# Bed Surfing

**Summary**

by *wicked17writer*
Darcy has a power, (teleportation) it sucks because (it only works when she's unconscious) and it has her *sleeping* with all of the Avengers...eventually.

(Basically inserting Darcy from her introduction in Thor into all of the MCU canon with the reason being, this power, which takes her all over the place at random. )


Notes

This chapter is a bit dense, it is mainly a universe establishing chapter. Will become better after this, I promise.

Set in Marvel Canon Universe. Starts post-Thor.

enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes.
No one knew for sure that Darcy was a mutant. Over the years, some people suspected or assumed she was, but no one knew for sure.

She never took a test or anything to confirm her ‘mutantcy’, but she was pretty sure she was one. At puberty she developed a special ability. And that’s what Darcy called it, her ‘specialness’ her ‘ability’, because in no way shape or form could her ability be classified as a ‘super power’. And if it was, it would be the stupidest super power on the block.

When Darcy was fourteen she was slapped with the puberty stick hard. She got huge boobs, dope curves, and her ability, all practically overnight. The first time her ability manifested was also the last day of summer break before her freshman year of high school.

She had been hanging out with a group of friends at her best friend Lilly’s house. They were all lying out on towels tanning after having enjoyed a late afternoon swim. They had spent most of the summer hanging out at Lilly’s because she was the only one who had a pool. Also because Lilly had the hottest brother ever and Darcy had a not so secret crush on him. He was sixteen, tall, tan, and on the football team but still nice, and totally gorgeous in a wholesome way.

His name was Jay and she had scribbled his name all over her diary all summer. Lilly and her friends teased her mercilessly about it. They talked her into buying a bikini, since she was the only one amongst them who had anything to fill it out with. They always sent her into the house to retrieve snacks when they knew Jay was home. They even tried locking the two of them in the basement once, but Lilly’s mom stopped them.

Jay had spent the bulk of his summer at Football camp, but he had come home three weeks prior. Jay had gotten even hotter post-camp. And all that time secluded with only male companions had turned him into a flirting machine. Since he came home he had been making little comments complimenting her appearance, opening doors for her, finding little excuses for their hands to touch. Darcy didn’t know how to respond to the attention so she just usually smiled and internally freaked out and celebrated.

However, that day when Jay came out to use the pool, he brought some of his football friends with him. A lot of the guys hollered and catcalled all the girls, but everyone could tell that Darcy was the main focus of their attentions. It made her uncomfortable and she had wrapped herself up in her towel, feigning coldness.

The guys invited the girls back into the pool and the other girls jumped at the chance to hang out with the older guys. Darcy hung back. The other kids were splashing around and having fun, but with the other guys around Darcy felt insecure in her itsy bitsy bikini.

Darcy looked on longingly as Jay stripped off his shirt and kicked off his flip flops. He threw her a wink before diving into the pool. After that Darcy decided to ignore her insecurities and she too jumped into the pool to have some last day of summer fun.

Later on Lilly and Jay’s parents broke out the grill and they all enjoyed an impromptu BBQ.
Everyone was getting along. The other football guys had stopped leering at her and Darcy felt all a twitter, because she was sitting next to Jay, and he had noticed she was cold and given her his button up to wear over her bikini.

When she excused herself to go inside to use the bathroom she sniffed the shirt and jumped up and down and squealed in delight. Upon exiting the bathroom she literally ran into Jay’s chest. He had been waiting for her.

They ended up making out in his bedroom for twenty minutes. Darcy was the one who pulled away first, he had tried to untie her top and Darcy wasn’t comfortable with that. Jay understood and they went back and joined the group.

Before she went home, Jay asked her out on a date. She said yes. It was one of the best days.

When she went to bed that night she kissed a picture of Jay before she went to sleep. It was morning when she woke up… wrapped up in Jay’s arms. Darcy lay there petrified. She had no idea what had happened to her. She had gone home, went to bed, and somehow woken up five miles away. If she had not been wearing her PJ’s she would have had a complete mental breakdown.

Jay was…surprised to say the least when he woke up to find Darcy there. Surprised and a little freaked out…and flattered. He assumed she had snuck into his room because she liked him so much. Darcy went with the explanation only because she had none to offer herself. They made out and Darcy let him grope her breasts a little, just for being so cool with her unexpected appearance.

When his mom knocked on his door to make sure he was awake, they broke apart and Jay bid her good luck on sneaking out without getting caught.

Darcy just thanked God Jay had a bedroom on the first floor. She slipped out of his window rather easily and borrowed Lilly’s bike (which she never rode anymore) and pedaled home as fast as she could. Her parents didn’t notice that she had vanished in the night.

She never said anything to anyone about the incident and neither did Jay. I

She and Jay ended up dating for all of freshman and sophomore year, junior and senior year for him. He was her first boyfriend. Her first kiss, her first love. She even lost her virginity to him. She mysteriously showed up in his bedroom every couple of weeks. Jay loved it and assumed she just broke in to his bedroom to see him all the time.

There were a few other instances when Darcy woke up in places she hadn’t fallen asleep. Mostly they occurred with Jay and her dog. She dreamt of her dog a lot, and woke up in his doggy bed besides him a lot. When she and her mother had a fight over a short skirt and her relationship with Jay, she woke up in bed with her parents, wedged between them like she used to do when she was a little girl. Her mother thought it was her way of reaching out and mending the hurt feelings from the night before. Darcy didn’t disagree with her.

When Jay graduated and headed off to college, they broke up. She was going to be in West Virginia, he was going to college in New York; it just made sense to break up.

A couple months into her junior year, Darcy woke up in Jay’s arms once again, with no idea how she got there. That’s when Jay started to have a problem with her little habit of breaking in. He could understand it when they were dating and living five blocks away from each other, but for Darcy to travel to another state and break into his dorm room in the middle of the night, that was going too far.

Darcy had no idea what to do. Jay yelled at her for half an hour about moving on, letting go,
invading other people’s privacy, boundaries. She just sat there shell shocked.

She had chalked up her little ‘breaking and entering’ habit to sleep walking. Or some sort of other sleep disorder, like the people who took that drug and then raided the fridge in the middle of the night. She just thought it was a harmless, simple, weird little quirk she had. But there was no way she could have ‘sleep walked’ to the train station, to a cab, into a guarded building, into Jay’s dorm, into his bed….all without waking him or his roommate up….all the while bare footed and in an oversized t-shirt, panties, and wearing nothing else.

When she stared hysterically crying, Jay finally stopped lecturing and berating her. Darcy begged and pleaded with Jay not to say anything. He agreed, but demanded to know how she got there. When she told him she didn’t know, he threatened to call the cops. When she told him the truth, about the first time she showed up in his bed and all the subsequent times after that, about how she never knew how she got there, he didn’t believe her.

He called her a liar, he called her crazy. He told her she needed mental help.

Darcy didn’t disagree.

Jay was still a good guy though, and he still loved her. So he lent her some clothes, money and sent her home. When she got home, her parents grounded her for the rest of the school year. Darcy accepted the punishment without complaint.

After that Darcy started to sleep in layers. And she wore a wristlet around her wrist with her ID, a credit card, and a fifty dollar bill inside.

She never woke up in Jay’s arms ever again.

After her cross state trip to Jay’s dorm room, she and Lilly had a very public fight. And that night, Darcy woke up in Lilly’s bed. And thank god for that.

Despite their fight (which was actually about Darcy’s supposed ‘stalker-y’ behavior concerning Lilly’s brother ). Lilly believed her when she said she didn’t know how she got into Lilly’s room. Lilly believed her when she told her she never actually snuck out of her house to see Jay, she just appeared there, like magic. Lilly believed her about her not leaving the state to sneak into her ex-boyfriend’s dorm room.

Lilly believed her, because that night Lilly had a dream about Darcy too.

With Google and Lilly’s help, the two of them came to the conclusion that Darcy had to be a mutant. And that her power was teleportation. Specifically, a shitty form of teleportation that only worked when Darcy was asleep. And she had no control over.

Darcy could fall asleep anywhere and if she dreamed about someone (animals included), and they were asleep too, she could teleport to their location and ended up lying beside them.

And though after high school she and Lilly grew apart, they would always be bound by the secret of Darcy’s ability.

When Darcy was twenty four years old, she signed on to be an intern to an astrophysics named Dr. Jane Foster. It was through Jane that she met the Norse god Thor. Who, as it turned out, was actually
a pretty okay guy, once you got past his princely pompousness.

Following Thor’s departure from Earth, Darcy’s ability kicked into overdrive.

Before Thor she woke up in a strange bed maybe once or twice a year. Post-Thor, Darcy was on her way to becoming a professional *bed surfer.*

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Story Inspiration: This picture=

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Chapter 2 – Phil Coulson

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to Phil Coulson, Agent of Shield.

Chapter Notes

Happy Saturday.
I hope to update this once a week, but no promises.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 2 – Phil Coulson

Darcy woke up in a crappy motel.

“Fuck.” She quietly cursed. She felt her unexpected bedmate startle awake, and then she had something cold and metal pressed to her temple.

“Who are you?” A familiar man’s voice demanded. Darcy couldn’t place it to a name and she was too scared to turn and look at who was, she suspected, pointing a gun at her face.

“I’m just a college student. Don’t shoot me!” The room that was dark one second ago, was suddenly flooded with light and Darcy winced as her eyes struggled to adapt to the change. Thank god she was only far sighted, without her glasses she could still see, but not things that were far away.

“Miss Lewis?” The gun was removed from her head. Darcy chanced a look to the side and found the government suit guy who had stolen all of Jane’s research. He wasn’t wearing a suit now though. Just a plain white t-shirt and boxers. His gun was lowered in front of him but he didn’t move to put it away.

“Uh….yeah.” Darcy responded distractedly, her eyes trained on the gun in his hands. She had never thought about waking up with a stranger and being shot for her troubles. Being faced with the scenario, she was surprised no one had pulled a gun on her before. She was so lucky/unlucky all at the same time….bittersweet lucky? Oxymoron lucky? Darcy shook her head clearing her tired thoughts.

“What are you doing here?...In my bed…in my home…in a different state than you were spotted via surveillance four hours ago.” The agent questioned her, his tone and face turning more and more befuddled as he mentally worked out how impossible it was of her to have just appeared in bed next to him.

“You still have Jane’s place under surveillance? Dude, not cool.” Darcy remarked as she sat up in the bed, making sure to keep her hands raised.

The agent raised his gun and aimed it at her again, demanding in an angry voice, “What are you
Darcy paled. “I’m sorry. I…you….I guess you left an impression on me.”

“What?”

Darcy closed her eyes as she recalled the dream that brought her to the agent’s side. She saw him talking to Thor, she saw him taking Jane’s research, her memories faded into the dream. When the dream took over she watched as the man, dressed in his boring normal suit; held a big space age looking gun. He walked forward and talked to someone she couldn’t see and said words she couldn’t hear. To her, it looked like an understated version of the Evil Dead’s classic “This is my boomstick” scene. The dream shifted and then she was watched him sitting on the floor, blood on his lip, looking like he was about to hurl.

“Miss Lewis!” The agent, who’s name she couldn’t even recall, shouted her name. He sounded frustrated like, he had been trying to get her attention for a while.

“Hi. Sorry.” Darcy responded quietly as she focused on the man in the here and now and let the dream version of him fade from her mind.

“How did you break into my room?” He demanded, his brow furrowing together.

“Um…I…didn’t?” Darcy said with a shrug.

“You didn’t break into my room?” He motioned to her body with a wave of his hand, “All evidence to the contrary be damned?”

“Uh…yeah?”

The man shot her a frustrated look and then rolled his eyes, stowing his gun in a holster that hung off the bedpost. “Miss Lewis, I can’t help you if you don’t talk to me.” The agent said, his tone softening.

“I don’t…I don’t actually remember your name.” Darcy admitted quietly. Her eyes downcast as she twirled a ring around her finger.

“Agent Phil Coulson.”

Darcy nodded and gave the man a little wave, “Hi Agent Phil Coulson.”

“Miss Lewis.” Coulson said her name reproachfully and Darcy let out a calming breath.

“I…have an ability and it in a word, sucks.” She looked up and the unflappable agent blinked slowly at her.

“Go on.” He encouraged.

“I don’t…you work for the government, which is scary, because I don’t want to be put on a list. Seriously, my power is so benign, it should really be called a disability!” Darcy said argumentatively.

Coulson just stared at her with a blank expression.

Darcy ducked her head and tucked a strand of hair behind her ear as she continued to explain her power poorly, “Um.. so, yeah I have this power. And it’s stupid. And I can’t control it at all!...Not that I’m an out of control powered person! But, I just mean, I can’t direct it…at all. So, me showing up here, is just…like…serendipitous.”
“Are you a mutant?” Coulson asked seriously, but with a hint of compassion in his voice.

“Maybe?” Darcy admitted, “I’ve never been tested or recruited/approached by those crazy mutant terrorist groups…the XYZ men or the Brother’s in the Hood group that other guy runs.”

Darcy bit her lip as she looked up and finally spoke straightforwardly about her ability, “When I dream about someone…and their asleep too, sometimes, not all the time! I…just magically wake up next to them…wherever they are.”

“So you…teleport in your sleep.” Coulson summarized.

“Are you going to arrest me?” Darcy asked worriedly. She could feel her eyes watering as she realized the government finding out about her could actually ruin her life.

Coulson narrowed his eyes at her, “No…should I?”

“No!” Darcy exclaimed with a hopeful smile, “No! I’m completely harmless I swear! In fact, if you think about it, I’m really the victim here!”

Coulson gave her annoyed look. Darcy shrunk into herself a little, as she mumbled, “From a certain point of view.”

Coulson looked her up and down, taking in her Minnie Mouse sleep shorts, black knee socks, white tank top and Flashdance sweatshirt. He gestured with a finger to her wristlet, “What’s that?”

Darcy quickly opened it up and showed him that it contained her ID, a twenty dollar bill, her house key and a condom. Coulson eyed the condom with an amused expression. Darcy frowned and stuffed her belongings back into their container.

“Better safe than sorry.” Darcy grumbled. Besides, one never knew when one would wake up next to a hot horny guy who didn’t ask questions about mysterious girls showing up in their bed.

“I take it, that beyond that twenty dollar bill you have no other means of getting home to New Mexico?” Coulson asked as he took a terrycloth robe off a nearby chair and put it on.

“Dude, I don’t even know where here is.”

“California, Malibu to be exact.” Coulson informed her.

“Cool. Never been.” Darcy said in a chipper tone. She was optimistic about this meeting. She sensed that Coulson was about to offer to help her.

“You can stay here on the bed, sleep if you need to, you’re free to use the bathroom. I’m going to step outside and make a few calls and see if I can’t get you on a plane back home today.”

Darcy smiled brightly at the older man, “Thank you.”

Coulson waved off her thanks but she crawled forward and grabbed his hand, squeezing it with her own. Her tone turned serious as she tried to convey the true depths of her fears and her gratitude of his acceptance of her ability and willingness to help her, “Seriously, thank you Agent Coulson. This could have gone south in a thousand of different ways. I could have ended up with my brains splattered all over the place, you could have turned out to be a creepy rapist, or one of those human purists guys that gets off on lynching mutants or you could have reported me to your shady government agency and arranged to have me dissected. So…truly, from the bottom of my heart. Thank you.”
Darcy wiped away a tear as it rolled down her cheek and concluded her little speech in forced lighthearted tone, “Thank you for being so cool Coulson.”

The man gave her a genuine smile. He looked at her with compassionate eyes. It made him look younger and ….hotter. Objectively, he was too old for her. But she did have a blind spot for the well meaning, good guy types. And…he definitely had ‘spank me daddy I’ve been naughty’ appeal.

Coulson pulled away from her hand. And as if he sensed her thoughts turning down an inappropriate avenue, he straightened his posture and regained that stiffness that she remembered from New Mexico. He gave her a sincere but polite smile and responded, “You’re welcome, Miss Lewis.”

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Darcy’s Sleep outfit

Chapter End Notes

How’d you all like it?
Any guesses on who’s next?
Chapter 3 – Tony Stark and Pepper Potts

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to Tony Stark and Pepper Potts.

Chapter Notes

Just some timeline clean up. This is following CANON.
So, just for clarification Thor occurs directly after Iron Man 2. This story is set right after Thor ends....so....everyone clear? K.
Also, this is a late night upload so all errors are due to lack of sleep and should be pointed out in the comments so I can fix it in the morning or never if it's too much trouble and I'm feeling lazy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 3 – Tony Stark and Pepper Potts

Darcy woke up to a woman’s voice shrieking practically in her ear.

“TONY I SAID NO THREESOMES!”

“I didn’t do it!” A male voice answered the woman, sounding as bleary as she felt.

Darcy groaned and put a hand to her face, raising the sleep mask up to the top of her head so she could see where she had woken up this time. Looking to her left she saw a pretty familiar looking redheaded woman, but she couldn’t place the woman’s name. She looked pissed though.

“TONY!” The woman yelled, waking the man up again.

“What?” Darcy turned to her right and saw that the man in question, was in fact Tony Stark.

“Holy shit. You’re Ironman.” Darcy stared at the man with wide eyes. She had never met Tony Stark or this woman she recognized but couldn’t place.

For the first time ever, her stupid disability had brought her to someone she didn’t know, had never met, but did know of in the celebrity sense, and had dreamt about.

Darcy closed her eyes as she recalled what had brought her there. She had been watching TV in bed, too tired to move after a long day of data recording in the desert with Jane and Erik. Footage of the Stark Expo fiasco had been playing. When she fell asleep, she dreamt of the news she had been watching. Of Iron Man flying around and saving people from the evil Hammer drones.

When the dream took over she watched as Tony Stark talked to Coulson, the woman who looked familiar by his side. She watched as Tony Stark lay on the ground and was startled awake. She watched him falling out of the sky like a rock. She saw the face plate on his Iron Man suit be ripped off. She dreamt of him being electrocuted. She dreamt of him eating snacks in a lab and offering
some to a fluffy haired man in glasses.

This only meant one thing to Darcy. Excited at what she had just figured out she shouted, “HOLY FUCK! I could have been sleeping with Ryan Gosling this whole time??!”

Tony looked at her, confusion written all over his face as he asked, “What?”

Darcy turned her head and watched the red head get out of the bed and put on a silk robe. The woman looked flawlessly classy. She was wearing one of those long silky sexy nighty things, the kind that was lace trimmed and pale seashell pink. Darcy looked down at her own outfit and internally groaned. She had been too tired to get dressed for bed properly so she had just taken off her jeans and fallen asleep in the t-shirt she had worn all day, her underwear, her sweater, and socks. Her sleep mask and wristlet she had put on last minute as a reflex, but she really wasn’t dressed properly if they threw her out and she had to find her own way home. Speaking of home…

“Where are we?” Darcy asked. The woman and Tony ignored her.

“I’ve got a better question, who are you and what are you doing in our bed? TONY?!” The woman asked the famous billionaire with a pointed look. Obviously blaming the unknowing man for her sudden appearance.

Tony held his hands up in surrender claiming, “I swear I don’t know her.”

“Then what the hell is she doing in our bed Tony!”

“Um hi. I’m Darcy.” Darcy tried to inject herself into the conversation but, the two continued on as if she hadn’t said a word.

“How should I know?” Tony growled as he sat up and scrubbed a hand across his face, “I was sleeping! Maybe you snuck her in for a dirty threesome and you’re blaming me to throw me off the trail!”

“Don’t be ridiculous.” The woman retorted with a glare.

Tony glowered at her, “Then don’t accuse me of bullshit that isn’t my fault.”

“You promised me that after we became official, you would be monogamous Tony. You said you could handle an adult relationship!” The woman started pacing in front of the bed.

“I’M TELLING YOU I DON’T KNOW HER!” Tony shouted.

“I’m just supposed to believe that a gorgeous buxom twenty something fell out of the sky and just happened to land in our bed?”

Darcy blushed at the other woman’s description of her, even as she grumbled, “Not out of the sky, no.”

Tony perked up, a huge smile spreading across his face, before he asked with a delighted tone, “Are you jealous?”

The woman rolled her eyes and said, “Jarvis, who is she?”

“Unknown Ms. Potts.” A robotic voice answered from the ceiling.

“Who the fuck was that?” Darcy mumbled, looking around for the source of the unknown voice.
“Jarv, how did she get in here?” Tony asked.

“Well, I---” Darcy began but the robot voice cut her off.

“The unknown woman materialized in the middle of the night. Appearing out of nowhere, literally.”

Tony turned on her with narrowed eyes, “What do you mean materialized?”

“I mean just that Sir. She materialized. As if by--”

“Magic?” Tony interrupted, he turned on her and waggled his eyebrows at her, “Are you a magician?”

The woman rolled her eyes and questioned the unknown voice, “Jarvis, magic? Really?”

“Magic isn’t real. It’s just science we don’t understand yet.” Darcy said. Finally, truly grabbing Tony and the woman’s attention. She gave each of them a little wave hello.

“Hey, Hi. I’m Darcy. And I’m sorry to just show up here. Usually I only show up when I know the person, so this is weird for me too.”

The woman sat down on the end of the bed, “What do you mean show up?”

“What are you, the hotter version of the Great Gazoo?” Tony asked.

Darcy squinted her eyes at Tony, “Is that a Flintstones reference?...Also, hotter? You think the Great Gazoo is hot?”

Tony smiled at her and Darcy swooned internally, “Well, at least she’s not an uncultured idiot.”

“Getting back to the point.” The woman said pointedly.

“Uh, I’m--I have an…ability. It sucks. I call it my disability. See, I dream about someone, sometimes, and then, ‘poof’ I show up in their room, in their bed. While their sleeping.”

“Well, that’s incredibly unsettling.” Tony muttered as he inched away from her and got out of the bed.

Darcy tried hard not to ogle the older man’s fit physique, but the boxer shorts and tank really showed off his assets and she couldn’t help it.

“I can’t help it.” Darcy said in a dreamy voice as she stared at Tony’s arms. When the woman glared at her she shook her self and then continued on, “It happens when I’m sleeping, duh. And, and, I can’t control when it happens. I…ugh, it basically just fucks up my life in super awkward way. See this moment for example.”

“Oh, well. We’re not sleeping any more. You can leave.” The woman said as she crossed her arms in front of her chest.

“Are you a mutant?” Tony asked, looking at her in that ‘oh what an interesting specimen you are’ way science-y people had.

Darcy shrugged her shoulders and just looked down at her hands. Her wristlet hung from her wrist, she twisted it around and around to give her something to do.

Tony clapped his hands together making her jump and look up at him, “Well, this was fun. Thanks for coming, causing a fight between me and my girlfriend. Hope you have a nice trip home. And…”
When Darcy just looked back at him, Tony waved his hands in the air, saying, “Okay, Disapparate. Or whatever.”

Darcy looked down at her hands and mumbled, “I’m not a wizard. It doesn’t work like that.”

The woman stood up and demanded, “Well, I officially don’t care. Get out.”

Darcy’s eyes began to water and she nodded. She made to get out of the bed, exiting the large bed on the side Tony was on. When she stood up, Tony’s eyes looked her up and down then went to the ceiling. He took a step away from her and towards his girlfriend, claiming, “I’m not looking. See how I’m not looking at the hot half naked girl Pep?”

Darcy looked to the woman, Pepper, and asked, “Um, if you could just…tell me where I am. And how I get out? And, where the nearest airport is?”

The redhead’s face softened as she appraised Darcy’s appearance. She nodded to Darcy’s bag, “What’s in that?”

Darcy held up the wristlet for the couple to see, “It’s got my ID, a couple of bucks, a credit card. I…” Darcy trailed off as she was suddenly, totally struck with the full weight of the embarrassment of the moment. Here she was with the classiest looking people to ever be rudely awakened and she….she had on underwear, a dirty t-shirt, no bra, no pants, and she knew for a fact that her hair was a knotted mess. She was an interloper and she looked like shit and she was standing in front of the most famous power couple in the world.

Pepper Potts. The woman’s name suddenly came to her. She was Pepper Potts, CEO of Stark Industries and Tony’s long time assistant turned girlfriend and now boss.

*She had never wanted to turn invisible more in her entire life.*

“Never mind. I’ll figure it out.” Darcy stuttered as she turned and made her way to the nearest door…which turned out to be a closet.

Tony pointed to the door on the other side of the room, “Exit’s that way sweet cheeks.”

Pepper elbowed Tony in the side. The classy woman strode forward and stood in front of her. The woman’s eyes searched her face, “You’re telling the truth. Aren’t you?”

“Yeah.” Darcy said in a pathetic whine. Her eyes began to well up with tears; she folded her sweater over her body trying to hide her underdressed figure.

Pepper put a hand on her shoulder, “Wait a moment. I’ll be right back.”

Pepper moved around her to the closet that was behind her, Darcy kept her eyes glued on the floor, too ashamed to look up at Tony. Pepper reappeared a moment later with a pair of sweatpants and a pair of UGG boots in her hands.

“Here.” Pepper handed her the pants first. Darcy didn’t question the woman’s generosity, just silently put the pants on.

Pepper continued, “I don’t think you’d fit in my pants. But you should fit in Tony’s. And eyeballing your feet I can tell you wear a smaller size than me, so these boots should serve you for now. If it wasn’t so cold out I could give you flip flops, but…”
The woman trailed off and Darcy gave her a grateful smile as she pulled on the boots, which were admitted about two sizes too big, but better than nothing.

“Thank you.” Darcy said sincerely. Pepper nodded.

Darcy made to leave, when she passed Tony he grabbed her arm and stopped her asking, “Why here? What was that bit about Ryan Gosling?”

Darcy just shrugged her shoulders, “I don’t know. I.. I thought I understood how my pow—my disability worked. I thought it only brought me to people I knew. But I don’t know you. I mean.. you’re Iron Man. Of course I know you, but not like, personally. I know of you. Everybody knows who you are.”

Darcy smiled at Tony as he puffed up a bit and preened at that. She punched him in the shoulder lightly, “Don’t get a big head or anything. I was watching the news before I went to sleep, and guess what was on? Oh yeah, it was you and the Stark Expo clusterfuck. You know, the big time terrible that happened not too long ago, where so many innocent people were injured and blah blah blah. So, yeah. Ryan Gosling.”

“What?” Pepper asked, “I’m not following.”

“I dream of Ryan Gosling all the time. He’s my favorite celebrity crush. So, if I fell asleep watching the news about you,” She pointed to Tony, “That means it’s possible for me to wake up next to Ryan Gosling. A man I’ve never met, but know of through his work and legendary handsomeness.”

“I’m legendarily handsome.” Tony grumbled with a pout.

“Yeah, but you don’t look photo-shopped.” Darcy retorted with a smirk. Pepper laughed and then when Tony turned a betrayed look on her, she turned it into a cough.

The more she thought about her dream the more she questioned her Ryan Gosling theory, “Although, maybe it’s just because I saw you/ dreamt of you talking to Coulson. The last guy I dreamt-apparited to.”

Tony and Pepper exchanged a look then turned on her and asked in unison, “You know Phil?”

“You know Agent?”

Tony turned to Pepper and gave her a look, “Since when did you start calling him Phil?”

Pepper ignored Tony so she followed the woman’s lead and explained how she knew Coulson, “I met Coulson while in New Mexico. He was posing as an FBI agent. I’m an intern for an astrophysicist named Jane Foster. Due to some… NDA bullshit, I can’t really tell you any more than that.”


Pepper glanced at a clock on the nightstand. She then went to her purse that lay on a nearby chair, she dug out her phone and gestured to the closet saying, “I’m going to make a call. You two chat.”

Darcy and Tony watched as Pepper stepped into the, admittedly large walk in closet, but still a closet none the less, to have her private phone call. It was…a little weird that she chose to talk in the closet, but Darcy wasn’t one to judge.
When the door closed behind Pepper, Tony and she turned to each other.

Tony looked her up and down again, but not sexually just in an appraisal-ly way, “So, you’re a mutant.”

“Don’t know. Never been officially tested.” Darcy responded.

“I have a microscope in my workshop. I could test you.” Tony offered.

Darcy folded her arms under her breasts, “Nah. I’m good living with the mystery.”

“Seriously?”

“Yeah. Ignorance and bliss and all that.” Darcy confirmed.

“Okay…well, in that case, want a drink?”

Darcy unfolded her arms and grinned at the man, “Yes, please!”

Fifteen minutes or so later, Pepper found them in Tony’s living room. They were doing shots of some fancy expensive liquor that tasted terrible but Tony insisted was ‘top shelf’.

“Hey Pep.”

“Hi. Want some?” Darcy held out a full shot of the yucky liquid Pepper, it was her third shot. Pepper shook her head ‘no’ and Darcy shrugged and looked to Tony and pouted, “Hey! You drank yours without me!”

She threw back the shot and made a mean face to avoid doing the ‘yucky’ face.

Tony chuckled at her and took the empty glass out of her hand, commenting in a teasing voice, “Yeah, well, keep up short stack.”

Just as Tony was about to pour them each another shot, Pepper walked over and took the bottle out of his hand.

“Aww.” Tony whined adorably.

“Times up. Party’s over. Consequences time.” Darcy muttered to herself. Tony who overheard her giggled. The fact that she made IRON MAN giggle? Made her giggle. And soon they were falling all over each other laughing at Pepper’s feet.

“Oh goody. You got her drunk.” Pepper sniped. Pepper reached down and helped her to her feet. Tony got to his feet shakily by himself.

“Listen Darcy, I spoke with Phil--” Pepper started only to be interrupted by Tony interjecting, “His name is Agent.”

Pepper ignored him and continued by repeating herself, “I spoke with Phil, and he corroborated your story. He said you’re claims about your ability--”

“Disability.” Darcy interjected, interrupting Pepper.

Pepper looked annoyed and muttered, “Oookay, you two can’t be left alone together again.”
Tony raised his hands in the air yelling, “Yay!”

And then he brought his arms down, and put one arm around her shoulders and one around Peppers. He squeezed them together in a group hug as he exclaimed, “There’s going to be a threesome after all!”

Pepper turned to him with a cold look and said, “You’re old enough to be her father.”

That deflated Tony for a second but then Darcy added, “Yeah but he’s still hot.”

“You’re not helping.” Pepper said to her.

“Sorry.” Darcy replied automatically, “I’s just being honest…I think you’re hot too. Like, very fancy hot.”

Tony laughed and kissed Pepper on the neck before leaning his head on her shoulder, “Can we keep her?”

“No.”

“But we’re totally letting her stay the night aren’t we?” Tony asked with a smirk.

“You got her drunk. Of course we’re letting her stay the night.” Pepper replied.

“I’m not drunk.” Darcy denied. Pepper rolled her eyes and took Darcy by the hand and began leading her down a hallway.

Tony trailed behind them saying, “See! She’s funny and pretty. We should totally keep her. Or hire her!”

“No.” Pepper refused breezily before halting their progress down the hall and opening a door. Pepper gestured to the room with an sweeping motion, “This is the guest room. Our bedroom is on the other end of the mansion if you need anything. It has its own bathroom.”

“Wait,” Darcy said confused by what was happening, “What…guest room? You, you’re not kicking me out?”

“No. You can stay here, get a good night’s sleep and then we’ll arrange a ride home for you in the morning.” Pepper explained with a kind smile.

“I have my own plane.” Tony said.

Darcy’s eyes watered and she began fanning her face trying not to let them fall. “You guys…oh my god you guys! You two are sooo sweet. First off, neither one of you threatened to shoot me in the face. Then you give me pants! And liquor! And now a room! You guys are not at all like I thought you would be. You’re sooo nice. And, I don’t…I can’t repay you, you know that right?”

“We know.” Tony snickered.

“Not even with sex. Cuz, I’m not like a prostitute. Sex is for fun. Not for currency.” Darcy mumbled.

“Well, that’s disappointing.” Tony reflected.

Pepper shot him a look but then put an arm around her shoulders and guided her into the room, helping her to sit on the bed. Pepper leant down and took off the boots and placed them neatly on the floor.
“Just rest Darcy. It’s okay. We’re going to help you.” Pepper gave her hand a squeeze and Darcy let her tired head loll to the side as she regarded the beautiful woman before her.

“Why?” Darcy asked, completely blown away by her and Tony’s lack of vitriol in response to her unexpected arrival.

“Are you a good person?” Pepper asked.

“Yeah.” She replied automatically.

“That’s why.” Pepper said with a smile.

“We’re also helping you because we can. I’m a super hero, helping people is kind of what I do now. And also you’re hot and funny.” Tony added from his place in the door way.

“Ignore him.” Pepper advised.

Pepper helped her slip under the covers and Darcy slid her eye mask down over her eyes. As she felt Pepper reach the door she called out, “Thank you!”

“You’re welcome honey.” Pepper responded softly.

“Yeah. What she said.” Tony added.

As Darcy snuggled into the expensive feeling bedding she mused aloud, “Who knows, maybe when I wake up I’ll be somewhere else...”
Pepper’s Sleep Outfit
Chapter End Notes

Just curious, what did you guys take away from that. Are you reading this thinking Pepper/Tony/Darcy sexy vibes or are you feeling familial bonds being formed...cuz honestly I wrote this with a dash of both ideologies.
Let me know what you think in the comments.
Chapter 4 – Captain America

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to Cpt. America.

Chapter Notes

*****************************Note
This chapter takes place a month or three after Steve's been defrosted and a little bit before the events in the move 'The Avengers'.

Also, I use some foul language and mention some perfectly normal bodily functions, such as erections, but I don't think I'm going to up the rating. Let me know if you think I should.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 4 – Steve Rogers

Darcy woke up to the feeling of an erect penis grinding on her butt and a large hand groping her chest. It wasn’t unpleasant by any means, but currently Darcy was suffering from the flu so she was not in the mood.

Darcy's vision was obscured by her ‘wake me in Paris’ sleep mask, but she assumed she had woken up next to Tony again. After her first meeting with the billionaire genius and his CEO girlfriend, Darcy had become a frequent visitor in their lives. In fact, she would consider the pair her friends. And she had the hand-written Christmas card to prove it!

However, given that Tony was a horny little sexual deviant, these sorts of awkward morning wood situations had popped up now and then. So Darcy wasn’t fazed by the butt grinding or boob groping. She was just annoyed.

“Get off.” Darcy wheezed in horse voice, she slapped at the hand on her boob and elbowed the male figure behind her.

“OH GOD!” An unfamiliar voice shouted. Darcy frowned and internally cursed her luck. She was not in Tony Stark’s bed. Apparently.

“Oh, ma’am I’m so sorry. I didn’t mean to, I was asleep! I never would have tried to. I swear! I’m sorry.” The voice continued to apologize. Darcy felt the man, whoever he was, bound out of the bed away from her. Darcy rolled onto her back and raised her sleep mask to the top of her head.

“S’okay.” Darcy replied in her deep sore throated voice. She wiped a hand over her eyes and blinked away her drowsy blurry vision.
“It’s nothing to be ashamed of. Don’t get a complex.” Darcy continued as she finally got a good look at her newest bedmate. And boy was she glad she was wearing her fancy Pepper Potts gifted PJ’s…

The man was handsome as fuck. Blonde, lightly tanned, blue eyed, tall, muscular…so muscular. He was totally ripped, he had Abs for days and he was just wearing a pair of basic dark blue boxer shorts. Boxers that did nothing to hide his porn star sized erect penis. Darcy felt her mouth drop open as she took in the Adonis before her.

The man turned pink as he followed her gaze, he immediately cupped himself, obscuring his erection with his hands. Darcy wished she could do the same to her red nose, dark circled eyes and sweaty fevered forehead. She did not look her best and she was almost face to penis with the hottest guy she’d ever met in real life.

“Ma’am I didn’t mean to touch you, I swear I nev—Wait. Who…what are you …? Who are you? Did Shield send you? Did you break in to my apartment?” The man asked as his mind seemed to finally overcome his embarrassment and he was able to assess the awkward/weird situation logically.

“Hi. I’m Darcy. ” She introduced herself with a little wave. She reached up and stretched her body, hearing several joints or bones or whatever pop in that pleasant way.

“What are you doing here?” The man asked in a stern voice. Darcy let out a yawn that turned into a cough that turned into her hacking up some flem and looking around for a tissue she could spit it into. Not seeing one, she just grimaced and swallowed it back down.

“Who are you and what are you doing here!” The man repeated himself, his eyes narrowing at her.

Darcy gave the man a blank look as she tried to remember her dream. She had been watching the history channel when she felt her NyQuill kick in and she lowered her eye mask. She listened for a little while; she had been watching a retrospective on Howard Stark and his contributions during World War II, when she had fallen asleep.

When the dream took over she watched as Captain America in his costume and Tony talked in what looked like a lab. She watched as Captain America smiled and waved on stage at a USO tour event. She watched Captain America and Howard Stark talking over an unpainted shield. She dreamt of Captain America doing what looked like a cheesy 90’s style PSA.

Darcy squinted as she stared at the now-hostile looking man. She was confused.

“Who are you?” She asked.

The man glowered at her, his hands going on his hips in an intimidating pose that was ruined by the huge outline of his dick in his boxers, he spoke tersely, “You broke into my home, got into my bed. Tell me who you are.”

Darcy stared at the man’s face, wracking her brain for who he could be. He looked a lot like the real Captain America who died in the war. Maybe this guy was Captain America’s grandkid or something? And her power, unable to locate the deceased iconic patriot, brought her to the closest substitute?

“Ma’am.” The man called out harshly, causing her to blink and try to focus back on the present.

“Sorry. I’m…I told you. I’m Darcy Lewis.” She said, she brought a hand to her throat, her throat felt scratchy and sore. And her head was really starting to pound again. She really just wanted to go back to sleep until the flu had left her system.
“Are you alright?” The man asked, concern creeping into his voice.

“Fuck. Sorry, I uh, might have infected you. I have the flu right now. When I went to bed I had a fever of 101 and I think it’s gotten worse cuz I feel like shit.” Darcy explained. She stared at the man whose identity she still couldn’t puzzle out.

“I’m powered. Or gifted. Or mutated or whatever. I have this ability to…like poof, into other people’s beds. It sucks. I can’t control it. I’m very sorry to bother you. Especially when I probably look like a…really good analogy for a sick person I can’t think of right now.” Darcy closed her eyes and sat up, rush of blood from her head making her feel woozy.

“I’ll go.” She mumbled, “Just give me a minute and I’ll---” Darcy threw off the blankets and put her feet on the floor.

“Am I in California?” She wobbled upon standing and knocked into the man’s nightstand. She heard a crash and felt a splash of water soak her sock covered feet. Shit.

“Ma’am.” The man said sounding alarmed. Darcy got down onto her hands and knees and stared picking up the pieces of broken glass.

“’m sorry.” Darcy slurred. She collected a few big pieces of glass in her hand just by reaching out blindly. The room was dark and she wasn’t wearing her glasses, so of course she cut her hand.

“Ma’am! Put it—it’s fine. You don’t need to clean-- It’s just a glass.” The man’s big hands grabbed her wrists and shook her hands, prompting her to drop the broken glass she had tried to collect.

“You’re bleeding.” The man said as he guided her back up from her crouched position. He pushed her back on to the bed in a sitting position. “Stay here. I’ll get a bandage.”

Darcy nodded and just sat motionless until he returned. He turned on a light and she flinched, the light stabbing at her eyes.

“Sorry, I just want to make sure you don’t have any glass in your wound.” He explained. The man took her cut palm in his hands and gently picked out a tiny piece of glass she hadn’t noticed was lodged in her. Then he wiped the bloody area with a warm washcloth.

“What’s your name?” Darcy asked. She stared at him as he applied Neosporin and a large band aid. He was really pretty.

He looked up at her and smiled at her, he had a really good smile, “Steve Rogers.”

“Bullshit.” Darcy accused. The man claiming to be the 70+ year old laughed at her.

“You asked.” He said as he gathered the garbage from the band aid.

“Steve Rogers, Captain America, Steve Rogers? Or like…Steve Rogers the third? Like his descendent. Like that would actually make actual sense, seeing as how the legendary soldier died like…I can’t think of the exact number right now, but it was before the fifties so like, a while ago.” Darcy closed her eyes as another bout of wooziness hit her.

The man claiming to be Steve Rogers put a hand on her forehead and said, “Wow, you’re hot.”

“Thank you. So are you.” Darcy couldn’t resist. She opened her eyes and gave the man her best ‘you know you want me’ face. The man laughed at her, but tried to cover his reaction by turning it into a cough.
Even though she knew his cough wasn’t real, he was just trying to be polite and not laugh in her face, it caused her to frown. She put a hand on his shoulder and squeezed their gently, “I’m sorry man claiming to be Steve Rogers. I probably gave you the flu. My power’s the worst. So stupid and intrusive and it got you sick probably too and I really am sorry.”

Darcy tried to stand so she could get up and leave but the guy pushed her back down onto the bed.

“Why don’t you stay? Close your eyes. If you’re as sick as you say, and you seemed to be, you shouldn’t be running around New York City in a robe and some wet socks.” His eyes softened.

Darcy pouted and untied her robe, flashing him her pale pink and black lace tank and panty set, “I’m not just wearing a robe.”

She held up her wristlet and waved it in front of his face, “I have cash and credit card and this super high tech homing beacon thingy a friend of mine made for me. I’m not totally fucked if you want to throw me out and wash your hands of my weirdness.”

Darcy felt another stab of pain in her brain; she swallowed thickly, before asking for clarification, “Wait, I’m in New York?”

“Yeah.” He confirmed with a sigh.

“Shit.” Darcy cursed, she knew that there was a Stark something being built in New York City currently, but she also knew that Tony and Pepper were in California currently. So if someone was going to be sent to collect her and get her home, it wouldn’t be Happy Hogan, with whom she had become familiar with. And with whom she was comfortable seeing her in this shit-tastic state. It would be some random driver and/or handler.

“I’m going to get you a new pair of socks. Wait here.” He said before shutting off the light and disappearing. She should leave, showing up unexpectedly and inserting her problems and life and weird ability, into stranger’s lives was becoming a bad habit.

“Is your name really Steve Rogers?” Darcy asked when he returned to her side. She let him take her legs in his hands and strip her of her wet socks and replace them with new dry ones.

“Yes ma’am.”

Darcy poked him in the stomach with one finger, “Are you for real?”

He tickled the bottom of her foot causing her to smile and squirm before he let her feet go. He replied softly, “Yes, ma’am.”

There was so much more she wanted to talk to him about. His grandpa the war hero. Where exactly they were in NYC. How he got to be so hot and nice. And if he was going to call the cops on her… But she was so tired.

“Stop calling me ma’am.” Darcy grumbled as she let him guide her into a reclining position and cover her with the blankets.

“Okay Darcy.” He said with a small smile, “Why don’t you just get some rest? And we’ll work this all out in the morning when you’re feeling better.”

“But--” She tried to protest, “I’m sick. I’ll--won’t you—you’ll get sick if you--”

Steve stuttered adorably, “I’ll…I won’t sleep with you, I mean, I won’t sleep here. I’ll sleep on the
couch. I promise nothing…I won’t…not that I have to worry about getting sick anymore, but I wouldn’t want you to have to worry about…if I would, again, after you woke up the first time with my, with me…”

“Humping my ass like a horny dog on the fourth of July?” Darcy offered finishing his sentence for him and breaking the tension that had been building.

Steve laughed and she could practically feel him blushing. Darcy smiled to herself proud that she had stopped him from having a meltdown due to erection embarrassment; she liked teasing this super hot super polite guy.

“Go to sleep.” He ordered, he slipped her eye mask down over her face. She heard his footfalls as he left the room.

Just as she was about to drift off it occurred to her that he had mentioned Shield….

“Hey Steve!” She called out, “Steve?”

“Yeah!” Steve called from some distance away, before he repeated himself as he got closer, “Yeah? Do you need something?”

“Are you the real Captain America who died in the war? I..I only ask because I had a dream about Captain America…I assumed you were his descendent, but…that’s not how my power works. I dream about someone, I wake up next to them. So…are you? Him?”

There was a long pause before he answered her, “Uh, yeah? I’m…him. I’m Captain America. Steve Rogers. The first and..only…it’s um. Nice to meet you?”

Darcy nodded to herself, with that little fact straightened out she was able to clear her mind and get some rest. She curled up onto her side and murmured, “Okay cool. That explains the Shield connection. I had a run in with them earlier in the year when Thor arrived from Asgard, so I guess…the shady secret government agency resurrecting the long thought dead American icon isn’t that farfetched after all.”

“Uh…what?” Steve asked sounding severely confused, “Thor?”

“G’night.” Darcy mumbled as she felt the pull of sleep at her mind. Comforted with the knowledge that Steve was adorable and kind and hot and the real Captain America.
Steve’s sleep Outfit
So, I have no idea who I want Darcy to end up with, romantically/pairing wise. Not yet anyway. My idea is to either decide later, or let you guys choose, or make it a choose your own adventure type thing....IDK yet.

Any questions or comments about this chapter would be greatly appreciated.
Chapter 5 – Bruce Banner

Chapter Summary

Darcy meets Bruce Banner.

Chapter Notes

Rewatched the Natasha/ Bruce introduction in AVENGERS MOVIE a lot in writing this chapter. SO, that's an influence.

Chapter 5 – Bruce Banner

The loud blaring of a car horn woke her up. Darcy groaned and dragged the blanket over her ears trying to block out the noise. This action was followed swiftly by the sound of someone falling out of bed.

“Who-wha-I…” An unfamiliar voice stuttered, causing Darcy to groan. She had had a late night out with Jane, it had been six months since Thor had left New Mexico and Jane was starting to lose hope that he would ever return again. Darcy being the awesome bro she was took the sad astrophysics out for drinks and a much needed bitching session. She wasn’t looking forward to playing ‘who’s done broken into my house’ stupid power edition, especially whilst hung over.

“Hello? Uh…Miss?” The voice questioned. Darcy grumbled internally, but turned onto her back and raised her sleep mask to take in her unknown bed companion. Blinking at the early morning light, Darcy’s eyes sought out the man in question.

He was kinda scruffy, but he looked adorably befuddled. He look to be in his late 30’s to early 40’s. He had fluffy black hair and he scrambled quickly to put a pair of glasses on his face. He blinked his eyes at her expectantly. Her perusal of her bed companion was put on hold as she realized the ‘bedroom’ they were in was…little more than a shack. And also, hot as balls.

Before she had fallen asleep she had thrown on a sweatshirt over her sleep shirt, the heat in the room made her regret wearing anything to bed at all. Darcy sat up and pulled off her sleep sweat shirt, she made an unhappy grunt when she hit herself in the face with her wristlet.

“What are you—Don’t do that! Don’t take off your--” The man sputtered in alarm.

“Chill dude. I’m not trying to tickle your pickle; it’s just so hot in here,” Darcy grumbled as pulled her Stark shirt down as it rode up when shedding her sweatshirt. She threw off the thin sheet that had served as the blanket in the heat oppressive room. Darcy rubbed at her face; she could hear the sounds of traffic outside.

“What is it so hot in here? Where are we the surface of the fucking sun?” Darcy whined as she toed off her cute Captain America socks. They were a gift from the man himself; Steve Rogers had given
them to her the last time they met unexpectedly.

Since their first meeting, she had sleep-teleported to New York, into Steve Rogers bed, four more times. They usually ended up spending the day together before she eventually had to make her way home; they had been all over the city sightseeing at all the major tourist destinations. He actually seemed happy to see her when he discovered her in the morning. Secretly Darcy thought that the resurrected man was lonely and that’s why she was a welcomed sight.

On her last trip to see Steve, he had given her the socks “Just because he saw them and thought she would like them”. Darcy had blushed, awkwardly punched him in the arm and taken him out for coffee in thanks. However in this room, her cute Captain America socks felt more like tiny ovens on her feet than cute reminders of her super hot senior citizen friend. Darcy snatched up the discarded foot apparel, she looked at her wristlet mournfully, knowing full and well they wouldn’t fit inside, she resigned herself to just holding the sentimental socks.

“Hi?” She said with a yawn, she gave the man what she hoped was an endearing smile. The guy didn’t seem overly alarmed by her appearance, just confused. Darcy took in his sweat stained black t-shirt and plaid boxer shorts with a smile. He might be old enough to be her father, but the man had no dad-bod to speak of. In fact, he could be classified as a DILF.

“Hii.” The man replied, dragging the word out.

Darcy extended her hand and introduced herself, “I’m Darcy.”

The man stared at her hand with a small smile, the kind of smile you usually used when appeasing crazy people and going along with their delusions as a means of keeping them calm. The man shook her hand without introducing himself. When they released each other the man crossed his arms in front of his chest and then looked around the room. Darcy did as well. She suddenly realized that this ‘bedroom’ was his whole house.

There was a beaded partition hung from the ceiling partially separating the bed from the kitchen/dining room/living room that was the rest of the room. Darcy internally sighed in relief when she spied a door off to the side of the kitchen, where she could spy a grim looking toilet and sink. At least the bathroom wasn’t in the same room too.

The man’s voice brought her attention back to him. “Nothing looks like its missing. Not that I have much to steal...”

“I didn’t--” Darcy began to argue but the man cut her off.

“However, I don’t think it’s the practice of thieves to stop in the middle of the crime and crawl into bed with their intended marks.” The man looked at her with an appraising eye, “Goldilocks evidence notwithstanding.”

She held up the ends of her messy pig tail braids, “No golden locks here buddy. I swear I’m not a thief.”

“Just a burglar.” The man said with a raised brow.

“I just told you I wasn’t a thief. And you just said that you didn’t have anything good to steal anyways!” Darcy pointed out with a pout.

“Burglary is when someone enters a building illegally with the intent to commit a crime, usually theft, but not always.” The man informed her.
Darcy gave the man a cheeky smile and wink, “Dude, if I’d burglar-ed you, you’d know and you’d be awake when it happened.”

Darcy delighted as the man’s cheeks tinged slightly pink. The man took his glasses off his face and wiped the glasses with the end of his shirt, the act giving her a brief glimpse of his flat stomach and the wiry hair that covered it. Darcy licked her lips.

“You seem pretty chill about my inexplicable appearance.” Darcy said observationally, “Compared to others I’ve encountered I mean.”

The man put his glasses back on his face, “You break into a lot of bedrooms, do you?”

Darcy wobbled her head back and forth considering how to answer him before admitting, “Actually yes.”

“Fetish?” The man guessed with a cheeky smile of his own.

Darcy snapped her fingers and pointed at the man teasing him, “So close.”

The man chuckled. The smile fell from her face as she sighed; she hated explaining about her possible mutation/disability/stupid power. She should just get her explanation written on a shirt and wear that to bed so she wouldn’t have to tell each new bed companion her whole spiel.

“Okay.” Darcy said glumly, “Real talk explanation time.”

The man straightened up, obviously sensing the change in her demeanor or maybe he knew what come next was the answer to her sudden appearance.

“I have this…condition.” Darcy began, “It makes me—I’m not in control of it. I can’t…I go to sleep and wake up in bed with someone--”

“Oh! You have a drinking problem. I see.”

“No!” She objected glaring at the man for interrupting her, “I don’t have a fucking drinking problem. Or a drug problem. Or a mental health problem either!”

“Sorry…go on.” The man said looking appropriately chagrined.

“I might be a mutant. Or…I don’t know, like a magic person, with the suckiest magical ability ever….like a squib, but…not. Actually that’s a terrible analogy.” Darcy berated herself; she put a hand on her eyes and drug it down across her whole face.

The heat in the room, the stuffy air, the loud sounds of a bustling city, and what she suspected was a foreign language being used as drivers/pedestrians yelled expletives at each other, was causing a headache to form. Or it could have been all the tequila last night. Either way, as nice as the man was being about her unexpected appearance, there was nothing she wanted more in that moment than to be at home in her own bed.

“Are you all right?” The man asked sounding concerned. Darcy smiled to herself thinking back to when she met Steve and Coulson and Pepper and to a lesser extent Tony, people being more concerned about her wellbeing than her inexplicable appearance in their beds seemed to be the key in winning them over. Perhaps in the future she should cover herself in fake blood, so that when she woke up in someone’s bed out of nowhere and told them she was a mutant, they’d be relieved that at least she wasn’t dead.
“I’m fine. Just…frustrated.” Darcy said with a smile. She put her hands in her lap and locked her fingers together, she straightened up and shook her head once to clear it. She smiled and waved her hand, mentally wiping away the past minute of their conversation, not caring if he didn’t understand what her gesture meant. Darcy made it clear by saying, “Let’s start over. Hi, I’m Darcy. I’m maybe a mutant. I don’t know if I’m a mutant for sure, like I said, there may be another explanation for what I can do.”

“What can you do?” The man asked quietly.

Darcy smiled at him, “I go to sleep, dream of someone, and wake up in bed next to them.”

“That is—” The man began, but Darcy cut him off.

“The other person has to be asleep too. And it usually only works with people I know, or know of. And or saw on TV, or in a book or whatever. Like…yeah. That’s…why I’m here. It’s because I can’t control it. I have no…I can’t make it happen and I can’t stop it from happening. I’m really as powerless as you in this situation if you think about it.”

The man stared at her and Darcy saw as he internally softened towards her. He took a step forward and sat down on the other side of the bed. He smiled at her and looked deep into her eyes. Darcy leaned in as he put a hand on her knee and said in a cold voice, “You actually expect me to believe that?”

Darcy jerked back, confused by his sudden change in demeanor. She questioned sounding dazed, “What…what do you mean; I’m…telling you the truth. I swear.”

“Oh please. That’s a ridiculous story. I’ve researched Gamma Mutates in relation to how gamma radiation would affect cellular deterioration and death in biological subjects. And in all my research on mutants, I’ve never heard of one who didn’t master their power by their twenties—at least!” Gone was the soft spoken man who she had just been bantering with. Darcy clenched her fists as she tried to suppress her desire to scream back in his face.

But she couldn’t scream at this man. She didn’t know him. She didn’t know what he was capable of. And if his quick Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde about face was any indication, he wasn’t someone she should blindly provoke.

Darcy defended herself in a calm steady voice, “Well I don’t know what to tell you buddy, I am maybe a mutant and I can’t control my power! That’s the truth.”

“Then you’re not a mutant.” The man accused.

“Maybe I’m not. I said ‘maybe’ I’m a mutant.”

The man rolled his eyes, “There’s a blood test you can take to find out for sure, why you haven’t taken it?”

“I don’t want to be labeled.” Darcy said through gritted teeth, her temper flaring up inside her.

“That’s a unreasonable answer.”

Darcy glared at him, “Well, I guess I’m an unreasonable person.”

“And you expect me to believe that?”

Darcy took a calming breath and made a real effort to push away her anger and annoyance. She had
broken into the guys home, he had a right to be skeptical. She held onto that thought when she
looked into his eyes imploringly, her tone softened with real emotion, “I’m not bullshitting you dude.
I’m serious. I don’t know if I’m a mutant, because I don’t want to know. To be a mutant in America,
is to walk around with a target on your back….Everything I’ve told you so far has been the truth.”

Darcy begged him in her head to believe her.

The man scoffed, “You over played your hand. I could have believed you, maybe, if you hadn’t tried
to ‘relate’ to me.” He put the word ‘relate’ in air quotes.

“What do you mean?” Darcy asked.

“All that stuff about not being in control. Not being able to make it happen or stop it from happening,
being powerless against your ability?....Do you really think I’m that dense?”

“I don’t know---”

“Trying to play on my emotions, making parallels between yourself and my problem with the other
guy? Who wrote your script? Did Ross do it himself or was that improvisation?”

“Who’s Ross?” Darcy questioned, truly confused by the man’s reaction now.

“You almost had me…” He said looking at her wistfully. Then he burst into movement, grabbing her
arm and sliding her across the bed, pulling her to the edge and making her stand up. Darcy held tight
to her Captain America socks as he began to pat her down like a handsy TSA agent. Darcy was so
traumatized by the sharp turn of events that she just sort of froze and let the man do it.

“I know you weren’t sent here to try to take me out, so maybe you really don’t know who Ross is.”
Darcy let out a little ‘eeep’ as he fondled her chest in a clinical manner.

“I really don’t know anybody named Ross, except Ross Gellar from Friends.” Darcy forced out a
chuckle, but the man didn’t look amused. He took her wristlet and unzipped it. He shook out the
contents onto the floor. He spread out her cash and credit card with his foot until he revealed her
license and Tony’s tracking device button.

“That just means someone else hired you.” He said coldly, as he bent down and picked up both her
ID and the electronic car key looking thing Tony had built her ‘in case of emergencies’ just like this
one. He held up the black plastic device and questioned her, “What’s this?”

“No one hired me! See my ID? I wasn’t lying! This is just my fucked up power and brain bringing
me here---”

“ID’s can be manufactured this is meaningless.” He flung her ID behind her head, Darcy didn’t dare
turn her head and see where it landed. The man yelled at her, shoving the device in her face, “What
is this?”

Darcy didn’t know what to tell him, what she could tell him that he would believe, what she could
tell him without making him even angrier.

“Fine.” The man said, he dropped Tony’s tracking device on the floor and then stepped on it with his
bare foot with such force, that the device shattered. He kept smashing it until all that was left was tiny
pieces.

“What happened? Did you come here hoping to get a reading of my brain activity whilst asleep? Did
you slip me something? Try to knock me out but got the dosage wrong. When I woke up you
concocted that ridiculous story to try to get out of here without facing the other guy?” The man stood up and stood almost nose to nose with her. The look on his face was…stern. Angry even.

“What other guy?” Darcy asked in a small voice. The man practically snarled as he pushed past her and started ripping the bed apart.

He threw the pillows on the floor and then stripped the bed of its sheets exposing the ugly stained mattress underneath. He picked up the sheets and shook them as if he expected something to fall out of them. Darcy’s eyes widened as she realized, she was in danger. She always expected people to accuse her of being crazy, but she never thought about what would happen if she teleported into bed with someone who actually was crazy!

“What were you after? My DNA? Blood samples? Hair, skin, or nail samples?...Other bodily fluids?” The guy looked her up and down with a disgusted face. He picked up the discarded pillows from off the floor and began feeling them for lumps, looking for whatever it was he thought she took or brought or stole. “Or were you going to play into the urban legend and harvest an organ, leaving me to wake up in a tub filled with ice.”

The man turned and looked her up and down again, “Just because you look like her you thought I would what? Be blinded by your beauty and not figure it out! Not get angry? Not hurt you!”

The man shouted and in his frustration Darcy watched in horror as he ripped his pillow in half. Feathers drifted down to the floor slowly, though the man didn’t seem to pay them any mind.

“I’ll just go.” Darcy said quickly as took a few steps back towards the main door, not wanting to outright run away from the incensed man nor take her eyes off of him for a second.

“DON’T YOU MOVE!” The man’s booming shout was like a slap in the face. It made her jump and halted her steps.

There was something wrong with his voice; it sounded different, it changed when he yelled. It sounded deeper. More…dangerous. Darcy froze, tears sprung to her eyes but she didn’t let them fall.

Darcy damned herself for taking off the smart watch Tony had given her. She usually wore it all the time, but when getting ready to go out drinking with Jane, she had decided the watch clashed with the bohemian chic outfit she wanted to wear… so she had taken it off and left it behind. Like a fucking idiot.

When she got home that night, she had been more than slightly inebriated and hadn’t thought of putting the watch back on. The watch that Tony had made was not only a smart watch; it was so much more than that. It was a phone. It was voice activated. It had GPS. It had a panic button that alerted Tony via a Jarvis-direct line that she was in danger. All of which would have come in handy when faced with her current predicament.

“Don’t move.” The man repeated himself in a quiet voice, “I’m so--…Tell me who sent you here, who knows where I am…and you can go.”

Darcy’s whole body was shaking. Internally she was freaking out, she didn’t think the man would like it if she claimed not to know what he was talking about again.

“I won’t hurt you.” He said softly, “I really won’t.”

Darcy didn’t believe him. This guy had shown to have a temper and she did not want to be on the other end of it. They stood there staring at each other, the man seemingly waiting patiently for her to respond.
“I don’t know what to say.” Darcy finally claimed, breaking the awkward tension. She ducked her head to stare at her chipped pedicure, and whispered, “I don’t even know your fucking name.”

There was a long silence, and Darcy looked up to see the man staring at her. She met his gaze and let all of her emotions play out in her face. She held nothing back, not her fear, her confusion, her anger, her panic.

The man stared at her with a wounded expression, and then he looked down at the broken pillow in his hands, then down at the floor where all the feathers had fallen. He looked over at the bed with an expression of dawning horror. Darcy wanted to take advantage of his preoccupied gaze, but then he was looking back at her. His eyes narrowed as he once again, looked her up and down, from her tangerine nail polished toes, to the top of her head where her sleep mask still sat.

The man’s brow knit together, “You don’t know who I am?”

Darcy shook her head no.

“You didn’t come here...on purpose.” The man stated. Darcy nodded yes.

“I frightened you.” He stated with certainty. Darcy didn’t bother to nod, he knew it and she knew it, he had scared the crap out of her.

“I’m sorry.” He apologized.

“Okay.” Darcy said non-committedly. The man dropped the two halves of the destroyed pillow onto the ground. Darcy watched, her whole body still tensed and poised to run, as he took off his glasses and rubbed at the bridge of his nose. The man then turned away from her and walked the few steps it took to reach his rickety looking kitchen table. There was only one chair at the table, the man sat down in it, once again facing her.

Darcy knew she should run, now that it seemed the man had calmed down. She should flee, find a phone, call for help, forget she ever met the raging crazy man...but she couldn’t. She wouldn’t.

She didn’t really believe her power had any sort of ‘higher power’ guiding hand to it. She met the people she met due to happenstance, and timing, and what she ate that night which influenced her dreams. However, she couldn’t deny that those she teleported too, ended up being people she was glad to know. People who were important.

Like with Coulson, meeting him alleviated most of her fears about the government abducting her to cart her off for experimentation. Meeting Tony was a godsend logistically speaking, he took a shine to her and her to him, he was like a weirdly prev-y uncle Daddy Warbucks. Without Tony, her savings would be completely drained what with her uptick of cross country bed-teleporting. He was also an excellent drinking buddy and legit superhero. And Pepper! God, Pepper had been amazing in the emotional support role. It was because of Pepper that she had started pursuing her graduate degree, online, so she could also be Jane’s assistant while they continued to fruitlessly try to open a worm hole in space, so that they might see Thor again. The older woman had been like a mentor to her, telling her how to negotiate as a women, handle everyday displays of sexism with class, and not least of all how to shop until one dropped. And Steve...well, she got the feeling that her friendship with the iconic Captain America, was a blessing to the man out of time. After all, just like the dinosaurs, all his friends were dead. And if had one great skill, it was being an awesome friend. No one did friendship like Darcy Lewis.

Staring at this man, this crazy, dangerous, scary man, she got the same impression from him as she did Steve. This was a man who had problems, who was sad, and lonely and afraid to ask for help.
Darcy took a few steps back and sat down on the edge of the bed. The man looked surprised by her actions, but she could see the spark of something in his eyes.

“So, what’s your name?” Darcy asked from across the room.

“Bruce.” He answered.

“Bruce. Just Bruce? Like Cher. Or Bono?” Darcy teased with a shy smile, inviting him to lighten the mood with her.

The corners of Bruce’s mouth lifted as he clarified, “No. Bruce Banner…Doctor Bruce Banner.”

“A doctor? Cool. Were you a child prodigy like Doogie Howser? Or are you a doctor like how anyone with a doctorate degree is technically a doctor.” Darcy questioned with a raised eyebrow.

Bruce shook his head no, but then the smile fell from his face, he looked at her in concern, “You can leave..I won’t stop you. I..I’m sorry about before. I know I scared you, I didn’t—I’m working on my anger, but when I thought you were sent here to---It doesn’t matter what I thought.”

“Just go.” Bruce said dismissively as he looked away from her to the one window his one room house had.

Darcy scooted back slightly, sitting more solidly on the bed, she said “No, I’m good. I think I’ll stay.”

Bruce’s head snapped in her direction. Darcy just smiled at him, “I have more questions for you Dr. Bruce Banner. And…yeah you scared me before, but…you destroyed my S.O.S. beacon, smashed it into tiny little bits, I don’t know where I am, but I suspect I’m in another country. Anyhow, I feel like you’ve calmed down enough to help me get home, and maybe I can help you.”

“Help me how?” Bruce asked skeptically.

“Well…I don’t actually know. But and I’m not judging, but from looking around here, you kind of live in squalor and yet you are a doctor. You think some guy named ‘Ross’ is after you. You think that people want to take your DNA and blood and other stuff. So, from an outsiders perspective, it looks like you’re not doing so hot in the life department, and you could use all the help you can get.”

“I repeat, help me how.” Bruce replied sassily. Darcy shrugged her shoulders in response. They sat in silence for a minute before Bruce said, “Kolkata.”

“What?” Darcy asked.

“That’s where we are. Kolkata, India.” Darcy blinked her eyes rapidly. She had suspected she wasn’t in America anymore, but…her power had never worked so far before.

“India?” Darcy echoed.

“I’m the local doctor around here.” Bruce said with a small smile, “I’ve been helping the poor, those who don’t have the means to afford proper medical care.”

“Cool.” Darcy said distractedly, her mind still trying to wrap around her trans-continental teleportation.

“You…Darcy, you said you had a dream about me? That’s what brought you here?” Bruce questioned with his head slightly tilted.
Darcy suddenly remembered what her dream entailed. They had been playing some of the Culver University incident footage on the news at the bar. ‘The Hulk’ is what they dubbed the creature. She and Jane both knew the incident well, Culver University being her alma mater and Jane’s employer for a time, the incident resonated for them in a big way. When she went to sleep, the creature had haunted her dreams. She saw the creature jumping around the city, smashing things, running through an office floor of a skyscraper only to bust out on the other side. She saw the creature roaring into the air. She saw the creature take a man and smash him into the floor repeatedly, only to walk away from him when the man finally remained motionless in the crater the creature had created with his body.

Darcy’s eyes widened as she realized Bruce hadn’t featured anywhere in her dream.

“I…I didn’t dream about you.” She stuttered.

“But you said—”

“I dreamt about the Hulk. You know the creature from the news? From Culver? I…it doesn’t make any sense though. I always end up in bed with the person I dream about.” Darcy said quickly as she began to panic. Her breathing quickened as she thought about what might be wrong, how her power might be changing, what it could all possibly mean!

“Oh my god, maybe I have a brain tumor and that’s why I’m broken! Maybe I’m going to die! I never just show up with someone unrelated to my dreams, that DOESN’T HAPPEN!” Darcy felt like she was hyperventilating.

“Hey, hey, Darcy…calm down.” She watched with panicked eyes as Bruce approached her slowly with his hands in the air, his voice was soothing but he still looked scared to touch her.

“Calm down, breathe.” He commanded, miming the motion and gesturing with his hands. Darcy copied him and followed his instructions. Not endanger of passing out anymore, Darcy felt her eyes well up with tears.

“I…I know why you ended up here Darcy.” Bruce said, he cautiously sat down on the bed next to here, careful to leave a lot of space in between them.

“You do?” Darcy asked, desperation coloring her voice.

“Yeah, you see…I am the Hulk.” Bruce admitted.

Darcy blinked away her tears and frowned. Looking Bruce up and down Darcy accused, “Bullshit.”

Darcy’s sleep outfit
Chapter End Notes

So, what do you think?
Chapter 6 - Thor

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to Thor.

Chapter Notes

Refresher From End of Thor movie:
Just as Laufey attempted to kill Odin by stabbing him with a frozen knife while he was still in the Odinsleep, he was then knocked backwards as Loki had appeared and then shot Laufey directly in the back with Gungnir. Loki proceeded to destroy Laufey with another shot before he then embraced his mother who delighted in the fact that Loki had saved Odin, while Loki had vowed that all of the Frost Giants of Jotunheim would soon pay for what they had done.
Loki revealing his true plan to use Laufey's attempt on Odin's life as an excuse to destroy Jotunheim with the Bifröst Bridge, thus proving himself worthy to his adoptive father. Thor arrives and fights Loki before destroying the Bifröst Bridge to stop Loki's plan, stranding himself in Asgard. Odin awakens and prevents the brothers from falling into the abyss created in the wake of the bridge's destruction, but Loki apparently commits suicide by allowing himself to fall when Odin rejects his pleas for approval. Thor makes amends with Odin, admitting he is not ready to be king; meanwhile, on Earth, Foster and her team search for a way to open a portal to Asgard.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 6 – Thor

Darcy woke up naturally, slowly coming out of her dream where she was hanging out with Thor, Lady Sif, and his three amigos. It was a pleasant dream and it felt good to stretch out her limbs and turn her neck, getting all the kinks out of it. She enjoyed the cracking sounds that her body made first thing in the morning, they were so...satisfying.

“Lady Darcy, is there something wrong with your neck?” A deep familiar voice asked from her left, startling her.

She had thought she was alone in her own bed, as such, she let out an undignified, “Meep!”

Darcy’s head turned towards the voice, but she couldn’t see who had spoken until she raised her face mask. Thor’s smiling face greeted her.

“Thor!” Darcy exclaimed happily, but somewhat subdued by her confusion.

“Greetings.” Thor said with another panty melting grin. Darcy internally shivered at the sight of his naked torso bathed in a sliver of moonlight; the room remained dark all around them obscuring everything else but him.
When did you get back to Earth?” Darcy asked, “Jane’s going to be so excited to see you…maybe not half naked in my bed for some strange reason, but excited all the same.”

“I know I am.” Darcy mumbled under her breath as she turned onto her side, folding her hands together underneath her cheek so she could see Thor’s face more easily. She was very tired and despite Thor’s unexpected arrival, she was still very sleepy.

Thor looked at her in confusion, “I am perplexed dear Darcy, for I was to ask you the same question.”

“What?..I live on Earth. What do you mean?”

“Well, not the exact same question.” Thor clarified, “But you seem to be under the impression that we are on Midgard. I assure you my lady that is not the case.”

“I say again, what?” Darcy said. She sat up as Thor sat up and reached for something beside the bed that she couldn’t see. He did something and then the room was aglow with soft candle light. It was a beautiful room, like something out of that ‘Maria Antoinette’ movie. The room had very high ceilings, a balcony, a wall where fancy shiny weapons hung on display, and a huge four poster bed.

Darcy looked around in wonder.

“Did Lady Jane travel with you? Is she hiding? Am I meant to look for her?” Thor started questioning quickly, “Is it a game?”

Darcy looked over to Thor, who’s face looked boyish as he contemplated being able to see Jane again. Darcy hated that she was to dash his hopes, but her brain couldn’t really process what was going on.

She stuttered, “Is..is-is this?....Asgard?”

“But of course!” Thor boomed with a smile throwing his arms out, gesturing to all around them. Darcy felt queasy.

“Lady Darcy,” Thor reached out a hand to her cheek, “You’ve gone pale.”

Darcy felt lightheaded. She couldn’t—this couldn’t be real, this had to be a dream. There was no way her power could…But she was here, in bed with Thor, and not in a sexy way. She was awake. She wasn’t in her room, she wasn’t on Earth. Darcy felt like throwing up. She felt like she was hyperventilating. She felt like…

Darcy fell back onto the bed and fainted.

“Darcy…”

Darcy had experienced fainting once before, when donating blood in high school. And once when she saw a half run over kitten in the local libraries parking lot. She could hear Thor calling her name as she returned to consciousness, she could feel his hand lightly slapping her cheek, trying to rouse her, but she daren’t open her eyes to confirm that he was real. That this whole crazy situation was… real.

“Darcy…” Thor called to her insistently. She could hear the concern his voice, she allowed her eyes to flutter open.
Thor’s worried face filled her field of vision. Darcy frowned and felt herself begin to tear up, her head spun as she considered the magnitude of her arrival on Asgard. She croaked out unreassuringly, “Hi Thor.”

Despite her weakness, a look of relief washed over Thor’s face at her words.

“Lady Darcy, you fainted! Are you unwell? Is that why you came, do you require healing?” Darcy wiped away the one tear that escaped her eye and shook her head no.

“I don’t need healing, I just…I’m--I’m just kinda freaking out big guy. Give me a minute.” Thor pulled back and Darcy blinked and stared at the ceiling above his four poster bed. It was gold and it had an intricate design.

“Lady Jane did not accompany you.” Thor said his words a statement rather than a question.

Darcy sighed, “No big guy. She didn’t.”

“I shall feel her loss greatly.” He said somberly. He then looked at her with a smile, “However that does not mean I am unhappy to see you.”

Darcy slowly sat up, leaning against the big fluffy pillows she made herself more comfortable as she replied, “I’m happy to see you too Thor.”

“How did you come to be on Asgard?” Thor asked, he nodded to the door, “And more importantly how did you get past the many guards that line the palace, sneak into my room undetected, and into my bed without waking me!”

Darcy smiled to herself; she may be on a different planet, but the questions her stupid power provoked seemed to be same no matter where she went in the galaxy. It was a little reassuring.

Thor continued as he moved to copy her pose, sitting up against the pillows he said, “I must admit, you’ve made me question my prowess as a great warrior. For what great warrior can be set upon so easily! Ho little one, tell me how you accomplished such a feat, for I must know your secret should another foe try the same tactic on me whilst in battle.”

Darcy poked Thor in his muscle-y bicep, “You don’t need to worry about a foe copying my methods big guy.”

Thor didn’t say anything just sat silently and waited for her explanation. Darcy sighed, “I’m different…I didn’t mention it when you first came to Earth. It’s not exactly something I like to divulge unless it comes up. See, I have this stupid power--”

“An ability that allows you to cross realms is not what I would classify as a ‘stupid power’.” Thor interrupted. Darcy gave him a slight conceding nod, as he had a point.

“Yeah well, this is the first time it’s ever allowed me to cross realms. So…” Darcy felt heaviness pull at her eyelids. All of a sudden she felt the urge to sleep again. She let her eyes close but, continued to explain, “Usually I just fall asleep and wake up somewhere else, with someone else. I can’t control it, it’s a big inconvenient pain in the ass and---”

“You travel to wherever you dream about?” Thor asked. Her head felt so heavy, holding it up was becoming difficult.

“No…I don’t--I…my dreams are usually about a person.” Darcy covered her mouth as a yawn interrupted her explanation, “I don’t go to a ‘where’. I travel to a ‘who’.”
Darcy let her head fall back onto the soft fluffy pillow behind her, another yawn forced her to cover her mouth. Darcy apologized, “Sorry Thor, I don’t—I’m not usually this tired. I don’t..I’m just so sleepy.”

Darcy felt Thor’s large hand run over her hair. He lowered his voice and said, “Sleep then Lady Darcy. Sleep, and when you wake we will talk more.”

Darcy felt reassured by his voice, the pull of sleep at her mind finally won. She allowed her body to relax and she once again fell asleep.

Again, Darcy awoke naturally but her ascent into consciousness was quick. She felt like the warm blanket of sleep had been ripped away and the harsh light of day shone directly into her pupils. Her blank mind was instantly awake and flooded with the memory of waking in Thor’s bed earlier. The facts of her situation, her off-planet teleportation nightmare, instantly had her worrying.

Darcy’s eyes snapped open.

“You’re awake.” A feminine voice to her right called, Darcy turned and found a older woman sitting in a chair beside the bed reading a book.

The woman closed the book and smiled at her comfortingly, “Thor had duties to attend to.”

Darcy just blinked at the woman. She was beautiful. She had her hair piled on top of her head in this mass of golden waves but also she had a long flowing pony tail that came down over one shoulder. She wore a beautiful off white dress that looked like it had metal sown into the fabric. She looked… regal.

“I am Frigga. Queen of Asgard. And mother of Thor Odinson.” Darcy’s eyes widened as the QUEEN OF ASGARD introduced herself, “You are Darcy Lewisdottir. Midgardian. Friend of Thor.”

“Uh….yeah?” Darcy said unintelligently. All thoughts leaving her at the royal morning greeting.

“You have slept for four days.” Frigga said with a pointed look.

“That explains why I have to pee.” Darcy mumbled. Frigga pointed to a door across from the bed.

“Relieve yourself. Then we shall talk.” Darcy got up and threw the covers off. She stood up on wobbly legs, then gave Frigga a weird combination of a bow and a curtsy.

“Thanks.” Darcy said quickly before running for the door she had indicated too.

After Darcy had relieved herself, she washed her hands in the opulent bronze basin. And that’s when she caught sight of herself in the mirror.

She hadn’t even thought about what she was wearing when speaking to Thor earlier. When he had stayed with them, he had seen the way she liked to dress and he hadn’t seemed to judge her for it. But now, knowing that the QUEEN OF ASGARD was on the other side of the bathroom door, she couldn’t help but hang her head in shame.

She was wearing her solar system socks that Jane gave her for her birthday, velvet sleep shorts that
were total booty shorts, her watermelon wristlet…and the piece de resistance, she was wearing a pink sweatshirt that had ears and proclaimed her to be a cat. She couldn’t look less ready to meet a queen if she tried.

Knowing there was nothing to be done; Darcy just glared at her reflection before leaving the bathroom, lamenting the fact that Thor didn’t seem to have an extra toothbrush, or any toothbrush laying out at all. She wondered if Thor used magic to brush his teeth or if Gods just didn’t have to deal with cavities or morning breath…

The Queen was waiting for her where she had left the woman. So, Darcy crawled across the large bed and went to sit next to the woman. She quickly grabbed up the blankets and situated them around her lower half to cover up her bare legs and stupid socks. She sat criss-cross facing the queen, in her son’s bed, half dressed, with cat ears on her head.

Frigga smiled at her indulgently. “Hello my dear. Better?”

“I’m…refreshed.” Darcy said with an awkward smile.

“Good. Thor didn’t want you to awake alone, for fear you would..how did he put it, ‘freak out’.” Darcy smiled as the unfamiliar words made the queen seem unsure of herself. The Queen smiled at her, “He asked if I would sit by your bedside until you awoke, as I do have experience in this area.”

*The Odin Sleep. Darcy remembered what Thor had told her about his father having to sleep and recharge his ‘odinforce’. How his mother would sometimes sit vigil at his side, Odin being very vulnerable during his recharging.*

“Thank you.” Darcy said sincerely, “That’s very kind of you.”

Frigga nodded regally, “Yes. But I have to admit, kindness was not my only motive.”

“Come to see freak Midgardian who invaded the castle?” Darcy asked grumpily. She didn’t look forward to being regard as an oddity by the people of Asgard.

“More like I came to meet my fruit borne of a tree I planted a long time ago.” Frigga said with a secret smile. Darcy felt a plastic smile take over her face as she nodded, not knowing what the hell the Queen was talking about.

“Tell me about the dream that brought you here to Asgard.” Frigga said mercifully changing the subject.

“Well,” Darcy began, “Before I went to sleep Jane and I were doing research. She was doing more research on the stars, trying to find a way to open the Einstein-Rosen Bridge, or as you know it, the Bifrost.”

Frigga nodded encouragingly, so Darcy continued, “I wasn’t really helping her. I was reading up on Norse mythology…it’s uh, become something of an interest of mine.”

Darcy blushed as she basically admitted she had been reading the tabloid accounts of Queen Frigga and her family. The Queen put a hand on her knee and squeezed it, prompting, “The dream?”

“Oh, yes.” Darcy exclaimed loudly, before lowering her voice to a normal volume. “The dream.” She echoed.

“In the dream there was Thor…obviously, it started with Thor. I watched him canoodling with Jane back on Earth, taking his shirt off—often, uh…” Darcy stumbled with her words as she realized she
just inadvertently admitted she was having dirty thoughts about the queen’s son, TO the Queen!

“Thor is very handsome. I’m sure many dream about him so.” Frigga commented with a twinkle in her eye. Darcy felt her face get hot once again. Instead of languishing in her embarrassment, Darcy powered ahead, speaking very quickly.

“I watched as Thor did some boring things, eat dinner with the warriors three, I saw him train or like, spar, with Lady Sif. I saw him run through a field, fight this…ugly creature thing, wash his hammer, that last one was not a euphemism.” Darcy ignored the chuckling Queen, “It was a very normal, very boring dream but then…then it changed and Thor was different. Sadder, maybe? He was still doing normal things, but his eyes didn’t sparkle as much. His smile wasn’t as wide. He just seemed…subdued?”

“Then the dream changed again and I saw myself in Asgard, which is weird because I usually don’t dream about myself when I’m…travel-dreaming. I saw Thor and me walking through the halls of the castle. Then Lady Sif and the warriors three appeared. And then there was drinking and laughing and just…hanging out. It was…a very chill dream.”

The Queen was quiet for a minute after Darcy finished. She sat there waiting for the older woman to say something, it was hard for her to resist filling the silence with idle chatter but the Queen looked so deep in thought that she abstained from her more annoying instinct.

“You are no normal mortal Darcy Lewis.” Frigga announced. Darcy rolled her eyes; this news was no new revelation for her.

“I kinda figured that out the first time I teleported…your highness.” Darcy quipped.

“You have a touch of the Aesir in you.” Frigga said dramatically. Darcy didn’t know what “ICE – ear” meant but she had a couple guesses.

“Uh huh.” Darcy grunted, “Ice-ear. Yeah that’s….the Asgardian curse word for mutant right? Pfft. I figured.”

The Queen rolled her eyes as she seemed to realize Darcy did not understand. Frigga spoke with authority when she said pointedly, “You are of Asgard.”

“I’m a what?” Darcy exclaimed, unable to not picture that scene from Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone in her head.

“Interbreeding with mortals throughout the ages have diminished the Aesir light in you, but not snuffed it out. The Asgardian blood in your veins is much diluted, generations and generations, separate you from your ancient Asgardian ancestors.” Darcy felt gob smacked, she had no words.

The Queen reached out two hands and placed them over her temples, Frigga’s hands hovered over her head then slowly she lowered them to her heart. Still hovering over her skin, the Queen squinted in concentration as if looking into the very soul of her. After a few seconds a smile broke over the royal woman’s face. Frigga dropped her hands from Darcy’s body and Darcy found herself hurrying to sit up straighter.

“Ah, yes. That explains it.” The Queen mused aloud as if she was talking to herself.

“What?” Darcy asked anxiously, that freaked out feeling returning.

The Queen explained, “Many of Asgard, Vanir, and Olympus were known to indulge in trysts with the mortals who worshiped us. So many in fact that many Midgardians unknowingly have the blood
of ancient gods and goddesses running through their veins. Though, not usually enough to spark any gifts as powerful as yours.”

“Like Hercules.” Darcy whispered, picturing the Disney movie in her head before moving on to Kevin Sorbo.

“You have two different races of Asgardian ancestors in your lineage. That explains why you’re gifts are so strong. I can sense the Vanir blood in you. It calls to me.” Frigga said with a wane smile.

Darcy scrunches up her face in confusion, “Vanir? I thought you said I was descended from the Asgardians?”

“The modern race known as Asgardians is actually a blend of the Aesir and the Vanir. Before Odin and I were married, there was war. The Aesir lived in Asgard, and it was home to the gods and goddesses of war. Odin was their ruler. The Vanir lived in Vanaheim, home of the fertility gods and goddesses. I am Frigga, daughter of the Vanir leader Freyr.”

“Uh-oh.” Darcy interjected, “I smell a woman getting sold into marriage to stop a war.”

Frigga gave her a sad smile, “It worked out in the end…after years of war Odin proposed to marry me, establishing a lasting truce that holds to this day. When we were married, the Vanir joined with the Aesir to become the Asgardians. And I…was appointed the goddess of marriage.”

“Woah.” Darcy said quietly as she processed the story Frigga had told her and silently compared it with what she had read about back on Earth.

“Indeed.” The Queen said diplomatically, “I feel…a faint connection to you Darcy Lewisdottir of Midgard.”

Darcy felt the ends of her mouth tip up in a smile, “Really?”

Frigga nodded, “I would not be surprised if it was revealed that you and I are related.”

Darcy’s eye brows shot up high on her forehead, “Uh…..”

“I have other children besides Thor and Loki. Older children who lived long before Thor was ever born.” Darcy wanted to ask more about Frigga’s other children, but she could sense that the woman didn’t want to talk about them.

Frigga admitted quietly, “Also, I too dream of the future.”

“I can’t dream of the future.” Darcy disputed.

Frigga got up from her chair and came to sit next to Darcy on the bed. Frigga put her arm around Darcy’s shoulders and hugged her one armed. “Do not fear your power child.”

Darcy wanted to pull away from the queen, but didn’t because she figured it would be rude. Still, she argued, “I’m sorry, but I think you, you must have misunderstood what I said. I don’t dream of the future. I dream about a person and teleport to their location, as long as they too are asleep.”

Frigga caressed a lock of her hair, “And you dreamed of being on Asgard. And here you are.”

“But that supports my argument that I dream about someone and then appear where they are. That doesn’t prove I can see the future.” Darcy pointed out.

“You can see the future child. It is a gift…and a curse. Believe me I know.”
Darcy decided to let the ‘Darcy can see the future’ argument drop, instead she changed the subject and asked, “You can dream the future? I never read anything about that.”

Frigga nodded, “I don’t—not many people know this, I would ask you keep my confidence in this matter.”

Darcy nodded vigorously, “I swear.”

Frigga smiled sadly at her, “What I dream of…cannot be changed…as all events are directed by fate and fate—fate is something you cannot fight or outwit or change.”

The melancholy way the Queen spoke lead Darcy to believe that Queen Figga had been trying to change the future for a long time…and failing to do so for even longer. Darcy was suddenly reminded of the Scottish princess with wild orange curly hair.

"Some say fate is beyond our command, but I know better. Our destiny is within us. You just have to be brave enough to see it." The Queen looked at her oddly, as Darcy spoke in a vaguely Scottish accent, reciting the end quote from the Pixar movie ‘Brave’.

Queen Frigga removed her arm from around Darcy’s shoulders, “Yes, well. Here on Asgard we take fate and dreams seriously.”

Darcy admired the deft way the Queen changed the subject, “You must take caution with whom you share your ability with. We will have to tell Odin of course, but…while you are here on Asgard; I beseech you to hold your tongue.”

“If Asgardians take dreams seriously, why are you unable to change the futures you dream about? Don’t they believe you when you tell them horrible things are going to happen?” Darcy questioned, thinking of the Greek myth of Cassandra.

The Queen looked away from her, to the open window. Her voice trembled when she spoke, “Even when believed, the futures I dream of always come to pass. No matter what I or anyone else do to try to alter them. The Norns demand obedience from gods and men alike.”

“Who are the Norns?” Darcy asked, knowing the answer from Earth’s Norse mythology but wanting to hear from Frigga what the real answer was.

“The Norns are sisters; they oversee the fate of the people of the nine realms. Many seek their counsel, they are wise and they live in a liar in the roots of Yggdrasill.”

“Yggdrasill’s the world tree. Right?” Darcy asked. The Queen nodded.

“It is known that a fair amount of dreams are draumskrok, “dream nonsense”. They are more dreams that are random and meaningless, than those of significance, but still. Occasionally the Norns grant some a glimpse of the fate they have loomed for them. Other times, dreams provide a means of contact between the living and otherworldly beings.”

Darcy couldn’t help the patronizing tone she used when asking, “Asgardians think dreams are like face timing the dead?”

“We believe in dreams elves, spirits, deities, and yes the dead can establish contact with the living. Often imparting an important message to the dreamer, or sometimes even striking a deal with them that leads to tangible benefits in waking life.”

“Okaaaaaaaaay.” Darcy said, dragging out the word, “So, in summary. I am not a mutant, like I
thought for most of my life. Instead I am the great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-granddaughter or cousin or whatever, of some ancient Asgardian, who may or may not have been from Vanir, which means that I might be related to you...Queen of Asgard."

The Queen let out a musical laugh, and Darcy couldn’t help but smile, “Well, I think my brains just about reached its limit of new information for one day.”

“I understand child. It is a lot to absorb.” Frigga acknowledged, “Perhaps you would like to instead get dressed and join Thor and I for a light lunch? Odin should be done with him by now.”

Darcy looked down at her sweatshirt then back up at the regally dressed Queen, “I uh, didn’t bring an extra set of clothes.”

Frigga gestured to a chair by a small desk on the other side of the room. Over the back of the chair lay clothing. “I hope I got your size right.” The Queen said with an impish smile.

Darcy grinned broadly before bounding out of the bed and over to the clothes. She gently picked up one of the most beautiful dresses she’d ever seen in real life.

“Oh my god! I’m get to be a pretty pretty princess!” Darcy squealed as she held up the delicate gown to her chest and spun in a circle. Her feet knocked a shoe over and she let out an excited noise as she bent down and picked them up to examine them closer.

“Oooh. These are sooooo pretty!” Darcy remarked holding the shoe up for the Queen to see. The woman looked about ready to laugh out loud at Darcy’s antics, but her queenly demeanor kept her from breaking.

Queen Frigga nodded nobly, “I’m glad you approve. I worried that they would be too different from what your used to wearing, and thus wouldn’t like them.”

Darcy’s eyebrows rose, “Are you kidding?! If I could dress like a fairy tale princess every day, I totally would!”

Darcy pursed her lips as she pictured herself wearing a Cinderella-esque hoop skirted gown whilst trying to enter the narrow doorway of Jane’s trailer/home. “On second thought, I’d only dress like this if I didn’t have a job, or have to pee more than once a day.”

Queen Frigga finally cracked and began to laugh at Darcy, though she tried to be subtle, hiding the gesture behind her hand. Darcy didn’t mind. She walked back to the bathroom to change.

“There’s a matching cape, if you’re cold in just the dress.” Queen Frigga said from beyond the door, “I hung it on the back of the door.”

Darcy let out a girlish squeal of delight when she set eyes on the dark blue floor length cape. Darcy stuck her head out the bathroom door to tell Queen Frigga, “I love you. Will you be my official fairy godmother?”

That time, Queen Frigga didn’t bother to try to hide her laughter. She just laughed freely.

Darcy’s Sleep Outfit
Asgardian Dress picked out By Queen Frigga
Okay, so cards on the table, I watched a lot of Xena and Hercules as a child, and I watched all of the New Zealand series “The Almighty Johnsons” and I highly recommend the series. SOOOOOOOOO, I fell into a well of Norse Mythology and Marvel® Norse Mythology and I learned a lot of stuff that I didn’t know about the ancient Norse people that I found fascinating. And in constructing this chapter I made a few choices, smashing real and fake Marvel, mythology together. So, not everything is real Marvel Canon, and not everything is real Norse mythology, it’s a blend of both.

Also, as far as explaining the origins of Darcy’s power…this is it. However, it will NOT be featured heavily in the rest of the story. This is not a mythological Darcy demi-goddess story. However, (in my mind) Darcy is something of a demi-goddess, not a mutant like she thought, her power comes from her being the great descendant of an Asgardian on her father’s side and the great descendant of a Vanir-ian on her mother’s side AND meeting Thor, which kicked her power into overdrive and awakened the magic inside her to its fullest potential.

This knowledge really won’t change anything, except make it even more complicated for her to explain to people how she woke up in bed next to them.

P.s. –Thor did wake up when Darcy teleported into bed with him, but because he knew her, and he read her sleep mask, he decided to let her sleep and wait to ask her why she was there and stuff, until she naturally woke up.
His is some bonus Norse mythology knowledge I discovered and consider to be head cannon for the story, but won’t really come up ever again (probably).

The Asgardian Frigga, goddess of marriage, was the wife of Odin (former leader of the Norse gods), who raised her husband’s son Thor, the god of thunder, though he was not her natural son. She bore three children with Odin: Balder (god of light), Hermod (god of speed), and Tyr (god of war).

Frigga bore Balder in a tryst with Odin before their marriage. An ancient Asgardian prophecy foretold Balder’s death would initiate an apocalyptic event called Ragnarök which would herald the death of all Asgardians. However, Odin feared that if Balder were known to be his son it would make him a target and hasten Ragnarök; consequently, Balder was brought up unaware of his royal lineage.

THOR’S Birth MOM=“Gaea”, under the name "Jord" mated with Odin, who wanted a son who would be strong on Earth (not just in Asgard) and gave birth to Thor. However, Thor was not told the true identity of his mother until Gaea revealed it to him later on.
Chapter 7 – Volstagg

Darcy woke up when a large hand wacked her in the face. To say it was a rude awakening was an understatement. Upon arriving in the unfamiliar bed, Darcy was unceremoniously pushed off of it and onto the floor.

Darcy lay prone, on the flat of her back as she let her mind catch up with what had just happened. She couldn’t see due to her improvised sleep mask, but she knew where she was. Volstagg’s loud snore was unmistakable, as was his wife’s matching one.

Darcy had spent the past three weeks stranded in Asgard. With the Bifrost bridge broken and Odin unwilling to conjure enough dark matter to send one measly mortal home, Darcy had no means of returning to Earth…unless/until she learned to master her power and was able to return the way she came.

The Queen had been giving her ‘magic’ lessons, but they hadn’t exactly helped. So far her magic lessons included some strange Asgaridan version of yoga, reading old dusty books, and visualization meditations before bedtime. Despite her weeks of failure, the Queen was still hopeful that she could learn to control her ability, but the longer she remained trapped on Asgard the more discouraged Darcy became.

Darcy rubbed at her face, her little beaded wristlet hit her in the head but she ignored the annoyance as she contemplated what she wanted to do. She was really tired. Thor and his friends had spent the day showing her around the market place and it was a really exciting and fun day, but it involved a lot of walking so Darcy was really beat. She didn’t feel like moving, even if it meant sleeping on the hard wood floor next to Volstagg’s bed, like a dog. However the nightly nostril noises he and his wife made as they slumbered made it impossible for her to sleep.

“Ugh.” Darcy grumbled as she rolled over onto her belly and covered her ears with her hands, trying in vain to block out the noise. Her calves were still sore, her feet had blisters, she did not want to get up…but she was going to have to if she wanted to get any type of rest that night.

It was her fourth trip to Volstagg’s home. Since she spent most of her time with Thor and his friends, the warrior’s two and Lady Sif were the most frequent beneficiaries of her unsolicited
companionship. Fandral “the Dashing”, was the only one of Thor’s friends whom she hadn’t accosted with one of her nightly drop ins. A fact the Robin Hood look alike found infuriatingly alluring.

Fandral, once he and the other three had been briefed on her power and sworn to secrecy, had been fascinated by her in more ways than one. Hoping to entice her into dreaming about him, Fandral tried many strategies. At first he just regaled her with tales of his bravery, his romantic prowess with other women, and heroism. When that didn’t work, he kept up a constant stream of compliments; Darcy found it hard not to blush at the flowery words he used to describe the beauty of her booty and other particular body parts he found worthy of commentary.

Still, one by one she visited Volstagg, Hogun, Lady Sif, Thor, and even the Queen! And yet despite all his effort, she did not sleep teleport into Fandral’s bed.

As the days went on and his efforts seemed all for naught, Fandral became frustrated. Puzzled as to the reason behind Darcy’s avoidance of his bed, he began to lash out at her in little ways. He made little comments about how weak Darcy was. How silly and mortal she was. How she would benefit from training with Sif as she was a little ‘on the plump side’. He ‘accidentally’ bumped into her when he walked. He ‘accidentally’ stepped on the ends of her dresses. He ‘accidentally’ spilled ale on her. Honestly Darcy wanted to kick him in the balls, but he was Thor’s friend and without Thor on her side she doubted Odin would let her stay in Asgard let alone the palace! So she kept her mouth shut and just suffered from Fandral’s hot/cold behavior.

One particular day however, Fandral made a snippy comment about Darcy’s aversion to him that implied she was ignorant, slutty, and had more in common with a Bilgesnipe than an Asgardian. This seemed to push Thor over the edge. He stood up and pointed an accusing finger at Fandral and called him out for acting like a pouty bitch. Though, Thor used different words, that was basically the gist of what he’d said.

Thor took it upon himself to challenge Fandral to an arm wrestling contest to defend her honor. They didn’t call it an arm wrestling contest, but that’s what it amounted to. In the end, Thor slammed Fandral’s hand down onto the table victorious. And, he did so so hard that Fandral’s knuckles bled upon impact.

Afterwards Volstagg and he went off ‘talk’ and when they returned Fandral apologized for the way he had been acting. Apparently she hurt his fragile male ego with her evasion. When Darcy didn’t accept his apology, Fandral surprised her when he vowed to “Atone for his abominable behavior and prove to her, his deepest sorrow and true penitential feelings.”

Ever since that day, Fandral spent most days following her around very closely. He constantly opened doors for her, offered to carry her bag, volunteered to get her food and drinks. Fandral also pounced on any opportunity he could find to perform feats of strength and skill in front of her. He also shared more about his past with her, not just the stories of his heroism and bravery, but stories about his family. His past failures and adventures that taught him life lessons.

Darcy had no doubt that it was only a matter of time before she dreamt about Fandral, but in the meantime she was enjoying him trying so hard to win her attentions and forgiveness.

“Huugggh.” Volstagg let out a particularly loud snore and Darcy whined. She grabbed the end of her teal robe and threw it over her head, but the sleeping couples snores were too loud do block out with such thin fabric.

Volstagg and his wife were actually fairly understanding about her inability to control her power and her unexpected arrival in their home the first time it occurred. Volstagg’s wife, Hildegund, was round
like her husband and a good natured woman; she had welcomed Darcy into her home with open arms, as had her many children. However whenever she dreamt of Volstagg and ended up in he and “Hildy’s” marital bed, neither awoke upon her arrival.

Darcy didn’t really mind being ignored by the happy couple, she just wished “Volstagg the Voluminous” wasn’t so…large, nor his wife equally so. Or maybe she wished his floor wasn’t so hard and cold. Volstagg told her over breakfast one day that “Many there are who assume that I eat only to escape a nagging shrew of a wife. Nonsense! I eat only because I enjoy it!”

Darcy had laughed and his wife had thumped him on the head before kissing his bearded cheek. They were a cute happy food loving couple and Darcy was glad she got the chance to get to know them, despite her sourness at being stuck on the alien planet.

Darcy blearily got to her feet and tip toed out of the room blindly. After four trips to Volstagg’s home, she knew the houses layout well enough to get around without seeing where she was going and navigate to where she wanted to be.

Darcy found her way to the comfy chair that lies in front of the fireplace and she cuddled up and fell quickly back asleep.

She awoke a second time to the sound of giggling and a loud squeal of delight.

“Eeeeee! Gunnhild, come here! It’s DARCY!” A little girl’s voice shrieked, fully waking Darcy up.

“SHHHH Gudrun! Can’t you see she’s sleeping in Papa’s chair?” Another, older girl’s voice yelled back.

“No she’s not! She’s awake now that you been loud!” The first little girl, Gudrun, shouted back at her older sister. Before the two started bickering as oldest and youngest sisters were want to do, Darcy lifted her head and raised her sleep mask/scarf. She gave a little wave to the children who were standing on the landing that lead to the upstairs where the girl’s bedroom resided.

“Hey girls.” Darcy said with a yawn.

“DARCY!” Gudrun screamed as she ran at Darcy and launched herself into Darcy’s arms. Darcy luckily anticipated the tiny girl’s intentions and caught the youngest daughter.

Gudrun was the equivalent of an Earth-aged five year old, as best as Darcy could guess. She gave the sweet girl a big bear hug. The little girl squeezed her back gently. All of Volstagg’s children had been told that Darcy was weaker than they were and they had to use caution when being physical around the young woman, least they accidently break her bones with a simple hug.

“You came for breakfast?” The little girl asked as Darcy pulled away from her and sat the girl more comfortably on her lap.

“We’re having eggs this morning.” Gunnhild, the second oldest of Volstagg’s girls, said from the stairs where she remained despite her little sisters run and jump at Darcy. Gunnhild was fifteen-ish and she tried to act like she wasn’t as excited as the rest of her siblings when Darcy came to visit, but Darcy knew better.

Darcy gave the older girl a smile. Gunnhild was the leader of the children, if she had your favor, the rest of the children would follow suit. Darcy had won the spirited and boisterous girl over, when she easily deduced the girl had a crush on Hogun and arranged for the girl to sit next to him at dinner.
The girl had sought Darcy out after the dinner ended and interrogated her on her romantic interest in the often silent and grim warrior. Darcy easily reassured the younger girl that she had no romantic interest in Hogun. Then she gave the girl tips on how to flirt. Darcy had been Gunnhild’s favorite ever since. *Well, technically second favorite behind Hogun, but Darcy would take what she could get.*

“I like eggs.” Darcy blearily replied. Gudrun let out an excited noise that had her wincing, the noise to high pitched and too close to her ear.

The little girl hopped off her lap and threw her arms up in the air in victory shouting, “Huzzah!”

“I want to help!” Gudrun whined as she ran to her sister and tugged on the older girls dress, “I want to help make breakfast for Darcy!”

Gunnhild looked down at her little sister and rolled her eyes even as she pats the girl on the head, “Fine. Come on. Let’s get started.”

Darcy gave the pair a little wave as they left, then ran to the bathroom.

Volstagg had fourteen children…that Darcy had met. And Gunnhild and Gudrun were always the first to wake up, but if Darcy waited too long to get to the bathroom, a line would form. Darcy was an only child and not accustomed to sharing, but visiting Volstagg and his children had taught her how cut throat people could be first thing in the morning when they really had to pee.

As Darcy exited the bathroom Rolfe, the youngest of the boys, ran into her and wrapped his arms around her waist. He hugged her even as he did the ‘pee –pee’ dance, greeting her with quick words, “HI DARCY! I’m so glad you came to visit again. I love having you here. You play with us and that’s fun and I have to go to the bathroom now. Bye!”

The boy abruptly left her just as quickly as he greeted her and Darcy smiled as the door shut behind him and she heard the sound of the little boy relieving himself.

On her way to the kitchen she ran into one of Volstagg’s older sons, Leif. Lief was the equivalent of an Earth’s sixteen year old and he rarely spoke to her, but his actions always spoke volumes.

“Good morning Lief.” Darcy said, smiling brightly at the long limbed and gangly boy.

“Oh, ha, hi. Hello.” Lief stared at her chest as he mumbled his greeting. Darcy enjoyed torturing ogle-rs, no matter their age or gender, so she put her hand on his shoulder and gave it a little squeeze.

“Did you sleep well?” Darcy asked, making her voice sound a little breathy.

Lief’s eyes grew wide as saucers, his gaze never straying from her chest. It wasn’t as if she was dressed scandalously, Thor had given her money to buy a whole bunch of clothes so she could fit in with the Asgardians. The nightgown she was wearing was floor length and came with a matching billowy robe which she had tied securely around her waist. Her chest wasn’t even on display! And yet the teenagers eyes never wavered.

Darcy’s smile grew as Lief stuttered out, “Slept g-good.”

He slowly moved his hand to the front of his lien britches, covering his crotch. He pushed past her
grumbling as he fled, “I’ve got to go.”

Darcy threw her head back and cackled as he disappeared around the corner.

When Darcy finally reached the kitchen, she had one of Volstagg’s sons, Einar, attached to one hand, and one of his daughter’s, Flosi, attached to the other. Both children chattered at her incessantly, asking her questions about Earth and what she liked to do for fun and if they could go play with her after breakfast and if she knew how to swim and what Queen Frigga was like and on and on and on they went.

“Leave the poor woman alone!” Hildy chastised as they walked into the kitchen. Einar and Flosi dropped her hands and ran to the table to begin piling food onto their plates. Darcy smiled at the woman and walked into Hildy’s open arms.

“Hello dear, nice of you to visit our little patch of earth again.” Hildy said while hugging Darcy fiercely.

“Thank you again for hav--” Darcy began but Hildy cut her off.

“No! None of that! We are glad to have you. You know that! Come! Sit.” Hildy said, pushing Darcy to the table and swatting her behind, she ordered, “Eat!”

Darcy smiled as she sat down in between Gudrun and Flosi.

“Darcy! I made the eggs, Darcy! Try them. Try them!” Gudrun shouted as she bounced in her seat.

“I made everything else.” Gunnhild grumbled from across the table.

“It looks delicious.” Darcy said to Gudrun, before turning to Gunhild and giving the older girl a smile, “It all looks delicious.”

“Tastes even better than ‘ooks!” Einar said as he stuffed his face with bread smeared with jam.

Hildie came from behind him and swatted him on the head with a dishtowel, “Don’t talk with your mouth full.”

“If he did that, he’d never get to talk at all.” Gunhild said with a smirk. Darcy ducked her head so the young boy wouldn’t see her laugh at the teenager’s joke.

After breakfast, Darcy couldn’t just leave, the children wouldn’t have it. Volstagg sent word out to Thor that Darcy was with him and his family and they decided to take a trip out to a nearby lake. Darcy still had so much of Asgard left to see.

The children all seemed very excited at the prospect of playing tour guide to Darcy. They promised to show her the best places to swim, to dive, to find fish! The younger children piled into a wagon which Hildy drove. Lief, Gunnhild, Volstagg, and Darcy were all expected to ride on horseback, beside the wagon because there wasn’t any room left. However, Darcy had never ridden a horse before.

“C’mon horsey. C’mon. Giddy up!” Darcy cajoled the unmoving horse. She lightly kicked at its sides the way Volstagg had told her too, but the beast refused to move. Darcy shot a mournful look
at Volstagg and asked, “What am I doing wrong?”

Volstagg let out a hearty laugh, “By the time I explain it to you, the sun will have set. You’ll just have to double up with one of the kids.”

Volstagg then looked to Gunnhild and Lief, he asked, “So, who wants to ride Darcy?”

Lief let out a choking sound and Volstagg laughed at his son’s blushing complexion and said, “Excuse my mistake m’lady, who wants to ride with Darcy?”

Darcy decided to give the hormonally charged teenager a break and she rode to the lake with Gunnhild. The girl was very knowledgeable about the area and she kept pointing out edible plants and hiding spots where Darcy would find local wildlife.

When they reached the lake the children all but stripped down to their underwear and threw themselves into the cool water. Only the adults and teenagers had bothered to don proper swimming attire.

Hildy set up a blanket on the bank of the lake and began setting up a picnic of sorts. Volstagg joined his wife and began eating with her, Darcy didn’t want to intrude on their brief moment of couple solitude so she faced the lake with determination. Darcy was a little nervous about swimming in the murky looking water of the lake, but none of the children seemed bothered by the prospect at all, so she assumed it was safe.

She set about shedding her borrowed dress and shoes to reveal the Asgardian bathing suit underneath. Darcy was wearing borrowed clothes form Volstagg’s daughter Jargsa, who was about her size. However, the Asgardian swim wear was a tad too small on her in the chest area and she was almost spilling out of the top. She felt a little self conscious but she figured no one besides Lief would really care, so she just arranged her hair to the front of her chest, and started walking slowly into the water, to the delight of the screaming children.

About an hour into their swimming, Thor, Hogun, Fandral, and Lady Sif showed up. Their arrival set the children off shouting and running out of the water to greet them. Most ran to Thor, but others threw themselves into Fandral and Hogun’s arms. Lady Sif, strangely was greeted respectfully and properly, with handshakes and curtsies. Only she and Lief and Gunnhild remained in the water.

The three of them watched as Fandral lifted a shrieking Rolfe into the air and spun him around in a circle. Gudrun and Einar both held onto Thor’s biceps as he lifted them into the air. Hogun, “The Grim”, actually smiled as he got down on bended knee to talk quietly with Thakrad and Gunnar.

Lady Sif waved to the three of them in the water and Darcy waved back.

“How do you fair Lady Darcy?” Sif called out to her.

“I’m okay.” Darcy said a she treaded water, “You guys come for the food, the company, or the water?”

“All three?” Lady Sif said with a laugh, she squinted up at the suns and remarked, “It’s a hot day and I imagine the cool water is quite refreshing.”

Darcy slapped at the surface of the water, “Well, then. Get your clothes off Lady!”

Darcy turned her head as she heard a choking sound. She saw that Lief was turning red again and she smirked as he muttered, “Oh god.”
Darcy laughed as Lief who had been walking out of the water, sunk back down under the water quickly. Lief’s eyes darted from her to Lady Sif.

Lady Sif arched a brow at them, Darcy imagined she was used to such hormonal reactions from Volstagg’s son. Darcy shrugged at the other woman and give Sif a wicked grin. Lady Sif chuckled to herself then called out, “The water is warm then? If it’s too warm I shall have to swim nude!”

Darcy felt her evil smile widen as Lady Sif began to play along. Darcy suppressed a cackle as she said, “Oh no! Naked swimming? Is that allowed?”

“Naked swimming!” Fandral shouted, suddenly very interested in their conversation. He put Rolfe down and went to stand by Lady Sif. He shouted, “Why, didn’t you know? Naked swimming is encouraged in Asgard—Ah! Thor! No! No don’t—”

Darcy finally allowed herself to cackle in wicked delight as Thor picked Fandral up and threw him into the lake. All of the children crowed and pointed at the wet hero as Fandral surfaced and comically spit water from his mouth in a high arch. His playful reaction had the adults laughing too, instead of getting mad or swearing revenge, Fandral lay back in the water and began a artful back stroke in her direction.

“Thank you my prince! How did you know that the fire in my heart which burns bright for the affection of Lady Darcy needed cooling off?” Fandral said with a laugh.

Darcy rolled her eyes, but with a smile on her face as Fandral swam out to her.

“My lady.” Fandral said with flare, he stood and bowed to her once he was close enough. Darcy decided to play along, she stood and gave a mock curtsy.

“Good sir.” Darcy replied. Fandral, with a wide smile swam closer to her, he took up her hand and kissed her knuckles, causing Darcy to blush.

“Have no fear my lady. Should you require rescuing, I shall be at your side in a moments notice, ready and willing to give your plush lips the kiss of life.” Fandral promised as he waggled his eyebrows at her.

Darcy let out a musical laugh, “Surely you’re not so hard up that you have to wait for a damsel to drown, just to get a kiss?”

“Is that an offer?” Fandral responded as he maintained an intense amount of eye contact. Fandral swam closer until they were almost nose to nose. He’d been showering her with attention of one kind or another since she’d arrived and Darcy was tempted to kiss him, he was after all very handsome. However, she was a Scorpio and therefore needed far more groveling on his part before she even considered giving in to her baser desires.

Darcy splashed Fandral viciously in the face, then swam away as fast as she could teasing him as she fled, “No kisses today Fandral! I’m afraid all I have to offer at the moment is ‘the thrill of the chase’.”

“I love a challenge!” Fandral called out as he swam after her.

After the arrival of Thor and the others, Volstagg and Hildy finally ventured away from their picnic and into the water with the rest of them. Thor, Hogun, and Lady Sif followed suit soon after. They all spent the afternoon swimming and engaging in good old fashioned tom foolery. It was the most fun she had had yet in Asgard.
When they were saddling up the horses to go home Volstagg pulled her aside and asked her what she had dreamed about. Darcy still didn’t believe that her dreams were prophetic, but Thor and his friends seemed more open minded, semi-convinced by the Queen assertion that it was possible.


Volstagg looked at her and his face paled.

“What’s wrong?” Darcy asked.

“Gudrun is my youngest. And she’s been out of diapers for two years.” Volstagg said.

They both turned and looked at Hildy, who at that moment put a hand on her stomach as if she was in pain. The moment of pain passed from the woman’s face and then she was hauling herself up into the little seat at the front of the wagon.

“Odin’s beard!” Volstagg cursed.
Darcy’s Swim Outfit

Chapter End Notes

Would you all like to see the rest of the Warrior's 3 and Lady Sif? Or should I go back to Earth?
Chapter 8 – Hogun

Darcy awoke with a sigh of pleasure.

“That feel good?” Hogun asked. Darcy made a pleased groan.

“Real good.” She answered huskily. Hogun pressed his fingertips into the space right under her shoulder blade and Darcy took a deep breath in as he worked out a knot that had been aggravating her.

The first time she had teleported into his bed, he almost bludgeoned her to death with his mace. Luckily he had punched her in the jaw first, which had made her cry, which alerted him to her identity and prevented him from actually accidentally murdering her.

Now, whenever she appeared Hogun let her sleep and only woke her up via gentle/non-sexual back massage. His guilt about almost killing her was the best thing that ever happened to her.

After about fifteen minutes of the best massage she’d ever had, Hogun asked in a quiet voice, “You are especially tense today. What troubles you young Darcy?”

Darcy’s body stiffened at the question. Hogun quickly got to work smoothing down the skin of her back, rubbing his oiled hands up and down the tightened muscles. Darcy let out another sigh as she rearranged her head on the pillow.

“Same as always.” Darcy grumbled, “Can’t control my power. Can’t go home. Can’t wake up in the same bed I fall asleep in.”

Hogun ran his hand up and down the length of her arm, paying extra attention to her bicep as he asked, “Do you want to go home?”

“Of course!...I mean, I think so….no, yeah. I want to go home….” Darcy rambled.

“You sound unsure.” Hogun said observationally. And that was the downside of visiting Casa de Hogun. The man may give a deep tissue massage like a pro, but he actually had more in common with an aspiring therapists. Damn probing questions and insightful commentary.
“I’m not unsure.” Darcy argued.

“You may want to return to your world, yes. But do you want to do it now? To leave today? Tomorrow? Or is there still more you wish to explore here in Asgard.”

Darcy opened her mouth to answer but froze when she realized he was right. She didn’t want go home, yet. She was having fun with Thor and the Warriors Three and Lady Sif. Every day was like her very own episode of Star Wars, only she was the main character! She spent most days hopping from activity to activity, or place to place. Thor was the most enthusiastic tour guide imaginable, and everyone she met seemed fascinated by her alien-ness, but in a good way. Odin wasn’t even that much of a dick to her anymore!

Besides, Frigga was like…the most patient awesome mother figure/teacher she’d ever met. And while her magical ability lessons weren’t working, Frigga had begun teaching her other magical lessons.

“I did just learn how to make one apple, look like two apples.” Darcy admitted quietly. The thinking was that if she tapped into other aspects of her Asgardian heritage, the ability to control her teleporting power might unlock naturally. Illusion manipulation was her first lesson, she’d been working on duplicating the simple object for a week straight and she’d finally cracked it.

Hogun let out a tiny chuckle and noted, “A feat most worthy of pride young Darcy.”

Darcy turned her head to look at the man who was massaging her hand so expertly she felt like she’d never have to worry about carpal tunnel, “Do you think it’s okay if I don’t want to go home yet?”

Hogan smiled at her kindly, “I think Queen Frigga shines with happiness every moment she spends with you. Lady Sif enjoys finally having some female companionship. Fandral is half way in love with you. Volstagg and Hildy want to adopt you. Thor thinks of you as his lighting sister. And I…”

”And you?” Darcy prompted.

“And I find myself with more to say when you are around.” Hogun said with a small smile.

Darcy could feel herself blushing. She turned back and lay her head down on the pillow so Hogun could begin massaging her neck. Her words came out slightly muffled by the pillow, “I like hanging out with you too Hogun.”

After a few more minutes of silence Darcy asked, “Why do they call you Hogun the Grim? I mean, I don’t want to pry, but like…everyone calls you that. And I don’t understand. You’ve been perfectly pleasant around me.”

Hogun’s hands stilled for a second before he went back to massaging her. His voice was so low pitched that when he began speaking, Darcy almost didn’t hear him at all, “Like you, I am not Aesir. My home was conquered by Mogul of the Mystic Mountain. Mogul killed my ancestors and laid waste to my homeland. When…when my brothers and father sought out the Mystic Mountain to destroy Mogul for what he had done, they all perished.”

Darcy shrugged off his hands and quickly sat up to look the sad man in the face, “Oh, that’s terrible! I’m so sorry that happened to you.”

“With the aid of my allies, I was able to gain victory over the murderous Mogul and attain revenge for my people.” Darcy reached out a hand and put it on Hogun’s shoulder. Hogun patted her hand before removing it from his person.
“It was a long time ago, young Darcy. The wound of my families’ death has long since healed.” Hogun admitted, his face once again the unreadable mask, his lips a straight line on his face.

“Still,” Darcy added, “I’m sorry for your loss.”

Hogun nodded at her, then stepped away to wash his hands in a nearby basin. Darcy grabbed her robe from off the end of the bed and slipped it on. She silently followed Hogun as he led her to his Spartan kitchen. She sat at the table and Hogun silently whipped them up something to eat for breakfast.

Halfway through the breakfast, Darcy couldn’t take the silence anymore, “So everyone calls you Hogun the Grim because of your family tragedy? That sucks. People nicknaming you after such a horrible event. That doesn’t seem very nice.”

Hogun didn’t respond right away, so Darcy babbled on, “Maybe we could rebrand you? We could get the Warriors’s two and Sif and Thor to start calling you Hogun the Haaaaaaaaa--?”

Darcy drug out the word as she searched her mind for adjectives that begun with the letter ‘h’, “--- aaaaaaappy? Hogun the Happy?”

Hogun stared at her blankly, Darcy shook her head and mused, “No, that doesn’t really fit your personality does it...Hmmmm. Hogun the Humble? Eh, it’s alright, but it’s not great. How about, Hogun the Honorable? I mean, even though it starts with an ‘H’ it just doesn’t sound right.”

The longer Hogun looked at her impassively the more ridiculous her suggestions became, “Hogun the Hospitable. Hogun the Helpful. Hogun the Handsome, huggable, hunky, hot! Hogun the Horny? No, too sexually desperate. How about Hogun the Hung? No, too sexually intimidating.”

It was at that point Hogun proved he wasn’t immune to her charm, as he threw his head back and began laughing heartily. Darcy smiled to herself, proud she was able to cheer the usually dour man after she had bummed him out by bringing up his dead family…and homeland.

“Young Darcy, I enjoy your irreverence.” Hogun said breathlessly as his laughter died down, “You have a way about you.”

“Uh, thank you?” Darcy accepted the compliment shakily.

“Hogun the Good is what I was called...long ago.” Hogun volunteered. Darcy smiled encouragingly, eager to hear the story of how Hogun got his name.

“I joined with Volstagg and Fandral on a fool’s errand.” Hogun revealed, “Volstagg and Fandral were competing for bragging rights. It seemed like an amusing way to pass the time, so I volunteered to act as judge. The two dared each other to venture forth into dangerous territories to find the menacing Fenris wolf...and pat it on the head.”

“Is Fenris Loki’s son?” Darcy interrupted.

“What?” Hogun looked at her in confused amusement.

“Never mind.” Darcy said with a shrug, before prompting, “So, you and Volstagg and Fandral went out to try to pet a giant wolf...”

“I was not competing, I was the judge.” Hogun corrected. Darcy hid a smile, Hogun obviously didn’t want to be lumped in with the other two’s idiocy.
“It was decided that the first of either Volstagg or Fandral to pat the Fenris Wolf on the head, would be the victor.” Hogun clarified before continuing, “We faced many arduous challenges to reach the beast, challenges that bonded us together like brothers.”

“Awww. So, this is also the origin story of the Warriors Three!” Darcy exclaimed happily.

Hogun gave her an indulgent grin before saying, “When we reached the giant beast our journey was no longer the quest of individual pursuits, but a challenge for a team. Fools that we were…We were all soundly defeated in a most humiliating fashion.”

“How?” Darcy asked as she leaned closer.

Hogun scowled, “I thought our situation safe, the Fenris Wolf was an impressively fearful sight, but it was still chained.”

“Chained to what?”

“The gods bound Fenris to a rock where it has been kept to this day, it is prophesied that when Ragnarok occurs, Fenris will devour Odin.” Hogun said with a smug smile.

“Yeesh.” Darcy declared, “Are all the prophesies so grim?”

Hogun shrugged and admitted, “Usually.”

“Well, that’s unfortunate.” Darcy commented breezily before she shook her head, “Wait, we’re getting off topic. Go back to you and the chained up puppy dog.”

Hogun looked at her like she had called his mother a two dollar whore, “Fenris is no ‘puppy’. The wolf is fifteen feet tall, with human like intelligence, strength, and magical abilities!”

“Okay, okay. Calm down. I get it. Fenris isn’t a cuddle-y puppy, he’s a crap your pants scary badass wolf.” Darcy said as she raised her hands in mock surrender. Darcy gestured with her hand to Hogun and encouraged, “Go on…”

Hogun narrowed his eyes and crossed his arms over his chest, “The beast pounced on me. Caught off guard, I lay helpless under the giant beast, his sharp teeth mere inches from ending my life.”

“How’d you escape?”

Hogun uncrossed his arms and ran a haggard hand over his face, “Fenris offered a devil’s bargain to Fandral and Volstagg for my life.”

“Wait! The wolf can talk?”

Hogun ignored her question, “After our defeat I changed. No longer was I Hogun the Good, Hogun the Bright Heart, or Hogun Ever Quick To Laugh or Sing. Our hubris, my foolhardiness…it was what lead us to failure.”

Hogun turned to stare out the window as he finished his tale, “As a result of our adventure, I became more…serious. It affect the others differently, Volstagg took a greater interest in eating, Fandral became even more reckless in his pursuits of brash heroism. They…we needed a voice of reason if we were to continue on as the Warriors Three.”

“And it wasn’t going to be those two knuckle heads.” Darcy explained.

Hogun turned back to her and smiled, “No. It wasn’t.”
“So you became more serious. And quiet. And…grim.” Darcy surmised.

“I did.” Hogun confirmed as he went back to looking out the window. Darcy picked up her mug and finished drinking her tea quietly.

When she put it down loudly, Hogun turned to her startled by the noise. Darcy smiled cheekily at him, “Just for the record, ‘grim’, looks really good on you. Like, super hot…very sexy.”

Hogun’s eyes sparkled as he once again threw back his head and laughed.

“And just for the record, I had a dream that you fell in a ditch and broke your leg.” Darcy blurted out quickly. Hogun’s laughter died instantly. He stared at her with an annoyed expression. Darcy got up and headed for the bathroom, calling out over her shoulder, “But don’t worry, I don’t think I can actually predict the future!”

Right before she shut the door she heard Hogun mutter, “Figures.”

Darcy’s Sleep outfit

Chapter End Notes

Even though we saw so little of the Warriors 3, I liked them and I'm enjoying this little detour in Asgard. I hope you all are too. However, I will say, the more I read about it...Norse mythology/Marvel Asgardian mythology...it's weird y'all.
Chapter 9 - Lady Sif

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up with Lady Sif.

Chapter Notes

You guys...this may be my most favorite chapter yet.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 9 – Lady Sif

Darcy awoke to the feeling of a strong arm winding around her waist pulling her back into a warm body that eagerly molded itself to her own. It was the feeling of a set of breasts pressing into her back that gave away whose bed she had teleported to.

Darcy curled in on herself more, creating space for her bed companion to further spoon her. As she allowed herself to snuggle into the body behind her, Darcy whispered, “Hey Sif.”

“Greetings Darcy.” Lady Sif whispered back. Darcy content, that she was safe, fell back asleep.

The dream that brought her to Lady Sif’s bedroom replayed in her mind. She watched as Sif, looking like a total boss, fought some red haired chick with a sword. The two seemed evenly matched, but their battle field looked like something from Earth, in that it was a grey, drab, metal room. And nothing like the beautiful architecture she’d so plentiful on Asgard.

Her dream changed then and she re-watched Lady Sif try to take down Loki’s killer Robot thing back in New Mexico. She saw flashes of her time with the lady warrior here on Asgard. Drinking, attempts to teach her to fight, eating, shopping, swimming in the lake. Her memories all blurred together until they dissolved into sillyness. She dreamt of riding Fenris the Wolf, (who in her mind looked a lot like Clifford the Big Red Dog), through the streets of New York City, Jane and Lady Sif riding with her.

When she awoke later on, it was due to Lady Sif exiting the bed. Darcy lay awake in the bed but unmoving as she listened to the other woman use the bathroom and get ready for the day. She tried to fall back asleep and just as it was about to happen, an unknown item of clothing hit her in the face; alerting her to the fact that Lady Sif knew she was awake.

“Rise, Lady Darcy.” Sif ordered. Darcy groaned and turned over onto her stomach, smothering her face into the soft feather down pillows.

The warm blanket was maliciously snatched off her body. Darcy curled into a ball and tried to spread her short robe out over her legs, her body instantly came alive as the cold air bitch slapped her.

“Noo.” Darcy whined. The headscarf she had wrapped over her eyes as a make shift eye mask,
was snatched off her face. Darcy slapped her hands to her eyes in an effort to block out the morning light that had filled the room.

“Rise.” Sif repeated more sternly, “Tis time to greet the day.”

“Tis time to tell the day to fudge off.” Darcy grumbled as she grabbed a pillow and tried to hide her head underneath it.

Sif grabbed the pillow and threw it off the bed out of her reach. Darcy growled and finally opened her eyes to glare at the gorgeous woman warrior. Sif smirked down at her, “The sun has risen. Time to make use of it.”

“I hate you.” Darcy mumbled under her breath. She uncurled her body from its ball like shape and stretched out her limbs.

“I shall fetch us breakfast. If you are not dressed and ready for the day ahead by the time I return, I shall drag you from this bed and throw you into the nearest body of water.” Sif threatened with a bright smile, and then she turned and headed for the door.

“I’m not your manservant Sif! I don’t haveta do nothing!” Darcy pouted grumpily from the bed. She crossed her arms over her chest and glared as Lady Sif gave her a cheery wave goodbye before she left the room.

Darcy stubbornly stayed on the bed until she heard the door close behind Sif. At which point she bounded out of the bed like it was on fire. She ran for the bathroom, because she wasn’t stupid and she knew Sif wasn’t bluffing about throwing her in the lake.

As she got dressed in Sif’s borrowed clothing, she admired herself in the mirror. Even without makeup, with wet hair, and a scowl on her face...her outfit made her look and feel beautiful. Darcy pet the pretty fabric gently. Darcy put her hair in a slick pony tail, then wrapped all her hair around in it in a big bun. The wet nature of her hair made the simple hairstyle appear classy; when it dried she imagined it would look messier, but for now it looked perfect.

Darcy couldn’t help but give a little spin in front of the mirror, admiring the 360 degree vision of her ensemble. Something was weird...As she stared at her reflection, the more apparent it became that these were not Lady Sif’s clothing. They fit Darcy too well. Her outfit must have been made to fit Darcy’s short and curvy frame. Darcy smiled as she realized that Sif must have bought the outfit in anticipation of her next unexpected arrival. She vowed to bake the lady warrior something gooey and delicious, in thanks. Or at the very least a half way decent looking friendship bracelet.

“Lady Darcy!” Sif shouted from the other room.

“Speak of the devil.” Darcy murmured to her reflection.

“Darcy!” Sif yelled as she slammed the door open, “You must come to the palace at once.”

Sif looked shook and she wasn’t carrying any breakfast. Darcy could tell that whatever had Sif spooked, it was something serious.

“What’s wrong?” Darcy asked.

“It’s Loki.” Sif announced with wide eyes, “He’s alive!”
Darcy clung to Sif’s waist tightly as the skilled warrior rode quickly towards the palace. Once they arrived Sif handed the reins off to palace guard, the guard looked like he was about to object at being given ‘put the horse away’ duty, but one warning glare from Sif shut him up. The guard hurried off to do Sif’s bidding, all without her having to say a word. *It was very impressive.*

Darcy wanted to ask a thousand questions, but she could tell Lady Sif wasn’t in the mood to answer any. She had to run to keep up with the tall warrior’s quick stride. There was a large crowd outside the throne room, Sif, gently shoved people out of their way as they made haste to the door. It looked and sounded like the entire place was gossiping about the news of Loki’s not-dead status.

When Sif tried to enter the throne room, the guards at the door moved their fancy spears together in the shape of an ‘x’ to block her entry.

“Let me through.” Sif demanded.

“The all father is with Queen Frigga and Thor. You may not enter.” The taller of the two guards informed them.

Sif gave the guard who spoke a dirty look, “I was not making a request.”

“Woman, you are not in the position to give orders.” The other guard sneered.

“Woman?” Lady Sif repeated the word like it was the most offensive curse word she’d ever heard.

“Hey, hi!” Darcy chirped, she stepped around Sif to stand between her and the guard she was glaring at. She gave the guards a wide smile and a wave.

“Maybe you can just poke your head inside and ask Thor if we can come in?” Darcy suggested to the tall guard. The man looked back at her blankly from underneath his shiny helmet, apparently not even designating her question worthy of an answer.

“Lady Darcy, I know you are trying to help but I will handle this.” Sif said through clenched teeth, she grabbed the back of Darcy’s top and pulled her back, putting Darcy slightly behind her. Sif could practically see Sif’s muscle’s tightening as she got ready to spring into action.

Before Sif could open her mouth to argue with the guard further, Darcy tapped her on the shoulder and asked her, “With fighting?”

Sif turned to her with a confused expression, “What?”

Darcy clarified, “Are you going to handle this with fighting? And wiping the floor with these guards’ asses?”

Sif’s mouth twitched as she suppressed her smile, “If it comes to that.”

“Listen here woman---” The guard began, Darcy could tell things were about to get all fight-y fight-y. Apparently they were dealing with the dumbest, least well-informed guard in all of Asgard, because he was certainly *acting* like he didn’t know what a badass Lady Sif was….Or maybe the dude had a death wish. Either way, she had to intervene. So, she quickly came up with a plan. And starting yelling.

“THOR! THOR IT’S DARCY AND LADY SIF! THE ROYAL BOUNCERS WON’T LET US
Darcy heard the people behind her, the fancy royal court people, go all a twitter at her outburst. Probably gossiping about her rude manners or whatever, but Darcy didn’t care about being the unofficial representative of Midgard at that moment.

Sif turned on her and glowered, “Lady Darcy--”

Darcy cut her off, exclaiming, “Look!”

She pointed at the throne room’s doors. They weren’t opening, she was just hoping to stall for time by making Sif look. Sif turned back to her and glared, “Lady Darcy that is not how things are done--”

Darcy pointed at the doors again, “Look!”

“Lady Darcy--” Sif began to lecture, not falling for her trick again.

“I’m serious! Look!” Darcy said in a pleading tone pointing at the doors.

“Lady Darcy--” Sif said, exasperation coloring her voice.

Thor’s deep voice cut her off, “Lady Sif. Darcy.”

Darcy watched a grim faced Thor speak to the guards in a hushed tone. They stepped aside, and soon Thor was ushering the two women through.

Darcy elbowed Sif whispering, “It worked! I’m a loud and obnoxious genius!”

Darcy fell behind Thor and Sif slightly as she took in the giant empty room, it was an impressive space and she craned her head back to take in all the golden details. Asgardian architects certainly loved their high ceilings.

She’d only been in the throne room once before after she first arrived in Asgard. Odin had summoned her and questioned her, kind of implying she was a spy, whilst also implying she was too stupid to be one. It was like a really weird, intimidating, scary interrogation. Frigga and Thor had stood by her side though, vouching for her and taking responsibility for her while she was stranded in Asgard. Odin was basically strong armed by his family into grudgingly granting her, what she loosely understood to be the equivalent of a tourist’s visa. The King had ignored her ever since, except to complain how Queen Frigga was wasting her time trying to teach her magic.

With her eyes glued to the ceiling and the pretty painting that was above them, Darcy accidentally ran into Thor’s broad back.

“Ouch.” Darcy yelped, she rubbed at her nose where she had banged it.

“Darcy.” Thor chastised. Darcy mouthed ‘sorry’ at him and Thor smiled quickly but then forced himself to adopt a more stern expression.

Darcy smiled cheekily and pointed up, marveling, “Dude, you’re on the ceiling.”

Thor glanced up and smiled despite himself, “A handsome likeness, do you not agree?”

“Totes.” Darcy replied. Thor grinned at her genuinely; she had found that Thor enjoyed seeing her geek out. Flattery really did get you everywhere, with him at least.
“Why do you both insist on involving the mortal?” Odin sighed at his wife, who stood by his side. Darcy’s attention went to the ornery one eyed king who stood on the lowest tier in front of his golden throne. It was clear that Odin did not like her. He didn’t hate her, but he did not like her. Despite Odin’s distain, Darcy waved a quick hello to Frigga. The woman nodded to her in acknowledgment before turning to face her husband.

“Lady Darcy is from Midgard. She has more stakes in this than all of us.” Frigga said in a chastising tone. Odin rolled his one eye.

“Fine.” The king agreed grumpily, he then fixed her with a pointed glare and said, “She can stay. But she mustn’t speak.”

Darcy smiled at Odin and mimed zipping her mouth, locking it and throwing the key over her shoulder.

“What was that?” Thor asked from beside her.

Darcy looked at him in confusion, “I was miming promising not to talk.”

The king let out disgruntled noise, “Ugh.”

“Oh.” Thor said with a shrug.

“I understood what you meant.” Sif added quietly from her left. Darcy turned on the lady warrior and smiled at the woman brightly.

Just then the Warriors Three burst into the throne room. Fandral slipped under the arm of a guard who was trying to grab him. Volstagg staggered in, a guard hanging on to each leg, both arms and onto his back, trying to stop the large man from lumbering forward unsuccessfully. Hogun brought up the rear, walking unimpeded, his trusty mace over one shoulder and a scowl on his face.

“We heard Loki was back!” Fandral shouted as he continued to dip and dive and elude the guard who was trying to catch him.

“We came as soon as we could.” Volstagg said. He then body slammed the guard that was clinging to his back into the ground with a grunt.

“I told them we should wait until we were summoned, but they wouldn’t listen.” Hogun said his words aimed at Thor, “You know how they are.”

“Guards, it’s alright. Let them in.” Thor said, unable to hide the smile on his face.

“Why not invite the whole court inside?” The King said snidely to his wife. Darcy couldn’t help but chuckle at the King’s show of sass.

“Hush.” Frigga said to her husband, “Thor’s friends are proven warriors…besides you know he’ll run and tell them everything after the fact anyway.”

“They irritate me.” Odin groused. Frigga smiled at him, leaning forward she kissed him on the cheek.

“The ground under your feet irritates you.” Queen Frigga teased. Odin smiled back at Frigga with fondness, before his eyes cut to her. Darcy’s eyes widened as the King caught her staring at the small exchange between him and Frigga. She averted her gaze to the floor.

When the doors closed behind the guards, Darcy ventured a glance up. Odin was now sitting on his
thron. Frigga was standing next to him on the little dais at the top. Thor put a hand on the small of her back and led her up the first tier of stairs. Sif walked with them on the other side of Thor. The Warrior’s Three hurried to stand beside them.

Fandral pushed his way between her and Volstagg, jostling the larger man over so he could stand next to her. Darcy suppressed a smile, forcing herself to scowl, as Fandral brushed the back of his hand against hers.

“Father, was just telling me how Loki is alive.” Thor said in the general direction of his friends. Odin tilted his head and stared at Thor.

“Hooray?” Darcy ventured, she assumed that everyone would be a little happier to know that the lost prince was in fact alive, even in spite of the things he did prior to his ‘death’. Frigga smiled at her warmly.

“Yes, finally having confirmation that my youngest son lives, is a great comfort and cause for celebration.” Frigga said with a regal nod in her direction.

“I’m happy for you Frigga.” Darcy said, but seeing the bulging eye of Odin, she quickly corrected herself, “Queen! I mean, Queen Frigga. Queen of Asgard and the nine realms, whom I definitely do not know well enough to address so…colloquially.”

Frigga put her hand delicately to her mouth, letting out a cough/hiding her laughter. Odin shot a pointed look at Frigga. The Queen straightened up then, and the light mood suddenly turned solemn. She addressed them all in a clear loud voice, “Ever since Loki fell from the Bifrost, I’ve been searching for him using magic.”

“My Queen, a fall from the Bifrost is a fall into eternity. Are you sure it is Loki you have found?” Volstagg asked, his eyes shining with compassion for the Queen’s loss.

“I would have felt it should he have died, though we did mourn his passing, I knew it was a farce. He did not die. He was found and saved by someone very powerful.” Frigga informed them.

“Who?” Thor asked.

“This is still unknown to me.” Frigga said sounding troubled.

King Odin thumped his staff onto the ground, refocusing everyone’s attention on him. “It doesn’t matter who found him. Loki lives.”

“You are right father.” Thor agreed, “Loki’s return to Asgard is all that matters now.”

“His return to Asgard for judgment.” Odin said sternly. There was an awkward silence following Odin’s subtle reminder that Loki’s supposed death did not erase the crimes he had committed.

“I had a vision.” Frigga said, breaking the silence, “I found Loki and we spoke. The conversation was short but informative. He is planning something involving the Tesseract.”

“What’s the Tesseract?” Darcy asked but was ignored as everyone else lost their shit.

“The Tesseract!”

“He is not that mad is he?”

“How could he?”

“Why?”
“SILENCE.” Odin shouted, the twin ravens that sat on either sides of his throne ruffled their feathers and spread their wings cawing, before settling back down.

“The destruction of the Bifrost continues to shift the balance of power across the nine realms…and into the worlds beyond Yggdrasil.” Odin said coldly.

In a softer voice he continued, “We are cut off from the other realms without the bridge. Jotunheim is still damaged. Nidavellir fears the dwarven forges will be overtaken without our protection. The Badoon and Marauders mobilize as we speak to attack others, including Vanaheim.”

Odin stared at Thor as he spoke, “By Saving Jotunheim, we weakened the other realms.”

“You mean I weakened them.” Thor said somberly, “I was the one who broke the Bifrost. I saved Jotunheim. I am responsible.”

Darcy grabbed his wrist and gave it a little squeeze, offering Thor what little comfort she could. She hadn’t realized that Thor had such heavy burdens on his shoulders. He was always so enthusiastic to hang out with her and show her around Asgard, he never told her he was too busy, he rarely pawned her off on someone else. In fact, she didn’t realize that he actually had a job. That being a prince meant he had duties and responsibilities beyond baby kissing and winning wars. It suddenly struck her that ruling the whole of Asgard, was his future.

“Heimdall has finally seen Loki as well. He is on Midgard.” Odin announced. Darcy whipped her head from Thor back to Odin so quickly that an audible cracking noise could be heard.

“Earth?” Darcy asked, “What does Loki want with Earth?”

“It makes sense. We left the Tesseract on Midgard.” Thor said with a nod.

“Then that is what he is after.” Sif concluded.

“What’s the Tesseract?” Darcy asked.

“We must stop him from whatever villainy he has planned.” Fandral declared.

“Is the Tesseract like a bomb?” Darcy asked her voice rising with her frustration.

Volstagg stomped his foot on the floor in agreement, calling out, “Aye! Loki shall not harm another soul if we have anything to say about it.”

“WHAT’S THE TESSERACT!?” Darcy shouted, finally fed up with being ignored. Odin opened his mouth, Darcy guessed to yell at her, but Frigga put her hand on his shoulder and stopped him.

“Child,” Frigga said, looking at her with sad eyes. The Queen descended the few steps from the throne to the lower platform, where she and others stood. Fandral stepped back and let Frigga take his place so she could put her arm around Darcy’s shoulders.

“Child, the Tesseract is a crystalline cube. It predates the universe and possesses unlimited energy.” Frigga explained kindly.

Darcy blinked her eyes rapidly as tears formed, thoughts of her friends and family, flashed in her mind. She didn’t understand. In a desperate voice she asked, “But what does that mean? Unlimited energy to do what?”

“It could repair the Bifrost.” Thor said with dawning realization.
Frigga nodded, “The Tesseract has the ability to open gateways between realms. In the wrong hands…”

“It could prove quite destructive.” Odin said, finishing his wife’s sentence. Queen Frigga nodded, her arm slipping from around Darcy’s shoulders. Frigga turned and walked back up the stairs slowly. No one said a word as the Queen returned to her post beside the king.

Darcy felt an anxious panic start to form in her chest. If someone wanted to destroy Earth with a realm opening gateway device, they could open a wormhole in the middle of the planet and like… connect it to a black hole. Or they could open a portal above the polar ice caps that connected to the sun and cause like…tsunami’s and stuff. There was so many ways this Tesseract thingy could be used to destroy the world. She could literally think of fifteen ways, just off the top of her head.

Darcy bit down on her lip until she tasted blood. She couldn’t help but think of Tony. He was Iron Man, a superhero, and he was a squishy mortal and he would be the first one to rise up and try to stop Loki from doing whatever nefarious evil thing he was planning on doing.

Her mind flashed and memories of laughing with Steve, going to museums, getting coffee, educating him about essential pop culture things flooded her mind. Her experiences with Steve were so normal that it almost made her forget that he too was a superhero. The first superhero in fact. Steve was Captain America, and Captain America was absolutely stupid enough to think he could go toe to toe with a god.

“There all gonna die.” Darcy worried, as a tear finally broke free and rolled down her cheek. Her brief run in with the Hulk’s alter ego was the only thing that gave her hope. She knew Bruce wouldn’t volunteer to save the planet, but if the Earth was really in danger they had to recruit him right?

“No.” Thor said with severity she hadn’t ever heard from him, “Midgard is under out protection. We will not let harm come to your world Darcy.”

Darcy stared into Thor’s unwavering gaze and she wanted to believe him so bad. She knew why he was so invested in saving the Earth. He was a really good person and a hero and all that jazz, but… also, mostly Jane.

“We’re trapped on Asgard.” Darcy said quietly, not liking the effect her words had on Thor’s determined expression, “We’re trapped and there’s no way for Asgard to help Earth. So, like, let’s not bullshit each other Thor.”

The pessimistic part of her didn’t believe Thor stood a chance against a crazy god who had his hands on the equivalent of a dooms day device. Especially not when the crazy god was his brother, whom he still loved. Darcy knew Thor well enough now to know that he loved Loki. He missed him. And no matter what Loki had done to him, done while he was controlling a crazy death robot on Earth, Thor would forgive him. Because that’s what family did. They forgive you when you went crazy and they loved you, no matter what. Darcy wiped away a tear angrily and whispered, “The Earth is doomed.”

“Asgard is not as impotent as you might think young lady.” King Odin said, once again drawing her attention back to him. Darcy stared at the king with watery eyes. For the first time, there was a twinkle in his eyes as he looked at her.

“I can send you back to Midgard.” Odin announced.

“You can?” Darcy asked. Odin looked at her confusedly, but then he rolled his eye at her.
“Not you! Thor! I can send Thor back to Midgard.” The King explained with a put upon expression, “Why would I waste my energy on sending you back? You have the ability to travel between the realms at will.”

Darcy opened her mouth to argue with King, but Thor put a gentle hand on her back and she thought better of it and just closed her mouth.

“How?” Hogun asked, speaking for the first time since his entrance.

“Dark energy.” Queen Frigga supplied.

“Father, no!” Thor said softly. He took a step towards his dad.

“It is the only way.” Odin said his face grave.

“It will be painful.” Queen Frigga informed them.

“I’ll survive.” Thor declared.

“For both of you.” Frigga said, casting a worrying glance at the King, but Odin’s face was an unflappable mask.

“Father…” Thor said in a small voice. Darcy took a step forward and put her hand on the small of Thor’s back. Even though she thought Odin was a bit of dick, she knew Thor loved him and would be upset if anything were to happen to the old Cyclops.

“Unlike the Bifrost, traveling via dark energy is demanding on the body. You will experience pain the likes of which you have never imagined.” Odin warned, “And I will only have enough energy to get you there. I will not be able to bring you back.”

“How will he return if you cannot bring him back?” Fandral asked.

“The Tesseract.” Darcy whispered. Odin nodded at her.

“You will have to find the Tesseract and harness its power to bring Loki and yourself home.” Odin said to Thor.

“I will not fail you father.” Thor promised, turning he looked down at her, “I will not fail Midgard.”

“Good.” Odin said with another tap of his staff to the ground, “You leave in an hour.”

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Darcy’s sleep outfit
Darcy’s Outfit From Lady Sif
The Throne Room
DUN DUN DUN!!!!!!!!!!!!
So....what do you think?
Chapter 9 – Iron Man

It had been a day since Thor had left for Earth. And Darcy had not slept since her friend’s departure. Odin had survived the use of dark energy, but just barely. Queen Frigga sat by his side as the Asgardian’s royal doctor, Eir, looked after him. Lady Sif disappeared almost as soon as Thor did, she sat vigil with the Queen. Volstagg had been called back home by his wife, who was experiencing a non-emergency child related crisis. Hogun had disappeared to consult with Heimdall. Leaving Fandral and Darcy alone.

Fandral, knowing Darcy would do nothing but stew, took her on a day trip to the Halls of All-Knowing, which was the overly fancy name the Asgardians gave to their library. He pulled all the books where the Tesseract was referenced and they spent the day reading. It was a way for her to feel like she was doing something, while also not doing anything. When the Halls of the All-Knowing closed for the day, Fandral took her back to the lake they near Volstagg’s house. Except, the peaceful place did nothing to soothe her.

When Darcy asked Fandral to take her back to the palace as it had grown very late he conceded. When she told him she would be fine on her own, he insisted on walking her to her door. When they reached her door, he insisted on making sure no one was inside. When he was assured she would be undisturbed, he insisted on staying the night, in case she needed anything.

Darcy had finally escaped his company when she claimed to need a shower and forcibly shoved him out the door, locking it behind him.

In the hottest water she could stand, she hid for at least an hour. In privacy, she stood under the spray of the water and cried until she had no more tears left to shed. She was worried for her friends. Her family. Her planet. She was an emotional mess.

Now she was pacing the floor of her designated room at the palace. Though she rarely stayed the night in her own bed, Queen Frigga had insisted on assigning her one. It was only now, today, that she appreciated the gesture so fully. Behind the walls, she was free of judgment and probing eyes.

“You will wear a whole in the carpet if you keep pacing like that.” Fandral observed from his sprawled position on the chaise lounge.
Well, she was mostly free from judgment.

Fandral had shown up the second she exited the shower, almost like he had been waiting outside the door to her room. He just barged in, headless of her towel clad state, though he had covered his eyes with his hand when he saw her state of undress. Darcy had thrown some things unsuccessfully at his head; he had declared that in Thor’s absence he was sworn to protect her from all things, including loneliness and worry.

He seemed genuinely concerned about her and…Darcy didn’t actually want to be alone. She wanted to be home, she wanted to see her friends, help them if she could…

Fandral’s offer to keep her company was both sweet and annoying. She relented and quickly got dressed in the bathroom only to emerge and start pacing the floor of the room relentlessly. She all but ignored Fandral and he let her, for a time. Fandral sat quietly reading a book for the past two hours or so while she paced herself silly.

However, it would seem her time was up.

“Why don’t we go to the local tavern and drink away these troubles?” Fandral offered with a brilliant smile. Darcy ignored him and began chewing on her nails as she paced.

“It pains me to see you like this dearest Darcy. Your brow all furrowed. Your back hunched over.” Fandral got up and grabbed her hand pulling it from her mouth, “Your beautiful mouth used to destroy your delicate fingertips.”

Darcy yanked her hand out of his grasp, “I’m a nervous nail biter, so sue me.”

She resumed pacing but refrained from biting her nails. Fandral began to pace with her, with an annoying amount of synchronization.

“We can’t do anything.” Fandral said. She ignored him.

“You have not slept all night Lady Darcy. Are you not tired?” She ignored him.

“Hungry! You must be hungry. We could go to the kitchens and get a snack.” She ignored him still.

“The Queen wouldn’t approve how you are running yourself ragged with worry.” She kept pacing, her eyes on her feet, it was all she could do to keep placing one in front of the other. Too keep moving. To keep going when all she wanted to do was to fall apart.

“Stop! Stop this nonsense Darcy!” Fandral exclaimed, physical grabbing hold of her shoulders and forcing her to stop pacing. Darcy felt her eyes water. Pacing was calming, pacing felt like she was doing something, even if she wasn’t really doing anything at all.

She knew the truth, she knew she was useless. Less than useless, she was a burden. And her whole planet might be being destroyed as they spoke and standing still before Fandral and his ridiculous facial hair, Darcy couldn’t help but feel overwhelmed.

She felt alone. Asgard and its inhabitants had never felt more alien to her. Should Thor fail, and Loki succeed in his evil endeavor, Darcy had no doubt the planet would be destroyed. Her new Asgardian friends would not mourn the fall of the Earth. They would mourn Thor. They wouldn’t know about Iron Man or Captain America. They would chronicle the destruction of ‘Midgard’ in one of their dusty old books and never think of it again, except in relation to Thor’s demise!

“Oh Fandral!” Darcy cried as she collapsed into the man’s arms. Fandral pulled her tightly to his
chest, cradling her with care against his body.

“This isn’t exactly how I imagined you calling out my name.” Fandral quipped as he ran a hand down her hair. Darcy sobbed into his chest, her shoulders heaving as she felt…everything, all at once. All the worry. All the despair. All the sadness. All the helplessness.

Darcy felt her knees give out underneath her, but Fandral’s strong arms around her prevented her from falling.

“Oh, dear Darcy. Do not cry. Please. All will be well. Have faith in Thor, he will bring Loki home and all shall be as it should. You’ll see.” Fandral said softly as she continued to cry. He held her while she sobbed; he gently swayed them until her body wracking cries diminished into sniveling whimpers and silent tears.

“You are tired, dear one. You need rest.” He said as he gently led her over to the bed.

“No. No I can’t sleep. How can I sleep when my friends could be dying!” Darcy argued tiredly, but physically allowed Fandral to maneuver her up onto the bed.

Fandral stood next to her and looked down at her tear stained face with a pained expression, “It hurts me to see you so distraught. Tell me how to help you, dear one.”

She spared a thought to how crappy she must have looked, but her vanity couldn’t hold a candle to the overwhelming sense of dread she was feeling. Darcy shook her head and covered her face with her hands, “Nothing.”

She wiped away her tears and sniffed loudly, repeating herself as she looked Fandral in the eyes, “There’s nothing you can do.”

Fandral gave her a small smile before he threw himself over her body onto the empty space beside her on the bed. He smiled at her, but there was a sadness in it as he said, “I excel at doing nothing.”

“You don’t have to--”

“I can stay with you. And make sure you are not as alone as you feel.” Fandral said. Darcy closed her mouth. *How could she argue with an insightful and sweet line like that?*

Darcy nodded, relenting, “Okay.”

She turned onto her side, making herself more comfortable. She watched as Fandral did the same, mirroring her pose until they were face to face on the bed. Fandral reached out and fingered a loose lock of her hair.

“Close your eyes dear one. Rest.” Fandral softly commanded.

Darcy gave the man a small smile, “Is that what you say to all the ladies?”

Fandral chortled before scooting closer, making their knees touch. He grabbed her hand in his and interlaced their fingers together, “Sleep, Darcy. When you awake, all will be well.”

“When I wake up all my friends might be dead.”

“Have faith.” Fandral counseled.

Darcy’s eyelids felt so heavy she allowed them to close, *just for a minute.* However she couldn’t resist trying to get the last word, “You’re a pretty optimistic guy Fandral.” Darcy said as she let out a
yawn, “You know, on my world, they say optimism is for fools.”

“It is all part of my charm.” Fandral said in soft voice.

After a moments silence he added, “I now see why Hogun likes you so much. Do you know he once told me that optimism is the madness of insisting that all is well when we are miserable?...Today, you are as pessimistic as he usually is, and yet normally your outlook matches mine. You are the most positive person I have ever met Lady Darcy. You inspire happiness in all around you. Remember who you truly are, hmm?...Believe.”

Fandral leaned forward and she felt him leave a feather light kiss on her cheek, “Everything will work out for the good. You will see. Thor will save Midgard, Loki will be imprisoned, and the next time we sleep together, it will be under very different circumstances.”

“Last word.” Darcy mumbled as she felt sleep tug at her mind and she allowed herself to succumb.

Darcy awoke with a scream; she felt like she was being stabbed with cold air and the world was bathed in brightness, she threw a hand over her eyes to shield them. All she could hear was the sound of rushing air and all she could feel was nothingness and cold. Darcy opened eyes into half slits. All she could see was clear blue sky. She realized, she was falling.

She’d never been prone to falling dreams. And she wasn’t especially afraid of heights. But faced with the reality of the situation, she found herself terrified.

She stopped shielding her face and opened her eyes fully, looking around at her surroundings. Only to be hit in the face with a familiar looking foot.

“TONY!” Darcy screamed as she found that the Iron Man suit was tumbling through the sky with her. She latched onto the suits foot and climbed up its body until she was face to faceplate.

“TONY!” Darcy screamed again, her voice lost on the rushing wind all around them. She felt lightheaded and a little like Alice in Wonderland as they tumbled head over heel through the air. Looking down at the ground Darcy saw a cityscape underneath them and she began to panic at the thought of going splat down below.

“TONY!” Darcy screamed again, banging on the suit’s chest plate with her fist. His arc reactor light was out. She was struck by a new fear. If Tony’s arc reactor light went out, did that mean he was dead? Or going to be dead very soon?

“Tony?” Darcy said in a wobbly voice as she felt another wave of lightheadedness swim threw her mind.

Darcy clung to the inanimate suit, wrapping her arms around its waist and resting her head against the cold metal chest. The suit might be a sinking stone, dragging her down to the ground faster and faster, but there was no way she was letting him go.

Darcy squeezed her eyes shut and tried not to vomit as she lost consciousness again.

Darcy awoke with a pained gasp. She felt as if she had just been tackled by a line backer. Something
She was staring at destroyed buildings and the ruins of a fresh battle down below…below the tall skyscraper she was on the outside of! And the ground was getting closer at a disturbingly fast rate. Darcy screamed, “AAAAAAAHhhhhhhhhhh!”

She noticed that the thing around her middle was green, but then bits of mortar and brick and glass were flying all around her. Darcy closed her eyes and curled her body around the green thing that held her tightly.

It was the Hulk Darcy realized. The green giant jumped off and away from the building he had been sliding down and threw himself and her down to the street below. Hulk turned his body in midair so he would land on his back taking the worst of the impact. As they crashed into the ground, the metal thing in her back banged against her body painfully. Darcy wheezed as they slid along the ground until finally they came to a stop.

She heard the Hulk grunt before he unceremoniously threw her onto the ground beside him. Darcy threw out her hands in time to save her face from slamming into the ground, but the gravel scrapped away painfully at the tender skin of her palms. Her elbow banged against the metal thing on her back. And her chin scraped on the ground as something metal hit her head and forced her to practically kiss the ground.

The metal thing on her back pinned her to the ground, it was very heavy. Darcy decided to just lie there and not move.

A few seconds later familiar voice called her name, “Lady Darcy!”

The metal thing on her back was suddenly removed.

A different but equally familiar voice called her name, “Darcy!”

“Thor.” Darcy cried out gratefully, right behind him was Steve dressed in his Captain America outfit, “Steve!”

Steve put a hand on her knee but his focus elsewhere. Darcy turned and watched in horror as Thor reached over and torn off Iron Man’s face plate, revealing an unconscious Tony underneath. She sat up and looked at the unmoving man.

Steve leant over her and put his ear to Tony’s face.

“Is he breathing!?” Darcy asked in a shrill tone. Steve put his hand over the unlit arc reactor, touching Tony’s chest before pulling his hand away.

“TONY!” Darcy screeched. She looked to Thor who looked back at her with worried eyes. She looked at Steve, but he kept his gaze locked on Tony. She at last looked at Hulk who moved from a crouched position to a more erect posture. Darcy could see concern in the imposing giant’s eyes.

All the men around her were breathing heavily but none of them were doing anything.

Darcy started pressing at Tony’s suit, looking for some sort of manual unlock button, “We’ve got to get the suit off. He needs CPR!”

She couldn’t find a way to get the suit off. Her nails tore on the metal as she scrambled to unlock Tony from his iron prison. “WE HAVE TO GET THE SUIT OFF!”
Hulk suddenly let out a mighty roar and Darcy clapped her hands over her ears. Tony jolted awake with an unintelligible noise.

“Ahgh, ah, ah.” Tony panted.

Darcy began to cry as Hulk thumped a hand on his chest and Tony moved his head to watch the creature commenting, “What the hell.”

Darcy uncovered her ears as Tony asked, “What just happened? Please tell me nobody kissed me.”

Darcy smiled as she realized the light in the suit, the arc reactor that kept the shrapnel from moving into his heart, had turned back on. Then she thought about how close he was to dying just a second ago, and she let out a sob.

Tony’s eyes went to her and softened, “Darcy…you’re back! Did you kiss me? Did I miss it? Pepper agreed, you’re my free pass. Do it again while I’m conscious.”

Darcy began crying and she didn’t even know why. She was happy….she was home.

She fell over onto Tony’s chest, burying her head on the unyielding metal of his suit. The whole experience was pretty traumatizing and her body ached everywhere, so if anyone was entitled to some crying in public, it was her.

“Seriously, what happened?” Tony asked again. She saw his arms twitch through the shield of her hair.

“We won.” Steve said tiredly. Darcy felt how Steve looked.

“All right hey, alright good job guys. Let’s just not come in tomorrow. Let’s just take a day.” Tony quipped, making her laugh despite everything. Darcy pushed her hair to one side and turned her head so she could look at Tony’s face while still resting her head on his chest.

“Have you ever tried Shwarma? There’s a Shwarma joint about two blocks from here. I don’t know what it is, but I want to try it.” Tony joked. Darcy reached up and ran the back of her fingers over his cheek.

“Don’t you get all sappy now Lewis. You heard Spangles, we won. And hey! Where the hell have you been?” Tony said, Darcy removed her finger and felt the pull of sleep at her mind.

She slammed her bloody palm onto the ground as subtlety as she could. A shot of pain went through her body, chasing away the feeling of drowsiness. Tony quipped with a charming smile, “You missed all the fun.”

“We’re not finished yet.” Thor informed them dourly.

“And then Shwarma after.” Tony added. Darcy ignored this and looked over to Thor. He smiled at her wistfully despite his obvious dark mood.

“You found your way home Lightning Sister, I knew you would. Mother will be so proud.” Darcy cheered at Thor’s words.

She turned back to Tony. Truthfully, she was confused…but happy. She scooted up and placed her hands on his chest, and looked down at his face. Tony met her gaze with an unreadable expression.

“I have no idea what’s going on. But I’m glad you’re not dead old man.” Darcy said, and then she
lowered herself down to his face and kissed him. It was a sweet kiss and when she pulled away she chuckled. Tony’s eyes were still closed and his lips still puckered comically.

His eyes snapped open and he looked at her incredulously asking, “That’s it? I saved the world and that’s all I get?”

“Tony.” Steve said in scolding tone.

“Not even a little tongue?” Tony whined.

“We mustn’t waste time.” Thor said seriously.

“Okaaaay.” Tony groused, his eyes flickering to her, “Priorities, I get it.”

“I’m actually…” Darcy’s words trailed off as she lost her train of thought. Her body felt drained, her eyelids once again felt heavy and she honestly tempted to curl up on the dirty street and let herself drift back into blissful unconsciousness. But that couldn’t happen.

Her eyes jolted open as she dug her nails into the open wounds on her palms. She wobbly got to her feet; Thor came to her side and put his arm around her waist, steadying her.

“Darcy will need to rest.” Thor said, “Traveling between the realms is taxing. Even for such a mighty creature as she.”

Darcy let her head fall forward to rest against Thor’s dirty armor, muttering, “I’m good for now.”

“Suit needs a few more minutes before I can get up.” Tony informed them.

A hand touched her back and she turned her head to see Steve’s smiling face.

“Steve!” Darcy exclaimed with tired excitement.

“You’re back.” Steve said pulling her into his arms. Darcy hugged him back tightly, even as she winced, his tight embrace slightly painful due to her injuries, “I was worried.”

“I’m back.” Darcy exhaled as she felt her body going lax, her eyes fluttering closed. Once more Darcy dug her fingernails into her palms, trying to wake herself up with pain. She pulled away from Steve and shook her arms out.

“What are you--?” Steve began to ask.

“I’m trying to stay awake.” Darcy snapped as she jumped up and down a few times, she pointed at all of them and ordered, “No judgments.”

Tony stared at her bouncing chest, “Wouldn’t dream of it.”

Darcy stopped her impromptu aerobics. She watched as Tony sat up and his leg twitched but otherwise remained unresponsive, he looked up at them, “Two more minutes.”

Darcy felt like she was ignoring the other hero on the street, she turned to the green goliath and smiled brightly.

“Hulk!” Darcy exclaimed with a cheerful kind of exhaustion. She took a few unsteady steps in his direction, Steve held her hand as she regained her balance and she smiled at him gratefully.

Steve let her go as she walked towards the gigantic creature more steadily, “Hey Hulk! I don’t know
how much of Banners memories you have, but I’m Darcy.”

“Do you remember me?” Hulk stared at her but didn’t respond. Nor did he look impressed.

“Guess not.” Darcy muttered. She took another tentative step towards the giant. She was within arm’s length of him now.

“I just wanted to say thank you.” She reached out a hand to him and Hulk flinched back and growled at her. Darcy’s hand froze midair, “I won’t hurt you….dude, how could I hurt you?”

She reached for Hulks hand, “That was amazing, what you did. I’d be a sidewalk blood stained Rorschach test if it wasn’t for you.”

She walked forward and just as she was about to grab his hand, she tripped on some rubble and did a full on face plant into the ground.

Hulk let her fall on her face, at his feet. And then he laughed at her.

Darcy glared up at the green monster and muttered, “You suck.”

This made the green giant laugh harder. Steve, a true gentleman, rushed over and helped her up. Once she was back on her feet, Hulk pat her on the head and said, “Girl funny.”

“Gee thanks.” Darcy dryly replied.

“And we’re back in business.” Tony announced as his suit made whirling noises and he used the hand repulsors to ‘fly’ back to his feet.

“What happened?” Darcy asked gesturing to the destroyed city all around them, “I mean, how did this--”

“Loki.” Thor said simply as if it explained everything. Darcy then looked over at Tony.

Tony rolled his eyes, “Cliff notes? Loki opened a portal, rode a bunch of space whales into New York, space whales secreted little aliens. Government tried to nuke the city. I saved the day.”

“You--?”

“I took the nuke and flew it into the portal from whence the space whale’s came….I watched it blow up the rest of the army on the other side.” Tony explained, a haunted tone coloring his voice. He started walking. His lighthearted tone seemed false when he concluded “Fell back to Earth just as the portal closed.”

They all started walking down the street following Tony. Steve came up beside her and put his arm around her waist and helped her keep up.

“At which point…you fell unconscious.” Darcy said slowly as she made the connection between what had happened to Tony and her subsequent arrival back on Earth, “And because.. you weren’t awake, I was able to teleport to your position.”

“Which was about 30,000 feet above the city, sorry about that.” Tony concluded.

After walking half a block Darcy realized that she had no idea where she was, let alone where they were headed.

“Hey, where are we going?” Darcy asked as she limped along behind Thor. Steve tightened his grip
around her waist. While she was appreciative that he was helping her walk, she felt like she was also the reason why they were walking.

“My place.” Tony answered.

“You guys…you can leave me here.” Darcy volunteered, “I’m not exactly a heavy hitter, and Thor, you said you weren’t finished so--”

“Nu-uh kid. Just got you back. Not leaving you to rot in the middle of a war zone.” Tony argued without even turning around to look at her.

“But I’m slow.” Darcy said with a pout.

“Yes.” Hulk grunted. Tony turned on the green giant and hit him with the back of his hand.

“Hey, be nice big guy.” Tony cautioned motioning to Darcy, “She’s a friendly.”

Hulk grunted, pointing at her, “Tiny girl slow.”

“Ouch.” Darcy grumbled, “That unexpectedly hurt my feelings more than I thought it would.”

“Hulk is right. We move to slowly, we must make haste least my brother escape.” Thor acknowledged, he turned and looked at her appraisingly.

“See?” Darcy said petulantly, “I’m slowing you down. You have hero-ing to do.”

Darcy looked around and saw a bench that was only half destroyed. She pulled away from Steve and started limping towards it. “Look, I can sit right there and—AaaH!”

Hulk grabbed her around the middle and tucked her in close to his chest, under his chin. He gestured to the other men saying, “Follow Hulk.”

And then the green giant took a massive jump into the air that had her screaming, “Aaaaaah!”

They landed a block away from the other heroes, Hulk turned to look back at them, Darcy couldn’t see them because he only turned his head and not his whole body, but the grin on his face led her to believe that the others were running after them.

Another grunt was all the warning she got before the Hulk took off with another massive jump. Darcy screamed again, but it soon transformed into a scream of exhilaration as opposed to a shriek of terror, “Aaaaaah, ha, aha, ahaaaaaaaah!”

When Hulk landed he looked down at her quizzically, Darcy grinned up at him and patted the arm around her waist, sharing with him, “This is actually kind of fun now that I’m not being hit with bits of building…and I’m not afraid I’m about to die..for sure.”

One side of Hulk’s mouth lifted in a smirk. Darcy heard the whirl of Tony’s suit catching up with them, but just as she saw a bit of red and gold out of the corner of her eye, Hulk took off again.

It took them five more jumps to reach their destination. Which was apparently, Stark Tower.

When the Hulk set her down on the ground Darcy felt like her whole body was vibrating and she tumbled to the ground giggling.

“Whooo! That was some ride big guy!” Darcy called out. The Hulk smiled at her affectionately.
“Tiny girl fun.” Hulk grunted out. Darcy mentally gave herself a high five for endearing herself to the most dangerous creature on the planet.

“You can say that again.” Tony’s modulated voice said as he touched down next to them. The faceplate flipped up and Tony looked at her with a worried expression, “We all good Darce?”

Darcy gave him two reassuring thumbs up, “Super duper.”

Tony looked at her with an amused grin before turning on the Hulk, he pointed at Darcy, “Handle with care big guy.”

Hulk threw up his hands, as if to say, ‘I did!’ but otherwise didn’t respond to Tony.

Thor then landed carrying Steve. Darcy felt delirious. She shouted and pointed at the pair, “That looked hilarious!” She mimed rocking a baby in her arms, “Wittle Steve and daddy Thor!”

Darcy started laughing and she kept laughing even though it wasn’t that funny and the actual laughter was starting to pain her stomach.

“Kid. You okay?” Tony asked, he put a hand on her shoulder as her laughter died out. Darcy let out a groan and her vision swam in front of her.

“I’m fine.” She insisted in a dazed tone.

“She needs rest.” Thor advised as he came up from behind her and swept her into his arms. Darcy closed her eyes as wave of dizziness passed over her.

“Nooooo.” Darcy argued pitifully. Her head gravitated to Thor’s chest and her eyes closed against her will. She turned her body into Thor’s chest instinctively even as she protested, “No rest.”

But she couldn’t fight it, she felt herself falling asleep.

Darcy was jostled awake. Thor’s face filled her field of vision.

“Rest Lady Darcy. All is well.” Thor commanded. She shook her head and tried to get up, but he pushed her back down onto the…couch, gently.

“Kid, do as Shakespeare says and lay down.” Tony ordered, “You look like a strong wind could knock you over.”

“Wha-?” Darcy tried again to get up, but this time it was a big green hand on her face that stopped her.

“Tiny girl stay.” Hulk grunted.

From underneath the Hulk’s hand Darcy relented and conceded in a muffled voice, “Okay.”

Hulk let out a happy grunt and walked away. Tony gave her a pointed look and followed after the green giant. Steve came up from behind her and surprised her with a kiss on the forehead.

He smiled down at her reassuringly, “We’ll be back soon. Stay here.”

Thor patted her on the leg before he stood from his squat position beside her, “We merely need to secure my brother and then we may depart.”
She couldn’t tell if Thor meant that he and Loki would depart, or he and he, with the captured Loki in tow could depart. Darcy hoped that Thor didn’t expect her to leave the Earth again so soon. She liked Asgard and she hoped to return to visit in the future, just... not yet.

Darcy watched Thor walk away with Steve, her vision slightly blurry around the edges. The pull of sleep was strong, but her will was stronger. Darcy dug her fingernails into her palms. She threw herself off of the comfy couch onto the cold hard wood floor with a thud.

“Ow.” She couldn’t fall asleep. She couldn’t just lie down and let her friends go capture Loki. She needed to get up and move. *Do something.*

She got one knee up underneath her and pulled herself to her feet using the couch. The effort to stand while her head was pounding, her body was overworked and she was on the brink of fainting, left her panting. She had to move though, she had to get up.

She staggered forward in the direction the others went. She fell against the wall and slid along it until she reached an open door. She grabbed the frame and pitched herself forward, stumbling a bit as she tripped over... something. That something was something made of glass, she snatched up a piece of it as she went past and kept it in her hand, in case she needed it to keep herself awake.

She managed to quiet her footsteps, by dropping to the floor and crawling forward, she was tempted to just lie down and go to sleep, but she could hear voices. She crept forward slowly, the voices didn’t sound angry so she figured it was safe.

As she peered around the corner she saw Tony sans helmet standing in front of the Hulk who was next to Steve, who was also sans helmet. Steve who was next to Thor who was next to some redhead lady in a cat suit carrying a glowing stick—staff—scepter thingy. Some guy knelt in front of all of them and drew back the sting of a bow and arrow, pointing it at another guy who was crawling on the floor before them.

They actually looked super intimidating and badass all lined up like that. In her head she could hear the Star Wars theme song playing. She imagined the crawling man was basically crapping his pants looking at them.

The guy on the floor turned to the group of heroes and said, “If it’s all the same to you, I’ll have that drink now.”

“Ba ba ba ba ba bum, Ba ba ba ba ba bum, bu bu ba bum.” Everyone suddenly turned and stared at her. Darcy’s eyebrows shot high on her forehead as she felt her cheeks get hot.

“Oh,” She asked, “Was I saying out loud?”

Tony rolled his eyes and Thor glared at her, but it was Steve who spoke, “Darcy, we told you to stay put!”

Darcy scowled and got to her feet, heavily using the wall for balance, as she slurred “You’re not the boss of me.”

Hulk grunted/laughed, crossing his arms in front of his chest. The redhead looked at her with a critical eye, as if assessing her strengths and weaknesses and judging her, “Who is this?”

“She looks kind of drunk.” The bow and arrow guy commented conversationally.

Tony ignored them all and asked “Kid, what are you doing?”
Darcy shrugged, “I dunno. Felt like a kinda epic moment. Thought you needed musical accompaniment. And Star Wars just came to mind.”

Bow and arrow guy let out a laugh and Tony smiled begrudgingly, but the others remained stone faced. Thor stepped forward, “Lady Darcy, your body needs rest—”

She watched as his mouth kept moving, words obviously spilling from his lips, but Darcy couldn’t hear him, everything was kind of like white noise at the moment. She gripped the piece of glass in her hand until the sharp edges bit into her hand and the pain shocked her mind back into working order. Sound returned to the world all at once and Thor’s words suddenly came back into focus, “— your hand!”

Thor bypassed the figure on the floor and strode towards her with purpose. She looked down at her hand and she was shocked by the amount of blood squeezing the jagged piece of glass had caused. Thor grabbed her hand and took the glass out of her grip and threw it to away. Darcy looked up at him numbly and remarked, “Tis just a flesh wound.”

“What the hell Darcy!” Tony yelled from across the room, “Did Point Break get you into masochism or is this a side effect of inter-dimensional travel?”

Thor gave Tony a dirty look but otherwise didn’t comment.

“We don’t have time for this.” The red head announced. She was kneeling by the guy on the floor, putting some fancy handcuffs on him. Darcy watched in fascination as she put this hella kinky looking Hannibal Lecter mask over his face.

The mask highlighted his blue eyes. Wait, blue…?

“Darcy.” Thor called, bringing her attention back to him.

“I…I couldn’t fall asleep.” Darcy stuttered staring at the man with the jet black hair, it suddenly struck her. She grabbed Thor’s cape and tugged on it pointing at the man, “Dude, is that your brother?”

Thor paused examining her hand to glare at Loki and confirmed, “Unfortunately.”

“Awww.” Darcy cooed, “Don’t say it like that. You know you love him.”

“Not at the moment.” Thor grumbled.

“His face looks weird.” Darcy commented as Thor tied something around her hand, bandaging her wound.

Darcy looked down and saw the dark red of Thor’s cape wrapped around her palm. She looked up and threw her free arm around Thor’s body, “You tore you cape for me? But it’s so majestic!”

“Seriously, is she drunk?” The bow and arrow guy said.

Thor hugged her back gently even as he turned and glared at bow and arrow guy, “She’s delirious with exhaustion. She needs rest. Her body has been overly taxed in its journey, but she’s fighting it.”

Thor turned back to her and asked, “Why are you fighting Lady Darcy? You must trust me in this, you need rest.”

Tears pricked her eyes, she shook her head, “I trust you. I just can’t sleep yet…I can’t. I have to stay
“Kid.” Tony said, he was out of his suit now; he came up beside Thor and put a hand on her shoulder, “Fights over. You can sleep. I’ve got your back. Don’t worry.”

Darcy pushed his hand off her shoulder and shook herself free of Thor, she took a step away from them and then another and another, her eyes were filling with tears.

“I can’t. It’s just--” she held up her hand “A little pain and I can stay awake. I’m fine…I can stay.”

Steve and the redhead were approaching her now, Hulk and bow and arrow guy stayed with Loki guarding the beaten god as he lay on the floor. Loki also looked how she felt.


“I can’t go yet.” Darcy said as she shook her head, “I don’t want to go.”

“Kid--”

“Darcy--”

“NO! I just got here! I’m home! After two months of trying to get here I’m finally home!” Darcy screamed. Tears fell down her cheeks, she didn’t bother wiping them away. She took a few more steps away until her back hit the wall.

In a strangled voice she admitted, “I didn’t try to get here. It just happened. Like always, I just… appeared. I…can’t control this—this stupid power! Who knows where I’ll end up if I fall asleep again! I sure as shit don’t! I can’t--but I’m here now. And I don’t want to go!”

“So you can’t sleep.” Steve said understandingly.

Darcy nodded, echoing his words in a broken voice, “So I can’t sleep.”

“Kid--”

“Lady Darcy, I have the Tesseract. I will repair the Bifrost. And I promise you, wherever you go, I will find you should you ever get lost.” Thor promised. Darcy blinked her eyes slowly; they once again felt too heavy to remain open.

“You shouldn’t make promises you can’t keep.” Darcy mumbled, she dug her nails into her wounded palm and winced.

She allowed herself to slide along the wall until she was a crumpled pile of limbs on the floor. She began to cry again, embarrassed by her own weakness, she covered her eyes with her hands, mumbling to herself, “Can’t sleep. Don’t fall asleep.”

Someone came and sat down next to her. Strong arms pulled her into a lap. She could tell by the smell, it was Thor. He smelled like rain and an approaching thunder storm. She cuddled into his chest and he began to stroke her hair soothingly.

In a soft deep voice he whispered to her, “I will find you if you get lost. You are my lightening sister Darcy.”

“Ancient alien ancestry aside, we’re not really family Thor.” Darcy murmured.

“Not all families are bound by blood.” Thor said. He began rubbing her back and Darcy felt her body go lax in response. It felt so good to close her eyes. To relax.
“It pains me to see you suffer so.”

Darcy clutched her bloody palm to her chest, “Pretty painful for me to.”

Thor inhaled sharply, “I will find you a teacher to help you master your power Darcy, this I swear to you. On my honor as a man. On my word as the Prince of Asgard. I promise you.”

Darcy opened one eye to look at Thor and asked, “Pinkie promise?”

Thor’s brow furrowed, “If you like.”

Darcy held out her pinkie and Thor copied her action, she wrapped her small digit around his and shook their joint hands up and down once. She closed her eyes then.

“Promise me one more thing.” She asked, as she unlocked their pinkies.

“You may ask anything of me Lady Darcy.”

“Give Fandral a kiss for me?”

“I doubt it will mean the same thing coming from me.”

“You said anything.” Darcy reminded him petulantly. She was on the cusp of sleep, she could feel it.

“I did…Alright. I promise.”

Darcy managed to say one last thing before she fell asleep, “Use tongue.”

Darcy’s returning to Earth Outfit *(picture with flat boots though, Darcy’s no way running around in heels*
Sooooooooooooo, IDK where I'm taking the story next. When I started writing this story, this chapter (her falling through the air with Iron Man) was what I was working towards, but now...I have TOO many ideas

SO,
I could send her to Asgard to meet Loki,
I could have her befriend Clint
Or Natasha,
Find out Coulson's dead from a Agent's of Shield Cast Member? May, Skye, Jemma, Fitz, WARD?
Found out Coulson's NOT dead From a Agent's of Shield Cast Member? May, Skye, Jemma, Fitz, WARD?

Wake up with Bucky in Cryo
See a picture of Peter Quill on a milk Cartoon (as one brilliant commentor pointed out)
She could run into Daredevil or Jessica Jones or Luke Cage (not Iron Fist, that series was like pulling teeth, Connie Wing was the only redeeming factor)

So......Votes? Suggestions? Where would you all like to see the Story go next....cuz...I'm open to suggestion at this point.

LEAVE A COMMENT, the reason I've been updating so quickly is because of the amazing response I've been getting from the commenters, so thank you! Truly thank you for reading.

FYI
Also, Searched youtube for little clip called "HULK CATCHES IRONMAN" & Watched it a bunch when writing this.
Also, also, totally wrote that whole 'showering' thing into the story so I could change Darcy's outfit
Chapter 11 – Steve Rogers

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up at Steve's apartment.

Chapter Notes

Soooo, I'm back!
Sorry for late update, I've been having some summer fun times in Real Life. Hope to update weekly, that is the goal.

STORY NOTE::::: This chapter takes place, at the beginning of Iron Man 3 and (some vague amount of time) before Thor 2 and Captain America: Winter soldier. ALSO: This mentions events seen in Agents of Shield series.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 11 – Steve Rogers

Darcy awoke to the smell of freshly brewed coffee. She could hear Steve humming to himself as he puttered around the kitchen. Following her rocky return back to Earth everyone expected her abilities to leave her drained and unable to teleport for a while. However the opposite was true. After a few days of restorative coma-like sleep, her powers seemed to kick into high gear. And ever since, she had been ping ponging between bed partners almost nightly. Though, thankfully she remained on planet.

“Hey, you awake?” Steve called out quietly. She didn’t know if he could hear the change in her heartbeat or if he just recognized the sound of the rustling sheets, but the super serum-ed soldier always seemed to sense when she awoke.

“Yeah.” Darcy croaked, her voice sore. She hadn’t woken up next to Tony in a while, due to his insomnia, but she still frequently visited him all the same. Yesterday she had been in Malibu with Tony. She had actually teleported to California via Pepper, awakening next to the badass CEO as she got dressed and left for work.

With Pepper gone and off to be a grown up, she ended up hanging out with Tony in his workshop. Off to the side and out of the way while he worked Darcy enjoyed getting to see the genius tinker. Tony had taken to constantly improving and creating new powered suits. Her favorite so far was the Mark XXVII Armor, codenamed Disco. It had a colorful orange and blue color scheme and been designed with specialized stealth capabilities. However, last night Tony had been feeling antsy and they had hit the town. *They had painted it red and gold in the most spectacular way.*

First Tony had taken her to a few boutiques dropping thousands upon thousands of dollars in clothes for Darcy, despite her protests. Then they had crashed a wedding, ‘accidentally’, not that the bride or
groom minded when Tony offered to pay the tab at the bar for the happy couple. Finally they had ended up in a karaoke bar where they ultimately, sung and drunk the night away.

She had been drinking an awful lot ever since she got back to Earth due to some emotional fallout she was not prepared to deal with yet and was trying desperately to avoid. Another contributing factor to her sudden interest in boozing it up, apparently liquor affected her power. And she liked it.

As a result, it had been made clear to her that Steve was concerned, Bruce was concerned, Jane and Erik were concerned, but Tony understood. Tony was an enabler and she loved him for it. Especially since she discovered that if she drank until she passed out, she didn’t dream. Not prophetically/disturbingly or at all.

Shortly after awakening following the battle of New York, Tony informed her that Phil Coulson had died. It was while drinking and commiserating the man with Bruce, Tony and Pepper, that they discovered this odd new quirk in her abilities. If she drank to the point of unconsciousness/alcohol-induced-sleepiness, she experienced no visions, no cryptic messages, nothing. It didn’t stop her from teleporting from person to person, but it stopped the weird dreams. And that was good enough reason for her.

Bruce had wanted to do some tests and offered to find a chemical solution to her disturbing dreams that didn’t involve her ruining her kidney, but she didn’t have much faith in it. As far as she knew, he was working on it anyway. The big softee.

“I feel like death.” Darcy complained. She daren’t even contemplate raising her sleep mask to let the piercing daylight stab at her eyeballs.

She remembered passing out in the limo on the way home to Tony’s Malibu mansion but she could recall nothing of the dream that brought her to Steve’s bed. It was awesome.

“After the night you had, I can imagine.” Steve responded, his voice drawing closer. She wondered how mad Pepper would be at Tony when he arrived home drunk and alone. Tony hadn’t been drinking as heavily as she, but he had definitely gotten a little bit more than ‘buzzed’. She felt a little bad abandoning Tony to face Pepper and suffer the consequences of their drunken tomfoolery alone, but her killer hangover left her little sympathy for anyone else beside herself.

“Am I naked on the internet or TV?” Darcy asked as she felt the bed dip as Steve sat down.

She heard him set the presumably hot cup of coffee down on the side table as he answered her, “No. But, Tony sent me a video of you two singing an…interesting rendition of ‘Summer Nights’ in my email.”

“It’s still December though, right?” Darcy asked as she moved to sit up more comfortably in the bed. Once she was upright Steve took her hand in his and helped her find the handle of the coffee mug.

“Was I naked in this video?” Darcy asked as she brought the mug to her lips and took a small sip of the liquid.

“No.” Steve said sounding amused. He lifted the sleep mask off her eyes and onto the top of her head. Darcy squeezed her eyes shut tightly, expecting to feel the bright light of day slap her in the face. Beyond the thin skin of her eyelids though, she could not sense any offensively bright lights. She tentatively opened one eye, and was pleased to the find the room dark.

“You did arrive in a sparkly dress that barely covered your…lady parts though.” Steve brushed a lock of hair out of her eyes as she allowed herself to fully open her eyes.
“Lady parts?” Darcy questioned teasingly as she took another sip.

“You threw up on it.” Steve informed her flatly. Darcy cast her gaze down into the mug of hot liquid. She could feel her cheeks heating up as she took another sip.

“Sorry.” She apologized quietly.

“I’m not afraid of a little vomit Darcy. I’m afraid of what you’re doing to yourself.” Steve said in a serious tone. Darcy lifted the beds sheet that covered her form to look down at what she was wearing.

“You couldn’t have leant me a pair of boxers to wear as shorts?” Darcy criticized, causing Steve to blush. She was wearing one of the spare t-shirts she had left at Steve’s apartment and the panties she had worn out the previous night…and that was it. Well, that and the wristlet she had worn out with Tony. And the extra sleep mask she kept at Steve’s. He must have put the eye mask on her after she arrived, in anticipation of her hangover induced light sensitivity.

“Well, I….I didn’t think—You—” Steve stammered. Darcy knew the big blonde’s buttons and how to push them to turn him into a blushing school girl. *Diversion achieved!*

Darcy grabbed at her chest, not feeling the strapless bra she had worn under her sparkly dress, she fixed her features into an overly exaggerated expression of shock, “Why Captain Rogers, did you take off my brazier?”

Steve’s cheeks weren’t pink anymore. They were red.

“I had too! I thought you said---I didn’t want you to wake up with that thing digging into you. I didn’t look, I swear. I took the dress off first then threw the t-shirt on over you, then undid the brazier from the back and let it fall to the floor. I didn’t—you know I would never—” Steve’s quick and nervous answer warmed her heart. He was such a good guy and the care he showed when dealing with her nightly intrusions was truly touching.

Darcy reached out and put her hand on his leg, stopping the unneeded words from tumbling out of his mouth. Her features softened as she assured him, “I was pulling your leg Steve. Thanks for taking care of me. I know you didn’t sign up to deal with drunken Darcy and I appreciate it.”

With a mix of relief and a roll of his eyes Steve brushed off her sentiments, “I just did what any decent guy would have.”

Darcy smiled and put the mug of coffee back onto the side table. She reached forward and put her arms around Steve’s broad shoulders, hugging him gently. Steve’s arms automatically came around her torso and pulled her into his lap. She rested her pounding head on his shoulder and sighed, “You’d be surprised at what passes for decent now a days.”

Steve began to rub her back as she sat there clutching at him, just enjoying the comfort of his embrace. She was so tired and she felt so sick, physically and mentally. Knowing that Steve was there for her brought her more relief than any cup of coffee could.

She didn’t know if Steve had any romantic feelings for her, but she knew that if she allowed herself to go there mentally she could definitely fall in love with the centenarian. However, due to the messy state of her life and his superhero status, she rarely let her mind drift into that kind of territory. Though, being wrapped up in his arms did make it a bit of a challenge.

The piercing sound of a doorbell ringing had her jerking out of his arms. Steve stood, running a hand in his hair. He grabbed the blue kimono style robe she had left at his place and gave it to her.
Excusing himself, he hurried out the room to answer the door.

Darcy put the robe on and threw the covers off, shambling into the nearby bathroom she relieved herself and scowled at her reflection as she washed her hands. She had last night’s makeup smeared and smudged all across her face. She looked like death warmed over and she felt like absolute shit. She grabbed her pink sparkly toothbrush and quickly set about brushing her teeth. She splashed some water on her face when she was done, then grabbed a washcloth and added some soap so she could wipe her face clean.

When she emerged from the bathroom she felt a little bit better, but not by much. The thought of eating made her stomach turn, but she was also starving. After a few weeks of heavy drinking, Darcy had learned what the perfect amount of alcohol to consume was so that she didn’t have to experience dizziness, shakiness, mood disturbances or rapid heartbeat. Unfortunately she was still susceptible to other hangover symptoms such as fatigue, weakness, headaches, light and sound sensitivity, nausea, and poor or decreased sleep.

Regardless she made her way into the small kitchen of Steve’s apartment. Steve had moved to Washington, D.C. and he was now working as an agent of S.H.I.E.L.D., the same organization that had stolen Jane’s research, recruited Hulk for the Avengers, employed Phil and help Tony stop the stupid government from nuking New York City. Darcy had mixed feelings about Steve’s new agent status.

“Who’s that?” Darcy heard a deep woman’s voice ask.

Darcy turned to see a beautiful and familiar looking redhead push past Steve to enter the apartment. It was the woman from the Battle of New York; the press called her the ‘Black Widow’. Darcy knew her as an agent of Shield but little else.

“Hey.” Darcy greeted the woman with an unenthusiastic wave. She practically collapsed into the little wooden chair at Steve’s kitchen table as she met the steady gaze of the intruding woman.

Steve closed the door and came up behind the other woman, he had a nervous smile on his face as he said, “I don’t think you two have actually met.”

He gestured with one arm to Darcy, “Natasha this is Darcy.”

He gestured to the red head, “Darcy this is Natasha Romanoff.”


“You’re the teleport-er.” Natasha acknowledged with a slight nod of her head. Natasha stalked forward and moved to sit at the table with her, “How have you been since New York.”

Darcy refrained from rolling her eyes at the woman, “You’re the one who works for the sneaky spy agency, you tell me. How am I doing?”

“Darcy!” Steve chastised.

“You seem to be intent on drinking yourself to death, so that’s new.” Natasha responded dryly. Her face turned inquisitive as she pressed, “Though, no one’s quite figured out why.”

“No one meaning your bosses? Or no one meaning the friends we have in common?” Darcy asked gesturing to Steve.

“Both.” Natasha said simply.
“Whatever.” Darcy huffed, “I’m a young woman, drinking, partying all night. I’m allowed to…sow my wild oats or whatever. Hell, it’s more than allowed, it’s expected!”

Steve moved forward until he stood behind Natasha, “Darcy, I’ve been talking with Tony and Bruce, we all agree you need help. I asked Natasha for some advice and--”

Darcy interrupted Steve by thumping her fist onto the table, “Girls Gone Wild was a thing for a reason you know. Drinking? It’s like, totally normal.”

“Not for you.” Natasha responded quickly.

“Excuse me, but who the fuck are you?” Darcy snapped. Natasha looked a little taken aback but Darcy’s head was throbbing, her stomach was turning, she felt like her mouth was made of sandpaper and she felt very attacked. So, of course she responded in kind.

“Tony showed me footage of you when you infiltrated S.I and other murder videos that were stored on the S.H.E.I.L.D.’s servers. You’re an assassin, and a spy. What do you know about normal?” Darcy accused.

“I know when someone’s lying.” Natasha stated evenly, “Especially to themselves.”

Darcy scrunched up her face, “I’m not lying to anyone.”

This time it was Steve who asked the uncomfortable probing question, “Then why are you drinking every night until you pass out.”

“It’s not every night.” Darcy spat out.

“I don’t want you to die of alcohol poising.” Steve said, his tone concerned and feathers unruffled by her irascible behavior.

“I won’t.” Darcy argued petulantly.

“Or choke to death on your own vomit.” Darcy felt her lip begin to tremble.

“Please, Darcy talk to me. If not me, someone else. Anyone else. Please. I just want to help you.” Steve plead. Under the table Darcy linked her hands together and squeezed.

She tried hard to keep the attitude out of her voice when she responded, “There’s nothing to talk about. I’m just enjoying a break from responsibility and indulging in some youthful rowdiness.”

“Is that why you quit working for Doctor Foster?” Natasha asked.

“I didn’t quit…I took a leave of absence.” Darcy pouted, “It’s not like she really needs my help anyway.”

Darcy sat up straighter and stared the two down, “Besides, me drinking really has nothing to do with some deep seeded—anything! I’m just, it’s just easier.”

“Easier to what?” Natasha pressed.

Her voice was grave when she answered, “Easier to live.”

Steve and Natasha exchanged a look. Darcy took the opportunity to examine the woman before her. She wore a pair of jeans, a tank top and a leather jacket. Gone was her loosely curled red chin length hair, in its place the woman had shoulder length straight red locks. The new hair looked like shit.
“I like your old hair style better by the way.” Darcy announced, changing the subject.

Natasha stared back at her blankly. With a biting smile Darcy added, “This one makes you like a deranged soccer mom.”

“Darcy!” Steve scolded, “What the hell?”

Darcy glared at Steve, “You what the hell!”

“What?”

“What the hell Steve? Why is she here? Why’d you invite the murderer to my shitty intervention?” Darcy demanded.

“She’s not a murderer.” Steve defended. Darcy and Natasha responded simultaneously.

“Yes she is.”

“Yes I am.”

Darcy’s eyes narrowed at the other woman, suspicious that the woman’s admission of guilt was a trap.

“Only in that you’re a soldier like me Natasha.” Steve said kindly.

Natasha turned and looked at Steve dead on, “I’m nothing like you Steve.”

The two stared at each other just long enough for Darcy to detect a weird amount of non-sexually related tension between the two.

“You know, this has been great. Really,” Darcy stood abruptly, “But I think I’m just going to leave.”

Steve moved to her side, “Darcy no. That’s not—I don’t want you to leave. You don’t have to--”

Darcy moved around Steve quickly heading for the front door, “I don’t have to leave, I want to.”

Darcy shut the door to Steve’s apartment loudly. And as soon as she did, she realized she hadn’t grabbed a pair of shoes….or pants.

Darcy sat on a bus bench not far from Steve’s apartment. Luckily had still been wearing her wristlet when she stormed out of Steve’s apartment, thus she still had her Stark phone, and Tony’s credit card. Now all she had to do was wait for the cab she had called without crying and calling attention to her shoeless, half dressed status.

“Hey.” Natasha said as she approached her from behind.

Darcy looked at the woman with a tired expression. Her head hurt, her eyes hurt, her stomach hurt. She didn’t have the energy to fight with the spy.

“Go away.” Darcy grumped.

“No.” Natasha said breezily as she sat down next to Darcy on the bench.

“I promised Steve I’d make sure you made it…wherever your going, alright.” Natasha explained.
“Why didn’t Steve come himself?” Darcy inquired with a downturned pout.

“I convinced him not to.” Natasha said with a measured voice, “Said he needed to give you some space.”

“And he listened to you?” Natasha gestured to the empty street around them.

“It would appear so.” Natasha said. Darcy crossed her arms over her chest.

The two women sat next to each other in silence for a couple of minutes. Natasha broke the uncomfortable tension by scooting closer and lowering her voice to ask, “If I asked, point blank, why you’ve been suddenly, heavily, drinking. Would you tell me?”

“No.”

“Why not?” Natasha asked in a soft tone.

Darcy stubbornly kept her gaze locked across the street. She watched a couple of pigeons peck at some water in a pot hole.

“Why not talk to Steve? He cares about you--”

“I know that he cares about me!” Darcy snapped.

“What happened to you on Asgard?” Natasha questioned, “Why aren’t you working for Jane anymore?”

“She fired me okay!” Darcy exploded, “Jane fired me! She found out that I spent a month on Asgard, a month with Thor, got mad that he didn’t spare a second to call her when he came back to New York without me to fight the Chitauri, she told me the truth and fired me!”

“What truth?”

“The truth that I’m not needed! I’m not a scientist, I’m not an astrophysics in training, I sucked as an intern and she doesn’t need me.” Darcy panted as she finished confessing.

“That has to hurt.”

“It does.” Darcy acknowledged coolly. After a few seconds her face softened as her anger faded, “But she didn’t fire me from being her friend, just her employee. I…she was really nice about it. I mean, she just…I didn’t contribute much to her research. Filing, grocery shopping, transcribing her notes. She could hire anyone to do that.”

“You’re not mad?”

“I’m a little mad.” Darcy quickly acknowledged, “I’m mad that I don’t have a job. A place to be, a thing to do. A shred of normality in my otherwise wacky zany life..”

Darcy’s voice cracked as she continued, “Security…sanctuary.”

She shook off her emotion and spoke with a calm and even tone, “But mad at Jane? No. Not for firing me.”

“You have no home.” Natasha stated coldly, “No place to call your own.”

“Thanks.” Darcy retorted sarcastically, turning her head she scowled at the woman, “Thanks for
rubbing that in.”

“I’m merely making an observation.” Natasha defended.

“Dude, don’t lie to me. You’re conducting an interrogation. Let’s not bullshit each other okay?” Darcy saw a tic in Natasha’s face that could have been surprise but it disappeared too quickly for her to be sure.

“Your extreme change in behavior following the incident in New York has caused alarm in the community.”

Darcy narrowed her eyes, “The secret agent community?”

The fact that S.H.I.E.L.D. now knew about her and her abilities had caused her some alarm too. Natasha stared at her with an expressionless face, giving nothing away.

“Yes.” She acknowledged, “The secret agent community.”

“You worried about me stealing state secrets or something?” Darcy guessed, not really sure why the secret agency would care about her beyond the obvious…the obvious being kidnapping her and brainwashing her and sending her out to do their evil shady bidding.

“Upon your return to Earth, I observed your interactions with the Avengers.” Darcy made a ‘go on’ gesture when Natasha paused.

“Thor considered you his family. His lighting sister.”

“So?” Darcy asked not really getting what the agent was hinting at.

“You developed a close relationship with a God Darcy. You’ve been practically adopted by both Pepper Potts and Tony Stark. Both of whom are powerful, intelligent, and highly guarded individuals. Bruce speaks of you fondly but makes sure not to let anything of consequence slip out about your relationship nor about your person, which you might have divulged to him.”

“Okay, so I’m connected.” Darcy acknowledged with a shrug.

Natasha squinted at something in the distance, Darcy turned to see what the woman was looking at, but she saw nothing. Natasha refocused her gaze back on her and continued, “From the unedited footage we gathered of the incident. The Hulk treated you with, as of yet, an unseen amount of affection.”

Darcy smiled at the thought of the Hulk, she hadn’t seen him since the incident, but she’d never forget the feeling of flying with him as he jumped through the air. Nor would she ever forget how grateful she was that he had saved her and Tony.

Natasha gestured down the street where Steve’s apartment lay, “Steve’s all but infatuated with you. Hell even Phil vouched for you way back when.”

“Well, when you put it that way…I have no idea what you’re trying to say to me.” Darcy uncrossed her arms. She had an inkling, but she didn’t know for sure what the agent was hinting at.

“You have powerful allies Miss Lewis. Would they break the law for you? Destroy cities to find you? Go to war for you? Who knows how far your friends would go…for you. Who knows? There might even be an entire alien army willing to invade the Earth upon your say so.”
Darcy’s brow furrowed as she muttered, “Fat chance with Odin on the throne.”

Natasha ignored her, “The point is. You’re important to a lot of important people.”

Darcy snapped her fingers as she finally understood where Natasha was coming from, “And that makes me valuable.”

“And that makes you valuable.” Natasha echoed. After a beat of intense eye contact, Darcy went back to watching the birds drinking dirty street water.

“So, now that you know our concerns. I’ll ask you again. Point blank. You’ve been suddenly heavily drinking. Tell me why.”

“No.” Darcy said. She stood up as her cab pulled up to the curb. She turned and looked at Natasha when her hand was on the door handle, “I’ll cut back on the drinking though.”

“Just like that?” Natasha asked with a raised brow.

“Just like that.” Darcy confirmed with a nod. She wasn’t lying; she really would stop drinking so much. Stop drinking so she could have a dreamless night sleep. Stop drinking so she could hide from the possible truth.

She didn’t know much about Natasha, but she knew enough to know that the woman was a good agent. And that made her someone Darcy couldn’t trust.

Darcy got into the cab and told him to take her to the nearest airport. She would go back to Malibu. Back to Tony and Pepper. They were smart and Darcy trusted them more than anyone else right now. Had Steve not signed up to work for S.H.I.E.L.D. she might have trusted him with the truth, but maybe not. Pepper and Tony had money and power and vast resources and if anyone could help her figure out what to do, it was them.

Later on, when she was on a plane headed back to the west coast, Darcy declined the little bottles of alcohol the stewardess were offering. Thanks to Tony she was flying first class, she was able to buy a pair of jeans and sneakers at the airport and the stewardess gave her a blanket from a hermetically sealed bag so she knew it didn’t have rabies or whatever.

As she stared out the window, looking down as the world disappeared behind a layer of fluffy white clouds, she thought back on the vivid dreams she experienced while in recovery from her trip of planetary teleportation.

While she slept in coma like state, she dreamt. She dreamt of a man on fire threatening Tony and Pepper. She dreamt of Jane with inky black eyes, like a possessed demon. Of a dying Loki. A grieving Thor. A man with a metal arm looking down at a bloody and beaten Steve in his Captain America uniform. A shaken looking Bruce, shirtless and clinging to a blanket around his shoulders.

But worst of all, she dreamt of Phil Coulson. Of Phil screaming, crying out in pain, agony, being tortured…begging for death. Pleading with masked doctors to end him, to kill him, let him die. It was Phil who haunted her. Who drove her to drink and sleep dreamlessly, dulling her senses bottle after bottle.

It was Phil Coulson’s fate that made her afraid of dreaming. Of the future.

They said he died on the Helicarrier. Stabbed by Loki. Dead within minutes. Hell, there was footage
of his slaying!

But still, Darcy wasn’t so sure. Frigga warned her that dreaming the future wasn’t the same as changing it.

She didn’t want to believe she could dream the future. She didn’t want to believe that…whatever they were doing to Phil in that operating room that was so horrible that he would rather be dead than endure it.

What she did want was to stop drinking every night. Stop feeling out of control and scared of her own power. She didn’t know how to do that. How to stop feeling something, but she supposed she could start with closing her eyes and letting herself fall asleep. Not with fear in her heart or alcohol in her system, but with an open mind and a clear head.

Darcy pulled down her sleep mask so it covered her eyes and she thought about where she was going. *Stark’s Malibu mansion.* And who she was going to see. *Tony and Pepper.* And she let herself drift to sleep.

A couple hours later a stewardess woke her up and told her that they had landed. After exiting the plane she made her way to the nearest bathroom, on her way she passed by the a few TV’s. When she saw Tony’s name flash across the TV she stopped in her tracks.

Darcy watched in horror as the aftermath of the destruction of the famed ‘Chinese Theatre’ played out on the airport’s TV. She had to cover her mouth to stifle her cry when footage of bystanders caught up in the bombing was shown. She recognized Happy Hogan as he was put on a stretcher and loaded into an ambulance.

Just then, Tony being mobbed by reporters in front of his car came on screen. Tony stared directly down the barrel of the camera as he spoke.

*Here’s a little holiday greeting I’ve been wanting to send to the Mandarin…I just didn’t know how to phrase it until now. My name is Tony Stark and I’m not afraid of you. I know you’re a coward, so I’ve decided that you just died, pal. I’m gonna come get the body. There’s no politics here, it’s just good old-fashioned revenge. There’s no Pentagon, it’s just you and me. And on the off chance you’re a man, here’s my home address, 10-8-80 Malibu Point, 90265. I’ll leave the door unlocked. That’s what you wanted, right?*”

Darcy’s eyes widened as she muttered to herself, “Is he insane?”

Tony had just given out his home address and called out a terrorist on national television. She had to get to Tony and warn him and Pepper about her dream! Darcy turned on her heel and headed for the exit. So intent to reach her goal, she bumped into a man as she rounded the corner.

“Sorry.” She mumbled as she reached down to pick up his fallen newspaper.

“Not a problem Miss Lewis.” Darcy froze crouched at the man’s feet; her hand outstretched reaching for the paper. Slowly her eyes traveled up the man’s body to his face.

He flashed her a grin, “I was hoping we could speak?”
Darcy’s sleep outfit

Chapter End Notes

SO! Tell me what you thought of the chapter.
AND who do you think Darcy ran into in the AIRPORT?

AUTHOR NOTE::::: I just want to thank you all for the amazing response I’ve received by the commentors, it's your feedback that made this chapter such a joy to write. Last Chapter was like the end of my PHASE 1, we now embark on PHASE 2. Knowing how much you like the story I’m telling makes writing it 10x better! And I appreciate all the interest and love. Thank you!
Chapter 12 – Darcy Lewis

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.
As Darcy regained consciousness, she became aware she was in agony. Her face twisted and crumbled as tears sprung to her closed eyes. She didn’t want to wake up yet, she was in too much pain. She stubbornly squeezed her eyes closed harder and willed sleep to come back and claim her mind once again. To take her away from whatever cruel reality she had found herself in.

There was something slick and sticky on her hands, she clenched her fists and her palms stung in response. She brought her hands to her nose and took a sniff. It smelled like blood. Tears escaped her
closed eyelids and began to roll down her cheeks.

Darcy opened her eyes and let the tears flow.

She looked down at her hands and as expected they were a bloody mess. She opened her hands to reveal two twin gashes along her palms. She quickly closed her hands and clenched them. It was only then that she realized she was standing. *She had never been a sleep walker…*

Had she not been so messed up physically, her standing status would have warranted more attention. As it was, she couldn’t spare a thought to her odd posture.

Darcy looked around her, but all she could see was darkness. She knew she was outside, she could feel the cold dirt beneath her feet. She could see a beautiful star speckled sky above her head. And there was a crescent moon shining above like a mocking smile, providing minimal light. Her eyes squinted as she tried to look beyond the shrubbery she saw around her. The wind blew and Darcy shivered. She seemed to be only wearing a thin sweatshirt and linen pants. No socks. No shoes. No wristlet.

It was cold and when the wind blew it felt like it was stabbing at her. Her hair whipped around her face obscuring her vision even more. She was confused and afraid. She didn’t know…anything. Where she was, where she had been, who she had been with, how she had come to be here. Nothing.

“Hello?” Darcy called out, her voice sounded hoarse. A persistent pain in her shoulder drew her attention back to her body. She gingerly reached up to pat her shoulder with her trembling hand, only to find the hilt of a knife lodged there.

“Ah!” The cry of pain left her lips as her hand touched the knife, moving it slightly and causing the area to throb with fresh pain.

“Fuck.” Darcy cursed. She didn’t know if she should pull it out or leave it in. If she did pull it out, would she bleed out? Would it get infected? Darcy tried lifting the arm and let out another shout as she realized what a stupid idea that was.

Darcy looked around her empty surroundings, she took a few stumbling steps forwards. Her eyes searched the darkness looking for signs of a nearby highway or house or mall or fucking anything! There was nothing. Nothing but darkness.

Darcy fell to the ground and just…cried. Her head felt foggy and she had a massive headache. And her hands hurt. Her feet were frozen. Her knees felt bloody and banged up too. She had been *stabbed!* She didn’t know where she was. Or what had happened to her. And she had no phone and she just…wanted someone to come and save her.

She allowed herself a few minutes to cry and wail and just be sad and in pain.

But then, she made herself get up.

She wiped her snot and tears onto the sleeve of her sweater. The coarse material scratched at her skin, but Darcy didn’t care. She had to get moving.

She looked up and tried to remember everything she had learned about the stars and the constellations from Jane. From the color of the sky, she could guess that it was the middle of the night. *Duh.*

She knew that she was somewhere away from cities and probably all of civilization, just based on
how many stars she could see. In the city, only hundreds of stars were visible. When she had been in New Mexico, she had seen with her own eyes how many stars were really out there in the galaxy.

The sky above her was jet black and the stars shining looked like diamonds on velvet. There were so many shining stars above her, it was hard to distinguish one from another. Darcy idly wondered which one was Asgard as she searched for the Big Dipper. Or Orion. Those were the two constellations she could always find.

Darcy let out a huff of disappointment. Either the familiar constellations weren’t there or she couldn’t find them. She felt like a failure. And an idiot. She had interned with a world class astrophysicist and spent months out in the desert staring up at the sky with Jane. She should have been able to find one measly constellation. One familiar celestial…thingy, that she could use to orient herself.

Her plan to use the stars was a failure. So, she just picked a direction at random and started walking.

Darcy felt like she had been walking for hours. She was sure it hadn’t been hours, but it felt like it. And she had the blisters and bloody feet to prove it.

“Fucking rock!” Darcy exclaimed as she stepped on another sharp pebble. She screamed loudly, “I fucking hate the outdoors!”

Her head was starting to clear and now she couldn’t stop thinking. Thinking about getting hypothermia. About getting tetanus or rabies. About bears and whether she was supposed to make herself look big or run or not run. About falling down a well. About ticks. About stepping on a snake or a scorpion. About all the millions of horrible things that could happen to her whilst stumbling around in the dark woods that she had found herself in.

She hadn’t meant to walk into the woods. It was just that when she picked a direction to walk in, woods…developed around her. And before she knew it, she was surrounded by tall trees. However they weren’t fluffy with leaves, they were creepy and branchy. Allowing the sliver of light the moon provided, to still reach her.

As another rock or root or whatever, stabbed the tender bottom of her foot Darcy let out a frustrated growl. She vowed as she kept walking, “I’m never going camping….ever.”

The more she walked the more she thought about what she did remember. Last she remembered, she had woken up at Steve’s apartment. She had spoken with the Black Widow, aka Natasha. She had promised to stop drinking herself to sleep. She had planned on going to Tony and Pepper for help. She had gotten on a plane and….

That was it.

Getting on the plane, going to sleep in first class was the last thing she remembered.

She began to theorize aloud to herself, “Maybe Heimdall was testing/trying to fix the Bifrost? And I accidently got abducted then….dropped randomly?”

Darcy shook her head, “No, that’s ridiculous. Heimdall would test it on a squirrel or something first.”

“Shield? Evil government trying to ‘disappear’ me?....No, I would be at the bottom of a lake or an overpass or something with a pair of cerement shoes and my fingerprints burned off….I may be
confusing the government with mob movies.”

“Horribly not funny prank gone wrong?”

“I got black out drunk and….made…someone mad enough to drive me out into the woods and leave me here?....No, that wouldn’t explain why I woke up standing….or stabbed….and am not drunk now, or hung over.”

“New power? Random teleportation plus….bodily harm?...God, please don’t let that be true.”

“Abducted by different aliens?”

Darcy honestly couldn’t think of a reasonable explanation for her current predicament. All the ideas she came up were outlandish and unrealistic. She decided not to dwell on what had happened to her. She had faith that when/if she found people again, and was able to contact her friends, they would help her figure it out. Or possibly Frigga. Yeah, Frigga could totally use magic to figure out what the fuck happened to her.

“Don’t worry about things you can’t control.” Darcy advised herself.

An hour or so later Darcy was getting very, very bored. She had been walking for ages, and still she was no closer to…anything resembling civilization. All the blood on her hands had dried and was all stiff and gross. Her shoulder still hurt like a son of a bitch, but she had resigned herself to leaving the knife lodged in her body, and the throbbing pain was so constant that it was now a numb pain. It still hurt. But it hurting, felt normal. It was the little cuts and scrapes on her feet that were really killing her.

She decided the only way to combat her ever growing feelings of fear, pain, bordom and despair… was with show tunes.

She changed lyrics as it suited her and substituted verses when she forgot what came next, but she sang surprisingly on key,

“Let’s get down to business, to defeat the Huns
Did they send me daughters, when I asked for a burger and fries?
…..da, dah, da
Mister, I’ll make a man out of youuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu”

“Tranquil as a forest but on fire within
Wish I had a blanket, cause I’m so..fucking cold”

Darcy began to replicate the different voices of the different characters as best she could remember from the Disney classic,

Panting, “I’m never gonna catch my breath”

Speaking nasally, “Say goodbye to those who knew me”

High pitched, “Boy, was I a fool in school for cutting gym”

Deepening her voice, “This guy’s got ’em scared to death”
Singing normally, “Hope he doesn’t see right through me”

In a anxious voice, “Now I really wish that I knew how to swim!”

She paused to lean against a tree but continued singing in a tired quiet voice,
“Be a man
We must be swift as a the coursing river
Be a man
With all the force of great typhoon”

Darcy pushed off the tree and resumed singing and walking with gusto,
“Be a WOMAN
With all the strength of a raging fire
Mysterious as the dark side of the fuck you moon”

Darcy raised her middle finger to the moon over her head.

She wanted to stop and rest, but she couldn’t. It was too cold. If she stopped moving, she would freeze and die. She felt a little delirious, but the singing seemed to be helping so she carried on,

“Time is racing toward us till the Huns arrive
Heed my every instinct and I’ll surely die
I’m unsuited for the rage of war
I want to pack up, go home, be through
How could I make it out alive without youuuuuuu?”

Darcy mimed a karate chop with her uninjured arm,
“Be a man!
We must be swift as the coursing river
Be a WOMAN!
With all the force of great doubloon…heheh, I mean typhoon
Be a woman!
With all the strength of a raging fire
Mysterious as what the fuck happened to meeeeeeeeeeeeee!”

Darcy was tempted to spin on her heel and do jazz hands, but she decided against it.

Just as she finishing singing, “I Just Can’t Wait To Be King” she heard something. Something… people-y. Darcy paused and tilted her head, positioning her ear to face the direction she thought she heard the sound coming from.

“.EWIS!”

Darcy’s eyes widened. She felt like what she was hearing was real, but she also felt like she’d gone a little crazy and she might be imagining it.

Then she heard it again, only it was clearer and sounded closer.

“DARKY LEWIS!”

Darcy began running towards the voice. Stumbling and falling as she did she screamed out,
“HERE!”

She got to her feet and ran, “I’M HERE!”

Tree branches hit her in the face and scratched her, but she kept running forward towards the voice that was calling her name. She had a thought that she might be running back into the arms of whoever stabbed her, but at that point she didn’t care.

“DARCY LEWIS!”

Darcy tripped on a root and fell flat on her face. Which also caused the knife that was stuck in her shoulder to slam further into her body, she screamed out in pain, “AAAAGH!!”

She rolled over, relieving the pressure on the knife which had been driven further into her arm, but she could do little more than lay there panting in pain. She clutched at her arm in vain as she continued to call out, “I’m here. HERE! I’M here….here…here.”

“I found her!” Darcy heard a voice shout. A figure rushed over to her, she tried to back away from them, but in her weakened state all she managed to do was move from laying on her side, to an even more prone position. Like a turtle, belly exposed and unable to right herself.

Lying flat on her back, too tired to sit up, or move or defend herself. Totally vulnerable. Darcy trembled as the figure came into view above her.

It was a man. He had dark short hair, pale skin like hers, and awesomely Tony Stark-like facial hair. But he wasn’t Tony Stark. He was a stranger and she was afraid. He reached out to touch her injured shoulder and she winced in anticipation of his touch but it never came. She opened her eyes to see his hand hovering over her wound.

“She’s been stabbed.” The man muttered, not loud enough to be talking to anyone but himself.

Darcy took a shot and fired back sassily, “Stabbed? Tis but a scratch.”

The man’s gaze met hers, he seemed surprised. She watched as the corner of his mouth lifted slightly, “With a wound this deep, I’m surprised you haven’t bleed to death from your scratch.”

Darcy scowled, “It wasn’t this deep before. I fell and pushed the knife in more, like, thirty seconds ago.”

“I see.” The man said with a twitch of his mustache.

Another man came running to them, breaking through the shrubbery loudly. He had dark skin and dark brown hair, his eyes went right to her but the words he spoke were for his friend, “You found her.”

“She’s injured.” The other man responded quickly. It was then that Darcy realized how oddly they were dressed.

Darcy poked the light skinned man crouched beside her with her uninjured hand, “Are you two part of a..ninja/karate club...camping group, or something?”

“What?” Both men asked simultaneously.

“You’re dressed like the Ninja Turtles when they went to China.” Darcy explained with a wince, the pain in her shoulder now seemed to be intensifying exponentially.
The man by her side put a hand on her forehead, checking her temperature. His friend behind him, began waving his arms around all…weirdly.

“Who are you?” Darcy asked as her vision began to blur.

“She’s got a fever.” The man looked so…worried, “Jesus, her brain must be boiling.”

Darcy’s eyes fell shut. She still listened though.

“We have to get her to Kamar-Taj. Now.”

“I’ll help you carry her.”

When the two men lifted her, something jostled the knife in her shoulder and she screamed out, her eyes opening to see the regretful expressions on the men’s faces.

“Sorry.”

Darcy couldn’t say it was ‘okay’ and reassure them that she didn’t blame them, because the pain had her eyes rolling back in her head and passing out.

Darcy dreamt of the stars, of flying among them. Looking at worlds, galaxies, planets she’d never heard of before. It was beautiful. Her dream...for once was not ominous. Or scary. Or cryptic. It was peaceful. Awe-inspiring. Epic.

Darcy woke up in a dimly lit room, on a bed, indoors. She closed her eyes again and let out a sigh. She snuggled her body slightly into the pillow behind her head and just relished the feeling of not being cold anymore. Being back indoors was everything she could have ever asked for.

Darcy let her eyes flutter open, she looked around at the small room taking in the Spartan décor. There were a few windows where sunlight shone through creating a warm dull glow. The windows didn’t have screens to keep out bugs though, instead they had these…lattice like pattern things on them…she guessed for, prettiness? She watched as dust danced in the rays of light. The door across from the bed was made of wood and it also had designs on it. There…wasn’t much else in the room.

“Miss Lewis?” A voice called out.

There wasn’t much else in the room, except for a creepy dark corner she hadn’t noticed, where the light skinned guy with the awesome facial hair was sitting on a chair reading a book.

“Sup.” Darcy answered, proud that she didn’t jump or shriek in surprise. Though that was maybe due to tiredness.

The man stood up and put down his book on the chair he vacated. He walked over to her bed side and stared down at her. He introduced himself with a nod, “Miss Lewis, hello. I’m Dr. Strange.”

“Stranger danger.” Darcy whispered to herself.
“Excuse me?” The man questioned with a smile.

“Nothing.” Darcy said, changing topics she asked, “Where am I?”

“Kamar-Taj.”

Darcy’s eyebrows rose, “I’m going to need you to zoom out, map wise buddy, cause I’ve no idea where Kamar-Taj is.”

“Nepal.” The doctor answered, he gestured to her injured shoulder and asked, “May I?”

Assuming the doctor wanted to examine her gnarly stabbing wound, Darcy gave him the go ahead, “Be my guest doc.”

The doctor…Doctor Strange, lowered the bed sheet that had covered her up to her chin, she was wearing an apron like garment that didn’t obscure her shoulder wound, but covered her breasts and she assumed other naughty bits.

“Where’s Nepal again?” Darcy questioned.

“Near the Himalaya Mountains.” Doctor Strange answered as he lifted the gauze from her shoulder and peeked beneath, “You’re wound is healing nicely.”

“Yay.” Darcy said without enthusiasm, her brows furrowed, “Himalayas as in…the mountain range that separates…India and China?”

The doctor made a noise of confirmation.

“As in Mount Everest?” Darcy asked again.

“Yes. As in Asia. Not America.” The doctor confirmed, he put his hand on her forehead, muttering, “Fevers finally broken.”

“Kamar-Taj.” Darcy repeated the foreign sounding name.

“It’s a place where sorcerers and sorceresses train. People often come here after being broken or damaged, physically and metaphorically.” Doctor Strange said frankly.


Strange snorted a laugh, “No. Not like Hogwarts…although, on second thought, yes. A bit.”

Darcy glared at the man responding sarcastically, “Wow. What a clear and concise explanation.”

“Well, you haven’t balked at the idea that magic is real yet, so I assume you believe in its existence?”

Darcy shrugged her good shoulder before demanding, “Help me up. It’s weird conversing with you while you loom over me like a Ring Wraith the O.G. Dementor and I stare up at your nose hairs.”

Strange helped her sit up comfortably and he dragged the chair that had been in the corner, closer to her bedside. She smiled as he discreetly touched his nose self-consciously as he sat down.

“So.” The doctor began, “Magic.”

“Yeah, I know magic is real, but do you know about aliens?”
Strange looked at her flatly, “I used to live in New York. And anyone who has access to any type of media knows about the battle that happened there.”

“Oh, yeah. I forgot about that.” Darcy responded with a crooked grin, “Worms cans and bags of cats, am I right?”

Strange seemed to be fighting a smile, “Yes. Getting back to the point.”

“Yeah, so, me being here. How’d that happen?” Darcy asked.

Doctor Strange’s eyes crinkled at the edges, “You don’t know?”

His voice seemed softer and she could see the pity in his eyes. She hated it.

“I don’t know who stabbed me.” Darcy admitted with a vicious smile, “How’d you find me? Scrying spell, a la Charmed?”

“Didn’t watch that show past the first couple of episodes.” Dr. Strange revealed, “But in any case, yes and no—”

“You do that a lot?” Darcy challenged, “The, yes and no thing?”

Dr. Strange ignored her, “I—we used magic to find you, but it wasn’t ‘scrying’ as you alluded to.”

“You used magic to find me?” Dr. Strange nodded. Darcy narrowed her eyes at the man, “Why were you looking for me in the first place?”

“Someone asked us to.”

“Who?”

“I’m not at liberty to say.” The doctor answered evasively.

“Why not.”

“Because he does not know the answer.” A person announced from the doorway.

Darcy’s eyebrows rose high on her forehead as she watched a bald, pale…lady, enter the room, draped in colorful robes.

“Who are you?” Darcy asked.

“I’m known as the Ancient One.” The woman acknowledged with a slight bow of her head.

Darcy pointed at the doctor, “So, you’re Doctor Strange and she’s the Ancient One, and I’m… looking for a vowel here people, come on. Enough with the pseudonyms. Who the fuck are you!”

The bald chick and doctor exchanged a look; it felt like they were having a discussion about her but without words. Darcy fumed internally, “What the fuck! Where am I? What is going on! How did you find me? Where was I? Where am I now? What do you want with me? Who STABBED ME!? Why---why… Just, why?”

Darcy felt her eyes begin to tear up as she worked herself up, her breath started to come in gasps. She felt like she couldn’t breathe. She was hyperventilating.

The bald lady walked over to her and sat on the bed with her; she put a hand on the back of Darcy’s
head and pressed their foreheads together. The action, though weirdly intimate, had a calming effect on her.

“Breathe in.” The older woman coached. Darcy did as she directed and she felt her mind expanding, her emotions dampening enough so she could think clearly.

Breathe out.” The Ancient One advised as she slowly backed away from Darcy’s forehead and sat up right on the bed. Darcy followed her instruction and the woman removed her hand from the back of her head.

“Calm yourself child. You have been through much, and have more to endure.”

Darcy scrunched her face, “That sounds ominous and foreboding.”

“But, does it sound like the truth?” The Ancient One questioned.

Darcy rolled her eyes and crossed her arms underneath her breasts, she muttered, “I guess.”

“Good. The truth is a good place to start.” The Ancient One tipped her head to Darcy, “And the start is sometimes ominous and foreboding.”

Darcy turned to Doctor Strange who sat stiffly on her other side; she pointed her thumb at the Ancient One, “Tell me you’re not going to start talking like a fortune cookie too.”

Doctor Strange let out a laugh, but quickly ducked his head and coughed, trying to cover it up.

“There are forces at work in the universe far beyond your understanding Miss Lewis,” The Ancient One said, bringing Darcy’s attention back to her, “Far beyond my understanding sometimes.”

“So what good is it being the Ancient One if you can’t understand the forces of the universe and their ‘mysterious ways’?” Darcy questioned, not really caring about the answer, she chattered on, nervously, “By the way you have a very good head shape. Very, round.”

The Ancient One raised her eyebrows at Darcy before smiling bemusedly, “Thank you.”

“We saved you, Miss Lewis, because someone asked us too.” Doctor Strange said, causing her head to whip in his direction.

“Who?” Darcy demanded.

“I already told you, he doesn’t know.” The Ancient One said. Darcy clenched her jaw and turned to the woman.

Glaring, she asked, “Then you tell me.”

“I don’t know either.” The Ancient One said with a shrug.

“Blarg!” Darcy exclaimed, she banged her fist onto the bed, beyond frustrated with this game of verbal merry-go-around-and-around-and-give-you-no-answers.

“It was asked of me to draw you here. So I did. I called to you, and you came….not exactly where we were expecting you to be, but close enough.” The Ancient One said calmly.

“You called me here? Like a dog?” Darcy questioned incredulously.

“Like a homing beacon.” Doctor Strange supplied, “Like a moth to the flame.”
Darcy nodded, feeling better about his analogy than the Ancient Ones.

“When we found you, we brought you here.” Doctor Strange continued, “You were gravely injured, feverish, your wound was infected, your ankle sprained, you had various cuts and bruises all over your body, you were nearly hypothermic—”

Darcy’s eyes grew wide as the Doctor listed off the condition he’d found her in. She interrupted the doctor, stopping the flow of words from his mouth with one quiet one from hers, “Thanks.”

Strange closed his mouth and looked at her with surprise. She extended her hand and grabbed his, squeezing it, “I forgot to say that. I-It should have been the first thing I said really. I mean, you saved my life. For reals. So, thank you.”

She kept her gaze on his hands as she spoke. Noticing how scarred his hands were she traced the raised lines with her thumb. She raised her eyes to meet Strange’s gaze. He looked surprised, flattered, and a little uncomfortable with all the ‘feelings’ talk. Darcy gave him a sincere smile, “Thank you Doctor Strange.”

The doctor’s cheeks flushed as he answered in a breathy voice, “You’re welcome.”

The Ancient One loudly cleared her throat and Darcy let go of the doctor’s hand. Turning her attention back to the bald woman Darcy smiled at the woman in an exaggerated fashion, “Thank you too. I assume this whole place is yours? So, thanks for letting me stay here while I recover and stuff.”

The Ancient One nodded in acknowledgement, “As I was saying. We were asked to bring you here to Kamar-Taj. Doctor Strange has healed you using conventional methods. When you are well enough we will escort you home. Our half of the bargain fulfilled.”

“What bargain?” Strange asked.

She ignored most of what the Ancient One had said though, lost in her own thoughts. Darcy mused aloud, as pieces fell into place and an idea formed in her mind, “You were asked to bring me here, to Kamar-Taj, Karmar-Taj being a magical Hogwarts. In answer to a magical force, that…you don’t know what it is, just that it asked you to save me.”

The Ancient One wobbled her head before nodding, “Not exactly, but yes.”

Darcy turned to Strange, “I see where you get that from.”

She turned back to the Ancient One, “Would your request to save me, by any chance, have come from Asgard?”

There was silence as the Ancient One narrowed her eyes and stared at Darcy. Unflustered, Darcy continued, “Cause, I got connections. And…I’d put money on Frigga or some other Norse-y magic connection of hers, being the one to ask you to find me and save me.”

The Ancient One said nothing.

“Hey, I could be wrong! But maybe I’m not. I mean Thor did promise to find me a teacher, to help me with my power, before he left Earth.” Darcy said with a tip of her head, “And Thor’s a pretty reliable dude in my experience.”

“Thor? As in--” Strange asked.

Darcy smiled at him, “As in the God of Thunder and Fertility and my close personal friend. And
Frigga’s son. Frigga being the magical expert on Asgard.”

Strange’s forehead crinkled as his eyebrows rose, Darcy smiled smugly to herself, he looked impressed and that pleased her to no end.

“You said something about Kamar-Taj being a place where witches and wizards come to learn stuff after being broken and damaged.” Darcy gestured down to her body, “I think I qualify, dontcha think?”

“You wish to stay?” The Ancient One asked at the same time Dr. Strange argued, “I didn’t say witches and wizards.”

“Tomato Potato.” Darcy said breezily. She turned her gaze to the Ancient One, “To answer your question, hell yeah I want to stay. Before leaving Asgard I learned how to make an apple, look like two apples.”

“Did you now?” The Ancient One said.

“You can teleport?” Strange asked sounding amazed.

Darcy gave him a molasses slow grin, “Dude, I wake up in strange places with strange people almost on the daily... You see Mr. Strange-”

“Doctor.” He interrupted, correcting her, “Doctor Strange.”

Darcy leaned toward him, putting her hand on his knee; she used a honeyed voice, “Dr. Strange... I’m no stranger to the world of weird that makes up this wacky universe we call home. Me, being here, it’s almost kismet, dontcha think? I’m meant to be here. You’re meant to teach me.”

Dr. Strange swallowed thickly and pressed his lips tightly together. His gaze shifted over to the Ancient One.

“Kismet isn’t the right word.” The Ancient One announced. Darcy suppressed the urge to roll her eyes. She got the feeling that if it were up to Doctor Strange; she wouldn’t even have to ask to stay! He’d be begging her to put on a school girl outfit and play naughty professor with her. The Ancient One however...

Darcy turned to see the woman staring at her with an unreadable expression.

“I’ll meditate on your request and give you an answer in the morning.” The Ancient One stood and left the room abruptly.

Darcy turned to Strange and declared, “I think she likes me!”

Darcy’s Outfit
“So let me get this straight. You’re a world class doctor, but a magical trainee?”

“Student.” Strange corrected.

“Intern.” Darcy countered humor in her voice, “A magical intern.”
Chapter 13 - Stephen Strange

Chapter Summary

She wakes up next to Stephen Strange

Chapter Notes

Author’s Note.
There is mention of torture in this chapter, but I’m keeping it non-graphic. There is also some minor sexual assault, again non-graphic, but also it doesn’t go very far. I’m keeping this stories rating where it is, but if you think I should change it, let me know in the comments. I would rate this chapter as about as graphic as a show that runs on prime time from 9pm-11pm, if that helps.

Also, the response on this story has been amazing and I just wanted to thank all my commentors for their amazing feedback. It means so much and it is so motivating and I can’t thank you enough for reading thus far.

Now, on with the show…..

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 13 – Stephen Strange

Darcy awoke abruptly when a door was slammed open and a voice called out, “Strange! You’re late!...Her too!”

Darcy moaned and burrowed her face further into Stephen Strange’s neck. Strange’s mangled hand began to rub circles on her back even as he whisper yelled back at the evil taskmaster Karl Mordo, “Shhh. She had a rough night. We’ll be there soon.”

Darcy could practically hear Karl rolling his eyes, though he did close the door quietly as he left.

“No be there soon.” Darcy grumbled. She wrapped her arms tighter around Strange’s torso and moved her leg over one of his, full on body hugging the older man.

“You can stay and sleep, but I have to go.” Strange whispered back, “I have my class.”

“No.” Darcy argued petulantly. Stephen Strange was her favorite person at Kamar-Taj and he was quickly becoming one of her favorite people period. He was hella smart, funny, and sarcastic. He reminded her of Tony in a lot of ways, only Strange was in a ‘flux point’ of his life. He had been a neuro-surgeon and now he could barely hold a pencil steady without his hands shaking. She got the feeling that before he found Kamar-Taj, Strange had been in a very dark place.

“I need to go to class to practice.” Stephen stated with a sigh, he was having trouble learning how to open portals via the sling ring. His inability to immediately master each new magical task put before
him vexed him. Frustration was one of the things that initially drew them together, besides the obvious.

Strange stopped rubbing circles on her back and began to pet her hair in a lazy fashion. Darcy was aware of Strange’s crush on her, hell everyone at Kamar-Taj was. She knew that if she pushed he would skip his stupid class and stay in bed with her, especially since she showed up wearing her sexiest sleepwear. Booty shorts and a see through tank.

She raised her sleep mask and pouted at him. “So? Phooey on your stupid old class.”

Darcy shrugged off her long robe, throwing it onto the floor carelessly. Darcy stretched her arms above her head, letting Strange get a good look at what little she was wearing. A thrill ran through her as Strange’s eyes dilated and he licked his lips. She supposed she had a crush on him too.

Darcy took off her wristlet and threw it onto the nearby side table. When she turned her attention back to Strange, a smirk stretched across her face. His eyes were locked on her breasts. Darcy moved her body back into her sleep position, content in the knowledge that Strange would cooperate and stay put.

Tucking her head against his shoulder, under his chin, she once again threw her leg over his thigh. Her hand found the light linen shirt he wore to sleep and she slipped underneath it. She scratched lightly at his flat stomach. A shudder ran through Strange’s body and Darcy was immensely proud.

Darcy rubbed her face into his chest, “Stay with me.”

Strange protested in vain looking away from her to the clock on the opposite wall, “I can’t Darcy. I have to practice--”

Internally Darcy rolled her eyes. Annoyingly Strange was a very studious student and took his sorcerer training very seriously, however Darcy was determined to keep him in bed with her until she was good and ready to get up. She removed her hand from his stomach and put it on his cheek. She moved his face, forcing him to look at her. She gave him her most sincere pleading look, “Stay with me?”

“Don’t give me that loo—”

“Just a half an hour more?” Darcy begged, “Please?...You know I won’t be able to go back to sleep if you get up.”

“Darcy….I…okay. Half an hour.” Strange conceded, Darcy didn’t bother to hide her victorious grin. She stretched her neck up so she could peck him lightly on the lips. She quickly settled down in his arms again, snuggling into the warmth of his body. She wouldn’t be able to go back to sleep if he got up or not, but she wasn’t ready to face the day just yet.

She and Strange had developed a weirdly intimate relationship in a short amount of time. The Ancient One had preformed a spell on her ‘chakra’ that more or less confined her to the grounds of Kamar-Taj until the woman undid the spell. A physical barrier was erected if she tried to leave, by walking or teleporting. Darcy was inclined to believe in the spell’s ability to detain her, but she prepared her nightly wristlet regardless. Just in case.

She had her own room next to Strange’s, but every night when his body finally succumbed to exhaustion after late night studying and he fell asleep, she teleported into his bed. Strange was very flattered. She hadn’t teleported to anyone else, only him. In some ways, it felt like they were living together. Or at the very least sharing a hotel room whilst on an extended vacation.
She and the doctor had struck up an easy friendship right from the start. Most of the other sorcerers and sorceresses were students or masters way above Strange’s current level, and so he was a bit of an awkward newbie outcast. Darcy was an anomaly and thus more of a spectacle than someone everyone was dying to get to know. The two of them just gravitated towards each other naturally. And after the first morning erection/wandering hands/sleepy groping session, their friendship just evolved….to them making out every once in a while.

Darcy got the feeling that Strange had never liked someone like her. Darcy knew she was all spontaneous and chaotic mystery girl while Strange was all type A personality, rigid and focused man. They should be like oil and water, but instead the two of them got along like fire and gasoline.

Their current non-relationship based on physical attraction and genuine friendship…was all a matter of circumstance. It was only Strange’s ‘magical intern’ status that made them in any way compatible. If she had met him when he was a big time doctor, he wouldn’t have looked at her twice. It was a fling, she knew this, and she assumed he did as well. It’s not like they discussed their ‘feelings’.

Strange was obviously determined to become the new Merlin of the sorcerer world. He was smart, he had drive, and natural talent when it came to the mystic arts, Darcy had no doubt that in time he would achieve his goals and outgrow her. However, at the moment, they were sort of on the same level. And they, as a temporary unofficial couple, worked.

After the agreed upon half an hour Strange announced, “Okay, I have to go.”

Darcy groaned and clung to his body, refusing to be removed whining, “Nooooooo!”

“Yes.” Strange argued, affection coloring his voice, “Time to get up.”

Darcy didn’t want to get up. She had a private session with the Ancient One scheduled and she was not looking forward to it.

Up until that point, Darcy had been passed around the facility to many different teachers. She had been taught how to ‘breathe’ and meditate and listen to nature and listen to her own body and get in tune with the blah blah blah. Almost every teacher had grown weary of her and her inability to sit still, stay quiet, listen, follow directions, and so on and so forth.

Darcy was well aware she was not suited to the ‘peaceful’ and ‘tranquility’ that Kamar-Taj exuded, nor was she as ‘serious’ and ‘mature’ as the other residents. She wasn’t one for being obedient, she had a thing about bucking authority figures. And so, thus far, the only residents of Kamar-Taj who had any amount of affection for her, besides Strange, were Karl Mordo and Wong the librarian.

Karl liked her because with him, his lessons were physical and she actually listened and followed directions since she liked what she was learning with him. Wong liked her because she was charming and funny and he obviously had good taste.

“C’mon. We have to get up.” Strange cajoled, trying to unlatch her hands from his person. The time had come for her to have her one on one with the Sorcerers School of Witchcraft and Wizardry’s Principal, a.k.a. the Ancient One, and Darcy knew she really couldn’t stall any longer…but she could try.

“Nooo.” Darcy pouted; she popped up and jumped onto Strange’s lap. Straddling his waist she sat atop him and pushed on his shoulders, “Let’s stay and have sex instead!”

Strange raised an annoyed brow at her and stared at her deadpan. He knew she wasn’t really offering, she had been keeping their make out sessions strictly PG-13, lest they catch real ‘feelings’
for each other. Strange let out a sigh, but his hands went to her waist. He sat up so they were nearly nose to nose.

“Darcy---”

“Aww, don’t say my name like that.” Darcy whined, “All full of…annoyance.”

“I’m not annoyed.” Strange refuted, sounding ironically annoyed.

“Disappointed, then.” Darcy guessed.

“Darcy.” Strange repeated her name sharply, Darcy closed her mouth and swallowed the sassy retort she had planned on hurling at him.

Strange met her gaze and stared into her eyes in an unblinking manner that guaranteed she had his complete undivided attention. He was un-swayed by her attempts at seduction and in a serious tone he assured her, “Darcy, you have nothing to be afraid of.”

Darcy responded automatically, “I’m not afraid.”

Except she was.

Upon arriving at Kamar-Taj, all injured and messed up, Darcy spent two days just sleeping. Strange had said she showed signs of extreme sleep deprivation, among other things, so that probably accounted for her need for extra restorative sleep time. It was agreed on that she most likely hadn’t traveled off planet again. Mostly likely.

When she woke up and met the Ancient On and convinced the elder woman to let her stay and study, it was another three days before Strange pronounced her well enough to do anything more strenuous than reading while reclining in bed. During her three days of mandatory bed rest, she made contact with Tony and Pepper.

“I’m not afraid of anything.” Darcy lied.

“Not even sharks?” Strange joked lamely, but she didn’t laugh. He muttered under his breath, “Or sharknados…”

“Forget it. Never mind. I’ll get up.” Darcy made to get off of Strange’s lap but he wrapped his arms around her waist and stopped her.

“Don’t pout.” Strange chastised softly.

“I’m not pouting. I’m getting up like you wanted, now let me go.” Darcy ordered.

“The past can’t hurt you Darcy. You shouldn’t be afraid of it.”

Darcy narrowed her eyes at Strange and used an accusatory tone as she finger poked him in the chest, “Don’t go all fortune cookie on me now doc.”

Strange grabbed her finger in his trembling hand, “Whatever you find out about what happened to you, it won’t hurt. It won’t change anything.”

When she contacted Tony and Pepper, she discovered she had lost ten days. She also learned that Tony had the arc reactor removed from his chest and Pepper had been infected with this…fire poison, but Bruce was working on developing a cure, so she wasn’t supposed to worry. Darcy wrapped her free arm around Strange’s back and put her head on his shoulder so she could avoid his
eyes, half hugging him, half hiding.

“You were abducted. Possibly tortured. Maybe experimented on.” Strange stated frankly, “Those are the most likely scenarios, but you’re here now. Knowing the truth can only help you moving forward…not hurt you.”

Tony had tried to track down footage of her in the airport, the last place she could remember being, but the footage from all the camera’s in the area had been wiped out mysteriously. It was only through eye witness accounts from store owners and the stewardess’s, that Darcy knew for sure that she had landed and got off the plane. No one knew what happened to her after that. Tony and Pepper had been busy with their own problems, but Steve had noticed that she was missing and had sounded the proverbial alarm.

Apparently, he had all of SHIELD out looking for her, but even with Steve’s new spy contacts, no one could find her. Eventually all assumed she had just teleported off planet again. Considering the condition she had arrived in, Darcy knew that wherever she had gone, whatever had happened to her, it wasn’t good. And finding out the truth wasn’t going to be pleasant. Her scheduled session with the Ancient One, was supposed to be about recovering her lost memories. Hence her procrastination.

“I know the past can’t hurt me physically. You want me to go all Rafiki, Lion King, I get it.” Darcy agreed in a small voice. Strange let go of her hand and they fully embraced, hugging each other tightly.

“Learning the truth can only help arm you for the future.” Strange said trying to be comforting, but it wasn’t comforting.

Darcy closed her eyes and tried not to cry. Every night she had spent with Strange, she had been having nightmares and they were increasing in their ferocity. They were leaving her exhausted and drained. And that’s exactly how she felt right then. Frigga had warned her that those who had the ‘sight’, who foresaw the future…it never helped. Knowing things…knowing things didn’t help. Darcy had been having horrific, horrible dreams. And knowing they might come true…her possible foreknowledge didn’t make her feel armed for the future, it made her feel…afraid of it….impotent.

Strange knew she had nightmares, he woke her up and comforted her when they became too bad. She had taken up calling out in her sleep according to him, thrashing around as vicious visions played out in her head. He wanted to help her, but Darcy didn’t think he could.

She agreed with him anyway, “Okay.”

Strange ran his hands down her arms asking, “Do you want me to come with you?...I..I haven’t…that we’re not---”

Darcy cut him off, “Yes please.”

“Are you sure?” Strange asked, pulling away from their hug gently, he stared into her eyes.

Darcy allowed herself to examine his face. Stephen Strange was classically handsome. And the little bit of grey that was developing at his temples was a total silver fox turn on she didn’t know she had. In truth, Strange was a weird dude. Hot. Driven. Smart. Kind. She liked him a lot. Which frightened her even more.

She prayed to Frigga and Thor and even Odin, that her dreams were just normal nightmares and not visions of the future. But she would never be sure, until they came true…
She prayed she’d never have to watch the man before her flake away like ash in the wind.

“Come with me. Please?” Darcy asked shyly, “You’re right…I’m scared….I don’t know what the hell is going on. In the future, the past. I feel like the present--right now, with you..this is all that makes sense to me.”

Strange’s eyes crinkled. He looked confused, but his lips quirked into a smile as he brought their foreheads together, “Future, past, present?...Who’s the fortune cookie now?”

Darcy felt a similar smile tug at her lips. She brought her mouth to Strange’s and placed a sweet kiss on his lips, muttering, “Shut up smartie pants.”

They made out for another fifteen minutes before Karl came by to rouse them again. This time with a bucket full of water. Cold water. Which he unrepentantly threw at them, making them spring apart and scramble off the bed.

Ice cold water. ‘Cause Karl Mordo was an evil rat bastard with no sympathy for no one.

Darcy had sought out the Ancient One only a handful of times since arriving at Kamar-Taj. Most memorable was the time she asked the bald woman if she had to do everything like everyone else who was studying at Kamar-Taj. The Ancient One had told her she didn’t need to do anything she didn’t feel comfortable with. And that was when she quit trying to mediate and started hanging out in the library with Wong more. It was also the point at which she sent out an S.O.S. to Tony and had him express deliver her some creature comforts. Such as Pringles, a laptop, spray cheese, 500 thread count sheets, a giant pack of Gatorade, a razor, and some wardrobe essentials.

Looking around Kamar-Taj, the place really did look like Hogwarts. Everyone there dressed the same, ate the same, and spent their free time doing the same stuff. It almost appeared cult like. Darcy naturally differentiated herself from the other inhabitants, just based on her behavior alone. However it was nice that her own Daddy Warbucks could put the icing on her ‘Darcy-is-an-individual-not-a-mindless-drone-cake’ with a wave of his magical Mastercard.

Despite her ‘bucking’ the system with the Ancient One’s approval Darcy was dressed in a similar fashion as most of the inhabitants of Kamar-Taj, just based on the weather. She wore layers, and it was all vaguely karate class-esque, with her wrap style shirt, vest and coat. Strange had actually bought her the socks she was wearing after she complained that she missed shopping, what with her being confined to Kamar-Taj. She had lamented about her desire to explore, she had never been to Asia before. In response Strange left the compound and returned with a pair of humorous socks and an apology that he wasn’t better at cheering people up.

Darcy tugged on her loose draw string pants, picking out a wedgie really quick before Strange opened the door to the Ancient One’s private study. Upon entering, they found that the Ancient One was already waiting for them. Sitting in the middle of the room, kneeling with her eyes closed.

“You’re late.” The Ancient One ridiculed without opening her eyes.

“Sorry.” Darcy apologized quickly, not sounding very sorry at all. Strange squeezed her hand in censure as they approached the unassuming, and yet very intimidating woman.
“Our apologies.” Strange said.

“Why are you here Dr. Strange?” The Ancient One asked, finally opening her eyes to pin Strange with a mildly probing stare.

“Moral support?” Strange said, phrasing his answer like a question. The Ancient One turned her eyes onto Darcy. She almost wilted in response.

The Ancient One…she had a vibe…maybe an aura? Darcy could feel it. Sense it? Whatever the semantics may be, Darcy found the Ancient One very unsettling. Especially when the woman gave Darcy her undivided attention.

Darcy met the woman’s gaze all the same, asking with just a hint of vulnerability in her voice, “Please? Can he stay?”

The Ancient One looked at them impassively; she tilted her head and gestured to the empty space before her with a wave of her hand. Darcy looked at Strange and he gave her a smile, apparently this meant that he was welcome to join them. They both walked over to her and sat down across from the older woman.

Strange copied the Ancient One’s kneeling position, Darcy sat criss-cross like she was in preschool.

“So, how do we start?” Darcy asked. The Ancient One gestured down to the little tea table set between them.

“Drink.” The Ancient One commanded in that quiet way of hers. Darcy grimaced but picked up the cup she indicated and took a big sip as instructed.

“I hate tea.” Darcy groused, before asking, “So what will this do? Put me into a trance or something?”

The Ancient One picked up her own steaming cup and took a delicate sip before answering with an amused grin, “No. It’s just tea.”

“Oh.” Darcy responded, she put the cup down into its saucer gently, “In that case, I’ll pass.”

The Ancient One preformed her hand wave-y magic and then poof. They were in the airport. The last place she remembered being. Only…she wasn’t living it, she was watching it.

“The spell allows the viewer an outsider’s perspective on their own memories.” The Ancient One informed her, startling Darcy. The Ancient One stood beside her, Strange on her other side.

“I’m right here.” Strange assured her. Darcy nodded and turned her attention back to the scene.

Ste watched herself run into a man. He flashed her a smile and then pulled out a badge. He was from SHIELD. He said that Tony pissed off the wrong terrorist, and he had been sent to collect and protect Darcy.

And like an idiot, Darcy believed him. She went with him willingly.

When her…past/memory self, got in the car with the agent, she her ‘present’ self, the Ancient One and Strange all floated alongside the car as it drove. It was super weird.

“You recognize him?” Strange asked.
“No.” Darcy said softly. They all watched as she and the agent chatted in the car amicably. It was night time and darkness swirled all around them, her past self wasn’t able to recognize where he was taking her, but she assumed he was going the right way. She made small talk with her potential kidnapper, she joked and smiled with him. He seemed to like her.

Present Darcy couldn’t help but wonder if this whole thing was a big mistake. The agent was actually pretty handsome and he defenintly had the build to be a body guard. Maybe they got into a car accident and she was knocked unconscious and she teleported away? Maybe her getting stabbed was all a mistake too? Maybe her power had malfunctioned and stranded her on a desert island for ten days?...Yeah right, and maybe a coconut hit her on the head and gave her short term memory loss like something out of Gilligan’s Island.

“Look.” Strange pointed to the back seat. What Darcy had assumed was a tarp covering luggage or garbage, moved. Ever so slightly.

“Carjacker?” Darcy guessed doubtfully. Strange shrugged his shoulders.

Darcy and the agent arrived at a building. He had said he was taking her to a hotel, but he had driven her to a building that looked abandoned. Past/memory Darcy started to look a little anxious. The agent gave her an easy smile and assured her that she was perfectly safe.

“I thought you were taking me to a hotel?” Past/memory Darcy asked.

“I only said that to throw of anyone who might have been listening and tried to follow us.” The agent said as he got out of the car. Past/memory Darcy’s hand jerked towards the electronic lock on the door, like she was tempted to lock the agent out of the car. But he still had the keys, so that would have been useless.

The agent pulled out his cell phone while Darcy sat nervously inside the car. The agent glanced at her before coming around to her side of the car. He gave her a reassuring smile, ”You look jumpy. Here, take this and talk to Mr. Stark yourself so you can see I’m on the up and up.”

The agent opened her door and held out the phone to her. Present Darcy touched a hand to her own ear. She could hear what her past self was hearing.

“We’re sorry. The number you have dialed is not in service.” Past/memory Darcy looked up at the agent in horror. There was a flurry of movement from the backseat. And then there was a needle in Darcy’s neck and she was slumping forward.

“Fuck.” Present Darcy cursed, more annoyed with her own stupidity than what had happened so far.

She, the Ancient One and Strange were enveloped in total darkness before they were once again faced with her memory. Only the setting had changed.

Past/memory Darcy was now handcuffed with her arms behind her back lying on her side, on the floor of an empty room, with no windows and one door. Fake Agent crouched beside her on the floor, slapping her face lightly cooing, ”Wakey, wakey.”

“What happened? How’d I get all tied up?!” Darcy asked shrilly.
The Ancient One, who had been mostly silent stepped forward and put a hand on Darcy’s shoulder, “It’s a memory spell. We can only see what you were able to see. You must have been rendered unconscious.”

Strange put his arm around her shoulders and Darcy automatically leaned into him, wrapping her own arm around his waist. Strange asked quietly, “Do you want to stop?”

“We should keep going.” The Ancient One advised, “The spell is more affective if not interrupted.”

Strange glared at her and then snapped, “She should stop if she needs to take a break. There’s no reason to traumatize her further.”

“I’m not traumatized.” Darcy argued softly, she put a hand on Strange’s chest, “I’m just…shocked. Shocked that I let this happen.”

Strange’s face scrunched up, “You didn’t let any of this happen.”

Strange made a sweeping gesture to her small figure being roused awake on the floor. The florescent lighting made her look like shit. All pale and petrified. Fake Agent helped her to sit up and drink from a water bottle.

“But I went with him…like an idiot! Like a fucking child lured into a van with promises of puppies and candy!” Darcy raged. Strange looked at her with a pained expression and Darcy couldn’t help but feel worse.

“You did nothing wrong.” Strange stated with conviction, Darcy let her eyes slide past him to the vision of her memory.

“Let’s keep watching, and see if you’re right.” Darcy challenged. They all redirected their attention back on the past.

“What do you want from me?” Past/memory Darcy asked.

Fake Agent smiled at her, “What do you mean? Isn’t it obvious?”

Fake Agent ran a finger over her lower lip. Both Darcy’s, past and present, flinched jerking their heads back. Fake Agent dropped his hand and gave her knee a squeeze, commenting in a husky tone, “You’re a very pretty girl Darcy.”

Strange’s grip on her shoulders tightened and Darcy’s stomach sank. Her eyes watered and her eyes darted over to Strange. His eyes never moved from her past self. She took a deep breath and focused back on the scene.

“So you’re a rapist?” Past/memory Darcy asked boldly, giving a flat look to Fake Agent. This made him grin wider.

“Is that you’re way of telling me you like me back?”

The door burst open and a new man entered the room dragging two metal chairs behind him. The man was dressed all in black and had a weird mask thing covering half his face. He had longish shaggy brown hair and piercing blue eyes. Though, those eyes looked alert…they also looked dead. Like the man had no life left in him.

Something in Darcy lurched towards the man. Drawn to him.
“Him.” Darcy uttered.

“What about him?” Strange asked quickly.

“I don’t know.” Darcy answered, her eyes tracking every movement the new man made.

Fake Agent barked an order at the muzzled man and her past self was hauled to her feet and made to sit on one of the chairs. Fake Agent took the other chair and set it up right in front of her before sitting down in it so closely to her that their knees touched. The silent man took up a position directly behind her. Her past/memory self craned her neck around to look at him.

“Who’s he?” Darcy’s past/memory self asked, turning back to Fake Agent she quirked an eyebrow and quipped, “Your super into BDSM boyfriend?”

Fake Agent tipped his head back and let out a hearty laugh. When he was done laughing his face fell into an expression of distain and he backhanded her across the face.

Darcy pressed a hand to her face; she could feel the sting of the hit only…it was like an echo of the pain.

Strange addressed the Ancient One, “Can she—Is she relieving this? Physically?”

The Ancient One assessed her present self with a cool gaze, “She shouldn’t be.”

Darcy reassured them, “I’m not feeling it. Not like it’s happening, more like I’m remembering how much it hurt.”

Strange nodded, “Okay…just, remember if you need to stop.”

Darcy turned away from him and asserted, “We’re not stopping.”

Past/memory Darcy nodded to herself, “Okay, maybe I deserved that one. Everyone knows that being a sassy pants to your abductor gets you hit. I should have expected that.”

Fake Agent said nothing.

Past/memory Darcy babbled on, “But really, what the hell is going on? Am I bait? Is this an interrogation? Are you actually just a crazy person, picking on me just cause you have a thing for brunettes?”

“You’re a talker.” Fake Agent said conversationally, “That’s good.”

Fake Agent nodded at the silent man behind her, signaling him. Suddenly there was a deceptively strong gloved hand around past/memory Darcy’s throat. Fake Agent smiled, “That’ll make this so much more fun, for me.”

Past/memory Darcy struggled, trying to squirm out of the silent man’s grip, but he just put his other hand on her shoulder.

Fake Agent slapped her on the thigh and gestured to the man behind her, “This here’s the Asset. He’s an obedient guard dog. He’ll do anything to you I tell him to. Choke you. Rape you. Beat you. Kill you. Trust me honey, he’s nothing more than an obedient soldier….Hold on, I’ve got to check this.”

Fake Agent took out his phone and pressed a few buttons. The silent man, the Asset, crouched down and whispered in her ear from behind. His voice was low and gruff and barely audible but Darcy
heard it “Stop. Or I’ll have to hurt you.”

Past/memory Darcy listened. She stopped struggling in the strong man’s grip. She trembled, her lip quivering as Fake Agent put his phone away and focused back on her.

“You gonna be a good girl and do as I say?” Past/memory Darcy nodded in agreement.

“Good.” Fake Agent said, his gaze lowering from her eyes to her lips.

”Kiss me.” He ordered. Past/memory Darcy’s eyes widened, but beyond that she didn’t move.

Fake Agent snarled and grabbed the front of her t-shirt yanking her forward into his personal space, ”I said kiss me!”

“Why?!” Past/memory Darcy cried out. Fake gent just glared and snapped his fingers. The hand around her throat squeezed cutting off her oxygen.

“Jesus.” Strange exclaimed and present Darcy tried to pull away from him but he held her close. Wrapping her up in his arms as if he could protect her from the past.

Past/memory Darcy struggled, gasping for air but finding none thanks to the ‘asset’s’ tight grip on her windpipe. She slapped at his hand tried to reach behind her to hurt the Asset, to get him to let her go, but she was helpless.

Fake Agent snapped his fingers again and the Asset’s hand released her throat. Past/memory Darcy gasped, drinking in air and coughing. Fake Agent ran his hand up and down her upper thighs in a soothing fashion.

“That’s it baby. Just take it one breath at a time. In and out. You’ll be okay.” Fake Agent coached. Past/memory Darcy listened to his advice but glared at him all the while she struggled to get her breathing back to normal.

Fake Agent stood up and abruptly sat on Darcy’s legs, straddling her and crushing her with his massive frame. He put his hands on her stomach and slowly slide them up her torso, over her breasts up her neck, to her cheeks. He cupped her face in his hands gently as he grunted, “I’m not going to rape you.”

With her face awkwardly handled, past/memory Darcy responded bitingly, “Gee whiz, wonder why I don’t believe you.”

Fake Agent ignored her quip and continued on threatening her in a guttural tone, “I want you to kiss me…like you mean it. With tongue. Not because I’m going to rape you. But because I want you to know who is in charge. I want you to know that you will do as I say, or the next thing I make you do…it’ll be so much worse than one measly kiss.” Past/memory Darcy swallowed thickly.

“So I’ll say it again…” Fake Agent released her face and let his hands fall down to the tops of her thighs. He caressed her gently as he urged her, “Kiss me.”

Past/memory Darcy stared in shock at the man sitting on her lap like the most unsexy lap dancer ever. Present Darcy remembered how dumbstruck she felt. How afraid and confused. How impotent.

Past/memory Darcy moved her head forward slightly. Fake Agent’s answering smile lit a fiery hatred in her eyes, but she continued leaning forward towards the man, intent on giving in to his demand.

Present Darcy looked away, hiding her face in Strange’s chest as her past/memory self made out with
her abductor. She didn’t need to see it…she remembered it now, how softly the evil man kissed her. How gentle and skilled he was with his tongue. She could feel the ghost of his lips on hers as the scene played out in front of them. Her stomach turned at the thought and she clutched at Strange’s belt with a white knuckled grip.

She didn’t look when her past/memory self broke the kiss and Fake Agent began speaking again.

“Mmm. You’re good at that too.” Fake Agent complimented, teasing her, “You sure you’re not into this?”

“Can you get off of my lap?” Past/memory Darcy requested politely ignoring his taunting, “You’re crushing me.”

“Aww. I’m sorry baby. Course I can…..Better?”

“Yes.” Past/memory Darcy answered weakly.

“Good. So. You ready to get this thing started?” Fake Agent asked.

“Haven’t we already started?” Present Darcy lifted her head from Strange’s chest and turned to watch her memory once again.

Fake Agent loomed over her past self, his hand holding her chin in place as he gave her a kiss on the cheek, “Oh babygirl, that was just an introduction. Now it’s time for the warm up.”

The warm up consisted of her being forced out of the chair onto her feet. She was told she had to stand on one leg, until Fake Agent said otherwise. He warned that if she lowered her leg she would be ‘prompted’ by the Asset to pick it back up. Then the vile man left the room, promising to be back soon.

Darcy, Strange and the Ancient One watched as Darcy’s past/memory self stood on one leg for five uninterrupted minutes. Almost simultaneously Darcy’s past and present selves announced, “I’m bored.”

The Ancient One did some hand waving and the scene magically went into fast forward.

“Shouldn’t we…not do this, fast forwarding thing? In case anything important get’s said.” Darcy asked.

The Ancient One stared at her, “Did anything important get said?”

Darcy crinkled her brow in confusion, “Isn’t that what we’re here to find out?”

The Ancient One turned her gaze back onto her past/memory self, “If anything of import is said, you will feel it and I will restore the memory to real time.”

Being forced to stand one foot seemed to last for at least a few hours. Then Fake Agent came back into the room with food. She, the Asset, and Fake Agent all ate together. She remembered how uncomfortable and silent it was as they ate. Like the weirdest, most awkward three-way date ever.

Past/memory Darcy was then blindfolded and marched out of the room and only unmasked and uncuffed when she had reached a bathroom. It was the Asset who had escorted her, he also stayed and watched as she relieved herself. Present Darcy covered Strange’s eyes as her past/memory self peed, that was just a little to intimate.
Past/memory Darcy was then re-blindfolded and marched back into the empty room. She was forced to resume her one legged standing position, only the Asset let her stand on the other leg. Fake Agent left the room again and the Asset took up his sentry position behind her as Darcy was forced to stand.

Though they were fast forwarding through the memory and couldn’t hear what was being said, she did talk. She talked to the Asset, but he didn’t seem to respond. And as they watched it Darcy began to remember what she had said. What she had done. What had been done to her.

It was all coming back to her, everything. It was like a flood, or being hit by a wave. She was suddenly submerged in the knowledge of what had happened to her during her lost ten days.

“Stop.” Darcy yelled, the Ancient One waved her hands and real time was restored to memory.

Past/memory Darcy looked haggard. She put her leg down and the Asset shoved her. Her past self turned on the intimidating man and shoved him back. “I can’t stand anymore!” Past/memory Darcy shouted.

With her hands still handcuffed behind her back, she crumpled to the floor and sat criss cross awkwardly sulking, “I need to rest. I can’t do this anymore!...I can’t.”

“This is a day later.” Present Darcy announced.

“They made you stand for a day?” Strange asked sounded horrified.

Darcy watched her past self cry on the floor, “Yeah. They started with stress positions. Then they added some light tazing and punching and stuff when I tried to fight back. After I was too broken to fight they used constant florescent lighting, more stress position fun and loud irritating sounds at high volume to further break me. After being kept awake for four days straight, they finally asked their first question.”

“What did they want to know?” Strange inquired.

“Everything.” Darcy responded. It was true.

They wanted everything. They wanted to know about Asgard, the Avengers, her powers, her sex life, her likes and dislikes, her thoughts on the current political climate, what she wanted to grow up to be when she was a little kid, her thoughts on war, her thoughts on crunchy verses creamy peanut butter. They wanted everything!

“What does that mean!!” Strange demanded in a tight voice.

“It means everything.” Darcy answered in a distracted voice, her eyes glued to the Asset. He watched her with a dispassionate expression. He gestured to the door and Fake Agent re-entered, taser in hand.


Strange grabbed her hand and squeezed it, “Darcy he made you---I didn’t even think to run a rape kit when we found you---”

“He didn’t rape me. He didn’t make me…beyond what you saw; there was no more sexual assault-y stuff. Just normal assault-y stuff.” Darcy said, gesturing to Fake Agent tasing her past/memory self on the floor. The man wore a sadistic grin on his face as she withered in pain at his feet.
“Darcy are you sure--”

Darcy put a hand on Strange’s arm and stared into his eyes so he would see the sincerity in her words, “Beyond some light spanking and derogatory language, he never touched me like that again.”

Strange reached out for her face, but only let the tips of his fingers caress her cheek, “I’m so sorry this happened to you.”

She couldn’t face the pity in his eyes when he looked at her. Darcy took a step forward and wrapped her arms around Strange, prompting him to do the same. Allowing her to hide her face from his sad eyes.

“Can we go back to the real world now?” Darcy asked, her words muffled by Strange’s robe.

“Close your eyes. And count to ten.” The Ancient One instructed. She and Strange did as she bid and when she opened her eyes again, she and Strange were sitting side by side across from the Ancient One in her private study. Safe within the walls of Kamar-Taj.

“Woah.” Darcy sighed, putting a hand to her temple. She felt a little woozy.

“Have a sip of tea.” The Ancient One prompted. Darcy did as the woman instructed, slurping greedily even as her face screwed up in distain at the foul tasting liquid.

Strange, not missing a beat turned to her and asked, “So do you know why they took you?”

“Nope.” Darcy admitted, “But I know who took me…visually anyway. So that’s a start I guess. I never did catch their names, not that they would have given me their real ones even if I asked.”

“You never got their names?” The Ancient One asked. Darcy shook her head.

“Who stabbed you?” Dr. Strange questioned as he moved closer to her.

“I did.” Darcy admitted as she took another sip of tea.


“They were using sleep deprivation tactics to keep me awake to keep me from using my power to escape. I needed to get out of there because I was getting delirious and starting to forget to lie.”

“What do you mean?” The Ancient One asked as she too sipped on her tea.

Darcy cupped her hands around the porcelain cup. She stared down into the brown liquid as spoke, “I’d never give up my friends…or myself. I lied about everything….at least at first. I tried to keep my answers simple and close to the truth, but after a while they—they could tell when I was just bullshitting them. And little truths started to slip out. And then some big ones.”

“What did you tell them?” Strange inquired sounding more concerned than curious.

“I told them about Asgard, I figured that would be the least helpful out of all the information I could give them, I mean, what can they do to Gods? I think I managed to lie about everything else, but at the end I was so tired I don’t know. I started to lose all sense of time and…reality.” Darcy said deflating a bit, “I just wanted the pain to stop at a certain point.”

“So you stabbed yourself?” Strange asked sounding incredulous.

“I stabbed myself…so I would pass out. So I could sleep and hopefully escape. I mean, I tried to aim
for something non-vital.” Darcy said with a shrug.

“That was a terrible plan.” Strange commented dryly.

Darcy muttered under her breathe, “Fuck you judge-y pants.”

“What will you do with this information, now that you have it?” The Ancient One inquired as she put her cup down.

Darcy could feel the weight of both Strange and her eyes upon her. Darcy stared at the bald woman with a slight frown. “I guess…that’s the question. Isn’t it?”

Darcy’s Sleep outfit
Darcy’s ‘Kamar-Taj’ Day Outfit
Chapter End Notes

So...Tony & Pepper next?
Back to Steve?
Bruce?
Someone from Asgard?
Someone else?
.....................................?

What would you most like to see? Let me know in the comments. Also, did you like the chapter? Was the memory thing confusing?
Chapter 14 – Pepper Potts

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to Pepper Potts

Chapter Notes

Author’s Note: Sticking close to the cannon in the movies, one scene and some dialogue might seem very familiar….

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 14 – Pepper Potts

Darcy woke up next to Strange with a gasp. She’d dreamt that the Asset died just like Strange had in her other dreams…and it had felt sad. She was confused and upset and she knew it would be pointless to try to go back to sleep so she glanced at the window. It wasn’t light out yet, which meant that if she slipped out of bed very quietly she could get some reading done before Strange woke up.

She could feel her body’s tiredness, but she slipped out of the bed regardless. She padded across the room on bare feet, she both closed and opened the door quickly and quietly. She headed next door to her own room to grab clothes and use the bathroom. Every step of her foot felt heavy, her head was foggy, but she kept moving forward. Most days she woke up exhausted, it was nothing new.

She had been running herself ragged ever since she learned the truth about her abduction and subsequent missing ten days. She had been practicing magical fighting techniques with Karl Mordo daily. And when she wasn’t pushing her body to the limit, she was stuffing her mind with as much knowledge as it could hold, spending countless hours reading in the library with Wong. Karl commended her commitment to self-improvement, but Wong and Strange both thought she was working too hard.

After her trip down memory lane, the Ancient One removed the spell that kept her tied to the grounds of Kamar-Taj, but despite this, she hadn’t left the relative safety of the real life Asian Hogwarts, with the exception of a few occasions. Strange managed to pry her away from her studies once to go shopping in a nearby market place and once more to go on a stereotypical ‘American tourist’ sightseeing tour, complete with overly eager tour guide. Strange and she didn’t talk about what happened to her much. She avoided the topic because it brought up bad memories; she assumed he was just following her lead.

She was woman enough to admit she was feeling a little vulnerable now that she and Strange barely spent any time together that wasn’t ‘magic study’ related. He’d finally mastered the sling ring and was now advancing level wise, much faster. As a result they had less and less opportunities to make out and stuff. Not to mention she was still feeling semi-violated after her ordeal, which had translated into her acting aloof. The distance that had cropped up between them, coupled with her incessant dreams, and recent trauma all had her feeling raw. Hence the intense training.
She read that morning until the sun came up; she then skipped eating breakfast so she could join the
morning yoga class lead by the handless Master Hamir. Afterwards she found a sunny spot in the
courtyard and finished reading about the Vaulting Boots of Valtorr that Karl used so well when
sparring. When she was done with her reading, Karl sought her out. He offered to join her for a run
before his class. They worked up a sweat running in circles in the training area; Karl was kind
enough to keep pace with her slower gait. She had been there a month but her commitment to
learning all that she could physically and magically had only been in effect for a couple weeks. Her
stamina still left something to be desired. As they ran, he told her humorous stories about some of his
various magical blunders over the years.

When class started Strange joined them and Karl’s friendly demeanor receded behind the mask of
‘teacher’. Karl had taken to training her and Strange together mainly because they shared the same
level of knowledge when it came to martial arts. No matter that Strange was in far better physical
shape than she. They greeted each other and Darcy tuned out, she was feeling a little light headed so
she grabbed some water.

The Ancient One and two other student’s arrived and took up space on the other side of the training
area. The bald woman oversaw all the flip-y fighting moves and stick hits with a impassive face as
she fanned herself.

“Like Kaecilius?” Strange asked, bringing Darcy’s attention back to the conversation. She’d heard of
the rogue student who stole a forbidden spell, but honestly she had so much going on in her own life
she hadn’t paid the dangerous sorcerer any mind. Strange and Karl dropped into a fighting stance
and circled each other as they spoke.

“That’s right.” Karl answered. Karl then did a cool looking kick, which Strange narrowly moved out
of the way of. Strange countered by pushing Karl’s stomach, knocking him back a few steps. They
locked each other in a weird standing wrestling type…thing.

“You knew him.” Strange stated like it was an accusation. Which was all the distraction Karl needed
to slip behind Strange and get him into a choke hold.

Karl lectured Strange while he was immobile, “When he first came to us, he’d lost everyone he’d
ever loved. He was a grieving, broken man, searching for answers in the mystic arts. A brilliant
student, but he was proud, headstrong. He questioned the Ancient One, rejected our teaching.”

Strange managed to elbow Karl in the stomach and break free, Karl nodded in acknowledgment of
Strange’s skilled move and continued telling Kaecilius’s story, “He left Kamar-Taj. His disciples
followed him like sheep seduced by false doctrine.”

“He stole a forbidden ritual right?” Strange asked.

“Yes.” Karl admitted.

“What did it do?” Strange asked as Karl made his way over to the weapons display and picked up
the Staff of the Living Tribunal.

“No more questions.” Karl announced.

“What’s that?” Strange asked.

“It’s a relic.” Darcy stated loudly, butting into the conversation.

Karl smiled and nodded at her, “Yes.”
Strange turned to her with a confused frown, “How’d you know that?”

She smiled cheekily, “I might have read ahead a bit.”

“This is a relic, like Darcy said.” Karl repeated, recapturing Strange’s attention, “Some magic is too powerful to sustain so we imbue objects with it. Allowing them to take the strain we can not.”

“This is the staff of—” Karl began, but Darcy yelled out to interrupt him, “The Staff of the Living Tribunal!”

Karl gave her an amused look and Darcy preened. Strange muttered under his breath, “Ten points to Gryffindor.”

Darcy ignored Strange in favor of clapping her hands excitedly as Karl opened the staff and revealed the glowing magic within, she ooh’d as he turned it into a whip like thing and slapped it dramatically on the ground before it returned to its solid staff shape in his hands.

“There are many relics,” Karl informed them, “the Wand of Watoomb. The Vaulting Boots of Boltor.”

Darcy bit her lip in excitement as Karl tapped his heel causing orange sparks from the sole of his boot. Strange quipped, “They really roll of the tongue don’t they.”

Darcy slapped a hand at his stomach, “Like all that medical jargon is easy-peasy to spout.”

“Can I try on the boots?” Darcy asked, “I brought an extra pair of socks in case they’re too big.”

“No.” Karl refused kindly.

“When do I get my relic?” Strange asked.

“When you’re ready.” Karl said with a smile.

“I think I’m ready.”

“You’re ready when the relic decides you’re ready.”

Darcy playfully shoved at Strange’s shoulder, “Yeah, Strange. The wand chooses the wizard.”

Strange turned to her and scowled, “Why do you insist on calling me Strange? We’re…you know. You should call me by my first name. Which is Stephen in case you forgot.”

“I already know a Steven. And he’s much blonder than you.” Darcy replied breezily she moved over to Karl and grabbed the staff out of his hands, examining it close up.

“You can’t keep track of two people with the same name?” Strange challenged.

“I can’t not call you Strange, it’s your name.” Darcy smiled in thanks and handed the staff back to Karl.

“But—” Strange tried to object, but Darcy cut him off, “Look. I already call you Strange in my head. I can’t change it now.”

“That’s ridiculous.” Strange accused, “You shouldn’t—it’s weird! I’ve seen you semi naked! We’ve engaged in romantic relations.”
“Romantic relations?” Darcy repeated mockingly.

“And with that engagement, we’ve achieved a certain level of intimacy. You shouldn’t be calling me by my last name. It’s…”

“Strange?” Darcy offered with a smirk.

“Formal.” Strange finished in a flat tone.

“Agree to disagree.” Darcy said as she folded her arms in front of her chest.

“Are you two finished?” Karl snapped sounding annoyed. Strange looked away from both of them.

Darcy looked contrite as she apologized, “Sorry. My fault. Back to the lesson.”

Karl addressed Strange, “You watch.” He then pointed to her with the staff, “You. Conjure a weapon.”

Darcy took a step away from Karl and closed her eyes for a moment a she attempted to gather herself. Karl was asking her to shape and manipulate Eldritch magic, not her forte but she was improving.

She brought her hands about twelve inches apart and concentrated on the image of what she wanted to make, forming a tangible construct out of energy. It began as line but then as she willed into the desired shape, the glowing energy construct became larger and more circular. When she opened her eyes she saw that she had recreated Steve’s shield. Star and all.

“Ready?” Karl asked. She nodded.

Karl attacked with a ferocity that startled her, but she didn’t back down. He used the Staff of the Living Tribunal like it was a light saber, first trying to strike at her left side, then her right. Sparks clashed as his weapon beat at her shield viciously.

She’d noticed that Karl used a lot more patience with her than when he dealt with Strange or other students. And at first it had annoyed her, but then she realized he never held back. He didn’t treat her like glass, he attacked her with the same amount of power and strength that he used on everyone else. He just…made sure she was ready before he did. Which she appreciated, especially in moments like these.

When she realized that she was only acting defensively she decided to change tactics. She put her shoulder behind her shield and launched herself forward knocking into Karl with the full weight of her body inexpertly knocking him back several steps. Karl smiled at her even as he tried to use the staff to sweep her legs out from underneath her. She jumped avoiding the staff.

“Good.” Karl encouraged as he walked back several steps and turned in a circle.

“Fuck.” Darcy cursed as she realized what he was doing. He needed more room to use the magical boots to gain the ‘high ground’ and attack her once he had leverage. Darcy could do nothing but brace herself as Karl used the boots to briefly walk on air, jumping down on her with a punch which her shield saved her from.

As Karl got his feet back on solid ground, Darcy raised her arms and aimed the edge of her shield at his throat and lunged forward. Karl’s eyes bulged as she effectively throat punched him with her energy shield. Once he was off guard. She brought the shield down again and pushed him with it. He stumbled back tripping on her discarded water bottle, falling to the ground butt first.
Darcy smiled widely as she stared down at her fallen teacher, “I won!”

Strange clapped from the corner and she turned to him, “Did you see that! I kicked his---Ah!”

Something hit her back with such force that she fell forward. When Darcy hit the floor, her energy shield construct dissolved as she put her hands out to brake her fall and save her face from the ground. She turned to glare at Karl who smiled at her broadly.

He held up his staff and shook it at her tauntingly, “You forgot to disarm me.”

After class Strange disappeared and Karl offered to eat lunch with her. Darcy begged off, citing a prior engagement. She grabbed an apple from the dining hall and headed to the library for her quizzing session with Wong. Two seconds after arriving, she promptly passed out.

Darcy realized after she regained consciousness that she had skipped dinner the previous night, which maybe wasn’t the smartest decision. And she’d done all that physical activity with Karl and Strange, so maybe she should have grabbed something more substantial than an apple for lunch. Add all that information up with the fact that she had only gotten a couple hours of sleep thanks to her non-stop nightmares, now featuring visions of a possible horrible future and memories of being tortured for information. It was no wonder that she passed out.

Wong threw some water on her face, reviving her, and he must have suspected what was wrong with her because he forced her into eating a big lunch. While she ate, Wong lectured her about self-care and physical limitations and blah, blah, blah. She sort of tuned him out after a while. He must have sensed that too. He strong armed her into agreeing to follow him to a ‘special’ place of his choosing to learn some ‘cleansing’ mental exercises.

He sent her back to her room to get weather appropriate clothing, then he used his sling ring to take her to the top of a mountain. There she was surrounded by blue skies, snow, and air that was thin and left her breathless. The view was the very definition of splendor. It was gorgeous. It was peaceful. And it was quiet.

The natural beauty that she was surrounded by lulled her into silence and obedience, which was in and of itself, a miracle.

Wong instructed her to sit comfortably on the cold ground beside him. She did as he bid without complaint or whining. Most at Kamar-Taj had long since given up hope that she could sit still long enough to achieve a meditative ‘trance/sleep like’ state and thus (hopefully) control her powers at will, but not Wong… apparently. Wong gestured to the expansive beauty laid out bare before them and asked, “What do you see?”


Wong gave her a half smile, “Yes. That is true. But…what do you know is out there, that you cannot see?”

Darcy scrunched her nose up, “Huh?”

“The wind?” Wong prompted, “It is there but we cannot see it.”

“Oooh. Uh, um…the animals?” Darcy guessed. Wong nodded encouragingly.
“Uh, okay, the…village at the base of the mountain? The people that live there. The…trees? I don’t
know. If we’re going to get metaphysical, everything’s out there I guess. So, what’s the right
answer?” Darcy asked.

“The world is out there. That is the answer. Our world. The people, the things we’ve built, the
animals we co-exist with, the bugs, the germs, the tiny atoms that make up the matter that makes up
everything.” Wong concluded.

“You’re losing me dude.” Darcy admitted.

“The Ancient One is much better at explaining things like this, but I shall try my best, forgive me as I
muddle through?” Wong asked with a wan smile. Darcy nodded.

“What you see with your eyes is a part of the material universe. Beyond that, there is more. So much
more. More worlds, more mystery, more power. This universe is only one of an infinite number.
There are worlds without end. Some benevolent and life giving; others filled with malice and hunger.
Who you are…who you are in this vast multiverse is what matters.”

Wong gave her a pointed look, “Working yourself to the bone will yield nothing of substance if you
cannot see beyond yourself.”

Darcy didn’t know what wisdom Wong was trying to impart but she had a vague notion of his
general point. The truth was, she didn’t always understand the magical texts she read, they used a lot
of metaphors and fancy words she had to look up and cross reference. Its why she had to read
everything multiple times and go to Wong asking clarifying questions. He never got annoyed with
her whenever she asked a stupid question, unlike Strange who grew visibly frustrated if he had to
explain something to her more than once. Strange had a photographic memory so never revisited the
same book twice.

It was a big topic though, magic. Totally worthy of re-reading dry info texts in her opinion. The
concept of multiple realities and thoughts shaping reality were dense topics and she was in awe of
how quickly Strange could whip through each subject, mastering it so easily (in comparison to her).
It’s why she enjoyed classes with Karl so much, she did better with the physical.

Karl had taken an interest in her for some reason and he had been a great help in helping her with her
attempts at Eldritch magic manipulation. Or as she liked to call it, glowing energy shape magic. But
even with help, it didn’t seem like she would be able to become a master sorceress any time that
century. Truly, forming energy constructs, and duplications spells were the only things she’d had
success with thus far. She sucked at transmutation, protection spells, binding spells, atmospheric
spells, dimensional warping, astral projection, not to mention her own innate teleportation power. It
was deeply frustrating and infuriating and only fueled her into working harder. Trying harder. …Too
hard perhaps.

“What does that mean?” Darcy asked in a pathetic voice, annoyed that she once again needed
something spelled out for her in layman’s terms.

“It means you are giving me an ulcer and I want you to slow down.” Wong said frankly, “No one
can become a master in a day.”

Darcy turned to the man and eagerly defended herself, “But I’m just trying to get better! To be
stronger. I want to be less D.I.D, more Buffy! Or Xena….You feel me?”

“D.I.D.?” Wong asked seeking clarification.
“Ugh, D.I.D. Damsel in Distress. I don’t want to be an easy target. I don’t want to have to be rescued; I want to do the rescuing. I want to be my own hero. A self rescuing princess!” Darcy brushed a lock of hair out of her face putting back under her hat as she grunted, “I don’t ever want to be weak and helpless again.”

Wong put a hand on her shoulder and squeezed, “Then may I suggest not working yourself into an early grave?”

Darcy’s shoulders deflated and Wong removed his hand, “I just… I’m always-- I’m tired. I’m so tired sometimes I can’t see straight. I worry. I worry constantly. I worry about the people who took me and what they might have planned. What they’re going to do with the information I gave them. What they might do to someone else. What the Fake Agent will do to the Asset if he finds out the guy gave me the knife and showed me where to stab myself to cause the least amount of pain/death so I could escape.”

As the truth fell from Darcy’s lips she felt more and more relieved but worked up at the same time. She began talking very quickly, “I worry about the future. About it coming true. About my dreams being true! Fate being set in stone. About the fate of the planet as a whole. About my friends. The heroes I’ve come to care for that thoughtless throw themselves in the line of fire. I worry all day, every day. My worry haunts me, I feel haunted. Like is there a worry ghost? Or a worry demon? Cuz, I think they’re legit following me around. Just kidding, I know the worry is all me. It’s just my brain, driving me crazy… one uncontrollable worry at a time.”

Darcy sniffed and blinked her eyes rapidly as she suppressed the urge to tear up, “…Hell, I worry about people I’ve only dreamt of, who I’ve never met, who don’t even live on this planet, who MIGHT NOT EVEN BE REAL!”

As Darcy shouted an echo could be heard bouncing off the towering mountains all around them. Darcy sheepishly ducked her head and adjusted her mittens.

“I’m not going to pretend I understand everything you just said, but we are going to come back to your ability to see the future. Don’t think I missed that.” Wong said as he adjusted his body into a more comfortable seating arrangement.

“I don’t know for sure if I can see the future. And I don’t see it. Not premonition style, only in dreams. Garbled and fragmented.” Darcy revealed.

Wong put a hand on her back and pushed slightly, prompting her to sit up straighter, “Let us tackle one problem at a time.”

“You got a plan to catch those assholes that kidnapped me then?” Darcy asked sassily.

“No. I have a plan to allow yourself some relief from the negative thoughts that plague you.” Wong responded as he closed his eyes, “I’m going to teach you to clear your mind so you can rest and allow your mind and body to recharge. Making it easier for us to tackle the rest of your problems.”

He then instructed her to copy him. She fixed her legs, copying his pose, and then closed her eyes.

“Think of nothing but the breath moving in and out of your lungs.” She obeyed and listened as Wong’s calm and soothing voice advised her to ‘breathe in’ then ‘breathe out’, slowly, over and over.

“In… and out.”

“In…. and out.”
“In…...and out.”
“In……...and out.”
“In…………...and out.”

Darcy didn’t remember falling asleep, but when she woke up, it was to the feeling of being roasted alive. Which while unpleasant was better than how she had been feeling upon waking most days lately.

“Jesus Christ!” Darcy cursed. She brought up a hand to shade her eyes from the harsh sunlight, but gave that up as her hands began to sweat inside her mittens. Where ever she ended up, it was oppressively hot.

“Wha?” A drowsy voice asked to her left. Darcy looked over as she ripped off her mittens to see she had teleported to the side of Pepper Potts. Pepper lay on a towel beside her, dressed only in a salmon colored bikini.

They were on a beach….And Darcy had arrived wearing three layers of clothing on top including a hat that doubled as a scarf, mittens, and two sets of pants. She began stripping herself of the unneeded weight.

“Darcy?” Pepper blearily asked, squinting up at her from her reclined position. Darcy discarded her coat first.

“Hey Pep.” Darcy greeting came out muffled as she pulled her scarf/hat over her face and threw it to the sandy floor beside her.

“What are you---how are you doing?” Pepper asked as she moved up onto her elbows.

Darcy yanked the boots off her feet one by one as she replied, “Good. I was on top of a snowy mountain top and now I’m on a beach. So…upgrade?”

“Is that Darcy?” She heard Tony call out from behind her. She turned her head to see that behind her and Pepper a white curtain tent had been erected and inside was a table which Tony was lying on. The masseuse that had been giving him a massage stared at her with a confused expression.

“Hey Tony.” Darcy called out, “Yeah it’s me!”

Tony sat up abruptly, headless of the light sheet falling from around his waist, the one that was used for modesty’s sake….which Tony didn’t apparently have.

“Darcy. Kid, you’re back. How was Hogwarts? Finished with magic school already?”

Darcy averted her eyes as Tony got up from the massage table, he waved the foreign woman away dismissing her with a few curt words in Spanish. She turned to her vest and started unwrapping herself and the various knots that had tied the turtle neck garment to her body.

Even over the loud sound of the ocean’s waves crashing on the shore she could hear Tony approaching from behind but she didn’t address him. She kept her eyes on herself as she asked Pepper, “Is he just… walking around naked?”

“It’s a private beach! I can do what I want.” Tony exclaimed as he stood between her and Pepper
before plopping down in the sand next to her, headless of his nakedness.

Darcy kept her eyes averted as she wiggled out of her pants leaving herself in a light long sleeved shirt and leggings, she commented dryly to the naked billionaire, “You are going to have sand allllll up in your crevices. You get that right?”

Tony ignored her and wrapped his arms around her shoulder, pulling her towards his chest so he could hug her. Darcy, forced into close proximity with his naked chest was startled to see his arc-reactor-free chest. She ghosted a hand across the scarred tissue in the middle of his chest.

“Gross right?” Tony quipped with projected bravado. Darcy could see the tension that lined Tony’s face and she felt bad for bringing it up. One glance at Pepper and she could see the tiredness etched into the woman’s face. She forgot that they had been through something major while she’d been AWOL.

So, she joked to keep the mood light, “Not as gross as the thought of your old wrinkled balls getting all sandy two feet from Peppers face.”

“Let’s not talk about balls in my face, hmm?” Pepper smoothly bantered, inciting laughter from both Tony and Darcy.

“Tony, you’re making everyone uncomfortable. Go put something on.” Pepper prompted.

“I’m not making anyone uncomfortable!” Tony squawked, turning to her and moving his arm to point at her, unintentionally revealing his penis to her gaze, he asked, “Am I making you feel uncomfortable?”

Darcy slapped a hand over her eyes, she revealed, “I just saw Tony Stark’s penis.”

“Tony!” Pepper chastised.

“I didn’t do it on purpose!”

Darcy laid back on to the sand and then curled up on her side, putting her back to the squabbling couple, “I’m just gonna curl up over here. Don’t mind me.”

“Go put something on!” Pepper ordered, “I’m so sorry Darcy.”

“Why are you apologizing? It’s not like the sight of me is so horrific that she’ll be scarred for life! I can name twenty people off the top of my head who would die for the chance to see little Tony.”

Darcy kept her eyes stubbornly closed as she felt Tony get up and walk away from them back towards the tent.

Even with her eyes tightly closed she couldn’t resist mocking him, “You call your penis little Tony?!?”

“Don’t say it like that! He’s not that little! You saw! Or, wait, did you catch him at a weird angle? Do you need another look? Here, I’ll show you.”

“TONY!”

Darcy didn’t bother muffling her laughter as Pepper got up walked over to Tony to scold him. Two minutes later Pepper returned, “I’m sorry about him.”

“It’s fine.” Darcy replied. She was now reclined on her back. She’d folded her heavy coat into a
pillow and used her vest to cover her eyes, blocking out the sun’s bright light. She wiggled her toes, enjoying the sand squishing between them.

“So where are we?” Darcy asked.

“Tristan da Cunha.”

“Where?” Darcy asked, having never heard of Tristan da Cunha before.

“It’s the most isolated island in the world. It’s in the south Atlantic Ocean.” Pepper answered.

“Oh. Anddddd. Are you here because of your…fiery STD infection thing-y?”

“Extremis.” Pepper corrected but didn’t elaborate.

“Or…are you here because remote island couple retreats are standard affair for rich people’s vacations? As a peasant myself, I wouldn’t know about such things.” Darcy rambled feeling nervous, but Pepper laughed.

“Both.” Pepper said. She handed over Darcy a spray can of sun block. Darcy smiled gratefully and began applying it to her exposed skin.

“And how goes your cure?” Darcy ventured delicately.

“Tony says it’s almost finished. Bruce is doing some final testing to make sure it’s safe, but they think they’ve cracked it.” Pepper explained.

“That’s so good to hear. I was worried about you.” Darcy said quietly as she handed the sun block back to the equally fair colored woman. Two minutes later Tony returned.

“I’m back!” Tony announced as he once again wedged himself between her and Pepper, “What did I miss?”

Darcy was tempted to say ‘nothing’ but the prospect of messing with Tony was just too appealing. Darcy removed her vest from her eyes so she could see, she snorted when she saw what Tony was wearing, because of course he wore swim trunks with little Iron Mans on them.

“We were just discussing the logistics of our upcoming threesome. Weren’t we Pepper?” Darcy asked.

Tony’s face lit up, a smile stretched across his face, “You were?”

“Yeah.” Pepper confirmed sounding uninterested but Darcy appreciated the older woman playing along.

“Soooo, is Happy out of the hospital yet or should we go to him? Oh! Sexy nurse’s costumes could be fun.” Watching Tony’s smile fall into a scowl caused her nothing but joy.

“Not funny.” Tony said flatly.

“Not joking.” Pepper replied just as dryly. Tony gaped at her with his mouth open, sputtering nonsensically. Darcy cackled, Pepper was such a low key slayer when it came to making Tony squirm.

Overcome with sudden affection Darcy launched herself into Tony’s arms, knocking him flat onto his back with her unexpected gesture she breathily confessed, “I missed you guys.”
Darcy’s Mountain Top Outfit

Pepper’s Bathing Suit
Thank you for all the amazing comments. Literally sat down to do something else, and ended up writing this whole chapter in two hours. Posting early because I'm happy with it. Let me know what you think in the comments!
Chapter 15 – Odin and Frigga

Darcy wakes up in the marital bed of King Odin and Queen Frigga.

Chapter Notes

So, I'm on vacation all this week. I don't know if this will lead to an increase of updates or decrease...
So, here's one to get you through the next week if I'm too busy to write....

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 15 – Odin and Frigga

Darcy woke up to a familiar scream of surprise, but didn’t move. She recognized the voice, it was Pepper. She had gone to bed in the guest room but her showing up in their bed wasn’t uncommon. Darcy’s sleep addled brain guessed Pepper must have just woken up slightly confused? For some reason?

“Who the hell are you?” Pepper asked. Or maybe not?

“What do you mean?” Darcy grumbled rubbing her face on the expensive sheets of their bed.

However, Darcy was equally surprised when another voice answered, “I’m sorry. Don’t be alarmed.”

Darcy’s eyes shot open, but before she could react the warm body she had been sleeping next to was suddenly on fire. At least it felt like it. A strong arm around her middle pulled her back away from the intense heat and towards a familiar male chest.

“Pepper.” Tony said warningly even as he pulled Darcy away from his girlfriend.

Pepper ignored him as she threw off the covers and stood up, her arms and chest area began to glow, she stalked forward and spoke threateningly, “You picked the wrong bedroom to break into.”

Darcy finally laid eyes on the intruder and if possible, her eyes widened even more. Her voice was slightly croaky from misuse and she only had one eye open, she and Tony had played a drinking game last night (for fun) and she was feeling the after effects, but recognized their intruder all the same. She yelled out, “Pepper, don’t! It’s my—that’s Strange.”

Pepper gave her a look, “Yes, a man in his overly layered pajamas breaking into our private secure room is strange.”

Darcy ran a hand over her head and pulled out the sleep mask that was tangled in her hair, “No, his name is Strange. He’s from Kamar-Taj….he’s a friendly. Stand down.”
Behind her Tony sputtered, “That’s your ex-boyfriend?!”

“Ex?” Strange asked sounding sad. Darcy had to avoid his hurt puppy eyes. She watched as the glowing light receded from Pepper’s body and she returned to normal.

“Oh.” Pepper said, putting a hand on her heart, “Oh, I’m sorry.”

Strange turned to Pepper and dazedly shook her hand when Pepper offered it.

“I’m sorry, Mr. Strange, yes I remember now. Darcy’s told us about you.” Pepper said with a chagrín expression.

“Doctor.” She and Strange corrected simultaneously. Strange’s eyes shot over to her as he elaborated, “My name is Doctor Stephen Strange.”

“Not mister.” Darcy added.

“Well, aren’t you fancy.” Tony commented snidely. He pulled Darcy closer, bringing her back flush against his chest, “Now what the hell are you doing here?”

“How did you get into the tower?” Pepper asked as she slipped on a silky robe over her lacy night gown, once again an accusatory tone in her voice.

“Is everything okay?” Darcy questioned her brow furrowing as she thought of Kaecilius and the stolen spell book pages.

Strange’s eyes darted from person to person. He fiddled with the sling ring on his fingers as he stammered, “Uh…I uh, um…see, ah--”

“Spit it out grandpa.” Tony jeered.

Darcy pulled Tony’s arm off her middle and turned to glare at him, “He is not a grandpa.”

“The graying at his temples would disagree.” Tony remarked sourly.

Darcy narrowed her eyes, “Are you jealous?”

“No.” Tony responded quickly.

“He is jealous.” Pepper confirmed, sounding mildly surprised herself.

Tony scoffed, “Why would I be jealous of Darcy’s magical boyfriend who was also a world class surgeon, has classic good looks and amazing facial hair?”

An awkward silence followed Tony’s words. Darcy’s heart melted as Tony’s cheeks turned, ever so slightly, pink. Tony avoided her eyes so Darcy turned to Pepper and the two of them exchanged a surprised look. Pepper shrugged at her. So Darcy resolved to shelve this strangeness on Tony’s part, and address it later with the man when they were alone.

“Moving on?” Darcy offered, poking Tony in the chest to get him to look back up at her. Tony smiled at her gratefully.

“Yes.” Pepper said loudly, refocusing their attention. Pepper narrowed her eyes and crossed her arms taking a step forward towards Strange, “Moving on to how you broke into the new high tech supposedly secure Avengers Tower.”
“And what is it that you want.” Tony added.

Strange opened his mouth to respond but Darcy interrupted, “Ooh! Ooh, ooh! I know how you got in. Sling ring! You opened a portal and just bypassed all the security didn’t you?”

Confirming her educated yes with a simple, “Yes.” Strange smiled at her causing her to smile back at him.

“Great. We’re susceptible to break ins from wizards.” Tony said dryly, as he got out of bed. Darcy blushed as Tony revealed he was naked, unabashedly walking over to a nearby chair Tony picked up his own Hugh Hefner type robe and covered himself.

“I’ll work on some facial recognition type security measures, in case this happens again…maybe I can rig up something so that you’re shot with a Tranquilizer or something…upon unexpected appearance. ” Tony mused aloud as he walked over to Pepper and put a hand on her lower back once he was close enough, “Well, unfamiliar face/unexpected appearance. Wouldn’t want to accidently shoot up Darcy every time she came to stay with us.”

Darcy feeling awkward, being the only one still in the big bed crawled out from underneath the covers and then over them towards the end of the bed. She paused before getting off and joining the others. On her hands and knees, she froze to let out a long yawn. She was tired, a quick glance at the clock showed that she and Tony had only gotten about five hours of sleep.

Darcy let out a groan as she lowered her chest to the bed whilst keeping her but in the air, stretching her back out in cat like pose. She extended her arms out in front of her as she let out another smaller yawn, closing her eyes in the process. She held that pose for a couple seconds until she felt like all her muscles had woken up from their nightly hibernation.

She really wasn’t ready for so much action upon just waking up…but such was her life.

When she looked up Darcy chuckled to herself, all eyes were clued to her ass which was still high in the air. Unlike Tony she had taken the time last night, to put on actual pajamas. She was wearing a funny t-shirt and small drawstring sleep shorts, but they were so small they might as well be called booty shorts because she was sure that the underside of her butt cheeks were showing.

Fully stretched out Darcy clambered to her feet and went to stand with Tony and Pepper. They all looked at each other awkwardly for a couple seconds, before Darcy pouted, “Okay, I can’t handle this without coffee or something.”

Darcy turned to Strange, “Is anything life threatening happening?”

“No.”

“Cool. Then let’s continue this conversation over breakfast. ” Darcy answered as she maneuvered in between Strange and Pepper and Tony, heading for the door. She called out over her shoulder as she left the trio behind her, “You coming?”

Darcy led the way to the kitchen, heading for the large containers that housed the cereal. Pepper went to the coffee maker while Tony went to the fridge and started taking out healthy ingredients to throw into a blender. Tony loved himself a morning smoothie. Pepper grabbed bowls and handed them off to Darcy as she passed by on her way to the table.

Darcy sat and poured herself a bowl of cheerios with minimal spillage. She glanced up at Strange who was standing awkwardly in the doorway as she poured the second bowl of cereal.
“Come and sit.” Darcy invited, kicking one of the breakfast table’s chairs out slightly. Strange hurried forward and sat down next to her.

Darcy pushed a too-full bowl towards him, “Here, eat.”

“I’m not—” Strange tried to protest but the sound of the blender being turned on drowned him out. Pepper came by the table and dropped off a carton of milk and spoons before returning to the coffee maker, or the toaster, Darcy wasn’t sure. Pepper seemed to filter from machine to machine in the morning.

Darcy clapped her hands over her ears and put her head down on the table, hiding from Tony’s obnoxious morning torture device. Once the noise stopped, Darcy proceeded to shove the dry cereal from her bowl into her mouth, one handful of at a time.

“You don’t want milk?” Strange asked looking at her with a bemused expression. Darcy didn’t answer verbally, she just shook her head and kept feeding herself.

Strange continued to watch her, even as he poured milk into his own bowl and took a spoon and fed himself. Tony sat down next to her on the other side, sipping on his smoothie as he did so. He placed a smoothie in front of her as well. Darcy picked it up and sniffed it, it smelled banana-y so she took a sip. Tony liked healthy smoothies, so there was no telling what kind of weird disgusting ingredients he put into the blender every morning, sniff tests were very important when drinking something Tony handed her.

Tony smirked at Strange, “Couple months of living together and you still don’t know that Darcy doesn’t like milk in her cereal? Some boyfriend you were.”

Darcy whacked Tony on the arm, making him spill his smoothie a little bit on the table.

“Cheerios weren’t really aren’t on the menu at Kamar-Taj.” Strange defended.

“So we’ve heard.” Pepper said as she sat down with them and joined the conversation. Tony snagged a piece of toast off the plate Pepper placed in the middle. Darcy grabbed for the mug of coffee that Pepper held out to her. Strange shook his head and declined the mug she offered to him. Pepper took a sip of her own cup and focused her gaze on Strange, “So, Dr. Strange. Now that we’ve fed and watered Darcy--”

Tony snorted in amusement and Darcy pursed her lips in a comical frown. Pepper continued, her eyes sparkling with amusement, “Why don’t you tell us why you here?”

Strange paled. He dropped the spoon into his bowl and pushed away from the table, “Actually, can I use your bathroom first.”

Pepper and Tony exchanged a look, but Pepper smiled politely at Strange, “Of course. It’s right down that hallway.”

Strange fixed Darcy with a pleading look, “Can you show me Darcy?”

Tony frowned, “It’s down the hall. Right there. You can’t miss it.”

Strange continued to stare at her intensely. Darcy understood what he wanted, so she quickly shoveled another handful of Cheerios into her mouth and stood up. With a full mouth Darcy said, “It’s okay, I’ll show him.”

“Darcy.” Both Pepper and Tony said her name with varying degrees of concern/caution. Darcy...
waved a hand at them.

“It’s fine. Stay.” She assured them.

She led Strange down the hall back towards the master bedroom and when they were out of earshot of Pepper and Tony…and she had finished chewing, she asserted “You don’t really have to use the bathroom.”

“No. I don’t.” Strange confirmed softly.

“You just wanted to talk to me alone.” Darcy posited.

Strange smiled bashfully and ran a hand over the back of his neck, “You know me well.”

Darcy missed him then. She missed Strange in that moment more than she had in the two months they had been separated. She missed him so intensely that she couldn’t stand not touching him for a moment more. Darcy threw herself into Strange’s arms, squeezing him tightly around the middle. Strange wrapped her up and hugged her back.

“I missed you.” Strange confessed as he kissed the top of her head, Darcy buried her face into Strange’s chest and inhaled his smell. Besides telling Tony and Pepper about the basics of her relationship with Strange, she hadn’t allowed herself to think about him much. She thought it would hurt too much.

“I missed you too.” Darcy said softly, her words muffled due to her face still being buried in Strange’s robes.

“Then why did you stay away?” Strange asked sounding hurt.

“That’s just how my powers work.” Darcy grumbled defensively.

She and Strange pulled back from each other, Strange looked disappointed, “That’s not an answer.”

Darcy frowned, “Yes it is.”

Strange began, “Darcy I--”

Darcy cut him off, “Excuse me.”

She ducked around him, walking quickly down the hall, “I have to pee and I want to brush my teeth. Give me five minutes.”

When Darcy emerged from the master bathroom, fifteen minutes later, she found Strange sitting on the bed she had shared with Pepper and Tony for the last month. He looked up at her as she padded over to him on sock covered feet.

She sat down next to him and before he had the chance to say anything else, she apologized, “I’m sorry.”

He looked at her with a surprised expression. Darcy smiled wanly, “I’m sorry for running away from you, figuratively and kinda literally.”
“Darcy…we never defined our relationship, but…you know I care about you. Regardless of how this all shakes out between us?” Darcy reached out for Strange’s arm, hugging his bicep with both her arms, she rested her head on his shoulder.

“I care about you too.” She admitted, “I just don’t…know what—I just don’t know.”

After a beat of silence, Strange joked, “Do you think us having sex will help you figure it out?”

Darcy let out a laugh and let go of his arm, sitting up she shoved him playfully away from her. She scolded without venom, “Shut up.”

“You can come back to Kamar-Taj. I…I won’t—there won’t be any weirdness if you want to come back to learn.” Strange comforted.

“I don’t think I’m supposed to go back.” Darcy expressed with a wince.

“What do you mean?”

“I mean, I…I’ve been teleporting next to Pepper and Tony for two months now. I think I’m supposed to stay here.” It was true. Following their month long island retreat, they all flew back to New York. Bruce had been running some final tests to rid Pepper of the Extremis in her system, but he’d had a slight set back and thus they’d been stuck there for a month.

Darcy hadn’t left Pepper or Tony’s side in all that time. She hadn’t teleported to anyone else besides those two.

“I don’t really believe its fate that guides my sleep teleportation, but…but for whatever reason I feel like I’m needed here. Pepper’s waiting for some, well you saw her. She’s got this virus in her system, a terrorist injected her with it against her will, and a cure is being created its just taking longer to brew than Banner originally thought.” Darcy explained.

Strange looked understanding as he nodded, “I can see why you want to be here for your friend.”

Darcy pressed her lips together, suppressing the tears that she felt forming behind her eyes, her voice was tight when she responded, “Yeah.”

“Do you think after…?” Strange let his question trail off.

Darcy blinked back tears, “I don’t know.”

“Why?”

“Tony needs me too.” Darcy explained with a shrug, “He’s going through this whole, identity crisis thing. He blew up all his Iron Man suits, he’s working as a consultant for some shady government agency. He spends most of his time in the lab now a days, working on repairing Dum-E and U.”

“Dum….E?” Strange questioned.

“Dum-E and U are Tony’s robots, okay, a little bit of background, Tony challenged a terrorist, got his house blowed up, his girlfriend kidnapped and tortured and his little robot pals temporarily dead. But it’s cool, he’s fixing them up now. So, yeah…. Tony has attachment issues. And I-”

“And you want to be here for him.” Strange finished for her.

“Yeah.” Darcy picked at her cuticles, “So, like, I want to stay.”
“Do you think you’ll ever return to Kamar-Taj?” Strange asked in a strangled voice, she watched as he clenched and unclenched his trembling hand.

“Yeah.” Darcy answered quickly, but she paused for a long moment before adding, “Just not anytime soon.”

They sat there in silence for at least a minute.

Then Strange broke the silence, “The Ancient One said you are welcome to return at any time.”

“That’s nice of her.” Darcy noted as she stared at Strange’s profile. His eyes were locked on the wall opposite them.

“Karl told me to tell you to keep practicing.”

“I will.” Darcy assured him softly.

Strange got a paper out of one of the folds of his robe and handed it over to her, “Wong said you could go to these addresses if you want to continue your studies…through correspondence. There are locations set up all over the world…The closest one to here is the sanctum in Greenwich, all residents have been alerted you might come by looking for books and guidance…”

Darcy took the paper from Strange’s shaking hands, “Okay…tell Wong I said thanks.”

“I will.” Strange agreed stiffly.

Darcy felt a tear roll down her cheek, she couldn’t help but address what had gone unspoken between them for so long, “So, we’re breaking up. Right?”

Strange’s head snapped back in her direction. His eyes found hers and she saw the cool demeanor that he had been clinging too, disappear.

“That’s the first time you’ve acknowledged that we were ever together.” Strange quietly noted.

“I didn’t want to get attached!” Darcy sniffed as she wiped away more stray tears.

Strange pulled her forward, onto his lap and Darcy wrapped her arms around his neck and kissed him. It was a slow, sad kiss. And as their mouths moved against each other, she could taste the salty tears as they slid their way down her face.

Darcy pulled away first.

“We don’t have to.” Strange volunteered, as he held up his sling ring, “We don’t have to break up if you don’t want to….I don’t want to.”

Darcy’s lip quivered, “But it won’t be the same! Long distance relationships never work.”

Darcy shifted her gaze away from Strange’s heartbroken expression. She stared at the wall as she responded in a monotone voice, “Besides. I think our lives are moving in different directions.”

Darcy expected Strange to push her off his lap. To act callous and cold and treat her with scorn. But he didn’t.

Strange ran a shaky hand over her hair, before he brought up his other to caress her cheek. Darcy allowed her eyes to meet his and she was surprised by what she saw. Strange looked sad, but also like he understood. Like he didn’t hate her….like he still cared.
“Okay.” Strange said softly.

Darcy let out a choked sound as tears once again began to fall from her eyes, she fisted her hands into his robes as she gasped out his name, “Stephen.”

Strange inhaled sharply and she saw his eyes get a little misty. Strange repeated himself, “Okay.”

He then leant forward and brought their lips together. Their kiss wasn’t slow this time. It was hard and intense and filled with frantic energy. Strange clutched her body close to his. Darcy allowed her fingers to sink into his hair, pulling him closer. They kissed with a sense of urgency. All tongue and teeth and no finesse.

And then they just froze. Lips pressed together tightly, they froze. And then they slowly broke away from each other. They stared into each other’s eyes as they panted lightly.

“Okay.” Darcy said, acknowledging, “Okay, we’re broken up.”

Strange left via portal and almost as soon as he was gone, Tony and Pepper came in.

“Hey kid. You okay?” Tony asked as stood in the doorway.

“Not really.” Darcy answered honestly. It felt weird to be so sad about ending a relationship she hadn’t even allowed herself to acknowledge was a relationship for so long.

“You’ll be okay sweetheart.” Pepper comforted walking forward to sit next to and hug Darcy.

Darcy didn’t have it in her to respond so she let her arms remain loosely at her side as she responded, “I know.”

The next day, Pepper, who had been on leave from work for more than a month, couldn’t put off the demands of being the CEO any longer. There were certain things she needed to do in person, cure or no cure. She left early in the morning heading for the SI offices before she or Tony even woke up.

It was okay though; Tony was a pretty good get-over-your-break-up buddy. For two days he sat around with her in pajamas. He ate ice cream straight from the carton. He even watched that Rachel McAdams/Ryan Gosling movie with her, though she was sure he would deny shedding a tear, he totally did. And of course he drank with her as she drowned her various sorrows, but not as heavily as she.

And then, he decided to start a new project. And he of course, enlisted her help.

He didn’t need her help truthfully. It was painfully obvious how much he did not need her help. She was basically a glorified golden retriever. As in, ‘go fetch this’ and ‘go fetch that’. She didn’t mind though, it felt good to be physically busy even if her mind was still free to run wild, her body acting on auto pilot because none of her allotted tasks required any thought.

After a week or two of working on the project with him, she got the sense that Tony needed something constructive to do as much as she did.

After all, he wasn’t the CEO of Stark Industries anymore, unlike Pepper he could work from home for long extended periods and he didn’t even need to put on pants if he didn’t want to. He’d
promised Pepper that he would take a break from ‘hero-ing’. And distracting himself like he used to in his playboy days was a no go either.

He wasn’t able to live it up as a notorious playboy anymore, no matter how often he purposed engaging in sexual relations with her, he loved Pepper and would never betray her like that. The happy couple had moved into the Tower together and no matter how often Darcy shared their bed or witnessed Tony nude, nothing would ever likely happen between the three of them. Not that they could convince Tony of that.

And if she was honest with herself, she was tempted to give in and try out sex or a relationship with the famous power couple. She did love Pepper and Tony, she was attracted to them, but still she suspected what she wanted most of all was a distraction.

Realistically, for her, entering a sexual relationship with Tony and Pepper, while probably fun and sexy, would lead to nothing but heartbreak. It would most likely end badly and lead to their relationship forever being tainted by awkwardness and jealous (on her part). For god sakes, Tony used the pieces of shrapnel that had been removed from his heart to make a necklace to symbolize his commitment to Pepper and not to being Iron Man. She couldn’t compete with that. Besides, Tony was probably a better drinking buddy than bed partner anyway. Especially now that he had a one to two drink minimum and never drank to excess, unlike she did. She appreciated his willingness to hold her hair back when she puked more than she would chocolates or roses.

But, yeah, she got the sense that Tony needed to keep busy as much as she did. If not for different reasons.

They were currently in Tony’s private lab in the Avengers Tower. Tony had her helping him make modifications to his repulsor technology for S.H.I.E.L.D.’s new Helicarriers, to avoid the issue that happened during the attack on the Helicarrier, preceding the battle of New York.

“Hold the wrench. Give me the screw driver.” Tony ordered and Darcy complied easily. Darcy was nervous about Tony being in league with S.H.I.E.L.D. but, he assured her it was a onetime thing. He had no intention of becoming a government stooge. *Like Steve.*

Tony was in his element and even through her glum attitude; she was able to appreciate watching the mechanical genius work.

“So, when are you going to stop moping about the wizard?” Tony asked tactlessly from under the large machine he was working on. Tony had yet to master the art of the segue.

“I don’t know….I’m not…like –I’m just, sad. That it didn’t work out.” Darcy explained stiltedly.

“You know what they say; the best way to get over someone is to get under someone else. Gimmie the wrench back.” Tony held out his hand, his torso not visible, only his legs and expectant hand sticking out.

Darcy handed him the tool, slapping the metallic object a little harder than necessary into his palm, and calculated her next words carefully, “I’m not having sex without Pepper.”

Darcy laughed as she heard the sound of Tony hitting his head on the metal as he sat up in surprise. He quickly slid out from underneath the machine on his rolling board thing-y. Tony looked at her with an open expression, “Does that mean you’ll have sex with *with* Pepper? Am I invited? I’m invited right?”
She loved bantering with Tony.

“I’m messing with you Stark.” Darcy teased. Tony’s answering frown had her cackling.

Tony pointed the wrench in his hand at her and accused, “Mean.”

Tony got up and took a swig from his water bottle, wiping his dirty oil stained hands off on a rag he turned and leaned against a counter, staring at her with a serious expression.

“Seriously, kid. I’d love to keep you. Let you hide out here forever, but Pepper’s is becoming concerned.” Tony used air quoted around the word ‘concerned’.

“Are you? ‘Concerned’?” Darcy asked, copying his use of air quotes.

Tony threw the rag onto the counter, “Nah. I know you’ll bounce back sooner or later.”

Tony looked like he had something else he wanted to say, but he was holding back. Which, was very unlike him and thus she was very curious.

She prompted him, “But?”


“Tony.”

Tony sighed, avoiding her eyes he revealed, “I’m worried about your nightmares Darcy….ever since you and Dr. Wizard broke up, they’ve gotten worse. And I…don’t know how to help you.”

Tony was right. Her nightmares had gotten worse since she broke things off with Strange. She’d been dreaming of people in pain and…it was driving her crazy.

She’d been waking up screaming, crying, fighting Tony and Pepper when they tried to shake her awake. It wasn’t like her other maybe prophetic dreams either, she’d just been dreaming about people’s faces screaming out in pain. Like a really tight close up in a movie. Their torture was inescapable.

Some of the faces were familiar, some not. All were in agony. She could tell that some suffered from emotional pain, some physical but that was it. It was becoming increasingly draining, experiencing snap shots of people in anguish, especially without context or reason. It was torture.

She’d started self-medicating again, initially. Except, using booze to allow her to sleep dreamlessly had stopped working after a while. She’d since, tried binging caffeine, exercise (mental and physical), and plain old staying awake for as long as she could. Her efforts were a mixed bag and the results weren’t great all around.

“I don’t think Stephen and my relationship ending has anything to do with my dreams. I think that’s just a coincidence.” Darcy admitted softly.

“I don’t believe in coincidences.” Tony said glibly.

One week later Pepper was cured.

Bruce, who also lived in the tower, but mostly stayed to himself came by and injected Pepper with
the cure after breakfast.

“That’s it?” Pepper asked.

As he packed up his vials and threw away the syringe Bruce confirmed with a smile, “That’s it.”

“You sure she’s cured?” Tony asked from where he hovered behind Pepper’s shoulder.

“I’m 100 percent certain.” Bruce boasted.

Darcy looked around at her friends before shrugging, “I’m with Pepper. I was expecting something more dramatic than the excitement of getting a flu shot.”

Bruce let out a chuckle.

Darcy ended up tagging along with Bruce, giving Tony and Pepper some alone time. She’d been forced to listen to them have sex before, it just made her feel extra lonely.

She followed Bruce down to his lab and asked him what she could do to help.

“Help? Help with what?” Bruce asked confused.

“Wiiith, whatever?” Darcy said in chirpy voice.

“Darcy I don’t really---”

Darcy put her hand on his shoulder, and implored in a desperate voice, “Please give me something to do.”

Bruce, recognizing the vulnerable state she was in, sighed, “Okay. I guess…you can go over to that computer and type up some of my handwritten notes?”

Darcy smiled brightly and gave him a mocking salute, “Can do!”

Five hours later Darcy fell asleep on the keyboard.

She woke up slightly when Bruce tried to jostle her awake, but she batted him away. She felt it as he picked her up and took her somewhere, but when she felt the reassuring softness of a mattress underneath her, she went back to sleep.

She woke up violently, sometime later.

“NOOO!” Darcy screamed, her eyes closed tightly as her mind tried desperately to escape the dream that was causing her such distress.

“Darcy…Darcy wake up. You’re okay.” She could hear Bruce trying to reassure her and wake her up.

“NO!” Darcy cried out, “Stop!”

Strong hands shook her shoulders, “Wake up!”

Her eyes opened. Bruce towered above her, concern etched into ever line on his face, “Darcy.”
The way he said her name made her crumple. She began to cry. And not just tears rolling down her cheeks crying. Real crying. With loud embarrassing wails escaping her mouth. Uncontrollable tears falling from her face in an endless river.

Bruce didn’t hesitate, he lay down next to her and allowed her to cling to him. She curled up and he put his arms around her and let her be.

When her emotional outburst died down, he stroked her hair and moved her so she was half laying on him, her head pillowed on his chest. He wrapped her up in his arms and she felt safe. Even though she knew she wasn’t.

“I’m going to figure out a way to help you Darcy.” Bruce vowed. Darcy believed that he would try, but she didn’t have faith that his efforts would result in anything less than more disappointment.

She didn’t respond. She just held onto him tightly and let him comfort her with his soothing presence. He began to rub her back and soon, she was asleep once again.

“Oh!” A feminine cry of surprise woke her up again. But it wasn’t Pepper.

“Oh, my.” The familiar voice said. Darcy felt the woman move to sit up next to her. She could also sense it when the woman turned on a light. Darcy was very confused because she could still feel Bruce underneath her, his steady breathing indicating he was deep asleep. Which meant that she was still at the Avengers Tower…right?

“Oh, no.” The voice whispered. Darcy couldn’t teleport other people when she was asleep…

“WHAT IN THE--” A booming male voice shouted, startling Bruce awake. Darcy jerked back away from the noise and opened her eyes. And even though her head felt woozy, her vision blurry, and she felt like she’d been hit by a truck, there was no looking away from the sight of the pissed off God.

Odin’s eye twitched in anger and Darcy had never felt so terribly mortal in her whole life.

When she let out a whimper Bruce exclaimed blearily, “Wha? What’s going on?”

“Dear, don’t be upset.” Darcy now recognized Frigga’s voice as she tried to temper her husband’s wrath, “You know she cannot control her powers--”

“IN OUR BED?!” Odin shouted as he threw off the blanket that covered all four of them. His voice getting louder as he repeated himself, “IN OUR BED!”

“Odin, she is but a child--”

But Frigga’s words were cut off by a roar from Odin, the King of Asgard practically growled as he grabbed hold of Bruce’s arm and pulled the confused scientist out of the bed, allowing him to drop onto the floor with a thump.

He would have yanked Darcy onto the floor too, had Frigga not anticipated her husband’s action and grabbed Darcy first. Frigga held Darcy against her chest, placing her arms protectively around Darcy’s chest and neck.
Darcy felt a freaky sense of déjà vu and couldn’t help but think she’d experienced this all before. And somewhat recently to boot!

“AN INTRUDER! IN OUR BED?!” Odin bellowed sounding even angrier as he kicked out, striking Bruce. Bruce let out an answering groan. Odin then stepped on Bruce, pinning him to the floor with his naked foot. Speaking of naked, Darcy couldn’t help but glance up at the All Father’s impressive junk, as apparently Odin slept in the nude. Darcy was relieved she could feel Frigga’s nightgown brushing up against her skin as the older woman held her close. Frigga being naked too, would have made it beyond awkward.

In a scratchy voice she called out, “Please don’t!”

Odin didn’t even look up. Frigga however pet her head gently, cautioning her, “Shush child. He shall not harm you.”

And while Darcy appreciated Frigga’s protection, it was clear that Odin didn’t perceive her as a threat…unlike Bruce.

Darcy couldn’t see him but she heard as Bruce shouted from the floor, “Get off of me asshole! DARCY ARE YOU OKAY?”

“WHO ARE YOU! SPEAK! SPEAK WHILE YOU STILL HAVE TONGUE!” Odin commanded, looking down murderously at the prone figure at his feet.

Darcy reached up and touched just under her nose, something was sliding down her face…it was blood. She was bleeding. Surprised, she announced the fact, “I’m bleeding!”

Frigga let her go and Darcy sat up against the headboard. Frigga returned to her and held a cloth to her face. Frigga then said something she couldn’t understand. Her eyelids felt so heavy and her head swam. Darcy allowed her eyes to close, but a loud roar had her eyes popping open again.

The roar was one she recognized, one she knew didn’t come from Odin.

Darcy watched in horror as Odin flew across the room, his guards rushing into the room only to freeze at the door. Their eyes were locked on Bruce as he struggled to stand up from the floor. Bruce’s skin was turning green, his veins popping out. He grit his teeth and his eyes turned from brown to bright green.

It looked more painful than she’d imagined. Instead of watching the impressive sight of his muscles bulging and ripping through his clothes, Darcy stared at his face. It occurred to her that she’d seen Bruce make that same pained expression before. In her dreams.

As Hulk stood up fully transformed, Darcy’s eyelids lowered to half mast. She couldn’t stay awake, but she didn’t want to fall asleep. Everything was her fault.

Odin would kill Hulk…Bruce would die…because…of her.

Darcy couldn’t remain awake any longer. The strain of crossing such vast space and distance took its toll on her body and she passed out.

The sight of Hulk roaring at the approaching King and guards was the last thing she saw.
Darcy’s Sleep outfit When Dr. Strange Arrives

Pepper’s Sleep outfit When Dr. Strange Arrives
Darcy’s ‘DAY’ work outfit, What She’s wearing when she arrives on ASGARD
Chapter End Notes

And....then Hulk.....does.....stuff......on......Asgard..............................................
Chapter 16 - Fandral

Chapter Summary

Darcy finally wakes up next to a half naked Fandral.

Chapter Notes

Can I just say that as much as I love Thor and Darcy....Thor the Dark World, is just not a good movie. The bad guy SUCKS, I just...I listened to the commentary instead of re-watching the movie, thinking it would be fun or something, it had Kevin Feigie and Tom Hiddleston and some other guy, they all talk in monotone and they try to give insight and explain things but...it's like EVEN they knew the movie sucked when they recorded the commentary.

BE WARNED, this mentions THOR the Dark World, but honestly, the movie did a lot for a lot of characters and I like how it moved the overall THOR story forward, but damn that movie's not as awesome as I remember it being in theaters.

TIMELINE KNOWLEDGE IS IMPORTANT ON THIS ONE, so, like I hope you guys don't get totally confused.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 16 – Fandral

Darcy woke up feeling…pretty great. She could feel the bright light of the sun shining on her left and she turned her head towards it. She was in a quiet room, lying on a soft bed. That much she could tell, without even opening her eyes.

She remembered everything, crashing into Odin and Frigga’s bedroom, Odin being a dick to Bruce, Bruce in turn Hulking out. And then, nothing but her dreams.

It was the first time, in a long time, where she wished to remain asleep for her dreams were so sweet. She had dreamed of her friends laughing, hanging out, having fun. It was like a clip show of her friends happiest times. She dreamt of people and creatures she’d never met doing the same. It was nice.

Her dreams this time were a comfort, a small glimpse into the future to show that everything wasn’t doom and gloom 24/7. Darcy sincerely hoped that this time, her dreams would come true.

As Darcy opened her eyes a smile spread across her face.

“Oh! You’re awake.” A young woman about her age exclaimed. Darcy didn’t recognize the woman.
The young lady put a hand on her shoulder, “I’ll fetch Lady Eir.”

Darcy frowned at the unfamiliar name but didn’t protest as the young lady left the room.

“Still on Asgard then.” Darcy tried to say, but her voice was a hoarse croaking thing that had Darcy clutching her throat in surprise.

“Your voice will return with time.” A older woman looking woman in a blue-green robe announced, “Besides a feeling of lethargy throughout your body, you should suffer no other side effects?”

Darcy nodded in confirmation and the woman smiled at her, “Good. I’m Lady Eir. I’ve been taking care of you while you’ve been… indisposed.”

Darcy nodded in understanding. The young woman from before scurried back into the room, she handed Lady Eir a tall glass before she left again, quiet as a mouse. Eir went to her bedside and sat down, putting the glass to Darcy’s lips, she helped her take a drink.

“Not too much.” Eir advised, pulling the cup away and setting it down on a nearby side table.

“What happened?” Darcy asked, her voice still low and gravelly, but no longer parched and scratchy.

“You unexpectedly teleported into the King and Queen’s bed.” Eir said, her eyes narrowing as she stared at Darcy, obviously looking for recognition of some kind.

“Mmmhmm.” Darcy nodded.

“Your friend, turned into a beast.” Darcy winced, Eir sounded disapproving. Darcy could imagine that the Hulk’s appearance hadn’t gone over well considering how agitated he was the last time she’d seen him.


“He fought off the Kings guards and set about destroying the palace, well, trying to anyway. We Asgardians build things to withstand a lot of punishment. He spent his time half running from the King, half tempting the Allfather to try to catch him as he knocked things over and broke through walls.” Eir sighed, continuing in an exasperated voice, “Finally Thor found the beast and was able to calm him somewhat.”

“Well that’s good.” Darcy commented. She rotated her ankle, smiling as it let out a satisfying cracking noise.

Eir frowned at her and glanced at her foot then back up at Darcy’s face, “And, I’ve been caring for you ever since.”

“Thanks for that.” Darcy said with a smile which the older woman returned. Then, the young woman from before knocked on the door quietly before letting herself in.

She held a long swath of fabric in her arms, she held it up in explanation, “The King said Lady Darcy is to bathe and dress as quickly as possible, he demands an audience with her.”

The lines lining Eir’s mouth deepened as the woman frowned, “Now? Today? She’s only just woken up! She’s not ready--”

The younger woman interjected, “I’m just relaying his orders Lady Eir.”
The woman then laid the clothing on a nearby table, “I’ll leave you.” She did a small head nod in Darcy’s direction and then the young woman was once again gone.

Eir exhaled loudly and kept her gaze locked on the dress on the table, seemingly deep in thought. Darcy felt awkward, but let Eir’s silent contemplation continue for a few minutes before she couldn’t stand it anymore.

“Lady Eir?” Darcy said softly, catching the woman’s attention, Darcy offered “It’s cool. I can deal with Odin, you don’t need to worry.”

Eir’s frown disappeared, the older woman smiled at her fondly, “Oh my dear, but you are a sweet one aren’t you.”

Eir’s eyes grew troubled once again as she said, “I can see why Queen Frigga was fond of you so.”

“That’s me.” Darcy said smiling self-deprecatingly, “Totally accommodating to any and all royal demands.”

Eir let out a laugh and Darcy smiled victoriously, having gotten the healer out of her funk.

“Come,” Eir said as stood up and pulled back Darcy’s blanket, “I’ll help you into the bath and leave you to soak, while I nip into the kitchens and fetch you something to eat before you see the king.”

“Awesome.”

Two and a half hours later, Darcy had been scrubbed and fed and dressed and she was standing before the tall doors that led into the throne room. The King was just finishing up another meeting apparently, so she’d been left to wait and fidget until it was her turn. She tried engaging the guards in conversation but they ignored her.

Lady Eir offered to go in with her, but Darcy told the woman that wasn’t necessary. She was confident she could deal with the annoyed King herself. Darcy didn’t say anything to Lady Eir, because if felt like bragging, but she knew Thor and Frigga wouldn’t let Odin do anything too bad to her. Even if she had inadvertently released an angry Hulk I the palace.

Darcy scratched at the uncomfortable collar of the dress she had been given. It was beautiful, but uncomfortable. And more revealing than clothing she was used to wearing.

Darcy had been shocked and a little embarrassed when Eir had helped her into it. It was silver and gray colored, it was a tulle fishtail gown with beaded feather detailing on the bodice, but it also had a plunging neckline that nearly went to her naval making it look all at once scandalous and angelic. The only reason she was able to wear the dress at all was because the top was held up by an illusion neckline fabric, which helped keep her breasts in place. She was also going completely commando, a fact which only added to her anxiety about meeting with Odin. Apparently the young lady who’d given her the dress forgot to get her underpants and the dress just wasn’t designed for a bra.

Darcy’s breasts were too large for the dress truthfully but since the clothes she had worn to Asgard had mysteriously disappeared, she really had no choice. Besides, complaining about a gorgeous dress, given to her for free right before she had to stand before the King and get yelled at, didn’t seem like the smartest idea. So she didn’t mention her discomfort or apprehension about wearing the elegant gown. She did however, request a coat.
She was handed a cape and decided to just roll with it. At least she had a pair of comfortable pretty sandals.

The guards startled her when they slammed their staff’s on floor and then opened the doors for her. Darcy stepped inside and waited. She jumped again when the guards closed the door behind her. It was so…quiet.

The throne room was empty inside. Save the king sitting on the throne of course. Odin beckoned her forward with two fingers.

Darcy walked through the enormous room, her head held high, her shoulders back, and hopefully projecting confidence. Her eyes frantically darted all over the room, looking for Thor or Frigga’s familiar faces. But, they weren’t there.

Once she reached the base of the throne’s stair platform she hesitated. She swallowed nervously, her head turning from side to side, praying that Lady Sif and the warriors three would jump out from some hidden spot.

“Lady Darcy.” Odin said, his stentorian voice making her wince a little, “You have recovered.”

She didn’t know if he was asking or saying it like a fact so she didn’t respond, just nodded her head.

“You brought a monster into my bedroom. You endangered all of Asgard. What do you have to say for yourself?” Odin looked down his nose at her and Darcy licked her dry lips, wishing she wasn’t so far away. The forced perspective of looking up at him on his throne from where she was standing made Odin look extra intimidating.

“Um…sorry?” Darcy stuttered in a wobbly voice, unsure exactly what he wanted her to say.

“What was that girl? I can’t hear you.” Odin’s face remained impassive but Darcy swore she saw a twinkle in her eye as he fucked with her, ordering her, “Speak up.”

Darcy cleared her throat loudly, repeating herself in a clear loud voice, “I’m sorry.”

“Sorry?” Odin echoed, an incredulous look on his face, “That’s all you have to offer the King of Asgard for your slight against the crown?”

Darcy frowned, “I’m really sorry? It was a mistake. I, uh—-you know I don’t have control over my power dude.”

“Yes, I know of your magical failings.” Odin didn’t look impressed. Darcy sighed, lifting the bottom of her dress so she could ascend the steps without tripping over her skirt.

“What are you doing?” Odin asked sounding curious but not angry.

“This is ridiculous, I’m so far away and everything echoes in here. I’m getting closer.” Darcy explained, she moved quickly up the first tier of steps and then the second, “And if it’s just going to be you and me in here, I refuse to look up your nose the whole time.”

Odin raised a hand as if to touch his nose, but lowering his hand as she stopped directly in front of him, just three steps away from the throne.

“This is highly irregular girl.” Odin said, minutely tilting his head down, as if to hide his nose hairs from her view.
“Well, what can I say? My whole life’s been pretty irregular. You get used to it.” Darcy shot off a couple finger guns and then winked at Odin, saying, “Trust me.”

“Mortal girl, you are most presumptuous to think you worthy of approaching the throne.” There was a bite to Odin’s words that had her wanting to turn tail and run back down the steps but she held her ground. She couldn’t let Odin bully her into cowering at his every word.

Determined to not let his…everything, scare her, Darcy cocked her hip and folded her arms under her breasts, “Dude, a throne is just a chair. Don’t get all ‘Game of Thrones’ giving the hunk of metal more importance than it’s worth.”

The corner of Odin’s mouth twitched and Darcy felt victorious.

Odin made her jump a second later when he banged his staff on the floor, apparently signaling a topic change, he spoke with irreverence, “Alright. What did Lady Eir tell you of what happened following your disastrous arrival to my bedchambers?”

Darcy unfolded her arms and smoothed down her skirt, “Um, not much actually. She said that Hulk trashed the place a bit, then Thor talked him down. Annnnd then everything was cool?”

Odin’s eyebrows rose high up on his forehead, “That’s all?”

Darcy nodded.

“Good.” Odin took his staff and laid it across his lap vertically. He then gestured for Darcy to sit on the step right under the little bowing griffin statue that sat next to the throne. Darcy shrugged and then did as he bid, she wasn’t a fan of standing in the face of judgment anyway. She’d much rather sit.

Odin’s demeanor changed then. He grew more somber as he explained, “I instructed Lady Eir to deflect any further questions you might have had, as I wanted to speak with you myself.”

He looked at her with just a hint of pity and Darcy’s brow knit together, she was confused because Odin wasn’t yelling at her and no one else was around and she had a sick feeling in her stomach…

“Remind me, how long did you sleep, the last time you teleported between worlds?” Odin asked.

“Like, four days. I think?” Darcy replied, her voice sounded unsure even though she knew what she was saying was correct.

“And did you eat upon waking?”

“Um,” Darcy thought of the delicious sandwich, cheese platter and apple slices Lady Eir had given to her in the bath, “Yeah.”

“This time you brought someone with you though.” Darcy nodded in confirmation; a little confused by Odin’s questioning methods. Odin continued, “You’ve been in a restorative sleep for the past thirty three days.”

Darcy’s eyes widened and she choked on her own spit, gasping out, “What?”

“Lady Eir put you into a soul stasis, not unlike my own Odinsleep, it allowed you to recharge after expending such a large amount of energy and magic.” Odin looked at her with a contemplative eye, “I would not suggest attempting such a feat again, as I had to enlist Idunn in acquiring——”
Darcy interrupted the King with a shrill squawk, “A MONTH?!”

Odin looked annoyed but Darcy didn’t care. She continued to exclaim in shock, “A month? I’ve been in a coma for a month? Seriously? Just because I teleported Bruce with me? That’s insane!”

“You’ve missed much while you slept Lady Darcy.” Odin said, his eye looking a little sad, his face an expression of restrained pain, “Queen Frigga is dead.”

Darcy gasped and she covered her mouth with her hand to stifle her cry of surprise. Odin’s vulnerable expression and lack of yelling made sense now.

“Why?” Darcy asked, tears already forming in her eyes. She didn’t understand, how could she see the future and not see that. She immediately wanted to deny the truth of what Odin said. Frigga couldn’t be dead…she just couldn’t.

“Why?....” Odin’s face looked heartbroken as he answered, “Child, I asked the Norn’s the same thing. There is no why. Life is just chaos. And tragedy befalls us all.”

Darcy shook her head, “No. No, your--” She wanted to accuse the King of lying, but she knew in her heart that Odin wouldn’t lie about something like Frigga’s death, “How?”

“She was killed when Dark Elves assaulted Asgard in search of your mortal friend Jane Foster.” Odin’s face hardened at the mention of the elves.

“Elves? Like…I guess not like Santa.” Darcy mumbled, before clearing her throat and wiping away a stray tear to speak in a clearer voice and ask, “Jane? Why were evil Elves after Jane?”

“A cosmic event that occurs every five thousand years, called the Convergence, occurred. Your friend was stupid enough to go wandering into a realm she did not belong to. Like an idiot child she touched something she should have and became infested with a substance known as the Aether. It was killing her. Thor brought her here--”

Darcy interrupted, figuring out the rest for herself, almost able to see what happened in her mind’s eye as she said, “And then the evil Elves followed Jane to Asgard. Queen Frigga hid Jane, defended her…with her last dying breath.”

Darcy began to gasp as her chest heaved, up and down, up and down, and then she couldn’t hold the tears back anymore and she began to weep. She buried her face in her hands and cried.

Odin allowed her her grief in silence.

When her crying shifted from body shaking wails, down to silent sniffling tears, Odin spoke again, “Before the Convergence and Jane Foster’s stupidity, Queen Frigga visited you every day. She sat by your bedside for an hour or so and read to you.”

Darcy looked up at the King, not caring about how she might look Darcy wiped the back of her arm across her face, ridding herself of snot and tears, “I’m so sorry she’s dead. I mean, I’m sorry for your loss, King Odin. I’m so sorry.”

Odin nodded at her and she could swear she saw his eye shining with an unshed tear.

“Loki is dead as well.” Odin stated flatly.

“Oh my god.” Darcy said true shock coloring her voice, “Are you sure?”
In her dreams she had seen Thor and Loki, smiling at each other, their feud seemingly ended and their brotherly bond once again restored.

“Yes.” Odin said in a bitter voice, “He died nobly, giving his life to save all from Malekith’s evil scheme to use the Aether to unmake the universe.”

“Dude wanted to unmake the universe?” Darcy exclaimed petulance coloring her voice, “What the fuck?”

Odin surprised her by chuckling and commenting in an amused tone, “Indeed.”

Darcy squinted at the old man, “Hey, not that I’m complaining, but why are you being so nice to me?”

“Nice?”

Darcy rolled her eyes, “Well, nice for you I suppose. I mean, I kind of expected more yelling and possible imprisonment.”

Odin was quiet for a moment before he answered, “Frigga loved you.”

Darcy’s eyes watered again, “I loved her too.”

Odin audibly swallowed, pursing his lips his voice turned brittle, “I could tell that too…she was teaching you magic. Like she taught Loki, all those years ago.”

Darcy swallowed as she realized just how special she had been treated by the Queen, how unusual Frigga’s kindness and seeming adoption of Darcy was. Odin continued his voice slightly monotone, “She spoke of you to everyone. Even Loki, while he was imprisoned, heard of you. All could see the light in her eyes when Frigga spoke of your exploits, the warmth in her voice when she described your character…”

Darcy felt the tears flow from her eyes once again, but she held in her sobs and instead responded, “I didn’t know she talked about me.”

“Bragged.” Odin said with a pulling of one corner of his mouth that could have been called a smile, “She bragged about your kindness, your humor, your beauty.”

Odin and she locked eyes, she saw the bereaved soul inside him as he revealed softly, “She always wanted a daughter.”

“I would have been honored.”

“Of course you would have.” Odin replied, a hint of cheekiness sneaking into his voice, “She was a Queen. And I hear tell that all little girls dream of being Princesses.”

Darcy scowled, “Yeah, well. This little girl dreamed of being a veterinarian so don’t go picking out tiara just yet.”

Odin gave a derisive snort, “Wasn’t planning on it.”

The mood though still grave, had lightened somewhat and a thought finally occurred to her. Darcy straightened up and asked, “Where’s Thor? How is he handling his moms…how is he?”

Odin rolled his eye, “I offered Thor the throne,” Odin gestured to his chair, “As you can see, he chose not to accept.”
Darcy stood up and looked at the giant ostentatious throne, evaluating it just aesthetically, she commented, “You know, I just don’t think this thing is Thor’s style.”

“You think Thor unworthy of ruling?” Odin asked with a quirked brow, real curiosity on his face as he leant forward in anticipation of her reply.

Darcy pet the gold arm rest of the throne with her fingertips, avoiding Odin’s gaze as he answered, “I think Thor…thinks he’s unworthy. Or maybe not unworthy, just unready for it. The responsibility, I mean.”

Odin nodded thoughtfully, his gaze focusing on something behind her.

“Besides,” Darcy gestured to the giant gold ‘wings’ that extended to make the chair look as garish and imposing as possible, “this is all a little much…not really the kind of throne I see Thor choosing for himself.”

She imagined Thor surveying thrones at a chair shop and choosing one that was understated and normal chair looking. Indiana Jones choosing the Holy Grail out of an array of choices came to mind. The cup, one that a carpenter would drink from, not an ostentatious glittery goblet meant for a king.

“You think so little of ruling?” Odin questioned, bringing her out of her thoughts.

“I think so little of putting on a show, to prove that you’re the ruler.” Darcy blushed, “No offense, I mean…this is all very, pretty, and…gold…but, it’s not like you need it.”

Odin, thankfully didn’t seem put off by her impudence, he murmured in low voice, “A king is still a king, with or without the crown.”

Darcy smiled and nodded, “Exactly.”

Odin smiled at her, and Darcy was surprised by how genuine it looked, “I think I’m beginning to see, a little, of what Queen Frigga saw in you now. Darcy Lewis of Midgard.”

Darcy took a step back away from the throne and leant against the side of it, “Well, this is the first real conversation we’ve ever really had so…”

Darcy let her sentence trail off as she was unsure of what to say next. Odin picked up his staff from where it lay across his lap and put the end of it on the ground; he held it vertically and cast his gaze to the entrance.

“Am I keeping you? Do you have another appointment?” Darcy asked, a little worried that she wouldn’t get to ask Odin her other questions.

“They can wait,” Odin looked back at her a smirked, “I am the King. I say, when I am finished with you.”

“Cool.” Darcy said, speaking quickly, “Because you didn’t actually answer my question about Thor. You said he didn’t want to be King and he fuc—he uh, went off, but you didn’t specify where to.”

“Midgard. He chose to return to his mortal paramour, though officially he is acting as one of Earth’s protectors, a show of Asgard’s benevolence and protection.” Odin answered in a matter of fact voice.

“And what about Bruce? What happened when he de-Hulk-ed?”
Odin looked a little uncomfortable at the mention of the Hulk, but he answered quickly, “Thor got the beast to heel after causing an absorbent amount of destruction. Luckily for you, soon after Asgard was attacked by the ev—Dark Elves, and in their attack on Asgard they did more damage than your beast ever could. He was...actually quiet helpful in beating back some of their contingent.”

“How--” Darcy bit her lip, unsure she should even ask the question, or if it was too gauche.

Odin gave her a challenging look, arguing, “Don’t get shy on me now.”

Darcy nodded and lifted her head as she asked, “How long after I arrived did all this crazy evil Elf stuff happen?”

“Nine days.”

Darcy blinked her, trying to repress the urge to cry. She couldn’t help but think, that if she hadn’t brought Bruce with her, she would have been recovered from her trans-planetary teleportation enough to help fight. And maybe then Queen Frigga wouldn’t have died. If she was teleporting to places where she was needed, which was just a theory at this point, but if it was true, she couldn’t help but feel like she failed. She was needed, and she wasn’t there for Frigga.

“The beast unfortunately fell threw a portal, and was left stranded on a desolate world, Svartalfheim, for a time. It was only when Loki and Thor confronted the Dark Elves on Svartalfheim that they found him. He made his prescience known just as Loki was killed, but by then Malekith had absorbed the Aether, and the Hulk buckled under the full force of such a weapon being used on him. He transformed back into his less beastly persona, and assisted Jane when they all returned to Midgard to stop Malekith from unleashing the Aether into the Convergence which would have obliterate the Nine Realms.”

“What about Lady Sif and the Warriors three?” Darcy asked desperately. She couldn’t believe she had slept through a possible world ending event. Again. “Where were they when all this craziness was happening?”

“When Thor brought his insufferable mortal to Asgard, after she’d been infected by the Aether, the Dark Elves devised a plot to infiltrate Asgard. So when they attacked, intent on getting their hands on the Aether, Asgard would have to fight two battles at once, one from within, and one from outside the palace.” Odin who had been telling the story of what happened in her absence with a certain amount of...well, not glee, but aweless pleasure, suddenly grew somber. His orotund voice softened and his shoulders slumped, his whole person began to exude despair, “One of the Dark Elves allowed themselves to be captured and imprisoned.”

“Oh no.” Darcy said quietly. Odin continued, ignoring her, “He used vile technology to turn himself into a super powered warrior….He freed all the prisoners.”

“Causing a prison riot.” Darcy surmised. Odin nodded glumly. Darcy tilted her head and shifted her weight from foot to foot, nervous about asking, but needing to know, “Loki was—all the prisoners are held in the same area? He was freed as well?”

“No.” Odin informed her flatly, looking her directly in the eyes, “They left Loki in his cage. Rightfully judging him to be...far too dangerous and unruly to be released.”

Darcy worried her lip and blinked her eyes as her heart broke for the insane man she had never really gotten the chance to know. But she knew of Loki. From stories told to her by Frigga and Thor and Volstagg. All three spoke of Loki with fondness, recounting the good times they had shared with the mad prince when he was much younger and more interested in mischief than mayhem.
Darcy was unable to stop herself from quietly lamenting, “Poor Loki.”

The air crackled and Darcy saw a shimmer of magic around the King as he practically growled, “What?”

Darcy gulped audibly and stood up straighter, pushing off the throne to stand without slouching, “Nothing.”

“What did you say?” Odin ventured, his face contorting into an ugly mask of emotion.

“Nothing.” Darcy repeated.

“You think Loki worthy of pity?” Darcy nodded her head ‘no’, afraid of the revulsion with which Odin spoke.

Odin’s voice became raucous as he boomed, “TELL THE TRUTH!”

Navigating the stairs blindly and backwards, Darcy stumbled back a few steps, putting a god amount of distance between her and the enraged King. “I didn’t mean it.”

“Yes you did! NOW TELL ME!” Odin shouted, pointing his staff at her in an accusatory manner, that was more than a little threatening.

“I’m…I just though. That. Okay, so, Loki was imprisoned, his home was under attack. He saw the attackers escape the prison, knew they were going to go upstairs and possibly hurt his family. But he was trapped, unable to help his family--”

Odin interjected, raging, “HELP HIS FAMILY? He helped them find her! He gave them directions! Told them right where she’d be! LOKI KILLED HER!...Loki does not deserve pity, he killed Queen Frigga with his insolence and spite.”

Darcy didn’t bother suppressing the tears as they rolled down her cheeks, “That just makes me feel even worse for him.”

Odin looked at her as though she had slapped him, he whispered his question, “What?”

“Loki loved his mom…he didn’t care that she was a Queen, she was his mom. And he loved her. And I know Queen Frigga loved him.” Darcy stated softly, a look of awe came over Odin’s face, “And she never stopped loving him. No matter what he did or how crazy he went. Still she loved him anyway.”

“What would you know about it?” Odin questioned.

“She told me…and I saw it.” Darcy affirmed, her voice becoming more confident as she explained herself, “Unlike you, Frigga never pit Thor and Loki against each other. She loved both her sons equally, but she related more to Loki than she ever could Thor. They shared a love and mastery of magic, it bonded them.”

Odin’s mouth became a straight line across his face as Darcy continued to speak, “He loved her. You have to believe that.”

Odin didn’t agree or disagree he remained motionless, so she went on, “Even if you imprisoned him for a billion years and gave him nothing but golf magazines to read to past the time…Loki, playing a part her death, that is probably the worst punishment he could have ever suffered.”
She could empathize with feeling like a failure, a crazy person, a disappointment. Darcy could imagine how terrible it would be to hurt the one person in the world who was always on your side.

“I’m sure it was, emotionally devastating. And for a person who had been cast out and abandoned by his other family members, losing his mother, the one person who continued to reach out to him, to visit him while he was imprisoned, to try to repair their relationship—”

Odin’s gaze narrowed on her, “How do you know Queen Frigga continued to visit Loki while he was imprisoned?”

Darcy shrugged her shoulders, “I don’t know, know it. I mean I dreamt it, and I assumed, well, you know, Frigga was just that kind of mom. She wouldn’t give up on Loki that easily.”

“What do you mean you dreamt it?” Odin questioned leaning forward in his chair.

“Queen Frigga thinks—thought that I could dream the future. I’m not convinced, or I’m in deep denial. I don’t know. I just…I’m beginning to suspect that I don’t so much dream the future as dream…everything. The past, the present, the future, all of it. Just mashed together and jumbled up so nothing really makes any bit of sense at all.” Odin leant back in his chair and reclined into it, affecting a pose of distracted contemplation.

“Is that so?”

“Yeah.” Darcy admitted, deflating at bit. Relieved. Her possible precognitive abilities had been weighing on her for some time now, and with Frigga dead, well, she felt lost.

“Where are the Warriors Three and Lady Sif?” Darcy asked in a tired voice, their conversation about Loki having derailed Odin answering her question the first time she asked it.

“Hogun chose to remain on Vanheim once peace had been restored across the Nine Realms. I sent the others on a mission, they will return a few weeks.”

Darcy was curious about what kind of mission her friends had been sent on, but she was too tired and emotional drained, so she just nodded.

Odin’s face was blank as he looked her up and down, “You will remain on Asgard for a few days. You may stay in the same room as your last visit to Asgard.”

“What? Why? Isn’t the Bifrost fixed? I thought it was fixed?” Darcy argued.

Odin banged his staff on the floor twice and the doors to the throne room opened and Darcy turned her head to see the two guards enter and head towards them.

Odin ignored her question about the Bifrost and continued to give out kingly commands, “You will remain as my guest and a friend of Asgard. You will take time to rest and recover, before your journey home. I will send someone to act as your escort and companion for the duration of your stay.”

“What?” The guards had reached the bottom of the stairs that lead up to the throne. They stared ahead unseeing, probably waiting for instructions.

Odin stood and stared down at her from his great height, “Go now Darcy Lewis. The guards can help you to your room.”

“I don’t need help finding my room! I don’t need to rest and recover! I’m fine. I can go home today!
You hate me, don’t you? Why not get rid of me? Let me go home? I’ll--”

Odin looked down his nose at her and smiled cruelly, his voice lowering but not quieting so only they could hear, “It would be very embarrassing to be dragged out of the throne room kicking and screaming. Don’t you think?”

Darcy’s mouth gaped as she stared at Odin in shock. He wouldn’t…no, he totally would.

Darcy snapped her mouth shut and balled up her fists in anger, “Fine. I’ll go. But this isn’t over!”

Darcy stomped down the steps and ignored the guards that walked along side her as she stalked out of the throne room. She didn’t walk quickly enough not to hear Odin muttering to himself, “I would be disappointed if it was.”

Darcy spent a week in Asgard before her power had her once again hurtling throughout the galaxy. She spent most of the time in the company of a very handsome and roguish guard by the name of Axel. And she’d be lying if she did admit to developing a little bit of crush on the young guard.

He, like Thor, had total cliché Norse good looks except he wasn’t as big and bulky as Thor, he was more tall and lean. He also had dirty blonde hair with a full beard and clear blue eyes. After spending a few hours in his company, he quickly won her over. She stopped complaining about being ‘forced’ to stay in Asgard by order of the King and began to enjoy it.

After their first meeting the throne room, Darcy didn’t see King Odin for the remainder of her stay on Asgard. Which was just fine with her.

Axel encouraged her practicing and use of magic. Apparently Axel had several sisters who studied magic when he was growing up, so he could actually perform a little magic himself. And thus, they got up to all sorts of shenanigans.

They spent an entire day running around Asgard casting illusions on peoples body parts, making them look outrageously fat or weird, giggling as everyone around them freaked out and tried to remain polite at their friends unexpected change of appearance. He used the perfect amount of mockery and digression when mocking their subjects. He had a sense of humor that was wicket and cruel but he allowed their admittedly, mean commentary, to be heard by anyone else so she never felt all that guilty for busting a gut laughing with him at other people’s expenses.

Another day Axel took her to a secluded spot on the border of the city, showed off the indigenous wild life to her. They spent one day, trying to pick pocket people. He was much better at it than she was.

They also spent some time hanging out with Volstagg’s family, swimming at the lake and playing with the children. Lief, Volsgtagg’s son that had a crush on Darcy, hilariously acted aggressive towards Axel. Axel showed that he wasn’t all acerbic wit and biting commentary, when he didn’t mock the younger teen or engage with Lief’s numerous attempts to start a fight. He also showed a softer side when interacting with the younger children, he just had a playfulness that made the kids flock to him.

The only day they spent together that wasn’t filled with laughter and fun, was the day he took her to
Queen Frigga’s memorial. It was little more than a statue in a garden, but it was quiet and she was grateful there was a place to go for her to say goodbye to the Queen she’d counted as one of her extended family. When she asked if there was one for Loki, Axel became withdrawn. He’d shown her the stone, one brick with the Prince’s name engraved on it, was all that Asgard had done to remember Loki. When she asked why Loki didn’t get a statue like Frigga, Axel didn’t have an answer for her. He left her early that day. Abandoning her in the library, she didn’t still him until the next day, when they both proceeded not to mention the previous days’ events at all.

She got on so well with her guard, that she was actually disappointed when he dropped her off at her room every night. There were also some times during the day, when he disappear on her, without warning. He’d always reappear ten or so minutes later, with a reasonable apology, but it still left her feeling a little lost and abandoned whenever he deserted her.

She wished he’d hit on her like Fandral did, but he didn’t. He was a perfect gentleman, only interested in her company and friendship. Well….mostly. From time to time she’d catch his eyes on specific body parts of hers, and she’d been ogled enough to recognized a lecherous male gaze when it was on her. So, she was pretty sure he wasn’t gay, but whatever his reason, he held back and kept all of their interactions platonic.

Embarrassingly, Darcy actually made a move on him and he rejected her.

He had been walking her to her door, and she’d asked him inside to help her retrieve a necklace that had fallen behind the heavy vanity in her room. He agreed to help. Once inside, Darcy had pounced and kissed him. At first, he’d responded eagerly, but then he pulled away.

Shaking his head, he’d told her that while she was ‘lovely’, he wasn’t ‘available’ at the moment, whatever that meant. Turning beet red, Darcy had been stunned and all but pushed him out of the door. He’d assured her they could still be friends and that he’d see her tomorrow as she closed the door on his face.


It didn’t work though, she woke up in the same empty bed she’d woken up every other day she’d spent on Asgard.

When Axel came to collect her in the morning, she’d feigned an illness and spent the day hiding out in her room. She didn’t even leave for meals, instead asking food to be brought to her.

Axel came to her right as she was getting ready for bed.

“Darcy!” Axel called thought the closed door, “Let me in.”

“I’m sick.” Darcy called out, faking a cough.

“I’m sleeping.” She called out as she pulled back the covers and climbed into the giant bed, “I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Darcy saw a shimmery sign of magic near the door handle and then Axel was walking through it. He looked surprised to find her in bed already.
“Oh, you really are in bed.” He said looking slightly embarrassed.

“Yeah, so. Bye!” Darcy chirped sassily, pulling her lace eye-mask down over her eyes and throwing herself down on to her back, pulling the covers up, she hid her face.

“Don’t dismiss me so cruelly.” Axel plead, she could hear him getting closer, “I’ve not seen you all day.”

“Yeah, I was sick. So, tomorrow.” Darcy closed her eyes tightly, wishing Axel would accept her words at face value and leave.

He pulled the blanket from off her face and Darcy stubbornly kept her eyes closed, “You’re mad at me.”


“I wanted to kiss you back.” Axel announced. Darcy’s eyes popped open and she hurried to lift her eye mask and sit up so she could see him properly.

Axel took a seat on the bed next to her, “I’m very attracted to you, but I don’t think we should entwine ourselves.”

“Why not?” Darcy asked unable to hide the disappointment in her voice.

“I like you too much.” Axel answered, a mischievous smile growing on his face, “You’re a riddle Darcy. A puzzle box that I can’t help but want to solve. Your personality is enchanting. Your body is alluring. But your power…you could be ripped across the universe without a moment’s notice. Your magic grows stronger day by day and though you have yet to master it, I can sense building up inside you, accumulating and I just…can’t wait to see what happens to you next.”

Darcy narrowed her eyes as Axel continued to wax poetic about her abilities. She was starting to get a sinking feeling in her gut…

“I find myself wanting to mold you, teach you. Help you navigate the ins and outs of your strange power. I bet if you were able to harness it you could move planets. Teleport objects to your side with a thought. Banish them away from you, sending them across the universe, with a glance. There is so much untapped potential in you my dear.” Axel ran a finger along one of her wayward curls.

“Do you see my dilemma?” Axel asked as he let his finger fall from her hair and trace it down her arm, all the way to the tip of her finger, “I want too many things from you.”

Darcy felt like something had sifted, something was different and it was all him. Axel had seemed like he was too good to be true from the start, but she had wanted a friend so badly she over looked his sometimes odd behavior. The jokes he took too far. The comments that were just a shade too cruel. The way his blonde hair seemed black in certain light. His tan that paled occasionally before returning to normal. His eyes, that were clear blue, sometimes shone bright green. And now, his whole body was …flickering right before her eyes.

“You’re not Axel.” Darcy accused. His eyes lit up with mirth and a Grinch link smile took over his face as it faded, another face could be seen right underneath it but then the lights went out, plunging them into darkness.

“Oh I am.” He assured her, his hands began to glow and they were the only source of light in the room, he waved them over her, “You’re just now meeting the real me. And I’ve finally decided what I want to do with you.”
She screamed and tried to run away, scrambling for the other side of the bed, he yanked her back and with a few words she found herself unable to move.

“Don’t be afraid. Like I said before Darcy…I like you. And this…won’t hurt…a bit.”

He lied.

Darcy couldn’t move so she couldn’t scream, pain ran up and down her spine, it followed into every extremity and her head exploded, an instant migraine developing. She could feel a hand petting her hair and she heard an unfamiliar voice making shushing noises.

A voice that wasn’t Axels spoke in the darkness, “There now, don’t struggle, embrace the pain. Fight through it.”

She listen to the voice, what choice did she have.

After two minutes of pain, what felt like two hours, the pain faded. Receded slowly then quickly until it was all gone, only the pounding in her head remained.

“I know it doesn’t seem like it, but I am helping you Darcy. I’m giving you a gift.” The silky voice assured her. The hand petting her hair disappeared and Darcy tried to move but her body was still immobilized, not her mouth though.

“What’s the return policy on your ‘gift’?” Darcy quipped, masking the fear she felt threatening to overwhelm her.

The voice laughed and then she felt a pair of soft lips press against hers, she let out a muffled cry but was unable to turn her head away. The lips applied a steady pressure that was removed quickly. The hand returned to her hair, petting her, “There now, you’re protected. I’ve done all I can to help you.”

“What the fuck does that mean?” Darcy cried out.

“Just remember, the best way to predict your future is to create it.” The hand moved from her hair to her cheek, caressing her tenderly, the voice lowered, “I’m probably more surprised than you are, but I actually think I’ll miss you.”

“What the fuck does that mean?” Darcy repeated, “Protect me from what? Who are you?!?”

“You know who I am. You just don’t want to admit it because you like me.” The hand left her face and Darcy let out a grunt of frustration.

“Axel?” Darcy called out.

The voice sighed, “The time for lies is over. Now it’s time for you to see the truth.”

“Great. Totally agree; now turn on a light and un-spell me so I can punch you in the face!” The voice laughed at her.

“Sweet dreams dear Darcy and good journey to you.” The silvery voice whispered, then she felt the palm of a hand press against her forehead and then she knew only darkness.
She woke up with a scream, “Ahh!”

A pair of strong arms came around her quickly. Pulled her into a masculine chest a familiar voice cried out her name, “Darcy!”

She knew that voice. With tears in her eyes she turned around and saw Fandral’s ridiculous manicured bearded face.

“Fandral!” She exclaimed as she threw her arms around him and hugged him close. Tears leaked from her eyes as he held her, those tears soon became sobs and then she was full on weeping all over his naked chest.

“Dear Lady Darcy, you leave me torn. I wish to celebrate for you, finally, finally, have found your way to my bed, and thus I feel like the most fortunate man in all the nine realms.” Fandral stroked her back as he talked, comforting her, “But I find myself feeling repulsion at my own joy, as you are so clearly in distress.”

“Tell me Lady Darcy, what troubles you so. Perhaps we can solve your problem quickly and spend the rest of the night enjoying more pleasurable activities. We are in a bed, after all.” Fandral said, a teasing lilt in his voice.

Darcy didn’t respond. She just clung to her friend and cried. She remembered Axel turning into a stranger and doing a spell on her, but that wasn’t had her so upset. She’d had the most terrible dream. She’d seen the destruction of Asgard by a giant lava monster. She’d seen Volstagg stabbed. And then Fandral…she saw them die. Killed by an evil dagger throwing woman.

“I saw you die.” She whispered, confessing, “I can see the future. And I saw you die.”

Fandral’s arms stiffened around her.

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Eir
Darcy’s Dress
Darcy’s Coat
Reminder of what the Throne Room looks like
Guard that Odin sent to Hang Out with Darcy
Darcy’s Sleep outfit she’s wearing when she shows up in FANDRAL’s BED
Chapter End Notes

You all understand that this chapter takes place AFTER THE WHOLE MOVIE OF Thor The Dark World....so you know that whole bit with ODIN was actually Loki in disguise....
If you are confused, please let me know in the comments.
Let me know if you liked the chapter too!
Chapter 17 – Fandral (Again and Again and Again)

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up on a space ship.

Chapter Notes

Hope you like the chapter, I'm on vacation for the next two days so there might be another update in the middle of the week or by Friday, who knows? Maybe not. Not promising, just positing.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 17 – Fandral (Again and Again and Again)

Fandral hadn’t believed her. He’d convinced her to sleep and speak on her prediction of his death in the morning. Emotionally and physically exhausted, she gave in to his request and fell back asleep. Comforted by his arms around her, she was lulled to sleep to the sound of Fandral’s heart beat under her cheek.

She awoke some time later to the sensation of fingers running up and down her arm.

“Stoppit” Darcy grumbled, sleepily she turned onto her side, curling up into a small ball. The fingers stopped teasing her skin, but only momentarily was she free of irritation. A pair of soft lips kissed the skin of her shoulder making their way down her bicep and arm, all the way down to her fingertips. It actually felt kind of pleasant so she didn’t complain.

“Lady Darcy,” The dulcet tones of Fandral’s voice broke the silence causing her to cringe and frown, “Tis time for you to wake darling. Come back to us in the waking world.”

“Fuck off.” Darcy whined childishly, blindly she searched for the blanket and pulled it up over her head. The blanket did nothing to block out the sound of Fandral’s hearty laugh. Darcy scowled as Fandral pressed is body to hers, cuddling up behind her.

Darcy squirmed in his embrace. She couldn’t feel his skin against hers, nor his body heat, so she assumed he lay above the covers. Darcy’s voice was low as she complained, “Leave me alone.”

“You’ve been sleeping for nearly two days and we are about to approach our destination….I think you would threaten me with bodily harm if I allowed you to miss our arrival to Knowhere.” Fandral spoke in a cajoling tone but his words sparked her mind into overdrive.

Darcy threw the blanket down off her face, “Two days?”

She turned in his arms to face Fandral. He smiled at her and brushed the hair out of her eyes, his tone was wistful, “Yes, dearest Darcy. Two days of staring at your sleeping form, able to look but not touch.”
Fandral leaned in kissed her on the cheek, his mustache tickled her skin causing her to reluctantly smile at his whispered words, “Let me show you to wash room, it’s small, but satisfactory.”

Fandral helped her to roll out of the bed and took her to a small bathroom, and when he said small, he had meant small. There was just a toilet, sink, and standing shower. It was in such a small space that your knees touched the wall when you sat on the toilet.

Just as Darcy was about to question where they were, why it felt like they were moving, what the hell was going on. Fandral kissed her on the cheek and asked her to leave her clothes on the sink, he promised to wash them while she showered, before he disappeared promising to bring back breakfast.

When she emerged from the shower, her nightgown, underwear, and robe indeed looked washed and dried and was folded neatly on the edge of the sink. Darcy quickly got redressed and exited the tiny bathroom. Fandral was waiting for her on the bed, plate with something warm and yummy smelling beside him.

He lit up as she climbed aboard the bed, he held out a mug to her and she greedily drank from it. It was some kind of juice she remembered from her days at the palace in Asgard. Once she lowered the drink from her lips, Fandral held a forkful of eggs to her lips. Darcy gave him an slow smile and indulged him letting him hand feed her.

When he went to do it again, she shook her head, “I’ve got it from here dude.”

She began to quickly shovel the food into her mouth, she felt ravenous.

“Your arrival, while most welcome, is…slightly problematic.” Fandral informed her with a grimace.

“What do you mean?” Darcy asked in between bites.

“Lady Sif, Volstagg and I are on a secret mission for King Odin.” Darcy nodded as sipped from her cup.

“Yeah, and?” Darcy questioned.

“And, it’s…secret.” Fandral said with a wince, “We cannot tell you what we are doing, for your own safety.”

Darcy shrugged, “That’s fine.”

Fandral looked surprised, “Really?”

Darcy finished the last of the food on the plate, tempted to lick it clean, she deposited her empty dishes on the little side table beside the bed, “Yeah, what do I care? So, you can’t tell me what you all are doing…you can still hang out with me and tell me where we are right?”

Fandral’s expression grew strained, “Lady Sif has argued that you be left here,” He gestured to the small Spartan room they were sitting in, “Contained to my cabin, so that you might not even learn the smallest detail of our task. For your own protection.”

Darcy’s eyebrows raised high on her forehead, “Really?”

“Yes.” Fandral confirmed.

“She has met me right? She remembers me? Does she really think I’ll be content to sit in this room
for..how long will this mission of yours take?”

“A few weeks or so.” Fandral said evasively.

“Yeah, okay. No.” Darcy practically bounced off the bed and onto her feet. She made her way to the door, but just as she was about to open it, Fandral put a hand on her arm, stilling her.

“Lady Darcy…I am…Lady Sif is correct. Were you to stay in this room, and learn nothing of our mission, you would truly be safer. Our task is dangerous and we are far from Asgard.” Darcy stared at his face and saw truth in what he said. He really thought it would be better for her to stay hidden in his room for a week than risk learning what they were doing.

“Are you going to stop me if I try to leave the room?” Darcy asked, not really sure if he would actually restrain her, considering how much he liked her.

“No.” Fandral said in a serious tone, “But I would make you aware that you are putting yourself at risk if you choose to leave and join the others. You risk learning the truth and you risk being hunted down by possibly for said information.”

Darcy gave his words consideration before making up her mind, “I hear you. I understand how serious this is, but I’m not staying in here for a week.”

Fandral nodded at her and stepped back allowing her to open the door.

“OH MY GOD!” Darcy squealed with delight. Fandral had led her to the bridge of the ship. The spaceship! She was in space!

“It is a beautiful view isn’t it.” Lady Sif commented from the pilots’ chair, her gaze shifting from Darcy to Fandral, “I expect you’ve been made aware of the risks?”

“Yeah.” Darcy replied distractedly as she walked forward to the glass dome that was the spaceship equivalent of a car’s windshield. Laid out before her was a view Jane would have killed for. The sky was inky black, with stars just littered everywhere like someone had just dropped a bottle of glitter all over the sky.

“And you agree not to inquire as to the nature of our quest?” Lady Sif asked.

“Mmhm.” Darcy’s eyes were as wide as they could get. There was so much space. It was intimidating and gorgeous and ridiculous. Her life was...certainly turning out to be far more interesting than she ever pictured it becoming when she was growing up in West Virginia.

The spaceship they were in was not Asgardian. Apparently flying an Asgardian spaceship to where ever they were headed would raise too many eyebrows. Fandral told her that their mission was so secretive that they didn’t want anyone knowing their true race, the fact that they were Asgardian at all, was also a secret.

Volstagg suddenly entered, upon seeing her he let out a cry of joy, “Darcy!”

Darcy barely had time to turn before he had swept her up into a big bear hug. Seeing Volstagg reminded her of her dream and she felt her face crumble momentarily, she hugged the large warrior extra tightly. “Hello Volstagg. It’s good to see you.”
“Oh, girl it does my eyes good to see you again as well.” Volstagg let her go, dropping her back onto her feet. He clapped her on the shoulder lightly, “Your presence brings light to the doldrums days that have plagued this dismal journey for far too long.”

“Yes, Lady Darcy. Though I have my reservations about exposing you to the risk, we as warriors of Asgard have taken on willingly, I am glad to see you.” Lady Sif said with a smile. Darcy made a happy noise in the back of her throat and ran over to Sif, greeting her properly, with a hug.

Volstagg lead her over to a chair, urging her to sit in front of a panel of blinking lights and buttons, he spoke with a smile and a twinkle in his eyes, “Tell us girl, what adventures have you gotten yourself into in our absence.”

“Yes, Darcy. Tell us how you have been since Thor last saw you on Midgard when he helped defeat the Chitauri.” Sif encouraged. Fandral came to sit next to her, obviously eager to hear what she had been up to as well.

Darcy’s smile faded and she nodded, “Okay. Well…after Thor left with Loki, I ended up teleporting all around, well, first I slept for a couple of days recovering, but after that I started teleporting all over. From Tony, to Pepper, to Bruce and Jane and Erik and Steve and..basically all over.”

“Your friends greeted you happily though? Yes?” Lady Sif questioned, perhaps sensing the shift in Darcy’s mood.

Darcy gave her friends a half hearted smile, “Yeah.”

She was quiet for a moment as she collected her thoughts, trying to think of the best way to break her abduction and subsequent torture to her alien friends. She didn’t want to inciting her warrior friends to take up arms against the culprits back on Earth. With her luck it would spark an intergalactic incident…

Fandral called her name “Darcy?” He put his hand on her back and stroked it a few times soothingly, “Did--”

Darcy couldn’t think of a way to make it sound good so she just blurted it out, “I was kidnapped.”

Volstagg narrowed his eyes but Fandral and Lady Sif looked confused, “I thought you not a child by Midgardian standards? What does it mean to be ‘kidnapped’?”

“It means a couple of guys…took me, put me in a room and tortured me and asked me millions of questions and then…I escaped.” Darcy let her gaze flicker from friend to friend. In Sif’s eyes she saw pity, anger in Volstagg and anguish in Fandral.

She averted her gaze to the stars as she continued speaking, “Yeah, so I uh, forgot to tell Odin this when I saw him, but I might have, under intense duress told my kidnappers all about Asgard. So, I don’t know. Just, FYI. Anyway, I eventually rescued myself..with a little help. So then I found my way to a magical school in the Himalayas. I…started dating a wizard, but we—we’re not together anymore. I, I learned some magic.”

She shifted her eyes back onto her friends, a little bit of pride bleeding into her voice as she boasted, “I can actually create an energy shield and keep it up for five minutes now!”

The warriors didn’t look any happier than when she told them she’d been tortured and her shoulders slumped, her tone deflating as she babbled, “Which is…exciting. So, um I also learned some basic fighting stuff too. I’m…I’m not very good at that stuff though. And--”
Lady Sif’s grin was as wide as Darcy had ever seen it, “You’ve begun training to be a warrior?”

“No.” Darcy corrected, “Just some basic self-defense stuff.”

Sif had a gleam in her eye that Darcy didn’t like, “Well, I shall be honored to help continue your training.”

“That’s okay. You don’t--”

“It will be fun.” Sif said with an air of finality that Darcy didn’t feel equipped to contend with, so she let it go.

“Anyway, after I left Karma-Taj--”

Fandral interrupted her, his hand clenched in a tight fist belying appealing voice, “How long were you held captive?”

Darcy audibly swallowed, “Uh, a couple days.”

“Did they..you said you were tortured. Tortured how?” She could see the tension lining every inch of Fandral’s body and she knew if she went into detail about her time with her kidnappers, it wouldn’t make Fandral feel any better.

“Tortured like…torture.” Darcy replied trying to be evasive, “They didn’t do any permanent damage, don’t worry about it.”

“Don’t worry about it!” Fandral shouted and she shrank away from him. His eyes were wide and his mouth a hard line across his face. It was an intimidating look.

“Fandral!” Sif scolded. Fandral looked at her with a murderous expression.

“She was tortured!” Fandral said as if it explained his outburst, he turned his eyes back on her, going down on one knee in front of her, he grabbed up her hand and kissed her palm, “Tell me Lady Darcy, tell me the scoundrels who hurt you still breathe. Tell me you did not vanquish them in your escape, so that I may avenge you. Bring pain to those who caused you to suffer.”

“Aye.” Volstagg agreed, “Tell us who they are and we shall deal with them after we deal with the Aether.”

“VOLSTAGG!” Lady Sif chastised loudly.

Volstagg went pink, “Whoops.”

“Aether?” Darcy questioned.

“Forget it.” Lady Sif ordered her, “Continue with your tale. Where did you go after leaving the wizards?”

Darcy shifted her eyes between the commanding Sif and the embarrassed looking Volstagg, she ignored Fandral who still knelt before her. Fandral kept her hand held captive in his, and he kept intermittently kissing the back of her hand and holding it to his cheek. She ignored all that and finished recapping her recent events, “Well, after Kamar-Taj I, you guys were there when I accidently teleported into Frigga and Odin’s bedchambers…I slept, for a month, and woke up to find you guys gone, Hogun and Thor off world, and Frigga dead.”

They were all silent for a moment as they remembered their fallen Queen.
“I met with Odin, he told me what happened while I recovered…then I woke up here.” Her voice sounded tired even to her own ears. Though, she didn’t feel it in her body, she was more tired in her soul. Tired of being jerked around by her power, deposited all over the universe without a moment’s notice. Without any say in the matter.

Fandral smiled at her and she forced herself to smile back, “Fandral finally got his wish and I teleported to him and now I’m with you guys. And…that’s what’s been up with me.”

Volstagg regarded her with an expression of fondness, Sif smiled at her almost in encouragement. She forced another smile though her face was starting to ache from all the fake smiles. In a chirping voice she asked “So, how have you guys been?”

It was another two days before they arrived at their destination. Darcy didn’t teleport at all; she went to sleep beside Fandral and woke up next to him every night. Lady Sif alerted them that they were approaching the mining colony of Exitar and that they should join her on the bridge to see it. She and Fandral ran out of the mess room, eager to see what had been promised to be a ‘sight unlike any other’.

When they reached the bridge Darcy practically pressed her nose to the glass to see the planet they were approaching. At least…she thought it was a planet. It looked, sort of like it had been half eaten or something. It was surrounded by gases light in hues of green and yellow. It almost looked like a helmet, half hallowed out and refurbished into a planet.

Darcy turned to Volstagg with an incredulous expression, “That’s the planet we’re going to?”

“That’s Knowhere.” Volstagg answered with dramatic flair, Darcy rolled her eyes and turned back to the awesome sight before them. She listened as Volstagg took pleasure in getting to play ‘story teller’.

“Knowhere is the severed head of a Celestial being. It is home to the mining colony of Exitar and the Collector’s museum.”

“Who’s the Collector?’” Darcy asked, she turned when she heard Sif make a noise, but Sif shrugged at her and then obviously avoided her gaze, “Why are you acting all squirrelly?”

“I’m not.” Sif denied, smiling too widely at her. Darcy huffed, but let Sif’s weirdness go unaddressed. She wasn’t stupid, Volstagg had obviously mentioned he wasn’t supposed to. Again. So she didn’t bring up the Collector, and instead inquired about something else.

Turning back to Volstagg she asked, “That’s a…severed head?”

Volstagg looked a little more subdued, probably ashamed at being silently scolded by Sif behind her back, but his confidence came back the more he talked, “Hundreds of years ago, the Tivan Group sent workers in to mine the organic matter within the skull. Bone, brain tissue, spinal fluid. All rare resources. Highly valued in black markets across the galaxy.”

“The absence of rules and regulations turned Knowhere into a safe haven for outlaws.” Fandral added, coming to stand next to her and watch their approach on the Celestial remnant.

“Which is why you will be remaining on the ship while we handle our business.” Sif said sternly.
Darcy rolled her eyes, she’d been arguing with Sif off and on since she had arrived about being restricted to the ship.

“But why!” Darcy whined, whirling around putting her back to the glass, she pouted and fixed Sif with a sour expression.

“I’m not discussing this again.” Sif said, her tone dismissive.

“I’ll remain behind with you Darcy, we shall oversee the refueling of the ship.” Fandral said trying to be consoling. Darcy continued to pout, refusing to be assuaged.

An hour after Volstagg and Sif left the ship, Darcy snuck away from Fandral and escaped the ship. She had raided Sif’s room and borrowed a vest, boots, and a cloak. She threw the items on over her long night gown, she had hoped to blend with the indigenous people but she quickly discovered that her ‘medieval chic’ attire was sorely out of place.

Apparently Asgardian attire, was not what the rest of the galaxy was rocking now a days.

Just walking around outside the ship, she had seen a blue skinned alien, a red and bumpy faced alien, and a pink skinned alien.

Someone bumped into her, a very tall someone; they looked down at her and snarled at her, “Move Xandarian.”

Darcy scuttled out of the large green alien’s way, just sort of gaping at his long tail that swished back and forth as he walked away from her.

“Darcy!” Fandral cried running out of the ship. He stopped short when he saw her, figuratively four feet away from the ship.

“You left the ship!” He accused.

Darcy reached out one hand and put it on the ship, touching it, “It’s not like I went far.”

Fandral made a face and then nodded, “I suppose not, but still. Lady Sif will have my head if anything happens to you.”

“Nothing will happen to me,” Darcy smiled evilly and then moved over to Fandral and kissed him on the cheek, then linking their arms together she pulled him forward and away from the ship. “As long as you’re by my side. You wouldn’t let anything happen to me. Right?”

“No one will touch you, their life would be forfeit if they even tried. This I swear.” Fandral stared at her with goo-goo eyes and Darcy smiled encouragingly.

Fandral only let her charming smile distract him long enough for her to guide them a few steps before he shook his head and ground his heels into the dirt, halting their progress, “No! We can’t, you have to stay with the ship Darcy. This is not lark. We are in danger here. You could be hurt. I’ve sworn to keep you safe.”

Darcy frowned and was unable to stop herself from stomping her foot childishly, “But I want to go exploring! I’ve never been on an alien planet before!”
Fandral gave her blank look, and Darcy rolled her eyes, “Asgard doesn’t count. You guys look just like us squishy humans. You’re not...alien aliens. You’re just...you’re just like the galactic version of Alaska. Different culture, far away, a little behind the times but...still...um--”

“What?”

“Never mind.” Darcy blushed, “Shitty metaphor. Ignore me.”

Fandral sighed, “We need to return to the ship.”

Darcy pouted, her eyes scanning all around them, soaking up the sights of aliens loading and unloading their ships, refueling, and paying the short little alien working the fuel pumps.

Darcy responded in a flat voice, “Getting to visit what amounts to a gas station isn’t exactly exciting Fandral. I can’t go home and tell someone I was in space and went to an alien planet--”

“--Severed head of a Celestial being.” Fandral corrected. Darcy rolled her eyes.

“Whatever, I can’t go home and say I went to the other end of the universe and all I saw was the lousy gas station! That’s like the worst summer vacation story ever!” Darcy groused.

She stuck out her bottom lip and put her hand on Fandral’s chest, she fluttered her eyelashes at him and affected a breathy voice, as she plead, “Can’t we just visit one shop? Or walk down the main street or something? What about that museum?”

“NO!” Fandral shouted. Darcy jerked away from him, letting her hand fall away from him she took a few steps back.

Fandral’s face softened, and he made an effort to sound more reasonable as he explained, “Don’t mention the museum. Banish it from your mind. Please, Lady Darcy. You don’t understand..you can’t know why we’re here. Please.”

Fandral looked around them, people were staring at them, they were causing a scene. Of course people were staring. A green woman with black and red hair, sharpening a knife looked particularly interested in their conversation.

“Please come, on the way home we’ll stop at another planet. A safer one. One with beautiful landscapes and plenty of tourist sites.”

Darcy crossed he arms in front of her chest and pursed her lips, “And will I be permitted to leave the ship on these far away tourist destination planets? Or will they be too dangerous too? I’m not helpless anymore you know.”

Fandral took a few steps towards her, his hands held up in surrender, “I speak the truth my lady. I only endeavor to keep you safe from harm and happy. This place is not for the likes of you dearest. You are not made for the company of scum and villainy.”

Darcy allowed Fandral to put his hands on her shoulders, “Asgard is the pinnacle of technology and culture throughout the galaxy, though I can understand the need to explore the other realms and see for yourself how the other half lives.”

Darcy narrowed her eyes at Fandral even as the scowl melted from her face, “You Asgardians are so fucking stuck up.”

Fandral laughed and pulled her close for a hug, “You mortals are so emotional, so inquisitive and
vexing. In the best possible way of course.”

Darcy pulled away from and nodded at him mockingly, “Of course.”

Fandral cupped her cheeks in his hand; he brought their faces close together, their noses touching. “Mortal lives are so short; I suppose it’s what makes your people so passionate.”

“I’m passionate.” Darcy murmured as her eyes fell shut and she stretched up onto her tip toes, bringing her lips into contact with Fandral’s.

Their kiss was slow and sweet. His lips were so pliant under hers and his mustache and goatee were as soft as silk. His arms went around her waist and he lifted her up, bringing her level with him so he needn’t tilt his head down so far.

He was a very good kisser and Darcy allowed herself to just surrender to the moment and follow her bodies instinct. She responded to his every movement in kind, tangling her tongue with is in a slow sensual exploration.

“FANDRAL!” Sif’s disembodied voice had her and Fandral freezing mid-kiss.

“Shit.” Darcy muttered against his lip, capturing Fandral’s lips for once more kiss Darcy was the one who broke their kiss by shoving Fandral away from her.

She spied the angry Lady Sif and amused looking Volstagg as they marched towards the two of them.

Darcy poked Fandral in the stomach, her voice matter of fact as she informed him, “I’m going to blame everything on you.”

Fandral looked a little dazed as his forehead crinkled, “What?”

“What is she doing outside the ship?” Sif demanded as she got close enough to scold them.

Darcy pointed at Fandral, “His fault!”

And then she ran away, sprinting up the gangplank of the ship she hid around the corner and listened as Sif began chewing Fandral out.

She felt bad for abandoning him to face Sif’s wrath alone, but really, it was just her ‘mortal’ self preservation instincts kicking in, so…he totally should have seen it coming. Darcy cackled to herself as Fandral cried out, “Ahh! Stop hitting me! Lady Sif! I yield! I YIELD!”

Several days later, just as he’d promised, Fandral convinced Lady Sif and Volstagg to agree to take her to of the nicer worlds that the Asgardians deemed ‘civilized’. The name of the planet was Zenn-La. It was home to the Zenn-Lavians, it was a part of the Deneb star system in the Milky Way galaxy. The Deneb star system contained a few points of interest including 37 planets and 93 moons, but it was Zenn-La the Asgardians thought she might enjoy seeing the most. And the second she step foot on the planet, she quickly figured out why.
It was populated by a humanoid species that had no discernible differences from regular humans or Asgardians. Its people varied in roughly the same minor ethnological aspects as the people of Earth and as such Darcy was once again faced with an ‘alien’ planet populated by people who didn’t look all that alien.

However, the people of Zenn-La were as long lived as Asgardians by nature; they had used their long lives to construct a virtual paradise. It was a technologically advanced race to be sure, and its city looked like something out of the Jetsons only, prettier.

Which is maybe why the Asgardians deemed them ‘civilized’. She was starting to understand why Asgard was so cut off from the rest of the galaxy…they were kind of…arrogant and a little bit racists.

After a lengthy ‘check in’ process with the Zenn-La security delegation, she and the Asgardians were given a three day pass to the planet.

“It is very rare for any species other than Asgardian or Xandarians to be allowed more than a few hours on Zenn-La Lady Darcy.” Volstagg informed her as they strolled down the quiet street. The four of them received a few odd looks, but Darcy suspected it was due to their odd attire. Zenn-La had this whole pristine metallic color scheme going on, fashion wise.

She and the Asgardians definitely stood out in their grey cloaks and medieval fashion. Darcy didn’t like it. She felt extremely self conscious.

“Yes Darcy, for ten thousands centuries Zenn-La was locked in a bloody Age of Warfare. They have since renounced arms forever and have been enjoying nearly a century of peace, prosperity, and learning.” Sif articulated in a orotund voice.

“Does…Asgard have like, a peace treaty with Zenn-La or something? I thought you guys only cared about the nine realms?” Darcy asked as she came to stop in front of what, she assumed was a pet shop window. Small furry creatures barked and played with each other cutely and Darcy felt her heart melt a little at the sight of such adorable tiny animals.

Sif and the others stopped with her and observed the creatures as they continued to converse. Sif shook her head, “No Asgard has no alliance with Zenn-La, but the Allfather makes sure Asgard stays informed of the rest of the galaxy’s pertinent changes and cultures.”

“And Zenn-La made the cut huh?” Darcy muttered under her breath.

“What was that Lady Darcy?” Sif questioned.

“Nothing. Go on, you were telling me about how Zenn-La is enjoying a hundred years of peace?” Darcy prompted.

Volstagg took over the story telling duties, “Yes, and in this Golden Age of Reason the Zenn-Lavians have since entered an ‘Age of Space Travel’. They’ve launched numerous space faring vessels in all directions of the galaxy. They actually colonized many primitive worlds, but a while back they stopped sending out these expeditions as they learned what Asgard learned long ago…”

Volstagg paused for dramatic effect and Darcy smiled as she indulged him, prompting, “What did Asgard learn long ago?”

Volstagg turned away from the alien furry pet shop and looked at her directly, making her turn away from the furry cuteness as well, “Many planets will fall under your dominion when you are a far more advanced civilization, but when no other world is capable of offering you anything you don’t
already have…what’s the point? All you do is take over planets and acquire more responsibility you don’t need or want. And at the same time you overwrite the cultures of the more primitive worlds with your perfect culture, destroying everything that made them unique.”

“Huh.” Darcy responded. Possibly proving the point that Asgard and Zenn-La are more advanced than the puny human race in comparison.

Fandral put his arm around her shoulders, “Zenn-La became reclusive, keeping to themselves much like Asgard, they choose to stay out of the galaxies ever changing politics and wars. They only allow select visitors from equally advanced civilizations, hence our admittance.”

“It’s quite fascinating isn’t it?” Volstagg commented, then he sniffed the air and a look of pleasure overtook his face, “Oh, my friends. We are in for a treat; do you know what I smell?”

“Food?” Fandral asked with a mocking smile.

“Not just food boy! Zenn-La’s famous delicacy, pindu cake!” Volstagg sniffed the air and then stepped out in front taking lead of their little group, “Come on!”

They followed behind Volstagg as he followed his nose to a little bakery on the corner.

He wasn’t wrong, it was the best cake she’d ever eaten.

Two weeks later, they were back on the ship in the dining hall and Darcy was begging for them to take her to another world. Six just wasn’t enough.

Other creatures had mistaken her for a Xandarian often enough for her to become curious about the planet that all the Asgardians were disguising themselves as being from. Xandar was totally on her planetary bucket list. However, the Asgardians had just heard through the ‘space news’ that some major battle had just taken place on Xandar. So, Darcy was scrambling for another destination to beg to see.

Once she had gotten her hands on a planetary database she had used all of her powers of persuasion on the Asgardians to get them to keep ‘visiting’ planets on their way home to Asgard. In addition to Zenn-La Darcy had convinced the Asgardians to take her to the terra-formed pristine beaches on Deneb-7, a planet called Heaven where people lived in solid clouds, a planet called Astra where the people were bald and yellow skinned and had the ability to manipulate metal using the power of their minds, and a space station called Kymellia which, actually was super boring, and a planet called ‘Prime’ where they had the best ice cream in the universe.

“C’mon. Deneb-7 beaches were great but isn’t there a planet out there where I don’t have to bath in sunscreen first? Why don’t we just visit one more--”

“No Lady Darcy. It is time we returned to Asgard.” Lady Sif informed her in a no-nonsense tone. Darcy could tell the Asgardians were growing weary of all the planet hopping but, she just didn’t want to stop.

“But--” She protested, but Volstagg interrupted her.

“Girl we’ve just informed you that a band of former intergalactic outlaws just saved the planet Xandar from the Kree warlord known as Ronan. The attack left the planet in upheaval. The Nova
Corps forces all but decimated and your response is, ‘let’s go somewhere else then?’”

“Why are you so intent on exploring the galaxy all of a sudden?” She could hear the genuine curiosity in Fandral’s voice and she hated it. She didn’t want to explain herself.

“Yes.” Volstagg chimed in, “Pray tell us what has lead to your fascination with alien cultures.”

Darcy bit her lip and cast her gaze down on the floor, she had been dodging probing questions like these for the past couple days. Darcy’s voice was small when she replied, “I don’t know. I just… want to see more.”

“You’re lying.” Fandral accused.

“No I’m not.” Darcy denied, the tips of her ears feeling hot.

“Lady Darcy, you know we think fondly on you, but I will not be kept from my wife and children a day longer for whims you cannot explain. Tell us the truth or speak no more of visiting dangerous planets and boorish aliens.” Volstagg’s orotund voice had Darcy shrinking in on herself.

“It’s…” She stuttered, “It’s…I.”

Lady Sif approached her, she could see the frustration lining the woman’s face, but she could see Sif was making a concentrated effort to soften her demeanor, “Do you not wish to return home? Does your time in captivity make you long for the far off worlds yet to be explored?”

Sif brushed her hair back, putting it behind her shoulder, “You can trust us Darcy. We are your true friends and we would not begrudge you any time you need away from Midgard.”

“It’s not about that.” Darcy shook her head, “It’s not about me.”

Sif threw her hands up in frustration, “Then what?”

Darcy fixed Fandral with a stare, “I know you don’t believe me, and I don’t want to particularly talk about it, let alone think about it….but I saw you die.”

She shifted her gaze to Volstagg, “I saw you die and you die on Asgard, some lady kills you.”

“Darcy–” Fandral tried to interrupt but she held up her hand halting his words.

“I saw you die on Asgard,” Darcy repeated, “So I figure, you can’t die there. If you’re not…you know, there.”

Sif’s eyes grew soft. Volstagg looked irritated and Fandral kept his face blank, betraying nothing.

“Darling,” Fandral began, he picked her up and sat down in her place, pulling her into his lap, “My dearest Darcy, your dreams are vivid and fantastical but they are not predictions of the future.”

“Fandral.”

There was a warning tone in the way Sif said his name. Fandral shot Sif a hard look before he turned back to her, his hand on her chin forced her to look in his eyes, “Darcy you must believe me, the vision you saw will not come to pass.”

“You don’t know that.” Darcy whined pitifully, visions of him stabbed in the chest playing on a loop ran through her mind, tears came to her eyes and she blinked them back.
“If it is, as Lady Darcy says, if Queen Frigga warned her that her visions of the future would come true and no one would ever believe her—” Lady Sif began but then Volstagg slammed his fist on the table top halting Sif’s words and making Darcy jump.

Fandral wrapped his arms around her waist as Volstagg rose to his face a scowl on his face as he ranted, “This is nonsense! I am seasoned warrior of Asgard. Once known throughout the land as the “Lion of Asgard”. I have fought creatures that would give you nightmares for years, followed Thor into battle on more occasions than I care to remember. I will not die by a woman’s hand, vanquished without a fight!”

Volstagg deflated at little as he focused on her, “I’m sorry my Lady Darcy, but you are wrong. Your vision is unfounded. I might someday die on Asgard, but not like that. And not anytime soon.”

“I hope not.” Darcy whispered as Volstagg turned and left the room without another word, Sif hot on his heels.

Fandral stroked her hair as she pillowed her head on his shoulder, hugging him close.

He held her for a while, comforting her as she quietly cried, unable to banish his death from her mind now that it had been brought up again.

“My Lady, please mourn me no more.” Fandral said, breaking the quiet, “Save your tears dearest Darcy.”

Darcy lifted her head from his shoulder and sniffed, Fandral lifted his hand to her face and began wiping away her tears, “There is no need to cry over me. I’m not dead.”

“Not yet.” Darcy retorted in a quavering tone.

Fandral’s expression grew dour, “Everything living dies, even Asgardians.”

He leant forward and kissed her lightly on the cheek then, hugging her close before pulling away so he could see her face, “You shouldn’t waste your time worrying about the inevitable.”

“But--” Fandral placed a finger over her lips.

“Shh. Speak no more of things that may be. If..if I die on Asgard, I will die. It will be tragic and the maidens will weep for the loss of my handsome visage and incredible physique.”

Darcy chuckled as Fandral mugged at her and waggled his eyebrows.

He cupped her face, smiling at her sadly, he spoke with a seriousness that was unbecoming of his character but no less real, “If your vision comes true, know that I accept my fate.”

Darcy opened her mouth to object but Fandral shook his head stopping her, "Listen to me, know that I accept my fate, know that I do not run towards it… but Lady Darcy, I will not run away from it either.”

Fandral let her face go, “I am a warrior of Asgard. And I will defend it with my dying breath if need be.”

Darcy fisted her hands in his shirt, tears once again streaming over her cheeks, “But what if we can stop it?”

“What if in stopping it we doom Asgard and it is destroyed?” Fandral fired back. Darcy wanted to
argue with him but she could barely see him through her tears.

“Don’t cry for me Lady Darcy,” Fandral plead, pulling her in for another hug, whispering in her ear he repeated himself, “Don’t cry. Not for me, no more, no more tears my dearest one.”

His words just made her cry harder.

Fandral carried to her his bed and she fell asleep almost immediately, emotionally exhausted and filled with despair and a feeling of inevitable doom.

She woke in the middle of the night; Fandral was asleep beside her, shirtless, his lower half hidden beneath the covers. He often slept naked, but had taken to wearing the Asgardian equivalent of boxers to accommodate her modesty.

She drug herself out of the bed and into the tiny bathroom. There wasn’t a mirror but it didn’t matter, she didn’t have a brush or make up, she had been crying. She knew what she looked like, she didn’t need her reflection to confirm that she looked like shit.

She stripped herself of her borrowed clothes and stepped into the shower.

The water felt good. It was cold, but it felt clean. She washed her hair and body and when she emerged she felt a little better.

She squeeazed out her hair and then brushed her teeth. She hadn’t brought out a towel in, so she just exited naked. Fandral was still asleep.

She slipped under the covers and just stared at his face for a while. He was very handsome. And under all the pomp and bluster, he was a really good person. A really good man.

Darcy, heedless of her naked body, scooted closer to the sleeping warrior. She pillowed her head on his chest and molded herself into his side. Cuddling as close as she could without waking him. She put her hand on his chest and found comfort in the steady heart beat that thumped under her fingers.

She was tempted to wake him up and ask him to have sex…but sleep claimed her before she could think of something sexier to say other than, “Hey, I’m sad and I like you and all this death talk makes me want to reaffirm being alive, specifically by having sex. So, do you wanna?”

The last thought Darcy had before succumbing to sleep was, ’Oh well, next time.’.

Darcy’s outfit she wears on Knowhere with Sif’s borrowed items and her own Nightgown
Chapter End Notes

I had to look up a lot of obscure Marvel intergalactic info and so a lot of the 'info' from this chapter that is like, text-booky comes from comic book sources via Marvel wiki. So, it's all accurate, but it might not be MCU canon movie verse accurate, but it's Marvel Universe accurate.
*NERD FACT: Zenn-La is actual the home planet for the Silver Surfer

Is there a timeline confusion?
This is taking place after Thor 2, specifically END credit scene, & like 2 days after Guardians of the Galaxy volume 1.

So, what do you think?
I was totally going to have Fandral and Darcy bang, but then I was like, nah.
Chapter 18 – Star Lord

She woke up snuggled against a masculine chest. Strong arms wound around her small frame that made her feel safe and loved and Darcy sighed in contentment. She’d had a pleasant dream featuring some random guy and a cute furry animal. She didn’t remember the specifics but she was an animal lover so any dreams that featured fuzzy adorable creatures constituted a good night’s sleep in her book.

When one of the hands began to wander and grope she remembered she’d gone to sleep naked, and in the harsh light of (not day because they were in space on a ship) she was no longer up for squandering her real feelings for Fandral on a momentary sexual fling. Especially when she had morning breath.

She pushed the hand off her naked butt and playfully chastised her bed partner, “Hands off Bucko, I’m a lady, remember?”

“I don’t know any ladies with curves like these.” A drowsy unfamiliar male voice responded.

Darcy tensed and her eyes flew open. Thoughts began racing in her sleep addled brain, wakening her up faster than a hundred cups of coffee ever could.

SHE WAS NAKED!

She wasn’t on the Asgardian ship anymore.

SHE WAS NAKED!

She wasn’t in bed with Fandral anymore.

SHE WAS NAKED!

Darcy turned and stared at the man beside her in horror. He was the same man from her dream. He
was handsome with sandy brown hair, a mustache and scruffy facial hair surrounding his strong jaw. He looked nice, but Darcy was about ready to hyperventilate. She had never teleported into someone else’s bed NAKED.

Well, she’d teleported into other people’s bed while they were naked, but never her!

Her bed partner must have sensed something amiss, because he opened his eyes too, though he didn’t look at her with fear like she expected. He was obviously confused by her presence, but a slow smile spread across his face regardless.

His eyes ran over her naked body, most of it on display due to the low sheet that had somehow ended up around her waist. The man then waggled his eyebrows at her, causing Darcy to scramble for the bed sheet, raising it high up on her body all the way to her chin. The man ignored her rush to preserve her modesty; casually he turned on his side and propped his head up with his hand. He greeted her lazily, “I didn’t know it was my birthday. And I don’t remember unwrapping my presents, but here you are.”

“Really dude?” Darcy narrowed her eyes at the man, “Naked lady appears in your bed and your first reaction is to hit on her?”

The man gave a half hearted shrug, “What do you expect? You’re hot.”

Darcy began looking around the small room, her eyes desperately seeking out clothes that she might be able to steal. The man continued watching her closely; she could feel his eyes on her. He let out a yawn, and bantered, “Besides, you showing up in my bed would imply that is you who is hitting on me, so let’s not go throwing rocks at each other’s glasses.”

Darcy looked at his relaxed posture and his attitude just baffled her, she couldn’t help but inquire, “How are you so blasé about this? I mean, set aside that I just magically appeared I could be a murderer. Aren’t you the least bit worried about what my possible evil plans are?”

“Nah.”

“Really?” Darcy squeaked shrilly, “How?”

“Well, are you a murderer?”

“No.” Darcy answered quickly.

The man sat up, shifting the sheet causing her to squeak and tighten her hold on the grey colored fabric. He chuckled as he looked down at her, “Yeah, I’m not so much worried about evil intentions as curious as about the possibility of sexy ones.”

Darcy frowned and pointed a finger at the annoyingly horny man, “Don’t even think about it mister. My lady cave is closed for business. Me showing up here naked is just a big mistake.”

The man quirked a brow at her, “What kind of mistake?...Whose bed were you aiming for? Drax?” His tone took on a more lecherous tone when he asked, “Gamora?” After a beat his face twisted in disgust, “Rocket? Ew. Wait don’t tell me, I don’t want to know.”

Darcy blushed, “I wasn’t aiming for anyone’s bed. I have a condition.”

“A condition that causes you to strip naked and climb into handsome strangers beds?” They guy quipped as he stretched his arms above his head, not-so-subtly flexing in her direction. Darcy’s eyes remained glued to the man as he got up and walked over to what she assumed was a closet and
began rummaging around.

“I teleport when I’m sleeping.” Darcy explained speaking very quickly, “It’s a stupid power, I know, and just because I’m so, so, special…I can’t even control it. Or use it at will. Usually I only teleport into the beds of people I know, sometimes, like today, into the beds of complete strangers…sometimes only dreamt about. But on occasion I’ve teleported to people I’ve only heard of or seen on TV.”

The man turned on her and smiled genuinely, his face transforming into something childlike, “You’ve heard of Star Lord?”

“Who?” It was Darcy’s turn to look confused, “Is that your name? Star Lord?”

The man’s happy expression deflated, “Ugh. Yes, me! I’m Star Lord. Legendary outlaw turned Guardian of the Galaxy…I saved Xandar like, three weeks ago.”

Darcy perked up at that, “Oh! Yeah, I actually have heard of you…uh…thanks for saving the galaxy.”

Star Lord once again appeared childlike with his gleeful expression, “You’re welcome! Thank you for responding appropriately to my act of unbridled heroism, you’d be surprised how many ungrateful assholes don’t seem to care that I basically saved everyone! I thought there’d be more perks in being a galaxy renowned hero but, I can’t even get a free lap dance at the pleasure domes on Deneb-7!”

“How terrible.” Darcy responded flatly.

Star Lord pursed his lips at her lack of empathy, “Hey I saved the galaxy, I think that constitutes some sort of universal ‘thank you’ from the citizens. Preferably in the form of credits, accolades, or free stuff.”

Darcy regarded the man before her, standing before her in a worn out t-shirt and boxers she could admit he was very good-looking and well muscled and tall and broad shouldered and he looked every inch the hero he claimed to be. However, his physical manliness clashed with his childish attitude and made the handsome man (almost) entirely unattractive in her eyes.

She watched as he smell tested a pair of pants, his face contorting at their foul stench as he threw them on the ground and searched a new. Darcy didn’t want to come off as rude, but she was friends with likes of Iron Man and Thor, so she knew how real heroes were supposed to act and how they weren’t.

She sat up and arranged the sheet securely under her arm pits; once her naked body was properly shielded she turned her attention back on Star Lord. She kept her voice soft, trying not to sound preach-y, “You know a wise man once said that ‘Peace is its own reward’.”

Star Lord looked at her with a blank face. Darcy held up one hand, “I know, I know, it sounds cheesy, but I’m actually friends with some heroes back on my home world. And they--”

He then threw some clothes at her face, “Cool. Love you your whole, ‘the journey is the reward’ fortune cookie mentality. Listen, you can borrow these.”

Darcy took the clothes he’d thrown at her and held them up, eyeballing their size, the shirt he’d thrown her was thread bare but soft and obviously well worn, the pants had a tie for the waist so she could probably make them fit no matter how big they were on her. Distractedly she murmured, “Thanks.”
"Yeah whatever."

Darcy looked up and caught his eye, "No, really. Thank you Star Lord. I mean, if you were a little more rape-y... this could have gone so badly for me. So thank you, for real. I—I really appreciate this."

Star Lord looked a little uncomfortable with the genuine emotion she was displaying so she cast her eyes away from him. Star Lord then cleared his throat loudly, "Uh, I gotta take a whiz. And... other stuff. I’ll be over here if you need me," he pointed to a red door next to his closet, "Besides; I’m getting the feeling that you’d rather change in private, so... yeah."

Darcy felt a smile spreading across her face as Star Lord left the room. His actions suggested that he really was a good person despite his obvious need for recognition and free stuff... and lap dances?

Star Lord popped his head out of the door, a hand over his eyes, "Sorry, just forgot to say, that you shouldn’t leave the room cause my teammates will probably kill you on sight if I don’t warn them about you."

"Okay." Star Lord disappeared again and Darcy turned to her clothes, just as she was about to lower the sheet and put on shirt he gave her. Star Lord emerged from the bathroom again, hand over his eyes, "Sorry, sorry. I just—uh, forgot to ask. What's your name?"

Darcy let out a chuckle before answering, "Darcy... Darcy Lewis."

One of his teammates did try to kill her on sight anyway. The green one, Gamora leapt over the table and attacked her, holding a knife to her throat before Star Lord could get one word out about her.

"Woah, Gamora! Back off! She’s friendly." Star Lord rushed over and put his hand on Gamora’s shoulder, not pulling her off, just... touching her.

"Who is she?" Gamora growled out. Darcy just stayed still, flat on her back, her eyes wide, trying to appear as unthreatening as possible.

"Her names Darcy." Star Lord answered.

"How did she come to be on our ship?" A deep voiced alien asked from the other side of the room. Darcy could just make him out over Gamora’s shoulder. The man was shirtless, bald, had greenish skin with pinky-red swirling raised tattoo’s all over his body. He was sitting down at the table, a bowl of something in front of him, "We are in space. No other ship has approached our vessel in two days."

"She’s a teleporter, Drax." Star Lord explained, Gamora who seemed no closer to releasing her narrowed her eyes at Darcy, "Why don’t you let her up Gamora and she can tell you herself?"

"Teleporter?" The beautiful green skinned woman echoed her voice full of suspicion as she asked, "What device did she use to teleport onto our ship."

"Teleporting on board a vessel that’s moving 11,000 light-years per minute, considering how many jumps its taking us to get to the Sovereign, is impossible. No tech in the world could be that precise."

A disembodied strident voice answered, the voice reminded her of a stereotypical New York cabbie, but she couldn’t see the body it was coming from, "...not unless the place she was teleporting to and
from each had some sort of device, like a gate or a pad, something big that she could step on or step through.”

“She was naked!” Star Lord shouted out, like it would exonerate somehow.

The green skinned Gamora pressed the knife to her skin a little harder, “Is that why she’s wearing your clothes?”

Star Lord, who’d been acting a little worried for her, suddenly grinned goofily, staring at Gamora he asked sounding incredulous, “Are you jealous?”

The pressure pressing the knife into her throat suddenly lessened. Gamora whipped her head around and glared at Star Lord, “No.”

“Sounds like you’re jealous.” Star Lord insisted smugly.

“Why would I care what naked Xandarian you spend your time with?” Gamora questioned, finally sitting up to address her teammate her knife hand retracting completely from Darcy’s throat. The woman now, merely straddling her hips sitting atop Darcy instead of the low crouch and threaten pose thing she’d had going on before.

“I’m not Xandarian.” Darcy said at the same time Star Lord responded, “I’m just saying you sound jealous.”

Gamora frowned at Star Lord who in turn looked down at her and frowned with a confused expression, “You’re not Xandarian?”

“Noooo.” Darcy answered.

“Where are you from then?” Gamora asked, her tone shifting back into an intimidating tone that compelled Darcy to obey the scary alien lest she inflict bodily harm on her person. However, Darcy had learned from the Asgardians that Earth was considered a back water planet filled with primitive idiots, so she hesitated in revealing the truth about her biology and home world. Lying to the scary alien who already threatened her with a knife seemed like a risk, but it was one she felt she had to take.

“I’m Asgardian?”

A groan was let out by most of the people of the room. Gamora actually rolled her eyes and got up off her and re-sheathing her knife.

“So she’s crazy?” The cranky New York-ing sounding voice groused, “Everybody knows Asgardians went extinct thousands of years ago.”

Darcy sat up, dusting herself off, smiling gratefully as Star Lord extended his hand down to help her up.

“I’ve heard rumors that Asgardians live in a separate dimension only accessible by magic or secret passages ways that no one knows about. Which is why the validity of their existence is questioned and treated as an old wives’ tale.” The big shirtless guy, Drax said, and then he picked up his bowl and started loudly slurping up the contents. Everyone in the room stared at him for a moment, a little in awe of how he could drop knowledge like that then act as if he was not interested at all.

“He’s right. Everyone’s heard rumors about Asgardians, but no one’s seen a real one in forever, you hear some stories from old guys in bars about them now and then, but they’re not exactly reliable
sources of information.” Star Lord said, refocusing everyone’s attention back on Darcy.

Darcy shrugged, “I don’t know what to tell you but, I’m...Asgardian.” She held her hands up near her face and did a ‘ta-da’ pose. No one seemed all that impressed, “Which is why, I need help getting home. It’s not as easy as it sounds.”

“Asgardians are real.” Gamora stated with a nod, “I know this to be true.”

Darcy gave the woman thumbs up, “Awesome. My existence is valid.”

“How did you come to be on the Milano?” Gamora asked, her tone a little more relaxed.

“Teleportation.” Darcy responded glibly, trying and failing not to imply Gamora was an idiot.

Gamora’s eyes hardened and she folded her arms in front of her chest, “I meant why have you come aboard my ship?”

“My ship.” Star Lord interjected.

“Our ship.” Gamora corrected.

“Oh ya know, it’s just one of those things.” Darcy said evasively, her eyes searching for the other voice she had heard.

“What things?” Drax questioned.

Darcy ran a hand through her hair, just now giving thought to how shitty she must look, with her wild untamed curls still a little wet on the ends from having gone to bed with wet hair, her naked face, ill fitting clothes, lack of bra. Darcy crossed her arms in front of her chest as self-conscious thoughts filled her head. She mumbled her response, “Just one of those crazy random happenstance things.”

“I thought Asgardians were supposed to be warriors?” Gamora asked, a dismissive eye raked up and down Darcy’s body as she said, “You did not even attempt to fight back.”

Darcy shrugged, “Asgard has bakers too.”

“You bake?” Drax inquired, the first sign of genuine interest sparking in his expression.

“Some, but like, not professionally.” Darcy claimed, with a chagrin expression she explained, “I’m sort of unemployed at the moment. Or, well, I guess it’s an extended medical sabbatical thing? Until I get my teleporting under control, it’s kind of hard to keep a job when your globe hopping all over the universe.”

Star Lord nodded understandingly, “Yeah, that sounds tough.”

“What is your profession on Asgard?” Gamora pressed, still in interrogation mode, but thankfully going it about in a normal manner now. *Glares she could take, knives to her throat not so much.*

Darcy licked her lips, her eyes darting all around the tiny space, she didn’t want to outright lie and say she was a cobbler on Asgard or something, but she didn’t want to admit she was from Earth either. So, she changed the subject, “Where’s the other guy? The smart one. Who was talking about my teleporting via device being impossible unless in case of Stargates or tractor-beams?”

“I’m right here.” The cranky disembodied voice sounded from Drax’s direction, but Darcy didn’t see anyone.
“Is he an A.I.?” Star Lord scoffed and Gamora hid a smile behind her hand.

“I’m not a damn computer program. I’m right here!” A little raccoon hand popped up from underneath the table and waved at her. Darcy’s eyes widened as she slowly bent her knees and got a good look at the voices source.

She gasped when she saw him, “Oh my god!”

The raccoon frowned at her and then skittered out from underneath the table, some sort of Star Trek looking device in his hand.

“Awww. Look at your little whiskers!” Darcy quietly exclaimed, her hands on her cheeks, in awe of the adorable furry creature that stood before her.

“Names Rocket, now hold still.” He raised his hand and pressed a button on the device, a light not unlike a bar code reader scanned her from head to foot.

“What are you doing?” Star Lord questioned, “You’re not…that’s not radioactive is it?”

“Can I pet your tail?” Darcy asked reaching out a hand; Rocket barred his teeth and growled at her, she retracted her hand quickly, muttering under her breath “I guess that’s a no.”

Star Lord huffed out a laugh as Rocket answered, “I’m scanning her for a translator chip.”

Darcy noted that even standing to his full height he would only come to about her hip. Internally she was freaking out about how cute he looked in his little outfit, but his gruff demeanor had her thinking he wouldn’t appreciate her continued fawning, so she suppressed her Tiny Toons Elmira-esque urges.

“She doesn’t have one.” Rocket concluded, turning his device off and sliding it onto the table. He looked her over with a critical, “Maybe she is Asgardian?”

Darcy nodded, smiling, “I mean, Asgardians have something called the ‘all speak’ so I guess it’s not that weird…”

Except it was, because she wasn’t Asgardian, not really. She was like, one ninetieth Asgardian, at best.

“What is the ‘all speak’?” Star Lord asked.

“I think it’s pretty self-explanatory Quill.” The raccoon quipped, regarding his team mate like he was an idiot.

“I guess.” Star Lord acknowledged quietly.

Darcy watched as the Racoon went to a nearby cupboard and retrieved a bowl. Darcy pointed at him, and caught Star Lord’s eye, “Can I?”

Star Lord nodded and she went over to Rocket and retrieved a bowl for herself. She politely ignored Gamora and Star Lord, breaking off to huddle in the corner and talk about her.

“So Mr. Racoon, what’s for breakfast?” Darcy chirped cheerfully.

“I’m not a raccoon.” Rocket asserted angrily, “Don’t call me that. Name’s Rocket.”

Darcy wilted a little, but rallied and smiled at the small mammal, repeating her question again a little
more subdued, “Okay Rocket. What’s for breakfast?”

“Bullshit.” Rocket took a high tech looking Tupperware box and began pouring its contents into his bowl, “Shredded wheat bullshit, because some people don’t respect other people enough not to eat their food, even when it’s labeled!”

“I said I was sorry Rocket! Let it go.” Star Lord yelled, Rocket just grumbled under his breath. Darcy took the container from Rocket’s hand when he offered it to her and poured a bowl for herself. She then followed the cranky raccoon to the table.

It looked like and smelled like Cheerios, Drax handed both she and Rocket spoons from a drawer behind him. Darcy smiled at the man gratefully. As they began to eat Darcy tried to start a conversation in between bites, “So, you guys saved the Galaxy?”

“Yes.” Rocket replied succulently.

“Cool…was it…hard?” Drax and Rocket exchanged a look and Darcy blushed looking down at her bowl. She started to babble, “Forget I asked, of course it was hard.”

Drax spoke in a steady voice, just a hint of sadness in his words, “I sought revenge on Ronan the Accuser for killing my wife and daughter.”

Darcy looked up abruptly, Drax smiled at her demurely, “I went on a rampage across the galaxy and got no closer to my revenge, for all the time I spent as an ‘intergalactic criminal’.”

Darcy’s eyebrows raised high; Rocket bumped her elbow into hers, interjecting, “All of our criminal records got expunged when we saved the galaxy though. We’re on the up and up now…mostly.”

Darcy chose to say nothing; she just continued to eat quietly. Drax nodded to Rocket, “Yes, our records were cleansed but it does not erase all the destruction I caused in my fruitless quest.”

“You were doing it for a good cause.” Rocket offhandedly remarked.

Drax frowned, “Vengeance is a good cause. And thankfully, with my fellow Guardian’s help, I was finally able to avenge my wife Hovat and my daughter Kamaria.”

Drax grew quiet and a wistful expression came over his face. Apparently done sharing, probably lost in thoughts about his dead family, Darcy didn’t begrudge him.

Rocket took over, explaining, “Ronan was an asshole and a racist. There was a big battle on Xandar, I’m sure you know, me and the Nova core in the sky along with the Ravagers were all fighting, trying to stop the guy from getting down to the planet, cause if the crazy bastard stepped foot on the ground with the Orb in his hand, he could destroy the whole place, yeah?”

Darcy nodded, Rocket’s whiskers twitched as he repeated himself, “Yeah.”

“So you all blew him out of the sky?” Darcy asked quietly, having gotten only the highlights of what had occurred, she was very interested in hearing how it all went down, just out of pure curiosity.

“No. No…We caused his ship to crash land onto Xandar. Quill distracted him with some stupid dancing while I built a Hadron Enforce. I threw the weapon to Drax and he shot Ronan’s hammer, the Orb went flying. Quill caught it. Like an idiot.” Darcy’s brow knit together in confusion.

“Wasn’t keeping the Orb out of the bad guy’s hands the whole point?”
“Well, yeah, but we saw this Krylorian grab the stone with her bare hand earlier, and the thing instantaneously began ripping her body apart from the inside out! It caused a massive explosion. The lady disintegrated, poof, gone, nothing left! So yeah, Quill catching the orb. Idiot.”

“But brave.” Darcy added quietly. Her eyes flickered over to the man in question; he was gesticulating wildly at a calm looking Gamora,

“Only by joining together physically could we share the burden of the orbs power and direct it at Ronan destroying him.” Drax said, rejoining the conversation.

Darcy was confused, “Joining together physically?...You guys had sex to save the galaxy?”

“What?”

“NO!”

“We held hands!” Rocket cried out in clarification, he shook his head and got up from his seat muttering as he passed her, “Ya perverted Asgardian.”

Drax reached across the table and patted her hand comfortingly, “I often misunderstand things as well.”

“FINE!” Star Lord shouted at Gamora with his hands in the air. His outburst made Darcy turn in his direction. Star Lord’s eyes slid over to her, and he gave her an awkward wave, “Hey.”

“Hey, you guys done fighting about what to do with me?” Darcy asked with a smirk.

“Yes.” Gamora answered as Star Lord stuttered out a denial, “We weren’t talking about you.”

“Yes you were.” Darcy countered. Star Lord’s shoulders slumped as he and Gamora walked over and sat at the table with her and Drax.

“Okay, yeah we were talking about you.” Star Lord confessed.

“So are we throwing her out the air lock?” Rocket asked as he came back to the table, a weird stick in his arms.

“No!” Star Lord said quickly, his face trying to assure her but Rocket’s toothy grin made her a little nervous. He shook his head as he denied, “No, no, no, no. We would never do that to you.”

“He’s lying, it was an option.” Gamora revealed coldly. Darcy’s eyes widened and she scooted away from the scary looking woman who had chosen to sit down next to her.

“We’re gonna make a stop before Xandar to get fuel and supplies. When we get there I’ll take you shopping so you can get some actual clothes, because Gamora won’t share any of hers. I’ll lend you the credits. We’ll see if we can post-pone our job for the Sovereign, we’ll resupply while you shop. Then we’ll take you to Xandar. If anyone can help you get home to Asgard, it’ll be Nova-Prime. We just did Xandar a big solid, so they should help you out if we ask them too.”

“If you really are Asgardian.” Gamora muttered under her breath, “And not a spy.”

Star Lord shot Gamora annoyed look. Gamora’s face didn’t even twitch in response.

“And Quill can replace the food he stole.” Rocket added with a pointed glare.

Star Lord continued not acknowledging Rocket at all, “Darcy, I know you said you didn’t have anyone else to ask for help, so don’t worry. We won’t let you down. We’ll get you home somehow.”
Gamora immediately contradicted him stating, “We’ll take you to Xandar and no farther.”

Darcy chuckled.

“Either way, thank you.” Darcy responded kindly, “That’s amazingly generous.”

“Well, we are heroes now.” Star Lord boasted shooting a finger gun in her direction.

“Well, thank you. I’m just glad I found you guys and not someone less…noble. It’s hard to know who to trust sometimes, but you guys really are every bit the heroes that people are saying you are.” Darcy could see the affect her words had on Gamora, Drax, and Rocket in particular. All three straightened up slightly as she praised them, “And trust me, I know heroes.”

Star Lord smirked at her, “You know, if you’re really feeling generous, you could give me something in return. Maybe a performance? I mean, I’ve already seen you practically naked, uh, do you --dance?”

“You just had to make it weird.” Rocket muttered.

“Don’t be gross Star Lord.” Darcy ordered shutting him down. Star Lord looked away, appropriately chastised. Gamora made a noise and when Darcy looked at her, she saw a smile on the woman’s face.

Darcy sat up a little straighter, a proud grin on her face.

“I am Groot?” A little voice said. Darcy blinked owlishly as the little stick in Rocket’s arms stretched its arms and yawned.

Star Lord and Gamora chuckled as Darcy announced, “You guys are killing me with the cuteness, you get that right?”

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Darcy’s Borrowed Wardrobe
Chapter End Notes

We'll head back to Earth in a chapter or two...maybe. Is there any Guardians of the Galaxy character you think Darcy should really meet?
DID you like the chapter?
let me know in the comments.
Chapter 19 - Gamora

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to Gamora

Chapter Notes

This was going to be two different chapters, but I decided not to split it up.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 19 - Gamora

The nearest civilized planet was about five days away. In that time she ended up bouncing between teleporting into Gamora’s bed and Star Lords.

She considered calling him Quill like his teammates, or Peter, but he just seemed so…pleased every time she addressed him as Star Lord, she had a feeling it was a bit of wish fulfillment on his part. She suspected he was like Gretchen from Mean Girls, like ‘fetch’ he kept trying to make it happen, but it just wasn’t catching on.

Gamora woke her up in the same fashion as their first meeting. With a knife to her throat and an interrogation.

Gamora demanded, “Who are you!”

“It’s me. Darcy.”

“Why are you here?”

“Can’t control my power…teleportation remember?”

Out of all the Guardians, Darcy had discovered that Gamora had the softest bed. She hadn’t teleported to Drax’s bed, but the first day he had invited her inside his room to show off his weapon collection. His bed was hard as a rock. Quill’s had lumps. And Rocket slept in a hammock, Groot in his little pot. So, yeah, even with her violent and rude greeting, she didn’t mind bunking with Gamora.

Gamora grunted in acknowledgment and got off of her. Darcy rubbed at her throat as Gamora rolled out of the bed and called out, “I’m showering first.”

“’Kay.” Darcy sleepily responded. She was already snagging Gamora’s pillow and snuggling back into the bed. Visions of Gamora and Quill smiling and dancing together, played out in her mind.
After her second night’s sleep on the Milano, she had a dream about a strange looking alien and she asked the Guardians about it the next day at breakfast. It was just her, Quill, and Drax in the kitchen when she brought up her dream in the most out of the blue way possible.

“Do you guys know any bug people?” Darcy questioned as she distractedly ate the same cherrio-like breakfast she had yesterday, Rocket was right, it was bullshit. Bland, cardboard like, bullshit but it filled her stomach with a solid feeling so she shoveled into her mouth dutifully.

Drax had offered to share his breakfast with her, but it looked…gloopy and she decided to stick with what she knew in the food department. The panicked look Quill shot her when Drax made the offer solidified the choice for her.


“Yeah, like a female bug person specifically. A kind of pretty one, with pale skin and big dark eyes and antennae?” Darcy put her hands on top of her head and used her pointer fingers to mimic the antennae she’d seen on the insectoid looking woman.

“No. Why?” Quill asked with an amused look on his face. Darcy lowered her hands.

She hesitated telling them the truth about her dreams and the future and the whole fucked up Cassandra thing she had going on. So far no one had believed that she could see the future and it wasn’t like she got a sense of danger from the bug woman so she doubted not mentioning her would have any dire consequences.

She’d seen the woman talking to Drax, Quill, and Gamora in a white room with glowing yellow windows. She could play off the question and let the moment pass, her odd question forgotten. But…she felt like this was her opportunity to come clean. At least in part, about who she was. For real.

Lying to the Guardians felt wrong given how generous they were being, not to mention the guilt was pretty much killing her. And she’d only been with them a day! Logically she knew that the longer she was with them the more prophetic dreams she would probably have, given that, she knew that if she held back now, she would never reveal her precognitive ability.

The moment didn’t feel epic, but it was for her. Darcy shrugged and told the truth as nonchalantly as she could, “I had a vision of you guys talking to a bug lady.”

Silence greeted her revelation.

“It’s not a big deal,” Darcy continued, “She was just sort of hanging out with you, I was just wondering if you knew her, or if you are going to meet her in the future.. I guess she’s a ‘future’ friend.”


“Darcy. Do you claim to have the ability to see the future?” Drax asked seriously, his face a question.

“See it? No. Dream it? Yeah.” Darcy confirmed, making eye contact with Drax, “No one ever believes me though.”

“You can see the future?!” Quill exclaimed, his face lit up with surprise.

“Dream it.” Darcy corrected, “Which makes the visions all choppy and jumbled and hard to explain
“THAT IS SO COOL!” Quill shouted.

“It must be useful in battle,” Drax smiled at her, “It is indeed an impressive skill.”

“If it’s true you mean.” Darcy countered in anticipation of Drax’s skepticism.

“I don’t understand,” Drax’s face screwed up in confusion, “You just said it was true.”

“Yeah, but I also told you no one ever believes me.” Darcy explained. Her brows knit together as she stared at Drax and Quill, remarkably she didn’t see doubt in their eyes, “Right?”

“I believe you.” Quill stated seriously, the exuberant expression on his face growing more sober.

“You do?” Darcy asked, shock evidence in her voice.

“Yeah, why not? You teleported onto the ship. Why wouldn’t I believe you capable of other seemingly impossible acts of magical awesomeness?” Peter insisted earnestly.

Darcy felt her eyes getting a little misty. She turned to Drax and he nodded at her.

“I too believe you, you are Asgardian. There is no telling the amount of things we don’t know about your species due to your people’s isolation. Why not precognition?”

Darcy frowned, “No…no, me being able to dream the future isn’t an Asgardian thing. It’s a Darcy thing. Even my closest friends on Asgard don’t believe in my power. I…” Darcy looked away from the men as a tear escaped her eye, she quickly brushed it away, “My friends are going to die actually, I told them how, I tried to get them to believe me but they wouldn’t.”

“That sucks.” Peter empathized.

Darcy nodded and wiped away another tear, “All my friends on Asgard are warriors. They either think I’m just a really vivid dreamer and it’s all in my head, or they think themselves too capable in battle to die the way I predicted and just outright rejected my predictions.”

“Well, we’re not them.” Peter assured her with a smile.

Drax nodded, “Is this bug person someone we should anticipate will try to kill us?”

“No. I didn’t get any murder vibes from what I saw.” Darcy said with a small smile, “In fact, I think you guys are going to like her.”

Word of her precognition spread throughout the ship quickly. To her shock, both Gamora and Rocket accepted her ability as fact as well. Rocket’s only concern was about her ability to use it to cheat at gambling. Gamora on the other hand, Gamora had hundreds of questions for her.

“Can you see the past?”

“Sometimes.”

“Have you seen my past?”
“No.”

“What about my future.”

“I saw you and Peter hooking up.”

“What is hooking up.”

“Kissing and stuff.”

“What kind of stuff?”

“Over the clothes hand stuff.”

Peter had burst out of hiding at that, shouting, “I KNEW IT!”

Gamora stared at him for a minute before turning back to Darcy, “I take it back. I don’t believe you can see future.”

“Yes YOU DO AND YES SHE CAN!” Peter yelled joyfully.

Darcy butt in before Peter provoked Gamora into kicking his ass, “Best not to push things Star Lord. What I see is meant to happen, but I’m still not sure if what I see and do with that knowledge has the ability to change things.”

Gamora gave Peter a pointed look, he with a giant undeniable smile on his face, held up his hands and backed out of the room, “Okay, got it. Let it happen naturally, gotcha.”

Gamora rolled her eyes as Peter walked into the wall, and then scuttled out of the room embarrassed. She turned back to Darcy, “Are you sure?”

“He’s handsome, kind, sweet, and brave. You could totally do worse.” Darcy quipped.

“You forgot to mention stupid.”

“I was being tactful.”

Her second day on the ship consisted of dealing with the destruction left in the wake of baby Groot’s temper tantrum from hell.

She had woken up sweating next to Quill; it felt like it was suddenly ninety degrees inside the little room. The image of baby Groot running around in a little leather outfit was quickly put out of her thoughts as she threw off the blankets and grumbled sleepily, “Whys it so hot?”

“Dunno. I’ll go find out.” Peter mumbled as he rolled out of bed, but just as his feet touched the floor an alarm sounded. Peter was off like a shot, instantly awake and out the door. Darcy jolted up and ran after him.

As she ran she had to cover her mouth as she began coughing. She reached the bridge of the ship a couple seconds behind Quill. He was adjusting dials and pushing buttons, Darcy stayed back out of the way. Gamora and Drax came running in next and went to join Quill.
“What the hell is going on?” Gamora demanded.

“Air filtration system is jammed.” Peter answered quickly. Whatever he did, made the alarm stop going off to Darcy’s relief.

“And the heat?” Drax prompted.

Quill didn’t answer, instead he turned and started jogging out the door, Gamora, she and Drax followed close behind him. Darcy tried to be as inconspicuous as possible; after all, she couldn’t really help and she didn’t want to get dismissed for getting in the way.

Peter led them to the back of the ship.

That’s where they found Rocket. His little legs sticking out of a panel in the ship. She assumed he was trying to fix the ship, as he was deep in the ships guts and there were tools littered about the ground around him. By the sound of his cursing though, it wasn’t going well.

“GAH! Just get over here you little demon seed!” Rocket shouted.

“Rocket, what’s going on?” Quill questioned.

From behind the ships wall Rocket replied, “Groot’s throwing a temper tantrum and he won’t come out and I can’t get at him and he’s been running though the ships guts and he’s been accidently knocking connections loose and breaking things and he reversed the air’s filtration system somehow and--”

“What about the heat?” Quill moved to one panel over from Rocket’s location, he began to try to pry it off with his hands. Gamora smartly picked up a tool and handed it to him.

“The heat is most unpleasant.” Drax announced, alerting Rocket to his presence.

“GEE, YA THINK?” Rocket mocked, his tail twitching behind him, “I was fixing the heat before this whole episode started, but then Groot got out of bed and I had to put him back and then he got up and I had to put him back again. He hasn’t slept in two days and he needs to sleep! So, I had to keep putting him to bed, over and over and then I snapped at him and he got mad and--”

“And he started destroying the ship.” Gamora concluded with a sigh.

Peter got the panel off the wall and placed it gently onto the ground, he glared at Gamora, “The ships not destroyed. Don’t be dramatic.”

Peter reached into the ships innards, and moved a section of wires, revealing baby Groot.

“Gotcha.” Peter muttered as he reached out for their little charge.

“Watch it--” Rocket tried to warn, but it was too late to be any of use. Peter started convulsing.

“PETER!” Gamora shouted rushing forward. Luckily for her Darcy reached out and pulled her back.

“He’s being electrocuted, don’t touch him.” Darcy advised just before Peter staggered away from the wall.

They could hear Rocket’s laughter, “Tried to warn him.”

“GROOT! Get out here right now!” Gamora scolded as she bent down to check on the fallen Peter. He looked okay to Darcy, just a little twitchy.
“He’s not gonna listen. He’s cranky, exhausted, and stubborn.” Rocket explained as he emerged from behind ships wall, he went over to Peter and looked down at him with an amused expression.

“You think I didn’t think of that? He’s hiding behind the electric ionized toggle. You touch it you get zapped, which is why I didn’t just grab him. He’s got to come out on his own.” Rocket explained.

“Why don’t you fix the heat and leave us to deal with Groot?” Drax asked.

Rocket barred his teeth and growled at Drax, “I’ll get to the heat when I get to it.”

“I find the heat very uncomfortable.” Drax noted in a bored tone.

“YOU THINK YOU GOT IT BAD? I’M COVERED IN FUR!” Rocket yelled.

Drax added, “You should go fix the heat. You are obviously incompetent when it comes to dealing with crabby children.”

At that, Rocket looked like he was about to jump on Drax so Darcy took that as her cue to intervene. She slid in between the two and put her hand up to warn off Rocket.

“What about the air? Peter said something about the air filtration system? Is it toxic?” Darcy’s real worry began to bleed into her voice, “Are we breathing in toxic fumes or something? Shouldn’t that be top priority? Groot needs air to live too. Right?”

Darcy was very grateful when Rocket didn’t dismiss her concerns and just attack Drax anyway. Rocket ran his hands through the fur on his head, his frustration and own exhaustion evident as he explained, “We’re fine. Just breathin’ a bit of dust and shit. Not good for you long term, but it won’t kill us.”

“Is Peter okay?” Darcy asked Gamora. Gamora nodded.

“I’m fine.” Peter assured her, “Just a little...crispy.”

Darcy chortled, “Okay, so I think I can help.”

“How?” Rocket asked sounding disbelieving, “You see this in one of your visions?”

“You are right to sound skeptical Rocket.” Darcy pointed at the Raccoon, “And no. I didn’t dream about this. And I know nothing about space mechanics, but, I do have a lot of experience babysitting. And, I have an idea.”

Darcy knelt down so she was eye level with Rocket, she tentatively put a comforting hand on his shoulder, “You’re tired. You’ve been dealing with Groot on your own and I can see it wearing you down. So I think you need to tag out.”

“But, Groot’s my responsibility.” Rocket claimed, a desperation in his voice that made Darcy’s heart ache for the furry creature.

“Yeah, and right now what’s best for him, is for you to go fix the ship and trust that we,” She gestured to the Peter, Gamora and Drax, “Can handle this.”

Peter let out a groan as Gamora helped him to sit up. Rocket gave her a deadpan look, “Quill electrocuting himself isn’t exactly inspiring confidence.”

“Have a little faith.” Darcy gave Rocket an imploring look. And to everyone’s surprise, he relented.
“Okay.” Rocket fixed her with a pointed look, “But if this goes sideways, I’m blaming you.”

“Got it.” Darcy agreed and Rocket left the room.

Gamora looked at her expectantly, “What’s your plan?”

Darcy turned to Drax, “Can you put the panel back?”

“Why?”

“Because Groot’s afraid and angry and pulling him out against his will isn’t going to work. He needs to come out on his own, like Rocket said. Which means he only needs the one panel open” Darcy lowered her voice, “And if he tries to run, it will give him only one exit and make him easier to catch.”

Drax nodded and set about reattaching the first panel.

“Now what?” Peter asked grumpily, “We offer him cookies?”

“Does he like cookies?”

“No.”

“Then why would we offer him cookies?” Darcy asked. Peter threw his hands up in the air.

“I don’t know! To bribe him! How else do you expect to get him to come out?” Peter raged and just as he finished whining, the lights flickered and then went out.

“SORRY.” They heard Rocket distantly call out. A minute later the lights came back on.

Drax had disappeared. Gamora and she exchanged confused looks while Peter just scowled.

“Where’d Drax go?”

Peter pouted, “Who cares.”

“Okay, so you know what, why don’t you and Gamora go look for him? Perhaps near the fridge?” Darcy suggested.

“And leave you to deal with Groot alone?” Gamora asked.

Darcy shrugged and gestured to Peter, “Seems like you have a baby to deal with yourself.”

“I’m not a baby!” Peter denied, “I’m just hot and tired and hey, I just got electrocuted! Don’t pick on me.”

“I see your point.” Gamora conceded, “But will you be alright?”

“I can handle an angry two year old.” Darcy said confidently.

“He’s not actually two years old.” Gamora informed her as she helped Peter to his feet.

“Doesn’t matter. A cranky little kid, is a cranky little kid. No matter what species.” Gamora nodded at Darcy as she half drug, half pushed Peter out of the room.

Darcy felt 92% sure she could handle the situation. But as Gamora and Peter’s footsteps faded out of ear shot, she felt a little nervous stirring in her stomach.
She approached the wall quietly, she knocked above the panel, “Knock knock Groot. You want to do everyone a favor and come out from the wall?”

“I am Groot!” Groot angrily shouted.

Darcy sighed and put her back to the wall and slid down to the floor, getting comfortable she let her head rest against the wall and closed her eyes, “Okay, I understand. You don’t want to sleep. God, do I understand that.”

“I have dreams that are horrible, and what’s worse there going to come true. It’s scary going to sleep sometimes…hell, who am I kidding, it’s scary going to sleep all of the time. I go to sleep, there’s no guarantee I’ll wake up in bed next to someone I trust, someone who won’t hurt me.”

“I am Groot.”

“You’re right, that’s my problem. Not yours. You probably don’t suffer from the same sleep related issues I do. But, I bet you don’t like going to bed because you feel like you’re going to miss out on something.” Darcy let her head loll so she was facing the open panel to her left. She saw baby Groot inch out from his hiding spot just a little.

“I am Groot.”

“You don’t have to come out of there you know. You can stay, I’ll just sit here and talk with you until you’re ready to come out….Hey, do you know what I miss about my home the most? The people. You know what I miss about my home the second most?…My stuff. God, do I miss my stuff. My socks, my bras, my own hair brush and tooth brush. I miss my stuff like, so much, but…out of all of my stuff I miss my ipod the most.” Darcy looked at baby Groot curiously, “Do you know what an ipod is?”

“I am Groot.”

“It’s a device that plays music. It can hold like, five thousand songs or something. It’s crazy.”

“I am Groot.”

Darcy let out a sigh, “Music is amazing you know, it can make you feel things, take you back to a memory, its freeing, its cathartic, it’s fun, its soothing. Music is what keeps the galaxy together… metaphorically of course.”

“I am Groot.” Darcy smiled at the little creature; he’d taken another step out of hiding. If she wanted, she could grab him now, but that wasn’t her plan.

“Do you like music?” Darcy asked, she smiled when Groot nodded, “Excellent…hmmm.”

Darcy tapped her chin as she tried to decide what song the tree child would like, but which would also be soothing.

Her lips curled victoriously when she thought of the perfect song, “This is a song by Kesha. She’s a singer where I’m from. I basically listened to her last album on repeat for a month…also, forgive me if my voice cracks once or twice, I can hold a tune and I was in choir school, but I’m not a professional or anything.”

Darcy cleared her throat and began to sing,

“ I got too many people, da da da da, I got left to prove wrong
All those motherfuckers, da da da da, been too mean for too long”
“And I'm so sick of crying, yeah”
“Darling, what's it for?”
“I could fight forever, oh, but life's too short”

Baby Groot fully emerged from the inner workings of the ship and she could see his sleepy eyes becoming drowsy as he climbed out of the ship’s wall. She kept singing,

“Don't let the bastards get you down, oh no”
“Don't let the assholes wear you out”
“Don't let the mean girls take the crown”
“Don't let the scumbags screw you 'round”
“Don't let the bastards take you down”

Groot approached her slowly, Darcy put her hand out and he climbed onto it. She cradled him carefully as she brought him to her chest and cradled him against her shoulder. Patting his back lightly she continued singing,

“Been underestimated my entire life”
“I know people gonna talk shit, da da da da, and darling, that's fine”
“But they won't break my spirit, I won't let 'em win”
“I'll just keep on living, keep on living, oh”
“The way I wanna live”

Darcy got to her feet quietly, humming the words instead of singing them, she began to walk in circles, hoping to lull the tiny tree baby to sleep.

“Na na na, la dad a dad a, na na hey, na na hey” She sang as she stopped walking and stood still and just swayed. She didn’t know if Groot was asleep yet, his face was turned away from her, nestled aginast her shoulder she decided not to chance it and sang even as she heard footfalls approaching.

She smiled at Rocket and Gamora when she spied them in the door way, singing as they stared at her, “Na na na, la da da da da, na na hey, na na hey”

“He’s asleep.” Gamora informed her quietly.

“Good.” Darcy said as she continued to sway anyway.

“How’d you do that?” Rocket asked in an amazed voice.

“I’ve dealt with sleep deprived cranky children before. Sometimes rubbing their backs works. Sometimes ignoring them, while still staying within eyesight works. Sometimes they just need a song…You saved the galaxy with an epic dance battle right? Music’s magical. You should have learned that by now.”

Darcy walked past the two and headed to Rocket’s room which he shared with Groot. She had to suppress a laugh as Rocket’s voice reached her ears once she reached the end of the hallway, “Can we keep her and send Quill home instead?”

In the remaining days of their journey to the planet where they planned to shop and refuel, Darcy became the official bad mood baby Groot wrangler. She sung him to sleep every night and
encouraged him to engage in random dance parties during the day. She created games for them to play, made puzzles for him to solve, and started teaching him songs...well, he did sing along with her all of his lyrics were “I am Groot, I am Groot” so she wasn’t sure he was ‘singing along’ but he copied all of her choreographed dance moves when they sang, so she counted it as a win.

Baby Groot was much better behaved now that he had Darcy’s undivided attention throughout the day and Darcy felt less like a mooch in having a purpose aboard the ship. As such, she found herself spending a lot of time with Rocket as well.

At first, he tried to teach the both of them about fixing the ship, but she and Groot really didn’t have the mental capacity to absorb what he was saying. They ended up playing a game where they tried to touch Rocket’s fur without him knowing. She usually got caught. And even though he yelled at her, he didn’t kick her out of his space. Continuing to let her and baby Groot mess with him for their amusement.

After playing a game of tic tac toe using some wires Rocket had lying around, Darcy enforced Groot’s mandatory ‘naptime’ and he was blissfully sleeping on her shoulder. While her little charge slept, she and Rocket got to talking. She knew Drax’s back story but she knew nothing about the others. She started with asking the Racoon about Gamora.

“Gamora’s an assassin. Or at least she was until she met Quill and we all saved the Galaxy and became heroes.” Rocket informed her as he soldered some wires together, he was working on building a new weapon, one that was small and easily hidden. Which was odd, because she knew the tiny mammal was fond of ‘big’ guns that had lots of fire power. The weapon he was currently construction was the exact opposite of that.

Darcy patted Groot’s back as he twitched in his sleep, she regarded Rocket fondly, “Well, I can’t say she’s the first former lady assassin I’ve met this year, but she’s certainly the greenest.”

Rocket huffed out a laugh, “She’s a’right...Her childhood was almost as rough as mine. And that’s saying something. Her adopted father killed her family and half her planet before kidnapping her and ‘adopting’ her and turning her into the deadliest woman in the galaxy.”

“Shit.” Darcy cursed, unable to even comprehend how Gamora survived an upbringing as tragic as that.

“Yeah.” Rocket smiled thoughtfully, his tail twitching as he mused, “I think that’s why she likes Quill so much. He’s as far from the deadliest anything as one can be.”

“Well, they say opposites attract.” Darcy added, trying to keep her tone light, “What about you? How could your back-story possibly compete with Gamora’s? What were you adopted by a poop monster and raised to be a virgin sacrifice or something?”

Rocket let out a hearty laugh and Darcy felt proud because it was a genuine laugh, not one of the mocking ones she often heard him use, “You’re pretty funny.”

“Thanks.” Darcy flashed a grin.

“You’re really good with Groot too.” Rocket complimented.

“Thanks, but he’s not really all that bad you know, he just needed a little extra attention, and maybe a woman’s touch.” Darcy demurred.

“Well,” Rocket avoided her eyes, staring down intently at the disassembled gun parts as he spoke,
“We’re real lucky you found us…Groot’s never been better. Peter and Gamora are getting along more than ever. Drax and I haven’t attacked each other in three days…you’re pretty good for us.”

Darcy blinked rapidly knowing Rocket wouldn’t appreciate the water works his sentimental words caused. Darcy sniffed and bit her lip, “That’s really nice to hear…okay, so, changing topics. You. Growing up. What’s your childhood trauma?”

Rocket took a deep breath before answering, “No childhood. I’m a science experiment cobbled together by sadists who didn’t care how much it hurt every time they tore me apart just to put me back together again.”

Darcy reached out and stroked Rocket’s soft furry arm, “That’s terrible.”

“Yeah, it was. But, it’s got a happy ending at least.” Rocket gestured to Groot, “I escaped. Met him. Became a mercenary. Thief. Arsonist. All the fun crimes.”

Rocket smiled self-deprecatingly, “Then I helped save the galaxy, and here we are.”

She would never be able to understand Rocket’s pain, but she could empathize. Even so, she didn’t know what to say to that. So, she changed the subject.

“What about Star Lord?”

Rocket bristled, “Why do you indulge that fool in calling him Star Lord? He’s an idiot. He don’t deserve no fancy title.”

Darcy shrugged, “You asked me not to call you a raccoon. I can tell he likes it when I call him Star Lord. Doesn’t matter to me, but it matters to you guys. So, why not accommodate y’all with your name preferences? It’s only polite.”

Rocket looked at her like she was this…impossible thing, “You’re real different you know that?”

Darcy’s eyebrows shot up high on her forehead and she huffed out in an incredulous voice, “I’m different?”

She and Rocket both began laughing.

“It’s not a bad thing.” Rocket gasped out as their laughter died down.

“Good.”

Eventually, they reached their destination. They landed on a planet called Contraxia. Darcy read up on it before they arrived, it was kind of a sleazy place. Known for its brothels and bordellos, but it was somewhat civilized she supposed. It had also had a huge market where people could buy and sell wears. It had a casino and in the richer parts of the planet there were a bunch of spas.

The Guardians had split up upon arrival. Gamora and Rocket headed to the food markets, which were in a different direction than all the other shopping, Gamora was going to pick up necessary supplies and Rocket was intent on obtaining some frivolous creature comfort items. Drax was going to stay behind on the ship with baby Groot, who despite being adorable was mischievous as fuck when she or Rocket weren’t around. It was decided early on that he was liable to get into trouble,
and possibly kidnapped and sold off due to his size and species-rareness. He was not taking the separation well, but Drax didn’t appear frazzled by the little tree’s pounding fists on his leg when he was waving goodbye so Darcy had decided to not worry about it.

Quill had volunteered to take her clothes shopping. She was still wearing his borrowed clothing and while on the ship it really didn’t bother her, but now, out in public she was starting to feel really self-conscious about her bedraggled appearance.

Most of the clothing shopping was housed just past all the brothels…

They were currently walking down the street past a few upscale bordellos; Quill was more than a little distracted by the women in the windows who were on display and trying to attract customers. Most of the sex workers seemed to be these android robot women, but not all. The whole not exploiting living breathing women, made her feel a little better about the whole thing, but also at the same time not. Her inner feminist wanted to free the androids from their life of oppression, but she had to remind herself that she wasn’t home. She couldn’t just call Tony if she got arrested. She couldn’t count on Stephen to come through with a magical assist if things got crazy.

She was alone, except for the Guardians.

Quill’s inattention was very evident the second time he walked and missed a crack in the sidewalk, face planting into the ground. Darcy stifled her laughter as Quill popped up quickly and brushed himself off muttering, “Nobody saw that.”

“You keep telling yourself that Star Dork.” Darcy teased. She grabbed his hand and started dragging him to a store in the middle of the row of shops. There was a mannequin in the window that was wearing something very Jetsons-y and despite no one really rocking the Earth’s idea of ‘future/space’ fashion she still had an itch to dress the part.

“Let’s go in here.” Darcy said in a silvery voice.

Quill tugged on her hand, halting her entrance, “Uh, I was thinking more like the uh, second hand store? This place is a little pricey for me.”

Darcy pouted, and then turned to stare wistfully at the stores sparkly window display. She really wanted something new. She wanted something to wear that wasn’t too small, like Gamora’s clothes (the woman eventually relented and let her borrow a bra). Or ten times too big like Drax’s. Or five sizes too big like Quill’s. It was really nice that the Guardians’ let her borrow clothes, but it’d been almost a week of ill-fitting pants and shirts and going commando because Gamora refused to share underwear and she was just about ready to throw a fit!

Darcy let go of Quill’s hand and headed for the door. Quill whined, “Darcy!”

“Let me handle it.” Darcy called over her shoulder, “C’mon.”

When they entered the shop a little noise went off, it sounded a little like wind chimes. A pink skinned Krylorian woman ran over to greet them, “Hello. Come in, come in. How can I help you today?”

The woman was older and reminded Darcy of a grandma. Darcy smiled pleasantly at the woman, “Hi there. I need some new clothes.”

“Well, you’ve come to the right place my dear. Are we dressing for a specific occasion?” Darcy appreciated the woman not looking down her nose at them, especially given the disheveled way Darcy was currently dressed.
“No,” Darcy scuffed the toe of her borrow boot that was four sizes to big on the floor, “Just for like, life…all my clothes and stuff, got lost in a fire.”

The grandmotherly woman’s mouth wrinkled as she gasped sympathetically, “Oh no.”

“Yeah,” Darcy sniffed, she didn’t enjoy tricking the old woman, but this was a nice store and Darcy didn’t see a clearance rack so… “My entire family died. It was really terrible; I only escaped because my boyfriend ran in to save me.”

Darcy turned and looked at Peter like he was her hero, which, you know he was, but she made a really moon-y face at him, “I’m so lucky he came back for me.”

Quill smiled uncomfortably, “Uh huh.”

The woman moved so she could put an arm around Darcy and in doing so she not so subtly pushed Quill out of the way, “Oh my dear that’s---I can’t even imagine!”

Darcy put her face in her hands and worked up some actual tears by channeling thoughts about dead puppies and kittens, the older woman gave her a hug and made soothing noises. When she lifted her face to look at the older woman again she had tears streaming from her eyes, “My boyfriend saved me and he’s been letting me live with him, even though we weren’t even that serious before my whole family tragedy thing…and…and, I’ve been wearing his clothes for a while now and I just don’t feel pretty and we don’t have a lot of money and I…I…”

“Oh, there, there, dear.” The woman patted Darcy’s face and hugged her to her chest, pressing Darcy’s face to her substantial bosom, the store owner consoled her, “We’ll set you up with some new clothes free of charge. Let’s see..you’re a young person so you’ll need a going out outfit, a day outfit, something formal…Don’t you worry your head dearie. Why don’t you two head over to the dressing room and I’ll bring a few things over for you to try on.”

The store owner released Darcy and wandered off to start pulling items from the many racks. Darcy sniffled up the last of her tears and dried her eyes with the bottom of her borrowed t-shirt. Quill looked at her with a shocked expression, “What the hell was that?”

“What?” Darcy shrugged, “Charity makes me uncomfortable, you’ve already let me sleep in your bed, eat your food, so, like, just let me save you the credits…I mean units.”

“Dear? Which color do you prefer, pink or red?” The store owner called from across the room, she held up two sets of sneakers.

Darcy eagerly answered, “Pink!”

“You’re kind of deceptively scary.” Quill whispered as he walked with her to the dressing rooms.

Darcy decided to take that as a compliment, “Thank you.”

In the end she only accepted two outfits from the generous store owner, one ‘fun’ look and one ‘practical’ outfit. And entire two weeks’ worth of underwear. Quill carried her bags as she skipped ahead of him. She was twirling her new skirt around, giggling to herself as the plastic skirt flared out.

“AH! I feel like a bubblegum princess Judy Jetson!” Darcy squealed with delight.
“You look great.” Quill complimented. A beat later his face twitched, “Wait, did you just say Judy Jetson?”

Darcy froze, an action that had her almost toppling over as she was mid-twirl, “Wha?”

“Did you say Judy Jetson?” Quill stalked closer to her and Darcy knew she had that ‘deer in headlights’ look, but didn’t know what to do.

“Um, no.” She lied.

“Yes you did.”

“Nope, I say Fruity Steadson.” Darcy smiled nervously, “You should get your ears checked or something.”

“You’re lying.” Quill accused without any heat in his voice.

Darcy’s brow crinkled as she realized, that he had understood her reference! Which meant…Darcy pointed a finger at Quill as she cried joyfully, “You’re from Earth!”

“So are you!” Quill deduced.

At the same time the asked each other, “Why did you lie?”

Then denied at the same time, “I didn’t lie.”

“Darcy,” Quill huffed, “You said you were Asgardian!”

“You said you were Xandarian!” Darcy accused.

“No I didn’t.” Peter denied.

Darcy shrugged, “Well, I am Asgardian….but only like…a teeny weeny bit. Like my great-great-great excreta-you-get-the-point—really-old ancestor, was Asgardian. So, technically I am part Asgardian…but more technically I’m human.”

“Why didn’t you say anything?” Quill exploded, “You’ve been on the Milano all this time and you never said anything to me about being from Earth!”

Darcy shank away from him, her voice turning quiet as she confessed, “People seemed to look down on people from Earth out here. I mean, it helps that Asgardians and Xandarians are indistinguishable from humans, so I thought it best to keep it to myself. It’s not like you introduced yourself as ‘Peter the human’.”

“Yeah, but, you’ve seen my ship! You’ve seen my tape deck! You heard the music I listen to. You had to know I was Terran.” Quill threw her bags on the floor, “Why did you lie! I was helping you! Everyone—you lied!”

Darcy pressed her lips together and suppressed the urge to yell back at him. She kept her voice steady and calm as she replied, “I didn’t know you were Terran, it seemed rude to ask, so I didn’t. Rocket told me you were raised by Ravagers but that you were kidnapped as a baby, I thought it might be a touchy subject so I didn’t pry. And, and, you could have gotten the music and stuff anywhere. Trading? I don’t know I’m sure I’ve seen an alien walking around wearing the Nike swoosh.”

“You’re a liar.” Quill accused, real anger bleeding into his voice, “You took advantage of me and
my friends like you took advantage of that old lady.”

“No, Star Lord I’m not--”

“I bet you can’t even see the future like you said you could.” Darcy felt like she’d been slapped.

“I can.” She softly affirmed, her eyes turning sad as she internally battled panic, “You said you believed me.”

“Yeah well, now I don’t.” Peter snarled meanly, “And just for the record, Rocket and Gamora never believed you, not really. They just didn’t argue with you because you’re not supposed to pop the delusion of crazy people and that’s what they think you are.”

“You’re crazy. You’re a liar. And you can’t see the future.” Peter accused hotly.

Darcy grit her teeth and balled her hands up into fists, she was so sick of being challenged about her ability, so tired of not being believed so annoyed with Peter for reacting so badly over her little white lie. She was so angry she had to spit the words out slow and quiet, just so she wouldn’t scream at him, “Yes. I. Can.”

“Oh yeah? Tell me again about the bug girl we’re all supposed to meet?” There was a malicious taunting inflection in Quill’s tone.

“Star Lord--” Darcy just wanted to reason with him, explain herself, but Quill kept interrupting.

“About Groot joining the Ravagers?”

“Star Lo--”

“What about when you said that in the future, I’m going to end up with Gamora? God, what a load of horse shit. Gamora was right from the start, we should have never trusted you… Is Darcy even your real name? Was anything you said to us real? Were you after Groot? Is that why you bonded with him? Or were you after Rocket? Do you work for the scientist that made him? Were you there to hurt us? Are you working for--”

“PETER!” It was the first time she’d called him by his real name. He stared at her like she had betrayed him…and maybe she had. From his perspective.

“Peter please, I really can see the future, everything I told you was real except where I’m really from. And, I didn’t mean to hide anything from you. It was just a…self-preservation instinct thing.” She took a step towards him and he took one away from her, “Please forgive me.”

“I don’t care.” Quill whispered a look of disgust on his face, “I don’t believe you.”

Quill turned away from her and started to walk away, over his shoulder he yelled, “Find your own way home.”

She ran after him, “Peter, wait, please!”

He whipped around and glared at her with more anger and seriousness than she’d seen on his face in all the time she’d known him. Which, admittedly, wasn’t all that long…Still, she wilted under his gaze, her voice pathetic as she confessed, “I’m all alone. Please don’t leave me here.”

“Don’t follow me.” He snarled, “I can’t trust you. You are not welcome on my ship.”

Darcy watched him walk away from her until he was out of sight. She only realized she was crying
when a passing alien stared at her like she was a freak.

She quickly wiped her face and turned back to the bags of clothes that Quill had thrown on the floor and went to pick them up. She didn’t know what else to do, so she just started walking.

A couple hours later the sun had set on Contraxia and it had grown cold and dark. She ducked into a rowdy bar and used the bathroom, when she sat at the bar for half an hour without buying anything she was thrown out.

She ended up finding a park, it was kind of crappy, there was graffiti and discarded beer bottles all over but it was empty. She put her ‘practical’ outfit on over her ‘fun’ outfit in an effort to keep warm. It helped some but not enough to chase away the cold that was creeping into her extremities.

When it began to snow, Darcy was reminded of her time with Wong, at the top of the mountains. She tried to meditate, like he showed her, tried to will her power to work. When the sun began to come up, she stopped trying to get away and began thinking of a plan on what to do if she had to stay.

She ended up returning to the shop where the kind old woman worked. She spun a sob story for the woman about her boyfriend breaking up with her and abandoning her for another woman, stranding her on the planet. The woman was very sympathetic and Darcy felt like shit for using her good will under false pretenses, but Darcy really didn’t have any other choice.

The woman told her of a nearby homeless shelter where she could stay, offered to let Darcy work in her store, but admitted that Darcy could probably make more dancing at one of the strip clubs. Apparently, with all the artificial android ‘Love Bots’ prostitutes, real strippers and whores could make a pretty penny on novelty alone.

It quickly became obvious that Darcy working for commission at the store wouldn’t work out. It was a high end store and thus saw little foot traffic, and when someone did come in to the store the older woman just naturally took control of the sale, greeting the customers and automatically going to help them. The shop owner couldn’t pay her enough to even keep herself fed so after two days; she went looking for work in the ’red light’ district.

That is when she ran into the man from her most recent dream.

He was a blue skinned alien with a red fin thing on his head; he had bad teeth, but a lot of swagger. She’d dreamt of him asphyxiating in space, dying because he gave his mask thing to someone else. She couldn’t see the face of the person he was dying for, but she saw his face as it crystallized in the cold reaches of space and the light left his eyes.

He had a posse of rough looking men with him, they were Ravagers, she recognized the insignia on their coats from the one she drew and showed to Quill when she told him about baby Groot being dressed up in the uniform in her dream. The dream he didn’t believe was going to come true, anymore.

She’d thought about her fight with Peter a lot. She knew that Peter was a passionate guy, it was part
of why she liked him, but his hot headed behavior had really shocked her. She hadn’t expected receiving such a volatile reaction from him, over such a little thing. She felt like if she hadn’t revealed she could see the future, if she hadn’t pushed and tested and tried her luck, she could have talked him down.

It was her claims that he was going to be with Gamora that really sealed her fate. When she revealed the truth about her lie, she put into question everything she had ever told him. And he wanted to believe her vision of the future for him and Gamora so much, that the idea that it might have been a ruse? That must have been crushing for him.

It’s why he reacted so badly. At least, that’s what she thought anyway.

Darcy watched as the blue guy walked into one of the brothels. She was tempted to let him go. Let him live and probably die, just as she’d seen it. Just as fate, god, the universe or whatever wanted.

She felt so depressed about her ability to see the future. Her visions just seemed like these things that were meant to come true and destroy her life for trying to change them. She concluded, that not telling people about their future was the safer option. And the smarter one.

She didn’t want to deny her ability. To stop trying to help the people she dreamt of. ...To save them. But everything she did and said didn’t seem to help. So what was the point? It all felt like this big effort in futility.

She was about to turn away from the establishment and try her hand at getting a job at another, when the man’s face flashed in her mind. His sad expression. His sacrifice. The guy was destined to become a hero, or at the very least, do something very heroic.

A little voice in her head whispered ‘no’.

No to giving up on the brave blue guy. No to giving up on helping others. No to denying her ability. No to letting her disappointments in the past define her future.

She had to try to warn him…to change the future. Even if all she was doing was shouting into the void, she still had to try.

She made a sharp left and entered the brothel she’d seen the blue guy disappear into. She was a little wary about walking up to the guy and just laying it all out in plain English for the guy, her ability, his tragic fate, it would sound crazy but...he deserved the chance to believe her, didn’t he?

It was his life on the line.

She found him right away, he was at the bar getting a drink, two Love Bots hanging off his arms. Internally she cringed, the more time she spent on the planet; the more the android prostitution bothered her. However, robotic sex slave revolution would have to wait...

“Hey.” Darcy called out, the guy didn’t turn around so she tapped him on the shoulder and repeated herself louder, “Hey!”

The guy did a dramatic slow turn, then he grinned at her creepily, “Weeeell, hello sunshine!”

His eyes traveled up and down her body appreciatively, “What’s a sweet young blossom like you doing in here.”

Darcy resisted the urge to ask what an alien was doing with a vaguely southern accent and instead crossed her arms in front of her body, “I need to talk to you.”
“Well, you are a mighty fine looking woman; I suppose I could spend the extra units for a few hours with a *real* woman’s head betwixt my legs.”

Darcy curled her lip in revulsion, “Ew. No. I mean talk talk….also who says bewixt?”

The not-so-charming smile fell from his face, “Not interested.”

He turned his back to her once again and Darcy stomped her foot. She would not be ignored again!

“HEY!” Darcy yelled, “I’VE GOT SOMETHING TO SAY TO YOU SO TURN THE FUCK AROUND!”

The bar fell silent as the blue guy turned, his eyes bright and an amused but slightly ‘off’ looking smile on his face. His relaxed manner did nothing to temper her quickening heart beat. She was getting the impression that this man was dangerous and that maybe proverbially poking him with a stick wasn’t the smartest thing ever.

Darcy swallowed and shifted her weight from foot to foot. The guy raised a questioning eyebrow at her, “Well, you got my attention.”

She lowered her voice to a more reasonable decibel, trying to appear…not crazy, “So, um. First, sorry for yelling. That was rude, I apologize.”

The guy nodded to her and then took a slow drink from his bottle, the noise of the bar slowly returned to normal as they spoke.

“I uh, my name is Darcy. And…I’m not from around here. But, I can see the future.” The man had the audacity to laugh at her, like full on, laughed in her face.

Darcy suppressed her anger and kept on talking, “No one ever believes me, hell, I don’t believe it myself most of the time. And I know it sounds crazy, but it’s true. I can dream the future and I dreamt about you.”

“Lemmy guess, great riches in my future, if I’ll buy whatever it is you’re sellin’?” Darcy shook her head no.

“You one of those religious nuts? Here to tell me how the ol’ Universal Church of Truth will lead to my salvation or somethin’ equally ridiculous.”

Darcy rubbed her lips together and shook her head again.

“Fine. I’m game, what do ya see for old Yondu little girl? What’s in this old man’s future?” He regarded her with interest, and Darcy felt encouraged that he was at least willing to listen to her.

“I saw you die.”

The man scoffed, “Shoot, everybody dies girl.”

“I saw how you die.” Darcy elaborated, “The specifics.”

“Well, go on. Let’s hear it.” The man encouraged.

“I don’t know…where exactly, but you were in space. Flying? But like, without a ship. Sort of like Superman, but I think there was a rocket pack strapped to you or something… Um, you were carrying someone, you went up, up, up. You put this…thingy on the other person and I could see them getting all frantic when you---but before that you smiled, then you looked sad and a little
scared. You kept climbing higher and higher. Then you stopped. You two just sort of hung there, in the emptiness of space. There was nothing around you. Not a planet, not a ship. Just…space.”

Darcy touched her own face as she pictured her vision in her head, “Frost began to cover your face, you cupped the face of the person you saved. Your eyes…the life left them and then this creepy milky white film came over them and then…” Darcy made eye contact as she told him the end, “You were dead.”

“Cap’n you want me to get rid of her?” A man to the left of the blue guy asked.

The blue guy maintained eye contact with her though even as he told his friend, “Nah, leave her be.”

His friend nodded and turned back to the bar, the blue guy nodded to her asking, “That it?”

“Yeah,” Darcy sighed, “That’s it.”

The blue guy just stared at her, like she was puzzle or one of those weird paintings that made no sense, “What you want from me?”

“Nothing.” Darcy answered honestly, “I just wanted to warn you.”

“Why?”

Darcy shrugged her shoulders, “Because my visions have to mean something? Because it’s the right thing to do?…It’s what my friends back home would do.”

“You friends with a bunch of goodie goodies like the Nova’s?” The man questioned.

Darcy smiled sadly, she picture Tony and Steve in their uniforms, “Kinda.”

“Let’s say I do believe you, what then?”

Darcy smiled genuinely, “You’d be the first.”

“I’d have to be with the crack pot story you’re peddlin’.” Darcy frowned and reached out; she put her hand on the guys arm.

“Listen, just. Maybe carry around two of those…space suit- thing that makes it so you can breathe in outer space that I don’t know what their called. What could it hurt? If I’m wrong, I’m wrong. But if I’m right…” Darcy let her words trail off as she removed her hand.

“Alright.” The man tipped his beer to her in a sort of salute.

Darcy wrung her hands, not sure if she should leave or not.

“Bye.” The man said pointedly, gesturing to the door.

Darcy waved awkwardly, “Okay…bye.”

As she was walking away she heard the blue guy’s friend say, “Why are the pretty ones always crazy?”

The blue guy’s laughter rang in her ears as she left.
After talking to the blue guy she decided not to resign herself to a life of space stripping and or prostitution. She was meant for more.

She refused to return to the creepy smelly homeless shelter though. She made her way back to the park she had stayed at the first night Peter and the Guardians stranded her on the planet. She found the same tree she had sat under.

She felt better after talking to the blue guy, she felt better for not having given up. So, riding high on her good mood, she decided to give actively using her power another shot.

Sat just the way Wong had showed her. She recalled the instructions he gave her. She repeated them aloud to herself.

“In...and out.”

“In…and out.”

“In…..and out.”

“In…….and out.”

She stopped saying it and starting just doing it. Breathing. Meditating. Trying to dis-attach her mind from the present and will it into that magically ‘unconscious’ head space that seemed to activate her powers. She focused, not on a person, but on her home planet. Just Earth. She pictured how the planet looked from orbit, the image ingrained on her mind from various sightings throughout her childhood. Books, movies, TV shows, Movie studios logos.

She didn’t care who’s bed she woke up in as long as it was a bed back on Earth.

She missed her friends.

She missed home.

She fell asleep at some point, or maybe her meditation worked, either way when she woke up it was to a familiar face.

Darcy’s ‘Fun’ Outfit
Darcy’s ‘Practical’ Outfit
Chapter End Notes

And, we're headed back to Earth y'all.
Chapter 20 – Steve Grant Rogers

Chapter Summary

Darcy returns to Earth and meets someone new, reunites with old friends.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the long wait, I’m almost done with my other story and updating once a week has become my norm, so I might not update every week for this fic, but every other week...but only maybe. I like updating once a week and I only have one or two chapters for the other story left, so this should return to weekly updates soon.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 20 – Steve Grant Rogers

“Woah!” A voice exclaimed. Darcy let out a groan. She felt like she had just fallen asleep and she did not appreciate the rude awakening.

“What the fuck!” The voice continued to exclaim. Darcy didn’t recognize the voice so she buried her head further into the warm body she lay against and clapped a hand over her ear. She didn’t feel like dealing with a newbie. She could tell the body underneath her and the unfamiliar voice were two separate entities and she did not feel like playing ‘who’s the home-wrecker’.

There was also an incessant beeping that was hella annoying.

“Man, I don’t even know how to respond to magically appearing ladies.” The unfamiliar male voice continued to chatter. She did her best to ignore the noise and instead allowed herself to relish the warmth she had pressed against her front, the body she was presumably lying half on top of. The body was still and quiet and undisturbed by her arrival.

She felt a finger poke her in the arm.

“Rude.” Darcy muttered as she curled in on herself, raising her shoulders and ducking her head trying to hide as much as she could without actually moving.

“Uh, hey, lady?”

The body beneath finally stirred. The man she was on top of let out a pained groan, “Sam?”

Darcy knew that voice.

“Steve?” She said, un-scrunching her body and extending more so she was completely lying parallel to the man’s waking body.

“Where—Darcy?!” The body under her, Steve, attempted to sit up, but he let out a wheeze and lay back down quickly.
The unfamiliar voice, *that Steve had called Sam*, sharply criticized, “What are you doing? Don’t try to get up man.”

Darcy felt Steve’s timid hand stroke down her back comfortingly, “Darcy?”

Darcy stubbornly kept her eyes squeezed shut in case this whole thing was a dream that would end the second she opened them, and called out his name shakily, “Steve?”

The arm on her back patted her lightly, “I’m here, it’s me.”

“You know this chick?”

“Yeah, I know her Sam.”

“She appeared out of thin air….like poof. Magic. Lady.”

Steve let out a little chuckle, “She does that.”

Steve’s voice was throaty when he addressed her again, “Darcy, are you okay? Where have you been? Why are you? Sweetheart, open your eyes.”

“No.” Darcy pouted childishly.

“Why not?” Steve questioned with a chuckle.

“If this is a dream, I don’t want it to end yet…I’m warm. I’m home. And I’m with you, which means I’m safe and I don’t have to be homeless anymore.” She snaked one of her arms under his neck and hugged him tightly, her voice tremulous as she whispered, “I’ve been gone for so long and I avoided thinking about—I just missed everyone so much and I want to be home so badly.”

Sam tapped her on the arm gently, “Ease up girl, man just got his ass kicked and thrown in the Potomac.”

Darcy opened her eyes wide, “What? That’s not possible…”

She blinked, trying to adjust her eyes to the bright light of the…hospital room. Looking at Steve, she saw there was truth in what Sam said. Steve looked like shit. He was all banged up and bloody and hooked up to one of those annoying beeping machines and an IV.

Something of the horror she felt must have shown on her face because Steve rushed to reassure her, “I’m fine. I’m fine..it’s worse than it looks.” Steve let out a groan, “Maybe, just move your arm?”

Darcy all but threw herself out of the bed. Her leg got caught on the hospital bed railing and she almost face planted but two strong hands stopped her. Steve’s friend saved her, “Woah, watch yourself now.”

He helped steady her and get her back on her feet. She felt a little dizzy so she kept hold of his arms until the feeling passed, murmuring a quick “Thank you.”

“You okay?”

“Yeah, I think so.” The tall good looking man gave her a toothy smile, his dark skin made his pearly white teeth stand out and Darcy found herself smiling back at him.

“Sam Wilson.” Sam held out his hand and Darcy shook it, “Darcy Lewis.”
"You didn’t have to get up." Steve protested weakly from the bed.

Standing up next to the bed, she got the full picture of how injured Steve was, “What the hell happened to you Steve?”

“He got his ass kicked.” Sam teased playfully.

Steve answered her seriously though, “Hydra.”

“You fought a hydra? Did it escape from Asgard when the convergence was happening? I heard a Bildgesnipe got loose.” Darcy said. Sam and Steve stared at her like she had three heads. And then it clicked in her head.

“OH! You mean Hydra. The evil Nazi organization from the 1940’s…not the mythological creature…that Hercules fought…as his second labor, which was a form of penance he preformed for killing his wife and children….” Sam and Steve continued to stare at her, so she kept rambling explaining very quickly, “I enjoyed watching Hercules and Xena the Warrior Princess as a child, it lead to my fascination with Greek/Roman mythology, which is actually the only things I knew about the constellations when I started working for Jane, by the way, the stories behind the constellations and why their named what there named…Jane enjoyed listening to the myths when we were waiting for data to compile out in the desert….heh, good times.”

“Please stop.” Sam teased in a toneless voice.

“Yes, thank you.” Darcy replied, grateful Sam stopped her from further embarrassing herself.

“Not like Hercules.” Steve said clearing his throat, he confirmed, “Yes. Hydra Hydra.”

“Fudge.” Darcy cursed.

“Fudge?” Sam questioned.

Darcy shrugged, “I don’t like to swear in front of Steve.”

Sam let out a laugh, “I have a hard time swearing in front of Captain America too. Just seems unpatriotic somehow.”

Darcy’s eyebrows rose as she realized Sam knew Steve’s not-so-super-secret identity, she gestured to Sam with her head, “He inner circle?”

Steve nodded in confirmation. Darcy gave Sam a pat on the back, “Cool. Welcome to the team.”

Sam smiled indulgently at her, “Thanks.”

“So, Hydra’s back? Wow…I did not see that coming and I really should have.” Darcy mused, she could feel the journey across the cosmos catching up with her. Her limbs were starting to feel heavy and she had to blink rapidly to keep her eyes from falling shut. She would probably pass out from exhaustion soon.

“They also infiltrated Shield.” Steve informed her, feeling instantly caffeinated Darcy gasped, “No!”

“Yes.”

Darcy stepped closer to Steve’s bedside and grabbed his hand, “Oh my god. How—who—so, did Natasha turn out to be evil?”
“No.” Darcy’s shoulders slumped. It’s not that she wanted the female super spy to be evil, but it just didn’t seem like Natasha liked her, and Darcy wasn’t fond of the woman herself. So, her being evil would have been more convenient than taking the time to get to know the woman and possibly find some sort of common ground or mutual respect.

“Oh.” Darcy said flatly.

Sam let out a snort, but he just waved off her and Steve, “Don’t mind me.”

“It’s been a shit show, no joke.” Sam commented, completely going back on his ‘no cussing in front of captain America’ decree from earlier.

She felt the pull of sleep at her mind, but ignored it to comment, “I can imagine.”

“So, hey how did you--”

Darcy finished Sam’s question for him, “Appear out of nowhere?”

“Yeah.”

“I teleport. It’s a big thing. I don’t want to get into it now, if you don’t mind.” She turned to Steve and pouted, pointing her thumb at Sam, “You didn’t tell your new friend about me?”

Steve opened his mouth to reply but, the door slammed open with a bang and Darcy jumped. Iron Man stood awkwardly in the door. The suit made a noise and Tony’s modulated voice exclaimed, “Whoops.”

“Tony!” Darcy shouted as she ran around the bed and threw her arms around the cold metal body that encased one half of her favorite power couple. The suit’s arms remained at its side though. He wasn’t hugging her back.

Darcy stepped away from the suit and frowned, knocking on the suits faceplate she questioned, “Tony? Are you in there?”

“Sorry, kid.” Tony’s robotic voice answered, “I sent this guy ahead.”

The face plate flipped up to reveal there was no one inside the suit, “I’m fifteen minutes away.”

Darcy took another step away from the suit, she felt a wave of dizziness wash over her. The need to sleep again was creeping up on her quickly, but she did her best to will it away and remain active. Her trans-galactic teleportation would knock her out for at least four days if her past record was any indication, and now that the opportunity to see Tony in person was so close, she was determined to stay awake until he arrived.

She missed him and Pepper most of all. They were her safe place. They were what she thought of, when she thought of home…

“Darcy?” She stumbled back another step until her back hit the end of Steve’s bed, “Are you okay?”

The Iron Man suit stepped forward, hand outstretched as if to steady her, but Sam Wilson beat him to it.

“Sugar.” Darcy cursed as she closed her eyes tightly, willing her exhaustion and disorientation to FUCK OFF and let her remain conscious. Sam kept hold of her shoulders and she shot him a grateful smile when the wave of weakness passed.
“You were off world right? Asgard?” The Suit asked, before continuing introspectively, “You’re going to need to rest and recover.”

“She’s from Asgard? Like Thor?!” Sam questioned in a slightly high pitched voice.

Darcy shrugged off his hands and argued quietly, “Not like Thor.”

She turned and faced Steve who was sitting up stiffly, his face a mask of worry. She smiled weakly at him, reaching out she grabbed his blanket covered foot and shook it gently, “I’m so glad to be back.”

With pink cheeks Steve divulged, “You were missed.”

“Yeah kid, you nearly gave me a heart attack.” The Iron Suit said, “When Thor came back from Asgard without you and told us you were still recovering after bringing a passenger along with you on one of your nightly B & E sessions, I nearly rallied the troops and stormed the castle.”

“Pepper talk you out of it?” Darcy guessed with a wry grin.

“Bruce actually. Pepper was on board with the plan, but Bruce and Thor pointed out how far advanced Asgardian medical technology is.”

The thought of Thor was like a stab to her chest. Frigga.

God, she didn’t want to see Thor, surely he knew that had she not brought the Hulk into his father’s bed she would have been able to have helped him and Jane with their Aether/Dark Elves and probably save his mother’s life. But at the same time, she wanted to see Thor so bad, to comfort him, commiserate with him, to be there for him in his time of mourning.

“Thor.” Tears welled up in her eyes, “How is he? Is he…how is he handling everything? Is he okay?”

The Iron Suit stepped forward and put a hand on her shoulder, “Hey, don’t—No tears Darcy. You’re home. Everyone’s safe. Thor’s fine.”

Darcy didn’t see how that could be possible.

Thor’s mom had died. His brother had died. His dad…was so creepy and weird and he was the only family Thor had left. She was home, but for how long? She also had this pit in her stomach, this feeling like something terrible was coming and it was unstoppable but so far away…

Darcy turned and glared at the empty suit, she pushed its hand off her shoulders. She felt a sudden hatred for the hominid shaped metal. She wanted Tony to wrap her up in his arms and hug her and lie to her and tell her everything would be fine even if it they both knew that wasn’t true. She wanted Tony, her real Tony not…this metallic facsimile of him.

“Stop Tony, it’s creepy now that I know the suit’s empty.” Darcy growled as she wiped away angry tears.

“Maybe you should leave Tony.” Steve suggested from the bed, the suit took a step away from her, its hand raised in surrender.

“I didn’t do anything.” The suit denied.

Steve gestured Darcy to come over to him, patting the empty space on his bed, “Come sit with me
Sweetheart.”

“No.” Darcy responded tonelessly, she glared at Steve too, irrationally filled with anger because it felt like Steve was summoning her like a dog.

“Oh, good. It’s not just me.” The suit muttered.

“Shut up!” Darcy cried, she spun and shoved at the Iron Man suit’s chest, “Shut. Up.”

The suit didn’t move. Darcy just grit her teeth and pushed on it harder. Tony’s modulated voice sounded amused as it emerged from the suit’s speaker, “What are you doing?”

“I’m trying to push this giant tuna can out the door!”

“Why?”

“Because I don’t want to look at this dumb bucket of bolts if you’re not inside it!” Darcy let out a snuffle as her anger faded and she stopped pushing the Iron Man suit and just sort of stood there with her hands on its chest, bracketing the arc reactor.

“I’m sad and angry and I don’t know why exactly because it’s a mix of things, Frigga, visions of the future, the Guardians…god, I, I almost became a space hooker! I was homeless and had to sleep in a park that was all graffiti-ed and bad neighborhood-y and I—I had to lie to this nice old lady and I didn’t get to say goodbye to anyone, not even baby Groot! And…and—” Darcy collapsed against the Suit’s metal chest, sobbing on the shiny red surface, “And I’m so tired! I’m just so fucking tired Tony.”

She cried and the men in the room just let her, not interrupting or saying anything. Her shoulders shook and she made these gasping sounds. It felt like a release, like all of this stuff that had been building up inside her was finally getting acknowledged and felt, instead of suppressed.

A pair of warm hands pulled her off of the Suit and Darcy allowed herself to be maneuvered into a warm embrace, from Steve. She clutched at him desperately, gripping fistfuls of his thin hospital gown even as she scolded him whilst still sobbing, “You should be in bed!”

Steve didn’t respond except to make soothing noises and hug her closer. He held her and comforted her, she let him. Steve, despite his current battered state, was so strong and being with him, made her feel safe. He made her feel loved and cherished and like she mattered and like she wasn’t just this…inconvenience.

She found solace in Steve’s embrace. Her wailing died down and silent tears rolled down her cheeks as she ran out of energy. With her eyes closed and his warm body pressed against her own, she was almost lulled to sleep. Almost.

A loud crash from the window made her jump out of his arms. Broken glass shattered on the floor and all three of them gaped with open mouths as another Iron Man suit stood awkwardly in front of the busted window it had just flown threw.

Then the suit opened up to reveal Tony. He looked down at the destruction his dramatic entrance had caused and shrugged his shoulders, “Whoops.”

Tony wore a basic black under armor long sleeved shirt and pants and these weird black booties as he stepped out of the suit.

“Tony!” Steve chastised.
“I’ll uh, go get a broom or something.” Sam muttered as he made a hasty exit.

Tony ignored them and stalked towards her. Darcy felt a fresh wave of tears begin to fall from her eyes as she stumbled forward, eager to greet him. Tony caught her and quickly folded his arms around her. She let her whole body go lax, even as silent tears continued to stream from her eyes. He smelled her hair and she buried her face in his chest even though his shirt stank of sweat.

He began to gently rock her as they hugged, whispering, “I’m here. I made it. I’m here.”

Darcy stuck her hands under the bottom hem of his shirt and put her hands flat on the smooth skin at his back, “Don’t let me go.”

“I won’t.” Tony promised.

Darcy let her eyes fall shut. She could feel the pull of sleep at her mind once again. Knowing she wouldn’t be able to postpone it any longer Darcy whispered a confession, “I don’t want to be alone anymore.”

She didn’t hear Tony’s reply because as soon as she finished speaking, she fell asleep.

She smelt bacon. And coffee. The delicious aroma, the promise of bacon, pulled her out of her slumber and back into the land of the living. Her eyes fluttered open slowly, “Bacon?”

A feminine chuckle reached her ears, “Told ya.”

“Dammit Darcy, I can’t believe your love of bacon surpasses your love of coffee!” Tony indignantly whined.

Pepper’s clean, make up free face, greeted her. Darcy smiled and Pepper ordered, “Open up.”

Darcy’s smile grew even larger as she obeyed Pepper and the woman hand fed her a piece of crisp and perfectly cooked bacon.

“Mmmm.” Darcy whimpered, “So good.”

“Feed her again Pep.” Tony encouraged with a lecherous grin.

Pepper’s laughter rang out in the quiet room as Darcy nodded agreeing with Tony as she opened her mouth expectantly and waggled her tongue enticingly. Pepper fed her another strip of bacon and Darcy lips just nipped the edge of Pepper’s fingertips slightly. As her brain woke up more fully Darcy registered the way Pepper’s eyes dilated and fixated on her mouth as she chewed. Darcy remembered all the times Tony claimed that Pepper was open to a threesome happening between them and while she had never really taken him seriously before, the way Pepper was looking at her was kind of making her question that decision.

Unsure of herself, Darcy began looking around the room. It was big, the walls were a pale grey except for one wall which had heavy dark red floor to ceiling curtains across its entire length, covering what Darcy suspected were windows. She could tell from the décor that she was back in Tony and Pepper’s private bedroom, but it looked different from the last time she’d seen it. However Pepper’s style and Tony’s expensive clutter was undeniable.
Tony wore a humorous t-shirt and designer boxers, his hair was all messed up and not coiffed at all. Pepper looked elegant in a pink silk sleep set, her hair was unkempt as well. They looked more relaxed than she’d ever seen them.

“We in New York?” Darcy asked as she propped herself up on her elbows. Tony moved to put the hot cup of coffee to her lips but she turned her head away and scooted up into a sitting position. She made a ‘grabby hands’ motion for the mug but Tony pouted and pulled it out of her reach.

“You let her feed you.” Tony accused.

“Yeah, food. Not steaming hot liquid that could burn my skin should you spill.” Darcy quipped and smiled as Tony relented with an eye roll and gave her the mug of coffee.

Darcy drank from the cup greedily. Eyeing Pepper as she shoved a strip of bacon into Tony’s mouth just as he was about to say something. She snorted and handed the cup to Pepper. Pepper placed the mug on the little breakfast in bed tray thing that was balanced on the bed next to her.

“Toast?” Pepper offered.

“In a minute?” Darcy bargained as she pushed past Tony and headed for the bathroom.

“We left you clothes!” Tony yelled.

“Take your time!” Pepper called out and Darcy followed her advice. She used the toilet, brushed her teeth and then took a quick shower. She forgo a bra and returned to the bed wearing a breakfast themed outfit about twenty minutes later, one of the three outfits which had been left for her to choose from. She chose the most humorous option.

To her surprise both Tony and Pepper were still in bed and there was still food left on the breakfast tray. Pepper was tapping at her watch while Tony fiddled with a tablet. Both set down their devices when she entered. The only change in their positions she could see was that the pillows had been fluffed and one section of the curtain had been pulled back to let in some natural sunlight, but none that would shine directly onto the bed.

“You waited for me?” Darcy questioned as she crawled back onto the bed and got under the covers in between them.

“We waited.” Tony confirmed.

“You didn’t have to do that.” Darcy commented, “I know you guys are busy important people.”

“You’re important people.” Tony argued.

“I took the day off, tomorrow too.” Pepper commented as she placed the breakfast tray over Darcy’s legs, allowing Pepper and Tony to have easy access to the plate overflowing with food, “I’d like to spend it with you, if you don’t mind.”

Darcy wrapped her arm around Pepper’s and half hugged the woman, “That sounds perfect.”

Tony joined their mini hug, flopping onto her side and reaching across her body to get his arm around Pepper, Tony squished her between them, “Oh, I love it when the stars align for us to have a three-way day.”

“Get off, Tony.” Pepper rebuked, shoving Tony away from them with a hand on his face. Darcy laughed at Tony extended his lip and made sad puppy eyes at them. The little mischievous glint in
his eyes totally ruined the effect.

Pepper reached for a piece of toast and munched on it daintily, Darcy worried about getting crumbs in the bed for a second, before remembering that Tony and Pepper were mega rich and obviously had someone to deal with such things.

“So, how long was I out?” Darcy questioned as she picked up a fork and began eating the scrumptious looking scrambled eggs.

“Four days.” Tony answered, Darcy grunted in response.

“Thor’s here.” Pepper announced.

Darcy whipped her head to the red head, “He is?”

“He’s on another floor. We’re currently residing in the revamped Stark Tower, renamed, Avengers Tower.” Tony informed her. He wasn’t eating, but he seemed content to watch them eat so Darcy didn’t worry about it.

“Bruce and Steve too.” Pepper added, “And his friend Mr. Wilson accompanied Steve as well.”

“Why--?” Darcy started to ask but Tony just rolled his eyes at her, and interrupted, “Duh! To see you! You’ve been gone for six months!”

“I have?” Darcy asked, she honestly hadn’t thought she’d been gone that long, “I thought it was only two.”

Tony shrugged, “Thor suggested it was because time moves differently in other realms. When he found out you’d left Asgard and yet not returned to Earth, it was only because Heimdall assured him you were with friends that we didn’t go out after you.”

Tony turned avoiding her gaze, fluffing his pillow, “You really had us worried for a while there though.”

Darcy set down her fork as she finished the eggs and turned to Tony. She leaned over and hugged him with one arm, her side pressed to his, her legs trapped by the breakfast tray it was the best she could manage. She hugged him tightly, “I was worried for a while there too.”

“What happened to you Darcy?” Pepper questioned as she moved the tray out of the way, allowing Darcy to surge closer to Tony and really burrow into his side. Darcy let out a sign of contentment as Tony picked up a lock of her wet hair and began playing with it. Her cheek pressed against his pec provided her with the reassuring sound of his steady heartbeat.

Pepper moved closer and fitted her front to Darcy’s back. Sandwiching her, once again, between the two of them. Pepper ran comforting hand up and down her leg and thigh as she prompted in a soft voice, “Do you want to talk about it?...You said something about a baby?”

Darcy smiled at the mention of her little friend but her smile dissipated when Tony added, “Also something about becoming a space hooker?”

Darcy shut her eyes. She really didn’t want to talk about her time with the Guardians, nor her abandonment.

“Can we…not?” She asked.
Pepper rushed to reassure her, “Of course! You don’t have to tell us anything you don’t want to.”

“Yeah, I mean, I’m kind of dying of curiosity, but honestly Darcy, no rush.” Tony contributed as he squeezed her around her middle.

“Good. Because…I’m just not up to it right now.” Darcy admitted. They lay together silently for minute before Tony began to fidget.

Pepper sighed exasperatedly and moved off of Darcy, scooting back to the other side of the bed she reclined and stretched her long limbs. Darcy pulled off of Tony but not before he grabbed her chin and looked into her eyes seriously, “Are you okay? Do you need a doctor or anything?”

Darcy figured this was Tony’s way of asking if she needed a rape kit, she quickly reassured him, “No. No one---nothing physical assault-y happened to me.”

Tony nodded and she saw the blatant relief on his face. She surged forward and kissed him on the corner of his mouth making his mustache twitch.

Pepper grabbed a remote out of the bed’s side table as Darcy disentangled herself from Tony and moved to the middle of the bed once again. A TV emerged from the end of the bed, rising out of a hidden compartment. Darcy looked at Pepper and Pepper grinned, “Okay, how about some mindless entertainment instead?”

“Yes, please.”

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Darcy’s lounge/sleep wear

Tony’s lounge/sleep wear
A lot of readers are rooting for Steve, some like her with Dr. Strange, some were diggin Fandral, and some are holding out hope for a Pepper/Darcy/Tony sandwich, I've left it pretty ambiguous up until now how Darcy feels or rather, what will be end game so...I'd really like to hear from everyone on which Ship you think/want/hate for this story to end with?/or start up....We are moving on to the next MCU which is....AGE OF ULTRON.

Ultron was an 'okay' movie, but by no means my favorite so I'm excited to 'Darcy-fy’ it!

Also, minor housekeeping:
So, after Thor 2 or simultaneous to Thor 2 events, there was the movie Captain America: The Winter Solider going on, soooo, I might have fudged the time line a little so Winter Soldier happens a few months later than in cannon, but I don't think that matters.

Please leave me a comment down below letting me know what you thought of the chapter, and what you see 'relationship' wise for Darcy's future!
Chapter 21 - Jane Foster

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to Dr. Jane Foster

Chapter Notes

I was seriously overwhelmed by all the comments on the last chapter. This chapter...went in an unexpected direction, but what it means going forward, (if you read in between the lines) I think it will make a lot of readers happy.

THIS CHAPTER IS
LONG!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 21 – Jane Foster

Darcy awoke to the sound of a phone ringing. She groaned as Pepper slipped out of the bed and left the room. She had a scheduled conference call and had to get ‘top half’ presentable to take it and had set her alarm the night previous.

Darcy was grateful that Pepper had been able to set aside so much time to hang out with her lately and she didn’t begrudge the woman her 3 a.m. wake up call. Tony on the other hand loudly complained, “Alarms are evil!”

Darcy smiled sleepily as she rolled over in the bed and cuddled into his side, blearily she scolded him, “Shush.”

Tony wrapped her up in his arms and she pillowed her head on his chest, she felt him kiss the top of her head as he grumbled, “You shush. Dream Tony and dream pepper were just about to eat sushi off an artfully naked Dar-”

“Shush.” Darcy scolded again.

Both she and Tony fell back asleep quickly after that and when they woke up the second time, at a more reasonable hour; Pepper was once again in bed beside them.

At the breakfast table, Darcy announced to her benevolent benefactors, that she’d like to host a meeting and talk about what happened to her out in space. She wanted to get it over all at once instead of recounting her tale over and over for each individual.

“Are you sure?” Pepper questioned as Tony asked, “Who’s invited?”

“I’m sure Pepper. And Tony, all the people who I trust, so I guess the people who live here” Darcy
answered.

“I gave Natasha and Clint their own floor.” Tony revealed.

“Not them.” Darcy flatly replied.

She hadn’t seen or heard from anyone outside of Tony and Pepper since she’d returned to New York, but she knew Steve, Sam, Bruce, Jane and Thor were all living at the tower temporarily, apparently waiting for her to make an appearance.

She’d heard through the grapevine, otherwise known as Jarvis, that the only reason Steve hadn’t stormed the penthouse to see her was his friend Sam. Apparently Mr. Sam Wilson was keeping Captain America in check and not letting him invade her privacy, for which she was very grateful. So grateful in fact that she’d ordered Sam a cookie bouquet. In response, Sam had Pepper deliver a hand written thank you note. HAND WRITTEN!

And from that point on, Sam Wilson, was a mensch in her book. Not to mention someone to be trusted.

“They are technically Avengers.” Tony argued.

“I technically don’t give a shit.” Darcy sassed.

Darcy frowned. In catching up on all that happened while she was away Darcy had read a lot of what had been released during the Shield/Hydra debacle. Tony assured her that all mentions of her condition had been erased so quickly by Jarvis that it was highly improbably that anyone had learned about her, but she still worried about it.

And thus, she wasn’t keen on trusting anyone associated with the crappy spy agency, much less the woman who put her identity in jeopardy by releasing every little dirty secret the agent had. Especially, after having read through the detailed reports on Clint and Natasha’s various successful assassinations, infiltrations, and acts of sabotage over the years…much to Tony and Peppers disappointment.

Tony was pushing trusting Clint and Natasha hard, and Pepper wasn’t any better. It was actually becoming a point of contention between the three of them. Thankfully, Tony let the point drop and Pepper changed the subject when she inquired, “What about Mr. Wilson? Steve’s friend?”

“Sam? Yeah, he’s VIP according to me.” Darcy remarked offhandedly.

Tony grunted, “So you’ll trust the new guy, but not the two people who helped stop the Chitari invasion?”

“I’d trust a street vendor selling ‘all natural’ hot dogs before I trusted someone associated with shitty shady Shield.” Darcy quipped.

Tony opened his mouth to argue his point further but Pepper put a hand on his arm and stopped him. She turned to Darcy and spoke softly, reminding her, “Phillip Coulson worked for Shield too. You trusted him.”

A memory of Phil pleading doctors for death flashed in her mind. Darcy clenched her jaw and cast her eyes down at her plate, muttering, “Yeah, and look how it ended for him.”

Exasperated, Tony exclaimed, “I don’t get it! What do you have against Barton? What did Natasha do to you? Is it jealousy? Is it--”
“You don’t know them! I don’t know them! They were trained to be the best liars and killers and I don’t-”

“Trust them?!” Tony finished for her, boisterously interrupting, “I get it, you’ve mentioned this, but why? Give me one solid, logical reason why Darcy?”

“You don’t even know about Barton’s-” Darcy cut herself off. Clenching her teeth tightly together she held her tongue. After what she read, the information that had been released on the internet following the events in Washington with the Winter Soldier, and not so subtly questioning Jarvis about what Clint and Natasha shared about themselves she knew that Clint and Natasha were not to be trusted.

“Never mind.” Darcy muttered and went back to eating her French toast. Tony let out a noise and Pepper politely said nothing, and they all ate the rest of their breakfast in silence.

She’d had a dream about them a few days after returning to Earth. She dreamt of them arriving at a secluded farmhouse. She saw them greeted by small children. She saw Clint smile and hug children who called him ‘daddy’. Clint was their father, and she assumed Natasha was the mother, but she wasn’t certain. What she was certain of, was that Tony didn’t even know Clint and Natasha had a family or a place called ‘home’.

How could she possibly trust people like them? People who hid who they were, what they loved, what mattered to them most? Who worked for a shady government agency that was infested with NAZI’S?!

It didn’t matter that they supposedly ‘didn’t know’ about Hydra. They were trained liars. And she had proof (in her mind) that they were lying to Tony and the other Avengers about who they were NOW. No one knew about Natasha and Clint’s farm or their children! They didn’t trust the team and so she didn’t trust them.

Still, Darcy didn’t want to reveal what she knew about Natasha and Clint. About their farm or their family. She didn’t want to reveal it, because they didn’t reveal it. They kept their secrets from the team, for their own reasons and Darcy didn’t feel it was her place to go spilling the beans when they obviously didn’t want to. She just hoped that the reason they kept their family secret wasn’t because they were secretly mutant clones or something equally nefarious…

Just because she didn’t feel like she could trust Natasha or Clint, didn’t mean that they couldn’t trust her. She was determined to keep their secret, keep their little farm family safe, even if they never knew that she knew and could have told but didn’t.

She wasn’t a monster!

For the most part, staying at the tower with Tony and Pepper had been great; they gave her space to process what she had been through, whilst providing silent support and constant stimulation/distraction. So, after hiding out for a few days she finally felt ready to talk about her experiences in space. Darcy was grateful when Pepper offered to make all the arrangements.

Despite her disagreements with Tony and Pepper over not including Clint or Natasha, both he and Pepper stood at her side when she entered the Avengers common room.

Darcy’s eyes flickered over the occupants quickly. Steve, Sam, Bruce, Thor, Jane, and…Stephen
Strange. She hadn’t expected to see him and she couldn’t help the smile that broke out at the sight of him. At the sight of all of them!

All of the people on Earth that she trusted, in one room, it almost made her a little misty eyed.

Almost.

Steve looked the most desperate. While Sam looked the most comfortable Bruce looked the most uncomfortable. Thor looked the happiest but Jane looked like she was about to cry. And Stephen looked the most out of place. And considering he was sitting in between Thor, a literal god, and a time displaced patriotic icon, that was saying something.

She was nervous and couldn’t help but fidget with her hair clips, adjusting and readjusting them needlessly. As she felt of everyone’s eyes on her, she looked down avoided everyone’s gaze, letting let Tony and Pepper maneuver her over to a medium sized couch. The three of them sat down, she wedged securely between the pair. They sat opposite Jane, Thor, Stephen, and Steve, who all shared a long couch. Sam and Bruce sat together on a little loveseat to the side of the larger couch. They almost sat in a complete circle; the seating was positioned around a large glass coffee table. Darcy had no idea what to say first.

“Lady Darcy,” Thor began, making her look up and seek him out with her eyes. He smiled when their gazes met, “I’ve missed you. I am relieved to see you once again.”

She had planned on ignoring the niceties and just launching into her story straight away, but the earnest smile on Thor’s face drew her to her feet.

Darcy walked over to her friend, the god and sat down on the glass coffee table in front of him. With their knees touching she took his hands in hers and squeezed tightly, “I’m so sorry.”

Thor looked confused, “What have you to be sorry for my little lightning sister?”

“Your mom.” Darcy softly confessed, “I’m so sorry I couldn’t –I should have—if I had been awake, I could have helped--”

Thor pulled her forward, off the coffee table and into his lap. He wrapped his giant arms around her and Darcy buried her face in his hair, resting her chin on his shoulder she whimpered as Thor spoke in hushed tones, whispering into her ear, “You have not wronged me sister. My mother’s fate was sealed and no one is to blame but the dastardly creature that struck the killing blow.”

“But--” Darcy sniveled, “I’m so sorry…I’m so sorry.”

Thor squeezed one arm around her waist, while his other hand went to her back and started rubbing soothing circles as she began to quietly cry on his shoulder. She spared a thought to how Jane, who was sitting next to them, might perceive this moment, but the thought of Queen Frigga and the gaping hole her loss left in the universe, had her dismissing any self-conscious thoughts.

Darcy squeezed Thor, hugging him with her arms tightly, trying to offer him comfort even though she was the one crying, “I’m so sorry for your loss Thor. I’m so, so, sorry.”

After a moment Thor whispered in her ear, “Her loss is great and I thank you for your condolences dear sister.”

“I’m sorry about Loki too.” She whispered even though she had a theory that the trickster death had been greatly exaggerated.
Over the past few days, in anticipation of meeting with Thor again, she had reflected on her time back in Asgard. She’d thought about how oddly Odin had acted. How strangely the man disguised as Axel treated her. She’d theorized about the final spell that he performed on her, what it might have done and why he might have done it. She ruminated on the pain of the process and how it was supposed to ‘protect her’. However it was her reflection on the image of the two faces overlapping, Axels’ and someone else’s that truly haunted her.

She had come to conclusion that Loki was Axel…and possibly masquerading as King Odin as well. However, since Thor thought his brother died and it was just a theory she didn’t feel comfortable coming out and outright voicing her theory, because if she got Thor’s hopes up and she turned out to be wrong? It would be devastating. Especially after already losing Frigga.

Darcy sniffed back her tears and blinked her eyes rapidly. She lifted her head and wiped at her eyes, clearing away the evidence of her tears.

“He was a troubled soul, but now I hope he has found his peace.” Thor said as he gazed at her softly, “Thank you for your condolences again dear sister.”

Darcy gulped and her eyes darted over to Jane then back to Thor, in a gentle voice she asked, “You’re sure he’s dead?”

Thor’s body stiffened and he looked at her as if she had insulted him grievously. Darcy internally braced herself.

“You doubt his death?” Thor asked a hint of ire coloring his voice.

“I…met with your dad.” Darcy answered evasively, “He seemed very distraught…about your mom.”

Darcy glanced around and felt the weight of everyone’s gaze on her and Thor. Jane looked like she was interested in hearing more as did several of the others but it was Steve and Sam’s wincing expression that made her feel her words were poorly chosen.

Thor’s face hardened and Darcy instantly regretted bringing up Loki and Odin as Thor thundered, “His wife died. Has he not the right to be distraught?!”

Darcy leaned away from Thor, “I really didn’t mean to upset you Thor. I’m sorry.” Darcy insisted as she struggled to get off of Thor’s lap. She felt awkward and shamed by Thor’s cool words, but his arms refused to budge from around her waist, keeping her squarely in his lap.

“Thor, let her go.” Steve ordered sternly.

“Steve, don’t.” Darcy warned.

Thor ignored Steve’s command but his arms slackened all the same, “Forgive me Lady Darcy, I know you not to be a malicious sort. Please forgive me if I sounded accusatory, but I believe I am misunderstanding what you mean to say.”
Darcy bit her lower lip, Thor's reaction just confirmed how badly he would take the news if she was wrong and Loki was not alive and she claimed he was. She resolved to not bring up Loki’s possible survival unless and until, she had proof. Or the perfect opening to float the idea so it wouldn’t come as such a shock to Thor when he discovered it for himself later on…

Darcy put her hands on Thor’s shoulders, in a taut voice she acknowledged, “I understand Thor. It’s okay. I’m sorry I misspoke.”

“Thank you.” Thor conceded with a head nod.

“I’d like to get up now, if that’s okay?” Darcy declared softly, “Your knee is kind of boney and digging into my butt.”

Everyone in the room snickered at her terrible joke, the release of tension a welcome reprieve.

Thor let out snort, “You jest, I have not been eligible to be described as boney since I was a boy!”

Thor held her hand tightly as she climbed off of his lap, steadying her. He rose to his feet once she was on hers, he towered above her and Darcy craned her head back to maintain eye contact.

Thor cupped her face in his hands and gazed down at her with affection, “Dearest Darcy, forgive my sensitivity. I hope you know that I am truly grateful to see you once again, and that I think of you as my true Asgardian sister.”

“Nothing to forgive big guy,” Darcy responded, slipping her hands up and in between his so she could copy his ridiculously dramatic face cupping. Thor chuckled as she smooshed his face comically making his lips purse and pucker. Thor laughed and copied her, smooshing her face identically.

Darcy spoke through the face smooshy-ness, “I of course, take my role as your annoying little sister very seriously. And vow to never miss an opportunity to embarrass or exasperate you, as is a younger siblings right.”

They released each other’s faces simultaneously and laughed together.

After her little public one on one with Thor concluded, Darcy took center stage. She moved herself to the empty space between Tony and Pepper’s love seat and the larger couch, completing the circle by sitting on the floor in front of the glass coffee table that all the seating was arranged around.

“Okay,” Darcy clapped, “Back to business.”

In an orotund voice she began speaking, projecting clearly for all to hear, “When I woke up on Asgard, King Odin summed me and questioned me in the throne room. He also informed me about Frigga and Loki’s deaths, what happened to the Hulk, the convergence, Jane, the Aether, all of it.”

Thor, Jane and Bruce nodded at her encouragingly. Darcy turned to Sam, “Is everyone all caught up on these events?”

Sam gave her a thumbs up, Steve, Pepper, and Tony nodded. Darcy smiled, commenting, “Okay, good.”

Looking mostly in Thor’s direction, Darcy took a deep breath before continuing, “You know how Queen Frigga thought that I could, maybe, see the future? Well, I can.”
“You can what now?” Tony interjected at the same time Thor asked with an incorrigible smirk, “You’ve decided to finally stop denying the truth?”

Keeping her gaze on Thor, Darcy admitted, “Yes I have.”

Turning to Tony she stared him down as she asserted, “I think I can see the future.”

“Since when?” Tony questioned with a raised eyebrow. Darcy just shrugged her shoulders in response and turned back to face Thor, but before she reestablished eye contact with the blonde, Strange caught her eye.

Strange gave her a nod and stared at her so…reassuringly. The look on his face, the look in his eyes, the nod. She felt a little flutter in her heart, she ached a little too. She knew without a word spoken between them, that Stephen Strange believed her. He was on her side.

And in that moment she wanted nothing more than for him to take her in his arms and kiss her face off. Knowing he inherently believed in her, just made her feel so much better. She smiled at him gratefully.

“So, you can teleport and see the future? And this is a revelation to everyone not just me, the new guy?” Sam asked to clarify. Darcy drug her eyes away from Stephen and nodded at Sam. In response Sam shrugged commenting casually, “Cool.”

Darcy’s grin split wide at the man who just seemingly had a knack for rolling with the unexpected and unbelievable things he found himself surrounded by.

Jane raised a finger adding, “I also think it’s cool.”

Darcy looked at her former boss, surprised she exclaimed, “Really?”

Jane nodded eagerly, her enthusiasm bleeding into her voice as she explained, “Your ability to cross space and time lends credence to you also having the ability to ‘see the future’ only, I personally wouldn’t classify what you see as the ‘future’ as in, events yet to come, more like events happening at a different speed in another dimension.”


Jane ignored the commentary and continued, “I think it’s more likely what you are seeing as the ‘future’ is actually another dimension. Or possibly a parallel universe. I have a theory that your ability to teleport through space and time can also cross dimensions and other planes of existence.”

Darcy was glad the science of what Jane was saying, went over her head, for the most part, as she had a feeling if she truly understood what Jane was implying, she would be terrified of ever falling asleep again.

“Mmmmkay.” Darcy responded glibly.

Thor turned to Jane and put a hand on her knee, “Though my Jane is brilliant and knows much that I do not, I believe her theory on your power to be wrong in this instance. Darcy cannot see into other dimensions.”

Thor shook his head at Jane, asserting boisterously, “Darcy is of Asgard! Her power is of Asgard! She can see the future, small glimpses of the Norn’s plans, though she is powerless to do anything with the knowledge, I doubt her visions depict the lives of other dimensions or other worlds the we know not of.”

Darcy’s eyes widened as she realized Jane and Thor had given her the perfect opportunity to plant a
“Well actually, maybe Jane’s right!” Darcy started in a shrill excited voice, she turned to Thor, “Because I recently had a dream that Loki and Thor were riding in an elevator and joking together, so I guess maybe if her theory about parallel worlds is correct, there is a world where Loki is alive and he and Thor get along…eventually. And that’s…comforting? I guess?”

“Lady Darcy,” Thor began before clearing his throat and adjusting his voice into an even tone, “I do not doubt your power, my mother confirmed in confidence that she believed you shared her accursed gift, but perhaps what you saw was a vision of my brother and I, before he died? I have no doppelganger on any alternate dimension or parallel world and since my brother is dead, what you saw cannot be the future.”

“I had the dream after the whole convergence thing happened and he was already dead.” Thor made an ‘hmm’ noise and looked thoughtful at this revelation.

“I’m sorry; can we go back to the visions of the future thing? I think you’re just glossing over it a tiny bit.” Tony complained.

“I agree, are these visions random? Can you have one on command? Or are they sporadic in nature?” Bruce questioned, leaning forward, a scientific glee shining in his eyes.

“Do you see specific people? Like is it only people you know? Or can you see the future for someone you’ve never met?” Steve asked curiously, “Say if you saw a picture of them and concentrated on it real hard?”

Tony scoffed, “Why are you treating this like its true! No one can see the future! This isn’t real. It’s not possible!”

Darcy rolled her eyes and glared at Tony, “Go on, scoff. I was actually expecting a more dubious response from everyone but, seriously y’all got me straight trippin’.”

Tony narrowed his eyes at her wording and Darcy felt awkward about it but she just shrugged and pouted, “You know what I mean.”

Darcy crossed her arms in front of her chest and grumbled, “The Warriors Three didn’t believe me either.”

“The Warrior’s Three?” Jane asked.

Darcy head wavered as she rephrased, “Well, Warriors Two and Lady Sif. Hogun wasn’t with them when I teleported aboard their ship.”

“Ship?” Bruce echoed, catching her attention, “Ship as in boat, or ship as in spaceship?”

“Does anyone else find it weird that we need to make that kind of clarification?” Pepper quipped.

Grateful for the brief chance for levity, Darcy laughed before confirming, “Space chip.”

Thor looked confused, “The Warriors and Lady Sif, were on a ship?”

Darcy waved her hands in the hair, “Wait a minute, we’re getting ahead of ourselves. Back to reality, back to Asgard. When I woke up after arriving with the Hulk, I was summoned by the King. After a brief conversation/information download, King Odin assigned me an Asgardian escort. He called himself Axel and he and I got on really well. He was fun and charming and he helped me practice
magic, I learn a few new spells, and then, right before I teleported off Asgard,” Darcy lowered her voice for optimal dramatic effect as she said, “he changed.”

“How so?” Thor asked.

Darcy could feel her cheeks heat up in embarrassment as she admitted in a quiet voice, “I…he, he made it so I couldn’t move and then he did something to me, a spell.”

Thor There was a hard edge in his voice when Thor said, “He harmed you?”

Darcy shook her head, “No. Well, yes, but he hurt me to help me. At least that’s what he claimed.”

“Honey, you sound like a Lifetime Movie. People who hurt you are bad.” Tony advised in a desperate sounding mocking tone, “You know that right?”

“Tony!” Pepper chastised, swatting him on the arm.

Ignoring Tony and Pepper’s exchange, Darcy continued thoughtfully, “He…he had a face, under his face…I think what I saw the whole time, was a disguise.”

“It’s possible.” Strange declared, speaking for the first time, “From what you’ve told me of your time on Asgard, that kind of illusion would be easy for a skilled magic user to maintain. But that leads one to ask—”

“What was this guy trying to hide?” Steve finished. He and Strange exchanged a look.

Darcy ignored them and focused on Thor. “Axel said he liked me that he could sense my power growing and it intrigued him. He said he liked my whole…package. The brain, the bod, the power. He liked it all, but he was like, conflicted about liking me?”

“He didn’t harm you?” Thor asked that dangerous edge still evident in his voice.

“He said he wanted to protect me, he did a spell and it—he lied, it hurt so much, he said it wouldn’t but it did.” Darcy whimpered just at the memory of the pain his spell had caused.

“What kind of spell was it?” Stephen asked.

“His hands glowed, the lights went out and all I could see was darkness and little flickers of his face and body from then on….he paralyzed me on the bed, then….he said he was helping me—he said embracing the pain would help.”

“You believe him?” Thor asked, “That he wanted to help you, despite the pain his attempt to help caused you?”

“Yes.” Darcy said gravely, “I think he was telling the truth about liking me. About wanting to help me. He said when the spell was over and the pain stopped, he said I was ‘protected’.”

“That’s all he did?” Tony prompted, he gave her a knowing look and Darcy cast her eyes down. Damn Tony for being so intuitive.

“He kissed me.” She admitted quietly.

“He kissed you against your will?” Steve asked angrily.

“It was just a kiss.” Darcy defended.
Pepper made a disgusted sound, “That doesn’t make it right.”

“Or okay.” Tony added.

“Whatever,” Darcy said dismissively, “The last thing he said to me was, ‘the best way to predict my future was to create it.’ With my ability...I thought that might be important. Significant, somehow.”

Stephen made a face at that and Bruce took out a note pad and actually jotted it down, mouthing the words as he wrote. They all sat in silence for a couple seconds after that. Everyone looked thoughtful as they absorbed all of what she had divulged.

Darcy’s eyes flickered from face to face trying to assess how each individual was taking the news. Jane and Bruce looked scientifically ‘turned on’. Steve, Pepper, and Thor looked pissed. Tony and Stephen were both staring at her with these expressions of concern, like they expected her to fall apart at any moment. And Sam looked, thoughtful.

It was actually Sam who broke the silence, he waved his hand at her and said, “I know I’m new here,” Everyone turned to him and he sort of straightened up in his seat, continuing to speak in a clear matter-of-fact manner, “But it sounds to me like you’ve been through some real trauma.”

“No shit.” Tony remarked sourly.

Sam’s eyes slanted over to Tony briefly before coming back to Darcy. With a small smile Sam volunteered, “I can’t promise to understand what you’ve gone through, or even follow what you’re talking about, but if you ever need someone to listen or just sit with you? I’m here.”

“I have ears.” Tony declared, “I can sit. I’m here!”

“Tony, it’s not a competition.” Bruce counseled Tony as Pepper did the same, muttering under her breath exasperatedly, “Tony, shut up.”

“I don’t mean to step on any toes,” Sam rose his hands in surrender, “I just wanted to put that out there, considering I’ve spent a lot of time helping vets dealing with PTSD and your story sounds…like something you might need a little help getting over.”

Darcy appreciated the offer, “Thank you…I don’t know if I’ll..regardless, that’s really kind of you.”

Sam smiled and nodded in acknowledgement. Darcy let out a sigh and folded her arms on the glass coffee table. She let her head fall forward and she closed her eyes, listening to Bruce and Tony bicker quietly about Tony’s lack of tact and need to proverbially pee on Darcy when it came to her interacting with other people.

“Jesus.” Pepper muttered. Darcy lifted her head and watched as Pepper got up and went over to the wet bar and began making two drinks.

Thor brought her back to her story with a question, “After you left Asgard, you joined Fandral, Volstagg and Lady Sif on a vessel? What was the purpose of their journey? Where were they headed?”

“Yup.” Darcy confirmed, “Fandral finally got his wish, I woke up next to him.”

Pepper came up from behind her and handed her a drink before returning to her seat beside Tony, Darcy took a sip of the amber liquid wincing as the foul but potent drink made its way down her throat.
“He was a perfect gentleman?” Thor asked.

The overprotective big brother tone of voice he used warmed her, Darcy smiled at him fondly and nodded, “Yeah, he was a good guy about it. Kept his hands out of my underpants and everything.”

Pepper made a choking sound into her glass and Tony had to thump her loudly on the back as she coughed. Darcy looked at Pepper in concern but the red head waved away her concern, croaking out, “I’m fine. Continue.”

Darcy turned back to her own glass and stared at it as she spoke, “I was out for two days following my arrival, so they must have been pretty far from Asgard by that point. I’m not really well versed in space distances unless they are fictionally related. You know, parsecs Kessel runs, buzz related lightyears, one point twenty one gigawatts.”

Darcy played with her cup, tracing the rim of the glass with her finger, “I can’t tell you what they were doing, what their purpose was, because they said it would be dangerous for me to know. So, I was kept in the dark. I can tell you where we went though.”

“Where?” Stephen asked, leaning forward. Darcy looked up at him and her eyes sparkled as she revealed, “Knowhere.”

Only Thor seemed to know what she was talking about as he immediately responded loudly, “Why would they take you to that den of filth?”

“So I take it, ‘Knowhere’ is an actual place?” Sam questioned.

Darcy grinned broadly as she revealed, “It’s the severed head of a celestial being!”

Tony’s jaw actually dropped open and everyone, besides, Thor and Stephen, stared at her with varying degrees of abhorrence, disbelief and shock.

“It’s cooler than it sounds.” Darcy mumbled deflated.

“Well, it sounds disgusting so that’s a relief.” Jane quipped. Darcy shot Jane a small smile and the woman returned it.

“You would have loved it Jane.” Darcy gushed, “The stars, the planets. The vast amount of space that’s out in space is just, breathtaking! Not to mention the aliens! It was so incredible.”

“It sounds incredible.” Jane said wistfully.

“After Lady Sif and Volstagg handled their business on Knowwhere, we made a few stops on the way home to Asgard.” Darcy explained, “I was basically treated to an all expenses paid, tour of the galaxy.”

Thor let out a light laugh, encouraging her enthusiasm he said, “I’m glad my friends were gracious enough to indulge you Lady Darcy.”

“It was so cool! I got to go to all the top tourist planets, see the sights, eat all the best food thanks to Volstagg discerning taste, it was…an amazing space vacation.” Darcy sighed, memories of the good times had with her Asgardian friends playing out in her mind.

Jane got up abruptly with a rushed excuse, “I need to use the bathroom.”

Darcy bit her lip and as she watched Jane take hurried steps out of the room. Thor looked after her, a
conflicted look on his face. Darcy gestured after Jane with her head, encouraging, “Go after her Thor.”

“Lady Darcy--” Thor protested, but Darcy interrupted him, “Just go. I—I spoke without thinking. I just…after enduring so much bad, I got over excited about getting to share the good times. I didn’t think… Jane’s probably angry with me. Go.”

“I’m sure Jane’s not angry with you.” Thor argued calmly.

“Maybe.” Darcy took another sip from her cup, avoiding Thor’s gaze as she spoke glumly, “She’s probably not angry at me. Just angry in general. Angry that I, someone who showed no aptitude for astronomy or physics got to see things and go places, explore the galaxy in a way Jane would kill for.”

Darcy took a bigger swig of the burning liquid, gently setting the glass on the coffee table top, she quietly admitted, “I shouldn’t have rubbed it in.”

“My lady Jane would never--” Darcy interrupted Thor again, saying, “All the same bro, go after her.”

Thor looked at the hallway that Jane had disappeared, and then back to her, he stood and gestured to Darcy, “If you’re sure?”

“I’ll recap the rest for you later.” Darcy promised. Thor nodded and took off after Jane.

Tony brought her attention back to the rest of their group when he sarcastically asked, “Anything else exciting happen?”

Darcy downed the rest of her glass before raising the empty cup in his direction and shaking it, “Get me another and make it a double and I’ll tell you all about the talking raccoon, baby Groot, and the embarrassment of teleporting naked.”

Darcy didn’t hold back any of the details concerning her time with the Guardians. When she was finished everyone seemed a little exhausted, and Darcy was admittedly a little drunk.

Everyone began to pair off as they left the room. Pepper, Tony and Bruce headed for the upstairs lab, whispering conspiratorially in hushed tones. Sam intercepted Steve as he was headed over to her and took him in the opposite direction. Which left her and Strange.

Alone.

Darcy was still sitting on the floor, next to the coffee table, Strange sat on the couch to her left. Neither made to move, towards each other or to leave. So, Darcy finished off her third glass and got to her feet in a wobbly baby deer manner.

She practically fell onto the couch next to Stephen. Strange quickly plucked the empty glass from her hand and set it on the table in front of them. When he moved back into the seated position Darcy slumped heavily into his side and picked up the end of his belt and began fiddling with it. In a small pleading voice Darcy asked, “Can we just…not be awkward?”

Stephen slid his arm from out between their bodies and wrapped it around her shoulders and pulled
her closer into his side. He kissed the top of her head as she let it fall onto his shoulder and murmured quietly, “Sure.”

In a voice lacking enthusiasm, Darcy exclaimed, “Hooray.”

They sat snuggled together staring out at the impressive floor to ceiling windows lining the wall opposite them, looking out at the city as the sun set down behind the skyscraper buildings. The lights of the buildings were just starting to glow and stand out against the orange sky. It was a spectacular view…but Darcy had seen better.

After a while Darcy moved out of Stephen’s arms and sat up straighter, her words barely slurred as she said, “Thanks for coming. You didn’t haveta. So, yeah, thanks.”

Stephen smiled at her fondly, reaching out he pushed her hair out of her face and over her shoulder, promising, “I’ll always be there for you if you need me.”

Darcy grabbed his hand and trapped between hers lowering their hands to her lap she stared into his eyes, a wobbly smile on her face, “Yeah, but…you know, I’m your ex. So, you showing up is even nicer.”

Darcy let go of his hand and reached up to stroke a hand down the side of his face, “Besides, soon you’ll find a new girlfriend and then you’ll move on and become the new Dumbledore and I’ll just be this girl you knew once. So, thanks for showing up while you’re still available.”

Strange caught her hand and used it to pull her closer, “Darcy, is that what you think? That you’re so easily forgotten?”

“You’re going to end up a big time somebody and I just know--”

Strange interrupted her, “Did you see it? Did you have a dream of my future? Is that why you pulled away? Do I meet someone else?”

Darcy licked at her lips, thirsty for another drink to help dull her sense of pathetic-ness, “I don’t have to see the future to know how awesome you are. Dude, you’re so fucking dedicated, you are going to be a total boss when you master all the powers and stuff. I’ve seen that.”

Darcy rolled her head from shoulder to shoulder, stretching her tense muscles, “I’ve had a vision of what you become, yeah, but I didn’t need it. Anyone who meets you can see that you’re meant for greatness. But, since you asked, spoiler alert! You end up this…fancy flying guy whipping out spells laying the smack down on bad guys, meanwhile I’ll most likely still be all fucked up and lonely and helping no one and contributing nothing cause I suck at controlling my powers.”

“So I don’t meet someone else?” Strange questioned slowly.

“You will...probably. I don’t know. No, yeah. You will.” Darcy declared adamantly, she stroked his cheek again, “You’re so handsome and good. You’re gonna have mad bitches sniffing after you.”

Strange gave her a weird look. Darcy rolled her eyes, explaining, “I’ve been watching a lot of Breaking Bad. Sorry, Jesse’s vernacular is rubbing off on me I think.”

Strange laughed at that and Darcy felt the corners of her mouth lifting, “I’m just saying…I’m just trying to say, that I love you. And thank you.”

Strange looked struck. Darcy ran her thumb across his lower lip, “I love you and I always will, because you’re my friend and I…just do. I love you and it doesn’t matter if its romantic or platonic
love, it’s love. And it’s what I feel when I think of you.” Darcy’s voice lowered into a husky drawl, “When I remember being with you.”

“Darcy.” Strange said warningly in a gruff voice, “Darcy, I think you’ve had too much to drink. Why don’t we get up and put you to bed?”

Strange stood and pulled her to her feet. Darcy took the opportunity to wrap her arms around his waist and bury her face in his chest. Strange let out a sigh, but obliged her and hugged her back.

“You didn’t say it back.” Darcy whined into his chest a few seconds later.

His whole chest rumbled as he laughed and pet her hair, cooing, “Oh honey. Of course I love you too.”

Darcy lifted her head from his chest and stared up at his piercing blue eyes, “Really?”

Strange cupped her face, in much of the same way she and Thor had done to each other earlier, “Yes.”

“Romantic or platonic?” Darcy questioned.

The skin around his eyes crinkled as he smiled and responded evasively, “Yes.”

“Kiss me?” Darcy asked as she went up onto her tip toes and puckered her lips.

Strange shook his head as he smiled, “No.”

Darcy pouted and fisted the fabric at his waist as she pouted and whined, “Whhhy?”

“You’re drunk.”

“I’m not that drunk.”

Strange gave her an indulgent grin, then leant down and kissed her on the tip of her nose, smugly declaring, “There. Kissed.”

Darcy scowled but allowed Stephen to take her by the hand and lead her down the hallway towards the bedroom she had been sharing with Pepper and Tony. As she trailed after him she grumbled, “Crummy wizard, tricking me with your handsome face and chivalry.”

Stephen kept things light and friendly as he helped her unlace her shoes and unbutton her jean shorts. He took the Thor-esque hair clips out of her hair and ran his hands gently through it. Darcy was starting to feel really drunk. Her tight hold on Stephen the only thing keeping her from dizzily falling to the floor.

“I’m drunk.” Darcy declared, sounding shocked.

“Glad you agree.” Strange answered as he helped her remove the infinity shawl from around her shoulders.

“How’d I get so drunk? I only” Darcy paused to hiccup, “I’s only had like three drinks!”
“Three drinks, in the space of an hour and half, given your height and weight and the strength of the booze you were drinking, its…a lot.” Strange explained as he helped her over to the bed and pulled back the covers.

He helped her sit down on the sheets but Darcy began to shake her head ‘no’, however since the action caused her pain she began speaking her displeasure instead, “No, no, no, no, no, no, nooooope!”

“What?” Stephen asked looking around the room alarmed.

“I just finished telling ya the story of how I met a Stardork in my birthday suit! I can’t fall asleep in my underpants and awesome Hercules shirt! What if I ‘port into another sexy rogue’s bed?!’” Darcy lowered her voice into a mock whisper, “I’ve got ta make a good impression.”

Darcy appreciated Stephen suppressing his laughter even if she could see his shoulders shaking as he looked down hiding his face from her, “And so, you would have me…?”

“I need my stuff dude! My sleep stuff.” Darcy cried out loudly whilst throwing her hands in the air above her head.

“Of course.” Stephen said sounding amused.

Darcy pointed to the dresser which held her sleep wear, Pepper and Tony had given her a designated dresser and section of the closet and stocked the place with clothes for all occasions in her size. Because they loved her. And she loved them.

“I love love!” Darcy announced as she allowed herself to fall back onto the bed, Strange walked away from her and made his way over to the dresser.

“You’re a real happy drunk, you know that?” Stephen commented offhandedly. Darcy ignored him and rolled her whole body closer to the edge of the bed, lifting her feet into the air above her head and watching as she made her sock clad feet dance.

While trying to make it look like she was ice skating on the ceiling she called out, “Top drawer has panties. Under that, left drawer has sexy dress socks, right has cozy sleep socks. Below that is Dizziney….I mean, Disney. Below that to the left..or the right, I can’t remember right now, is silky sexy stuff, on the other side is super duper sexy stuff that Tony bought that—well, maybe actually Pepper bought them, either way, that drawer is filled with sexy lingerie.”

Stephen held out a red and gold bodysuit with cut outs at the crotch and nipples. Darcy just giggled, “I don’t actually wear most of the stuff in that drawer. No support.”

Darcy clutched at her chest and hefted her breasts up in her hands, “You see, I need sensible underwire action if they ladies are gonna sit right.”

Stephen chuckled and threw the barely there lingerie from whence it came and Darcy continued to direct him.

“Night gowns are hung up in the closet along with their matching robes. My side of the closet ison the other side of Tony’s suits. It goes, Pepper’s work clothes, Tony’s suits, Darcy’s fancy sleep wear shit.” Darcy pointed a finger in the vague direction of Strange as she ordered, “Make sure you pick an outfit out that is sexy, but in a casual way that doesn’t look like I’m trying too hard.”

“Yes, dear.” Strange quipped dryly.
Darcy lowered one foot at a time down to her chest and stripped herself of her socks, throwing the smelly objects far away from the bed, “I’ve decided that I want to date.”

There was a loud banging as Stephen slammed the dresser drawer closed loudly. The items on the top of the dresser, her hair brush and deodorant, a small jewelry box, all jostling precariously.

“Is that so?” Stephen commented casually.

“Yeah,” Darcy sighed, “I can’t wait any more. My life will never calm down and if I wait for things to level out to find a boyfriend or girlfriend, I may never do it at all! I’ll die old and alone with only my fleas to mourn me! I was born a street rat, I’ll die a street rat!”

Darcy giggled to herself as ‘One Jump Ahead’ from Aladdin played in her mind. Strange broke through her mental musical moment when he asked, “Girlfriend?”

“How?” Darcy grunted, still humming along to the music in her head.

“You said girlfriend or boyfriend?” Strange repeated, his voice a little higher than normal.

“I’m not excluding any of my options.” Darcy said as she clumsily got to her feet, somehow managing to stand atop the bed. She spread her feet slightly apart and put her hands on her hips in a ‘superhero’ pose, “I’ve been suppressing my feelings and attraction and everything and living the life of an ugly celibate nun for FAR too long.”

Darcy pointed one hand at the ceiling, crying, “Well, NO MORE!”

“Ugly celibate nun?” Strange repeated slowly.

Darcy began jumping on the bed, her dizziness from earlier forgotten as she flew into the air repeatedly. Bouncing and jumping, she breathily declared, “I want kisses!”

Bouce, jump, bounce, “I want sexy cuddles!”

Bouce, jump, bounce, “And orgasms!”

Bouce, jump, bounce, “I want a tab A to put in my slot B!”

Strange approached her slowly, sleep clothes held in his right hand. Darcy grinned broadly, “I want someone to catch me–”

Darcy jumped off the bed aiming for Stephen with her arms wide open. Strange let out an ‘oof’ but he caught her, his knees buckling only slightly.

“Gotchca.” Stephen boasted softly, Darcy wrapped her legs around his waist and made a happy noise as his hands grabbed her butt, hitching her up higher. Darcy ran her hand through his hair and messed it up with frantic hands. Smiling at the results, Strange carried her forward, back towards the bed.

She could sense he was about to drop her onto the bed so she quickly tightened her legs around his hips and wound her arms around his neck, smiling cheekily when the hands left her bottom and he outstretched his arms. Showcasing how she was clinging to him like a baby spider monkey.

“Look, Darce. No hands.” Strange joked, wiggling his fingers in the air.

Darcy ignored his joke as she stared at his face and felt a sudden rush of emotion. She leaned forward and kissed him high on the cheek, then lower and lower, kissing closer and closer to his lips.
Just as she was about to go for it, Strange blocked her, turning his head to the side.

Stephen bent down until her butt touched the bed, and then forcibly removed her arms and legs from his person. Darcy swallowed thickly, the euphoria she had been feeling drained out of her body as she took in the pinched look on Stephen’s face.

In a small voice Darcy explained, “You woke me up you know. I..I was attracted to people before I met you. And I knew…Steve has a super big not so secret crush on me. And, Tony and Pe—other people. And I always shut them down or ignored them or played it off or pretended to be oblivious. But then…you happened. Being with you was such an amazing surprise…And then, I spent time with Tony and Pepper, their couple-y-ness just made me miss you harder. Then I met Axel. And found my way back to Fandral. And he’s probably going to die…And I almost became a space hooker. And…it all comes back to you.”

Strange moved to sit next to her on the bed and she turned, maintaining eye contact with him, “You woke me up. I was asleep and you woke me up.”

“I would think that a common occurrence.” Stephen said quietly.

“No. It’s a metaphor.” Darcy reached for his hands and interlocked them with hers, “You were a surprise. You made me feel good and I felt good when I made you feel good and—touching. Just…touching another person, so intentionally intimately, you woke me up Stephen. Reminded me that I’m more than just an inconvenience and a weirdo.”

“You’re not a weirdo.” Stephen said sternly, his voice softening as he asserted, “You’re beautiful. And crazy, but in a good way. Charming and fun…you’re a dream.”

She squeezed her fingers and he copied her. She smiled sadly, “I never believed someone could like me back and accept all the shit that comes along with being a part of my life, but you proved me wrong.”

“Well, I do love being right.” Strange quipped.

Suddenly Darcy pulled hard on his hands, jerking him forward she pressed their lips together. Her kiss was clumsy and forceful but as she realized he wasn’t pulling away from her, she softened it. She eased back on the pressure and began nipping at his lips, and when he opened his mouth, she slipped her tongue inside and delicately explored it, letting out a mewling sound when Stephen massaged her tongue with his own.

In between kisses, Darcy couldn’t resist bragging, “Gotcha.”

They kissed for a while. Never releasing each other’s hands.

When Darcy’s kiss became suspiciously languid, to the point of not really moving at all, Strange pulled back from her. Darcy blinked blearily, the emotional meeting and alcohol combining to make her body sleepy beyond her mental will to keep kissing Stephen.

Despite her body’s exhaustion Darcy protested, “Nooo. More kissy kissy.”

Strange untangled their hands and pulled her close, hugging her to his chest, “Not tonight.”
Darcy clutched at his fancy wizard robe, complaining, “But tonight’s all that we have. When you leave you’ll go back to Karma-Taj and get sucked into your training to become the next Sorcerer Supreme.”

Strange replied quickly, “And you’ll return to your newfound quest to fall in love with some other man or woman.”

Darcy lifted her head from his chest and frowned at his face, “But I love you.”

“And I love you.” Strange said as he leaned in and kissed her chastely on the lips, “And now it’s time for me to leave.”

Stephen made to get up but Darcy kept a tight hold on his clothes stopping him, “Don’t go.”

“Come with me.” Strange countered.

“What?”

“Come with me, back to Karma-Taj. Train with me. Master your power and...be with me while you do it.” Stephen sounded weirdly vulnerable and Darcy wanted to say yes, she wanted to go with him and be with him and have everything sorted out, no fuss, no muss. But the thought of leaving Tony and Pepper and Steve and Thor and Bruce and Jane...it hurt.

“I can’t.” Darcy whimpered.

“Then let go.” Strange said kindly. He took her hands off his shirt and put them in her lap, before moving to stand.

Darcy jumped to her feet and threw her arms around his torso clutching him tightly, crying out, “I can’t do that either!”

“Darcy--”

“I don’t want to let you go!” Darcy stamped her foot and stood, looking Stephen in the eyes, “Can’t we just be together..like when we’re together?!”

“What?”

“When I teleport to you unexpectedly, or you join in for a team meeting, can’t we just...be us? Be together with the kissy kissy and the cuddles and stuff? Can’t we just be together, when we’re together?” The idea, though half formed in her mind, and slightly influenced by her inebriated state, sounded like the perfect solution to her for her obviously unresolved feelings for the magical man.

Stephen made a face, “Like a...part-time boyfriend?”

“Exactly!” Darcy cried triumphantly.

“And you’ll what, date other people while I’m not around?”

Darcy blinked owlishly at him that honestly sounded fucking awesome, in a hopeful voice she asked, “Would you be okay with that?”

“I—uh---I...don’t know.” Stephen stuttered, “I’d have to think about it.”

“It could work!” Darcy said with a wistful smile, “You could fulfill your destiny without my fucking it all up with interference, and I wouldn’t have to die of loneliness and despair while you’re away
saving the universe!”

Stephen stared at her with a complex expression she was too drunk to decipher, so she just cuddled up to his chest and hugged him tightly, advising, “Think about it?”

“I don’t think I’ll be able to think of anything else.” Strange assured her as her legs buckled and she almost fell to the floor, only to be caught by Stephen once again.

Strange scooped her up into his arms. Darcy sighed as he mumbled, “Time for bed.”

With minimal ogling and the brisk professionalism of a surgeon who’d seen a lot of people naked, Strange stripped her of her old underwear, shirt and bra. Quickly helping her slip into new underwear, sleep shorts, a sleep shirt, new socks, an eye mask and a wristlet. He put a big fuzzy robe next to her in the bed in case she got cold and kissed her on the forehead before leaving via the familiar sound of a portal.

Darcy was asleep within minutes of his departure. Visions of magically assisted threesomes dancing in her head.

Darcy woke up cupping a pair of small breasts.

“Darcy!” Jane’s shrill voice chastised, waking Darcy up faster. She immediately removed her hands.

“Sorry, I know how that feels.” Darcy empathized, “My bad.”

Jane huffed and pushed at Darcy’s stomach with her bony butt, complaining, “Gah! Move over, between you and Thor I feel like I’m roasting alive!”

“Are we still in the Avengers tower?” Darcy asked sleepily.

“Yeah.” Jane answered.

“Okay, Jarvis?” Darcy called out.

“Yes, Miss Lewis?” The AI responded automatically.

“Can you turn down the heat in here? To like, sixty degrees?”

“At once.”

“Thanks J.” Darcy mumbled as she turned over and faced away from Jane’s back, putting them butt to butt.

After a couple seconds silence, Jane mumbled, “Thanks.”

“No problem.” Darcy grumbled back.

After a couple minutes passed, Darcy whispered, “Jane? Are you awake?”

“Yes.”

“You mad I went to space and you didn’t?”
“No.”

“You sure?”

“I’m jealous.” Jane admitted, “That’s totally different than mad.”

After a beat of silence Darcy asked, “We still friends?”

“Of course.” Jane answered quickly.

“Cool.”

After a few seconds Jane worriedly asked, “Are you mad at me for being jealous?”

“Not even a little.”

“Good.”

“Good.” Darcy agreed, “G’night.”

“Good night Darcy.”

Thor’s deep chuckle rang out in the silent room, “See? I told you there was nothing to worry about dear sister.”

“Shut up and go to sleep Thor.” Darcy groused, though a smile spread across her face.

“Yeah,” Jane answered, “And wipe that smug look off your face. Just because you were right, does not mean you get to rub it in.”

“It’s completely dark in here. There is no way you can see my face.” Thor countered.

“I don’t have to see it to know it’s there.” Jane quipped.

Thor let out a yelping, “Alright! I yield. No more shall I bask in my triumphant validation.”

Curious as to what Jane did to make Thor sound like a surprised grade school girl, she asked, “How did you do that? I—what did you do to Thor?”

Darcy could hear the smirk in Jane’s voice, “My body may be hot, but for some reason my feet are still as cold as ice.”

“She put them on my calf Darcy!” Thor tattled, “As cold as a frost giant’s kiss!”

“Why do you know what a frost giant’s kiss feels like?” Darcy asked. When Thor sputtered to answer Jane’s laughter rang out and filled the room. And soon Darcy’s joined her.

Outfit Darcy wore to the meeting
Sleep Outfit, Strange picked out for Darcy
Everyone at the meeting, I imagine it all happening in the same space as the Age of Ultron Party where they all try to lift Thor's hammer (made this just a reference shot to use when writing) This chapter does not replace the Ultron party though...
Also, I just wanted to share this Gif: I think it says sooooo much.

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Chapter End Notes

So...what did you think?
How convincing was my Drunk Darcy? Too drunk? Not drunk enough? It's hard to write drunk people...its a fine line.

Anyone care to change their votes?
Chapter 22 – Darcy Lewis

There was something annoying tickling her nose. Darcy woke up rubbing at her face. When the sensation disappeared she relaxed and try to go back to sleep.

And then the feeling returned.

“Ughmm.” Darcy whined as she rubbed at her nose again. The itchiness disappeared again.

Darcy rolled over and buried her face in the pillow, bringing up the blanket high over her face she internally hoped it wasn’t a spider dancing on her face or something equally creepy crawly.

And because she pulled the blanket up so high, it left her feet exposed and they soon became chilled, this caused Darcy to let out a muffled curse. However, when the tickling feeling began to dance along the bottoms of her feet, that’s when she knew someone was messing with her.

Darcy turned her head resting her cheek on the pillow so she could be heard clearly when she yelled, “FUCK OFF!”

Familiar tinkling laughter met her cry and Darcy pulled up her knees, hiding her frozen feet from her torturer.

Suddenly the blanket was ripped off of her and Darcy let out a loud screech, “AAAGGGH!”

Jane kept tight hold of the blanket as she attempted to run away, Darcy lurched upright and threw her sleep mask onto the bed. Before she could even see properly, she was up on her feet and chasing after her friend.

“Ahh! Thor! Help!” Jane cried in between laughter.

“Yeah, you better run.” Darcy grumbled as she pursued the tiny scientist on heavy feet, knocking into the door frame and sliding along the wall as she made her pursuit. As her vision cleared and things came more into focus she spied what Jane had been using to tickle her.
“Where the hell did you even get a peacock feather!?” Darcy screamed as Jane hid behind a bewildered looking Thor.

“I thought you liked surprises?” Jane taunted playfully. Darcy picked up the nearest object and tried to throw it at Jane, but Thor caught the orange in midair before it could reach its rightful target.

“I hate you.” Darcy muttered as she climbed up onto the high stool that sat at the kitchen island.

“Me or him?” Jane asked as she peeked out from behind Thor’s massive shoulders.

“Both.”

“Surely you jest sister?” Thor asked with a frown.

“Not this early in the morning.” Darcy grumbled.

Thor having saved Jane from her fiery wrath, made amends by offering Darcy the breakfast he had been preparing for himself when they came and found him in the kitchen. Still giddy, Jane danced around the counter and informed her in a sing song voice, “You know you love me.”

“I don’t.” Darcy argued.

“It’s your birthday Darcy!” Jane exclaimed excitedly, “We have to get up and start the day so we can do all the birthday things!”

“Seems to me like the birthday girl should be allowed to sleep in if she wants to.” Darcy scowled when the metal hitting porcelain made a grating clanging noise as she slammed her fork into her syrup-y pancakes a little too hard.

Thor gave her a broad smile as he squeezed the syrup bottle over his second plate of pancakes, “Dearest Darcy, forgive my lady Jane, she is merely excited that she is not going to miss out celebrating this most joyous occasion with you, as she had feared.”

“Yup.” Jane said with a nod as she opened her mouth to Thor expectantly, allowing him to feed her. While chewing on one side of her mouth she continued to say, “I have to be at the airport by 9:15 a.m. tomorrow, which gives us plenty of time to celebrate Y.O.U.”

Jane booped Darcy on the nose before she did a little spin away from her and towards the coffee maker. Narrowing her eyes Darcy inquired, “How many cups of coffee have you had this morning? You’re suspiciously chipper.”

Jane ignored her and continued to dance in place as the coffee maker filled her mug. Darcy raised a brow and spoke in a dry tone, “Or have we added cocaine to our hearty breakfast?”

“Don’t be ridiculous.” Jane said dismissively.

Looking at the ceiling Darcy asked, “Jarvis, how many cups has Dr. Foster had this morning?”

“Four.” The A.I. responded automatically.

“JANE!” Darcy scolded, but it was for naught.

Jane had already claimed her cup of steaming hot caffeine and made her way over to the hallway that lead back to the bedroom calling out over her shoulder, “I’m gonna take a shower, I expect you
dressed and ready to go in an hour Darcy!”

Darcy and Thor could hear her singing happily off key from the kitchen. They exchanged silent smiles over Jane’s hyper behavior then ate the rest of their breakfast in companionable quiet.

Darcy and Thor sat in their sleep clothes on the couch in front of the big TV, the movie Brave Little Toaster was playing and Darcy was half paying attention to it, half answering Thor’s many questions. She and Thor each had a big bowl on their laps. They were sorting Lucky Charms, in her bowl they deposited the marshmallows, in Thor’s the yucky cereal bits.

Jane came to find them a while later after she had gotten dressed for the day, her hair was wet and she had a brush in hand. When she saw them she pouted, “You’re not dressed.”

“Nope.” Darcy said with a cheeky smile. Jane made a ‘hrumph’ sound and sat down on the couch with them.

After Jane had brushed her hair out and tied it up in a tight pony tail she turned on Thor and Darcy.

“Thor!” Jane said shrilly. When Thor and she just looked back at her blankly Jane let out a noise of annoyance, then she stole the box of cereal Darcy and Thor had been sorting, closed the lid securely before throwing it over the back of the couch in the general direction of the kitchen.

Jane then began poking Thor in the arm repeatedly, “Go get dressed!”

Thor rolled his eyes and put his bowl of cereal down on the little table in front of them, he then gave Jane a quick peck on the cheek as he walked back towards the bedroom, presumably to follow orders.

Jane gave her a flat look, “Go get dressed Darcy.”

Darcy stared back at Jane with a challenging expression, “I’m good right here thanks.”

“Go!” Jane whined.

“No!” Darcy parodied the same tone Jane used.

“Why?”

Darcy shrugged her shoulders before taking a whole handful of the marshmallows she’d collected and shoved them in her mouth.

“You know you can buy just the marshmallows now, you don’t have to sort them by hand.” Jane said as she inched over and snagged a handful of marshmallows and began eating them one at a time.

“Yeah,” Darcy acknowledged, “But that’s so un-American.”


“Well, then it’s lazy.” Darcy countered. She and Jane ate the marshmallows in silence, both getting sucked into the movie. When a commercial break came on, Jane snagged the bowl of marshmallows away from Darcy.

Darcy made grabby hands but Jane stubbornly held the bowl out of reach, “No.”
“But, but—mine!” Darcy whined.

“Go get dressed. I moved a very important meeting just so I could spend today with you. A meeting about me possibly receiving the NOBLE PRIZE Darcy. I moved it for YOU. So, get up, get rid of your birthday grumpiness and get dressed. We have celebrating to do.”

Darcy puffed her lips as she suppressed the urge to argue with her friend about the day being her birthday so it should be up to her what they do and how they celebrate it. But, she knew what a big deal the Noble Prize was; she knew what an amazing gesture it was for Jane to move such an important meeting. So, she kept her mouth closed and got up.

“Yay.” Jane called out to her retreating form, “We’re going to have an amazing day Darce, you’ll see!”

Ever since they made up, Jane had been trying to pack as much ‘friendship’ time with Darcy in as possible. They’d spent the past week practically attached at the hip. She could tell that Jane felt guilty about her imminent departure and even more guilty that she would be going back to work without Darcy.

So, Darcy had indulged her. However, it felt like Jane was trying to squeeze an entire lifetime of friendship memories into the week that she’d been staying at the tower. And it was getting harder and harder to keep a smile on her face.

Darcy appreciated Jane turning down interviews and speaking engagements to spend some quality time with her, but it felt…so condensed. Compressed? Rushed. Forced. It felt forced, like Jane was trying to rekindle the fire that was once their intimate friendship, but the truth was they just weren’t that close anymore….not like they used to be. Darcy didn’t think there was anything wrong with that, people drifted apart, they changed and evolved, it didn’t mean that she loved Jane any less, it just meant that their friendship had to adapt.

Jane obviously disagreed.

It felt a little like all the passion and interest that Jane had for science, was being focused on her, with laser beam intensity. Darcy was a very relaxed, go with the flow type person, so going along with Jane’s overly packed schedule everyday had been grating. Darcy had never seen Jane be more organized in her life. It was impressive and…a little scary.

So far they’d done a paint night, taken a dance class together, gone roller skating, ice skating, apple picking, attended a concert, tried aerial yoga, visited the zoo, the park, a renaissance festival, beach (even though it was NOVEMBER), they’d drank and done karaoke, gone to an amusement park and ridden roller coasters until they threw up, and last but not least horseback riding.

Darcy had enjoyed all the activities, but they were all scheduled back to back, with little to no down time allotted in between. She’d gone to bed exhausted and sore almost every night that week. And Jane kept forcing everyone to document every activity with zillions of pictures. Most often Thor was their ‘friendship’ photographer, but Jane had literally accosted strangers and billionaires alike, into taking pictures of them.

And that was another thing; she hadn’t really spent any time with anyone besides Jane and Thor in the last week. She hadn’t teleported into anyone else’s bed and she hadn’t returned to Thor and
Jane’s. She’d been staying in the guest room of Thor’s allotted apartment in the tower. So, her opportunity to see or talk to others was extremely limited given Jane’s commitment to ‘quality time’.

Seeing as how she had mentally committed herself to the idea of getting back out in the dating world, the feelings of isolation caused by her sudden lack of bed partners were especially irritating.

Sure she had seen Tony had Pepper when they had joined them at the concert, (because they got Jane, she and Thor the tickets) but it was so loud she barely got to talk to them. And Bruce, who had told Jane about the aerial yoga class, had been suspiciously absent from it when they attended. Steve and Sam had tried to tag along to the zoo outing, but Jane asked them not to because it was supposed to be a ‘girl’s day out’, when questioned about Thor’s inclusion she’d disinvited her boyfriend on the spot. Thor didn’t mind because he, Steve, and Sam spent the day engaging in some manly bonding at the arcade, so it had all worked out. Eventually everyone stopped asking to join, leaving her, Jane, and Thor to enjoy their time together unimpeded.

HOWEVER, somehow, Jane had struck up a friendship with Natasha and she’d been invited horseback riding with them. Darcy had kept her seething rage quiet about that one, though it was very difficult when Natasha and Thor turned out to be highly proficient riders and Jane was apparently just a ‘natural’ and Darcy fell off her horse. Twice.

So, as glad as she was that she and Jane had made up, she was even gladder that Jane would soon have science and scientific accolades to take up her valuable time. She was tired of ping ponging between being so intensely fixated on and being left alone and having to fall asleep to the sounds of Thor and Jane having sex one room over.

If her week bunking next door to Jane and Thor had taught her anything, it had taught her that she wanted someone to be her ‘someone’.

She missed the feeling of someone’s arms around her when she woke up, their breath on her skin, the heat of their body bleeding into hers….

In the middle of the week Stephen had portal-ed back and given his blessing for her to date other people, agreeing for their relationship to remain unaffected by any additional participants on her part. So, she was on the hunt for a love life that would consist of more than a few random days and an unspecified amount of time together.

Throughout the week she was tempted to booty call Stephen, but she resisted and instead signed up for an online dating site. She knew how valuable his time was and she was determined not to derail him becoming the next Sorcerer Supreme. She would only monopolize his time if he sought her out.

Everything about the week had led to her feeling unbalanced.

It was surprisingly unsettling to be waking up alone in her ‘own’ bed again. It actually made her feel really lonely, especially right when she woke up and right before she fell asleep. Being simultaneously smothered, isolated, and horny all had her feeling irritated. The fact that it was her birthday too, was just a kick in the teeth.

When Darcy made her way back to the living room, dressed and ready to go as ordered, she heard Jane arguing with Tony. She approached quietly and smothered a smile with her hand as she took in the scene. Jane and Tony were nearly nose to nose; Jane in jeans and a t-shirt, Tony dressed
impeccably in a tailored suit. Jane was poking Tony in the chest and he was poking her back in the shoulder as they sniped at each other.

“—you can’t!”

“That’s not a reason.”

“I don’t care! You’re not invited.”

“The hell I’m not! You planned this little outing with the help of my girlfriend and my A.I. and you’re planning on using my credit card to bank roll the whole thing so if anyone has the power to disinvite people, it’s me!”

“Screw you! This is my last day with Darcy--”

“You’ve spent the past seven days with Darcy!”

“But today’s her birthday--”

“EXACTLY, why I’m coming!”

Jane used two hands on Tony’s chest to shove him as she shouted, “You can’t come because we’re going shopping--”

“I’m a billionaire, I assure you I can shop.”

“And we’re going to the salon!”

“I love it when a pretty girl washes my hair and then blows me.” Darcy snorted as Tony waggled his eyebrows suggestively, she could see true irritation on his face despite his witty comebacks though. “What else you got?”

“We’re going to get mani pedis.”

“I could use a good buff.”

“Facials.”

“I love to exfoliate.”

“Gah!” Jane let out a noise and stomped her foot, “You can’t come Stark! I—we have other girly day activities, girl only stuff like bra fittings and a date with the sauna. So you see, you can’t come! Why would you want to? I sent Thor out with Steve and Sam to do party errands, why don’t you call them--”

Tony sneered at Jane, “Jarvis, cancel all of Ms. Foster’s appointments for the day.”

“WHAT!” Jane screeched, her face paled, “You can’t!”

“Then I’m coming with you.” Tony said lowly, “You want to use me, my name? My money? Well, then I’m coming with you. That’s the deal.”

“You self centered asshole.” Jane said crossly. When Darcy saw the way Tony’s nostrils were flaring, she decided to interrupt and make her prescience known.

Rounding the corner Darcy perkily chirped, “Hey guys.”
Both Tony and Jane’s heads snapped in her direction. Darcy smiled brightly, “What’s up?”

Simultaneously Jane and Tony said her name though each used a different tone, Jane sounded guilty and Tony sounded relieved, “Darcy.” “Darcy!”

Darcy walked over to Tony and quickly decided to play dumb, she gave him a big hug exclaiming, “Tony! Gosh, I feel like I haven’t seen you in forever!”

Tony kissed her on the top of her head as he squeezed her back, “Yeah well, I couldn’t miss out on spending the day with the birthday girl, now could I?”

Darcy pulled back, “You’re coming with us? Hooray!”

“Of course I am.” Tony answered quickly, shooting a victorious grin in Jane’s direction, “Wouldn’t miss it for the world.”

When they reached the parking garage there was a little squabbling between Jane and Tony over what car to take. Jane had arranged for a town car, while Tony ordered a limo. When Tony and Jane couldn’t force each other to back down, they both turned to her expectantly.

Darcy sighed as she realized she’d probably spend a large portion of the day breaking ties and playing referee.

In a dry tone Darcy asked, “Does the limo have a mini bar?”

Tony preened, “Duh.”

“We ride in obnoxious ostentatious style then.” Darcy said firmly. Jane pouted for a bit, but after her second glass of bubbly champagne, she lost the frown and started talking excitedly about all she had planned for that day.

“Okay, so first, we hit the spa. I’ve scheduled us for facials, a twenty minute couples massage, sorry Tony you’ll have to sit that one out, then we have a mud bath session followed up with a trip to the sauna. We’ll shower and then head out for our bra fittings! After that, shopping! You’re fave Darcy! We find the perfect dress for your party tonight. And then we’ll finish with a ‘chill’ manicure pedicure appointment, you said you wanted to do something chill right Darcy?” Jane didn’t wait for her to respond before carrying on eagerly, “Then it’s on to the official party at Avengers Tower! Yay!”

Darcy tried to muster some enthusiasm as Jane turned to her with an expectantly joyous grin, but the day Jane had planned out for them, just sounded exhausting.

“Actually, no.” Tony said flatly with a smirk, “We’re on our way to the nail salon first.”


“I’ve changed our plans around, so Jane you’ll get to be surprised too!” Tony said with false cheer. Darcy put a hand on Jane’s knee and shot her friend a look silently begging Jane to be nice. To her credit Jane took a deep breath and let out slowly, politely choosing not to fight or saying anything else until they arrived at the nail place.
When the limo stopped, Tony got out first and extended his hand to each lady helping them climb out with grace. Darcy stared up at the skyscraper, she could see that the second floor was lit up and you could see into the building. The first floor looked to be the nail salon, upstairs was the hairdresser section. It was a fancy upscale looking joint.

Tony linked their arms together at the elbow and drug her forward to the door, Jane trailed behind them listlessly. Upon entering, they were offered champagne. Darcy and Jane eagerly accepted, but Darcy noted with distress that Jane quickly downed the entire flute and then grabbed another. In the limo Jane had also had two glasses of champagne.

“Do you think we could get something to eat after this?” Darcy whispered to Tony. She gestured with her head to Jane who was taking a long sip from her glass, “To help soak up some of the bubbly and hopefully make my birthday a vomit free affair?”

Tony nodded to her and was about to reply when an outrageous looking woman called out his name, “Mister STARK! Hello again. So nice to see you.”

Tony returned her fake air kisses when she was close enough and Darcy marveled at the woman’s rainbow bowl cut hair and impossibly long and bedazzled nails.

Tony gestured to the woman, “Ladies, this is Akira, she owns the place. Akira,” Tony put an arm around Darcy’s shoulders and squeezed her into his side, “This is Darcy, she’s the birthday girl. Anything she wants. No limit, understand?”

“Happy birthday young lady,” The proprietor’s eyes lit up as she took in Darcy’s appearance, looking her up and down with an evaluating eye. Darcy shifted her weight from foot to foot as she gave the woman an awkward wave, “Hey.”

Akira grabbed for Darcy’s hands and scowled at her fingers, “You chew on your nails?”

“Um, yes?”

The woman made a ‘tsk, tisk’ sound then gestured to the wall of nail polish bottles behind her, “No worries. You pick colors and I make you look good anyway.”

“Um,” Darcy looked at Tony with wide eyes but he had no sympathy, just an amused smile on his face.

“And I’m her best friend, Dr. Foster.” Jane interrupted, pushing Tony away from Darcy and putting herself in between them. Jane slung an arm around Darcy’s waist and pulled their hips together so abruptly that it stung as their hip bones collided. “We both want the works and we want to be seated next to each other and we’d like some more champagne.”

Akira’s eyes shifted to Tony and he rolled his eyes but nodded. Akira then plastered a fake smile on her face and gestured behind her to the wall of nail color, “Go pick.”

Akira then took Tony by the elbow, “You want your usual Mister Stark?”

“No, I’m gonna roll with the ladies today. Where they go, I go.” Tony said. Jane gave him a dirty look over her shoulder, but Darcy pulled her towards the wall of nail polish before she could say anything.

Neither Darcy nor Jane were particularly typical ‘girly’ girls. Darcy had probably had four manicures in her whole life, and she knew for a fact that this was Jane’s first. So, they both just stood silently in front of the vast amount of choices of nail polish colors a little dumbstruck.
Tony came up behind her shoulder and in a teasing low voice he whispered, “So what color you want birthday girl.”

Tony was standing so close behind her she could feel the heat of his body against her back. It was comforting. Darcy replied honestly, “I don’t know.”

Tony picked up a pink bottle; he shook it out then turned it over and read, “Splash of grenadine.”

Tony held the bottle up to her arm, “This would go nice with your skin tone.”

“Too pink.” Darcy said as her eyes danced up and down the many shelves. Jane was crouched down on the floor, picking up inspecting and then discarding every color in the neutral section.

Tony pointed to the next bottle, it was a sea-green, “What about something in the teal family?”

“No.”

“Black?”

“I’m not an emo goth high school-er Tony.”

Tony made a ‘hmmm’ noise as he stepped away from the wall and moved behind her. He stopped making suggestions and Darcy just kept looking for the perfect color with her eyes. Jane hopped up and held a mauve and grey bottle aloft, “Found my colors!”

“Those are nice.” Darcy commented dispassionately.

Akira suddenly reappeared like a ninja, “You come over here and we’ll get you started. Mister Stark and birthday girl come when they choose.”

Jane looked hesitant to leave. Darcy didn’t know if she was worried about losing the weird friendship competition thing she had going on with Tony or nervous about getting her first manicure, but Darcy decided she needed reassurance all the same.

Darcy smiled at her genuinely, “This was a good idea Jane, the whole ‘girly fun time’ thing. Thanks for thinking of it.”

Jane straightened up and nodded, “Right.”

Jane followed Akira across the room and Darcy watched as her friend took off her flip flops and climbed into the big chair. As the woman ran water for the foot bath thing, Jane caught her eye and gave her a goofy thumbs up. Darcy chuckled to herself and turned back to the wall of color.

Tony put a hand on her lower back and reached out to pick up a bright red bottle; he turned it over and read, “Russian Roulette.”

“No.” Darcy said flatly an image of Natasha springing to her mind. She plucked the bottle from his hand and returned it, “No red Russians.”

Seemingly reading her mind, Tony’s lips got close to her ear as he scolded, “Isn’t it time you just gave in and befriended our friendly neighborhood spysassian? She’s really not so bad once you get to know her.”

“No.” Turning to face him put her lips inches away from his; Darcy swallowed thickly as she took in Tony’s dilated pupils that were locked on her lips. She answered firmly, “I don’t want to befriend the spy.”
Darcy turned away from the heated look Tony was giving her and grabbed a glittery copper color. Musing aloud Darcy said, “What color goes with copper?”

“Brown.” Tony answered, “But you should get another color too.”

Tony pulled a pretty purple and dark chocolate brown off the shelf quickly. Darcy took them in her hands and smiled at him appreciatively, “Thanks for the help.”

Darcy waited while Tony grabbed a buff and nude color polish, he then led her over to where Jane was seated with an arm around her waist.

When the water basins had been filled and their toe nails cut and cuticles’ trimmed Darcy noticed something. The conversation between the three of them was non-existant. Tony and Jane were talking animatedly with her, but they weren’t acknowledging or interacting with each other.

The ice between the two geniuses broke when Jane let out an embarrassing moan while getting their calves massaged. Even though, Darcy was in the same boat, she bit her lip to keep from calling out. However when Tony said something teasing about Jane and ‘foot jobs’ she couldn’t help but giggle at her friends expense.

Luckily Jane found the humor in the situation and laughed along with them. After that, Darcy brought up what little she knew of Jane’s work hoping to entice Tony to engage Jane in some ‘shop talk’.

He took the bait and the two of them were suddenly chatting amicably about space wholes and black worms….or whatever. At that point Darcy kind of turned her brain off, shut her eyes, and allowed herself to really relax.

Darcy was gently prompted back to reality when they had to move to the little table set ups for their manicures. Though Darcy was still positioned in the middle of Tony and Jane, the two were literally talking over her head about science.

Darcy didn’t mind, it though. A masseur appeared out of nowhere and began to massage Darcy’s back and neck and shoulders. Two more appeared soon after and went to work on Tony and Jane. Darcy threw back the rest of her champagne and indicated to the nearest person with a bottle that she would like another. The masseur did an amazing job helping release all of the tension that had been building up in her body over the past week.

When they were done Darcy felt so loose and comfortable. The three of them starting talking about past birthdays as they sat under the drying machines.

“Well, I think my worst birthday had to be when I got so drunk that I peed in the suit in front of a crowd of people and then got into a fight with Rhodes while he was wearing the War Machine armor.” Tony reminisced.

“Ew.” Jane exclaimed flatly.

Darcy scrunched up her nose and scolded, “Tony! That so gross.”

“I said it was my worst birthday.” Tony stated with wide eyes, “And in my defense, I thought I was dying from palladium poisoning, so I think I should be forgiven.”

Darcy let out a laugh and turned to Jane prompting, “How about you?”

Jane’s smile fell and she pursed her lips, “I don’t know.”
“Yes you do.” Tony teased, “Spill it.”


“Fine.” Jane sighed, “It was last year, right after I fir—right after we parted ways. I was alone and working and it passed. And I didn’t even notice until three days after the fact….I missed my own birthday because I was so buried in my research.”

“That’s…not that tragic.” Tony said matter of fact-ly.

“Yeah, you didn’t even end up naked on the internet.” Darcy added.

Jane scowled at them, “Well, it was a bad birthday for me.”

They sat awkwardly in silence for a few seconds before a smile began to tug at Darcy’s mouth. She remembered the last time she’d celebrated Jane’s birthday…it had been a disastrous affair from start to finish and yet…somehow not.

Darcy smiled thoughtfully, “I guess me throwing glitter in your face and spraying you with silly string first thing in the morning does sound at least exciting in comparison.”

Jane snorted air out of her nose. Sensing Jane’s irritation thawing Darcy continued, “Not to mention getting to enjoy the recognition of your birthday by others…even if it did come in crappy cake and banner form.”

Darcy lifted her hands in the air and spread them as if gesturing to an invisible banner over their heads, “It’s Your Birthday, One Step Closer to Death! Congrats!”

Tony let out a laugh, “You didn’t.”

“She did.” Jane confirmed.

Darcy laughed at the memory, “I made that thing like…a week in advance too. I used stencils on the letters, glitter, metallic markers, the works! That was a good sign.”

“The sign was good, but that cake!” Jane exclaimed.

Darcy blushed, “Yeah, I stayed up all night finishing that thing. It was my masterpiece.”

“What kind of cake was it?” Tony asked.

“It was one of those funfetti mixes out of the box, but the cake wasn’t what made it special, it was how I decorated it.” Darcy answered.

“It really was a thing of beauty.” Jane commented.

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“What kind of cake was it?” Tony asked.

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“It really was a thing of beauty.” Jane commented.

“I decorated it in white icing from melted down white chocolate, then I went online and got these tiny little sugar penises and covered the thing in sugar dicks.”

Tony and Jane laughed out loud, Darcy just shrugged her shoulders, “Whatever it was awesome and you needed to come up for air from your science binge and have a night out.”

“We stayed out until two a.m. dancing and drinking.” Jane said in a wistful tone.

“ Took the most expensive taxi ride of my life back home.” Darcy added.
“Yeah because you kept having him stop places.” Jane accused.

“Well, first I was hungry for something salty.’” Darcy turned to Tony and grinned he nodded encouragingly, “And then we needed ice cream of course!”

“Of course.” Tony repeated.

Jane made a face, “And that’s when you took home that guy!”

Darcy made a playfully critical face, “And yet you were the one who slept with him!”

“What guy?” Tony asked.

“Just some random guy.” Darcy said breezily.

“Well you stole my birthday gift.” Jane demurred.

“Yeah because you stole my boy toy and I was horny!” Darcy exclaimed loudly. She then realized how much attention they were getting and she blushed and looked down at her drying nails.

“What did you get her for her birthday?” Tony asked with a lecherous grin.

“A vibrator.” Jane said quickly.

Tony barked out a laugh and Darcy kept her eyes down as her cheeks continued to heat up. Tony fell into her, resting his head on her shoulder as he tried to contain his laughter. Once he was done, he lifted his head and put his chin on her shoulder, “I’m not going to lie, that sounds like an awesome birthday.”

The laughter left Jane’s eyes as she replied, “Yeah, when Darcy was around things were a lot more awesome.”

After their nails were dry, Akira led them upstairs and they all got their hair cut. Tony and Darcy received a quick trim, but Jane was going to cut her hair back to shoulder length. It had grown so long it reached the middle of her back in Darcy’s absence.

Luckily after the mani/pedi session, Tony and Jane seemed committed to acting less antagonistic with each other. With Tony’s encouragement Jane also decided to have some highlights put in her hair. While that was going on Darcy had her hair blown out.

She was honestly a little overwhelmed by all the pampering, but by the time her hair was done, so was Tony’s. Instead of having another opulent treatment like a facial or a face scrub or whatever, he chose instead to sit himself in front of her on the other side of the studio while she got her makeup professional done.

While the makeup artist applied Darcy’s foundation, Tony picked up her foot and began to massage it.

“What are you doing?” Darcy asked while trying to move her face as little as possible.

“You’re the birthday girl.” Tony said in response. Tony kept applying pressure to the bottom of her foot and petting her with his warm hands, bending her toes this way and that, pressing his fingers into the top of her foot. It felt good, but his massage wasn’t as good as the professionals downstairs. It was…more intimate though. Because it was Tony who was touching her so sensually it felt…
“Look up for me?” The makeup artist asked and Darcy complied.

“So what else do you want to do today?” Tony asked.

“I don’t know…I guess whatever Jane had planned.”

“Really?” Tony challenged as he switched feet, “You don’t want to ditch us and go hang out with Strange?”

“Stephen’s busy.” Darcy answered evasively. Truth was she hadn’t heard from Stephen all day and she wasn’t sure if he knew it was her birthday, but she hoped he’d come and visit soon. She missed him.

“Is that why you signed up for Okstupid? I’m sorry, I mean OKCupid?” Darcy tried to jerk her feet out of Tony’s grasp but he held on tight.

“How do you know about that?” Darcy countered, “Are you internet spying on me Tony?”

“I’m internet spying on everyone who uses the Tower’s wifi.” Tony confessed with a smirk.

“Not cool.”

The makeup artist held up a palette of eye shadow to her face before deciding on which color she wanted and instructing Darcy to close her eyes.

“So, polyamory…” Tony let his words drift of as he scooted his chair closer and moved his hands from her feet up to her calves and began massaging the skin there.

“I’m not talking about this with you.” Darcy said adamantly.

“Would you prefer Pepper?” Tony asked.

“I’d prefer a modicum of privacy.” Darcy snipped.

The makeup artist told her she could open her eyes and the woman began to apply something to her eyebrows.

“Why are you on a dating website Darcy?” Tony asked straightforwardly.

“Tony--”

“We all know Steve’s got a thing for you…” Tony looked at her expectantly but Darcy kept quiet So Tony kept talking, “I’m sure his little friend could be talked into a threesome if one man isn’t enough to satisfy you in one sitting…and you know you have other options, better options one might even say--”

“Stop.” Darcy glared at Tony even as she held up a hand blocking the makeup artist just as she was about to apply lipstick to her face, in a clenched and polite tone she asked the woman, “Can you give us a minute? Maybe go see if my friend Jane is getting taken care of?”

The makeup artist nodded and disappeared. Tony slid his hands to her knees, “Darcy--”

Darcy held up a finger, “Stop it.”
“Pepper and I want to date you.” Tony said quickly, the hands on her knees squeezing meaningfully, “Both of us.”

“Tony.” Darcy said his name for lack of anything else to say.

“This…I wasn’t supposed to---Pepper and I were going to tell you, ask you! I mean, ask you, together. Tonight. At the party but I, when I saw that you signed up for internet dating I just—“

“You just what?”

“I couldn’t think of why? I couldn’t think of one logical, good reason why you would turn to the unwashed masses of the internet, when you have so many fantastic flesh and blood prospects at your fingertips. Why not Steve? Why not me and Pepper?”

“Why not?” Darcy asked, her voice rising higher in pitch but not volume, “Why because I want something normal! Something non….non-complicated. Something easy. Something to call my own.”

“Bullshit.” Tony said flatly.

“You bullshit.”

“You don’t want normal Darcy! You weren’t built for normal.” Tony contested, his voice becoming husky, “You deserve the best this world has to offer…and that’s me and Pep.”

Darcy shook her head at the man in front of her, Tony was so impossibly charming and so forward and rude and amazing and sexy and difficult and kind. She didn’t know what to say.

“I know you’ve thought about it.” Tony teased, before his voice grew serious, “We know about your arrangement with Strange. We want in.”

Darcy put her hand on his cheek cupping it tenderly, the look on his face was intense and real and she believed him. He leant forward and slid his hands higher up her legs to her thighs, sliding underneath her skirt but not going further. She leant forward and used the hand that was cupping his face to slap him. *Lightly.*

“Snap out of it!” Darcy cried, she slapped on the cheek several more times.

“Ow, ow, ow. Stop, I need a safe word. I need a safe word!” Tony cried out as he winced but stood still and let her swat him.

“What are you doing?!” Darcy scolded, she took his hands off her legs and she pushed him back for good measure, “We are in *public!* You are Iron Man! You have a girlfriend and you two are a famous power couple! This shit will be all over TMZ Tony, what the hell are you thinking!”

Tony sat back on the chair and scooted away from her so he was closer to her feet again. They stared at each other.

“So what I’m hearing is, if I ask again…*not* in public….” Darcy’s nostrils flared and she leant forward and began slapped at Tony’s arms and chest.

“You suck at this, you suck! Why are you doing this *today? It’s my fucking birthday! Be my best friend and stop hitting on me! I just wanted today to be fun and relaxed and you’re making it all awkward and romantically thought provoking!*

“Darcy,” Tony grabbed her hands and halted her assault, “Darcy stop.”
“You stop!” Darcy angrily spat.

“I love you.” Tony declared.

And the quips and comeback she was ready to dispense died in her throat. Just like that.

“I love you.” Tony repeated as he let go of her hands, “I love you and Pepper loves you.”

Darcy felt her eyes water as Tony stared at her with this…open expression on his face. His chocolate brown eyes were wide and filled with sincerity as he spoke earnestly, “We love you and we want to be in your life, forever, any way we can.”

“Tony—”

“Please don’t interrupt,” Tony closed his eyes tightly before staring at her pleadingly, “Let me get this out?”

Darcy nodded.

Tony nodded and continued, “We want to be in your life in whatever capacity we can be. If we’re only ever friends? That’s great. Family? Even better. But, you’re looking for more than that. You want someone…you want more than Strange can offer you, right? More time together, more physical affection, more gifts and dates and wooing….am I wrong?”

Darcy swallowed thickly, “You’re not wrong. I want that. I want what you and Pepper have together. I want someone to miss me when I’m gone and welcome me back with enthusiastic sex upon my return…I want some to cuddle up with and just hang out with. I want to b—I want to go out on normal dates. Dinner and movie. Mini-golf. Bowling. Normal stuff you know? Romantic comedy shit.”

Tony smiled at her winsomely, “I get that. But, you know it’s all bullshit right? That shit you see in the movies isn’t real. You want what me and Pep have? Pepper got kidnapped and injected with Extremis. She was tortured and hurt and—“

“None of that was your fault Tony.” Darcy ran her hand through his hair and he bowed his head down encouraging her.

“There is no such thing as a normal relationship.” Tony said as he looked up, Darcy let her hand fall away. “There’s farting in bed. Peeing while there in the shower, morning breath. Holidays with weird relatives. That’s normal….that’s what you’re going to get with internet dating. Some civilian who is a nobody and has nothing to offer you.”

Darcy’s eyes threatened to water over as Tony stared at her with a look of such, reverence. “If you pursue your ridiculous internet dating plan, you’re only going to end up with some guy off the street who doesn’t know how to treat someone as extraordinary as you. Appreciate how special you are.”

“I was just exploring my options Tony.” Darcy explained, “I made a profile, started chatting with a few guys, it’s not a big deal.”

“Darcy…me and Pepper, we’re right here and we’re offering. We want you. Let me—let us try. We could make you happy. I know the two of us together could make you so happy.”

Darcy felt a tear slip free, “Tony it’s not that simple.”

“I’m just asking for a chance.” Tony said quietly, “One date.”
“Tony…” Darcy didn’t know what to say. Tony had never been so direct, open and honest about his or Pepper’s romantic interest before. She was so used to treating it like a joke; she didn’t know how to handle it when he was being so sincere.

In her heart she knew the whole internet dating thing was an exercise in futility. She didn’t really expect anything to come of it, but it was an ego boost to get so many messages, to see physical, tangible proof that she was desirable in the eyes of so many people.

Tony brought her hand to his lips and kissed her knuckles, “Please don’t make me go back to Pepper and tell her I ruined our chance with you?”

Darcy let out a laugh and wiped away another tear, “Can we..not do this here? Now? I don’t…I can’t think about this right now.”

Tony looked crestfallen as he nodded his gaze slid to the floor, “I get it. Too much. Too fast. Kind of my motto.”

Darcy rolled her eyes and prodded at his stomach with her foot, “That wasn’t a ‘no’ Tony.”

Tony jerked his head up and a beautiful smile spread across his face, “So that’s a ‘yes’?”

“That’s a ‘maybe’…at best.”

“So basically a ‘yes’” Tony grinned.

“I’m going to compartmentalize my thoughts and feelings today, I’m not going to consider or think about what you said until tomorrow and I expect you to do the same.” Darcy explained as she frowned at her tear streaked expression in the mirror, in a warning tone she said, “Don’t ruin my birthday like you ruined my makeup Tony.”

Darcy rubbed at the mascara streak on her cheek, trying to make it disappear. Tony motioned for the makeup artist to return.

“I won’t bring it up again.” Tony promised as he backed off and allowed the woman to fix her face, “I promise Darcy, this is going to be the best birthday you’ve ever had.”

They left the salon and headed out to a nice restaurant. They had lunch and Tony kept up the VIP treatment, getting them the best table, prompting the wait staff to sing happy birthday to her, making them put sparklers in her garlic bread because all she had ordered was a salad.

Tony spoke not another word of his and Pepper’s interest in pursuing a romantic relationship with her. He kept the conversation light and flowing, he even allowed Jane to act territorial with little to no push back.

Jane seemingly surrendered her title as ‘party day planner’ to Tony without a fight when Tony suggested they go by the pet store across the street and look at the animals. Jane was powerless when Darcy lit up at the chance to pet puppies.

Energized after holding and playing with some cute furry creatures, Tony led them back to the limo and they took off for a little boutique that was one of Pepper’s favorites. Darcy had to admit that she was immensely enjoying her birthday so far, despite the minor kerfuffle’s that had occurred earlier.
As the limo pulled to the store, the smile that had been permanently stuck on her face disappeared. Darcy turned and asked, "What the hell is she doing here?"

Waiting outside the store, was none other than, Natasha Romonoff. Dressed impeccably but similarly to Darcy herself, but better. The woman leaned against the brick building posing like she was doing a photo shoot. Darcy felt a stab of irrational jealousy and self-consciousness.

Jane held up her hands and quickly declared, "I had nothing to do with this!"

Tony shot her an annoyed look but turned to her with a coaxing smile, ignoring Jane as she hopped out of the car and went to warmly greet the red head, "Darcy, see--"

"Take me home." Darcy demanded.

"Darcy." Tony said harshly, "Don’t be ridiculous."

"Don’t be an asshole ruin-er of birthdays." Darcy muttered as she crossed her arms across her chest, from behind the tinted glass she glared at the spy.

Tony ran a hand through his hair with a put upon expression, "You’ve got to get over this thing with her."

"No I don’t."

Tony had a strained look on his face, "Darcy, she’s a part of the team, Barton too. And both of them are coming to your birthday party tonight."

Darcy’s mouth dropped open in shock, "Why!?"

“I want you to get along with them. So does Steve. We think it’s high time you got over your grudge and Pepper suggested this little shopping trip might be the opening you two need to bond…or kiss and make up.” Darcy silently fumed at the thought that Tony, Steve and Pepper were all conspiring against her.

Through gritted teeth Darcy spat out, "I don’t have a grudge--""

Without letting her finish Tony replied, "Glad to hear it."

He then all but ran out of the car, without looking back, leaving the choice up to her. She could ask the driver to take her home or she could get out of the damn car and go make nice.

After five minutes of internal debate, Jane dragged her out of the car and forced her into the store.

Natasha smiled at her, "Happy birthday Darcy."

Jane elbowed her in the ribs. With a sour expression, Darcy answered "Thank you."

Tony appeared with three sales associates trailing behind him, "Darcy!"

“I hate you.” Darcy said flatly.

Tony gave her an exaggerated pout, then snapped his fingers. The sales associate to his left extended a flute of champagne in her direction. Darcy snatched it out of the man’s hands and took a hearty swig.
“I hate you a little less.” Darcy replied when she realized the how tasty the champagne was. Tony had definitely brought it with him, it did not taste like the crap they handed out for ‘complimentary’ purposes.

Tony ignored her, and turned to Jane and Natasha, “So, instead of Darcy having to deal with the stress of looking for a dress or overly eager sales people, I have a proposal.”

Darcy downed the rest of the champagne and then extended her glass, the sales person who held the bottle rushed to refill it for her, “I’m listening.”

Tony smirked at her, “I suggest a competition between myself, Jane and Natasha. We all put together two outfits that we think would suit our lovely birthday girls tastes and figure. She tries them all on, 80’s montage style, and then picks a winner.”

“What does the winner get?” Jane asked as her eyes lit up with anticipation.

“A kiss.”

Darcy choked a little on her glass, “What?”

Tony licked his lips, “A kiss, specifically from you.”

“Why would they compete for that?” Darcy asked.

“Why not?” Natasha said with a shrug.

“I’m in.” Jane stated confidently.

“What?” Darcy shrieked, “Janie, I’ll kiss you plenty, you don’t need to do this.”

“I don’t need to, I want to. Not for the kiss but for the thrill of competition.” Darcy could see how pumped up Jane was and Darcy suddenly realized the brilliance of Tony’s plan.

Jane, wanted to prove that she knew Darcy best by picking out the winning outfit. Tony wanted a kiss and probably to rub it in Jane’s face that he knew Darcy better. And Natasha...Natasha was a wild card, but if she had to guess, Natasha was playing to get into her good graces, or at the very least get off her shit list. Darcy had been throwing subtle and not so subtle shade at the woman for a while now, and she could imagine it was beginning to irritate.

“What are the rules?” Jane asked.

“All outfits must consist of three things, an outfit, shoes, and a purse. Additional accessories’ are excluded. We all have to give our final choices to our designated sales associate to be put in the dressing room so Darcy won’t know who picked out what outfit.”

“That’s it?” Natasha asked as her eyes moved over the merchandise behind Tony’s head.

“No.” Darcy said, “Just what the hell am I supposed to be doing while you all are playing this ridiculous game?”

A female sales associate in a smart blazer came out from behind her making her jump, the woman gave her a plastic smile, “If you’ll follow me this way Miss, I’ll show you to our jewelry section.”

“What?” Darcy looked to Tony with a confused expression.

Tony shrugged, “Pep’s gift for your birthday got delayed in transit. She insisted you pick something
out, on her."

“That’s insane, Pepper doesn’t need to get me anything, she gave me—she lets me crash with you guys all the time I don’t need--”

Tony cut her off with an amused expression, “Kid, just…haven’t you learned by now, there is no arguing with Pepper. Just, go pick out something shiny.”

“….okay.”

At the jewelry counter Darcy indulged and tried on the super expensive, mega huge diamond… everything. She admired herself in the mirror and cooed over the carats and the cuts and basically pretended she really was going to pick something out, even if she had no intention to do so. About forty five minutes later a sales associate came and retrieved her.

She was led to the back of the store where the dressing rooms were. Jane, Tony, and Natasha all sat on a couch that faced a platform with a tri-fold mirror.

Darcy took in the scene with an incredulous expression, Jane’s hair was now in disarray and Tony’s suit jacket was torn at the shoulder. Natasha looked perfect thought.

“What the hell happened?” She questioned as she got closer.


Darcy arched a brow and Natasha answered in a monotone voice, “They got in a fight over a pair of shoes.”

“He stole them out of my hands!” Jane cried.

“She only took them because she knew I wanted them!” Tony defended.

Darcy turned to the sales associate that was behind her, “Can we get everyone a drink?”

Darcy disappeared into the dressing room to survey her options. First thing she noticed was that there was no mirror inside, hence the platform area outside. The second thing her eyes were drawn to was a gold and blue glittery dress with long sleeves that had been paired of flat glitter sneakers. Right off the bat it was her favorite.

She quickly stripped herself of her clothes and put the dress on. It was made of stiff material and the deep V in the front exposed way more boob-age than she was used to showing, and the placement was so that she had to ditch her bra for it to look good. She tied the sneakers on quickly and grabbed up the matching clutch purse and exited the dressing room.

Jane and Tony made happy noises, but Darcy expected for different reasons. She made her way to the three way mirror. She did a little spin and smiled as the dress flared out.

“What do you think?” Darcy asked.

“I love it.” Jane squealed.
“That dress was not made with someone of your chest size.” Natasha said plainly.

“I agree and I don’t mind it.” Tony said with a lecherous grin.

Darcy turned back to her mirror image, she did a jump and watched her chest bounce. Without support, it was a rather…noticeable.

“Boob tape.” Jane exclaimed, “You don’t need a bra, they have boob tape now…right Natasha?”

“This is true.” Natasha said in a measured voice, “Though, that is not my only concern.”

Darcy did a twist and attempted to raise her arms above her head, classic dance moves, and she discovered another flaw in the dress when Tony let out a wolf whistle. When she raised her arms, the stiff material lifted more than expected and exposed her underpants. It was also really scratchy and as she tugged the skirt down she noticed that she was shedding glitter all over the floor.

Darcy pouted, “Oh man, this was my favorite.”

“What?! I win! You heard her, that one’s her favorite.” Jane jumped up and raised her arms above her head.

“Dude,--”

Tony scoffed, “Didn’t you hear her? She’s disappointed because you picked a crappy scratchy glittery STD dress.”

Darcy looked at her pretty reflection mournfully, “He’s right Jane. I love the dress, it was my favorite right away, but it’s…just not right. Sorry.”

“Ugh.” Jane sat down grumpily and sipped her from her flute heartily, “Whatever.”

“Next?” Tony prompted.

Darcy disappeared and reappeared wearing a short and tight white satin number with an awesome Harry Potter purse and red flats.

“You look lovely.” Natasha said as she took to the platform and examined her reflection.

“Very sexy.” Tony complimented.

“It’s okay.” Jane said begrudgingly.

Darcy stared at her reflection critically, there was a flair of old Hollywood charm to the look. She looked really good, the silhouette of the dress suited her frame beautifully and accentuated all the right things. Without another word Darcy left the platform and headed for the dressing room.

“Aren’t you going to tell us if you like it?” Tony called out.

“Not after miss grumpy pants got all pouty.” Darcy replied as she disappeared behind the dressing room door.

She returned a minute later wearing a ugly pastel floofy dress with ugly shoes and a blah clutch. There was no hiding her distaste for the dress. It was written all over her face.

Tony actually laughed when he saw her, “That’s hideous!”
“No it’s not!” Jane argued.

“Jane’s right, it is a beautiful dress, but it is not something suited to Darcy’s personality or body type.” Natasha said politely.

Darcy stomped back to the dressing room and returned wearing a light pink body con dress with an origami-esque elephant purse and strappy pink sandals.

Darcy ran her hands down the curves of her body as she stared at her reflection. The tightness of the dress was uncomfortable, but the affect it had was undeniable. She looked so fucking good. The light pink color suited her complexion and toned down the ‘sexy’ vibe the dress was giving off.

“So hot.” Tony commented sounding like Homer Simpson when he thought about donuts.

“It’s really tight…are you even wearing underwear?” Jane asked, “Not that it doesn’t look good. It does, but--are you…really?”

“This dress is very attractive and you look attractive in it.” Natasha said with absolutely no passion. Darcy turned and eyed the red head, “Are you a femme bot?”

“What?”

Darcy mimed robot arms and modulated her voice, “Beep boop. I am Natasha. I talk without emotion. I have no feelings. I am beep boop a roobot.”

“I am not a robot.” Natasha denied with a blank expression.

“Okay,” Darcy put her hands on her hips and echoed Jane’s earlier words, “But…are you really?”

Darcy disappeared and reappeared wearing another short and tight body con dress, this one was paired with flats and a camera purse, it was two toned black and gold. As soon as Darcy set foot on the platform she heard Tony mutter, “Dress makes me want to rip it in half, right down the middle.”

Darcy chose to ignore him and instead rocked back and forth on her Hercules-esque footwear. She liked the dress, but she liked the pink one more, however she could see the pink strappy heels becoming bothersome as the night wore on, while the black sandals she wore now were super cute and comfy.

“That’s nice.” Jane said sounding a bit more pleasant.

“It suits you.” Natasha said in a modulated voice, “Beep boop.”

Darcy let out an involuntary laugh as Natasha copied her earlier ‘robot’ voice.

Tony ruined the moment by announcing, “Well that dress definitely makes me think about having sex with you more than usual.”

Jane let out a shocked gasp and turned on Tony exclaiming, “What is wrong with you!”

“Ignore him.” Darcy counseled as she got off the platform and headed for the dressing room.

Natasha’s parting words had her cackling, “Beep boop, easier said than done.”

Darcy returned to the little platform for the last time wearing a sequined rainbow jump suit. There were some simple gold flat sandals, a cool apple purse and a gold jacket that went with the ensemble.
Darcy put the jacket on when she got out in front of the mirrors.

“You look awesome!” Jane exclaimed excitedly.

“A little too covered up for my taste.” Tony said with a shrug.

“I think this outfit suits your personality, body type, and the occasion.” Natasha said with a hint of emotion.

Darcy turned to the red head, “No more beep boop?”

“Maybe later.” Answered Natasha.

Darcy turned to her reflection and did some ‘Saturday Night Fever’ poses. She did a little spin and started humming the beginning to Grease as she danced and posed in front of the mirror.

Natasha had a little smirk on her face as Darcy danced her way back into the dressing room. Once she was once again wearing her own clothes she emerged from the dressing room holding a black opaque garment bag over her shoulder.

Jane’s jaw dropped when she saw it, “You’re not even going to tell us who won!”

“Not yet.” Darcy answered as she rolled up to Tony and held her hand out, “Money please.”

Tony licked his lips and reached into his suit’s pocket and forked over a black card, “We’ll wait for you in the limo.”

“But! SHE’S NOT GOING TO TELL US WHO WON?!” Jane screeched as Natasha and Tony linked arms with her and directed her out of the store.

When Darcy approached the cash register she smiled at the cashier, “I’m going to take this one with me, but can I have the others wrapped up and sent to my address?”

“You want to take them all?” The cashier asked blinking at her.

Darcy gave her a mischievous smile, “Well, it is my birthday.”

After riding high, fueled by the thrill of competition Jane and Tony seemed to run out of steam a bit. Darcy suggested they all go to see the latest summer movie and graciously she did not explicitly disinvite Natasha. When they got to the line for tickets there were three movies about to start in the next ten minutes, so that helped narrow down their choice of what to see.

“So what do we think gang,” Darcy started, “Romcom, horror, or action blockbuster?”


“But he’s in a wheel chair and still manages to find love!” Jane sighed staring at a poster of the impossibly romantic hero.

“I agree with Stark, that movie looks like trash.” Natasha added, “And not even the fun kind with nudity.”
Darcy snorted, “Okay, so horror?”

“I’d rather not.” Jane pouted, “You know how I hate jump scares.”

Tony nodded, “Jump scares are the cheap thrills of the horror genre. They never do it right anymore, what happened to building suspense and showing instead of telling?”

Jane and Tony started discussing old Hollywood and how it was so much better than the movies of today and Darcy rolled her eyes. Movie snobs were the worst kind of pretentious.

“Big blockbuster shark movie it is then.” Darcy mumbled under her breath.

“I will get supplies at the concession stand.” Natasha volunteered, leaving quietly.

“Shit ton of butter!” Darcy called out after her, “Shit ton!”

The movie turned out to be so bad that it was good. They all enjoyed themselves, even Tony who was all up in arms about the ‘junk science’ of the premise. Unsurprisingly Jane and Tony enjoyed bantering with each other about how ‘implausible’ each science related scene was. What was unexpected was how much Darcy enjoyed Natasha’s biting commentary.

“That was a wonderful decision if one wishes to die by asphyxiation.”

“Why is she wearing heels? Is she going to stab someone with the stiletto? I’m intrigued and am now rooting for her character.”

“Why doesn’t she just push him lightly on the chest? His footing is shoddy and he would most likely fall back into the tank and be eaten.”

Darcy had fun mocking the movie quietly with Natasha and she frankly learned a lot as the spy began to dispense advice on the real life ways to survive each impossible scenario.

“If she were to take her pen and jam it into his aorta, it wouldn’t matter how outsized she was, he would fall at her feet all the same.”

“She has a set of keys in her hands, if she held a key outward while she threw a punch, it would cause more damage and allow her to run away to safety.”

“This scene is surprisingly realistic, I once killed a pedophile in the same manner.”

By the time they’d reached the third act, Darcy was starting to get bored though. For some reason there was a bunch of monologues about morality and reason and science all jammed into the end. She allowed her eyes to shut just for a minute…and she fell asleep.

The sound of a beeping alarm going off woke her up. She jolted awake and realized she had teleported and was no longer in New York with her friends, but half way around the world.

Without looking at her startled bed partner Darcy ran her hand over her face and cursed quietly, “Son of a bitch!”
Our players....

Darcy’s Nails
Outfit 1
Outfit 3
Outfit 5
Outfit 6
So, hope you enjoyed the chapter, I'd be interested in knowing which outfit you think will Darcy chose, who you think picked it out and which one was your personal favorite---
As well as your thoughts on the chapter as a whole.
Chapter 23 - Wong

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to Wong in Karma-Taj.

Chapter Notes

A lot of real life drama is going on and so I didn't re-read this, not that I ever really re-read, but this was a long chapter and a big important one, but I just need to post it now because my computer is acting up. PLEASE leave a comment if you liked it or didn't.

Chapter 23 – Wong

The sound of a beeping alarm going off woke her up. She jolted awake and realized she had teleported and was no longer in New York with her friends, but half way around the world.

Without looking at her startled bed partner Darcy ran her hand over her face and cursed quietly, “Son of a bitch!”

She woke up in Karma-Taj, but not next to the sorcerer she was expecting.

Wong regarded her calmly, “Darcy. You’re in my room.”

“I am.”

“In my bed.”

“Yup.”

“Welcome,” Wong smiled at her, the aloof mask falling from his face, “it is nice to have you back.”

“Thanks.” Darcy informed him, “I’d like to say it’s nice to be back but I have a birthday party to get to.”

She sat up and hopped out of Wong’s bed and headed for the door, calling out over her shoulder, “It’s nice to see you though.”

She heard Wong get up and follow her as she left his room and headed for Stephen’s room. Once she reached the courtyard she discovered it was night time in Karma-Taj, opposed to the late afternoon she had left in New York.

“If you are looking for Strange he’s not here.” Wong revealed as her destination became clear.

Darcy froze. Turning on her foot slowly to face the round man, “What do you mean he’s not here?”
“He left a few hours ago, he said he had to pick up a few things and that he wouldn’t be returning until tomorrow morning.”

Darcy frowned at the news. Wong approached her side and put a hand on her shoulder, “Worry not Darcy. I will aid you in your return home.”

Darcy pulled him into a quick hug, “Thanks Wong, you’re totally invited to my birthday party.”

Wong left her staring at the stars in the middle of the combat training courtyard. He wanted to change his clothes and clean himself up a bit before they portal-ed back to New York. Darcy didn’t mind, he left her with his robe so she wasn’t so chilly and the night sky at Karma-Taj was really, really, pretty because of the lack of light pollution.

That’s where Karl Mordo found her.

“Darcy?”

Darcy waved at the dark skinned man, one of the two teachers here who actually liked her, “Hey Karl. What’s up?”

“You’ve returned?” Karl asked as he made his way over to her.

“Nah, just a pit stop I’m afraid.” Darcy said with a half smile, she patted the ground next to her inviting Karl to sit with her.

“You have a wanders soul Darcy Lewis.” Karl said fondness in his voice as he sank to the ground beside her.

“Apparently.” Darcy acknowledged breezily.

Karl frowned, “You know Strange isn’t here at the moment. He’s--”

Darcy held up a hand, “Yeah, Wong told me already. It’s okay. He’s going to open a portal and take me back to New York; he’s just using the bathroom and changing his clothes first.”

“You don’t have to wait for Wong,” Karl gestured to the empty space in front of them, “I could open a portal right now--”

Darcy cut him off again, “No. It’s fine. I want to wait for Wong. He’s going to join me in New York…it’s kind of my birthday, and I’m—my friends are throwing me a party. So…hey, do you want to come? I know you’re busy and all, but--”

Karl smiled brightly, “Your birthday?”

“Yep.”

Karl cuffed her on the chin gently, “And how many years have you been alive?”

Darcy laughed at his phrasing and answered, “Twenty-eight.”

Karl tilted his head considering, “Only twelve years younger than myself…”
“You’re forty?”

“Indeed I am.” Karl answered.

“Got any ancient wisdom for an involuntary-teleporting girl on her birthday?” Darcy asked with a cheeky grin.

Karl paused dramatically, turning his body to face hers before answering in a staid voice, “Always wash your hands before eating.”

A laugh burst out of her and Darcy knocked her shoulder into Karl’s. He tried to maintain his ‘serious’ face but couldn’t resist cracking a grin and laughing along with her.

“Okay, will do.” Darcy giggled, “So, do you want to come to the party or not?”

“Where is it?”

“Stark Tower—” Darcy shook her head, “I mean, Avengers Tower, sorry their rebranding and I forget sometimes. It’s in New York City. Big goliath tower, can’t miss it.”

Karl opened his mouth to reply but Wong’s approach drew their attention away.

“Mordo, what are you doing up this late?” Wong asked as he drew closer.

“Contemplating life, the universe and our place in it.”

Darcy shot Karl an incredulous look, “For reals?”

Karl shrugged, “ Mostly…also, there was a shooting star scheduled to fly past the Earth tonight and I wished to see it.”

Darcy snorted and mumbled under her breath, “I’m surrounding by science nerds even at wizard school.”

Wong, having not heard her, continued on speaking to Karl, “And will you be joining us?”

“Perhaps.” Karl answered evasively, “May I arrive ’fashionably’ late?”

“Sure.” Darcy chirped with a shrug.

Wong extended his hand down to her and helped pull her to her feet. Darcy copied the move for Karl, yanking on his hand strongly causing the man to jerked up abruptly. When she released his hand he stared at her with a look of curiosity.

“You’ve changed since last we met.” Karl uttered with a sense of wonder.

Darcy tucked an errant strand of hair behind her ear, “Yeah, since leaving Karma-Taj, I’ve been all across the universe, met aliens…aliens that are not Asgardian but like, actually look like aliens, with different skin color and appendages and everything.”

“Really?” Wong questioned with an intrigued expression.

“Yep.”

“Your power is truly something to behold.” Wong remarked, his tone possessing a sense of awe.
Darcy shuffled her feet and fidgeted with her arms. Demurely she acknowledged, “I guess.”

“No.” Karl stated, “You, that’s not what I meant. You…you’re different somehow. I can’t…put my finger on it thought.”

Darcy let out a loud breath, “Well, I did recently discover/embrace the fact that I can see the future.”

“You can what?” Wong asked flatly.

“Yeah, I can see the future in my dreams…sometimes…most of the time.” Darcy confessed, “I think I’m supposed to try to change what I see, but it’s not all bad. Sometimes I’ll just dream about Steve and Sam playing a game of basketball or Tony and Pepper making out on the couch. So…I’ve kind of been playing it by ear. The Queen of Asgard told me that people with the ability to the see the future were cursed, because the future was a fixed thing, and I wouldn’t be able to change it no matter how hard I try, but I’ve decided to ignore that and I’ve been telling everyone about my ability in the hopes that when I have something important to tell you, you’ll believe me.”

Wong blinked at her owlishly. Karl looked thoughtful.

“So…ready to go?” Darcy prompted.

Wong startled, nodding he opened a portal and she could see the lobby of Star—Avenger’s tower on the other side.

“Later Karl.” Darcy said with a wave.

“Wait!” Karl called out, Darcy paused and turned to look back at him.

Karl smiled, “Ancient wisdom: Good advice is always certain to be ignored, but that’s no reason not to give it.”

One side of her mouth lifted as she asked, “Who said that, Buddah?”

Karl shook his head, “No. Agatha Christie.”

When she and Wong crossed through the portal they got shot a couple looks, but the security guy on duty recognized her and waved at her with a dazed look on her face. Darcy waved back before pulling Wong along behind her towards the elevators.

“C’mon.” Darcy called. Wong followed willingly, watching as she pressed the button for the elevator to take them up.

When the elevator doors opened, Wong stepped inside and Darcy held up a hand to stop the door from closing, “Jarvis?”

The A.I.’s voice came through the speaker in the elevator, “Yes, Miss Lewis.”

“Does everyone know I’m back.”

“Sir and Ms. Potts were alerted to your arrival thirty seconds ago, they are now letting it be known to the rest of the party guests.”
“Excellent.”

Wong gestured to the space beside him, “Are you not joining me?”

“Actually,” Darcy drug out the word, “I was thinking of sending you up ahead of me.”

Wong’s face twitched and he shifted clearly uncomfortable, “Alone?”

Darcy smiled reassuringly at him, “Stephen’s up there. He’s one of my surprises…Right, Jarvis?”

“I am unable to confirm or deny Dr. Strange’s presence in the penthouse at the moment.”

Darcy locked eyes with Wong, “Don’t worry about it, my teleport to your bed? I had a dream of the party, and Stephen’s upstairs. I promise.”

“You dreamed--”

“I’d like to change into my party outfit before I make my grand entrance, so you can go up stairs, find Stephen and you won’t have to worry about any awkward mingling with people you don’t know or have anything in common with…but you should totally talk to Thor. I have a feeling you two would get along…Bruce too.”

Wong gave her a uncertain look and Darcy stuck out her lip in a pleading fashion, “However, it is my birthday and you didn’t get me a present so, if you wanted to be a real bro and lend me your sling ring so I could make the most bomb ass entrance ever…that might be nice?”

Darcy held out her hand expectantly and Wong took a tiny step away from her. Darcy blinked her eyes at him and tried to appear innocent, “Pleeeeeease?”

Wong’s face went flat. In a dry tone he said, “You really think that will work?”

“I was hoping?” Darcy pushed the door open as it tried to close on her, “And you know I’ll give it back right after.”

With a sigh, Wong removed his sling ring and held it out to her, before placing it in her hand he pointed at her and warned, “Don’t lose it.”

“I won’t.” Darcy promised as she slid the ring onto her fingers.

Taking a step back she allowed the doors to start to close, “Thank you, thank you, thank you!”

Darcy grinned at Wong’s worried expression before the elevator closed and began to take him up. Darcy held out her hand and stared at the bling admiringly before letting out a squeal of excitement.

She quickly extended her hand and opened a portal to the roof of the building.

“Eee!” Darcy squeaked as she jumped through. Back at Karma-Taj she had mastered the sling ring, which had given Stephen so much trouble, within a few hours. Once she got the hand motion down and let herself believe it would work, she had been portal-ing all over the place.

She asked if she could keep one of the sling rings permanently, but Karl explained that there were only enough for the students who chose to permanently reside at Karma-Taj. Basically, politely telling her they were for the real students.

Darcy took in the sight of the New York City skyline. The wind was picking up and her hair whipped about her face but she didn’t care. She inhaled the crisp air and let out a sigh. The sky was
dark now and the city was lit up like Christmas. It was a breathtaking view considering Avengers tower was one of the tallest buildings in the city. Standing at the top, with the world at her feet, Darcy felt energized and filled with excitement.

Looking down Darcy didn’t experience any kind of vertigo; in fact she enjoyed seeing how far away she was from the ground. The people did look like ants!

Deciding not to press her luck, she took one last look at the city around her and pictured in her mind the next place she wanted to portal to. She figured that the room least likely to be occupied at the moment was her room back in Thor’s suit so she opened a portal and peeked her head in. She didn’t see anyone so she hopped through and let the portal close behind her.

“Jarvis?” Darcy called out.

“Yes, Miss Lewis?”

“Am I alone?”

“Yes, Miss Lewis.” Jarvis said reassuringly.

“Cool, tell everyone I’ll be arriving in like, fifteen minutes. I just – wait, is my outfit in here?”

“Yes, Miss Lewis, it was hung up in the closet for your convenience.” Darcy walked over and found the black garment bag right where the A.I. had said it would be.

“Did anybody peek?” Darcy asked as she set it down on the bed an unzipped the bag.

“Dr. Foster did, I believe she was not pleased with your choice.”

“Too bad.” Darcy commented as she pulled the rainbow jumpsuit out of the bag.

Once dressed and her makeup touched up, Darcy searched her room for the party supplies she had bought earlier in the week. No matter that the party was supposed to be planned ‘for’ her…Darcy had a vision of how she wanted the night to go.

And for that vision, she needed the two aerosol cans at her feet.

Looking up, Darcy addressed Jarvis once again, “Hey J, can you have everyone gather around the glass coffee table? The one that has the circle of couches and let me know when they are all in place?”

“I will convey your wishes Miss Lewis.”

“Thanks.”

“Hey, J?”

“Yes, Miss Lewis.”

“Do you think if I stood on top of the glass coffee table it would break?”

“No Miss Lewis, the table to which you refer to is not actually made of average glass it is made of
new metallic glass and it is stronger and tougher than steel.”

“Muhaha, excellent.” Darcy cackled.

She hadn’t expected portal-ing into Wong’s bed and him lending her his sling ring, but it turned out to be the exact thing she needed to make her ‘birthday vision’ come true. She had dreamed of this moment and gathered the necessary supplies to make it come true at the beginning of the week. She just hadn’t until then worked out how she was going to make it happen…logistically. Wong really brought the whole plan together.

“Everyone is in place Miss Lewis.” Jarvis informed her. Darcy didn’t reply she just opened a portal on top of the not glass coffee table.

Right up front she could see Tony and Pepper, with Jane and Thor at their sides. Darcy smiled sweetly hoping to hide her mischievous intentions.

“One can!” Pepper and Jane called out. The song “Sexy and I Know It” by LMFAO began to play and Darcy finger waved at her friends before bending down and grabbing the cans from the floor.

“Jarvis skip to the second chorus.” Darcy ordered as she made sure her fingers were in the right position. The song skipped ahead and Darcy smiled broadly, then jumped through the portal screaming, “SURPRISE!”

She pressed the top nozzles down hard and started spinning, spraying silly string all over everyone who had gathered around the table at her behest. Darcy threw back her head and laughed an evil laugh as her friends were covered in oodles and oodles of silly string.

She kept spinning and spraying even as she sang along,

“When I walk in the spot this is what I see
Everybody stops and they staring at me
I got passion in my pants and I ain’t afraid to show it
Show it, show, it, show it”

Darcy stop spinning and came to a stop in front of Tony, she then aimed both canisters at his face and sang as she sprayed him, “I’m sexy and I know it.”

She emptied the rest of the cans contents on Tony, her friends were laughing and wiping away the gooey string from their faces and bodies as they watched her torture Tony.

Tony held up his hands in an attempt to shield himself, “Gah! Why me! Why are you only spraying me??!”

Darcy ignored him and shook the cans to make sure she used up every last drop.

“I’m so glad I didn’t miss this!” Jane cried out in between her laughter.

When the cans were empty she threw her hands in the air and began shaking her butt, singing along, “Wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, yeah!”

“Wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, wiggle, yeah!”
Everyone began to clap along with the beat and Darcy laughed as she danced. When the song ended, she let the cans drop to the floor and she spun in a slow circle surveying her handiwork. Wong frowned at her and held out his hand expectantly.

“Ring.” He demanded sternly. Darcy gave him an innocent grin and slipped the sling ring off her fingers and placed it into his palm.

“Some of you look so mad…it’s so funny.” Darcy declared proudly, “I’m going to get a drink.”

As she moved to the end of the table to climb off, Steve gallantly extended his hand to her, helping her down. She gave him a dazzling smile as she walked past him to the bar.

Tony yelled out after her, “I take it all back! I hate you!”

“LIAR!” Darcy shouted back.

After her amazing entrance the party began in earnest. No one was really angry about her little stunt. Only Tony and Pepper disappeared and reappeared wearing different clothes. Everyone else brushed off the goop and rolled with it.

Darcy had a satisfied smirk on her face whenever she looked at Tony. She only felt a little bad about her prank when she saw the present table which was piled high with enticing looking packages. Sam and Steve approached her together while she was lifting and shaking packages experimentally.

“Hey birthday girl,” Sam greeted grabbing her hands stopping her from picking up the next present on the table, “Present time happens after you blow out your candles, don’t you know that?”

Darcy pouted, “I think present time should happen when ever the birthday girl wants.”

Steve put an arm around her shoulders and started walking them away from the table of gifts, “Don’t you know that it’s the anticipation that makes it the moment of receiving all the sweeter?”

“But, presents…” Darcy whined. On her other side Sam let out a booming laugh when she gave Steve a flirty forlorn look. Darcy snapped her head in his direction and glared, “And I don’t see any cake, so your after the candle rule is rendered nonsense.”

Steve squeezed her shoulder and gave her a sincere look, “The cakes are in the refrigerator.”

“Cakes?” Darcy asked, “As in plural?”

Sam swatted at Steve’s arm, “Dude.”

“Whoops.” Steve said with a cheeky smile.

Loudly Darcy asked, “I get two cakes!?!”

From across the room Tony shouted, “WHO TOLD?!”

Sam started laughing as Steve raised his hand and hung his head as his cheeks pinked.

“DAMMIT STEVE!” Tony grumbled as he stalked over to them, “She can see the future and we managed to keep the cake cornucopia competition a secret and you ruined it?”
“What?” Darcy’s eyes sparkled as she repeated, “What cake …cornucopia competition?”

Tony’s eyes widened fearfully, “Wha—I thought you spilled the beans!”

Steve smirked at Tony, “No, I only let slip that there was more than one cake.”

“But—but—” Tony stuttered before his lips became a line on his face and he groused, “Oh, fuck it.”

Tony put a hand on her shoulder and gestured to everyone at the party behind them, “Cake cornucopia. I figured Steve and Thor would probably need a cake each just to feel full, so I made bringing a birthday cake a requirement of attending the soiree. Everyone had to design the decoration and pick the flavor of the cake they wanted.”

Sam put a hand on Darcy’s shoulder, “But obviously most of us outsourced our cakes and had them made by a professional so we wouldn’t accidently poison you on your birthday.”

Steve smiled secretively, “Most of us.”

Tony pushed Sam’s hand off of Darcy’s shoulder and pulled her further into his side, “When we saw all the different cakes all next to each other, I got inspired by this afternoons dress shopping and decided you would pick your favorite without knowing who it was from and they would win a kiss.”

“Another competition Tony?” Darcy asked jutting her hip out, “What is it with you auctioning off my lips without my consent?”

Tony frowned, “I guess we could scrap the whole thing if it bothers you that much.”

Darcy gave his butt a light pinch and she delighted in watching Tony’s eyes widen and smolder as he stared down at her, “Nah, I’m a fan competition. I formally sanction the cake cornucopia competition.”

Tony leaned in close to her face and purred, “I look forward to collecting my winnings.”

Darcy blushed even as she laughed in his face and pushed his face away from her, remarking, “As if.”

Tony gave her an exaggerated look up and down, he brushed his hand over her sequined ass and smirked, “What makes you think I didn’t pick this little number out?”

Darcy put her hands on Tony’s chest and playfully pushed him away from her, “Yeah right.”

Steve cleared his throat loudly and complimented, “You really look lovely Darcy.”

“Yeah, but she’s missing something…” A voice from behind her said, Darcy turned around to see Jane with a glittery sash in her hand.

Darcy cooed, “Aww. Janie.”

Jane smiled wistfully, and then nodded her head up, “Hands in the air so I can put it on you.”

Jane slipped the glittery sash over head and helped fix it so it laid correctly on her, “There, you’re officially the birthday girl…I tried making it myself, but all of my sashes came out ugly. Thankfully Thor and Steve were able to salvage my idea and make it work.”

Darcy turned to Steve, “You made my sash?”
“Just the lettering.” Steve demurred, “Thor did the glitter.”

Darcy pressed her lips together and turned back to Jane, “Thanks honey.”

She pulled Jane into a tight hug and exhaled, “I love it.”

Jane squeezed her and whispered in her ear, “You deserve it; you deserve everything good that’s happened to you Darcy. I’m so sorry I got caught up in my own—I’m sorry I haven’t been a very good friend to you.”

Darcy pulled back and used her thumb to wipe away the stay tear that leaked from Jane’s eye, “Don’t worry about it Jane. You’re an amazing person and you are going to rock the world of science with your incredible brain. Just…don’t worry about you and me. Okay? We’re always going to be friends. No matter the time or distance between us.”

A few more tears fell from Jane’s eyes and Darcy pulled her in for another hug.

A little while later Darcy approached a huddle that consisted of an enthusiastic Thor in full on ‘story time’ mode, an enraptured Wong, and a bored looking Stephen Strange.

“Hey guys.” Darcy greeted, as she extended a flute of champagne out to Wong, “Having fun?”

“Sister! I was just regaling your wizard friends with the tale of how I defeated the mighty Bilgesnipe.” Thor boasted.

“Coooool.” Darcy commented, she tugged on Stephen’s arm and made flirty eyes at him, “You mind if I steal you for a minute?”

“Please.” Stephen said flatly, Darcy giggled as he put a hand on the small of her back and lead her away from Thor who resumed loudly talking to Wong.

Darcy took lead and drug him to the little empty dance floor. The second her foot touched the floor the music changed and “Stephen” by Ke$ha began to play. Strange glanced up then down at her, “You’re doing I presume?”

Darcy just smiled in response and pulled him fully onto the dance floor with her. The song was for Strange but it wasn’t exactly what she was in the mood to dance to, directing her words up Darcy called out, “Jarvis can we play ‘The Harold Song” instead.”

The slower tempo song filled the space and Darcy began to sway with the music. Stephen licked his lips and stared down at her with this…adoration.

They began to dance and while Darcy knew Stephen had no idea who sang the song, let alone r ever heard it before, but he seemed to enjoy it. He pulled her close to his body and ran his fingertips over her cheek before letting his hand settle on the small of her back.

Darcy put her head on his chest and followed his lead as he moved them around the dance floor languidly. She shuffled her feet as she sang along with the words in a low tone so only Stephen would hear her,

“They say that true love hurts
Well this could almost kill me
Young love, murder
That is what this must be
I would give it all to not be sleeping alone”

Stephen began to stroke his hand up and down her spine and Darcy shivered and pressed closer.

“Happy birthday,” Stephen said when the song ended and another slow song came on.

“Thanks.” Darcy mumbled into his chest.

“You look beautiful tonight.” Darcy looked up and couldn’t help but smile at him. His eyes twinkled as he looked down at her and she could feel the emotion simmering under the surface of his skin. Stephen moved a piece of hair behind her ear, “You always look beautiful.”

He kept his hand on her face, cupping her cheek and Darcy took the initiative going up on her tip toes she puckered her lips expectantly and Strange let out a little laugh before he bent his head down and kissed her.

They kept it tame. Only a little bit of tongue, but the second her hand slid down to his butt the music abruptly changed and a country tune began to play. She and Stephen jerked apart, startled, they found themselves no longer alone on the dance floor.

Pepper and Tony, arm in arm, walked quickly across the dance floor towards she and Stephen. Darcy raised an eyebrow at them as Pepper kept a pleasant smile on her face and Tony smirked at her.

“You’re not funny.” Darcy accused.

Tony cupped a hand around his ear calling out, “What? I can’t hear you over the music.”

Jane let out a squeal and Darcy winced, “Shit.”

Jane loved country music. Darcy took a small step away from Stephen as Jane came barreling at her like a torpedo. Darcy caught Jane with ease as she hugged Darcy excitedly, screeching, “Darcy! It’s Miranda!”

“Who?” Strange asked, Darcy shot him a look that conveyed, ‘I don’t know either.’

Jane pulled her to the middle of the dance floor and Darcy couldn’t help but laugh as Jane danced wildly, encouraging her to do the same. When she tried to run away, Tony came up behind her and pulled her and Jane into his arms for a group hug. It was then that Darcy realized how drunk Jane must have been as her only response was to twirl herself out of Tony’s hold and dance around the two of them.

Tony pulled her into formal dance stance and slyly grinned, “C’mon Lewis, let’s cut a rug.”

Darcy laughed in Tony’s face but followed him as they moved around the room in a tangle of coordinated steps. Out of the corner of her eyes she saw Pepper pull Stephen off the dance floor and start a conversation over near the appetizers.

When Thor joined them all on the dance floor, that’s when things got crazy because he picked up Jane and held her over his head in the ‘Dirty Dancing’ lift move as Jane sang drunkenly along with the country pop song proclaiming little girls were made of “Gunpowder and lead!”
Soon Steve and Natasha joined them, followed by Sam who had no problem dancing solo. When the song changed Darcy squealed because it was one of her favorites. She broke away from Tony and went over to Thor, wedging her way in between the pair.

In a commanding tone, Darcy pushed Jane towards Sam, “Here, Jane dance with Sam.”

Darcy then turned on Thor and grinned, extending her arms up in the air Darcy demanded, “Throw me.”

Thor laughed, but picked her up by the waist and threw her high into the air as requested. Thor had done the same thing to her back on Asgard in a field. She had seen him throw Volstagg’s younger children in the air and catch them easily and challenged him to do the same to her. Eventually she had him doing vaguely ‘cheerleader’ stuff, like holding her in the air by just her foot, he and Fandral linking hands to launch her high in the air. It was one of her favorite days spent with him and the warriors three. Just them, and not a care in the world.

She closed her eyes and enjoyed the feeling of gravity pulling her back down. When Thor caught her in his arms, Darcy cried out, “AGAIN!”

After about an hour of dancing, Darcy had danced with almost everybody in attendance besides Wong and Clint. She was flushed and sweating and had long since ditched her jacket, the black and gold bustier proved to be a good choice as the jumpsuit alone would have had her tits swinging all over the place. The bustier however, did trap heat and she could feel the sweat sliding down her chest, she fanned herself with her hand and smiled at Pepper who was approaching her with a concerned look.

“Hi Pep.” Darcy greeted tiredly.

“Darcy,” Pepper put the back of her hand on her cheek and then forehead, “Come with me. Let’s get you some water.”

Steve, whom with she had been dancing, whined “Oh man, but I was just starting to get good at this whole ‘twerking’ thing.”

“No you weren’t.” Darcy joked as she allowed Pepper to lock their fingers together and lead her by the hand away from the dance floor, looking back Darcy called out, “Practice on Bruce!”

Sam and Tony burst into laughter as Steve’s face fell comically.

Pepper led her to the other side of the room and then through the doors that led to the kitchen. When the door closed behind them the music of the party was dampened and in the quiet Darcy realized how hungry and thirsty she felt.

“Whoa.” Darcy exclaimed as she wobbled, Pepper came up and helped her onto a stool that sat at the kitchen island.

Pepper rubbed her back as Darcy closed her eyes and winced, “Maybe loads of champagne and no dinner wasn’t the best idea.”

Pepper heaved a sigh and pressed a kiss to her temple, “I’ll make you a sandwich.”
“Thanks.” Darcy said tiredly. She folded her arms and let her head rest on them as she watched Pepper move about the kitchen.

“Actually,” Pepper said as she pulled out bread and some American cheese, “I’m glad I have the opportunity to speak with you alone.”

Darcy internally groaned, but outwardly played dumb, “Yeah?”

Pepper finished putting the cheese between two slices of bread and looked up to smile at her, “Yeah.”

Pepper turned around and put the sandwich in the toaster oven, a cranking sound could be heard as she turned it on. Darcy shifted uncomfortably as Pepper came to sit next to her.

“Did Tony--?” Darcy began; Pepper cut her off with a small nod, interrupting, “He told me what happened. What he said to you…about us.”

“Us?” Darcy echoed.

Pepper dug something out of her skirt pocket, it was a ring box. She slid in front of Darcy and spoke calmly, “I bought this for you a couple months ago.”

Darcy blinked, “Pepper, you didn’t have to--”

“It’s your birthday.” Pepper insisted, “I bought it for you. Open it.”

“I can’t.” Darcy objected, the thing between them and Tony still hung in the air, and accepting a gift just seemed…wrong. Like leading Pepper on somehow.

“Don’t be ridiculous.” Pepper argued as she grabbed the box up and opened it revealing a beautiful diamond ring.

Darcy stuttered out a protest, “That must have cost a fortune. I can’t accept that. That’s…insanely beautiful.”

Darcy was a little mesmerized by the ring. It was ornate but understated. There was a sparkly oval diamond in the center and it was surrounded by this brown…gem stuff…Darcy didn’t know much about rings but she knew it was pretty and unique and she loved it.

“He wasn’t lying.” Pepper stated boldly, “We’d like to date you.”

“Uhhhh….” Darcy gulped as Pepper grabbed her hand and slowly slid the ring on her middle finger.

Pepper gently held her hand, admiring the ring on her finger as she spoke, “It’s a cocktail ring circa 1910 by Tiffany and Company. Its design is art deco and it features a marquise cut diamond framed with pre-cut horn and accented with single cut diamonds set in platinum.”

Darcy gulped audibly. Pepper fingered a strand of her hair, “I saw it and I thought of you….I think of you a lot actually. When I’m getting dressed in the morning I think about what you would think of my outfit. When I eat breakfast I wonder if you’ve eaten already. When I’m at work—when I’m at work I think of you at the most inopportune times. Just, just wondering how your day is going. What you did that day. When I’ll see you next.”

Pepper gave her this tender look and Darcy found that their hands had become intertwined and she
was leaning closer and closer to Pepper.

“I love you Darcy, I know you told Tony you didn’t want to talk about that today, about the possibility of their being an ‘us’ but I just wanted to reiterate that no matter what…I. Love. You. And nothing will ever change that.” Pepper’s hand found its way into her hair and Pepper gently fist a handful of her loose curls. “You’re my girl. My friend. And I--”

Darcy closed the distance between her and Pepper, pressing her red lips against Pepper’s nude ones. Darcy didn’t know why she did it, she didn’t know if she wanted to date Tony and Pepper, possibly ruin their perfect partnership, ruin all of their friendships, but…she felt like kissing Pepper in that moment. And so she did.

Pepper let out a surprised squeak but quickly took control of the kiss. Darcy followed the older woman’s lead and softly pressed her lips repeatedly against Pepper’s pliant ones kissing her chastely but meaningfully.

When she felt the tentative poke of a tongue at the seal of her lips she opened her mouth and allowed Pepper to explore her mouth. As Pepper took her time, slowly dragging her tongue up and down her own, Darcy let out a wanton moan.

She could feel Pepper smile against her lips in response but she didn’t care. She didn’t care about anything in that moment, but Pepper and her clever tongue.

**DING!**

The toaster oven went off and Darcy jerked back in surprise. She touched her lower lip; it felt like it was vibrating. Pepper looked at her in awe and Darcy’s eyes widened as she realized what she had done.

Darcy gulped and pressed her lips tightly together. She could feel a sense of panic creeping up her spine. She felt like she had jeopardized everything. Her relationship with Stephen. Her friendship with Tony and Pepper. She felt regret and shame and for all that it was a beautiful amazing kiss, it was ill timed.

Without Tony, without talking to Stephen about the possibility of their being a ‘her and Tony and Pepper’ the kiss felt like a betrayal. And she regretted it….well, she regretted how it happened…or maybe more precisely **when** it happened.

Pepper gave her a tender look advising, “Don’t panic.”

Darcy inhaled deeply and exhaled slowly. Pepper got up from the counter and retrieved the sandwich, plating it and grabbing a bottle of water from the fridge she set the items down in front of Darcy and then sat down beside her once again.

“I…enjoyed the kiss.” Pepper said, “However, I can sense—perhaps we should table any further discussion of a possible polyamorous relationship between ourselves and Tony, until…a later date?”

Darcy gave Pepper a appreciative look and Pepper returned it with a half smile, “How does that sound?”

Darcy’s voice cracked as she responded, “Good.” She cleared her voice and continued, “That sounds really good.”

“Good.” Pepper repeated, then she nudged the plate of food closer to Darcy ordering, “Now eat.”
Darcy smiled gratefully and muttered “I liked the kiss too” before taking a big bite. She ignored the smug smile on Pepper’s face and dug in practically inhaling the sandwich and then draining the entire bottle of water.

Just as she was finishing up, Pepper’s watch beeped and she sighed happily, “Excellent.”

“Hmm?” Darcy inquired as she set her dirty plate in the sink.

“It’s time for cake.” Pepper revealed with bright eyes.

Pepper and Darcy were unceremoniously kicked out of the kitchen by Tony, Thor, Steve and Sam as they arrived to retrieve the cakes. Pepper led Darcy out to the couches where Jane and Bruce were chatting science and Clint and Natasha were peppering Wong with questions. Stephen sat apart from everyone on a single lounge chair. He was staring off into space and Darcy broke away from Pepper, drawn to her magical boyfriend like a moth to a flame.

Darcy sat herself atop his lap and wrapped her arms around his neck, bringing him back to the present. Stephen blinked a few times before refocusing his gaze on her and smiling.

“Hey.”

“Hi. Bored?” Darcy asked.

Stephen tilted his head in a gesture that told her everything she needed to know. She stroked his bearded face, “Well, they’re bringing out the cakes now. And after that, presents. And then we can leave.”

Stephen’s eyes furrowed, “We don’t have to—I’m fine. I’m having fun. We don’t need to leave.”

Darcy ran her finger across the lines on Stephen’s face as he frowned, “It’s cool. I’m feeling a little party pooped myself.”

“Darcy—”

“Besides, I want to conserve some energy for when you take me to bed and we have enthusiastic birthday sex.” Darcy said with a sly grin.

Darcy huffed a laugh as Stephen’s eyes got big and he blushed and began to stutter, “B-b-birthday sex?”

“Not interested?” Darcy teased.

Stephen’s hand audibly smacked as he grabbed her butt and pulled her closer to his body. Leaning forward Darcy welcomed Stephen as he alternated mumbling against her lips and kissing them, stating in a low voice, “I’m going to birthday sex you until you can’t walk straight.”

Darcy giggled and cuddled close to him as he wrapped her shoulders up in a tight hug, “Good, because I’m counting on you to really drive home this whole ‘best birthday ever’ thing.”

Thor loudly burst through the door wheeling a cart laden with cakes, his voice boomed, “It is time for the Midgardian custom of setting cakes afire and blowing on them!”
Tony, Steve and Sam all trailed behind Thor pushing similar carts.

“Why is he so loud?”
“He knows we’re going to use candles right?”
“My cakes totally going to win.”

The boys stopped the carts in front of the glass table and then began unloading them, they covered every square inch of the glass table top and they still had to leave one cake on the cart!

“Holy shit that’s a lot of cake.” Darcy whispered as she sat up, she felt Stephen chuckling underneath her but ignored him as her eyes zipped from one cake to the next.

There were two Thor themed cakes, one which had a tiny Thor figure on top and one that was a life sized replica of Mjolnir. There was a gold painted pineapple cake, and a traditional looking white cake with gold drip and rose details. There was a pink frosting donut cake and a Hedwig cake. There was a really cool looking beach cake, a gummy bear covered cake, a kit kat and candy covered cake, a five tiered spatter painted cake and a rainbow of cupcakes cake.

“Am I drooling?” Darcy asked as she forcibly blinked, “Is this a mirage?”

Tony sat down on the arm of the couch next to Pepper and made a sweeping motion to the cakes, “So? Which one gets the candles?”

“What?”

“Pick a winner and will stick the candles in that one. We’ll sing, you’ll cringe.” Tony smirked, “Wishes will be made and then cake will be had by all.”

Darcy got up off on Stephen’s lap as Steve, Sam, and Thor all found seating. She circled the table, inspecting the cakes closer and smelling a few. When she dipped her finger into one of the pink cupcakes icing to take a taste Pepper made a ‘ah, ah, ah’ noise.

The red head wagged a stern finger, “No tasting. This is strictly a beauty contest. What’s on the inside is another competition entirely.”

“For real?”

Pepper just shrugged, “Didn’t seem fair if the best looking cake tasted the worst, so two different competitions seemed like the best way to sett--”

Tony interrupted, “The extra contest has nothing to do with upping the reward kiss count or improving anyone’s odds in receiving said reward.”

“Tony.” Steve scolded. He turned to Darcy with a soft smile, “Just pick whichever one strikes your fancy sweetheart.”

Darcy bit her lip as she internally debated choosing the Harry Potter Hedwig cake, which was almost certainly Stephen’s or the candy covered cake which really just…called to her in a deep and emotional way.

“Uh…” Darcy stalled.

“Don’t worry about the reward kisses,” Jane advised, “Nobody is expecting you to go through with them.”
“She doesn’t represent me,” Tony said quickly, causing everyone to chuckle.

“Okay,” Darcy started, “So… I think that, the cake that I am… physically attracted to is… the Kit Kat and M & M cake.”

Tony stood up and blanched, “No! That home made monstrosity?!”

“Aw, it’s home made?” Darcy remarked as she picked out a couple red M&M’s from the top of the cake and popped them into her mouth, “That’s so sweet. Who made it?”

Steve cleared his throat from where he was sitting next to Sam, he raised his hand and bashfully smiled, “I did.”

“Awww.” Darcy cooed before walking over to Steve and cupping his face in her hand and giving him a long loud kiss on the cheek, making sure the transfer of her lips stick would leave a big kiss mark.

“Thanks.” Steve mumbled as she pulled away, his face was almost completely red now and Sam who was sitting beside him, was barely holding his laughter.

, Natasha and Thor moved in with knives and began cutting slices from each cake and plating them, Jane and Pepper put them on one of the now empty carts. Steve looked up at her as she straightened up, “I’m glad you like it.”

Darcy reached out and caressed his head, running her hand through his hair, “Candy covered cake? You totally know me. I love it… I love it even more knowing you made it instead of buying one.”

“It was nothing.” Steve ducked his head and Darcy took her hand away, “Just followed direction is all. That pinterest thing you showed me was really helpful.”

From out of nowhere a pair of hands spun her around and she barely caught a glimpse of Natasha’s red hair before the other woman dipped her dramatically and gave her a big, but brief, kiss on the lips. Still in the ‘dip’ position Darcy angrily questioned, “What the hell?”

Natasha put Darcy back on her feet and smirked, “Thought I’d collect my kiss while you were giving them out.”

“What?”

Natasha ran a hand over the fabric of Darcy’s top, a very platonic caress, “I knew you would look good in the jumpsuit, but adding the bustier was a brilliant touch.”

“You picked out my outfit?” Darcy asked seeking confirmation.

“Of course.” Natasha boasted, “You know how superior robots are to humans. Boop.” Natasha poked her nose and Darcy just cracked at the absurdity. She began laughing and Natasha joined her.

In between breaths Darcy managed to say, “I… still don’t… trust you.”

“Same.” Natasha laughed.

Stephen came up from behind her and pulled her away, guiding her back to his lap in the chair. The lights in the room dimmed and Stephen waved his hand, two candles embedded in Steve’s Kit Kat and M&M cake sprang to life, flickering in the dark.

Her friends began to sing, “Happy Birthday To You” and Darcy just smiled looking at them all, her
eyes dancing from face to face.

Stephen had to prompt her when they were done, he whispered in her ear, “Make a wish Darcy.”

Darcy licked her lips and closed her eyes, leaning forward she blew out the candle 2 and 8, everyone began clapping.

The lights undimmed and Jane swooped in to take her Kit Kat cake but Darcy shoo’d her away.

“But what about the taste test thing?” Jane whined.

“No. This is my cake and I want to eat it tomorrow...” Darcy declared, she got up and picked up the cake announcing loudly, “I’m going to put this one back in the fridge. It’s mine. I’m not sharing.”

Laughter rang out behind her as she left the room.

When she returned, Darcy was given a bite of every cake. Jane’s cake won the taste test and her friend gleefully rubbed her ‘kiss’ reward in Tony’s face...even though it was just on the cheek. Everyone dug into the various treats heartily.

Graciously, Thor allowed her to bite off the tiny chocolate version of his head. Nobody but Tony, Pepper, and Bruce ate from Tony’s weird golden pineapple cake which was too acidic for Darcy’s tastes. Natasha had apparently brought the rainbow cup cakes and every single one of them was a different flavor...and soaked in some kind of alcohol. Thor, Sam, and Steve all but ate the 5 tier spatter paint cake themselves...and the life sized Mjolnir one too.

Once everyone had eaten their fill Darcy began to bounce with excitement. Clint, who she hadn’t really interacted with thus far, was the first one to notice and comment, “Dude, I think birthday girl’s ’bout ready to pee her pants.”

“PRESENTS!” Darcy shouted.

“Presents? What presents?” Jane teased.

Darcy chanted raising her arms above her head, “Candles blown. Wishes made. Cake eaten. PRESENT TIME!”

Darcy made grabby hands at the table of presents but didn’t get up from her comfortable spot on the couch wedged in between Thor and Pepper. “Gimmie, gimmie.”

“I’ll go first.” Tony volunteered, as he leapt to his feet and ran to the table covered in presents.

“We’re going to open all the gifts here?” Strange asked, “In front of everyone?”

“Yes!” Darcy cried as Tony threw a small light box at her head. Thor caught the shiny red papered box midair and handed it to her with a smile. Everyone quieted down watched as she struggled to get the gold ribbon off the box.

“I can help--” Thor offered but Darcy turned her body away from him so he couldn’t take the package away from her.

“I got it.” Darcy said defensively, just as she was about to use her teeth on the ribbon Pepper took
one of the cake knives and snipped the string for her.

Darcy pouted at Pepper but Pepper just rose an eyebrow at her. Darcy made a grumpy noise but quickly unwrapped the box and opened the lid to reveal what was inside.

“T...
“You’re welcome.” Clint said smugly.

Bruce went next, he got her a green night gown, robe and mask. And the ‘Hulk’ got her, Hulk slippers and Hulk socks. Natasha got her a hilarious purse. Sam got her a Hercules figurine but he’d replaced the Hercules figure with a Captain America one, making it look like Cap was fighting a five headed hydra.

“My turn,” Thor whispered to her, gently easing her off his body from where she had been leaning. Thor went over to the gift table and returned with a ornately carved wooden box.

He knelt before Darcy on one knee and everyone got very quiet and Darcy felt like crying even though he hadn’t even given her anything, because she could tell Thor was about to say something heart melting.

“Dearest Darcy, I have taken you to be my sister. Though we are not bound by familial blood, you are of Asgard. You are my chosen family. My sister, whom I will defend and aid whenever needed. You are my sister who brings lightness to my heart and comfort to my soul. I love you dear one.” Thor opened the box to reveal a beautiful and unique looking crown.

“You are my sister and that makes you a princess of Asgard. There is nothing that could part you from my heart and so I bestow upon you the moonstone diadem my mother had intended gifting you with herself-” Thor sounded choked up at the mention of his mom and Darcy slid to the floor beside him and wrapped him in a hug.

No one said anything as she and Thor embraced and quietly cried.

When they’d finally gathered themselves, Thor quicker than her, Darcy grabbed a napkin before taking her seat, worriedly she dabbed at her face hoping her makeup didn’t look too terrible. Thor stood to his full height and placed the diadem upon her head.

Darcy froze, her body tensing as a she felt a shiver of magic run up her spine.

“Mother enchanted it. Whenever you wear it, it will help focus your thoughts and clear your mind.” Thor informed her, “Additionally it makes you look even more beautiful and regal.”

Darcy nodded and Thor took his seat beside her again. She leant into his side and he put an arm around her shoulders, kissing the top of her head. She murmured quietly, “Thank you.”

“You are most welcome.” Thor replied.

There was a moment’s silence following their exchange. No one seemed to want to go next. And Darcy didn’t blame them. It was going to be pretty hard to top getting a tiara from an alien prince.

A portal opened on the other side of the room, causing most people in the room to tense and jump to their feet in a fighting stance. Thor remained at her side though.

Karl Mordo walked through the portal an amused expression on his face, “Did I miss the cake?”

Darcy waved and stood greeting her friend with a smile, “Hi Karl.”

When only Steve and Sam seemed to accept Karl as a ‘non-threat’ Darcy whisper scolded Tony, Natasha, Clint, and Jane, “Stand down weirdo’s, he’s one of the only teachers at Asian Hogwarts who likes me.”

Karl approached slowly, “I did not mean to interrupt.”
Darcy walked over to him and linked arms with the dark skinned man assuring him, “You’re not interrupting. You were invited, come, sit. We’re opening presents.”

“You missed the cake.” Wong said flatly, “The alien prince and the soldiers ate most of them.”

“Hey! I ate half the cupcakes!” Clint whined. Wong just shrugged his shoulders at the archer.

Darcy pulled Jane up by the hand and pushed her in Thor’s direction, making space for Karl to sit next to Wong and Strange. “Here, sit.”

Karl did as instructed, then looked around at everyone, “Thank you for inviting me.”

Darcy pressed her lips together as she stood awkwardly, her eyes darted around, there was no where left for her to sit but the floor now. Just as she was about to sink to the carpet, Stephen pulled her once again onto his lap.

Darcy slithered her arm around the back of his neck and mumbled a “Thank you” as she kissed him right next to his ear.

“You say you are unwrapping gifts?” Karl asked.

“Yeah,” Tony said sounding a little annoyed, “The prince just gave her a crown.”

“Diadem.” Thor corrected looking smug causing Tony to pout.

“I have a gift.” Karl announced.

Darcy’s eyebrows shot up high on her forehead, “You do? You didn’t have to do that.”

“I didn’t.” Karl said as extended a long slim item, wrapped in colorful fabric out to her, “This is from the Ancient One. Be careful it’s sharp.”

Darcy took the item and placed it flat in her lap, and then she unwrapped it slowly. It was a sword.

Darcy’s eyes lit up, “COOL!”

She picked up the sword and hopped off of Stephen’s lap only turn on him and put the sword to his throat and adopt a pirate voice while squeezing one eye shut tightly, “Ye be warned, Red Handed Darcy is the most venereal and libidinous lady sailing these seven seas.”

She then turned away miming light saber-esque motions while making the noises.

“A sword? Who’s bright idea was that?” Tony jeered.

Clint cackled, “Ten bucks she stabs somebody by the end of the night.”

“Yeah, you.” Darcy quipped as she held the sword over head like she had just pulled it out of a stone and whispered, “Excalibur.”

“Wow. You’re actually a just a hot nerd aren’t you?” Sam teased.

Steve turned and glared at Sam, “Hot?”

Darcy put her arm down, allowing the sword to hang limply at her side, she turned to Karl and exclaimed, “This is so awesome!”
Karl smiled genially, “I’m glad you like it, but it’s no Excalibur.”

Darcy shrugged, “Don’t care. Maybe I’ll name it…Sparkle-Death.”

“Sparkle-Death?” Natasha snorted.

“The sword has a name.” Karl informed them, “It’s called Dragonfang.”

“Is it really?” Wong said sounding surprised, “I thought it lost?”

Karl shook his head, “No, the Ancient One came to possess it after Kahji-Da the warlock was killed.”

“So its…a magic sword?” Darcy asked with reverence, holding the blade aloft so she could examine the hilt which was plainly beautiful, the hilt was black with bits of silver and the end of the sword had this, red cross octagon shape thing at the end.

“Is it dangerous?” Steve asked.

“Only to those she wields against.” Stephen said, Darcy extended the sword to him and he took it from her gently, “Dragonfang was carved from the tusk of an extra-dimensional dragon, the blade crafted by a warlock, it has the ability to absorb magical forces and is nigh indestructible.”

“Oooooh.” Darcy cooed.

“The Ancient One wishes you a happy birthday,” Karl said with a head tilt, “This next part she told me to tell you verbatim. ‘She hopes you never have need to use it but suspects through your ownership it will fall into capable hands’.”

Darcy ignored everyone’s speculation as she went over what Karl said the Ancient One said in her head.

“Oh man!” Darcy exclaimed. Everyone turned to her curiously. Darcy pouted, “The Ancient One hopes ‘I’ll never have need to use it’ means it’s not really meant for me! Boo!”

“What?” Sam asked.

Darcy frowned at the sword, “She thinks through me ‘it will fall into capable hands’…that means she wants me to give it to somebody! What a lame non-gift-gift.”

“Can the Ancient One tell the future too?” Pepper inquired with a pinched look.

“No…..right?” Darcy asserted looking to Karl, Wong, and Stephen for confirmation.

“No.” Stephen confirmed as he re-wrapped the sword in the fabric it came in.

“You will need a scabbard for such a fine weapon.” Thor said, “I shall find you one suitable.”

Darcy took the sword from Stephen and set it down on the glass table carefully, before plopping down on Stephen’s lap grumpily, “Weren’t you listening Thor? It’s not really meant for me.”

Thor gave her a knowing look, “Seeing the future is not as simple and straightforward as one might think. Do not assume because you have seen a piece of the future that you know all of it Sister. The sword may aid you yet.”

Darcy pursed her lips, “Okay.”
Tony clapped his hands together, “Well, that was fun. Magic sword really keen. Moving on, Pepper gave Darcy her birthday gift in \textit{private}” Tony shot her a knowing look and Darcy blushed and hid her face in Stephen’s neck, Tony continued, “So, that just leaves the Strange and Spangles….who’s next?”

“I’ll go.” Steve volunteered. He bypassed the present table and headed for the elevator, “I’ll be right back.”

Karl took her hand in his and bowed his head, “I hope you do not think me so rude, but I must take my leave.”

“Aw, but you just got here.” Darcy whined.

Karl smiled at her, “I have classes to teach in a few hours.” He pulled a small slip of paper from out of his robe and put it into her palm, “Happy birthday Darcy Lewis, may you find happiness.”

“And may the force be with you.” Darcy quipped as she made the Vulcan finger salute at him.

Karl laughed at her as he stood and Darcy smiled at him sadly, on her and Strange’s other side, Wong stood as well. “Not you too!” Darcy whined.

Wong smiled down at her, “I have enjoyed myself far more than I expected. Thank you for inviting me.”

Darcy stood and wrapped Wong in a hug. Wong patted her on the back twice and then he broke away. Karl made his way to the empty dance floor and set about opening a portal back to Karma-Taj, while Wong went over to Thor and Pepper, saying a quick goodbye to both and giving a wave to Tony.

Their departure wasn’t very dramatic. They just stepped through the portal and vanished. Darcy remained on Stephen’s lap, despite now having more room on their little love seat. Almost in response of Wong and Karl leaving, she wrapped her arms tighter around him, hugging him tightly.

Stephen hugged her back and kissed her temple, whispering a promise, “I’m not going anywhere, don’t worry.”

“Better not be.” Darcy groused.

“Where the hell is Rogers?” Tony asked exasperatedly.

Sam stood, “I’ll go check on him.”

Tony got up from beside Pepper and went over to the present table and grabbed the only gift remaining on it. It was medium sized box wrapped in dark blue wrapping paper with gold stars on it. Tony shook it experimentally.

“This one yours Strange?” Tony asked holding up for all to see.

“Yes, but…I wasn’t—I was hoping Darcy would open it in private.” Stephen stammered.

Darcy slapped her palm to her forehead and grumbled, “You really shouldn’t have let him know that.”

“Oh, but we’re all friends here.” Tony said with a smug grin, “No need to be shy.”

“Tony, put it back.” Pepper ordered.
“But I’m bored and I’m sure the birthday girl is also curious as to its contents.” Tony cajoled.

Darcy fixed him with a stern glare, “Don’t be a dick Tony.”

Tony pouted tossing the package back onto the table, “Fine.”

A few minutes later Steve and Sam reappeared looking disheveled, and…Sam had scratches on his hand and smudge of blood on the white button up shirt. Steve didn’t have a scratch but his sweater was slashed on both of his arms. Steve held a wicker basket in his hands.

“We’re back.” Sam needlessly announced as he made a beeline for the bar and fixed himself a drink.

Darcy turned her puzzled expression on Steve and he just smiled plastically at her, “Sorry. Uh…your present…got loose.”

“What?”

Steve walked quickly over to the couch where she and Stephen were, Stephen moved her off his lap and put her in the middle, leaving room for Steve to sit on her other side. Steve sat and then extended the basket, warning, “Happy birthday, I’m sorry this was a terrible idea.”

With a quirked brow, Darcy looked over to Tony and then Natasha. Tony looked equally confused, but Natasha looked like the cat who ate the canary…as did Clint.

“I—is it a Mogwai?” Darcy lifted the basket to her ear and listened intently.

“What’s a Mogwai?” Steve asked.

A quiet meow came from inside the basket and Darcy let out a gasp. She hurriedly put the basket down in her lap and unlatched the top. A tiny all black kitten looked up at her and ‘meowed’ and Darcy’s jaw dropped.

“Oh my god, oh my god, oh my god.” Darcy rambled as she held her fingers out for the kitten to smell. The tiny kitten licked her fingertips before rubbing up against her hand.

“You didn’t.” Tony said in an accusatory tone. Darcy rambled as she held her fingers out for the kitten to smell. The tiny kitten licked her fingertips before rubbing up against her hand.

“I…thought he would scratch you or bite you…” Steve said looking amazed as the kitten adorably nuzzled Darcy.

“Yeah, I was for sure ready for that thing to scratch out your eyes.” Sam added as he sat on the couch arm with a drink in his hand.

“Oh no, he’s a sweetie pie. He’s a love bug. He’s a tiny kitty cutie patottie and I love him and he loves me and I’m going to be his mama and I wuve him soooo much.” Darcy cooed.

Steve ran a hand through his hair and smiled as he watched Darcy bond with the kitten, “He got loose in my room and then he got wedged inside of the big plastic pretzel containers and then when we got him out—”

Sam took over saying, “He bit me and then scratched me and then hid inside Steve’s shoe and it was adorable, but I was bleeding so I didn’t care at that point.”

“I hate cats.” Jane said dryly.
Thor on the other hand got up and sat by her feet, extending his large hand to pet the black kitten between the ears, “Tis a mighty fine companion for an animal lover such as Lady Darcy, good on you Captain.”

Darcy looked up at Steve with wide sparkling eyes, “Yes! Sorry, thank you! Thank you Steve, this is…this the best birthday present ever.”

“Rude.” Jane jeered from across the room.

Darcy glared, “Quiet drunky or no kitten cuddles for you.”

“Fine by me.” Jane quipped, “Cats are the meanest.” Jane fixed Steve with a glare, “You should have gotten her a dog.”

“No!” Darcy protested, “I love the kitty.”

“Ooh, that sounded dirty.” Tony commented, Pepper gave a snort but smiled at Darcy encouragingly, “It is very adorable Darcy. What will you name it?”

Darcy looked searchingly at Steve, “Boy kitty or girl kitty?”

“Boy cat.”

Darcy nodded, then stared down at her adorable kitten’s little face for a few minutes, “Binx.”

Jane let out a groan, “From Hocus Pocus? That’s so lame.”

“Well it was either that or Salem.” Darcy reasoned, suddenly remembering Stephen she turned to her boyfriend and asked, “You’re not allergic to cats are you?”

“No.” Strange stroked a hand down the kitten’s spine and tail, “No. I quite like animals.”

“I’m glad you like him.” Steve said, drawing her attention back to him, “I figured, that when or if you unexpectedly teleport, I could look after him for you…if you want. And, that way, whenever you miss..Binx, you can come and find me.”

Darcy slowly smiled as she realized the strategic thoughtful that went into Steve choosing to gift her with the tiny furry creature. Darcy agreed, “Sounds like a plan.”

Steve smiled toothily and they sort of made goo-goo eyes at each other for a minute before something occurred to Darcy.

“Oh!” Darcy exclaimed shoving the kitten at Steve’s chest, “But you have to take care of Binx tonight.”

Steve reluctantly accepted the kitten into his hands, the animal immediately became ornery and Steve put him back in the basket. “Why?”

“Well,” Darcy stood up and grabbed Stephen’s hand pulling him with her, “I have to go have birthday sex.”

Darcy nodded and waved to her friends, “Thanks for a kicking party everyone, I appreciate the gifts and the thought you put into the evening, it was truly the best birthday I’ve ever had.”

Darcy pulled Stephen along behind her as she headed to the gift table and snagged Stephens gift of the table and headed for the elevator, “Have a good night everyone!” Darcy cheerily yelled as the
elevator door opened and she and Stephen stepped inside.

Darcy immediately turned to Stephen and held up his beautifully wrapped gift saying “It’s a vibrator isn’t it?”

She could hear laughter break out among their friends just before the door closed on them.

Stephen’s gift didn’t turn out to be a vibrator or dildo or sex lube or any of the other sex related toys she guessed as they rode the elevator. When they made it to her room, she opened the present to find an outfit made of all sheer material…because apparently Strange had a fetish.

Even with all the layers on, the lingerie, the top, the coat, the skirt, you could still make out Darcy’s nipples and lady area. Darcy modeled the clothing for him and it really ‘revved up his engine’.

They had sex for the first time that night…and the second and third time.

They fell asleep naked and wrapped up in each other’s arms.

When Darcy woke up the next morning it was to the feeling of Stephen letting out a groan. And then there was a feminine scream and then there was Tony yelling, “Jesus!”

Darcy blearily opened her eyes to see that she and Stephen were still naked, still in each other’s arms, but no longer in the bed they had fallen asleep in.

“Ow.” Stephen said dryly.

“Sorry, I just—I didn’t expect to see you, here…in our bed.” Pepper explained.

“What happened?” Darcy slurred.

“Nothing.” Stephen dismissed, “I’m fine.”

“We teleported together?” Darcy asked blinking at Pepper and Tony, “Hi.”

Tony smiled back at her drunk-ish-ly, “Hi back.”

“We can go--” Stephen offered but Pepper cut him off, “No, no, no. Stay, it’s not even morning yet.”

“We’re naked.” Stephen revealed dryly.

“Awesome.” Tony remarked as Pepper shifted away from Strange.

“Put me in the middle.” Darcy suggested, resting her head on Stephen’s chest so she could see him properly, “Then Pep won’t be freaked out by accidental unknown penis touching.”

“That would be…more preferable.” Pepper said politely.

Stephen didn’t say anything just helped Darcy climb over his body so she was nestled into his other side, Pepper ghosted her fingers over Darcy’s back before turning away and snuggling into Tony.
After a minutes silence Tony bellowed, “IS NO ONE GOING TO ADDRESS THE FACT THAT WE ALL WANT TO HAVE SEX WITH DARCY?”

Darcy groaned and grabbed for the extra pillow next to Stephen’s head, pulling it and putting it over her ear, muffling any response that might have sprung from Tony’s awkward directness.

“Go to sleep Tony.” Darcy ordered before she let herself be lulled back to sleep by the steady beat of Stephen’s heart under her ear and the combined body heat emanating off of both Stephen and Pepper.
Wong and his ‘Gift/Loan’

Jane’s Gift and Cake
Bruce’s Gift and Cake
Pepper’s Gift and Cake (just imagine with red hair)
Tony’s Gift and Cake
Sam’s Gift and Cake
Steve’s Gift and Homemade Cake
Strange’s Gift and Cake

Thor’s Cakes & Gift
Clint’s Gift and Cake
Karl/Ancient One’s gift
Just me being a weirdo and going on an Avengers/Cat binge...
So.......swords and tiaras and kittens and lady kisses.
A lot happened at the party, what did you like the best?
Chapter 24 - Helen Cho

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to Helen Cho

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the unexpected delay. I love grown up Halloween which occurs the weekend before actual Halloween, so last weekend I got nothing written. On top of that, I really had no idea how to tackle ULTRON, considering its not my favorite movie anyway. But, then I saw a picture and all of my plans changed.

Hope you like it. It's a long chapter and it's got a lot packed in there, so please leave me some feedback in the comments letting me know how you liked it?

“Woah.”
“That’s unsettling.”
“Cool.”
“How did she..?”
“Intruder alert.”
“Sister?”
“Hey!”
“Wuhoh. She’s gonna be pissed.”

Darcy frowned as the cadre of familiar voices reached her ears and brought her back to the land of the living and conscious. Though still drowsy she was immediately filled with a sense of sullen anger. She could feel that she was now on the floor instead of in bed, which was just annoying. Her friend’s excited/surprised voices woke her when she was very tired, also annoying. And to top it off, she didn’t hear the one voice she had been waiting for when she had fallen asleep. So very deeply annoying.

“Nooooooooo.” Darcy wailed in a whiney tone. Laughter sounded around her and Darcy snarled. It felt like she had just closed her eyes for a second when she was rudely awakened and she was just not in the mood to deal with people at the moment.

“Welcome back to New York buttercup.” Tony teased.

“Shut the fuck up.” Darcy grumped morosely. She turned her body so she was face down on the floor, helping block out some of the offensive light, she brought her arms up around her head to muffle the noise.

A hand picked up her stocking clad foot and Darcy pouted as she realized she only had one shoe on. The hand jiggled her foot some and a familiar voice cajoled, “Wake up now.”

When she didn’t respond the hand tickled the bottom of her foot and Darcy struck out with other leg instinctively, her foot made solid impact with a male crotch…while wearing her remaining stiletto heel. Her foot was dropped immediately and a thud sounded behind her, as well as a wheeze.

Darcy felt a little guilty. She sat up and turned her head to see who she had inadvertently assaulted. Under her breath she mumbled, “Whoops.”

Thor sat on the floor next to her, his legs bent underneath him, his hands cradling his groin. Darcy winced sympathetically and crawled over to where he lay.

“I’m sorry.” She apologized; Thor cringed and held up a hand stopping her from getting closer.

In a slightly high pitched voice he responded, “It was my folly sister. I’ll be—I am fine. Just, give me a minute.”

Darcy sat back on her haunches and looked around, recognizing the Avengers tower lounge area immediately. She pouted, annoyed at finding herself teleported so far from where she had wanted to be. Clint and Tony were snickering at Thor, while Maria and Natasha looked her over with a calculated eye. Steve, Bruce, and Sam all sat together and looked on at Thor with varying degrees of sympathy.

“Guess it doesn’t matter what species you are after all,” Clint quipped, “Getting kicked in the nuts is still getting kicked in the nuts.”

“Who—” Frowning she looked around the room in confusion, “Did you guys have a party?”

“A victory celebration,” Thor said loudly as he got back to his feet as nonchalantly as possible, “Sister we have retrieved Loki’s scepter.”
“And I missed the revels?” Darcy pouted. Thor appeared chagrín as he shrugged in response.

“You were missed.” Steve supplied quickly, “It was a spontaneous sort of…thing.”

“But, how did I get here if…” Darcy trailed off as she caught sight of the small Asian woman asleep on the sofa. It was Doctor Helen Cho. Darcy had met her once before, but she really didn’t know much about the doctor except that Tony thought she was brilliant and he (and Stark Industries) had made a sizable investment in funding her experimental research.

“I’m awake.” Helen claimed as she roused and sat up. Rubbing her eyes she denied, “I wasn’t sleeping, I’m not drunk.”

Tony got up and made his way to Darcy, stepping past Thor and crouching down so he was eye level with her he ran a hand over her hair and Darcy leaned into his touch, “Missed me so much you abandoned Pepper in Japan?”

Darcy glared at him as he stood and extended a hand down to her. Darcy let Tony pull her to her feet, his grip on her hand tightened as she kicked off the one stiletto heel that had made the trip with her, leaving her about a head shorter than him. His eyes twinkled mischievously as he looked her up and down, taking in her sexy ‘seduction’ dress complete with stockings and visible garters. Tony questioned with a raised brow, “You really pulled out all the stops huh?”

“Shut up.”

“I’m a little offended” Tony playfully complained as she crossed her glove clad arms defensively in front of her chest, quietly he teased, “I usually just get you wearing an oversized t-shirt and whatever underwear you were wearing that day when you try to seduce me.”

“Shut up.” Darcy glared as Tony put his arm around her waist and turned her to the group, gesturing up and down her body with a hand.

“She looks gorgeous though right?” Tony asked his friends. Clint, Natasha, and Thor all nodded ‘yes’, while Bruce, Helen, and Steve blushed. Maria’s face remained impassive as she stared at Darcy indifferently.

Tony tugged her closer to his body with one arm while bringing the other up to her cheek to caress her face, his voice lowered as a bit of sincerity bled through his bravado, “Nobody does ‘I woke up like this’ quite like Darcy Lewis.”

Darcy felt her mouth twitch, her resolve to remain annoyed wavering as Tony looked at her with such a soft expression. Tony took advantage and bent his head down and gave her a slow sensual kiss.

Their assembled friends had mixed reactions to their little display of public affection. Darcy could pick out the sound of Thor’s inhumanly loud wolf whistle. Clint, Sam, Rhodes, and Bruce all began to ‘Boo’ them teasingly. And Natasha and Helen made feminine ‘aww’ sounds. Only Maria Hill and Steve were noticeably silent.

When Tony grabbed her hips tightly and dipped her, Rhodes shouted, “Get a room!”

Clint quickly joked, “No, don’t! I like to watch.”

The group then began to direct their scorn onto Clint, ‘Booing’ and heckling the archer. Natasha bantered sharply, “I know at least one little lady who would be interested in hearing that fact.”
Clint’s voice quavered as he repeated, “I take it all back!”

When Tony broke away from her lips, Darcy’s eyes fluttered dazedly. He stared at her lovingly as he brought her out of the dip and set her back on her feet. He kissed her chastely one more time before he turned to everyone and cleared his voice, redirecting their attention back on them.

Tony smirked as he proclaimed, “Why don’t you all discuss Clint’s deep seeded psycho-sexual issues while I take Darcy and get her a drink.”

Darcy waved at the others as she allowed Tony to guide her away from the group. As they reached the bar Tony set about making them drinks and quietly he asked, “Is it really so terrible waking up and seeing me?”

“No.” Darcy answered in a depressed tone, “I’m just…you know-”

“Disappointed.” Tony said flatly as he grabbed a cherry from the little fruit container and put five on a napkin, sliding them in front of her.

Darcy picked up a cherry and ate it as she thought of the best way to phrase what she was feeling. It had been three months since her birthday and she had been somewhat successfully dating Stephen, Tony and Pepper. She had seen Stephen only twice since then, but she didn’t begrudge him any. She always knew his path to becoming the next sorcerer supreme wasn’t one conducive to dating so she enjoyed their sporadic dates, no matter how long they lasted or how far apart they were.

Accepting her limited time with Stephen had her shifting most of her focus to her other suitor and suitress. Dating Tony and Pepper had been…unreal so far. But amazing.

It was decided by the three of them that they would try to keep their polyamorous relationship quiet, publicly speaking. And thus she and Tony rarely had ‘solo dates’ outside of the tower. However, the same rule did not apply to her and Pepper. She and Pepper went on many dates protected by the umbrella of being considered ‘gal pals’. They just made sure to keep the PDA to a minimum on those occasions.

The three of them did enjoy ‘group’ dates in public though; the press seemed to think nothing of the three of them hanging out. They’d been to Broadway musicals, fancy restaurants, dive bar karaoke nights, and a few upscale bar trivia tournaments (except after winning for three weeks consecutively they had been politely banned).

A few gossip rags had speculated about her connection to the power couple and Darcy was adjusting rather well to becoming a known figure/fodder for public consumption/having her every action scrutinized by some info-tainment show. Some suggested she was a long lost daughter of Tony’s, others a relationship therapist/mediator hired to fix a relationship on the rocks, and one even guessed that she might be a ‘surrogate’ carrying Tony and Pepper’s love child. Darcy had learned not to pay attention to the media speculation.

The three of them had been enjoying the ‘honeymoon’ period for a while. It helped that all of the Avengers knew of their relationship status, so at home in the tower, they had free reign to be as publicly affectionate as they damn well pleased.

It worried Darcy sometimes how close she had grown to Pepper and Tony in the last three months. She had been basically living with them before they got together romantically but now…they were living together together. And they had been doing so happily, since her birthday. With the exception of the last month or so.
Darcy shoved two cherries in her mouth and threw the stems down as she chewed.

It had now been 37 days since she had seen Pepper Potts in person. Intellectually, she knew that Pepper Potts was the CEO of Stark Industries and as such Darcy totally understood that Pepper had to travel, and work late…and early…and a lot…but, still she missed her girlfriend.

Face time, texting, sexting, and phone calls only did so much.

“‘I can’t believe I’m not in Japan right now.’ Darcy muttered as she accepted the glass Tony pressed into her hand.

“I can’t believe I was jealous about you getting to surprise Pep without me ’cause I got called away on a mission,” Tony took a long sip from his glass before continuing, “And now here you are and here I am, and Pepper remains unsurprised..I assume you never met up with her?”

Darcy tilted the glass around watching the amber liquid swish about the glass as she grumbled, “Nope. Never saw her.”

“Damn shame.” Tony grunted before he gulped down the rest of his drink. He set about pouring another muttering, “Well; now I feel guilty for hogging all the sexy dressed up Darcy time.”

Darcy snorted into her glass as she took tentative sip of the hard liquor concoction. It was bitter and she made a face as she swallowed it down. Yesterday, she had been filled with giddy excitement and now she just felt like…a deflated balloon.

She and Tony were all set to fly to Tokyo and surprise Pepper, force her to take a couple days off and spend some quality time together, but then Tony got called away for Avengers business. She hadn’t been sure about going through with the plan without him, but Tony had ultimately convinced her it was what he wanted.

“Back where I started.” Darcy complained quietly as she took a bigger sip from her drink, “Endured a 15 hour flight, with a scary turbulence episode to boot..and I’m back where I fucking started.”

Darcy finished off the drink with a wince and slid the empty glass over to Tony and put her arms on the bar, leaning against it heavily as he poured her another.

“And you flew commercial for some insane reason.” Tony added as she took her glass back, “I commend you on your commitment to maintaining secrecy; if I had been with you, you know that wouldn’t have happened.”

“She would have figured it out if we used the private jet.” Darcy whined.

Tony saluted her with his glass, “Which is why you’re the best.”

Darcy smiled sadly and clinked her glass against Tony, both of them saying ‘cheers’ before taking a sip from their glass.

Leaning over to Tony, she whispered, “There were two babies on the flight Tony.”

“Jesus.”

“Two! God…it was so terrible. Trapped in a tin can with two screaming little fuckers—it was hell, but I was willing to endure it, willing to put up with it--”

“You were in first class though right?” Tony asked.
Darcy gave him a pointed look, “First class doesn’t mean soundproof.”

“I’m going to make you a medal.” Tony declared with a flourish, “Best girlfriend—no, most valuable—um, number one…I’ll think of something clever to put on it later.”

“I sat on a plane for 15 hours, sat in traffic for 2, dealt with a rude concierge whose rudeness totally translated despite the language barrier. Then I waited for another 3 hours in Pepper’s empty hotel room. Damn straight I deserve a fucking medal.” Darcy began to get emotional as she realized everything she had gone through was all for nothing.

“God, Tony…I tried to stay awake. I—I watched TV, changed my outfit a dozen times, put on makeup took it off only to put it back on again, I tried. But…I—” A few angry tears leaked out and Tony subtly shifted them so they were completely facing away from the others. Additionally he took off his suit jacket draping it over her shoulders gallantly.

Darcy picked up her glass and drained it, drinking the entire thing in one go. Popping the last two cherries in her mouth she slipped her arms into Tony’s jacket sleeves, berating herself under her breath, “I can’t believe I fucking teleported. I can’t believe that after all that effort, all that time spent trying to get to her, I ruined it! I ruined everything.”

Tony’s hand snaked around her waist, pulling her close so their sides were pressed up against one another. Tony quietly counseled, “Don’t—you didn’t. Darcy. Honey, don’t say that. Nothing’s ruined.”

Darcy sagged against Tony as he rubbed her back. She tried to maintain her composure as she explained, “I ruined the plan! Our plan. Our super secret sexy see Pepper in person plan.”

“So what? We’ll come up with another plan.” Tony consoled as he nuzzled her neck, “We are very crafty.”

Darcy sighed, “I’m just disappointed. And sad. I feel…like a failure, a big..fat stupid head.”

“You’re the opposite of stupid.” Tony argued as he kissed his way up and down her neck, “And I like your head.”

“I’m a bad girlfriend.” Darcy asserted with a frown, “We are Pepper’s shitty girlfriend.”

“We are Pepper’s amazing sexy understanding girlfriend…and boyfriend…I’m not a girl.” Tony denied comically, making her smile despite her sour mood.

She let out a quiet moan as Tony licked at her pulse point and the hand wrapped around her waist tightened, squeezing her hip in pleasant way.

Unable to shake her gloomy feelings despite Tony’s effort, Darcy’s voice sounded matter-of-fact as she professed, “Well, I’m a shitty super powered person who is in no way super. You can’t deny that. I mean, I still can’t even control my power. After all this time! And it’s fucking up all my carefully laid romantic plans, not to mention my life as a whole.”

Darcy closed her eyes as she felt a tear slide down her face, with a quivering lip she continued, “I flew all the way to another country and I only got to see the airport and I only interacted with a crazy cabbie and a snooty concierge and its bullshit! I’m bullshit. And…and, I’m—I feel shitty and stupid and I bad and I don’t deserve to feel good, so get off me.”

Tony pulled away from kissing her neck and stared at her with concern. Darcy wiped at her face as more frustrated tears fell from her eyes. With his back against the bar, Tony pulled her into his arms
and Darcy just sank into him. He held her for a minute, letting her quietly cry into his shoulder as he squeezed her tight.

The problem with dating two people at the same time, for Darcy, was balancing. For the first month, when all three of them were together, she sometimes felt a little like an outsider. Tony and Pepper were such a tight knit power couple it was intimidating. They made inside jokes that she didn’t get. They referenced dates and past experiences, she wasn’t aware of/privy to. They had history. They had a certain level of comfort with each other that she…lacked. They were just naturally, in sync, and Darcy worried that adding her to the mix was throwing everything off.

Pepper and Tony, sensing this worked very hard to make her feel included, and it worked. By month two, she was the one making inside jokes that the other Avengers didn’t understand. She teased Tony and Pepper every time they went somewhere with sea food, referencing the date where she felt bad for the lobsters and Tony and Pepper, moved by her emotion, bought all the lobsters in the restaurant, leading them to spend the rest of the date at Coney Island down by the water releasing the poor lobsters back into the ocean. All three of them became…a real…threesome.

She became more comfortable with both of them, more…intimate. Physically and emotionally. The more time they spent together, the easier everything felt, the more history they built together. By end of month two, Darcy was in love with them both, but held back from saying so, not wanting to jinx anything.

It was amazing and everything seemed perfect and then…Pepper had to go back to work.

Darcy didn’t begrudge Pepper this anymore than she did Stephen for focusing on his mystic arts studies. However, as she saw less and less of Pepper, she became closer and closer to Tony which made her feel more and more guilty.

She had never been in a polyamorous relationship before and Darcy was becoming increasingly paranoid about screwing it up somehow.

It felt like they were ignoring Pepper, even though she was the one constantly pulled away for work. It felt like she was stealing Tony away from Pepper in some ways. And Darcy didn’t want that! She didn’t want to replace Pepper, she wanted to be with Pepper. And Tony… And Stephen.

And that kind of thinking just spiraled into thoughts of self-abasement, thoughts about her being a greedy asshole who deserved to have all of her relationships explode in her face. Neither Tony nor Pepper had complained and yet…Darcy worried about favoring one over the other. That’s why surprising Pepper on her business trip meant so much to her.

Darcy sniffled and hid her face in Tony’s neck as her tears began to die down. Suddenly so embarrassed, she wished she knew how to turn invisible. She knew that at the very least Thor, Steve, and Natasha had all heard every word she and Tony had said with their enhanced hearing. The others probably saw her sniveling like a five year old and she…she was just mortified at displaying such weakness in front of the strongest people on the planet.

“I love you.” Tony whispered quietly, surprising her and getting her out of her own thoughts.

Automatically Darcy responded, “I love you too.”

After a beat Tony said, “I’m in love with you.”

“I…” Darcy bit her lower lip. They hadn’t exchanged ‘in love with you’s’ yet and while she knew that she loved Pepper and Tony unconditionally, there was a difference between loving someone and
being *in love* with someone. Admitting it now, without Pepper being there with them felt wrong somehow so she remained quiet.

“I just wanted to state it for the record.” Tony pulled away slightly and raised her chin up with a delicate finger, forcing her to meet his eyes, “I’m in love with you because of a million reasons. But I love you, platonically, because you are good. And smart. And kind, sweet, thoughtful, fun, funny, which are two different traits and shouldn’t be lumped in together.”

Tony wiped away the remnants of her tears with his thumbs, cupping her cheeks and holding her face in his hands when he was done. “I love you and Pepper loves you and we both know how much you love us.”

“Platonically?” Darcy asked.

“Platonically, romantically, parasitically…all the ways.” Tony’s mustache twitched, “We love you all the ways…I love you all the ways.”

“Even destructively?” Darcy asked with a wry smile.

“Big time.” Tony confirmed as he released her face and wrapped his arms around her waist, pulling her close for a chaste kiss on the lips, “Totally paranoid about anything happening to you, fuels my super heroics and makes me extra protective over the Earth and/or whatever planet you happen to be on.”

It was no secret to Tony’s nearest and dearest that he used a mask, acted a certain way with most people. Tony was so good at putting on the ‘Tony Stark’ show, that most of the world believed that’s who he truly was. Only a handful of people knew better. Darcy saw vulnerability in his expression it sent a shiver through her as it always did when Tony exposed his real self to her.

“Being in love with you. And Pepper…it makes me want to be more powerful to be able to protect you. To protect our home, from any—from everything that might come after us. And I’ve seen…Most of the time I feel like shit. Sometimes I feel like a big stupid head too. Like a failure.” Darcy put her hands on his chest and shook her head, silently arguing with him, but Tony kept on, “I don’t have any powers. I’m just a man. I’m just—I’m doing all that I can to protect you. Everything I can think of. And I worry that it’s not enough. That I’m…not enough.”

“You’re enough Tony.” The honesty in Tony’s voice hurt her heart and Darcy couldn’t help but want to heal him, “And take it from me, having power and being powerful are two very different things.”

Tony kept his eyes down but smiled at her words.

“I’m sorry for acting crazy.” Darcy apologized as Tony lifted his gaze and she felt the tension bleed out of his body.

“I’m having a hard time separating my love for you and my love for Pepper and when you speak for the both of you, it…confuses everything.” Darcy confessed, “I love you and I’m…I don’t want—I don’t want anyone to be left out. Me. You. Pepper. And the thought of not seeing Pepper, not getting to touch her…it’s been a month Tony. We haven’t seen her for a *month* and I’ve been feeling really guilty about that lately because, I just keep falling deeper and deeper in love with you and---”

Tony pulled her in for a deep kiss, his tongue sliding into her mouth as he selfishly kissed her so skillfully that her brain actually stopped worrying for a minute and she just…enjoyed the kiss. And then he just kept on kissing her that way. So, she kept on not thinking. *Just feeling.*
The kissing transformed into a full on make out session and somehow Tony ended up sitting on top of the bar and she ended up in his lap with her legs wrapped around his waist. In between kisses Tony promised to personally clear a full week in Pepper’s schedule for the three of them to get together and reaffirm the bonds that brought them together in the first place. And to talk, to plan and hopefully tan.

Darcy was thinking an island resort. She and Tony agreed a sexy vacation was needed for all three of them.

Darcy had just unbuttoned Tony’s vest and pushed it off his shoulders when a jeering male voice broke them apart, “You know we’re all still in the room right?”

Darcy squeaked as she pulled back so abruptly she almost toppled off the bar. Tony’s hands on her bottom saved her though and without missing a beat he yelled back, “Shut up Rhodey.”

“I would also like to voice my displeasure at having to watch my chosen Sister be defiled as well.” Thor added.

Darcy turned around and glared at him repeating, “Defiled? Really?”

In a deadpan voice Thor responded plainly, “I do not want to watch you have sex with Stark.”

“No one’s forcing you to watch big guy.” Tony quipped. And a hot blush rose up her body.

Darcy quickly dismounted Tony. Carefully jumping back down to the floor, she smoothed down her dress as she grumbled, “We wouldn’t have had sex on top of the bar.”

“While you all were here.” Tony finished as he re-buttoned his vest.

“Yeah,” Rhodes teased, “Sure.”

Surveying the Avengers Darcy took note of the abundance of take out containers littering the table and the absence of Sam Wilson.

“Where’d Sam go?” Darcy asked as she entwined her hand with Tony’s and they made their way back over to the assembly of Avengers.

“Had a hot date.” Steve supplied with a smile, “He said to tell you goodbye when you came up for air.”

“Oh.”

As they passed, Tony clapped Thor on the shoulder, “And for the record big guy, if anyone’s worthy of defiling your sister, it’s me.”

“Why not pick up the hammer and prove it then?” Maria challenged.

“But it’s a trick.” Clint claimed while spinning a chopstick one handedly.

“No, no it’s more than that.” Thor denied.

Deepening his voice Clint tried to evoke Odin, “Whosoever be he worthy shall haveth the power…
Whatever man, it’s a trick.”

Darcy settled down on the couch with Thor and Steve, smiling as Steve scooted over making room for her. Tony settled on the arm rest next to her, his hand sliding under her hair so he could massage the back of her neck.

Thor gestured to Mjolnir which was sitting on the square coffee table in between an empty beer bottle and a container of chow mein, “Well, please be my guest.”

“C’mon.” Tony encouraged.

“Really?” Clint questioned.

“Yeah.” Thor said with a bright smile, as Clint got to his feet Thor gave her a look of glee and Darcy rolled her eyes. Thor loved it when people tried to pick up Mjolnir and failed. It made him feel special.

“Now this is gonna be beautiful.” Rhodes commented.

“Clint you’ve had tough week we won’t hold it against you if you can’t get it up.” Tony teased causing everyone to chuckle.

“Don’t do it.” Darcy advised, “You can’t do it.”

Clint gave her a look, “You know I’ve seen this before right.”

Darcy nodded and Clint took tight grip of Mjolnir, and let out an embarrassing noise of exertion, he covered well by laughing at himself and claiming, “I still don’t know how you do it.”

“Smell the silent judgment?” Tony jeered.

“Please, Stark. By all means.” Clint gestured with his hand, challenging Tony.

Darcy reached out and grabbed Tony’s hand shaking her head, “You can’t lift it.”

Tony rolled his eyes and stood anyway. With swagger he stalked forward towards the hammer claiming, “I’m never one to shrink from an honest challenge.”

Darcy snorted as Tony slipped his hand into the leather strap and gripped the handle of the hammer, declaring it ‘physics’.

“Alright so if I lift it. I rule Asgard?” Tony asked.

“Yes of course.” Thor assured him.

Darcy leant over Steve and swatted Thor’s arm, “You’re such a secret troll Thor.”

As he adjusted his grip Tony declared, “I will be reinstituting prima nocta.”

“Ew.” Darcy exclaimed, “Boo! Now I want to watch you fail.”

Tony pulled on Mjolnir for a few seconds then took off the strap from around his wrist, “I’ll be right back.”

“Can you lift it?” Steve asked turning to her.
“Only I can lift it.” Thor pronounced with a big grin, “Only I am worthy of being Thor.”

Darcy pressed her lips together and suppressed a grin; Steve still looked at her expectantly. Darcy gestured to Thor, “You heard the big guy, only Thor can wield Mjolnir.”

“But can you lift it?” Steve pressed.

“I’ve never tried.” Darcy answered evasively, “Lifting the hammer isn’t just about being judged worthy or not worthy by a hunk of Uru metal.”

“What’s Uru metal?” Maria questioned.

Darcy ignored her gesturing to Mjolnir, “Lifting the hammer is fulfilling a magical contract. It’s…not a reward, it’s a title. A mantle. You lift Mjolnir and you are bestowed the powers of Thor. And…the responsibility that comes with being a protector of the realm.”

There was silence as everyone stared at the motionless hammer the immensely powerful object seemed almost ominous, just sitting there, being so damn powerful and selective.

“I don’t want the power of Thor.” Darcy declared, breaking the silence, “I don’t need to be farting lightning all over the place.”

After a beat, everyone was laughing.

“I do not fart lightning!” Thor refuted loudly, his indigent expression and the absurdity of his claim caused Darcy to cackle manically.

Darcy made fart noises with her mouth and then gestured with her fingers imitating lightning, “Pew, Pew, ppsft, ppsft, pppppffft.”

“She is jesting.” Thor said desperately, “I do not fart lightning. It heeds my call; it is not an involuntary action! And it does not exit my posterior! You’ve all seen me in battle, you know the truth.”

“I’m not joking, it’s true.” Darcy said with a straight face, turning to Thor she tried hard to maintain an honest expression, “Thor, honey, you wouldn’t know about it because it only happens when you’re sleeping, but you totally do fart lightning.”

Darcy bit the inside of her cheek as Thor’s expression morphed into one of dawning horror, “I do?”

“Mmhh.” Darcy nodded, looking down she let her hair fall into her face, obscuring the smile that fought its way onto her mouth, “I didn’t want to say anything, I didn’t know how to bring it up. And-I’m sorry to tell you like this Thor.”

“I cannot believe it.” Thor said, sounding dazed.

“You don’t actually believe her do you?” Clint asked Thor.

With crinkled brow Thor answered, “Why would I not? Darcy is my dearest Sister. She would not lie to me about such a serious affliction, especially one so embarrassing.”

Thor got up and ushered Steve to switch seats with him, so he could sit closer to her. He took her hands in his own and lowered his voice, “I’m sorry if I’ve hurt you unintentionally whilst sleeping dear Sister. I did not know that my power was so great that it found release while I was not in command of myself. Forgive me?”
Darcy exploded, laughing so hard that her stomach ached, pointing at Thor she gasped out, “This...is...why...Loki...Loki loved you....you’re so easy! Oh, my god. Oh...oh, it hurts. It hurts.”

Thor glared at her angrily and that just made her laugh harder. The longer she laughed, the softer Thor’s expression became until he too succumbed and joined her, laughing at his own gullibility.

“Oh, dearest Darcy.” Thor cried out, hugging her to his body with one arm, “Your light heart and penchant for mischief and tricks---You remind me of Loki in the best ways...you are a blessing.”

Darcy turned into Thor’s arm and hugged him back, “I love you too big brother.”

Over Thor’s shoulder Darcy spied Tony as he came back into the room with one of his Iron Man gauntlets on one arm. “HA! He’s going to try again!” She cried out pointing.

When trying to lift Mjnior with the gauntlet on didn’t work, Rhodes decided to join in and he went and got War Machine’s gauntlet. The two of them trying to lift the hammer with their armored assistance, left Darcy in stitches. She and Thor fell into each other as Tony and Rhodes taunted each other.

“Are you even pulling?”
“Are you on my team?”
“Just represent and pull.”
“Alright let’s go.”

Thor wiped away a tear as Tony and Rhodes finally gave up and sat down defeated, with a chuckle he challenged, “Anyone else?”

Darcy pet Tony’s face and cooed at him, “You did your best and that’s all that matters.”

Tony shook off her hand and pouted making her giggle.

When Bruce took his turn and tried lifting Mjnior loudly growling and vocalizing as if he was trying to invoke the Hulk or encourage him to appear...it was funny, but awkward funny and Darcy hid her smile behind her hand.

When he sat down Darcy bounced up and down, leaning across Thor to slap Steve’s knee, “Oooh, oooh. Steve! You go. You try.”

Steve smiled, amused and got to his feet gamely. Darcy gave him two thumbs up and Tony encouraged unenthusiastically, “Go Steve, no pressure.”

Steve adjusted his sleeves, pulling them up so they were above his elbows and then gripped Mjnior tightly with both hands and pulled. When the hammer budged, ever so slightly, letting out a squeak as it shifted against the table top, Darcy’s eyes shot to Thor. She stared at her Asgardian brother from another mother with concern.

Thor looked worried.

She glanced at Steve and got a little distracted by his bulging muscles. When Steve gave up with a smile Darcy turned back to Thor, happy to see a relieved smile on his face. She didn’t want the big guy getting a complex, because even though he acted like it was ‘nothing’ Thor and she both knew what that ever so slight movement of Mjnior meant.

Steve was worthy...almost, or at the very least he could be.
Everyone turned to Natasha after that. Darcy smiled at the woman with approval as Natasha turned down the offer to try lifting Mjolnir responding, “Oh, no, no. That’s not a question I need answered.”

“All deference to the man who wouldn’t be king. But it’s rigged.” Tony accused from where he, Rhodes and Clint were clumped together drinking beer.

“You bet your ass.” Clint agreed.

Maria gestured to Clint tattling, “Steve, he said a bad language word.”

“Did you tell everyone about this?” Steve questioned Tony. Darcy pinched Steve’s arm joking, “Damn, too bad Sam left already. He’s got the swear jar.”

“The handles imprinted right? Like a security code?” Tony said ignoring both of them, “Whosoever is carrying Thor’s fingerprint is I think the, literal translation?”

“Yes well, that’s a very, very, interesting theory. I have a simpler one.” Thor contended as he got up off the couch and picked up Mjolnir all dramatically, “You’re all not worthy.”

All the heroes balked at Thor’s declaration laughing until a loud piercing noise sounded. Tony took out his table/phone hybrid device and checked it as a noise sounded off again near the elevators. Darcy who was seated next to Steve now, slapped at his leg and pointed at the broken looking robot staggering around, like he didn’t see it.

“W-o-r-t-h-y.” The distorted voice came from the robot and the second it spoke Darcy sat up straighter. The voice struck a chord in her memory and she instantly knew she’d dreamt of the robot before, only she didn’t know it was a robot because when she’d heard the ominous voice it had just been a voice and a ball of color…

“No. How could you be worthy?” The robot taunted, “You’re all killers.”

“Stark.” Steve calmly said as his whole body shifted into ‘Captain America’ mode and he stood up.

“Tony?” Darcy repeated standing as well, but fully expecting Tony to be able to shut down this… sentient Iron Man suit that was walking around all creepily.

“Jarvis.” Tony called out.

“Sorry I was asleep. Or…I was a dream.” The robot said.

“Reboot Iron Legion.” Tony commanded his phone, “We’ve got a buggy suit.”

“There was a terrible noise,” The robot continued, “And I was tangled in…in …strings.”

Darcy trued walking forward wanting to be closer to Tony who was closer to the robot than any of them save Thor who stood next to him, but Steve grabbed her wrist and held her back.

“I had to kill the other guy.” The robot confessed, “He was a good guy.”

“You killed someone?” Steve questioned as he pulled Darcy back behind him, shielding her body with his own.

“Wouldn’t have been my first call.” The robot responded sounding matter-of-fact, “But down in the real world we’re faced with ugly choices.”

“Who sent you?” Thor asked and a recording began to play from the deformed Iron Man suit,
Tony’s voice played, “I see a suit of armor around the world.”

“Oh shit.” Darcy said breathily.

“Ultron!” Bruce exclaimed.

“In the flesh. Or no not yet. Not this…chrysalis.” The robot, Ultron, quipped, “But I’m ready.”

Darcy watched as Thor tightened his grip on Mjnior, and Maria Hill clicked the safety off of a gun she suddenly had in her hands.

“I’m on a mission.” Ultron declared.


“Peace in our time.” Ultron answered and then the two glass walls on either side of him exploded and three Iron Legion drones busted through and flew at the Avengers.

Darcy reacted without thinking, her hands worked without being told what to do, they just did.

She wasn’t trying to protect herself, she was trying to protect all of them. Within three seconds she had constructed her Steve inspired energy shield, but …like a huge one.

Her shield filled the whole space from floor to ceiling and Darcy stepped out from behind Steve and stalked forward until she was on the front line, in front of Tony and Thor. Glowing gold and fiery red, the familiar stripes and star comprised her circular shield, it stood between all of the Avengers and the Iron Legion drones. The reverberations of metal clanging sounded as the three Iron Legion drones slammed into her shield head first.

Like bugs on a windshield.

Two fell to the floor with detached heads, dead. The third which had to have been slightly behind the other two stopped right before impact. Hovering in mid air, the drone looked back at Ultron.

“How unexpected.” The robot said before the third flew around her shield, which while being huge, was still circular and did not block them off completely.

“Shit.” Darcy cursed and as the drone hurtled towards her. The drone lowered its head and when its shoulder hit her midsection Darcy gasped, her shield dissolving instantly as the wind was knocked out of her.

In a parody of a fireman’s carry the drone shot up into the air carrying Darcy over its shoulder. Darcy watched in horror as Ultron shot at Rhodes and sent him flying through a glass partition, falling onto the balcony of the level below. Gun shots sounded as Maria began to fire on the robot.

“Sister!” Thor shouted, as he threw Mjnior at such an angle that it knocked the robot out from under her, freeing her….to fall.

“FUCK!” Darcy cried as she fell with wide eyes, in her head she tried assuring herself that the fall wouldn’t kill her only break an arm or a leg but she was still terrified.

Steve came from nowhere, tackling her out of the air, holding onto her tightly as he tucked and rolled them to the ground. Safely, but none too gently.

“Are you alright?” Steve asked.
“Think so.” Darcy trembled, “Nothing feels broken.”

“Stay down.” Steve ordered as he hopped back to his feet and ran to the coffee table, picking it up and using as a shield as he ran straight at Ultron. Darcy watched in horror as a repulsor blast knocked Steve off his feet and then the robot shifted to fire on Bruce and Natasha who made a mad dash for the bar seeking cover. A fourth Iron Legion suit suddenly appeared out of nowhere and flew past them holding Loki’s scepter.

The suit made to fly out the window, but Thor noticed it too. With a mighty yell Thor threw himself at the robot, knocking the scepter free. The other drone scooped it up as it flew past firing repulsor blasts in Maria and Clint’s direction.

Darcy created another energy shield, silently thanking Karl Mordo in her head for being such an amazing teacher, she used the shield to protect herself from the various debris that was flying all over the place, not to mention repel the odd repulse blast.

Darcy watched as Natasha peeked her head out from behind the bar and began shooting at the drones. Then Steve jumped onto a drone and tried punching it…like an idiot.

The drone use it’s gauntlets to speed fly backwards, smashing Steve into the wall and freeing itself before it picked up Steve and threw him to the ground.

Something exploded and Darcy screamed as Clint slide along the floor. Darcy made her shield bigger, as she backed up spying Helen Cho out the corner of her eye. Knowing the woman was a doctor and not a superhero, Darcy decided to stick close to her and do what she could to keep the non-super-powered affiliated person alive.

Darcy watched with her heart in her throat as Tony, her Tony, took a running jump off the second floor landing and jumped onto the back of one of the drones that was flying in mid air.

He wasn’t wearing his suit. If he had missed his target…

He wasn’t a super solider. If he fell…

He was a squishy human with a screwdriver. If he died…

“THOR!” Darcy called out, dropping her shield so she could point to Tony, Thor stopped and frowned. He abandoned trying to catch the drone that held the scepter and went to Tony’s aid at her behest.

“I got it!” Steve yelled out as he ran after the robot carrying the scepter.

Tony however, being a stubborn asshole, rebuked Thor. Even over all of the chaos Darcy could hear him as he yelled at Thor, “What the hell Thundershock? This is my robot. Go get the scepter.”

Thor rolled his eyes before flying after Steve. Darcy let out a cry of frustration and abandoned protecting Helen. She would probably be fine.

She ran until she was directly under Tony as he fiddled his screwdriver, jamming it into the neck of the drone.

“What the fuck Tony!” She screamed up at him.

“One sec. One second.” Tony replied distractedly. Darcy didn’t know what she could do to help, but if the only thing she contributed was to break Tony’s fall when he disabled the drone and fell out of
the sky, then that is what she was going to do.

More gunshots went off and more explode-y noises erupted all around her but Darcy stood stock still under Tony as he rode the drone like a mechanical bull in midair until with a final slam of the screwdriver, the drone powered down.

And Tony started falling. Darcy quickly erected another energy shield but this time she angled it so Tony could slide along its surface and gently tumble to the floor…onto the broken glass.

“Shit.” Darcy cursed as she watched Tony get up, his eyes wild until he found her.

“You okay?” He questioned. Darcy nodded and let out a squeak as Steve’s shield when whizzing by her face only to land into the chest of the another drone, shattering the robot into pieces upon impact.

“Well, that was dramatic.” Ultron quipped as things quieted down.

“What is with the running commentary?” Darcy said to herself as the malformed Iron Suit robot continued to monologue.

“I know you mean well, you just didn’t think it through. You want to protect the world, but you don’t want it to change. How is humanity saved if it’s not allowed to…evolve.? With these, these puppets, there’s only one path to peace. The Avengers extinction.”

Darcy extended her hands and visualized creating a shield inside the robot bisecting it half, just as Thor threw Mjnior and hit it straight in the chest, knocking it back onto the floor.

“I had strings and now I’m free.” Ultron creepily sang before powering down completely.

Not a second of quiet passed before Darcy screamed, “WHAT THE FUCK?!”

“Darcy--” Steve called out, limping slightly toward her.

“NO! Somebody tell me, what the actual fuck! What the fuck was that!?” Darcy screeched pointing at the robot, “Why would—how could---why does the robot know about Pinocchio?! What even is that!?”

“Haven’t you made claims to see the future?” Maria said as stood up and shook broken glass from off her person, “Shouldn’t you already know?”

Darcy glared and crossed her arms. She hadn’t been happy when Maria had been made privy to her ability but through the combined persuasion and vouching of Pepper and Tony, Darcy had agreed to let Maria, Natasha, and Clint into her inner circle of people she trusted with the truth. She regretted it now more than ever.

“Don’t be a bitch.” Tony chastised as he made his way over to her, grabbing her up in his arms he hugged her tightly then began to run his hands over her body. Darcy did the same to him. They spoke at the same time asking each other,

“Are you okay?”

“Where are you hurt?”

“I’m fine.” Tony denied, wincing as she found a bloody gash on his forearm and poked it. Ignoring his own injuries, he repeated himself, “Are you okay?”

“I’m—I’ve got an adrenaline high going on right now so, I don’t know. I think all my internal organs
are in the right place and everything.” Darcy answered seriously patting her stomach where the drone had tackled her like a linebacker.

“Your abilities have grown since last I’ve seen.” Thor conceded, his big heavy hand landing on her shoulder, “You fought well.”

Darcy put her hand over his and blinked away the tears that were suddenly threatening to fall, “Thanks Thor.”

“Seriously,” Maria said in a gentler voice, “You didn’t see this coming?”

Darcy stiffened, “No. I…I did not see an evil robot breaking up the after party coming.”

Natasha and Bruce helped a limping Rhodes over to them as Clint led a shaking Helen over from the opposite direction. Darcy gestured to the smashed up tower, “If this was going to happen I would have warned you.”

“You called it Ultron?” Natasha stated, giving Bruce a pointed look over Rhodes head.

“Wait, before…Hill’s right. I did--I heard its voice. I dreamt about that voice.” Darcy confessed quietly, closing her eyes she tried to remember all that the voice had said in her dreams, “I dreamt of the same voice saying something like,”

Darcy made her voice as deep and low as she could, imitating the creepy sultry tones of the Ultron robot to the best of her ability, “‘I was designed to save the world’..”’Do you see the beauty of it? The inevitability? You rise, only to fall…. “The purity of them. Boom! The end. Start again. The world made clean for the new man to rebuild. I was meant to be new. I was meant to be beautiful.”

When she opened her eyes, everyone was staring at her and she felt like a freak.

Clint broke first, glaring, “And you didn’t think to share that information with the rest of the class?”

“It was just a voice. Just a voice coming from a holographic ball of light.” Darcy defended.

“Tony.” Bruce said as Thor squared his shoulders and faced down Clint, aligning himself with her and Tony.

“Interpreting visions of the future is no easy task. It drives more mad than problems it forewarns.” Thor said defensively.

Clint held his hand up, “Alright, whatever.”

“Let’s head up to the lab.” Tony suggested.

“All our work is gone, Ultron cleared out. Used the internet as an escape hatch.” Bruce revealed.

“Ultron.” Steve scoffed.

“He’s been in everything, files, surveillance. He probably knows more about us than we know about each other.” Natasha announced. She and Clint exchanged a knowing look as Rhodes stood up, holding his shoulder and addressed the group.
Darcy pulled on Clint’s arm as they other’s talked, ignoring everyone else, she focused on Clint reassuring him, “He won’t find them.”

“Find who?” Clint asked with narrowed eyes.

“Your family.” Darcy whispered, “Your kids.”

Clint’s eyes widened, “You know about…?”

“I’ve know for a while. I didn’t say anything because…kids, ya know? Also, it made me not trust you or Natasha. Knowing you two have a secret family stashed away somewhere…knowing you didn’t even trust *Captain America*? It seemed kind of suspicious. But…kids, ya know? So I kept quiet about it…your welcome.”

“I…I…” Clint stuttered.

“It’s okay.” Darcy promised, “I’m not going to say anything, I haven’t for the past year. And now that I know you better…I trust you a little more. I can’t say I understand why you’ve kept your family secret from the team, but…on the larger scale, bad guys, spies, evil in general, yeah, maybe I understand why you might have done it.”


Darcy smiled slowly at the archer, “You’re welcome.”

Tuning back into the conversation Darcy drifted away from Clint and descended the steps to the lower level, heading for Tony. Listening as Natasha said, “He wanted us dead.”

Steve countered, “He didn’t say dead, he said extinct.”

Clint added, “He also said he killed somebody.”

Just as Darcy reached Tony and put a hand on his shoulder, he stiffened and walked away from her, heading for the middle of the room where the holo displays popped up.

“But there wasn’t anybody else in the building.” Maria argued as she picked glass out of her bare feet with a tweezer. Darcy glanced down at her own stocking clad feet and wondered at her luck that her feet did not suffer the same fate, despite her stockings getting torn to shreds.

“Yes there was.” Tony held up his phone/tablet and tapped it, a distorted ball of glowing orange lights appeared. Tony turned to her and pointed, “Is this what you saw? You said you saw a holographic ball of light.”

Darcy opened her mouth to respond but…the hurt look in Tony’s eyes had her at a loss for words. She’d seen something similar to what they were looking at, but it didn’t matter now. What she saw might have been helpful if she’d told them about it before, but…honestly she didn’t think it was one of her significant dreams, she thought it was just one of her a normal, weird dreams. She didn’t even remember the dream fully until she heard Ultron’s voice again.

Looking down at the holo-display that represented Jarvis’s mutilated code Bruce marveled, “This is insane.”

“Jarvis was the first line of defense he would have shut Ultron down it makes sense.” Steve said solemnly.
“No.” Bruce argued. “He could have assimilated Jarvis, this isn’t strategy this is…rage.”

“You would know.” Thor said not unkindly. He then turned to Steve, “Where have you hidden the scepter?”

“What?”

“The scepter, in the middle of the battle, you said you had it.” Thor explained. Everyone shifted their gaze to Steve who looked panicked.

“I don’t…that’s not what I meant.” Steve denied. Darcy bit her lip as she realized how the miscommunication had happened as a result of her intervention. Calling Thor off the chase to the aid of Tony had lead to one of the drones escaping with the scepter. And it was all her fault.

“Shit.” Darcy cursed under her breath.

Thor turned and stalked up to Tony, picking him up by the throat. Darcy ran forward as Tony plead, “C’mon buddy use your words.”

“I have more than enough words to describe you Stark.” Thor glared as Tony grabbed onto Thor’s hand, trying to get his friend to release him.

Darcy slid in between Thor’s chest and Tony’s dangling body, ordering sternly, “Let him go.”


“Now we have to retrieve the scepter. Again.” Thor growled. Darcy pushed against his chest hard, forcing him back a few steps.

“So the fuck what? You did it once you can do it again.” Darcy asserted, ignoring everyone else and focusing on Thor, “But if you ever fucking put your hands on my boyfriend again, I swear, farting lightning bolts will be the least of your worries.”

Thor gave her a confused look and Darcy wilted a little, “Just pretend I said something less ridiculous and really threatening okay?”

Thor nodded and Darcy grabbed his hand giving it a squeeze, staring up at him she let all her worry and pain show on her face. Thor’s face softened and she saw a hint of shame.

“I…apologize.” Thor said with a tilt of his head.

Darcy hugged one of Thor’s massive arms, muttering “Damn straight.”

She loved Thor and seeing him hurt Tony…left her questioning herself and her allegiances. She honestly didn’t know what she would have done to Thor if he hadn’t released Tony, but…she was certain she would have done something. Something to hurt Thor and that…scared her.

Helen spoke for the first time since everything got explode-y, “I don’t understand. You built this program. Why is it trying to kill us?”

Tony let out a self-deprecating laugh and Bruce shook his head trying dissuade him as everyone else exchanged annoyed looks.

“You think this funny?” Thor questioned, Darcy held tight to his arm, prepared to restrain him if need be.
“No. It’s probably not, right?” Tony said as he turned away from the computer consol and took all of them in.

His affable manner was off putting. Tony continued to babble blithely, “This is very terrible. Is it so…” He actually giggled as he spoke, “It is, it’s so terrible.”

“This could have been avoided,” Thor tried to stride forward but she held him back, looking down at her, Thor relented and held still as he spoke, “—If you hadn’t played with something you don’t understand.”

“No, I’m sorry,” Tony strode up to her and Thor, totally defeating the purpose of Darcy holding the angry god back. “I’m sorry it is funny. It’s a hoot that you don’t get why we need this.”

“Need a killer robot?” Darcy questioned at the same time Bruce said, “Tony, maybe this might not be the right time..”

This prompted Tony to turn away from her and Thor and verbally attack Bruce.

“Really? That’s it? You just roll over and show your belly, every time somebody snarls?”

“Only when I’ve created a murder-bot!” Bruce replied calmly.

“We didn’t.” Tony asserted, “We weren’t even close! Were we close to an interface?”

Bruce made a face and shrugged. Darcy suddenly realized what ‘Ultron’ was meant to be. What Tony and Bruce had hoped he would be. A shield of armor around the world? The Iron Legion? More than Jarvis is—was, Ultron was meant to be an actual Avenger. A robot Avenger that could learn and grow and think and make moral righteous choices and live forever. He really was designed to save the world.

Darcy had no idea what went so wrong during the execution but she knew without a shadow of doubt, that Ultron was created, with only the best of intentions. Which is probably why everything went to hell.

When Tony began bantering with Rhodes about the Chitari invasion Darcy abandoned introspection and refocused on the present as Tony ranted.

“A hostile alien army came charging in through a hole in space…we’re standing 300 feet below it. We’re the Avengers. We can bust arms dealers all the live-long day, but…that up there? That’s the endgame. “

Darcy couldn’t help but recognize the fear that underlined everything Tony was saying and her heart ached for him, because he wasn’t wrong. Earth was not equipped to deal with the rest of the galaxy, she knew how outclassed they were first hand. She’d seen the technology that Rocket used on the Milano that was light-years ahead of anything on Earth, not to mention everything on Asgard.

Tony then asked flippantly, “How were you guys planning on beating that?”

“Together.” Steve responded.

“We’ll lose.” Tony challenged.

“Then we’ll do that together too.” Steve said.

Darcy slowly raised her hand, “Um, Steve?...That’s not very reassuring.”
“Wasn’t trying to be.” Steve said solemnly.

“Isn’t that your job though? Inspire the troops? Lead them into battle, hoorah?” Steve looked at her with a blank look and Darcy averted her gaze to the floor, mumbling, “Never mind.”

Steve issued an order to find Ultron and everyone suddenly started doing things. Darcy walked past Bruce, patting him on the shoulder and giving him an understand look as she moved to be by Tony’s side. He was hunched over a consol, looking at nothing.

Darcy wrapped her arm around one of Tony’s and leant her cheek against his shoulder, just standing quietly next to him while he used his big brain to hopefully think of a way to get them out of all this.

After about five minutes she closed her eyes and felt herself drifting...

Darcy’s “Seducing Pepper Potts” Outfit

Realized the Panties were to small to read so I did this..
Chapter 25 - Pietro Maximoff

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up with Pietro.

Chapter Notes

So...Today/yesterday was my birthday. I spent the morning/afternoon with my family and I have a party planned with my friends tomorrow. I spent most of the evening/night writing this so...I hope you like it. I stayed up an hour later than I was supposed too because I wanted to get something out this week and I knew I'd never get to it tomorrow. So...enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 25 – Pietro Maximoff

“This is an unexpected but most welcome surprise,” An unfamiliar accented voice whispered in her ear; however it was the groping hands on her chest that woke her fully.

“You’re definitely not my sister,” The voice commented sounding groggy as the male hand cupped her breast and weighed in his hand, he purred, “Hello there beautiful lady.”

Darcy’s eyes snapped open as a cold face nuzzled at her neck from behind her now horizontally lying body. It was a jarring experience to fall asleep in one place and wake up in another, it was even worse to be standing and awaken lying down.

From across the room possibly, however it was too dark to determine precisely where, another voice rang out, equally as accented and sleepy but decidedly feminine, “What did you say Pietro?”

Darcy searched her mind but couldn’t recall any man named Pietro...she stiffened as the groping hands fell away from her breasts and wrapped around her middle, pulling her back more fully to press up against a muscled male body. Darcy let out a squeak as the man, Pietro, inadvertently hugged her around the middle, in the exact spot the Ultron drone had tackled her at. Unawares, he hid his face in her hair, breathing deeply, “No. I like this dream, do not wake me yet sister.”

Darcy tried to gently pull away from the man holding her but he was strong and didn’t seem to want to let her go. Just as she was about to make him let her go, a red light illuminated the room all of a sudden. It was dim, but it cast the room in enough light for Darcy to see a woman sitting up and staring at her. The woman’s hand was glowing, providing the little bit of light.

“Holy shit.” Darcy whispered, “That’s cool.”

The woman’s delicate features, cast in the harsh red light made her look somewhat dangerous despite her tiny frame. Darcy quickly looked around taking in her surroundings.
The room they were in was small. And sparse. It wasn’t decorated with anything. There was just a dresser near the door and the two beds on the opposite walls and a night table next to the woman’s bed. No pictures. No clutter. It was…a little depressing actually.

“I’ve seen been you before.” The woman stated quietly, her eyes narrowing. The light in the room grew brighter as her other hand began to glow.

Darcy felt a similar inkling of familiarity as she stared at the woman with the long dark hair; however no name or context came to her mind so she decided not to mention it. Darcy gave a small wave to the woman trying to appear friendly, she was the interloper afteralll.

“Uh, hi?” Darcy said unintelligently, not really knowing how to tackle this situation. The woman having powers, the un-place-able accents, the empty room, it left her feeling off kilter. Hell, Darcy didn’t even know if she was still on Earth!

“You bought me a hooker Wanda?” Pietro asked as he yawned and rolled onto his back stretching his arms up above his head, a hint of distain in his voice as he said, “An American hooker?”

Still on Earth then.

Finally free Darcy pulled back the heavy quilt that covered them and sat up. She stared groggily ahead at the woman who copied her movements…Wanda, he had said. Darcy lied instinctively correcting him, “Canadian.”

His voice returned to its friendly tone as he apologized, “Many apologizes, beautiful lady.” Once again addressing his sister, Pietro took on a petulant quality, “A Canadian hooker, Wanda? Are you really so concerned about me going out in the world and standing still long enough to get shot?”

“Not a prostitute.” Darcy defended as she stood up, once on her feet she felt an ache in her lower back and she sent a glare at the bed. It was either very lumpy/unsupportive or all her time living it up with Pepper and Tony had left her with a taste for the finer things in life and a case of the ‘Princess and the Pea’ syndrome.

Finally getting a good look at Pietro she had woken up beside, Darcy smiled at the handsome pouting guy before forcing herself to affect a more neutral face. Nine times out of ten she woke up next to very very attractive people, truly a gift and a curse.

“Sorry, my bad.” Darcy apologized holding up her hands, “I have the wrong house, the wrong bed, the wrong guy.” She let out a half hearted laugh, “Seriously, must partyed a little too much last night.”

Darcy gestured down to her rumpled gown and ripped tights, “As you can see.”

She pointed at the door as she walked towards it, “I’ll just let myself out?”

There was an unexpected gust of wind and a blur and then Pietro, who had been laying in bed behind her was suddenly standing in front of her, cutting off her escape.

The fact that she was ‘trapped’ in a room with two unknown but obviously powered people was a little…disquieting. Darcy swallowed thickly and took a step back as she looked up at Pietro’s smiling eyes. He might have been half naked, with a serious case of bed head, but he was still intimidating
looking with his thick arms and buff physique.

“Surely you will not leave so soon?” Pietro asked with a teasing lilt. The light that had been illuminating the room in red, suddenly transformed with a tiny click. Darcy turned around just as Wanda, closed her glowing hands extinguishing the red light. A lantern on the night table beside her bed now providing normal non-super-powered lighting to the room.

Darcy had a fleeting thought of concern over how terrible she must look. She ran a hand over her hair knowing it must be a knotted mess, and no doubt her makeup was a smudged mess. She righted the Asgardian diadem, it being askew and barely hanging on to her head being the only thing she could really fix about her appearance in the moment.

“I’m very sorry about all of this. I didn’t mean to break into your home—” Darcy tried to apologize but Wanda interrupted her hissing, “This hovel is not our home.”

Pietro drew her attention as he stepped a little closer to her, “We are just squatting here.”

Darcy bit her lip. There was an undercurrent of anger and suspicion coming off the younger girl in waves and it was making her very nervous. Smiling at Pietro, knowing her expression must be strained she strived to keep her voice steady, “It’s just a mistake. I didn’t mean to end up in bed with you. I have a…condition you see, it’s—I can just leave…”

Darcy turned her head back and forth looking at the guy and the girl, a tense frown on her face. Neither seemed all that keen on letting her just walk out the door without some sort of…confrontation. Darcy worried her lip as she stuttered, “I-I-I didn’t take anything—I didn’t do anything to you.”

Pietro took a step towards her as he folded his arms in front of his naked chest. His tall stature dwarfing her and making her feel small and vulnerable, even if that wasn’t necessarily true. Smirking he asked her, “But would you like to…Do something to me I mean?”

“Pietro.” Wanda scolded, but Darcy didn’t look away from Pietro, as she smiled down at her. His smile felt…wrong.

He reached out and took her hand, bringing her knuckles to his lips he kissed her hand, “I could think of several things I’d like to do to you beautiful lady.”

Darcy pulled her hand out of his grip, demurring, “Nah…I’m—I’m good, thanks.”

Pietro’s flirtations were…alarming but not…like…the most alarming? What was really freaking her out was the guys lack of reaction at her invasion. He didn’t seem curious, or angry…it was, unusual, unnatural even.

Darcy could hear Wanda approaching from behind and she blindly felt for the buttons on Tony’s borrowed suit jacket grateful he had given her the garment before she unexpected teleported yet again.

“What are you doing here?” Wanda demanded.

“I already told you. I’m here by mistake.” Still facing Pietro Darcy buttoned the buttons quickly briefly contemplating taking off the blood red opera gloves but decided against it. Her seduce Pepper outfit was really backfiring on her spectacularly…

“I don’t believe you.” Pietro accused with a smile, “Tell the truth, or better yet, let me guess? Hmm. I know! You are madly in love with me and finally could not take it anymore, you snuck in here
hoping in the middle of the night I would ravage your body, ultimately becoming so enchanted with your...charms, that I fell in love with you too.”

“Pietro!” Wanda chastised.

Darcy blinked at the guy slowly, “Uh..no.”

“Obsessed with my sister and snuck into the wrong bed?” Pietro suggested with a waggle of his eyebrows.

“No. I—I just--” Darcy clenched her jaw and her fists, “I have a weird power okay? It just, sucks and never works when or how I want it to. Perhaps you can relate?”

“I’ve seen you before.” Wanda repeated, her body much closer than Darcy realized as the woman’s breath tickled her hair.

“Yeah, well, I can’t say the same.” Darcy said, tensing as Pietro took another step closer, snugly sandwiching her in between the pair. Darcy put her hands against Pietro’s chest and pushed lightly, “Can you back up?”

“No.” Pietro said quickly grabbing her hands and keeping them pressed to his chest.

Darcy felt a...weird semi-familiar sensation. She staggered, slumping forward slightly onto Pietro’s chest as she closed her eyes and waited for the sensation to pass. It was magic. Strong, invasive magic and it was making her feel...weak. Teeth clenched Darcy bit out the words, “What are you doing to me?”

They didn’t answer her, but Pietro’s hands left hers and wrapped around her waist lightly, holding her against him more comfortably. His words were obviously directed at his sister when he spoke, “What’s wrong?”

“I can’t---” Wanda replied sounding strained, “She—she’s blocking me somehow.”

Darcy whimpered, “Whatever you’re doing please stop, I feel like you’re sitting on my brain.”

The pressure, the weird sensation abruptly stopped. And Darcy sighed in relief.

“Who is she?”

“I don’t know. I couldn’t get inside her mind.” Wanda said sounding annoyed.

Darcy bristled, “Rude much?”

“Rude?” Pietro laughed, his chest vibrating against her own, “You are the one accosted us!”

Darcy pushed off of his chest, backing up and turning so they were all facing each other and no longer caging her into the weirdest incestuous threesome ever. “I didn’t do anything!” Darcy retorted, “What the fuck was that?!”

“You snuck up on us, on me. I didn’t think that was possible but you did it. You got as close as possible to my brother while he was completely defenseless.” Wanda admitted, “I tried to enter your mind to find out more about who and what you are.”

“Still rude.” Darcy quipped as she backed away from the pair of them until her back hit the wall, giving her something to lean against while also not taking her eyes off the duo.
“You must be very powerful to be able to withstand my sister’s mental probe.” Pietro said casually as he and Wanda advanced forward, stopping in front of her, leaving only an arm’s length in between them.

“I wouldn’t count on it.” Darcy mumbled as her mind raced. She knew she wasn’t that magically adept, nor powerful enough to block an attack as potent as the one she felt. So, she had no idea why the witches attempts to get inside her mind failed, she was just glad they did.

“I teleport into people’s beds when I’m asleep…when their asleep.” Darcy announced trying to take control of the conversation/interrogation.

“Really?” Pietro said sounding excited.

Darcy nodded, “It sucks. I–I can’t control it. It’s involuntary and random. And I’m sorry if I… worried you? Or whatever. But, I swear I didn’t come here to hurt you.”

Wanda raised her hands, which were once again glowing red, her hands hovered over Darcy’s face before moving down over her chest, then back up to her head. She lingered at the top of her head for about a half a minute before Darcy became annoyed and asked, “Can I help you?”

Wanda scowled and let her hands drop, “Nothing.”

Trying to play nice despite the weird personal space invading witches attempt to get in her mind yet again, Darcy rose her hands up in a comedic shrug, “What can you do? Performance issues…maybe you got the yips?”

“What are the yips?” Pietro asked looking intrigued.

“It’s like performance anxiety, most commonly associated with athletes.” Darcy informed him with a raised brow.

“No.” Wanda disagreed, “You are…there is something blocking me…you, you, ---I know you.”

“Ever been to Canada?” Darcy asked.

Wanda stared at her pensively before her eyes widened and she turned to Pietro gasping, “STARK! She’s his girlfriend’s assistant! The one the papers say is secretly his daughter!”

The look of anger and disgust that came over Pietro’s features had Darcy moving her hands without thinking.

“Not his daughter,” Darcy groused as she quickly formed her shield. Pushing forward she knocked the pair back and made a run for the door. She had no illusions about outrunning Pietro so she used her shield to block the door as she walked backwards, keeping up the blockade as she looked for somewhere to go. There were several empty looking rooms in the hallway but what she really wanted was an exit.

Finding a flight of stairs she was torn. She could only maintain the shield if she was able to see where she wanted it to be. So, in order for her to flee, she’d need to lower the shield, which would release the siblings and allow them to pursue her.

Pietro was banging against her shield with his fists, which really did nothing, but when Wanda’s hands began to glow as she directed her power at the shield, Darcy knew she was in trouble. Wanda’s power was like a sledgehammer and Darcy knew she couldn’t keep the shield up for long.
Suddenly, Pietro disappeared and Darcy seized the opportunity. She pushed her shield forward, slamming it into Wanda forcing the woman onto her ass before making a mad dash back towards the room Wanda was in.

She was guessing that Pietro had left the bedroom somehow and was running around the place from the outside, making his way up the stairs where she was positioned. Hoping to trap her in between the siblings once again..force her to run straight into his arms. So, she did the opposite and ran into one of the empty rooms that was closest to the one she started from. She ducked inside just as Wanda was getting up.

Her guess was proven correct when she heard/felt Pietro run past the room and back to Wanda. She could hear the siblings talking and she held her hands out and slowly and quietly found a place to hide in the pitch black room.


“I’m fine. She knocked me down…where is she?” Wanda replied.

“I didn’t see her.”

There was a beat of silence before Wanda said, “She’s still here…I can feel it.”

“Are you sure? Perhaps she can also mess with your abilities to sense her as well as read her mind? She can teleport. Why wouldn’t she just leave?”

“She said she couldn’t control it.” Wanda argued, “And I don’t think she was lying about that. She’s…I can sense the magic in her but…she’s not as strong as me.”

“And yet she resisted.” Pietro reminded her. Her time with ‘Axel’ aka Loki in disguise, flashed in her mind and once hidden directly behind a door, Darcy began muttering an enchantment to conceal herself.

“She did resist…she’s---she’s doing something. Go! Take this, search every room start at the lower levels and work your way up, I’ll do it the old fashioned way!”

Darcy silently cursed even as her lips and mind continued to weave the Asgardian magic around herself. The spell was not a simple one, but it was her only chance and so she continued to mutter quietly.

She and Loki had used the spell to hide from a drunk they had humiliated at the local bar after he grabbed Darcy’s butt. Loki had preformed the spell, turning them all but invisible to the man who searched the alley but did not see them even as he stared directly at them.

It was more of a glamour spell than a spell of invisibility. Darcy was trying to make herself look like nothing, like blackness, darkness. A shadow on the wall.

Loki taught her the spell and she had practiced it some but it had yet to perform it successfully.

After a minute or two, Darcy fell silent as Wanda entered the room, her glowing red hands outstretched before her lighting the way. The diminutive woman walked the perimeter of the room slowly. Darcy chanted in her head, with clenched hands and tense muscles.

If Wanda found her, saw through the spell, plan be was….she didn’t even know. She’d probably end up letting out a mighty yell, running at the woman and trying to ‘girl fight’ her, pulling hair and slapping faces. It was her go to defense every time, no matter how many times Lady Sif tried to teach
Not wanting to even breathe too loudly, Darcy held her breath as Wanda neared her location. The witch grew closer and closer to her hiding spot until she stood directly in front of Darcy.

Darcy was tempted to close her eyes but she kept them open as she stared back at Wanda, who seemingly saw nothing but darkness just as her spell intended. When Wanda leaned forward, her nose almost touching Darcy’s she almost peed. Almost.

Wanda pulled back and continued to walk out the room and into the next.

Darcy didn’t let out a sigh of relief; she just stayed still, coiled tight and poised to explode into action. She could hear the sound of the woman’s footsteps as she circled the next room, the walls were paper thin. Beyond going undetected, Darcy didn’t really have a plan. These super powered siblings obviously had beef with Tony, but Darcy didn’t know what that had to do with her.

She’d never really considered the fact that by being with Tony and Pepper, being associated with them publicly, she’d made herself a target. It was a weird thought. She could be kidnapped, held for ransom, or tortured like Pepper was, just to hurt Tony. She was a valuable bargaining chip if she was lucky, or she could end up being a painful lesson about collateral damage…

As Wanda’s footsteps got further and further away, Darcy couldn’t help but worry about Tony. She had gotten attacked by a robot he helped create and now this? She resolved to lie about where she disappeared to. She didn’t need Tony buckling under the guilt and stress of her association with him causing her pain. No fucking self-sacrificing break ups for her thank you.

She would not let Tony push her away because she was targeted because she was with him.

Darcy fell silent as a gust of wind breezed into the room, running around the perimeter before exiting. Darcy allowed herself a relieved sigh as the other sibling also failed to discover her hiding place.

“Oh, beautiful lady!” Pietro called out from somewhere down the hall and then quicker than a blink of the eye he sped back into the room and stopped right in front of her.

Darcy only had time to widen her eyes in shock as he grabbed a handful of her hair and pressed a chemically smelling cloth over her nose and mouth.

“I found you.” Pietro said coldly. She tried not to breathe in even as she scrambled to grab his hair and pull at it, whilst simultaneously kicking him in the leg and trying to scratch his face with her other hand. Wanda entered behind him and Darcy felt her hands being pushed away from Pietro, pinned to the wall.

“Your magic is weak,” Wanda said with glowing eyes and hands, “Compared to mine.”

“You didn’t see this coming?” Pietro taunted as pressed the cloth harder against her face. They stood locked together, unmoving as he waited her out. Darcy knew it was pointless to hold her breath forever, she was only delaying the inevitable but she couldn’t give in. She just…couldn’t.

Darcy squeezed her eyes shut and tried to shake her head to dislodge Pietro’s hand, but his grip was too tight. She was starting to panic, becoming desperate for air, she—she couldn’t hold out—she needed air!

With a gasp, Darcy opened her mouth and finally breathed in.
“That’s it.” Wanda said calmly, “Go to sleep.”

Darcy’s eyes fluttered as the strong chemicals filled her lungs and made her head spin. She didn’t mean to, but she was just so desperate for air that she took another chemical filled breath, not finding the pure oxygen she wanted she took another.

“No!” Darcy tried to plead, her words coming out muffled behind the cloth, “Please!”

Pietro looked sad as he stared at her struggling form. Wanda came up behind him and put a hand on his shoulder and his eyes hardened.

“Goodnight beautiful lady.” Pietro said as she fell unconscious, “If only you didn’t belong to Stark.”

She woke up…later. In a…office, but out the window she could see…a warehouse? Or a factory… facility? It looked…big.

Her head felt like cotton candy submerged underwater.

Blinking, she looked down at herself. She was tied to a chair with…extension cords? Her feet and hands tied with duct tape? She felt like she couldn’t trust anything, not even what she was looking at. Her head was just too fuzzy.

“Hello!” Darcy called out weakly. No answer.

There was a desk with a lamp, but she didn’t see a phone. There was probably no one nearby to hear her yell, but she had to try…

“HELLO!” Darcy screamed, her eyes falling shut and her head falling forward. Her head throbbed as she screamed, the exertion of energy causing ripples of pain in her head.

Looking down at herself, she noticed that someone had changed her clothes and she was immediately grossed out as it was obviously done while she was unconscious and that was not okay!

She was now wearing a pair of unforgiving running pants, a man’s running shirt and a pair of red velvet combat boots?

“What the hell.” Darcy grumped, she could feel that she was braless but thankfully she felt underwear, no way to tell who’s but she could only hope it was her own. Gone were her long red opera gloves, but luckily she could feel the comforting weight of the diadem on top of her head but her hair wasn’t tickling her face, she couldn’t see it so she suspected it was pulled back with a hair tie now.

“Fuck this.” Darcy muttered as she pulled at the bonds that held her to the chair.

“Oh!” Darcy let out a surprised noise as the cords snapped free easily, even the duct tape that held her hands and feet together separated with little effort.

Darcy peeled the sticky adhesive off her skin with a hiss, it ripped out some of her arm hair and that stung, she left the tape around the base of her feet, not caring as long as it wasn’t on her skin. She rubbed her wrists; they were tender and red from the tape.

“Awesome.” Darcy muttered as she stood up from the chair. Taking a step forward she lurched to
the side and fell to the floor groaning, “Less awesome.”

It took her about five minutes to find her ‘sea legs’ and stumble her way out of the office.

As she made her way in a ‘left’ direction as quietly as she could, but the metal walkway clanked underneath her boots and uncontrollably heavy footfalls. The factory was drafty and her protruding nipples made it super obvious she wasn’t wearing a bra making her even more nervous, so when she found a woman’s hooded red coat hung over the railing she didn’t hesitate pulling it on over her foreign and thin clothing.

Buttoning it up all the way the material strained across her chest as it was about a size or two smaller than she wore, however it did button up. The coat reached her knees and looked a little like a dress and the extra thick layer made her feel more ‘dressed’ and capable. Less violated.

She was tempted to call upon Heimdall, but while she slept, she had a vision of him leading Asgardians through the city, saving people, herding them away from attack. She’d seen and recognized only him. The rest of her chemically fueled dreams had been filled with visions of Asgard burning. Dying. Asgard was about to go through some shit and she didn’t feel like stressing Heimdall out before he had to go through it. Also, she wasn’t sure the bifrost worked from indoors…

“I really need a sling ring of my own.” Darcy griped as she paused her hand on the handrail. She looked down with trepidation; she was in a weapons factory or a cache. She could see like…missiles and shit, just, lying around, however looking down was making her want to throw up a little so, she stopped doing that. Moving forward she heard the sound of distant voices and decided to walk toward them.

Friend or foe it didn’t matter. If it was a foe, they would discover she was loose anyway. If it was a friend, huzzah!

Turing a corner Darcy froze. It was Ultron and the Avengers! Wanda and Pietro seemed to have teamed up with Ultron. And no matter how it looked from how the way they were positioned, she didn’t think this little confrontation would end in a epic dance battle…

Darcy remained quiet as she caught what Ultron was saying, “—tain America. God’s righteous man, pretending you could live without a war. I can’t physically throw up in my mouth, but…”

She had two choices, one try to remain hidden or two make her prescience known.

“If you believe in peace, then let us keep it.” Thor said to the robot.

“I think you’re confusing peace with quiet.” Ultron quipped.

Tony’s modulated voice filtered out of the suits speaker, “Yuh-huh. What’s the Vibranium for?”

Ultron gesticulated as he answered, “I’m glad you asked that because I wanted to take this time to explain my evil plan!”

Ultron’s hand glowed blue for a second and then two drone bots attacked Thor and Steve as Ultron first pulled Tony toward him then pushed him away (Darcy suspected magnetically) so hard into the metal door that a big ole Iron Man dent was left behind as Tony flew forward. Ultron met him and the two started to fight in the air above the others.

Thor and Steve dispatched the drone bots rather quickly; Darcy actually laughed as Pietro ran at Thor and like…pushed him? A little? However her smile fell quickly when Wanda sent a bolt of energy at Steve, knocking him onto his back.
And then there were a bunch of other guys just…appearing out of nowhere, with guns, shooting all willy nilly. When an arrow whizzed through the air lodging into one of the random gun guys, Darcy realized that Natasha and Clint must also be around somewhere.

Darcy recognized the streak of light and blurriness that was Pietro and Darcy figured it was only a matter of time before she was discovered so she erected her shield, or she attempted too. It flickered quickly out of existence as her mind swam, black dots appearing in front of her.

“Fuck.” Darcy cursed as she fell against the wall and slid to the floor.

When Pietro’s blur sped past Mjnior Darcy laughed as he suddenly came into focus, his hands on the handle pulled him back into real time and sent him flying comically. To herself Darcy said, “Well, that was hilarious.”

Darcy struggled to get back on her feet when a gun toting random guy ran past her, knocking her down, she shouted after him, “Dick!”

He must have heard her because he turned around and with a mean look he stalked forward.

“Fuck.” Darcy grumbled as she got onto her knees, trying to stand before he reached her.

He tried to kick her in the face but, in a move that would make Lady Sif proud, she grabbed his leg mid air and twisted, throwing him off balance and making him fall to the floor. Darcy smiled triumphantly, taunting the guy, “Suck on that bitch!”

The guy lifted his head, scowled, then raised his gun and fired.

It felt like a pinprick on the center of her forehead, like the jab of a needle. Quick pinch of pain then…nothing.

The man frowned and fired again. Hitting her in the shoulder. Again. The chest. Again, the gut. Again, again and again until his gun clicked and signaled he was out of ammo.

Darcy knelt there frozen. The man looked just as shocked.

She looked down and the red coat was riddled with bullet holes and yet…she wasn’t bleeding. She put her hand on her forehead, touching where the first bullet had landed and felt nothing but smooth unmarred skin. The pain in her head, the fogginess cleared and she felt…back to normal.

The man scrambled on the floor, trying to get to his feet. To escape. HER.

Darcy’s hand shot out and she grabbed his ankle. She kept hold of it as she got to her feet, until she was standing tall and the guy was dangling from her one hand. She was…lifting a guy easily twice her size, like it was nothing, like he weighted the same as a Chihuahua. However, she hadn’t grown magically taller, so the guys face was all smooshed on the ground as she held him nearly vertical.

“I’m—I’m…” She didn’t know what was going on but she had a few theories. However it was not the time to dwell on the sudden increase in super powers, chaos was all around her and her friends and family were fighting, possibly for their lives given that their opponent was a witch, a speedster and an evil robot.

She dropped the guy abruptly to the floor and picked up his discarded gun. She gripped the handle and the nozzle and then pushed; the metal warped easily bending into a U shape. Grinning down at the petrified man Darcy smirked, “I’m going to kick so much ass.”
“Please don’t hurt me.” The man whimpered.

Darcy rolled her eyes and dropped the gun, gesturing to the empty hallway behind them, “Get out of here and reexamine your life choices. Get a new job and be a new you….”

“I know I am.” Darcy muttered as he ran away from her.

By the time Darcy made her way to Steve on the lower level most of the fighting seemed to have died down; Steve was laying on a pile of…metal things and looked out if it. His eyes glowed an eerie familiar red.

She patted his cheek lightly and called his name, “Steve, Steve!”

He didn’t answer. She heard the crackle of static and a voice coming from his head. She pulled the com link out of his ear and put it in hers, despite the icky-ness of sharing ear wax.

“—hoever’s standing, we gotta move! Guys?”

Clint’s tired voice transmitted into the ear piece. Darcy pressed the tiny button to be heard and spoke confidently, “I’m standing. I can move.”

“Darcy?”

“Yeah.”

“What the hell are you doing here—never mind. Doesn’t matter. Where are you?”

Darcy looked around, “I’m with Cap. We’re on the lower level but he’s out of it.”

“Shit.”

“It was Wanda. I can tell. That girl is a real bitch witch.” Darcy informed him as she stared down at Steve’s unseeing gaze. She stroked his cheek tenderly, asking “How can I help?”

“You can’t.” Clint said gruffly, “Not unless you suddenly became an expert in computer/robotics and or magic.”

Darcy smiled wickedly and let her hand fall away from Steve, “About that…”

Clint informed her that she wasn’t in a factory or a warehouse as she previously thought, but a boat. Darcy volunteered to go find Tony and see if he was okay while Clint stayed behind and collected the team who were all be-spelled by Wanda.

Darcy found her way to top deck of the ship quickly and let out a sigh as she felt the sunlight on her face once again. Right away she spotted the quinjet parked a ways off. She wondered how the ground-bound Avengers got onto the very large boat but assumed that Thor and Iron Man had just carried them. The mental picture made her giggle despite how stressed she was, or maybe because of it.

She didn’t see any ropes or ladders she could use to get off the ship so…she jumped and swam
ashore.

Wet, annoyed and a little crazed Darcy reached the land within a couple minutes. She started jogging towards the quinjet when the hatch exploded open!

Hulk roared loudly as he stomped his way out of the plane. Darcy scowled as she spotted Pietro picking up Wanda and speeding away from the enraged monster.

“Well, shit.”

Hulk took off running. And Darcy followed.

He was faster, but she wasn’t falling behind she just…was behind.

Tony’s voice crackled in her ear, “News or footage, keyword: Hulk…Natasha I could really use a lullaby.”

Clint answered before she could, “Well, that’s not gonna happen. Not for a while. The whole team is down, you got no back up here.”

“Rude!” Darcy interjected, “I’m here! I’m back up!”

“Darcy!” Tony squawked.

“Hey honey. So, how’s your day going? Mine’s hella weird so far.” Darcy quipped as she pushed her body to run faster. She was way, way, behind the Hulk, but she could see where he was headed and she keeping pace. She just knew no good would come of him going anywhere so ‘people-y’ so she tried to run faster.

“Where have you been? Where are you now?” Tony asked his voice bleeding with emotion, “Baby, are you okay?”

“Baby?” Clint scoffed.

Darcy rolled her eyes at Clint’s teasing and decided to answer bluntly, “I got shot in the head and then a bunch more times in the chest.”

Both Tony and Clint screamed in her ear.

“What?!”

“I don’t think—” Tony began but she cut him off.

“I’m close to Hulk.” Darcy took off running following the destruction.

“I’m bullet proof now. And super strong. Also, this whole time we’ve been talking, I’ve been running and…do I sound out of breath? Nope.” Darcy let out a little laugh as she jumped over an overturned mailbox and launched unexpectedly high in the air. Like…as high as a street lamp high. “I’ve totally leveled up.”
“Yeah well, that’s…great But, I’m still calling in VERONICA.” Tony informed them.

“Hey, out of curiosity, where the hell are we?” Darcy asked as she began bounding over cars as she ran.

“South Africa.” Clint answered.

Darcy mentally ran through all she knew about South Africa and came up with the movie ‘District 9’. Smiling big a she jumped on top of a van and proceeded to surf it like she was Michel J. Fox in ‘Teen Wolf’, letting it take her to the end of the block before she jumped off. Casually commenting, “Cool, South Africa home of…I wanna say zebras?”

“You’re in Johannesburg.” Tony informed her tightly, “It’s the largest city in South Africa and one of the 50 largest urban areas in the world.”

A car went flying past her face, “Seems nice.”

Darcy had found the Hulk and he was pissed.

“Hey big guy!” Darcy shouted but the green rage monster was wailing on a car and didn’t notice her. She ran closer, moving to stand right in front of him on the other side of the car he was beating up. She jumped up and down and waved her arms at him, “HULK! OVER HERE!”

Hulk stopped punching the car and looked at her. His eyes were red, just Steve’s, just like Wanda’s signature magic.

“Oh shit.” Darcy cursed. The Hulk snarled at her and then roared, making her stumble back a few steps from the force of it.

Undeterred Darcy jumped up on top of the car bringing her eye to eye with Hulk, “That stupid witch is fucking with you Hulk. You have to fight it! You’re the Hulk! You’re the most…awesome strong biggest guy ever!”

Hulk didn’t look moved so she tried another tactic, her voice growing soft and sincere, “You don’t want to hurt anybody Hulk. Please stop. You need to chill out.”

Hulk backhanded her and she went flying into a cement wall. It hurt, a lot. But nothing felt broken and it didn’t kill her so Darcy got to her feet and brushed off the rubble from her ruined coat, mumbling to herself, “Luckily, I also appear to be smash proof.”

Hulk turned away from her and jumped onto another parked car, bringing his fists down he smashed in the windows and ripped off the trunk lid, throwing it carelessly behind him. Darcy quickly constructed her shield, stopping the trunk lid from hitting a couple of pedestrians at the end of the street.

“I’m suiting up Darcy, just hang on.” Tony told her over the com.

“DUDE!” Darcy screamed running over to the Hulk, “YOU NEARLY DECAPITATED THOSE PEOPLE!”

Darcy jumped on the Hulks back and turned his head to see the fallen car trunk lid and the cowering people. Hulk grunted then grabbed her by the back of her coat, pulling her off his back and throwing her into the ground.

Darcy lay there for a moment, a little in shock.
Tony, in the Hulkbuster armor, made his presence known, calling out to the crowd of people, “Alright everybody, stand down!”

Darcy got to her feet and put her back against the nearest building her eyes glued on the suit of armor that she knew housed Tony. Armor that was meant to withstand Hulk at his worst.

Hulk faced Tony and his massive Iron Man suit, looking agitated but attentive. Obviously recognizing and responding to the sound of Tony’s voice. Tony addressed the Hulk directly, “You listening? That little witch is messing with your mind. You’re stronger than her, you’re smarter than her, you’re Bruce Banner.”

“Tony!” Darcy winced as Hulk roared in anger.

“Right, right, right! Don’t mention puny Banner.” Tony back peddled. Hulk picked up the car he had been messing with and threw it at Tony. Tony caught it, but Hulk was already running at him, ready to rumble.

“Goddamn it.” Darcy cursed as she watched the two giants duke it out. Flinching as Tony picked up Hulk and slammed him into the ground, flying forward and dragging the Hulk through the breaking concrete, leaving the street in shambles. Hulk kicked up suddenly and Tony went flying.

Hulk was on his feet in seconds, running at Tony full force. With a leap and roar he launched himself at Tony. Tony repelled the attack easily, using the Hulks own momentum against him, flinging him off to the right and blasting him with his repulsor causing Hulk to collide with a truck. The truck spun and boxes spilled out of it as rocked on its tires, tipping over dangerously but somehow managing to stay upright.

“Jesus, you’re going to destroy the fucking city trying to save it. Tony! WATCH IT!” Darcy shouted as Tony advanced forward. She gasped when Hulk used a lamp post as a bat, hitting Tony and sending him flying into a nearby building. Tony slowed his descent with his repulsors hovering instead of touching down only to be brought down by the Hulk as the brute jumped on him and started wailing on him.

“In the back!” Tony cried out, “Dick move Banner.”

“This is ridiculous,” Darcy said as she ran forward, no longer willing hang back and let the boys destroy each other and the city around them. Tony’s tactic would only lead to ruin.

Hulk was distracted as he ripped off pieces of Tony’s armor and discarded them carelessly, providing Darcy with her opening. Hulk was attacking instinctually like a big ape and Darcy channeled the same animal as she ran and jumped on his back, clinging to him like a baby monkey. A plan or the piece of a plan heavily aided by a hunch, guiding her actions.

She wrapped her arms around his massive neck but then Tony punched Hulk and her off of him.

“Oh shit.” Tony exclaimed over the com, “Darcy! I’m sorry! ALSO WHAT THE HELL ARE YOU DOING?! Get out of here!”

Darcy couldn’t reply as she and Hulk were flying through the air. As they made contact with the ground she was dislodged and they slid along the ground, banging into a bunch of stuff and people. As they rolled to a stop Darcy realized they’d just destroyed a little market.

In her ear she heard Tony command casually, “Veronica, give me a hand.”

Darcy got to her feet as quickly as she could; the Hulk was lying on his back but slowly getting to
his feet. Darcy ran and jumped on his back again, getting her arms around his neck she grit out, “Hold still big guy.”

Hulk did the opposite.

He tried clawing at her, but she began to jostle about, swinging and slithering out of the way, stubbornly remaining on his back not allowing him to flip her off like last time. Changing tactics Hulk shook his entire body, like a wet dog, trying to rid himself of her.

Darcy felt her grip slipping but managed to hold out until he stopped. When he realized she was still on him, Hulk let out a roar of annoyance, giving Darcy the opportunity to grab the diadem off her head and put it on Hulks.

Hulk stopped roaring instantly. Darcy, her muscles aching, let go. Allowing herself to fall to the ground, she neatly landed on her feet.

Hulks shoulders slumped down and his fists unclenched. Darcy called out softly, “Hey big guy?”

Hulk turned slowly and looked down at her with a confused expression. The diadem looked like a ring on his head and she had to press her lips together so she wouldn’t laugh. This is was serious. But she wanted to laugh all the same.

Darcy took a big breath and moved forward to grab hold of his hand, she pet it softly with her much smaller one and talked in a soothing tone of voice, “So, I don’t know if you remember my birthday party, but that thing on your head? It was a gift from Frigga and Thor. It’s enchanted to help focus your thoughts and clear your mind…. So… you feeling clear?”

Hulk reached up a hand as if to touch the diadem and Darcy waved him off, “Don’t take it off! I..I don’t know if – if it will— I think it stopped Wanda from getting inside my head, before. And I had a hunch… well, it’s not a hunch anymore. It seems to be negating or erasing her affect, sooo… let’s just leave it? K?”

Hulk grunted and lowered his hand. Darcy squeezed the hand she still had hold of and smiled up at him impishly, “Besides, it makes you look pretty.”

“Darcy?” Tony’s voice crackled in her ear.

“Not now.” Darcy tilted her head to the side and muttered quietly, “Hang back; I don’t want you triggering him.”

She discretely clicked the com off.

Hulk was looking a little dazed as he looked around at all the destruction the fighting had caused. She tried to reassure him, “It’s not so bad. A little spackle, a little paint, this place will be as good as new… its not like you destroyed a whole building or anything.”

Hulk didn’t look mollified; he continued to stare pensively at the gawking crowds of people. Darcy tugged on his arm bringing his attention back to her, “Hey, do you think you could pick me up and we could get out of here? Let’s just leave the mess for the non-mind controlled people to deal with; you’ve had a hard day and so-- the fuck, have I.”

Hulk’s brow crinkled as he looked down at her. She could guess that he was worrying about hurting her, given that he’d just destroyed at least… one fifth of Johannesburg. Darcy didn’t want him getting all mope-y so she forced his hand.
She bent her knees and jumped high into the air yelling, “Catch me!”

He did…like four feet from her face hitting asphalt…also by the ankle. *Talk about déjà vu.*

“Not what I had in mind.” Darcy grumbled. Hulk let out a bark of laughter and lifted her higher, dangling her in front of his face.

“Let me go, so I can sit on your shoulders?” Darcy suggested, “I’ll be able to fly with you and keep the crown in place.”

Hulk shrugged and did as she asked. Darcy felt so tall seated atop Hulks shoulders, she couldn’t help but enjoy the view. With one hand on the diadem, keeping it in place, she patted Hulk’s cheek softly and kicked him lightly in the chest with her heels like he was a horse. Enthusiastically she pointed forward saying, “Tally ho Hulkie!”

Hulk tilted his head back so he could look up at her face, Darcy gripped the diadem tightly keeping it secure to his head as it threatened to fall off with the action. Hulk raised one brow as he growled, “Hulkie?”

Darcy grinned and shrugged, “If you don’t like Hulkie, I could call you Mr. Hulk. Or Senor Hulk. Herr Hulk. Monsieur Hulk….whatever. Hell, I could call you Miss Tallulah Featherbottom if you prefer?”

Hulk chortled as he brought his hands up to her legs, holding them in a tight grip, securing her as he bent his knees in preparation of one of his massive jumps, grunting out, “HULK IS JUST HULK.”

Darcy cradled his head in her arms as they flew into the air, yelling out, “That’s a big ten four good buddy-eeeeeeeee. Waaaaaahoooooo!”

They made it back to the quinjet without the military or the police or anyone else except for Tony, following them. After setting Darcy down, Hulk sat down on the grass next to the plane. He stared mournfully back at the city.

Despite their joking and her attempts to keep the mood light, Darcy knew that Hulk felt bad about what they’d done back there. The destruction and mayhem and possible casualties and hurt people. He wasn’t a monster. He was just…big.

Clint walked out of the back hatch and eyed them warily, “Everything alright?”

Hulk didn’t even turn to acknowledge him, Darcy waved him off, “We’re fine.”

Tony touched down a minute later. His voice livid as he projected his voice out of the suit, “Don’t you ever turn off your com in a fight! Not ever! YOU HEAR ME DARCY?!”

Darcy was tempted to give him the finger or roll her eyes, but she knew where Tony’s anger was coming from. Despite being addressed like a scolded child by *her boyfriend* Darcy kept her cool and responded, “Okay. Never again.”

“And—uh..okay.” Tony deflated, “Great.”

“Get out of the suit so I can hug you?” Darcy asked.
“It’s gonna take a minute or two.” Tony answered, “I think that something’s jammed on my leg—just hold on.”

“Take your time old man;” Darcy quipped as she turned away from Tony and back to Hulk, “Don’t want you to pull a muscle.”

Darcy addressed Hulk, “Whatcha thinking about big guy?”

Hulk frowned as he looked back at her, “Hulk Bad.”

Darcy shook her head, walking forward she heedlessly climbed into the giant’s lap, standing on his folded legs she threw her arms wide and hugged his naked green chest as tightly as she could.

“No, Hulk’s not bad. He’s just like Buddy the Elf.” Darcy declared with a sigh, “We just need to make the world a little studier to accommodate you big guy….you have special needs, no need to be ashamed.”

Hulk wrapped his arms around her and gently hugged her back, grunting, “Darcy stronger?”

“Yeah, I think so.” Darcy squeezed him tight, “For now anyways.”

Finally free of the suit, Tony’s un-modulated voice reached her ears a second before his body did, “I love you.”

“Me or him?” Darcy sassed with a smile. Tony had climbed up on Hulk’s legs as well and was now hugging her from behind. Squishing her in between him and the Hulk.

Darcy let out a sigh and turned her head so she could see Tony’s face as he answered, “Both.”

Darcy leaned forward and kissed him comfortably before pulling away and pressing her face into Hulk’s chest, “I love you guys too.”

Hulk’s body rumbled as he added, “DON’T KISS HULK.”

“Me or her?” Tony quipped.

“…YOU.” Hulk answered.

Tony laughed behind her, “Still friends though, right big guy?”

“STILL FRIENDS.”

They stayed like that for only a couple more seconds before Tony pulled away and helped Darcy down as well. As soon as they were free of his body, Hulk started to shrink down and transform back into Bruce.

A slow clap drew their attention back to the quinjet’s hanger door, Clint stood there with a smug grin on his face as he clapped, “That was beautiful man.”

“Shut it.” Tony ordered.

Darcy grabbed the diadem as it slipped off the mid-transformation man’s head and placed it back on her own, commenting lightly, “Well, that was unexpectedly heartwarming.”

Tony helped Bruce to his feet and they all made their way inside the plane.
Thor, Natasha, and Steve were all inside in various states of shock. Darcy ran over to Steve and put a concerned hand on his shoulder, “You okay Cap?”

Steve nodded, “I’ll live.”

“Not what I asked.”

Steve looked up at her and she saw pain in his eyes but also resolve. With a clenched jaw he moved her hand from his shoulder, and answered tensely, “I’ll be fine.”

Clint, in the pilot’s chair, called out, “Hang tight, we’re leaving.”

Thor reached out and grabbed her arm. He pulled her into his lap, locking his arms around her securely as they ascended into the air. Darcy let out a sigh of relief as she leant back against Thor’s broad chest, finally feeling safe for the first time since she woke up in Pietro’s bed.

Once they were at cruising altitude Darcy left Thor’s lap and sat down in a seat of her own next to him. Across from them Bruce sat curled in on himself. Natasha was seated close to him, looking as shaken as Darcy had ever seen her. Tony got up and headed over to Clint. Steve kept his head stubbornly pointed away from her.

Thor was also visibly disturbed. He was so quiet and withdrawn. So unlike the ‘big brother’ she’d come to know and love.

“What happened to you?” Darcy asked quietly, her arm winding around his, hugging him comfortingly.

“The girl warped my mind.” Thor revealed somberly, “I had a vision of Asgard, of Heimdall. He was blind. Said I would lead them all to hell….then he tried to kill me.”

Darcy pet his hair, “Dude, that sounds rough.”

“It was.”

After a beat Darcy asked, “So, do you want the good news or the bad news?”

Thor looked down at her, a little bit of life coming back to his expression, “Why is there always bad news? Why is there never good news and even better news?”

Darcy chuckled, “That’s just the way of the world big brother.”

She poked him in the abs, prompting, “Choose. Good news or bad news?”

“Bad.”

“Bad news is I had a similarly disturbing dream about Heimdall and Asgard only in my vision, Asgard was burning and Heimdall was helping people flee some attack I couldn’t see.”

Thor frowned deeply. Darcy put her hand flat on his chest over his heartbeat and pat it as she said, “But the good news is…I think I’m a real Asgardian now.”

“Real Asgardian?” Natasha repeated, her expression still looking dazed but her eyes alert and attentive.

“Well, I got shot and didn’t die. I got hit by Hulk and didn’t die. I ran really fast and for a long time and I didn’t die. So, yeah…I’m thinking I’m the real deal.” Darcy answered with a shrug, “It’s not
like theirs a blood test we could do to make sure.”

“There is.” Bruce said, his eyes still a little wild, “I could…I could come up with a test to see if you were Asgardian on a genetic level.”

Darcy grimaced, “Sounds fun.”

“Sounds irrelevant.” Thor smirked, “You are a real Asgardian, test or no test.”

Darcy decided to hold back on telling everyone she suspected it was Loki, disguised as ‘Axel’ back on Asgard, who preformed a spell on her to ‘protect’ her, which was the source of her newly found full Asgardian status. Probably jumpstarted by her getting shot in the face. She had a hunch that when her life was mortal peril, the spell suddenly activated transforming her fully. But she could be wrong. The spell could have been active since Loki spelled her and she only noticed it now because of all the unexpected fighting.

Either way, she probably owed Loki a thank you note. Maybe a cookie bouquet?

When Tony came back and told them that they were a couple hours away from touching the plane down at Clint’s ‘safe house’ Darcy just reclined her head back in the chair and tried to get comfortable.

“Cool, I’m gonna take a nap then.” Darcy said blithely, “Remind me to tell you guys how Wanda and Pietro attacked and drugged me when I wake up.”

What Darcy meets when Meeting Pietro and Wanda

The Outfit she wakes up in when in South Africa
Sorry if Wanda came off a little heartless and Pietro a little pervy....I don't character bash and I actually like Wanda as a character...after this movie....so

LET ME KNOW WHAT YOU THINK??????????????

Also, should I add more people to Darcy love life making her like a casual/multiple ployamorous-er. Like stve/Darcy plus steve/darcy/bucky, darcy/loki, excetra more pairings you get the idea, while maintaining darcy/tony/pepper and strange/darcy Or should I keep it to those yeoman relationships because I kinda had been setting up a steve /darcy thang but then darcy/tony/pepper grew so close and strange/darcy became the backbone of her growing/multiple loving heart due to needing strange to go off and become a badass.....so...thoughts????
I'm late and it's rambling.sorry.
Chapter 26 – Peter Quill

“Darcy!” She awoke to the sound of two familiar voices calling out her name in shock. It sounded like the voices were overlapping. The voices sounded far away and really close all at once. It was an odd sensation. Her eyelids fluttered and she got a quick flash of Tony’s dismayed expression before he disappeared and there was only darkness.

“Darcy! Holy shit it’s really you!” Darcy recognized the voice but she felt like her whole world had been turned inside out and couldn’t find it in herself to reply with any sense of skill.

“Wha…?” Darcy slurred, her eyes falling shut once again. She felt exhausted and totally, completely drained.

“Jesus, I’m sorry I was such a dick! I don’t know why—it doesn’t matter you’re here now…Darcy?”

She had a hard time opening her eyes, “Quill?”

Darcy blinked a few times until she could keep her eyes open enough to focus on the blurry vision of her one time Guardian of the Galaxy friend. The room was dark but his face was illuminated by the emergency blue light over his bed.

“I’m so happy to see you again.” Peter all but threw himself on top of her, eager to hug her even though she was lying down next to him flat on her back, meaning he was basically crushing her due to his muscle-y bulk.

“No.” Darcy said as she pushed at his chest.

“Sorry,” Peter apologized as he lifted himself off her, “Sorry, you’re probably still pissed right? Yeah, I was. I can’t even defend myself can I? Everything you said would happen, happened! You were right and I was a dick.”

“No.” Darcy whimpered as she rolled onto her side and put her hand out searching for the side table she knew was there.

“Please don’t hold a grudge? Please? I’m sorry. I’m really big time sorry. I was wrong. I was so wrong and so stubborn and I’m sorry.” Darcy was only half listening to Peter’s apology as she sat up...
and threw the blanket off her legs so she could hang them off the side of the bed in preparation of standing.

“I’m so sorry I abandoned you on Contraxia. I—I…no one knows what I did. I didn’t tell them we fought. I—I—I lied. They think you found a friend from home while we were shopping and left with them without saying goodbye.” Darcy grit her teeth as the blood rushed in her head, roaring in her ears.

“The more Rocket cursed you and Groot acted out, and Gamora and Drax sulked… the guiltier I felt. It’s the worst thing I’ve ever done but, I’m—I’m going to tell them truth. I’ll fix this, I promise…I kind of have to, now that you’re back.”

“Ugh.” Darcy grunted as she pushed off the bed and got to her feet unsteadily. Her body felt like it weighted a thousand pounds and all she wanted to do was to lie back down and close her eyes. But she couldn’t.

Her mind was like a hamster on crack running on a little wheel. Her thoughts raced and heart pounded. She couldn’t believe she was back in space. She couldn’t believe she abandoned Tony right when he needed her the most! She knew what would happen without her there, everyone would gang up on him for (helping to) create Ultron. Bruce would feel super bad for what Wanda made the Hulk do. Steve, Natasha and Thor would probably never talk about what that Scarlet Witch made them see, how she mentally raped/traumatized them. What the witch did to the team would fester and break them down. And she felt like a piece of crap for having left them all to deal with it alone. To deal with Ultron and Pietro and Wanda and the public fallout.

Even as her mind whirled there was one overriding thought that pulsed through her brain like a heartbeat, steady and ever present.

“I have to go back.” Darcy mumbled as she took a few steps forward.

“Darcy, you—are you okay? Are you hurt?” Peter came around the bed to stand next to her, catching her just as she stumbled and fell into the wall.

“Oh, god. What happened to you?” Peter whispered sounding sincerely scared.

“Not now.” Darcy felt like she was sweating, she was hot and her eyes fell shut as she fought off a wave of dizziness. Teleporting across such vast amounts of space tended to wipe her out but this felt different. She was usually able to stay awake for at least a few minutes after such a trip, but…she felt like she was about to pass out.

“Too far?” Darcy mused as Peter picked her up in his arms bridal style.

Mumbling to himself, Peter carried her towards the door, “Let’s get you to Gamora, she’ll know what to do.”

Darcy was unconscious before they even crossed the threshold.

There was a pinch of pain in her arm. She groaned and sluggishly struck out with her hand trying to dislodge whatever was hurting her. A strong hand caught hers and held tight, keeping her still. Her eyes were slits a she got a look at who was stabbing a needle into her.
Gamora’s green skinned face swam in front of her face.

“--cy? Ca- you -ear m-?”

Darcy felt like she was underwater as the alien called her name, her voice dulled and diluted. She managed to stutter, “Wh-wh-what?”

A bright penlight was shone into her eyes and Darcy groaned. Closing her eyes quickly she brought her other hand up to cover her face, whimpering, “Nooo.”

The penlight disappeared for a second and Darcy lowered her arm, cringing as the light of the room breached her thin eyelids even as she squeezed them shut.

“No..help…I..go.” Darcy breathily tried to communicate but the brain to mouth connection just wasn’t working properly. She tried to curl her body in on itself, but a strong pair of hands on her shoulders kept her pinned down to the hard surface, flat on her back.

There was a bunch of talking back and forth between Gamora and Quill; she didn’t know what they were saying. She just wanted to sleep. She needed to sleep after teleporting such a great distance. Darcy wondered if they had given her a shot to keep her awake?

She didn’t remember telling them about her need for rest following a large distance teleportation. If they didn’t know about that…whatever shot they gave her was keeping her awake but it wasn’t helping her to function. She felt like she was dying.

Gasping for sleep like a fish on land gasping for air…or water…or whatever. Darcy felt like her mind was trying to shut down but was being forced to run on fumes.

After a few minutes of poking and prodding, and conversation she wasn’t following, a loud angry voice broke through her distorted hearing and comprehension. Rocket had arrived, his harsh and abrasive voice unmistakable, “What the hell is she doing back here?!”

“She teleported into my bed.” Peter answered quickly.

“So? Send her back. We don’t need Groot getting attached to her again, just to have her up and disappear without a word.”

“Just Groot getting attached?” Peter teased.

“She’s sick Rocket.” Darcy moaned as Gamora forcibly opened her eyes and shone the pen light at her. One eye and then the other, “Can’t you see that she needs help?”

Darcy let out a little growl and Gamora let go of her face.

“Not our problem.” Rocket said flippantly, “Drop her off at the nearest Nova outpost and let them deal with her.”

“What is wrong with you? She’s our friend!”

“She abandoned us the second someone better came along!” Rocket argued.

“We always knew she was trying to get back home.” Gamora shouted back, “There’s no reason to be bitter because she didn’t say goodbye!”

“I LIED!” Peter exclaimed, “I lied, she--she didn’t leave us without saying goodbye. She didn’t leave us at all. She didn’t find a better ride. She--I…we had a fight.”
“A fight?” Gamora inquired menacingly.

“I found out she’s not Asgardian. She’s human…Terran, like me. And-and I flew off the handle. Overreacted. And…”

“And?” Rocket prompted.

“And I lied to everyone. I made up the story about her finding a ride so you guys wouldn’t go looking for her to say goodbye. So you wouldn’t stop me from leaving her behind on Contraxia, alone.”

“YOU DID WHAT!”
“I AM GROOT!”
“ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING?!”

“I’m sorry?” Peter said meekly.

“How could you Peter!” Gamora accused.

“You left her on CONTRAXIA! No wonder she’s all messed up now!” Rocket yelled.

“I AM GROOT!”

“Yes, we should throw him out the air lock.” Rocket agreed/translated. Groot’s voice didn’t sound ‘babyish’ anymore, he sounded…older, more like a kid than a baby. She felt a little pang in her heart. She hoped he was still small enough to cuddle and hold in her arms.

Darcy extended her hand toward the sound of Groot and Rocket’s voices, “N-n-naaa.”

A hand grabbed hers just as her wrist went limp and she could no longer keep her hand held out. The easily recognizable bark texture told her that it was Groot who held her hand. His other hand covered the top of hers, sandwiching her hand in between both of his.

“What’s wrong with her?” Rocket asked concern coloring his tone.

“I don’t know.” Gamora admitted quietly, “Go get Mantis and Drax.”

“Why? They don’t know nothing more than you about Terran biology.” Rocket contended.

“Yes, but maybe Mantis can help us communicate with her. Perhaps she’s been poisoned?…I should take a blood sample.” Gamora mumbled to herself before ordering sternly, “Go!”

“A’right.” Rocket groused.

“Na-o.” Darcy slurred in a quiet voice, “need…ne-ne-need.”

“We’re going to help you Darcy. Don’t worry.” Gamora said assuredly. Darcy winced and her hand tightened in Groot’s grip as she felt the pinch of a needle in her other arm. The pain, the bright lights, the overwhelming need for sleep…Darcy passed out.

She dreamt of home. She saw the team meeting Clint’s secret family, which included a secret pregnant wife to her great surprise. Apparently her idea about Clint and Natasha having a ‘thing’ was
waaaay off base.

She saw a flash of Thor in a pool of water in a cave with Erik, she had no idea what that was about but it seemed pretty weird for Thor to just fuck off for a Jacuzzi break when all robot hell was breaking loose.

She dreamt of Ultron using Loki’s scepter against Helen Cho, putting the woman under his thrall, and forcing her to begin building him a ‘real’ body using her ‘cradle’. She saw Ultron crushing the scepter in his hand…to reveal a gem.

She bore dream-witness to the exact moment when Wanda and Pietro realized how stupid they were for joining the evil robots team and fighting the Avengers. She saw it on their faces when they realized they were the villains of the story not the heroes.

She saw Steve and Tony fighting on the farm and felt concern for the growing divide that she could sense forming within the team itself. She saw a brief glimpse of bald African American man with an eyepatch, which was random. And she saw a flash of Clint’s children running around the assembled Avengers as they crowded the kitchen.

She saw the team back at Avenger’s Tower, huddled around the cradle. She mentally cheered when Bruce put the Scarlet Witch in a headlock taunting the girl asking her to ‘piss him off’.

She dreamt of a guy popping out of the medical cradle like a piece of toast. He was a …android? Cyborg? Robo-guy? Whatever he was he was new and different, part robot part living organic material. The man created using Thor’s lightning and the gem from the scepter. He seemed…nice? He was…purple? And…capable of lifting Mjolnir? Definitely someone Darcy was excited to meet once she got back home.

Darcy dreamt of her friends finally coming together like the team that they were meant to be. She saw them travel to Sokovia to try to destroy Ultron for good.

Darcy mentally bristled when she dreamt/watched Wanda and Pietro seemingly seamlessly join the Avengers in the fight against Ultron and his army of evil robots. She internally cringed as Ultron’s plan to lift a large part of the Sokovian land into the sky revealed itself. Boom! The end. Start again. That made chilling sense as Ultron obviously intended to use the floating land mass as a giant meteor…like the dinosaurs, he wanted the human race extinct.

Darcy didn’t get to see how it ended. She didn’t dream of how the Avengers stopped a ‘robot-made’ meteor from barreling down into the Earth causing untold amounts of destruction….She didn’t see the climatic ending fight, but she didn’t need to. She just knew the Avengers would save the day…somehow.

Darcy woke up to the sound of her stomach growling. She blinked her eyes open slowly, thankfully the light in the room was dim and didn’t hurt her eyes when she opened them and looked around. She was…in a hospital room?

“I am Groot?”

Darcy turned her head to see a kid sized Groot blinking back at her with those inky black eyes of his. His expression looked so hopeful as he stared at her expectantly.
“Hi little guy.” Darcy greeted, her voice hoarse and raspy.

“I am Groot!” Groot exclaimed excitedly.

“I am thirsty.” Darcy said motioning to the pitcher of water and empty glass on the side table next to her. Groot eagerly bounded out of the bedside chair he was sitting in and rushed to pour her water. Darcy accepted the glass with a grateful smile and sipped from it delicately.

“I am Groot! I am Groot.” Groot gesticulated with his hands as if saying ‘stay here’ and then he ran to the door and threw it open shouting loudly, “I AM GROOT! I AM GROOT! I AM GROOT!”

A pink skinned woman came to the door grousing, “No one understands what you’re saying young man, you don’t need to shou—Oh, my.”

The woman who was dressed like a space-y nurse gasped at the sight of her. Darcy gave the woman a little wave, “Hi.”

The pink nurse turned shouting much like Groot had, “Doctor! Doctor! She’s awake! Doctor!” The woman then turned to her with a comforting smile, “The doctor will be right with you dear, how are you feeling?”

“Fine. Hungry. But, okay I guess.” Darcy answered with a shrug. Groot returned to her side and bounced on his feet excitedly repeating “I am Groot” quickly. Darcy felt a pang in her chest, wanting to know what he was saying more than anything, as he was obviously having those one of those excited little kid moments where they were telling a long story without taking a breath in between sentences.

Darcy turned to the nurse who had come into the room and now stood at the foot of her bed, an electronic clear tablet in hand as she typed and ticked things off quickly. “Can you help raise the bed so I can sit up?”

“Of course dear, give me a moment.” The nurse answered kindly, “I’m just sending a message to your Guardian friends letting them know you’re awake.”

Darcy nodded and turned back to Groot, smiling at him she held out her hand and he grabbed it. Groot let out a grunt as Darcy used his arm to pull herself up into a sitting position. The nurse then pressed a button or something, and the bed followed her movement, supporting her back once again.

“Do you know how long I’ve been unconscious?” Darcy asked the nurse as Groot entwined their fingers and held tight to her hand.

The nurse ignored her question pursing her lips as she spoke, “You’re friends implied that you suffer from a chronic condition? However they were very unhelpful when we were trying to discern your medical history and just what was normal or abnormal, given your condition and species.”

“DARCY!” Rocket slid across the tiled floor, almost bypassing the door altogether before he scrambled forward into her room, past the nurse, onto the bed and into her arms. Darcy let out a soft ‘oof’ sound as Rocket unexpectedly slammed into her body, wrapping his furry little arms around her neck and squeezing a tad too tight.

“I am Groot.” Groot said in a scolding tone. Darcy wrapped her arms around Rocket and hugged him back before he could listen to whatever Groot had said and pull away from her.

She spoke softly as she rubbed her face against the side of his fuzzy one, “Hey Rocket. Long time no see.”
“Quill lied to us! We didn’t know! I swear! We woulda never left ya behind. Me and Groot woulda mutinied before we let that happen.” Rocket said adamantly.

Darcy smiled into his fur as she stroked her hand down his back, following his spine and then down his tail. She was blatantly taking advantage of Rocket’s emotional state but she couldn’t seem to care. He was basically the equivalent of a walking talking teddy bear (in appearance(in her opinion)) and in all the time she’d spent with the Guardians, Rocket had never let her cuddle him or pet him or hug him or do anything…physical affection-y. Darcy sighed as she reached up and got to pet his ears, tracing the appendage with the tip of her finger. *His fur was as soft as it looked.*

“When did she wake up? Are her cognitive functions impaired?” They could hear Gamora’s demanding voice growing louder as she approached the room, “Where’s the doctor?”

Rocket pulled away and pushed her hand away from his head, his little hands patting himself and smoothing out his fur from where she had mussed. He didn’t leave the bed though, he sat down on the bed’s guard rail, and kept his feet flat on the bed touching her leg. Darcy didn’t mind, his small body was able to easily fit next to hers on the bed. He could even sit down with her if he wanted.

Gamora stormed in, leading/pushing a human looking doctor into the room. The doctor was obviously smart as he wasn’t fighting Gamora’s manhandling, allowing her to hustle him inside Darcy’s room and then next to her bed. Trailing behind Gamora and the coerced doctor was Drax and the bug girl from her dream.

The doctor finally free of Gamora’s handling went over to confer with the pink skinned nurse. Gamora scowled at the man before turning her attention down to Darcy. Her face transformed from annoyed to…happy. Darcy was taken aback but easily returned Gamora’s smile as the green skinned woman reached out and ran hand over Darcy’s hair asking, “How are you?”

“I’m okay.” Darcy said grabbing Gamora’s hand from her hair and sandwiching it in between her own, “Me passing out for a couple of days following a trans-planetary teleportation is actually normal. I’m sorry I never mentioned that. I didn’t mean to worry you all.”

Gamora raised a challenging eyebrow, “You become comatose when teleporting between worlds? Why did this not happen the first time you boarded the Milano?”

“Comatose?” Darcy questioned.

Drax stepped forward. Over the blanket that covered her lower half, he reached out and squeezed her ankle gently, “You have been unconscious for six and half days. Everyone was worried you were going to die. Not I though.”

“Oh?”

Drax shrugged, “I assumed you would remain alive but unconscious for the rest of your life. A fate worse than death if you ask me. I offered to put you out of your misery and kill you in your sleep, but the others refused. Know that should your condition become permanent I would gladly kill you.”

Darcy huffed out a laugh, “Thanks you Drax, that’s…sweet but, don’t. Don’t kill me in my sleep even if it goes on for a long time.”

Drax shrugged and then nodded, “If you says so.” Under his breath he grumbled, “Shame to make yourself a permanent burden on those who care for you and must provide proper medical treatment, though…if you ask me.”

“Nobody asked you.” Rocket growled.
“Six and half days?” Darcy asked Gamora, seeking confirmation. Gamora nodded and Darcy sighed, “Well…there’s no rule or standard for how long I need to recover in between planetary teleportation. Usually it’s four days.”

“But--”

“However if I had to guess, why this recover lasted longer it’s because of the distance I traveled was farther than I ever had before? And…maybe because you guys injected me with something and took my blood and tried to keep me awake when I first arrived?”

Gamora blushed at that grumbling, “I was just trying to help.”

Darcy reached out and stroked a hand down the woman’s arm, “And I love you for that, really, but next time, just let me sleep? This one time I actually teleported with another person. Like, I went to sleep with this friend of mine and I teleported from Earth to Asgard and, woo, I was unconscious for a month after that. I think the amount of recovery time directly correlates with the amount of energy I need to..get to where I’m going.”

“Hello,” The bug lady who had hidden in Drax’s shadow moved around him and waved at Darcy, “No one has introduced me. I am Mantis.”

Drax lit up, “Yes! Mantis, the bug lady from your vision! She is proof of your ability to see the future! You longer need to doubt yourself or your abilities!”

Darcy blinked at the woman. It was a heady thing, seeing actual, tangible proof that her dreams were really and truly prophetic. Mantis extended her hand.

Dazedly Darcy took it and shook it in greeting, mumbling, “Hey. Nice to meet you.”

“I am Groot?” Darcy turned to Groot and smiled, Groot frowned and then pointed at the forgotten Doctor and Nurse who stood at the foot of her bed. Both medical professionals stood stock still, staring at Darcy with their mouths agape.

Darcy’s eyebrows rose high on her forehead, “Oh, I forgot about you two.”

“I—I---I…” The doctor stuttered. The nurse seemed to compose herself more easily, she handed Darcy’s chart over to the doctor and excused herself, “I need to go check on another patient.”

Darcy dipped slightly to the right as Rocket stood up on the bed and shouted after the nurse, “NOT A GODDAMN WORD ABOUT HER OR HER ABILTIES! YOU HEAR ME?”

Rocket then tilted his head in Groot’s direction, “I don’t think she heard me. Let’s go make ourselves..clear.”

Rocket jumped onto Groot’s shoulder as the tree-boy stode out of the room after the pink skinned woman. Gamora called out after them, “Don’t arrested for assault!”

She then turned to the bewildered looking Doctor, a hard look on her face, “If you say one word about my friend’s abilities, one word, I will kill you, your family, and your neighbors. Am I clear?”

The doctor nodded his head with wide eyes.

Gamora smiled viciously, “Good. Now, let’s get my friend checked out and discharged so we can get to our meeting with Nova Prime on time.”
Darcy hid her smile behind her hand as Gamora so threateningly name dropped the commander of the Nova Corps, not so subtly reminding the guy that Gamora was not only a physical threat but one with powerful allies.

“Yay.” Darcy cheered, “Let’s get me out of here!”

Within the hour, Darcy had endured several rounds of tests and eaten two sandwiches. Her release from the hospital was expedited by the Guardian’s intimidation factor. And before she knew it, clad in the alien equivalent of ‘sweats’, Darcy was being wheeled out of the hospital by Drax, Groot and Rocket on one side, Mantis on the other. Gamora in front clearing the way.

When they finally made it outside into the sunshine and Darcy was allowed to get out of the wheelchair she giddily skipped a head of the group and twirled in a circle. It felt so good to be outside, breathing real non-infectious air, standing and walking on her own two feet.

“Hooray freedom!” Darcy cried, ignoring Gamora and Rocket laughing at her as she raised her hands in the air and did a little dance of joy.

Looking back at the Guardians she lowered her arms and decided to finally address the elephant in the room, “So…where’s Peter?”

The smile fell from everyone’s faces. Rocket actually growled, cursing, “That son of a bitch.”

Gamora pressed her lips together and cast her eyes down. Drax was the one who stepped up, informing her, “Quill’s actions were so heinous that we felt he needed to be punished. I suggest dismemberment and was overruled.”

Mantis’s face looked pinched as she revealed, “Everyone was so hurt when they learned of Peter’s deception. He caused so much pain. Not knowing what was wrong with you or how to help you just amplified everything.” Her voice softened as she looked at each Guardian individually saying, “The pain of betrayal….the pain of disloyalty…the pain of selfishness.”

Mantis established eye contact with Darcy once again. The other woman walked forward and put her hand on Darcy’s arm, her antennae glowing as she spoke, “Guilt, treachery, deceit, violation. It is hard to think clearly when consumed by emotion.”

“They were all distraught.” Mantis broke contact with her skin and her antennae returned to normal, “The sight of Quill caused these feelings to become unmanageable. So we threw him in jail.”

“Jail!?” Darcy exclaimed shrilly, her gaze leaving the unfamiliar bug lady and seeking out the usually calm and collected Gamora.

Gamora stared back at her stiffly, “We came here to Xandar because it has some of the best medical facilities in the galaxy. Once you were safely in the hospital’s care…Peter—he needed to be punished.”

“Nova Prime owes us for saving the galaxy, so we asked if we could leave Peter in the holding cells back at the Nova Corps,” Rocket explained, “Decided to leave him to rot until you were better.”

“He went willingly.” Gamora added, “He….he knows what he did to you was wrong.”
“He was wrong.” Darcy said softly, regret tainting her tone. She felt like her arrival had shattered the cohesive team vibe the Guardians had going and she couldn’t help but feel guilty about that.

“Damn straight, lying bastard.” Rocket groused.

“But,” Darcy said with a pointed look in the furry man’s direction, “I lied too. He got mad for a reason. I said I was Asgardian when I was only a distant descendent of the Asgardians. I’m from Terra. Earth, Peter’s home! And… I guess he felt cheated somehow? I mean, I actually thought he was Xandarian myself, I didn’t know he was from Earth until he found out I was and—I—ugh, it just got so messy and his feelings were so hurt and I knew it was all my fault but—whatever. I shouldn’t have lied to you all, but everyone I’d met in the galaxy thus far, seemed to look down on Earthlings so… I bent the truth until it was lie shaped.”

“That don’t matter!” Rocket exploded, “He left you on one of the seediest planets in the galaxy!”

“I am Groot!”

Rocket gestured to Groot, “Yeah! You could have been murdered just for that mop of hair on your head! Probably worse!”

“Worse than getting murdered?” Darcy asked skeptically.

“People do worse things than kill ya. Trust me.” Rocket said somberly. Darcy was reminded of his history as a science experiment and she regretted questioning him as he elaborated, “You coulda been snatched up and forced into the damn prostitution racket, Contraxia is notorious for that shit, someone as pretty and rare as you? Yeah worse than murder is fucking right!

Gamora came over and took her arm, guiding her over to the ledge of a fountain, prompting Darcy to sit on it she spoke in a unwavering monotone, “Rape, experimentation, prostitution, drug addiction… Peter leaving you on that planet alone, broke, defenseless, and without any real practical knowledge of how the rest of the Galaxy operates? It was despicable.”

“But--” Darcy tried to protest.

Gamora shook her head with a sad look on her face, “No lie you told would have ever justified what he did to you.”

“Or what he did to us, by lying about what happened.” Drax added, “He robbed us of our chance to get mad at you as well, he robbed us of the chance to punish you ourselves, in a less damaging way of course. Peter’s punishment is not only about him suffering for what he did to you but what he did to us.”

“I am Groot. I am Groot! I am GROOT!” Darcy reached out and took the tree-boy’s hand, squeezing it tightly as he was obviously agitated and working himself up as he ranted, “I AM GROOT!”

“Whoa, language!” Rocket chastised.

Darcy pulled on Groot’s arm and forced him to sit next to her, she threw her arm around his shoulders and gave him a one armed hug. In a pitiful tone Groot wailed, “I am Groot.”

Darcy felt a tear escape her eyes and she quickly wiped it away. The Guardian’s weren’t a lovey-dovey bunch and she doubted they’d appreciate her display of emotion. She looked to Rocket expectantly, waiting for him to translate for Groot, even as she hugged and comforted the tree-boy.
“He,” Rocket ran a frustrated hand through his fur, “He says that you were like his mom, or what he thinks a mom should be. And Peter took you away. Peter took away his mom. And he’s really angry at Quill because he was so angry at you when we thought you abandoned us.”

“I Am. Groot.”

Rocket ducted his head and scuffed his foot on the ground, “Groot, she don’t need to know that.”

“I am Groot!”

“Know what?” Darcy and Groot said at the same time.

“Never mind,” Rocket said dismissively, “Point is. None of this, how we feel, none of it is your fault.”

“I am Groot.” Groot looked at her, his eyes shining with tears and Darcy didn’t need the translation. She automatically responded, “I love you too.”

Unable to stop herself from crying, she pulled Groot forward into her arms fully, hugging him properly and heartily. When she and Groot broke apart, Rocket was suspiciously wiping at his eyes but Darcy decided not to say anything.

“So what now?” Darcy asked.

“We can’t be a team if we don’t trust our leader.” Rocket said with a head nod, “I say we leave Quill here to rot or escape or—whatever.”

“I am Groot?”

Rocket shrugged, “Eh, Gamora can be the leader. Don’t know why she hasn’t been in charge this whole time anyway.”

“Who says she hasn’t been?” Mantis teased.

“I would gladly follow Gamora into battle.” Drax confirmed.

“No.”

“No.” Gamora and Darcy said at the same time.

She and Gamora stared at each other and Darcy was unable to not feel guilty. There was pain written plainly across the alien’s face. She was halfway in love with Peter already, this blow; this betrayal… Gamora was taking it the hardest.

“I am Groot!”

“Yeah, let’s just leave him behind. We can still be the Guardians of the Galaxy without him! Hell, I’d rather go back to the Ravagers and be a part of Yondu’s crew than let a lying bastard like Peter Quill order us around.”

“Peter never issued orders.” Gamora said defensively.

Rocket pointed at her accusingly, “You’re just blinded by your stupid love for that big asshole!”

“I am not in love with him.” Gamora argued.

“Not at the moment.” Mantis said quietly.
“Ha!” Rocket barked out a fake laugh, pointing at Mantis, “She knows!”

“Shut up!” Gamora yelled her hand going for her knife. Rocket’s hands reaching for his own weapon.

Darcy rolled her eyes and yelled, “Want to hear something ironic?”

She stood up and grabbed Drax’s belt buckle, then put a hand on shoulder and lifted the man straight over her head. ‘Drax the Destroyer’ seemed so surprised by her little maneuver that he did little other than extend his arms and flail them about trying to maintain balance.

Darcy grinned up at him, “Sorry big guy, just needed to illustrate a point, hope you don’t mind?”

Darcy giggled at Rocket and Gamora’s shocked expressions. Bending her knees slightly she returned Drax to his previous standing position.

Darcy clasped her hands behind her back and smiled broadly as she explained, “Sooooo, you all know now that Peter and I had a fight about me being secretly human when I claimed to be Asgardian. Tuuuuurns out, I’m actually Asgardian, like I claimed to be in the first place only I didn’t know it! I mean, I was born human with only ancient Asgardian ancestors to speak of, but since then I ingested some magic apples, endured a painful magic spell and presto chang-o! Asgardian.” Darcy did spirit fingers and held her hands out in a ‘ta da’ pose before dropping her arms and folding them in front of her chest defensively, “Keep in mind my ‘Asgardian’ status hasn’t been confirmed. I literally found out I had super strength and running and not-die-if-hit-by-bullets abilities, right before I teleported back to you guys. SO, not confirmed Asgardian, but, like, yeah I totally am.......Irony, am I right?”

Rocket was the first to break. His bark of laughter genuine and loud. Drax and Gamora followed close behind, unable to contain themselves when they really got going. Mantis began to laugh along with the others, but in that ‘I don’t know what we’re laughing at, but I want to be cool with these people so I’m going to laugh too’ kind of way.

When Darcy turned to Groot she found him stubbornly sat with his arms crossed, a sour look on his face. He looked back at her and grumped nastily, “I am Groot.”

Darcy narrowed her eyes at him and sassed, “You are wet.”

She then pushed him backward into the fountain they had been sitting on the ledge of. Groot sputtered for a second, resurfacing with a frown but Darcy didn’t give him a chance to remain mad, as she jumped into the water with him and began to splash him.

She shouted playfully as she splashed, “No frown-y face Groot! Happy Groot! I want everyone to be happy! BE HAPPY.”

Groot’s sullen little boy attitude was no match for Darcy’s infectious joy and silliness. He also really liked the water, lapping at it with his tongue as Darcy stopped splashing and cupped water to pour on her own head. It was a warm day and the cool water felt nice.

“Don’t drink the water!” Rocket cried out with a face palm.

Darcy just flicked some water at the other Guardians with her hair. Laughing as Drax jumped into the fountains water with a joyous shout. Darcy put her hands up and turned her head away as Drax began to vigorously splash her and Groot, retaliating by kicking water back at him she and Groot teamed up.
“You’re going to get arrested.” Gamora said flatly, but with a smile.

Darcy stuck her tongue out at the green alien, arguing, “Yeah, but this is a fun crime!”

They did end up getting chased off by the ‘Nova-cops’ running away from the fountain with merry laughter. They reconvened on the ship and it was decided to wait until morning to go and retrieve Peter from the jail. Darcy was just relieved that they agreed to let him come back to the Milano that she didn’t fight with them about making him wait unnecessarily.

Once again clad in borrowed clothes, Darcy settled down to sleep in Peter’s empty bed to sleep, exhausted by the day’s events despite having spent almost a week asleep. Both Gamora and Rocket/Groot offered to let her sleep in their rooms if she wanted, but she begged off.

She fell asleep quickly.

And woke up just as quickly when someone called her name, “Darcy!?”

Darcy bolted upright, once again next to Peter Quill. Only this time they were sharing a thin twin bed in a small chrome jail cell this time.

“Hey.” Darcy greeted the bewildered looking man as nonchalantly as she could.

“YOU’RE ALIVE!” A vein in Peter’s neck looked as if it was about to burst, “WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE? I’M YELLING—hmnh--Why aren’t you in the hospital. Oh, god. Did you teleport from the hospital to here? Are—what are you doing here!? ”

“Don’t pop a blood vessel, why am I here?” Darcy gestured with one hand to the bed, “Duh.”

Peter frowned at her, “You’re okay?”

“I’m okay.” Darcy confirmed, “My extended coma was due to the distance I traveled when teleporting. Intergalactic travel really takes a toll on my body.”

“You didn’t fall unceremoniously unconscious the last time you boarded the Milano.”

Darcy shrugged, “The last time I boarded the Milano I was already in space. Traveling to…wherever you were when I teleported into your bed, from the Earth is a lot more strenuous.”

“Oh.” Peter said thoughtfully. His eyes wide as he stared at her with awe.

“Thanks for the concern, good to know you care.” Half joking, Darcy gave him a smile. It fell from her lips as Peter curled up on himself with a sad look on his face. From under his lashes he regarded her with fear in his eyes.

“You know I’m sorry right? I..I feel like no matter how many times I say it, it’ll never be enough.”

“I know you’re sorry. Can I ask you a question?” Peter nodded, “Do you forgive me for lying to you about where I’m from?”

“Yes.” Peter turned away from her face, “You don’t even need to ask that. God, I was—I was such a
baby, I reacted like a child. I’m so sorry.”

Darcy nodded and they fell into an uncomfortable silence for a couple minutes. Darcy was a little surprised a guard hadn’t come by and discovered her. In a small voice, Peter broke the silence asking, “Do you hate me?”

“No,” Darcy answered automatically, “I don’t hate you.”

“You forgive me?”

“No yet.” Darcy said honestly, “But I will. I…right after it happened I was in shock. I couldn’t believe that you’d actually left me there.”

“I’m sor–” Darcy held up her hand halting Peter’s apology. He closed his mouth glumly and stared at her.

“Right after it happened I was in shock,” Darcy repeated, “Then I got sad…only when I finally got back home, did I get angry.”

“I deserve it.” Peter said quietly, “I deserve your hate. You should hate me.”

Darcy put her arm around Peter’s shoulders and gave him the same kind of one armed hug she’d given to Groot earlier in the day, “Maybe I should hate you but I don’t.”

“Why not?”

“Takes too much energy.” Darcy replied flippantly.

“Darcy, I abandoned you.”

“And I lied to you.”

Peter shook his head, shrugging off her arm, he grumbled, “It’s not the same.”

“No its not.” Darcy acknowledged, “But…I don’t want to hate you. You’re funny. And sweet, and kind, most of the time. You’re a hero. You saved the galaxy and…you’re my friend, even after what you did. And so, yeah, I don’t want to hate you. Therefore I don’t.”

“How?”

Darcy shrugged her shoulders, “Dunno? I…I have a really good life going on right now, evil robots aside, I’ve got a hot wizard boyfriend. A hot CEO girlfriend. A hot genius billionaire boyfriend.”

“You have two boyfriends and a girlfriend?” Peter asked with wide eyes, once again staring at her with awe, “Do they all know about each other?”

Darcy smiled toothily, “Of course they know about each other.”

“Wow.” Peter said revenant, “That’s…that’s impressive.”

“Thanks.”

After a minute of silence, Peter brought his knees up to his chest and rested his arms on them. Darcy leant over and rested her head on his shoulder. He spoke so quietly she could barely hear him as he said, “The team won’t forgive me.”
Darcy ran her hand through his hair, and then rubbed his back, before just hugging him. He sounded like a scared little boy and Darcy just felt her heart go out to him.

“They’ll forgive you.” Darcy stated confidently.

“No they won’t.” Peter said sadly.

“Yes they will.” Darcy argued.

“You don’t know that. You can’t know that!” Peter cried, lifting his head to glare at her. Darcy’s heart broke a little for him when she saw that he had silent tears streaming down his face.

“You’re a quiet crier.” Darcy said casually, reaching out she wiped away a few of his tears with her thumb.

“Had to cry quietly or else Yondu would have let the Ravagers eat me.” Peter pouted.

“Who’s Yondu again?” Darcy asked.

“My—the guy who abducted me from Earth. He raised me…he’s like my dad, but not--”

“Not blood.” Darcy said finishing his sentence.

“Yeah, family, but not blood.” Peter said with a sigh.

Darcy hugged Peter tightly, whispering in his ear, “Everything will be okay. You’ll learn from this mistake and grow as a person. It’ll all work out. You’ll see.”

“Groot and Rocket were so pissed.” Peter admitted sadly, “Gamora was hurt, Drax was just…disappointed. It…it’s so bad.”

Darcy kissed him on the cheek and then unwrapped one arm from around his knees and put it around her shoulders, cuddling up to him she assured him quietly, “They’ll forgive you.”

“But the team--”

“Shut up Peter. Trust me, they’ll forgive you. Because you’re not just a team. You’re family.”

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I'm not sure where to go for the next chapter so let's vote?

--> Should Darcy stay with the Guardians for 1 more chapter?
Should Darcy visit the movie Ant-Man?
Or Should Darcy visit the (ending) of the movie Doctor Strange?

Please leave any thoughts on the chapter down below. I know the Quill confrontation
was hotly anticipated, so I hope y'all not disappointed.

Also, in rewatching Ultron, over and over, I just...its not a good movie guys. Its just stuffed to the brim, setting up infinity war, ragnrok, civil war, black panther, THEY shoved in SO MUCH! The plot with the evil robot gets very convoluted and I just...wanna skip to the end?
Chapter 27 - Rocket Racoon

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up beside Rocket Racoon

Chapter Notes

I really wanted to post this yesterday, because I'm so THANKFUL for all my loyal readers, but...it just kept getting longer and longer, and I contemplated chopping it in half and posting half yesterday and half today, but well, then I didn't. FYI: When you reach the song, then you'll know where the halfway point was, where I was going to cut it up into 2 chapters but decided against it.

So, in conclusion, HAPPY BLACK FRIDAY EVERYONE! Hope everyone had a nice Thanksgiving, or a nice Thursday if you don't celebrate that holiday!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 27 – Rocket Racoon

Darcy woke up to an irritating tickling sensation. The humming of the Milano’s steady engine assured her she was still in space with the Guardians; the accompanying quiet snoring sound told her who her bed companion was. The soft fur brushing up against her arm was another clue.

She’d been back on the ship for two weeks and already things were falling into a familiar routine. She would go to sleep in her own bed, in a room she shared with Mantis, and she would wake up beside one of the crew members by morning.

Appearing in Rocket’s bed was the most problematic though, as the raccoon like creature regularly slept in a hammock.

The first time she appeared in his ‘bed’, she snapped and broke the damn thing. The second time, she broke it, gave herself a mild concussion, and nearly crushed Rocket. After that Rocket starting sleeping in a human sized hammock. One that was large enough for Darcy and secured to the wall by metal brackets.

“I am Groot?” Darcy smiled as she heard Groot call out quietly, the room was pitch black but still somehow, Groot knew she’d arrived and she had woken up momentarily.

“Hi Groot. I’m fine.” Darcy whispered back, “Everything’s fine.”

Rocket twitched in his sleep and Darcy held still as Rocket twirled several times, rolling in his sleep as he found a better sleeping position where his back was up against her stomach, his head resting right under her boob. Darcy covered her mouth as she smiled; Rocket was a surprisingly cuddly bed
partner. In a way she felt honored that he felt comfortable enough to get so close to her…to let her
get so close to him.

When it seemed liked Rocket was settled Darcy reached out and ran her hand down the raccoon’s arm, marveling at his soft, soft fur. Then she gently trailed her fingers over his naked back. He didn’t wear his jumpsuit to bed, just a little pair of boxers. The first time she’d touched his back like this she’d started crying. In the center of his back there was no fur and there were several metallic…jacks? Ports? She didn’t even know what word to use for the things embedded into his skin. The first time she had been confronted with evidence of his torture, Darcy had reacted emotionally, however the more time she spent with the Guardians and Rocket, her view on Rocket’s scarred back came to change.

Hands down what had been done to Rocket had been torturous and wrong. It was obviously mentally, emotionally, and physically scarring. Nevertheless, his genetic and cybernetic enhancement’s made him who he was. Intelligent. Capable, vain, chaotic, sarcastic, fun. She hated knowing Rocket had been abused in such a violent and permanently damaging way, but she wouldn’t want him any other way.

She could feel the disfigured and mutilated skin underneath her fingertips and she knew that if Rocket was awake there was no way he’d ever let her get this close to his scars, let alone touch them. She ran her fingers over the skin, up and down, up and down, in a repetitive soothing motion.

Rocket had revealed to her one night, after he’d gotten a little drunk, that he grew up in an insane asylum. That after funding for the asylum got cut, the doctors up and left, leaving their patients, ‘pets’, and robot assistants behind. The robots were the ones who ultimately created Rocket. The robots, unwilling to deal with the ‘Loonies’, tried to create caretakers through their various animal experimentations. In order to create a raccoon that could walk upright, Rocket endured many painful surgeries that changed the shape of his body. In a small way, Rocket’s origin story reminded her of Ultron, and wasn’t that a disturbing thought.

Darcy knew Rocket was very sensitive about his scars, finding them ugly and things to be ashamed of, but she wished that wasn’t so. She wanted Rocket to finally heal, emotionally speaking at least, from his harrowing past. She wanted him to feel comfortable in his own skin. She wanted him to feel comfortable around her and his fellow Guardians. She…she only wanted good things to happen to Rocket from now on. After learning the truth about his origins, she thought he deserved a little happiness.

“I am Groot?”

“Shh.” Darcy removed her hand from Rocket’s skin and put it on the wall next to them. Giving a little push, she set the hammock into motion. She let her hand rest on own chest and let the rocking movement lull her back to sleep.

After they’d retrieved Quill from jail, the Guardians offered to take Darcy anywhere in the galaxy she needed or wanted to go. She was eager to get back to Earth and see for herself how the whole Ultron thing worked out, so that’s where they were headed. However, Earth was a long ways away from where they were at the moment. So, it would take about a month and a half to get there.

She didn’t mind.

It was fun being aboard the space ship again. And her heart felt lighter for the truth about her home planet being known to everyone this time around.
Almost seamlessly she reintegrated with the team as if she’d never left. Perhaps even better than before.

She was pleased to know that despite her disappearance Rocket had kept up with trying to occupy baby Groot with mentally stimulating activities, however one of the activities he spent most of his time engaged, in now that he was a little older, was a stupid video game. Darcy quickly set about subtly discouraging Groot from being so attached to the damn thing by challenging him intellectually creating fun memory games and math lessons for him to do with her instead. Groot seemed happier for it and Darcy felt better knowing Groot’s brain wouldn’t rot from staring at a screen all day. In fact, she and Groot started their own little book club!

The goal was to read as many great works of literature from all across the galaxy that they could before she disappeared again. They were starting with a book called “The Intergalactic Travelers Guide to the Galaxy and Cake!”. One of the Nova cops had recommended it when they went to retrieve Quill, referring to it as ‘must read classic’. Darcy had tried to get her hands on some Shakespeare, but Earth products were really rare this far out in the galaxy apparently, even among the not-so-legal traders unless you knew somebody who knew somebody.

Spurred on by her commitment to education for Groot and herself, Drax had begun teaching a ‘survival’ class, it was only ever attended by her, Groot, and Mantis, but he seemed to take it very seriously. Teaching them about what plants were edible on which planets, how to start a fire, how to find water if stranded, how to avoid detection of predators and all sorts of other useful things.

Rocket, perhaps jealous by everyone else taking up their time, demanded that she and Groot finally buckle down and learn the basics about mechanical engineering. Groot was better at it than her, intellectually speaking, but her hands were more dexterous and able to do the work easier. So, when Rocket gave them broken engine parts and told them to fix them as a means of ‘testing’ them, she and Groot usually worked together to solve the problem in order to ‘pass’, much to Rocket’s annoyance. Apparently there was no such thing as ‘teamwork’ in mechanical engineering.

Within the first few days Gamora challenged Darcy to test out her new Asgardian strength and fighting skills. After thoroughly kicking her butt, despite Darcy’s superior strength, Gamora forced Darcy to train and spar with her for a couple of hours each day. Rumor had it that the green skinned woman had mastered 83.4% of all types of martial arts. Her skills applied to both armed and unarmed techniques, which is why she was undefeatable, at least for Darcy. With Dragonfang, the magic sword she had been gifted back on her birthday in mind, Darcy took advantage of Gamora’s vast weapon’s expertise and asked the woman to help her learn how to sword fight. Darcy was…getting better, but considering when they started she kept accidently hitting herself with her own sword, that wasn’t saying much. As a result, she walked around with her dulled-edge practice sword and dagger, secured by a pretty red belt, on her person at all times.

And while she enjoyed her one on one time with each of the Guardians during these ‘lessons’, she most looked forward to Earth/music appreciation time with Peter. She and he would carve out at least an hour each day to hang out and listen to music and talk about home. Listening to music from different parts of the galaxy and the more familiar mixed tapes from his mother and his newly gifted ‘Zune’, they just hung out with no other agenda in mind.

They talked about things he remembered from his childhood, places, popular culture, how he met his real dad and everything that happened after that. She told him about her various relationships, Ultron, and Asgardian shenanigans. It was just…nice. Comforting even. With no lies between them anymore she and Peter related to each other like no one else. There was an easiness to their conversations that didn’t exist between them and the others due to them being from the same planet, both secretly not totally being human but thinking they were, and just being go-with-the-flow type people in general.
She was just glad that their friendship didn’t seem to be permanently damaged due to all the ugliness that happened between them.

It also helped that anytime she was feeling lazy and she asked Peter to get her something or do something for her he was up on his feet in an instant. She didn’t make it easy on him though, often saying something like, ‘you abandoned me on an alien planet where I almost became a space hooker can you go make me a sandwich I’m hungry’ or ‘you abandoned me on an alien planet and made me homeless by default, my feet are cold can I borrow a pair of socks and could you go and get them for me?’ Yes she was milking Peter’s guilt for all it was worthy, but he deserved it so, whatever. Everyone else found it very amusing as well.

After a few weeks of this Mantis approached her about the possibility of them doing an ‘activity’ together as well. Just the two of them. Not wanting to leave the kind and soft spoken Guardian out of the bonding, Darcy agreed. And so Darcy/Mantis dance class was born.

That morning, in the same space she and Gamora trained, Darcy was teaching Mantis how to do the electric slide. It wasn’t exactly going ‘well’.

Darcy sang along with the song that played over the ships speakers, only possible because Rocket had linked up Peter’s Zune and the ship, “Some say it’s mystic, it’s electric, boogie woogie, woogie, you can’t resist it, it’s electric, boogie woogie, woggie.”

Mantis wasn’t really listening to her instructions on how the dance was performed, instead she spun in a circle with her arms out, laughing and singing along with Darcy when the chorus came on. Darcy had given up teaching Mantis how to dance when she came to realize Mantis didn’t care. She just wanted to hang out with Darcy and do something entertaining.

And so Darcy also spun in a circle with her arms outstretched next to the alien woman.

“I love dancing!” Mantis said as the song ended, “Darcy, you are very fun.”

“Thank you. I think you’re pretty fun too Mantis.” Darcy complimented.

“I can see why everyone loves you.” Mantis said as she retrieved her water bottle.

“Don’t you mean like?” Darcy corrected.

Mantis shook her head, “No. I mean love.”

Darcy stiffened, “What do you mean? I—surely not everyone—I mean, obviously Groot and maybe Rocket, but not everyone loves me. I’m..I haven’t even really known the Guardians all that long.”

“Nuh uh.” Darcy denied unintelligently. She felt conflicted, on the one hand, she had come to love each of the Guardians in her own way in such a short time, but she had never expected the highly guarded and emotionally immature bunch of heroic outlaws to return her affections. She knew they liked her obviously, but…love?

With a blush and lowered lashes Mantis said, “I must admit, that after observing your interactions with them, I became a little jealous, which is why I asked to spend some time with you. I know how hard it is for the Guardians to admit their feelings, but they cannot hide them from me.”

Mantis sighed, “Secretly, I had hoped you to be evil so we might have killed you, but sadly, you are just a good person who is enjoyable to be around. I understand why they feel the way they do about
you now.”

“Sorry?”

Mantis smiled at her brightly, “You’re forgiven.”

After a beat of silence Darcy couldn’t help but ask, “Are you sure everyone loves me?”

“Drax loves you in a familial way. I think you remind him of his daughter. Gamora loves you...she feels a sisterly love for you, her love for you is tainted with loss and regret though. Probably due to the contentious relationship she shares with her blue sister Nebula.” Mantis explained kindly, her tone softening as she obviously sensed the discomfort and shock in Darcy.

“Groot loves you like he loves Rocket. He finds comfort in your very presence, joy in your every touch, and despair and rage when you are in pain.”

“Aww.” Darcy cooed.

With a mischievous smile Mantis informed her, “Peter loves you like a sister he would not mind having sex with.”

“What?!”

Mantis ignored her outburst and continued, “Rocket loves you deeply and his love for you causes him pain and confusion and makes him feel occasional bouts of self-loathing. I suspect he acts as he does, because he does not feel worthy of your love nor friendship. Though his reasoning is not as clear to me as the others so I may be wrong. Sometimes I think he has sexual love for you, other times I think it is familial in origin. Perhaps he is harder to read; perhaps he just cannot decide how he feels for you.”

Mantis gave an impish shrug, “He’s very emotionally complicated for such a tiny creature.”

Darcy’s jaw dropped open and her eyes bugged out and all she could think to say was, “WHAT?!”

“I have upset you. You feel shocked and confused. Do you need me to elaborate? Use more adjectives?” Mantis offered with a sweet understanding smile. The thought of Peter and Rocket having sexual feelings for her was severely freaking her out. Rocket more than Peter, as Peter was a red blooded male and it was easily understandable to her that he would from time to time, think about her that way, not that she liked it, but it was understandable. Rocket on the other hand? HE WASN’T EVEN HER SPECIES! She couldn’t help but be grossed out.

“No!” Darcy held up a hand, “No just don’t...don’t talk anymore.”

Darcy walked over to the consol that controlled the music and changed the music from ‘happy block party appropriate’ songs, to Drowning Pools ‘Bodies’. She decided not to dwell on what Mantis had revealed to her and tried her best to forget it as the violently themed song started. She raised the volume until it filled the room, shouting over the music Darcy suggested, “Let’s just dance.”

“Let the bodies hit the floor
Let the bodies hit the floor
Let the bodies hit the floor
Let the bodies hit the floor

Beaten why for (why for)
Can’t take much more
One, nothing wrong with me
Two, nothing wrong with me
Three, nothing wrong with me
Four, nothing wrong with me
One, something’s got to give
Two, something’s got to give
Three, something’s got to give now”

She and the Guardians were eating breakfast, when Gamora came in with a worried look on her face. Darcy sat up straighter seeing Gamora’s display of emotion as the woman rarely betrayed herself so obviously.

“What’s wrong” Peter asked immediately.

“We just received an emergency distress call from a nearby passenger ship.” Gamora informed them with a grim expression, “They were hit by an unexpected meteor shower and their life support systems are malfunctioning. Their engineer died of a heart attack half way through their journey and the remaining crew lack the mechanical expertise to diagnose the problem let alone fix it.”

“Oh no, a passenger ship.” Mantis said.

With a dour look Drax asked, “How many people are in danger?”

“One hundred twenty-two.” Gamora answered quickly.

“How far away are we?” Quill questioned as he began to stow away the breakfast bowls, Drax moving to shove a few pancakes in his mouth before putting the remaining food in a containers to be saved for later.

“Close.” Gamora said, “A half an hour? Maybe less if we push it.”

“Can they pay?” Rocket asked with his arms folded.

“Rocket!” Darcy swatted his arm, “Don’t be an asshole!”

“What?” Rocket scowled, “It’s a legitimate question considering I’m the one who’s going to be doing all the work!”

“So we’re going to help them?” Gamora asked for clarification. Darcy glared at Rocket and he rolled his eyes.

“Don’t give me that look,” Rocket sniped as he got to his feet with a false smile, “We’ll help ‘em.”

“Yay!” Darcy grinned at him sincerely, “Time for some thrilling heroics.”

By the time they reached the ship in distress, it had gone silent. Which was not good. They could see
the ship out the Milano’s window as they approached; it was just floating in space, spinning slowly with gravity or whatever.

“It looks dead.” Darcy whispered. The Guardian’s bleak expressions told her she was right to be worried.

“Is the engine even on?” Peter asked pressing his face closer to the glass. Rocket kept his mouth shut, saying nothing, telling them all *everything*.

“So, how do you do this? Is there a tractor beam or something?” Darcy asked.

“Why bother? The vessel is obviously out of commissioned, the crew likely dead.” Drax said with bitterness, “We should not trouble ourselves to go sort through the corpses.”

“We don’t know that.” Gamora said stubbornly, “They could still be alive.”

“We both know that’s not true.” Drax argued.

“I’m gonna go suit up.” Rocket grunted, leaving the room quickly.

“Me too.” Quill said.

Darcy reached out and put her arm around Groot’s shoulders when it looked like he was going to follow. Drax and Mantis followed them out, presumably to ready the ship for ‘attaching’. She hugged Groot to her side as she turned to Gamora who had her eyes trained on the vessel. Staring at in unblinkingly

“Do you really think they’re people still alive on that ship?” Darcy asked quietly.

In a grave tone Gamora answered, “The transmission said, one hundred twenty-two souls. Eighty nine adults. Thirty three children. They were on their way to a new planet, escaping the tyranny and life of slavery on their home world. As slaves they were probably denied education which is why; when their one engineer died they couldn’t--”

Gamora looked away from the ship and locked eyes with Darcy, “I don’t know if they’re alive, but I hope so.”

“I am Groot.”

Darcy nodded, “I hope so too.”

There were no survivors.

Rocket diagnosed the mechanical problem pretty easily, said everyone had suffocated to death. He fixed the broken ship and it returned to full power within minutes. That done, he and Quill returned to the Milano so they could all discuss what to do next.

They were standing around the loading dock and Darcy was only half listening to what was being said. She kept quiet partly due to shock and sadness and partly due to her not *actually* being a member of the Guardians. It really wasn’t her place to offer input or opinions.

A bark covered hand squeezing her shoulder and brought her back to the conversation. Everyone was staring at her looking expectant.
“I am Groot?”

Darcy smiled at Groot apologetically, “Sorry, I drifted. What did you say?”

“We asked what you thought we should do?” Peter said, “Call Nova and let them deal with it or—–”

“Strip the ship of any valuables and parts we can use and then call Nova and let them deal with it.” Rocket said with put upon look as everyone glared at him. “You know they’d believe us if we said we found it like that! Besides, we tried to do the right thing. Don’t we deserve some kind of reward?”

“And you think robbing the corpses of a bunch of dead families is a reward!” Gamora snarled.

Rocket’s lip curled in derision, “I think it’s the smart move!”

“It’s unspeakable.” Drax growled.

“It’s despicable!” Gamora shouted advancing in Rocket’s direction a few steps.

Peter frowned and in a damnably charming way shrugged, saying, “It’s not all that bad, and Rocket’s right. We did try to help. Maybe this is karma?”

“Karma would be the same fate befalling us for even contemplating desecrating the people on that ship.” Drax said with a glare.

“IT’S A VICTIMLESS CRIME!” Rocket yelled, throwing his arms up in the air, “They’re dead! They don’t need any of the units they left behind. Or the jewelry we can sell or the ship parts we can salvage and use. They’re dead! THEY DON’T CARE! WHY SHOULD WE?”

Gamora unsheathed her scary looking dagger from her belt and took a threatening step towards Rocket. Darcy shook free of Groot’s hand and jumped in between the pair, holding her hand up in front of Gamora’s chest. Quill and she locked eyes, and he gave her a beleaguered look, “All caught up? Good. This is the point when I said, ‘let’s see what Darcy thinks we should do’.”

“Oh.” Darcy said flatly. She didn’t want to be the one to decide what they do. She didn’t know! She agreed with Rocket, if they did steal from the dead passengers, she wouldn’t lose any sleep over it, they were after all dead. And it’s not as if they would be going through people’s pockets or anything. But…they were still people. Or, they were. And it was a gross act, to steal from a group of fresh corpses. Morally, physically, ethically, it was gross. Disrespectful. And…icky.

She didn’t know what to say. She could see both sides of the argument. And it wasn’t like she even had a vote anyway…

She looked around at the assembled Guardians and noticed how Mantis was a step behind Drax, almost hiding behind him. It occurred to her just then that she might not be the only one reluctant to speak up due to not being a fully fledged member of the Guardians.

“What do you think Mantis?” Darcy asked.

Mantis blinked her inky black eyes and ducked her head, “Oh, I don’t think—it’s not my place.”

Darcy clenched her jaw, “No, it is your place. You fought with them against Peter’s evil dad. You live on the ship. You’re a Guardian of the Galaxy just as much as the rest of them.”

Mantis looked up at her with surprise, “No I’m not.”
Gamora’s brow furrowed and she stared at Mantis with a look of confusion, “Of course you are.”

“It’s not like we give out membership cards.” Peter added.

Mantis smiled so widely that it looked garish. Her cheeks grew pink as she stared at the others with awe.

“You are just as much one of us as the disrespectful rodent.” Drax said as he put a hand on Mantis’s shoulder and gave it a squeeze, “Even if you are hideous.”

“Drax.” Gamora scolded.

“I am Groot.” Groot said with a nod.

Rocket rolled his eyes, waving at Mantis dismissively, “Yeah, you’re one of us. Congratulations. So, what do you think, do we steal from the stiff or not?”

Mantis’s eyes widened impossibly wider and she let out a squeaking sound before turning tail and running out of the room without saying a word.

Rocket rubbed at his face in frustration mumbling, “She is so weird.”

Peter turned back to her, “So, Darcy what do you think we should do?”

Darcy shrugged, “Flip a coin?”

They did end up flipping a coin. And when it landed on heads, Rocket cheered enthusiastically while Peter merely raised a victorious fist in the air. Gamora left the room in a huff while Drax stayed and pouted.

Darcy picked up the discarded coin off the floor glaring at it, grumbling to herself, “Fate you fucking bitch.”

Gamora ultimately helped them raid the ship, stripping it of anything of value. Mantis and Drax too. Only Groot was spared from having to go aboard the ship filled with the dead. He actually wanted to go, since she and Rocket were going, but they both denied him, laying down the law and confining him to the Milano on penalty of no more book club with Darcy.

They all steadfastly avoided the bodies, not touching or moving them as they set about their thievery.

They left the ship much richer than they had entered, but severely depressed. It was a grim business, grave robbing. Dealing with/seeing all the dead bodies eventually even got to Rocket and Peter, deflating their robbery high. When they finally retreated back to the Milano, it was left to Rocket to call and inform Nova of the ship and its inhabitant’s demise.

A week after they robbed the dead ship they were on a semi-civilized planet called Castlier selling all
that they could from the gruesome job. Once flush with money, Rocket and Peter seemed to perk
back up excitedly talking about what they were going to spend their units on at the local market,
while the rest of them remained sedate. Even Groot was acting subdued.

Drax and Mantis elected to stay back at the ship while the rest of them went to the local shopping
district. Darcy was wedged securely in between Gamora and Groot. Both of whom couldn’t resist
from shooting semi-dirty looks at Peter every now and then. They obviously couldn’t let go of the
last time she and Peter went shopping together. Not that the same thought hadn’t crossed her mind
as well.

Darcy looped her arm in Groot’s, and gave his cheek a quick caress, hoping to get him to lose the
tension in his shoulders and unclench his jaw. By Rocket’s estimation Groot was about ten or eleven
years old, give or take, and Darcy didn’t like seeing the little boy so edgy. Groot turned to her and
said, “I am Groot” as he always did, but what she heard was “I--You w-oot am--leave me-oot?”

Darcy blinked at him and stopped, Gamora stopped with them as Peter and Rocket continued to
walk ahead of them unawares.

“What did you just say?” Darcy asked breathlessly.

“I am Groot.” Groot answered, but what she heard was, “I--Don’t leave am-me. Groot.”

Darcy pursed her lips together and took a chance saying, “I would never leave you.”

Groot’s eyes widened and he said, “I am Groot?” “I--Am-you understand-root?”

Darcy’s eyebrows raised high up on her forehead as she replied in a dazed tone, “I think I’m
beginning to.”

“I am Groot!” Groot shouted happily, jumping up and down. He starting talking very quickly saying,

Darcy didn’t understand a word of what he said just then and had to hold up her hands and made a
‘calm down’ gesture, “I can’t understand you when you get all excited like that. Slow down. I…I
think I’m learning, but I’m still just a beginner in Goot-ese. Okay?”

Groot nodded enthusiastically and Darcy cupped his cheeks in her hands, gently shaking his head
from side to side, she counseled, “Go slow and be patient e.”

“I am Groot.” Groot said, “I—I am--will teach-oot.”

“You’re starting to learn his language?” Gamora asked, making Darcy jerk her hands away from
Groot as she turned to the green skinned woman obviously forgetting she was there with them.

She smiled timidly, a hint of pride in her voice as she replied, “Yeah, I think I am.”

Gamora gave her an impressed look, “That’s remarkable.”

“I am Groot.” Groot agreed, running off in Rocket and Peter’s direction. Groot actually picked up
Rocket from behind, shaking his smaller but older friend/father figure excitedly chattering “I am
Groot” over and over again.

Darcy and Gamora both laughed as Rocket shrilly demanded to be put down and Groot ignored him,
spinning him in an circle crying out happily ‘I am Groot’ as Rocket’s arms and legs flew out with
centrifugal force.
Peter gave them a look and pointed at the pair, “Did you tell him to do this?” Peter didn’t wait for an answer before giving them a thumbs up and adding, “Nice.”

After gathering supplies and a new weapon Rocket had his eye on, they all returned to the ship laden down with bags and boxes. Darcy was pretty damn happy as she was able to buy a few souvenirs for her friends back home and some new clothes and Gamora agreed that should Darcy disappear unexpectedly again, they would not burn or sell them, so they would still be there waiting for her on her next visit. Which was…nice?

It was a couple days later when they decided to take a job on a neighboring planet, it wasn’t too far out of their way and the man asking for help sounded desperate. A rich and powerful judge’s daughter had been kidnapped and needed to be rescued from a band of space pirates. The case was a straight up rescue mission. Something easy and lucrative that would boost morale and make them all feel a bit better about themselves following the whole ‘robbing a corpse filled ship’ thing.

For the two days that it took them to reach the planet, Groot and Rocket spent most of their waking hours, trying to teach Darcy how to speak Groot’s language more fluently. It wasn’t exactly working. She was still just hearing whatever words she heard with slight variations of ‘I’ ‘am’ and ‘Groot’ inserted into the translation her brain heard.

Still, they were both very excited and encouraged at the prospect that she could understand Groot in any way, that up until then, only Rocket had.

“I--It’s am--like we Gro-real—oot family.” Groot said as he put an arm around Darcy’s shoulders and Rocket’s shoulders and hugged them into his side. Darcy returned the embrace readily but Rocket just sat stiffly with a nervous expression on his face.

“Yeah, yeah kid. Real great. Now two people in the galaxy will know what a sassy little shit talker you are.” Rocket said briskly as he wormed his way out of Groot’s embrace.

“Try not to let her know how much you curse all the time ‘eh?” Rocket advised. Groot and Darcy watched with amusement as Rocket quickly left the room, muttering an excuse about the engine as he left.

Darcy turned to Groot and patted him on the back consolingly, “Your dad has some real intimacy issues Groot.”


Darcy smiled sadly at the hallway Rocket had disappeared down, “Yeah, in his own wway.”

Darcy had excitedly got all dressed up for the rescue mission. She’d put on makeup, did her hair up in cute braids, she was wearing leather-ish clothes just like the other Guardians so she would fit in better with them. AND, she had put a spell on her purse and it actually worked! Turning her tiny little planet shaped purse into an infinity-bag. Just like in Mary Poppins.

It was a spell she had read about while staying at Karma-Taj. She had been secretly practicing it every night before she went to bed for the past nine months (when possible) and for the first time ever, it actually turned out like she wanted! The way the spell worked was she inserted an object into
the bag, to retrieve the object all you had to do, was stick your hand inside and think of the object you wanted to retrieve and it appeared in your hand.

The spell was only limited to inanimate objects. She remembered very clearly in the book that she was not to try to stuff a person or living creature inside, as it was akin to the vacuum of space and would kill whatever poor soul she stuck inside the bag. Including plants.

She stored her sword and dagger inside the tiny but infinitely large purse, zipping it closed with a smile. As she stared at her tiny purse the smile fell from her lips, the purse she used was brightly colored and super cute, but not exactly the best choice for an infinity bag. She’d have to do the spell again on a different purse that had a bigger opening so she could fit furniture and stuff inside. Maybe even a lamp! Like Mary Freaking Poppins!

Dressed, armed, and ready to go save a damsel in distress Darcy made her way bridge of the ship where everyone was gathered.

Mantis sat with an unhappy looking Groot, her antenna glowing, obviously trying to console him on not being allowed to go on the mission with them. Drax and Rocket stood over a table littered with guns, Peter and Gamora were hunched over a consol that showed pictures of their kidnapped victim, Miranda Reynolds. She was sixteen, with lime green skin, gills on her neck, and long strawberry blonde hair. She wasn’t pretty, but she wasn’t hideous, just plain. And she was the apple of her father’s eye. Her father being a very lucrative business owner and judge who’d stood up to the local mob scene one too many times apparently.

It was suspected that the local mob had hired the space pirates to kidnap Judge Reynolds daughter as means of sending him a message and that message was get in line or else.

Darcy was eager to go out on her first official mission with the Guardians, and it showed as she excitedly bounced on her feet, “Hi guys! I’m ready.”

Everyone froze, stopping what they were doing, and turned as one to look at her. Uh oh.

“Darcy?” Gamora asked, looking at Peter for guidance.

Peter looked like a deer in headlights, “See, the thing is…”

Darcy’s smile melted off her face and her painted lips formed into a thin line, “What? Am I wearing too many bright colors? I can chang--”

“You’re not going.” Rocket said bluntly.

“What? Why not?”


“I’m Asgardian. I can do magic. How is this mission, which you described as a ‘cake walk’ too dangerous?” Darcy argued.

“Just is.” Rocket said shortly, “You’re not coming.”

Darcy blinked her eyes rapidly, she felt a mixture of disappointment, sadness, and embarrassment, and it all had her wanting to cry but she refused to let a single tear fall and ruin her expertly applied makeup. She folded her arms in front of her chest and looked at the other Guardians with a stony expression, “And this is what the entire group decided?... None of you want me to come?”
“Darcy—it’s not that we don’t want you to come--” Peter tried to explain, but Darcy didn’t want to hear it. She held up her hand and stopped him.

Repeating herself, “All of you agree? You don’t think I should come?”

Peter and Gamora looked away from her eyes, but Drax met her gaze. He nodded, “We agreed. You are an unknown entity, still untrained and there is the life of a child at stake. We cannot risk it. You should stay behind with the tiny tree and stay safe here on the ship.”

Darcy licked her lips, “I see.”

She swallowed the lump in her throat and scuffed her foot on the floor, “I’ll just get out of your hair then.”

She didn’t even laugh when Drax replied, “I don’t have hair.”

She all but ran out of the room, going to Rocket and Groot’s room and locking herself inside. She sat and brooded and stewed and pouted and cried, a little, as she heard the others depart the ship.

They were heading for the local hang out, a fancy bar, where the space pirates were said to be hold up, hiding with the hostage in plain sight and spending the money they earned from the job on food and libations. It was supposed to be an in and out type thing. They infiltrate the bar all undercover like; have Mantis take out the leader subtly, then slip out with the girl without being detected. No fuss, no muss.

Darcy couldn’t help a little thrill of vindication when Groot came and got her, banging on the door shouting for her, “I AM GROOT!” ”I—DARCY AM-HELP!”

Darcy quickly slipped her infinity bag over her head and then threw open the door, coming face to face with Groot’s worried expression, “What’s wrong?”

“I am Groot, I am Groot. I AM GROOT!” Groot was talking too quickly for her to understand anything he was saying so she pushed him out of the way gently and started running for the Milano’s loading bay door.

“C’mon!” Darcy called out as she ran, “You can explain more slowly on the way!”

Darcy ended up putting Groot on her back, piggy back style, and running the equivalent of two miles to the bar the big confrontation was supposed to go down at. Groot explained as slowly and clearly as he could as she ran.

Apparently Mantis was unable to be sneak enough and was taken out right away, then someone recognized Gamora and put the space pirates on alert. Which, in hindsight, given that she is the most dangerous woman in the galaxy, was kind of an oversight on their part. The space pirates had unexpectedly gotten the upper hand and somehow captured all of the Guardians, even Rocket, who was the most wily of them all. Groot was a little iffy on the details of how it all went down but it didn’t really matter how it happened, it only mattered how they got out of it.

Groot had been listening over the com’s to the whole thing and when their friends got captured he
ran and got her, as he had no idea what to do or how to rescue them. Admittedly, neither did she, but she was a hell of a lot more capable than a ten year old tree boy.

When they reached the bar, Darcy let Groot climb down and they went around back to the service entrance. She used her superior strength to break the doors lock and they let themselves in quietly. From the kitchen entrance they could hear the hooting and hollering being done by the patrons on the other side of the divide. Not wanting to go into the situation without more information Darcy grabbed a waitress who looked shaken and asked her, “What’s going on in there?”

The pink skinned server looked harried, “Jeez, it’s like a feeding frenzy in there. The local assholes caught some foreign assholes snooping around the leader’s girlfriend and they started a big brawl and now the foreign assholes have been thrown into the sharkdine tank. Well, some of them have been, the other two are still being dangled over it.”

“What’s a sharkdine?” Darcy asked, suspecting it sounded exactly like what it was but needing to hear the confirmation from a local.

“It’s one of the largest and deadliest creatures in the water around these parts. The big tank and the damn creature are what the whole bar is built around, it’s our main attraction! We don’t got strippers and robo-whores like the other places around here do. This place was supposed to be the ‘safe’ family friendly type bar, it’s the only reason I work here and now this happens!” The waitress rubbed at her forehead and grumbled to herself, “I gotta go back to school.”

“Got it.” Darcy nodded, mumbling, “Thanks.”

The waitress gave her sympathetic look, “Those foreign assholes your friends or something hun?”

“Yeah.” Darcy admitted with a sigh.

The waitress patted her on the arm, “Well, cheer up. The two in the tank got weights on their feet but they’re still fighting off the sharkdine’s attack pretty good. So, maybe they’ll survive? Who knows. Dreck was always underestimating bullies on the playground when I knew him way back when.”

“Dreck?”

“Dreck’s the name he goes by now, but his mama named Dgregrious, we went to school together you see? I remember him as a little kid, he got his ass kicked a lot in school. Grew up since then, got himself a bunch of idiot friends and started calling himself Drek, wears a lot of tight leather now a days, sports a black Mohawk and is the local ring leader of mischief and mayhem.” The Waitress gave her a dry look, “He don’t fool me though, inside I know he’s just a scared little boy putting on an act. You try reasonin’ with him hun, he ain’t all that bad.”

“Cool. Thanks.” Darcy said and the woman walked off.

Darcy turned to Groot, ordering, “Stay here, I’m gonna go talk to this Dreck guy, when I’ve got their attention, you slip out and try to help whoever they threw into this ‘tank’. Okay?”

Groot nodded.

Darcy took a deep breath and put a hand on her head, touching the diadem on her head, so glad she hadn’t lost it in all of her travels. Steeling herself, she walked forward and went through the swinging door that separated the kitchen from the bar.
In the center of the room sat a large fish tank, it really was what the whole place was built around. The bar was separated into two floors and there were a ring of stairs wrapped around the giant fish tank that connected the two floors. The stairs were very wide and there was a platform in between the top floor and the bottom, with a little couch, currently a pair of teenagers were sitting on it making out with a disgusting amount of tongue. On the top there were dining tables set up and a little mini-bar, the ground floor seemed to be where the main bar and dance floor was at.

Darcy headed for the stairs. Walking up she looked into the tank and saw that it was Gamora and Drax who had been weighed down and thrown in with the deadly sharkdine, which should have been called a sharktpus, as it really did look a lot like an Earth shark only it also had tentacles like an octopus and a bioluminescent lure dangling off the top of its head.

Gamora was currently slashing at the tentacles as they reached for her, two dead lifeless tentacles lie on the tanks floor underneath her, showing how successful she had been in defending herself thus far. Drax...was unconscious. He looked dead. There were no air bubbles around him and Darcy’s heart lurched in her chest. Gamora looked like she was tiring as well. Darcy slammed her hand on the glass as Gamora closed her eyes and dropped her knife.

They couldn’t wait, if she left it to Groot they would rescuing corpses. Darcy moved her hands quickly, forming a large shield underneath Drax and Gamora’s weighed feet, she threw her hands up, shooting the two up, up, up, until they reached the surface of the tank. She kept them at the surface as she ran the rest of the way up the stairs.

Drek and his gang were all staring with shock and confusion at the couple as they seemingly floated on the surface of the water gasping and coughing. As Darcy reached the top of the stairs she saw that the sharkdine was banging its head against the bottom of her shield while it used its tentacles to feel out the shield, trying to go around it, trying to reach Gamora and Drax. She made the shield a little larger just to be sure it couldn’t get at her friends, accidently cutting off another one of the sharkdine’s tentacles. She kept the shield hovering on the top of the water like it was the lid to a jar, completely blocking off Drax and Gamora from the ravenous sea creature below.

“Who are you!?” One of Drek’s goons’s called out when he saw her.

Peter and Rocket who were dangling upside down above the tank on a hook, both paled, shouting, “RUN!” “Go, get out of here!”

Darcy rolled her eyes, muttering to herself, “Are you fucking kidding me?”

Drek, the biggest and ugliest guy in the room stepped forward, the kidnapped Miranda Reynolds hanging off his arm. He demanded in a deep voice, “Who are you?”

Darcy sashayed forward, her eyes running up and down the lime greened skinned sixteen year old hostage. The picture they’d been sent of her pictured the young girl in her school uniform, a shapeless navy jumpsuit that had been primly pressed and made the young lady appear preppy and proper. The girl now wore a super tight, super short neon pink dress, way too much make up and a very visible hickey on the side of her neck, just below her gills.

Darcy smiled brightly at the space pirate and his young arm candy as an idea began to take shape in her brain. She greeted them cheerfully, “Hi, I’m Darcy and I think there’s been a little misunderstanding. Can we talk?”

“Grab her.” Drek ordered. Two of his goons approached her, one from either side.
She kicked the one on the right so hard that he broke the bathroom door when he went flying through it. The other grabbed her around her waist and tried to pick her up but she threw her head back, breaking his nose and his hold. She turned on him and kicked him back towards the tank. He landed on her shield about five feet from Drax, a horrified look on his face as the sharkdine moved away from Gamora and swam underneath him instead.

Darcy then turned to Drek and raised her eye brow at him challengingly.

“Shoot her.” Drek grunted.

Darcy cursed as she had to drop her shield from underneath Gamora and Drax and the one goon, plunging the three of them back into the water with the with the dangerous aquatic creature. However she couldn’t dwell on that because about twelve men were shooting her, and unlike regular Earth guns, the weapons they were using were like lasers or tasers, and the little shots of electrical charge stung and pinched at her skin painfully.

Darcy erected her shield in front of herself, blocking the oncoming fire.

She held her position hoping they would run out of ammo or juice, but it soon became apparent that, that wouldn’t happen anytime soon. So, she came up with an alternative plan.

Darcy walked forward and pushed her shield forward at the same time. She enlarged it creating a giant rectangle, a wall of energy, which covered the entire space from wall to wall, from floor to ceiling. She kept moving forward, pushing and pushing, until tables snapped, chairs broke and everyone and everything was pinned in place, between her shield and the bars wall. Effectively incapacitating everyone on the other side.

Idly she wonder if she kept pushing what would happen first, would the people be crushed to death or would the bar’s wall give under the pressure and explode outward? She shook her head and refocused on Drek, she repeated herself with a smirk and a lilting tone, “Hi, I’m Darcy and I think there’s been a little misunderstanding. Can we talk?”

Drek, his faced pressed up against the shield and squished comically, choked out two words, “Yeash. Pleasesh.”

Darcy dropped the shield and everyone groaned with relief as they were released. Darcy didn’t pay any mind to them as she turned back to the tank worried about Drax and Gamora. She sighed in relief when she spied Drax was climbing out of the tank under his own power. Gamora was already out and Groot was helping unwrap one of the sharkdine’s severed tentacles from off her neck.

Groot seeing her gave her thumbs up and she returned it. Looking up at the gob smacked Peter and Rocket, who were still strung up over the tank, she curled her lips into a smug smile as she taunted them, “And you assholes said this would be ‘too dangerous’ for me.”

“We’re sorry okay!” Rocket shouted.

Peter added, “Yeah, we were wrong! You’re the best and we suck. Can someone get us down now? My head feels like it’s going to explode.”

Darcy narrowed her eyes in confusion. “Where’s Mantis?”

“Over there, by the bar.” Peter said in a voice colored with defeat, “They knocked her out with a beer bottle and left her over there.”

Darcy didn’t have to say anything, Groot hurried over to their friend to check on her. Allowing
Darcy to turn back and address Drek. She ignored the way Drek’s friends ran over to the tank and helped their fellow comrade out of the tank, he was bleeding profusely from his leg, but he was alive, so she decided not to worry about almost killing the guy.

“So…what’s wrong Drek? Nobody taught you any manners?” Darcy teased, only feeling a little bad about the shocked and disheveled looking hostage Miranda, who had also been squished by her shield.

Drek opened his mouth to speak but Darcy realized she wasn’t here for him, and instead focused on Miranda, asking, “Are you Miranda Reynolds?”

“Yes?” The girl answered timidly.

“Hi, Sweetie. Don’t be afraid.” Darcy said with a reassuring smile, “Your father the Judge hired me and my friends to, rescue you from being kidnapped.”

Drek got this conceited amused look on his face and Darcy had a guess as to why but needed to confirm it before she did the victory dance.

“He didn’t!” Miranda gasped.

“He did.” Darcy confirmed.

“Oh my god,” Miranda whined, she put a hand over her eyes; “This is so embarrassing.”

Darcy smiled brightly, ignoring the gang of ne’er do wells shooting her dirty looks as they descended the stairs with their injured friend, “I take it you’re not in need of rescue?”

The girls’ jaw dropped and a horrified expression came over her face, “Ugh! No!”

Miranda declared loudly, “Drek is my boyfriend! Daddy just doesn’t understand!”

Darcy looked Drek up and down considering, “How old are you?”

The guy looked down at his feet bashfully, “Seventeen.”

“SEVENTEEN?!” Peter shrieked just as he and Rocket were cut down, allowing them to fall abruptly to the floor. Darcy grinned at their plight as Rocket grunted out dispassionately, “Ow.”

“Pretty big guy for a seventeen year old.” Darcy commented dryly as she turned away from her friends and back to the oddly matched couple. Drek had his arm around Miranda and the two were leaning into each other and though the guy was huge, he did seem young now that she was close enough to see that the scruff growing on his face was hiding some serious baby fat. And thus explained his stupidity. Young, rebellious, and in love, god save them all.

“We just want to be together!” Miranda said shrilly, clutching at Drek’s jacket tightly.

“So, why does your dad think you were kidnapped by the mob?” Darcy asked with a pointed look at Drek who was shifting uncomfortably.

“I don’t know?” Miranda spat out nastily, “Why does he do anything! Because he’s an old fart who doesn’t understand me or Drek or anything! We’re in love! Why can’t we just be left alone?!?”

Darcy stared at Drek knowingly, he tried to avoid her eyes by shifting his gaze all about but he couldn’t hide the blush creeping up his neck. Darcy said his name cajolingly, “Dreeeek?”
Drek cleared his throat and tugged at his collar, “Um, I kind of left a ransom note after I helped you sneak out of the house.”

Miranda turned on her space pirate boyfriend and shrieked, “YOU DID WHAT?!”

“I just thought we could be together, and get a big payday at the same time. Win, win. So I made up some bullshit about those mob guys your dad is always going on about, and…it seemed like a good idea at the time!”

“YOU IDIOT!” Miranda screamed as she slapped at her boyfriend’s chest and arms, “HOW COULD YOU BE SO STUPID AND SELFISH!”

“I –ow, I did it for us! I swear! OW, don’t hit me there!” Drek whined.

Darcy turned away from the now bickering couple and faced her friends with a self satisfied expression, “Well, it’s a good thing you left me and Groot behind, you were right. This was a verrrrry dangerous mission indeed.”

“Don’t act smug. It makes it you look like you’re passing gas.” Peter said petulantly. Darcy couldn’t help but laugh at his juvenile humor.

Groot helped Mantis walk over to them, and upon seeing Darcy laughing she asked, “Oh, did I miss a joke?”

Darcy only laughed even more.

Rocket arranged a video conference in the bar, allowing Miranda and Drek to call her father and confess the truth. The Guardians were paid, despite not returning Miranda to her father, as the man was grateful his daughter was safe, if not in the unfavorable company of her own choosing.

The pay day was just enough money to pay for the damages done to the bar, refuel the ship and buy them all a few rounds of drinks.

Darcy tried not to tear up when the Guardians raised their glasses to her and thanked her for saving them. She couldn’t help a few tears escaping when they declared her ‘one of them’ though, a true and full member of the Guardians of the Galaxy.

They sat around drinking for a while. Peter and Drax quibbling about who screwed up the mission worst. Gamora talking with Mantis, explaining to the girl that she had to begin training tomorrow as today’s fiasco would have never happened if Mantis had more combat training. Mantis looked a little intimidated by that but Darcy thought it would actually be more fun for her if Mantis and she took lessons from Gamora together, at least it would feel nice to not be the only one to get her ass kicked over and over. Groot and Rocket, were talking but she didn’t know about what, Groot speaking so quickly that she couldn’t understand him and Rocket so quietly that she couldn’t hear.

“I’m gonna get another drink.” Darcy announced getting up without acknowledgement from the others. She made her way to the other side of the establishment to the main bar and waved at the bar tender catching his attention. He nodded, indicating he would get to her next.

Darcy was thinking about what Peter said about being a Guardian, and membership cards. While she didn’t think it was important, it would be nice to have some sort of official…thingy, to signify she was in fact a member. That they all were. Maybe…a ring? Or…a patch?
Darcy was brought out of her thoughts on designing a ‘Guardians’ symbol, by a twangy deep voice from right behind her. “Well, if it isn’t mah guardian angel.”

Darcy turned around and saw the same man she’d met back on Contraxia, the blue guy with the red fin on his head. The one she’d tried to warn and save with her ability to see the future.

“Hey, it’s you.” Darcy said with a smile. His little friend that she vaguely remember seeing when they all met, looked at her with wide eyes from behind his captains shoulder.

“It’s her.” The guy whispered. The blue guy’s friend suddenly rushed forward, pushing the blue guy into the bar, so he could hug her. He squeezed her around the middle tightly whispering, “Thank you, thank you, thank you. You saved the cap’n. I can’t ever repay ya. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.”

Darcy stiffened and looked at the blue guy with wide ‘help me’ eyes. The blue guy shook his head and pulled his friend off of Darcy, scolding, “Leave the poor girl alone, Kraglin. She don’t need ya slobbering all over her nice jacket.”

The man, Kraglin, sniffled and not so discreetly wiped away a tear, whimpering. “Sorry ma’am. I’m just so grateful ta ya. That’s all.”

Darcy smiled at the man awkwardly, “You’re welcome.”

Kraglin’s eyes widened and his face lit up, “Let me buy you a drink! Least I can do.”

The blue guy smiled at his friend, “Now, that ain’t a bad idea.”

Darcy smiled at the guy deviously, “I save your life and you offer to buy me one drink?”

The blue guy’s smile fell into a line, just a hint of a smile pulling at his lips as he playfully asked, “Two?”

“How about a round for me and my friends?” Darcy suggested with a grin, “Least you could do.”

“Done!” Kraglin declared with gusto, slapping his hand on the bar and waving at the bartender.

“What’s your name Papa Smurf?” Darcy asked the blue skinned alien.

The guy jerked at being refered to as ‘Papa Smurf’ and took a step back, looking at her up and down before he smiled at her with his crooked teeth on full display, “Yondu…Remind me again what’s your name little missy?”

“Darcy.”

The bartender took their nine drink order, Darcy glad the guy knew what the other Guardians had previously ordered because she didn’t fancy going back to the table and asking them all. She waited at the bar chatting amicably with blue captain and his first mate, while the bartender filled their large order.

When the bartender put all the glasses down in front of the, Darcy stared at them with a pinched expression. Out of pure laziness, she really didn’t want to make several trips across the bar delivering drinks, but by the number of glasses before her it would seem she had no choice.

Darcy turned to ask the aliens if they would watch her drinks, but the men wordlessly began picking up several glasses each. Kraglin somehow managing to carry five in one hand and two in the other.
Yondu held three, leaving Darcy to carry the last two, which belonged to Kaglin and Yondu themselves.

Yondu gestured forward with his head, and encouraged, “Lead on little missy,”

With a crooked sly grin he added, “Let’s get these libations t’your thirsty friends.”

Darcy chuckled a little at the man’s manner but proceeded to lead Kraglin and Yondu through the crowd of people to the other side of the bar, where her friends were at. When they were within sight of the Guardians table, she turned to point them out to the captain and his first mate, “My friends are just there, you see?”

Yondu let out a laugh, mumbling to himself as they all continued to walk forward, “Well, how about that.”

Darcy’s Day/Training Look
Darcy’s ‘Guardian Look’
After so many commentors cried out for more Guardians, how could I not listen? And I'm glad I did. I really liked this chapter and I hope you did too.

All of the alien stuff, instead of researching marvel comic cannon/lore, I just made it all up. The planet, the speices, the sharktpus. None of it is any type of canon. So, I hope you liked it anyway.

I'm not sure if I'm going to tackle the end of the Dr. Strange movie, but I want to at least touch on it maybe...And from the comments last time I got the impression that people weren't so passionate about Darcy meeting Hope VanDyne or Hank Pym or Scott Lang, so much as you all want her to hang out with LUIS! So...stay tuned. I don't know how yet, but those two, WILL meet somehow...some way....
Chapter 28 - Mantis

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up in Mantis's bed.

Chapter Notes

Okay, so I put up all my Christmas lights yesterday since the weather is nice, so this is getting put out a little later than normal. Happy Hanukkah to all who celebrate that holiday!

Also, warning, Still working out the kinks of Groot speak...italics/I AM GROOT, then what he's really saying...I'm working it out guys...bare with me.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 28 – Mantis

Darcy went to sleep and woke up in a dream.

She was surrounded by darkness, a room of black that wasn’t really a room at all, but a vast expanse of nothingness. She wasn’t worried or afraid or anything, she was just there. Alone.

Until she wasn’t.

“Darcy.” Stephen Strange appeared before her and Darcy smiled at the sight of him.

“Stephen!” She cried out and ran forward into his open arms. He caught her and hugged her tightly, burying his face in her hair.

“I found you.” He whispered. Darcy pulled away from his embrace and stood up on her tip toes she could reach his mouth. She kissed him with a sense of urgency and he returned it just as frantically.

Her time with the Guardians was fun and thrilling and she loved it, but she’d been with them much longer than she’d ever expected. And most of the time, she was caught up in the hero-ing of it all or she fell into the family dynamic so seamlessly, it felt like she’d always been with the Guardians. However, every detour they took, every mission that came up that they just had to attend to, delayed her return back to earth day by day, week by week, month by month. And it was getting harder and harder not to let her frustration and sadness show.

She missed Stephen and Tony and Pepper and Thor the most, and they were the people she tried to think of every time she went to sleep. She tried to will herself across the universe and back into their arms, but just like every other time she tried to master her ability, it hadn’t yet worked.

Seeing Stephen in her dream, knowing it was a dream, knowing it wasn’t a prophetic one…she was elated. In between kisses Darcy breathily whispered, “I’m dreaming.”
“Yes.” Stephen confirmed as he kissed his way down her jaw, “We both are.”

Darcy let out a gasp as he sucked on her pulse point, not really caring she asked in a husky voice, “Is this real?”

Stephen pulled away from her and Darcy put a hand on her own cheek, feeling her heated skin, it felt real to her.

“What is real?” Stephen questioned philosophically as he ran his hand over her hair, shoulders, and then down her arms. Touching her reverently, as if he was assuring himself that she was indeed real and whole.

“I miss you.” Darcy declared, with watery eyes and a trembling bottom lip, “I miss you and everyone so much and I’m so sorry it’s taking me so long to come home. I keep getting caught up in--”

Stephen cut her off with a soft kiss and Darcy melted against him.

“I love you.” Stephen said tenderly as he interlaced their hands together and brought them up to his lips so he could kiss her knuckles.

“I love you too.” Darcy whispered as Stephen let go of her hands and wrapped her in a hug. She rested her head against his chest and closed her eyes. Gripping the back of his robe tightly, she clung to him like he was a lifeline…because he was.

“Did you die yet?” Darcy asked. She’d been dreaming of him dying, facing a giant malevolent purplish entity. Over and over. She saw him die. “Did you die,” She repeated, “Or can I still warn you about the glowing purple eyed guy.”

“Dormammu.” Stephen said, “Yes, I’ve…I died. A lot. But, I used the eye of Agamotto to trap him in a time loop until he agreed to leave Earth and take Kaecilius with him.”

“That’s nice dear.” Darcy said as she snuggled her face into his chest, inhaling deeply and trying to commit his smell to her memory. Stephen chuckled at her response and picked up a lock of her hair, twirling it in his fingers mindlessly.

“I was worried.” Stephen confessed quietly, “I did a spell, it was supposed to show me where you are, but…I don’t think—I must have mispronounced something.”

“I’m glad.” Darcy sighed, “Best fuck up ever.”

Stephen chuckled and squeezed her tighter, “I’m glad too.”

“The Ancient One is dead.”

“I know.”

They were quiet for a few seconds, just holding each other, soaking in the act of getting to be together once again after being apart for so long. Suddenly, Stephen jerked backwards and Darcy looked up at him, his face twisted in pain momentarily before smoothing out.

“Stephen?” Darcy worried, “What’s wrong?”

“I can’t—can’t maintain the spell for much longer. You’re too…far away.” Stephen gripped her shoulders and pulled her to him, she kept her eyes open as they kissed once more, not wanting to miss a moment. She could feel the tears begin to spill over as they kissed what felt like a goodbye.
Stephen used his thumb to wipe away her tears as they pressed their lips together madly.

“Don’t go.” Darcy gasped, gripping the lapels of his robe. Stephen gasped too, but it was a gasp of pain. His whole body twitched and Darcy shook her head, “Don’t leave me.”

“I love you.” Stephen said sincerely, “I’ll always love you.”

Darcy nodded crying as she returned the sentiment, “I love you too.”

“Tony and Pepper love you. They—er-ah!—are you okay? They want to know if you’re okay.”

Darcy went onto her tip toes and kissed him trying to soothe his pain, knowing their time together was about to end. Petting his cheek with her hand she answered, “I’m okay. I’m with the Guardians, we’re heading back to Earth now, but things keep coming up and—”

Stephen disappeared.

“Aaaaah.” Darcy cried out distraught, falling to her knees, she wrapped her arms around herself as she cried.

Seeing Stephen, getting to hold him, kiss him…it felt worse now. Now that she was alone. In the dark. In the nothingness.

And then she woke up.

“Aaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

When Darcy woke up in Mantis’s bed, the alien screamed at the top of her lungs like she always did when Darcy suddenly appeared. Mantis then stopped, when she realized it was just Darcy, and she took a deep breath before greeting her cheerily, “Hello again, Darcy! Good morning, I was not expecting you to visit my bed.”

Darcy said nothing, just got out of her friend’s bed and headed for the showers so she could cry in peace.

A couple weeks after her dream encounter with Stephen, the Guardians got called in to help break up a child slavery ring. An undercover Nova officer who’s cover had been blown, tasked them with infiltrating a fancy party, identifying the reclusive ring leader, and getting evidence of the man’s corrupt activities and all of his associates so that he could be brought to legal justice.

The Guardians weren’t really known for their ‘espionage’ skills, but apparently they were the only ones in the area that were willing to help so…they reluctantly agreed.

Darcy didn’t want to help, she wanted to go home, but…it was a child slavery ring. How could she refuse? How could she argue with the others about yet another obstacle popping up in between her and Earth. She knew that if she said anything, they would abandon the mission for her, they were all committed to getting her home, but none of the other Guardians acted with a sense of urgency.
She kept her mouth shut and the Guardian’s assembled to save the day.

The undercover Nova officer did a little role play activity with all of them, and decided who was good at what. From that information the officer assigned them all roles that would best suit their skills and high society infiltrate-ability. It was a tricky mission; they were all out of their comfort zones.

Darcy was playing the role of the foreign Asgardian Princess, it was close enough to the truth that it made lying easy for her and being ‘Asgardian’ held enough mystic to get her into the party by offering a blood sample in lieu of an invitation, especially when her blood came back as ‘unknown’ and she bench pressed a security guard three times her size.

She was welcomed into the lavish party by the host himself. The host being their only lead in discovering the identity of the leader of the child slavery ring. The leader of the child slavery ring was known only as the Conductor. The Nova officer didn’t know what he looked like, what species he was, or how old he was. The only thing they knew about the man they were trying to catch was that he’d killed everyone sent to investigate him, he was a male, and he was starting to branch out into sex trafficking, but specifically child sex trafficking.

The host’s name was Mr. Shilreef, he was Xandarian, in his mid-thirties, thin, gangly, pale, with black slicked back hair, he reminded her of an emaciated Severus Snape, but with the personality of Gilderoy Lockhart. Or maybe Slughorn? It’d been a while since she read the books, but Mr. Shilreef in her opinion was a vain sniveling piece of shit that was desperate for fame. He seemed very keen on showing off Darcy to everyone in attendance. She was a novelty and her appearance out of the blue was attributed to Mr. Shilreef’s own reputation and status. A fucking feather in his fucking cap.

Darcy had a hard time hiding her disgust when Mr. Shilreef showed off the child fighting pits, but Quill who was acting as her plus one/man servant/slave/date, would silently interrupt offering her a drink every time she looked like she was about to blow their cover by jumping down into the pit and saving the child slaves from their gladiatorial fates.

Darcy had to tell their host that Peter was her personal slave and it would be a great insult to her people if they made him go through the normal security rigmarole to get him into the party. Peter had become too notorious for his own good. Quill, who was dressed in complimentary colors to her, kept his mask on and was discouraged from speaking, to reduce the risk of being recognized, but also because he was deemed uncouth and would ‘out’ them with his poor manners and uncultured speech….not to mention freedom.

Gamora likewise had to take steps to disguise her identity. She’d dyed her hair an outrageous ombre fire color, her makeup was bright and colorful, and she was wearing this long space/Grecian dress. Gamora was set up as the owner of a transport company and Mantis as her date. The fake invitations to get the pair in had taken the Nova officer their entire allotted budget’.

Gamora was sent to infiltrate the high roller gambling game that was being held in the back room of the party. Using her ability, Mantis was helping weed out suspects. The two of them together most resembled the other party attendees, with Gamora acting as the serious, stately one, and Mantis dressed shiny and happy and acting as her ditzy date/arm candy. They fit right in.

The wait staffs were all shirtless save an ornate necklaces, they were muscular, and wearing blank expressions. Drax fit right in after they spray painted his skin blue to match the others. He was taller and wider than the other waiters, but no one seemed to think him out of place.
Groot and Rocket were pissed they couldn’t join in on the covert ‘fun’, but it was just not possible for the pair to blend in. Rocket was in the building’s air ducts, scurrying around, hopefully breaking into the leaders safe and obtaining proof of his illegal activities. While the undercover Nova officer and Groot, tapped in and monitored the surveillance feeds.

Darcy was currently dancing with Mr. Shilreef as he bragged how he had purposed the new ‘sex trafficking’ venture to the Conductor, as a means of optimizing profits on their child slaves when they became too old to control or function in the capacity they were being used for. Which was child labor. The third time Darcy ‘accidentally’ stepped on the vile man’s foot he let out a sharp cry.

Darcy demurred, “Oh, forgive me, I am terribly sorry.”

Mr. Shilreef gave her a clench smile that did not hide his annoyance, “Think nothing of it Princess.”

The man let go of her waist and stepped away from her, “Perhaps that is enough dancing for now.”

Darcy gave him a shark like smile, “Indeed.”

Darcy snapped her fingers and Quill appeared by her side. Darcy spoke with distain evident in her voice, trying to portray an unfeeling slave owner she ordered, “Get us refreshments.”

Quill disappeared with a nod and Mr. Shilreef offered her his arm. Darcy smiled as she took it even though internally she was squirming at having to be so close to the evil man.

“May I show you the garden?” Mr. Shilreef offered.

He led her out the patio doors, the music and noise from the party instantly muffled when the door shut behind them. The garden was truly spectacular, but her appalling company kept her from enjoying the fantastic flowers and alien shrubbery.

Mr. Shilreef led her to a bench in the center of a beautiful display of night blooming flowers which glowed with bioluminescent pollen centers. As he scooted as close as possible to her, pressing up against her Darcy did her best to exude the regal bearing of Frigga while channeling the Shakespearean speech that Thor and the other Asgardians used when speaking, “Thou flatter me with your attentions sir. Do you not have other guests to attend to? You speak with reverence of your master the Conductor. Does he not have need of you?”

Mr. Shilreef curled his lip in revulsion, “The Conductor is not my master, he is my business partner.”

Darcy raised a challenging eye at the man, “Then why are you not as elusive and notorious as this man who does not even have a name? A man who’s reputation as the famed slaver has reached even the shores of Asgard?”

Mr. Shilreef looked as if he’d eaten a lemon, his voice became shrill as he argued, “I am the face. I am the front man! Without me Chad wouldn’t even have one slave to his name!”

Darcy couldn’t help but let her ‘regal-ness’ fall for a second as she scoffed, “Chad?”

Mr. Shilreef went white, “I shouldn’t have said that. Please don’t tell anyone I said his name! Cha—the Conductor is crazy. You don’t even know! He—he’s a psychopath. He’ll have me killed. He’ll have you killed! Oh god!”

Mr. Shilreef’s eyes darted around looking paranoid even though they were alone; Darcy rolled her eyes but put a comforting hand on the man’s shoulder and squeezed hard enough to make him
wince, *she was really playing up the whole, Asgardians don’t know their own strength thing*. In a lowered voice she assured him, “Fear not friend, you gaffe shall never leave my lips.”

Mr. Shilreef’s shoulder’s sagged with relief, “Thank you.”

“However if this Conductor is as powerful as you say, I would very much like to meet him.” Darcy smiled wickedly at the older man. Enjoying as his eyes widened and look of fear overcame his features.

Mr. Shilreef began to sweat as he stammered, “You—he—no! No, you shouldn’t..he doesn’t meet..you can’t. You, I—He would be honored of course, but, but, but—it’s not a good idea.”

Darcy gestured back at the party, “He is here isn’t he? Somewhere, at the party?”

“Ye-yes.” Mr. Shilreef confirmed wearily.

Darcy smiled charmingly, leaning in close she ran her hand up his thigh and let it rest on his leg. She pouted her lips seductively as she said, “Then you can introduce me. You have enough power? Don’t you?”

Mr. Shilreef nodded enthusiastically, his pupils dilating and his gaze fixated on her lips, “I-I-I have power.”

“Good.” Darcy stood abruptly and pulled Mr. Shilreef to his feet, dragging him back to the patio doors she commented dryly, “Then you can introduce me to him now.”

Noise and music hit them like a gust of wind as she opened the doors and tugged him along behind her, heading in the direction of the ‘off limits’ area he’d shown her when she arrived.

“I can’t— not now! He’s busy! He’s…he doesn’t like people, not even beautiful, bountiful, foreign princesses!” Mr. Shilreef pulled his wrist out of her grip, exasperation evident in his voice as he loudly yelled at her, “I’m sorry!”

The people around them began to twitter and Mr. Shilreef smoothed a hand over his hair, before taking a step closer to her and lowering his voice, “I’m sorry Princess, it’s just not possible for you to meet the Conductor at the moment. Another time perhaps?”

Darcy opened her mouth to argue with spineless wretch, when someone tapped her on the shoulder. She whirled around with a snarl, “What!?”

Fandral, blonde and perfectly groomed, grinned at her cheekily, “And here I thought you would be happy to see me?”

“Fandral?” Darcy’s jaw dropped.

Fandral pulled her close and kissed her on one cheek and then the other, “It’s good to see you, *Princess*.”

Mr. Shilreef muttered an excuse and scurried away, “I see one of my security personnel signaling me, I’ll be right back.”

Darcy turned to the man calling out, “Wait!” but he already disappeared into the crowd.

Darcy didn’t want to run after him, she didn’t want to convince the sleazy asshole to tell her who the Conductor was and she didn’t want to—so she didn’t. She turned back to Fandral and smiled.
Fandral raised a questioning brow, “Did I interrupt something?”

“Yes.” Darcy smiled softly at him, amazed he was there, “But my friends can go after him. It’s their turn to get pawed at and drooled on by that inhuman cockroach.”

Fandral took her hand and held it aloft as he looked her over from head to toe, “You look stunning.”

“I-thank you.” Darcy blushed. She tugged on the lapel where his cape met his shoulder, “You don’t look too shabby yourself.”

Fandral grinned at her before his expression softened and the teasing light left his eyes. He tugged her forward and they embraced, hugging each other tightly and wordlessly. She’d missed her Asgardian friends. The worry she had over their deadly fates never left her heart.

She couldn’t help but be reminded of her dream with Stephen.

“I am here on a mission.” Fandral whispered into her ear as he rubbed circles into her back. Darcy, content to stay in his arms, nuzzled her face into the crook of his neck and whispered back, “What kind of mission?”

With a sigh Fandral informed her, “King Odin sent me to find you. He demands your—requests, your presence back in Asgard. As soon as possible.”

Darcy jerked out of his arms, “Odin?”

“The King, yes.” Fandral said with a nod.

Thinking back to the last time she was on Asgard, when (most likely) Loki preformed the spell on her that made her fully Asgardian, to her time with Axel (most likely Loki in disguise), to her conversation with the ‘king’ following the death of his ‘wife’ (again, most likely Loki in disguise). She was at a loss. She had no idea why, Loki, masquerading as King Odin, would want her back in Asgard.

“Why?”

Fandral shrugged, “The King did not say. He just sent me to find you. I’m to take you home via the Bifrost.”

“I can’t just leave—” Darcy spied Mr. Shilreef coming back towards them, she muttered to Fandral, “Follow my lead.”

“Mr. Shilreef.” Darcy greeted the man with a smile.

Mr. Shilreef looked disheveled and a little spooked, “Princess, you must come with me now! Something terrible has happened and--and, we have to leave.”

“What happened?” Darcy muttered distractedly as she saw Peter, without his helmet, all but sprinting for them. Peter bumped into Mr. Shilreef nearly knocking him over as he came to a stop in front of them.

Peter panted, “Time to go.”

“I’m saving the Princess!” Mr. Shilreef declared as he stamped his foot, his expression growing lecherous as he eyed Darcy up and down, “I’m the one she’s going to reward.”

Peter turned on Mr. Shilreef and punched the guy in the face, knocking him out. Darcy was
impressed but she pouted and copied Mr. Shilreef’s earlier petulant tone, stamping her foot and whining, “But I wanted to punch him!”

Peter spared her a quick grin, “Sorry.”

“Friend of yours?” Fandral asked, his hand moving to the small of her back.

Peter looked at him with narrowed eyes and Darcy put her hand on Peter’s face, pushing him back slightly, chastising, “Don’t get all territorial on me Star Lord. This is Fandral.”

Darcy turned and gestured to Peter, “Fandral, this is Peter Quill, Star Lord, Guardian of the Galaxy, and my most bone headed friend.”

Peter shook his head then muttered, “Whatever, time to go!”

“C’mon!” Peter then grabbed her hand and started pulling her through the crowd, Darcy grabbed Fandral and they made their way out of the party as Peter told them what was going on using hushed tones, “Bad guy’s been gutted. Gamora’s been outed, Drax and Mantis got all the slaves and wait staff out.”

“Great!” Darcy chirped.

“Not great, Rocket rigged the whole place to explode.”

“Wait what?! What about…” Darcy blanched, tugging her arm and forcing Peter to stop, ready to argue why they couldn’t kill so many innocent people when, she thought about who was in attendance. She trailed off and Peter finished her thought for her as she surveyed the crowd of well dressed but evil individuals.

“What about all the slave owning, child labor profiting, and potential sex slave business associates that make up the bulk of the parties attendees?” Peter countered.

Darcy nodded and took the lead, the boys following in step behind her as she muttered, “You’re right. Fuck ‘em.”

Gamora, Mantis, Drax, Rocket, Quill, Fandral, and Darcy all stood side by side as they watched the mansion explode, from a safe distance away. The people they’d freed were amassed behind them, watching their oppressors meet a fiery end. It was all very solemn and grim…until the explosion set off a fireworks display that had been planned to end the party. When the little children began to ooh and ah at the pretty colors lighting up the sky, it was hard not to smile at the sight and feel like they’d done the right thing. And be glad that each and every mother fucker who had a hand in the children’s slavery and abuse was dead. *Extra crispy style.*

Fandral made his way behind her and whispered in her ear, “We should go now.”

Darcy frowned, “Not yet.”

“Darcy--”

“No. Yet.” Darcy said firmly.

Fandral stepped away from her and with a nod declared, “I will, as you said, follow your lead…”
Princess.”

The Nova officer squawked and made a bunch of noise about their explosive solution, but faced with the little kids they’d rescued, the ones who were all bloody from being forced to fight each other for rich people’s entertainment, half starved and terrified, the Nova couldn’t help but agree that the ‘Conductor’ and his whole enterprise had it coming.

The wait staff, the child slaves, and the Nova officer boarded a passenger ship headed for Xandar where they would be put in the alien foster care system? Darcy didn’t really know the specifics but, she was reassured by Gamora that those displaced would find new homes under the care and guidance of the Nova officer.

Fandral was suspiciously quiet as he followed them all back to the Milano. They found Groot in the cockpit playing one of his addictive video games, sitting with his feet up on the dash in the pilot’s chair.

“Look at him,” Rocket commented, “Not even worried if we’re dead or alive.”

“I am-knew you made Groo-it when I-the am--Nova left to Gr-meet you-oot.”

“You better have finished your math homework mister.” Darcy scolded, alerting Groot to her return. Groot tossed his video game to the floor carelessly and jumped out of the chair. When Groot ran up to her Darcy scooped him up in her arms, hugging the tree child close. The others minus Peter, finally noticed/acknowledged that they had a visitor as Groot pointed to Fandral asking, “I-who am-is Gr-that-oo-guy-t?”

Darcy leaned against the navigation consol, positioning Groot on her hip, she gestured to Fandral introducing him, “Guys, this is Fandral of Asgard. One third of the Warriors Three and a very good friend of mine.”

“Verily,” Fandral put his hand on his heart and bowed to them with a flourish of his cape, “It is an honor to meet any of Princess Darcy’s friends, but you are fine warriors and it gladdens my heart to see her in such company.”

“Eh, thanks pal.” Rocket said mockingly.

“Another Asgardian?” Drax said with a smile.

“Why are you here?” Gamora demanded with an emotionless voice.

“Yeah, and why are you calling her” Peter pointed his thumb at her, “a princess? You know it was all a ploy right? She’s not actually a princess. That was just her cover.”

“But she is a princess.” Fandral stated with pointed expression, “She is Princess Darcy..of Asgard.”

“Shut up.” Darcy sassed dismissively.

Fandral smiled at her cheekily, “King Odin formally adopted you.”

“Shut the fuck up!” Darcy whispered as she robotically lowered Groot to the floor.

“It was quiet the scandal.” Fandral informed them cherrfully.
Darcy ran a hand over her face, mumbling to herself, “He’s out of his fucking mind.”

Gamora advanced on Fandral, drawing her blade and putting it to his throat, with gritted teeth she repeated herself, “Why. Are. You. Here?”

Fandral grinned and pushed her sword away from his throat, twirling and drawing his own sword, he and Gamora faced off. Gamora with a serious and suspicious expression, Fandral, with a look of delight. Gamora advanced and Fandral dodged and blocked her blows with ease.

“Should we…?” Peter asked her, Darcy shook her head.

“Let them play.” Darcy answered distractedly, her thoughts not really on the ‘fight’ which seemed a little like foreplay to her, but focused on Loki, in the disguise of his father, ADOPTING HER? Seriously, he was just so weird; she didn’t even know what to think. She couldn’t even begin to speculate as to his motives.

“You fight well,” Fandral teased, “For a woman.”

Darcy let out a laugh as Gamora let out a yell. Gamora finally stopped toying with Fandral and with two quick moves, disarmed him then pinned him to the floor, her blade once again at his throat.

Fandral laughingly, held up his hands, “I yield. I yield, my lady. Aha! You’ve bested me.”

Fandral mugged at Darcy, “We really need to introduce her to Lady Sif, don’t you think Princess?”

Darcy let out a laugh as Gamora let out a yell. Gamora finally stopped toying with Fandral and with two quick moves, disarmed him then pinned him to the floor, her blade once again at his throat.

Darcy stepped forward and put her hand on Gamora’s shoulder, stopping her.

“She wants me to go with him back to Asgard.” Darcy revealed.

“I AM GRO-NO!- OT!”

“What?”

“When?”

“No!”

Groot, Rocket, Peter, and Mantis, all shouted at once. Gamora turned and looked at her over her shoulder and Darcy stared back at her friend with a sad expression.

“I’m going to Asgard.” Darcy confessed quietly.

“I am Groot. I am Groot. I am Groot. I am Groot! I. Am. GROOT!!!!” Groot spoke and yelled too quickly, his voice harsh and his expression hurt, she could only imagine what he was saying. Darcy tried to put a hand on his shoulder, but Groot brushed off angrily, “I-you promised am-you wouldn’t leave Gro-me!- oot!”

“Honey, please try to calm down—” Groot cut her off with a scream, glaring at her as he cried and ran out of the room. Darcy stared after him, not knowing if going after him was the right thing to do or if it would just piss him off even more.

“I will attend to the tiny tree.” Drax said kindly, quietly leaving the room. Darcy was once again reminded that out of all of them, Drax was the only one who had actually been a parent. Which is probably why temper tantrums never rattled him like they did everyone else.
“You can’t just leave.” Rocket said once Drax was gone.

“I have to.” Darcy stated with resolve, “I need to.”

“Why?” Mantis asked in a small voice, “Did we do something to make you want to leave?”

“What? No!” Darcy hurried over to Mantis and gave the slender woman a hug, “No. No. No. It’s nothing you—me leaving has nothing to do with you guys.”

“Obviously.” Rocket remarked meanly.

“Could you remove your sword?” Fandral asked Gamora, still on the floor beneath her, “There’s a chill down here and I like to get back to my feet.”

“No.” Gamora snapped.

“Gamora.” Darcy scolded, turning to her friend she gestured to Fandral, “Let him up. Please?”

Gamora remained emotionless as she got off Fandral and moved over to stand next to Quill. Fandral bounced back to his feet and smiled at her, “Thank you Princess.”

Darcy glared, “Would you stop it with the Princess crap?”

Fandral took a step towards her, “But you are a princess. You are my Princess. Princess of Asgard, and as such, you have my sworn loyalty and fealty forever more.” He grabbed up her hand and kissed her knuckles, waggling his eyebrows at her, he insisted, “Not to mention my heart and bodily affections.”

Darcy snatched her hand back, folding her arms in front of her chest. Fandral continued on dramatically, “My sword is yours to command. I am at your pleasure. Ask of me anything and I shall venture to fulfill your every desire. And hopefully one or two of my own.”

“Did he just imply that she gives him boners?” Peter asked with disgust.

“He’s implying somethin’ alright.” Rocket groused. He had a dangerous, chaotic look in his eyes that Darcy knew didn’t bode well.

“I’m sorry, but…this journey back to Earth is taking too long. I need to go home.” Darcy said, looking each of the Guardians in the eye, “I want to go home.”

“Home isn’t Asgard though, is it Darcy.” Gamora commented coolly.

“No.” Darcy acknowledged, “It isn’t.”

“Then why go with Mr. Fancy Pants back to isolation-Asgard?!” Rocket yelled, his tone becoming more accusatory as he continued, “You said you wouldn’t leave, you’re abandoning Groot, and we just got you back! HE LOVES YOU! Hell, he calls you ‘mom’! Don’t that mean anything? Don’t we mean anything to you?”

Darcy blinked back the tears that Rocket’s words caused, “You all mean the world to me but—“

“But what?! You got adopted by the king and now you wanna live it up princess style?! You’re too good for us now?!” Rocket sneered.

“TOO GOOD FOR YOU? I FUCKING LOVE YOU ASSHOLES, ASSHOLE!” Darcy yelled.
“THEN WHY LEAVE?” Rocket yelled back.

“BECAUSE,” Darcy choked on her next words, only able to emit a gurgling sound as tears spilled over and trailed down her cheeks.

She knew why Rocket was reacting so explosively and she still got baited into retaliating similarly. She didn’t want to yell at him. She knew that he was behaving so aggressively because he was hurt. She was hurting him. All of them. She took a calming breath and lowered her voice, “I have to leave because I want to stay.”

“That makes no sense.” Peter interjected.

“I love you. I love being a Guardian. I love rescuing little kids and saving the day and flying around the galaxy in the Milano. It’s fun. It’s amazing. And I love all of you. And I fit in. And I could see myself spending the rest of my days, happy, with you, as a Guardian.”

In a broken sounding voice Rocket asked, “Then why leave us?”

“Because. I love Thor and Asgard. And the warriors three and I could see myself spending the rest of my days, happy, with them, as an Asgardian. And I love Stephen and Tony and Pepper and Earth and I could see myself spending the rest of my days, happy, with them, as an Avenger.”

Darcy ran a hand over her mouth, “I fit in…so well, I…want to be in all places all at once, but it’s—it’s just not possible.”

“So pick us.” Mantis said, stepping forward, “If you fit in so well, in all these different places, just pick one. Pick us. Stay here.”

“She can’t.” Gamora said sounding disappointed. Peter put a hand on her back and Gamora leaned into him ever so slightly.

“You mean she won’t.” Rocket grumbled angrily, “We ain’t good enough, we ain’t normal enough, we don’t got unlimited funds or fancy…”

“Pants?” Mantis offered when it seemed like Rocket ran out of steam.

“I left my friends on Earth in crisis. If I go with Fandral to Asgard, I can use the Bifrost Bridge to return home to Earth, like that.” Darcy snapped.

“After you meet with the king.” Fandral added.

Darcy bent down next to Rocket, putting them at eye level. Out of all the Guardians, Groot included, she knew Rocket would take her departure the hardest. With a trembling hand she reached out for the top of his head, half expecting him to bite her, but he didn’t.

She slowly stroked his fur, caressing his soft ears and the back of his head. Rocket stood stiffly, arms crossed, head tilted down, stubbornly avoiding everyone’s eyes, but allowing the comforting touch.

“Rocket…you know I’ll come back eventually.” Darcy said quietly.

“Yeah, but then you’ll leave again.” Rocket countered gruffly.

“And then I’ll come back.” Darcy argued kindly, still stroking his fur. Rocket reached up and
grabbed her hand, sandwiching her large one in between his two smaller ones.

“I don’t want you to go.” Rocket admitted so quietly that she barely heard him. Darcy curled her hand around his, holding his hand.

“I won’t lie. I do want to go home. But, I also want to stay here at the same time.” Darcy stuck out her tongue, licking up one of her own tears as it rolled down her face. The salty liquid pleasant on her tongue.

Darcy’s thoughts were jumbled up in her feelings, but she tried her best to explain, “Being jerked across the galaxy by my stupid power is…so…awful. I never get to say goodbye. I never get to decide anything. I have no control. No power. No…agency. And I…miss people. I feel like I’m missing everything. And it hurts me to leave, to hurt you, all of you to leave, but I feel like…I feel like now is a good time to go.”

Rocket let her hand go and took a step away from her. He gestured to Fandral, “So, go.”

“Rocket, don’t be like that.” Darcy tried to pull him back to her but he stepped away and moved to the front of the cockpit so he could stare out the window.

“Just go Darcy.” Rocket jeered, “It’s what your good at.”

“Hey!” Peter exclaimed, “That’s not fair.”

Darcy stood up slowly, wiping away her tears carelessly, “No, he’s right.”

“He isn’t.” Gamora argued.

Darcy turned away from Gamora and moved to Fandral’s side. He embraced her and for just a minute Darcy allowed herself to sink into his arms and accept the comfort he was offering her.

They were all quiet for a few seconds before Fandral broke the silence, “If leaving your pet behind distresses you so, why not bring him along?”

“I’m not her pet!”

Darcy jerked out of Fandral’s embrace, “What?”

Everyone turned and stared at him as one. Fandral smiled charmingly, “You could all come. Visit Asgard, while Darcy meets with the King. See the sights, try the local delicacies. Darcy, Volstagg and Lady Sif and I, went on a similar jaunt not too long ago. It was most pleasant.”

“Would they be welcome there?” Darcy asked.

Fandral shrugged his shoulders, “I don’t see why not?”

Darcy turned back to her Guardian friends with a hopeful expression, “Guys, what do you say? Wanna go on vacation?”

They had to leave the Milano behind, but Rocket rigged up a few booby traps for anyone stupid enough to try to steal the ship. Fandral led them to a grassy field a little outside of town. He called out, “OPEN THE BIFROST!”
A rainbow light descended on the large group and they were off. Riding the rainbow.

When they arrived in Asgard, Mantis threw up. Peter lay on the floor, looking green but determined not to lose his lunch. Rocket’s fur was standing up and his claw like hand was clutching her leg so hard that she could feel it through the leather of her boot. Groot, Gamora, and Drax were the only Guardians seemingly unaffected by the journey. Darcy had a slight ringing in her ears but that might have been from Mantis screaming bloody murder the entire way there.

Fandral looked down at Mantis and Peter with an amused expression, “I’ll go find a mop.”

As Fandral walked away from them, he nodded to a muscular, bearded, mostly bald man, who was not Heimdall. The aggressive looking man gave her a surprisingly charming smile and bowed to her, greeting her respectfully, “Princess. Welcome back to Asgard.”

Darcy blinked at being addressed so formally, “Uh…hi.”

Standing up straight, the man moved forward with his arm outstretched to her, “I am Skurge. The Gatekeeper.”

Darcy shook his hand with a confused expression, “Does—is--are you Heimdall’s apprentice or something? Is that a thing?”

Skurge looked grim, “I am saddened to be the one to inform you Princess, but King Odin charged Heimdall with negligence of duty, exiling him from the city.”

“He did what?!” Darcy screeched, instantly infuriated with Loki and his bullshit, upon Heimdall’s behalf. Fandral returned then, mop in hand. As he passed Skurge he pushed the mop into the ‘gatekeeper’ s’ hand and moved to Darcy’s side.

With an arm around her waist, Fandral led her, and by extension the rest of the Guardians towards the long rainbow bridge that connected the gate to the city of Asgard. The Guardians all gaped at the sight of the city on the horizon, all towering and shiny and pretty. Darcy smiled at their awed expressions.

Fandral reassured her quietly, “Don’t worry, Heimdall disappeared before the trial. Hard to catch a man that can see everything in the universe.”

“Something is rotten in the state of Asgard…” Darcy mused aloud as she turned her eyes away from her stunned companions to the city itself. Like a beacon it shined and she felt drawn to it. “What the hell is going on?”

Fandral turned and kissed her on the cheek, murmuring words against her skin as he nuzzled her face, “Hopefully, you will be able to figure that out and put things to right. Princess.”

Darcy exhaled loudly through her nose before turning to Fandral, putting them nose to nose, “Thor returned from Earth talking about stones that needed to be researched and hasn’t been back for more than a day in eight months. The King has begun rewriting history, painting his fallen son in forgiving light, and has taken to indulging in drunken frivolity on a near daily basis. The loss of his wife, his son, the rejection of the crown by his first born, I believe the King is in deep mourning and that you are the only one who can set things to right.”
“You believe that?” Darcy challenged. Fandral smiled and cupped her cheeks in both hands before kissing chastely on the lips.

“I believe a woman can do anything if pissed off enough, my sweet Princess.” Darcy laughed in Fandral’s face and he laughed with her.

Darcy turned away from him and back to the city, “Okay then. Let’s go see the wizard.”

Fancy ‘Princess’ Darcy
--FYI, the top actually has an attached tutu or something, I thought that was heinous so just imagine without it, also, let’s just imagine that Darcy’s badass make up is cry proof, k?

Fancy Quill
Fancy In Disguise Gamora - photoshoped everything green, hope it doesn’t look weird

Fancy Dizty Arm Candy Mantis
Fancy Waiter Drax – bad blue photoshop all me, not an expert, just wanted him to be blue

--- these are all the outfits they are wearing when they arrive in Asgard too, just FYI
--- also FYI, I have TOO MUCH FUN making these damn outfits.

Chapter End Notes

SO, if its not clear, between ULTRON and THOR RAGNAROK, Thor spent 2 years looking for Infinity stones, then went to Muspelheim to fight the fire demon Surtur like we saw in the movie. Civil War happens, somewhere in between these two events as well, soooooooooo, This chapter and next is occurring in that 2 year period of time where Thor's off just looking for infinity stones, Loki in disguise is ruling Asgard....this is circa pre-Ragnarok. Clear?
K.
So...I have no idea what happens next all I know is that Loki and Darcy are
gonna...have a scene or scenes.
IDK why I brought the Guardians to Asgard, I jsut couldn't leave them behind! TOO
HEARTBREAKING!
So, the gang went to asgard...together.
Should they go to Earth for civil war together? Should they do crime and get locked up?
Should they get adopted by the asgardians as Darcy's weird cousins? I really don't know
what to do with the guardians in Asgard. Also, I have no idea what to do about Lady Sif
being MIA, I can't find any real answer as to where she went in MCU canon, only that
she DID NOT survive the Snappening of Infinity war, according to the Russo brothers.
So....Sif and Guardians in Asgard suggestions are welcome...I love brainstorming help,
so feel free to let me know if you have any ideas.
....I also want to go back to earth and see bucky sometime soon.......timeline and cannon
adherence is hard y'all. I don't think we are gonna visit Ant-man movie....but we will
probably see SCOTT, maybe Luis later on....idk. You might have noticed I ended Dr.
Strange movie canon without Darcy interfering cuz....space bonding needed to be had
and ....I'm rambling a lot now. Okay. Bye.
Chapter 29 - Loki

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to LOKI.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the lack of update last week, family hogged the computer for 'serious' stuff. I pride myself on being consistent with updates, but sometimes life is all like, "Oh, you have plans? Let me mess that up for ya!"

Didn't re-read second half of the chapter so let me know if you find any glaring errors, little mistakes are okay with me, I'm too lazy to fix the little things unless I'm in the mood to re-read the whole chapter just for fun/refreshing myself.

ALSO, this story makes reference of last time Darcy was on Asgard a lot, back in chapter 16, which you don't have to re-read just, be aware that the LAST TIME Darcy was on Asgard, was right after the events in Thor 2 and Frigga's Death.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 29 – Loki

Coming straight off a mission and traveling across the Bifrost left Darcy and the Guardians feeling, for lack of a better word: jet lagged. They were also sweaty and grimy from the mission’s explosive ending. Everyone was feeling g gross and tired.

Fandral took them to the palace as they were to see the King straight away but he sent word to his majesty that most of them were dead on their feet and wished to postpone the meeting. Luckily, the King sent word that he deigned to allow them to rest before meeting with him the following morning.

Fandral and the King’s messenger showed them to their rooms. Darcy stayed with the Guardians until each had been deposited in what was to be their private suit for the duration of their stay; she enjoyed watching their faces as they took in their opulent temporary accommodations. Only Rocket and Groot choose to room together.

Once everyone was settled Fandral led her back to her old room, the one Frigga and Odin had allowed her to use when she first visited, the one she stayed in when she returned and spent time with Axel/Loki in disguise after Frigga’s death.

Darcy was loitering outside the room, quietly just gazing inside without entering.

“Bedtime Princess.” Fandral teased kindly as he leaned against the door frame and stared at her. She gave him a quick smile before turning her gaze back to the empty room. It looked like nothing had changed since last she’d seen it and yet everything had.
“Has anyone else stayed in here?” Darcy asked, “Guests or…anyone else?”

Fandral scrunched his nose adorably, “No. Of course not. This is your room.”

“It’s not really—”

Fandral cut her off with a finger to the lips, “These are Princess Darcy’s chambers, so said the Queen, so agreed the King.”

“Frigga said that?” Darcy mumbled as she stared wistfully at the room, her mind conjuring memories of her time with the fallen Asgardian Queen. She must have looked sad because Fandral pulled her into his arms and held her gently, not saying anything, just providing comfort.

Darcy sagged into his embrace and allowed him to soothe her. After a few minutes of silence Fandral asked in a suggestive tone, “Care for some company?”

Darcy quietly chuckled into his shoulder, Fandral had a way of making her feel better and she was tempted to take him up on the offer.

“No.” Darcy denied, “I think a bath and a good night’s sleep are all I need right now.”

Darcy pulled back and kissed him on the corner of his mouth, “But thank you for the offer.”

Fandral smiled dashingly, “As you wish Princess.”

He let his arms slide down hers; he grabbed her hands and kissed each one before letting her go completely.

“I’ll come fetch you in the morning?” Fandral asked as he stepped away.

“Yes.” Darcy agreed.

“Good night.” Fandral said with a dreamy look on his face. Darcy stepped inside and closed the door, watching with a grin as Fandral walked away from her backwards. As Fandral grew smaller and smaller, the guards who had been stationed at her door whom had moved away to give her and Fandral privacy returned to take up their place in front of her door.

Apparently as the ‘princess’ she was entitled to secret service level protection, even within the palace.

“Good night.” She whispered before shutting the door.

After a relaxing bath she’d been too tired to even think about dressing for bed and decided to sleep in the fancy silk robe which had been left out for her next to the towels.

Darcy sat at the vanity brushing out her hair, her reflection was make up free and visibly tired, but still somehow didn’t look too bad. Her skin clear and bright, the under eye purpling that used to haunt her had completely disappeared. Except the height, she looked every inch an Asgardian. The subtle changes to her appearance just served as a reminder that she wasn’t human anymore and she didn’t know how she felt about that.

Her diadem sat atop a wooden faceless mannequin head which she had found creepy the last time
she’d stayed in the room, but its purpose was clear to her now and it looked much less creepy with the bejeweled crown at. As she stared at the crown she admired not only the literal royal crown jewels that adorned it, but the craftsmanship that made up its intricate design. It really was a thing of beauty.

It was sad to think that Frigga intended to give her the crown but never got the chance. It was weird to think that people thought she was a real ‘princess’ in part because of that intention. The crown was a symbol of that false thinking and she was tempted not to wear it tomorrow, but the emotional attachment she had to the adornment outshone her unease with her new title.

Her new title made her think of the man who gave it to her. Loki.

Thinking of Loki and his masquerade, his possible evil plan…she didn’t know where she fit in. She couldn’t think of one good reason why Loki, in the disguise of his father, would seek to involve her in his scheme by ‘formally’ adopting her. She was confused but more than that she felt saddened. She would have loved the chance to call Queen Frigga mother.

It all felt like some cruel joke and she didn’t like being the punch line.

A knock at the door broke her out of her dour thoughts. She set her brush down, tightened the tie on her robe and turned to face the door calling out, “Yes? Who is it?”

One of the unfamiliar helmeted guards assigned to watch over her stuck his head inside, “You have a visitor Princess.”

Darcy’s lips formed into a thin line, she did not like being addressed so formally, it felt…mocking in a way. She made a mental note to chat the guards up the next day, get to know them in hopes that she could establish a more friendly working relationship.

“What kind of visitor?” Darcy asked.

Groot’s tiny face appeared next to the guard’s knees, “I am Mom!—Groot!”

Darcy smiled, “Let him in.”

The guard’s face remained emotionless but his eye twitched noticeable as he informed her, “He’s not alone.”

Rocket’s angry voice reached her then, “Get your damn hands off a me or I swear I’m gonna shove my gun so far up your--”

Standing abruptly and knocking over her chair, Darcy shouted “COME IN!” loud enough and hopefully quick enough to save Rocket from pissing off the Asgardian guards she was hoping to befriend.

“They can both come in.” Darcy repeated as she bent down and picked up the chair she’d knocked over. The last thing she needed was Rocket to go around picking fights.

Groot ran in and gave her a quick hug straight away while Rocket sauntered in slowly, giving the guards a mean look as he paused at the door and obviously luxuriated in getting to slam it in their faces.

“I am Wow, you’re room is even bigger than ours! Groot.” Groot chirped as he ran away from her over to the bed. Darcy watched with an amused smile as Groot struggled to climb aboard the raised bed that sat in the center of the room. Darcy’s smile disappeared rather quickly as Groot began
jumping up and down enthusiastically, babbling too quickly for her to understand him.

She looked to Rocket who was fingering the golden knobs on her vanity. Rocket snatched his hand back when he saw he had her attention and he grinned at her innocently.

“Rooms not to your liking?” Darcy asked, unsure as to why they were visiting.

Rocket gave her a flat look, “Kid wanted a bedtime story and then a song and apparently I was found lacking.”

“I am Groot. Rocket told me how I am Groot. he escaped from a prison armed with a shoelace and a spoon. I am Groot. Boooring!” Groot breathily explained as he continued to jump on the bed.

Darcy threw a withering glare at Rocket before rolling her eyes, “How many times do I have to tell you prison breaks are not appropriate bedtime story material?”

Rocket threw his hands up in the air in a ‘what do you want from me’ gesture. Darcy noogied him on the head lightly and he pushed her hand away. Darcy chuckled as she walked over to the bed and the jumping Groot. He was so damn cute sometimes she hated to end his fun, but she was about ready to collapse. Groot unlike the rest of them had spent most of the mission sitting staring at a computer screen so his boundless energy made sense even if it was inconvenient.

Darcy reached out and caught Groot midair. She cuddled him close to her body before he could object; she did a little spin for good measure, causing Groot to cry out ‘woooo’. In a lilting voice she teased, “My baby Groot needs a happy story for bedtime and sleepy byes.”

Groot giggled as she tossed him high into the air and onto the middle of the bed. She watched with a smile as Groot bounced to a stop and finally lay on his back, shrieking with laughter and protesting, “I am Groot. No sleepy byes! I am Groot. No baby Groot! I’m a big boy!”

“Well, I’m an old lady so move over.” Darcy grumbled as she climbed aboard the humongous bed herself.


“Hey, I’m doing my best.” Rocket exclaimed as he climbed up the bed post and settled onto the bed with them. Darcy fluffed and arranged the pillows to her liking, tickling Groot with her hair as she leaned over him and slid a pillow underneath it.

“You’re doing amazing Rocket.” Darcy automatically replied as she pulled back the covers for her and Groot to scuttle underneath. Rocket who was often too warm when sleeping, settled on top of the covers on the other side of Groot. Groot neither got warm or cold when sleeping, he just enjoyed being as close to Darcy as possible.

Darcy waved her hands in the air, magically turning off most of the lights the way Thor had taught her. Groot wasn’t always this needy at bedtime, but she figured with the new environment and almost leaving abruptly again, they could afford to coddle him a little.

Darcy snuggled down into the blankets, shimmying this way and that until she was snug as a bug in a rug. Groot waited for her to settle before laying his head against her breast and body hugging her with his arm and leg. Darcy rested her arm on Groot’s back, smiling in the darkened room as Rocket moved closer to Groot, trapping her arm between his chest and Groot’s hard back.

She made no mention on why Rocket was wearing his jumpsuit to sleep even though she knew he preferred to sleep without it. Nor did she make excuses about her not having the energy to get up and
She kept her voice gentle and low as she began her story, “Once upon a time…um, there was…a new…mother! Yeah, oh! I just thought of a really good one. Okay, so, once upon a time there was a new mother. She held her tiny baby boy in her arms as he slept. She slowly rocked him, back and forth, back and forth and as she rocked him she whispered, ‘I’ll love you forever, like you for always, as long as I’m living my baby you’ll be’. Well, that baby boy grew and grew….”

The next morning a bit before dawn, Darcy awoke with a sneeze. She looked around blearily to find that Rocket had migrated during the night. She could feel his warm body curled up on top of her head like one of those hats Davy Crockett wore. She pushed aside his tail from where it had fallen in front of her face, sneezing once more as Rocket twitched in his sleep and his tail tickled her nose.

With a groan she turned on her side and threw her arm up over her face, protecting her from any further fur up the nose type interruptions. Somehow she fell back asleep, living raccoon hat and all.

When she awoke the second time, it was light outside, probably late morning. The sunshine streamed in through the gauzy curtains, lighting up the whole room with bright natural light. Darcy liked to sleep late and Groot, being a child, was an early riser. She found a note scribbled out in Rocket’s nearly illegible handwriting confirming they slipped out earlier to let her sleep further.

Darcy lay in bed for a couple extra minutes. Allowing herself to luxuriate in the 500+ thread count sheets, the inartificial light and air, the huge and insanely comfortable mattress. All luxuries she hadn’t had a chance to indulge in while flying around on the Milano.

Rocket was totally wrong when he accused her (not in so many words) of missing the ‘good’ life. Thinking of Rocket and their fight over her leaving dampened her good mood a bit, because no matter what happened in the next day or two, she was going back to Earth and she didn’t think the Guardians would want to accompany her there. Nor would they be welcome. Darcy could just imagine some evil government getting their hands on Rocket, opening him up to find out what made him tick. Caging Drax like an animal. Experimenting on Mantis. They’d probably straight up kill Gamora due to her dangerousness.

No. She did not think the Guardians going back to Earth with her was a good idea. They were too alien looking. She didn’t even want to think about what some evil Hydra offshoot would do if they got a hold of Groot.

With a shiver, Darcy sat up and set about getting ready to face the day.

She used the facilities and washed her face to start with. She then spent extra time fixing her hair, positioning the diadem a top her head perfectly so she looked especially…Frigga like. Meaning, royal by ways of majestic.

She found her old makeup exactly where she’d left it in the drawers of her vanity and painted her
face very sparingly. She merely applied some mascara and a deep red color to her lips and declared herself finished.

She was thinking of wearing one of the fancy lace-y cape-y jumpsuits Frigga had made for her, but when she opened her wardrobe she found it entirely empty, save one unfamiliar dress. She let out a frustrated noise and went over to her bureau, opening each and every drawer to find them also empty, save one single pair of fancy underpants.

Darcy growled and slammed the drawer shut, the satin undergarment crumpled in her hand. She angrily stalked to the door and threw it open. Her eyes were instantly drawn to Fandral and the two Guards, each of whom held a croissant looking pastry to their lips, about to bite into the delicious looking delicacies. The guards froze and stared at her with wide eyes, but Fandral just smiled cheekily at her and bit into the pastry.

“Where are my clothes!” Darcy shrieked.

“Princhess?” Fandral responded despite his full mouth. Darcy strode over and stole the pastry Fandral was about to finish shoving into his mouth, holding it above her head like a hostage she screed, “WHERE ARE MY CLOTHES!?”

Darcy ranted as the three males stared at her with wide eyes, “I have one pair of panties and a dress I’ve never seen before! Where are the dresses Queen Frigga gave me? Where is the embroidered cape Thor made for me? Where are the pants and cute tops Lady Sif and I bought!? WHERE IS MY STUFF?”

With a gulp, Fandral finished chewing and swallowing, he held his hands up like he was placating a wild animal, “Calm yourself Princess. I’m sure your clothes are merely misplaced. Perhaps being washed? In preparation of your return!”

Fandral took the hand that held the other half of his pastry aloft and guided it to her own mouth, encouraging her to eat it herself, “You’re probably starved, eat. You mentioned that there was one dress left for you?

Darcy’s ire diminished the second the delicious chocolate-y pastry touched her tongue. She let out a noise of appreciation as she quickly took another bite, finishing it off.

Fandral smiled broadly and threw his arm around her waist, turning her he led her back to her room, “There now, see? Don’t you feel a little better?”

Darcy licked and sucked on her fingertips, getting every speck of morning pastry into her mouth that she could, grumbling as she did so, “Don’t patronize me Fandral.”

“I would never.” Fandral gasped dramatically making a smile return to her face. She listened as Fandral continued to talk in a mellow, coaxing tone of voice, “Why not wear the dress that has been provided, I’m sure it’s your size.” His voice lowered and he whispered throatily, “It’s better than greeting the king in this delightfully sheer robe, no matter how becoming it looks on you.”

Fandral ran his fingertips down the lapel of her robe from shoulder to the lopsided bow that secured the material closed just under her bust. Darcy slapped his hand away grousing, “It’s not sheer.”

Fandral licked his lips before arguing in a gravelly voice, “Agree to disagree.”

She looked down at herself only to blush, last night the robe had looked opaque, but in the morning light she could very clearly make out her nipples and navel. She folded her arms and glared at Fandral as he just smirked at her.
Fandral leaned in and kissed her on the cheek, his hand which had been around her waist, slid down to her butt. He gave her left cheek a hardy squeeze before moving his hand back up to the small of her back, “Do not distress princess, you look ravishing.”

Darcy pursed his lips as Fandral kissed her on the corner of her mouth, his tone of voice returning to normal as he vowed, “I’ll go and investigate where your things have gone. Fear not, I shall not let you down.”

He turned to leave and fulfill his promise but Darcy grabbed his belt and tugged him back to her before he could leave, “Wait.”

“Yes?” Fandral asked with a sly grin and a quirked brow. She felt the need to explain herself. Darcy didn’t want Fandral to think her so shallow, so… obsessed with the nice things she had accumulated throughout her many trips to Asgard.

“I…I’m not mad because of the stuff being gone, well I am, but not really—I….Queen Frigga was at my bedside when I woke up after my first teleportation to Asgard and subsequent intergalactic induced coma. She took time out of her day to teach me magic and talk to me about my life and Asgard and her family and—and….She got me this blue cape and this pretty taupe dress with delicate blue flower-y embroidery and she…I don’t have a picture of her. She was so kind and treated me like a daughter—and I don’t even have a picture of us!”

“Darcy,” Fandral put his arms around her shoulders and hugged. She felt like she should be crying but she wasn’t, she was pissed off and angry and…drained.

Her voice sounded empty as she explained, “Queen Frigga is dead and I didn’t get to say goodbye or thank her or tell her how much I appreciated every moment we got to spend together and—and despite whatever wacky adoption scheme King Cook coo Pants has cooked up, I’m not actually a princess. I’m not—I wasn’t her daughter. I’m not entitled to anything. And I just…I just want my stuff back. To remember…”

Fandral reminded her quietly, “You have your memories.”

Darcy pulled her head off his shoulder so she could look into his eyes as she said, “Memories fade.”

Fandral took a deep breath and stared at her with pity. Darcy avoided his eyes staring at the floor instead she muttered quietly, “Memories fade and I just want to hold onto each and every reminder I have of the time we spent together since in the grande scheme of things, that time was so short. You know?”

She had her diadem, but she worried about wearing it all the time back on Earth. Her time with the Guardians, most of them former criminals, had made her a little paranoid about the crown being stolen. For its bejeweled crown-y-ness or it’s magical properties. She didn’t want the diadem to be the only thing she had to remember Queen Frigga by. She was alarmed by all of her things just disappearing so suddenly and without warning, it felt like her memories of Frigga and her time on Asgard were under attack.

Fandral cupped her jaw and tilted her head up forcing her to look at him. There was a gleam of determination in his eyes and a gritty resolve in the way he clenched his jaw. Darcy licked her lips and stared back into his brilliant green eyes, he was so very handsome and up close it was hard to deny her attraction to the Asgardian.

“I will find your things.” Fandral stated confidently. Darcy nodded, she believed him. Fandral leaned forward slowly and kissed her lips softly. She was reminded of the last time they were together, on
the space ship with Lady Sif and Volstagg, returning from their secret mission turned galactic sightseeing tour.

She slid her hand up his chest and rested it over his heart as she opened her mouth wider allowing him to deepen the kiss. She remembered sliding into bed with him, naked and uncaring of the fact as she snuggled up to his sleeping body. She’d been so close to having sex with him the last time she saw him, only exhaustion held her back…and then waking up naked next to Quill half a world away, had sealed their unconsummated fate.

She thought she’d never see him again.

Kissing him, feeling him warm and alive under her hands, she was so glad she was wrong.

One of the guards, who were apparently just standing around creepily watching her and Fandral make out, coughed. Darcy let out a mewling sound as she pulled herself away from Fandral’s lips.

He stared down with an enraptured expression. Darcy felt a little intimidated by the emotion on display, Fandral almost looked like he was in love with her.

She couldn’t help but look at him and see him dead. Her vision replayed in her mind over and over, he and Volstagg dying, slain by some weird lady in the Observatory of the Bifrost. Sensing something was amiss, Fandral’s expression changed.

“Princess?” He asked. Darcy was tempted to tell him what she was thinking, explain the dark and macabre turn her thoughts had taken, but she didn’t want to be overheard. Slanting her gaze at the guards, both straightened up and averted their eyes, trying to not look like they were watching her and Fandral, despite how they obviously were.

Darcy put her hand on Fandral’s cheek and caressed it while keeping her eyes on the guards, in a distracted voice she promised, “Later.”

Fandral agreed with a nod, “Later.”

Soon after Fandral left, Darcy was alone in her room struggling to get dressed.

The one dress that had been left in her room was indeed her size, but it was also hella intricate. From afar it looked like the entire dress was made of chainmail but it was made of this insanely soft silvery material. The dress had long flowing renaissance-fair-esque sleeves, a train, something akin to a cape, a dangerously high slit in the front of the skirt, and it came with this insane neck/shoulder piece.

The epaulettes necklace thing was all one piece and it took her a while to get it hooked on correctly and even then she felt very constricted and in danger of choking. She was half preparing herself mentally to meet the King in her bathrobe, propriety be damned.

She hated the collar, the revealing open back, the stupid metal pieces and how they dug into her; she hated the dress…until caught sight of herself in the full length mirror.

She looked awesome. Beyond awesome. She looked like a modern day couture version of Joan of Arc. Her minimal makeup, hair and diadem, her curves, it all just worked. She looked stunning and badass all at once. And just like that, everything that she hated about the outfit didn’t seem so bad.
Darcy found a pair of stupid high heels left out for her and put them on. Darcy generally only wore heels in the form of boots as they felt steadier, but she couldn’t deny how well put together she looked and how amazingly tall she felt in the shoes. Again, despite the pain they caused, the effect was worth it. She was willing to deal with the discomfort just to get the chance to wear such an amazing outfit. And that was saying something coming from her.

She looked like she was ready to battle, Game of Thrones style. She looked at her reflection one last time, wondering who had picked out the dress and left it for her, but she knew it could only be one person.

“Game on Loki.” Darcy whispered to herself as she spun on her heel and headed for the door.

The two guards who stood vigil outside her door followed two steps behind her as she made her way through the palace. Fandral told her before he left that Volstagg had come to the palace to see her, but upon learning she was still sleeping, he set up an impromptu ‘getting to know you’ breakfast for the Guardians. It was being held on the veranda outside the southeast library that looked out over the Queen’s favorite garden.

Darcy reached her destination quickly, a little astonished that she knew the palace’s layout so well. When she opened the doors she half expected everyone to be fighting, perhaps a few overturned chairs, broken dishes. What she found was the exact opposite.

Mantis spotted her first, exclaiming happily, “Darcy! You’re finally awake! Come here, you have to try these coco covered things!”

Mantis was seated at the table with Drax who was sipping from a tiny teacup, his pinky up in the air and a happy look on his face. Sitting with Drax and Mantis was Volstagg. Upon seeing her Volstagg cried out, “DARCY!”

Volstagg staggered to his feet but swiftly picked her up in a bone cracking hug. Her feet dangling in the air Darcy threw her arms around the voluminous warrior and squeezed back, her new Asgardian strength finally making her able to withstand such an enthusiastic greeting from her rotund friend without complaint or caution. Volstagg she stepped back away from her and bowed his head to her.

“Hello again Volstagg.” Darcy greeted sweetly. She put a hand on his arm, “It’s good to see you again.”

Volstagg nodded, wiping away a tear as he did so, “Aye, Princess. It is.”

Darcy rolled her eyes and moved around Volstagg to the buffet table, grabbing a plate she retorted, “Don’t tell me you’re buying into this princess crap too.”

She began filling her plate with the delicious looking breakfast items. Volstagg stood behind her as she did so, talking, “Princess…crap? Being adopted into the royal family is not crap. It is something to be celebrated.”

“Maybe if Frigga was still alive.” Darcy grumbled, not saying anything about it not being a legitimate adoption seeing as how the one doing the adopting wasn’t the king, but the ‘dead’ prince in disguise.
Volstagg’s meaty hand came down on her shoulder and squeezed, “Yes. If Queen Frigga were still with us your ascension would be a most joyous affair. I can see why, without her, your enthusiasm is tempered.”

Darcy turned and gave Volstagg a small smile, “Thanks for understanding. Sorry for being a grump.”

“Think nothing of it.” Volstagg took the plate out of her hand and carried it for her back to the table where her friends sat. Volstagg set her plate down and pulled out her chair for her, encouraging, “Sit, eat. You must be famished.”

Darcy smiled and accepted the chivalrous gesture, waving at Drax who was now stuffing his face with something that looked like a strudel. As she began eating, Mantis chattered on about her experience in Asgard so far.

“Darcy, the room is so large and spacious; I can see now why you would prefer living in a palace over the tiny bunks on the Milano. This place is amazing. I’ve never slept so soundly. My bed felt like sleeping on a feathery cloud! When I woke up, there was this beautiful dress waiting for me, I was led here by one of the helpful metal headed men, Drax and I met your friend Mr. Volstagg and the food, oh my goodness Darcy, the food! You can taste the every ingredient in the food, it isn’t freeze dried or prepackaged it isn’t slop or grass or…have you ever had something called a pie? You have to try the pie!”

Darcy suddenly realized that there was an absurd number of plates were on the table, it was covered in plates with all sorts of foods, not just breakfast foods. There were deserts, sandwiches, a few meat dishes, and all of them had a small Mantis sized bites in them.

With a crinkled brow, Darcy questioned, “Mantis…are you—are you just taking one bite of everything and then not finishing it?”

Mantis shrugged innocently, “How else am I supposed to know what I like unless I try everything that there is?”

“That’s so wasteful.” Darcy said exasperatedly.

“I’m going back to the things I liked best after I’ve tried everything.” Mantis said snippily, “Besides, nothing’s going to waste, Mr. Volstagg said he would eat anything I didn’t like.”

Volstagg chuckled, elbowing her lightly, “I like this friend of yours.”

Mantis pointed at Volstagg accusingly, “He said I could do it!”

Volstagg just laughed boisterously. Mantis began laughing along with him, though obviously a little confused as to why they were laughing.

“Fine.” Darcy conceded, “Just make sure to take any leftovers to the…stables? Dog kennels? Is that a thing?”

“What leftovers?!” Volstagg cried as he took one of Mantis’s discarded plates and began eating the contents alarmingly fast. Mantis squealed in delight.

“Well, I guess I’m glad you’re enjoying yourselves.” Darcy said with a wistful smile. She began eating, not knowing when they would be summoned before the king but knowing it would probably be soon.
“You’re family has been very gracious.” Drax commented as he daintily dabbed at his mouth with the cloth napkin.

“There not my fa--thank you. I’m glad you feel welcome.” Darcy said, “I only wish Thor were here…hey, wait a minute. Where’s Peter and Gamora? And Rocket and Groot?”

Drax sipped from his tiny tea cup once more before answering, “When I arrived, Peter and Gamora were finishing their meal, one of your warrior friends offered to show them around the palace.”

Darcy turned to Volstagg and he informed her, “Hogun.”

Darcy lit up, “Hogun’s here?”

“He came back to celebrate your return.” Volstagg said as he picked a piece of fallen toast out of his beard.

“I haven’t seen Rocket or Groot.” Drax said, brining her attention back to him, “I assume they are off causing trouble.”

“Most likely.” Darcy agreed with a grin.

A half an hour later, Peter and Gamora arrived escorting a disgruntled looking Rocket, while Groot rode piggy back on Hogun.

“I was just trying to see how it worked!” Rocket exclaimed.

“They said that if you had achieved your goal you would have blown yourself up!” Gamora chastised, “And, you dismantled the door to their armory to get at the damn thing!”

“I wanted to see how that worked too.” Rocket said defensively crossing his arms.

“If you don’t stop trying to figure out how all the magic doohickey’s work you’re going to get Darcy into trouble and us deported.” Peter added.

Gamora was wearing a floor length black gown with a leather bodice, she looked understated, deadly, and fabulous but it was Peter who really caught her attention out of the whole group. Quill was decked out head to toe in Asgardian finery. He had those fancy leather pants meant for riding horses tucked into a pair of high quality boots, he wore a leather vest over a linen shirt, making him look dashingly similar to how Fandral dressed. However it was the over the top burgundy velvet cape that took the look to the next level and set him apart from everyone, except maybe herself.

“I am Groot. Mom!” Groot exclaimed, when she stood up his eyes got real wide and his voice got low with awe as he said, “I am Groot. You look really pretty.”

Groot was naked as always. Rocket was wearing his regular jumpsuit and Darcy’s nose scrunched up at the thought, as she knew for a fact that it hadn’t been washed since he’d been crawling around the air ducts during their mission yesterday.

Darcy shot him a pointed annoyed look and he shrugged his shoulders at her and gave her a silent ‘what’? Darcy rolled her eyes and turned back to Groot, “Thanks honey.”

Hogun put Groot down onto his feet as the Guardians all moved to go sit with Drax and Mantis.
Darcy took a few hurried steps towards Hogun with her arms outstretched. Hogun hugged her briefly and gently.

“It’s been too long.” Darcy whined as they broke away from each other.

“Indeed…Princess.” Hogun teased. Darcy slapped him playfully on the arm groaning, “Not you too! What is with this princess thing? I’m still Darcy! Call me Darcy! You don’t call Thor, Prince Thor all the time.”

“As you say Princess Darcy.” Hogun said just to be a troll.

“Whatever, Hogun the Good and Grim.” Darcy sassed. Hogun let out a laugh and nodded to her, conceding.

“Darcy!” Quill rushed over to her side, almost bouncing with excitement he repeated her name, “Darcy, Darcy, Darcy! Look! Look it!”

Peter did a spin, swishing his cape around dramatically. He struck a pose and Darcy pressed her lips together tightly so she wouldn’t laugh in his face, he like Groot, was hysterically adorable sometimes. His little boy enthusiasm was infectious and Darcy felt the urge strike a similar pose and gush over her own outfit.

“You look awesome Peter, very Prince Charming.” Darcy said with a grin.

Peter beamed back at her, “All I need is a sword and I could totally stab Maleficent to save a Sleeping Beauty.”

“Well, fortunately for you this Sleeping Beauty is a self rescuing princess. But thanks anyway.” Darcy quipped.

When Fandral found them, with the exception of Volstagg and Mantis, they were all very full and finished with eating.

“I missed the party?” Fandral asked as he approached, he came to stand behind her chair, resting a hand on her shoulder as he surveyed them all.

Darcy looked up at him and jutted her lip out in an exaggerated pout and whined “Too much food, my dress is digging into me, help.”

Fandral let out a laugh and leant down and kissed her on the top of her head, “I’m afraid I cannot assist you with that particular problem right now Princess, but I do bring you good news.”

“My stuff?”

Fandral nodded, “All being cleaned as I had suspected. King Odin assured me all would be returned before sundown tonight. He apparently issued the order when he heard you had arrived in Asgard.”

“Aww, your papa wuvs you.” Rocket said mockingly earning himself a glare. Darcy’s frown disappeared quickly when a wadded up napkin hit him in the face. Gamora gave her smirk and Darcy blew the woman a kiss.

“The King is ready to receive you all now.” Fandral announced, “I’m to escort you there.”
Volstagg, Hogun, and Fandral all escorted Darcy and the Guardians into the intimidating throne room. Even from afar Darcy could see it was indeed Loki sitting atop the throne and not Odin. Looking at the warriors three she could tell they thought nothing amiss, thus she quickly deduced she was the only one seeing Loki in his true form.

As they approached Loki called out, “Daughter! You brighten this old man’s heart with your presence. Greetings! Greetings to you all.”

The warriors three all bowed when they reached the bottom of the throne. The Guardians all quickly followed suit. Darcy was the only who remained standing.

“Daughter,” Loki said warningly, “It is customary to bow before the King.”

“Uh huh.” Darcy said. Her eyes running up and down Loki’s body and face. It was her first time seeing him in person, knowing it was him…besides seeing him directly after getting his ass kicked in New York, which in her opinion didn’t count since she was on the brink of exhaustion and he was all beaten.


“You are this creature’s mother?” Loki balked his eyes bulging out slightly. Darcy was a little taken aback by Loki understanding what Groot was saying but tried to not let it show.

“Adopted.” Darcy replied coolly. Looking at her friends, who were all still on bended knee she became angry.

“Get up.” She ordered. Everyone looked at her in confusion. Darcy stomped her foot and repeated herself, “Get up! Stop kneeling, get up!”

Groot was the first to listen to her, hopping to his feet he grabbed her hand and called to her, “I am Groot. What’s wrong mom?”

Rocket was on his feet next, “You heard the princess. Everybody up!”

The Guardians all rose to their feet, but the warriors three remained on bended knee. Darcy stared at Loki challengingly. Loki clenched his jaw but gestured to his fellow Asgardians with his scepter, “You may rise.”

Hogun, Fandral, and Volstagg got to their feet. All eyes were on her and Darcy felt herself becoming agitated.

“Is something amiss Princess?” Hogun asked, his hand going to the hilt of his sword, his narrowed eyes turning on Loki.

Darcy bit her lip, she didn’t know what she wanted to happen, or hoped to happen, but a fight between her friends and Loki was not it.

“Nothing’s wrong.” Darcy lied, “I just don’t like to see my friends bowing, especially when everyone keeps addressing me as princess.”

“You are the Princess though.” Loki stated boldly, “Lady Darcy no more, Princess Darcy of Asgard
now.”

“Am I?” Darcy asked skeptically.

“I am King. You are what I say. And I say you are my daughter. The Princess of Asgard.” Loki said seriously.

“But why?” Darcy asked, truly curious, “Why adopt me? Why make me ‘Princess of Asgard’? You don’t even like me.”

“I like you.” Loki protested quickly, sounding sincere and a little offended.

“But why adopt her now? Way Darcy tells it, adopting stray children didn’t work out so good last time.” Peter said tactlessly.

Darcy could see Loki’s anger in the way his nostrils flared and his eyes squinted. In a dangerously tone Loki asked, “And you are?”

“Star Lord.” Peter state proudly.

“I doubt it.” Loki sneered.

“His name’s Peter Quill. He’s my friend and one of the Guardians of the Galaxy.” Darcy explained, “Known commonly as Star Lord.”

Loki nodded, pointing with his scepter at Gamora, “Her I know.”

“You do?” Gamora asked with a hint of suspicion.

Loki smirked as he answered, “Your reputation precedes you Gamora, daughter of Thanos the Mad titan.”

Gamora frowned and most of the Guardians tensed up visibly. Gamora jut her chin out as she replied, “I am no daughter of Thanos.”

Loki waved his hand at her dismissively, “As you say.”

Drax took a step forward, “I am Drax the Destroyer.”

Loki quirked a brow at him, “Good for you.”

“I’m sorry Darcy, can we go home now? This guy is obviously not father material.” Rocket jeered, pointing a thumb in Loki’s direction.

“Take care with how you speak of me rodent. I am the All Father. I am King of Asgard and you will respect me.” Loki threatened.

“Yeah, well you seem like a dick to me.” Peter sneered. Darcy winced as Peter’s words visibly enraged Loki as the Trickster got to his feet and stared down at them.

Volstagg drew the sword from his scabbard, his voice low and menacing as he spoke, “You are speaking to the King. Show some respect boy or I will teach you some.”

Gamora produced a double ended switchblade thing out of nowhere and Darcy could see that this whole thing was going to end in tears and bloodshed if she didn’t do something.
“Oh Daddy Dearest,” Darcy called out sweetly, she wasn’t sure if Loki knew that she knew that he wasn’t who he claimed to be, but she had a feeling that he didn’t know that she knew and it was high time he did. “I just want you to know, before anything stab-y happens, that I see you.”

“What?” Loki asked looking annoyed.

“I see you.” Darcy repeated, “I see you as you. Not the you, you want me to see you as.”

Everyone was staring at her like she had three heads. Except Loki, who looked stunned, “You…?”

“Yeah, I see you.” Darcy said with a nod, “So maybe we should talk alone so that the spoilers don’t wreck the ending.”

“Is anyone else confused?” Rocket asked raising his hand in the air. Peter, Groot, Mantis, Drax, Volstagg and Fandral all copied him and raised their hands as well.

“I am Groot. Mom? What’s going on?” Groot asked. Darcy exhaled loudly. She took a few steps towards Loki and the throne then turned around to survey her friends.

Everyone look confused, but Hogun and Gamora also looked suspicious. They would be the hardest to fool.

Darcy smiled brightly at everyone, clapping her hands she spoke loudly, “Okay! I have a plan.”

“Why do we need a plan?” Gamora asked.

“Because I need to talk to my dear old dad alone and I’m getting rid of all of you.” Darcy said playfully. She pointed at Rocket, “Rocket you and….Hogun and Drax! No not Drax, you and…Fandral, no. Wait, let me think for a minute.”

“Darcy what’s going on?” Peter implored.

Darcy stared back at him blankly, blinking owlishly, “Family drama, no big. Just gonna send you off for a little sightseeing.”

“I am Groot. I don’t want to leave you!” Groot shouted looking a little panicked.

“Too bad.” Loki taunted from behind her. Darcy didn’t even pay him any attention; she rushed forward and scooped Groot up into a big hug.

“You’re not leaving me Groot, you’re giving me some privacy so I can talk with King Odin about some things that are…private.” Darcy explained as she rubbed her hand up and down the tree child’s back.

“What things?” Fandral asked, his eyes narrowing, bouncing between her and Odin suspiciously.

“Adoption and vision type things.” Darcy answered succinctly.

“I am Groot. Why can’t we stay with you?” Groot whined as she put him down.

“Because some things…because…” Darcy floundered for an answer.

“Because the King says so.” Loki proclaimed.

Darcy turned and glared at him, “Not helping.”
“Wasn’t trying to.” Loki snapped.

“Darcy,” Gamora said and Darcy held up her hand cutting her off.

“Its fine, you guys, we’re going to talk for an hour and then come find you. I promise. It’s not a big deal.” Darcy said trying to sound casual.

“An hour?” Rocket questioned.

Darcy shrugged, “Maybe less? More? Just..a while. Don’t panic.”

“Princess--” Fandral began but Loki cut him off, banging his scepter on the floor loudly he shouted, “SILENCE.”

Everyone turned and looked up at him, “Enough! Get out. All of you. I have need of Princess Darcy, not the rest of you.”

When no one moved Loki stood and shouted, “LEAVE!”

“JESUS, CALM THE FUCK DOWN!” Darcy shouted back at him, “Don’t be such a dick, you are yelling at my family and I won’t tolerate it!”

She and Loki stared at each other. He with the power to have her and her friends imprisoned or killed, she with the power to expose him as the fraud that he was. Mutually assured destruction.

Loki sat on the throne with a scowl, gesturing with his hand he affected a bored tone, “Get on with it then, send them on their way as politely as you please…Princess.”

“Thank you.” Darcy said quietly. She turned back to face her friends.

“I have a plan.” She repeated, she made eye contact with Volstagg and nodded at the man, “Volstagg has a bunch of kids and lives really close to this awesome lake. I think Groot, Mantis, and Drax would really enjoy meeting your family and I would appreciate it if Groot had some kids his own age to play with for once.”

Volstagg nodded his head, “It would be my honor to host your adopted child and compatriots.”

“Cool.” Darcy gave the man thumbs up before shifting her gaze to Hogun, “Hogun, if you and Fandral could take Gamora, Peter, and Rocket to that place where we had those ice cream-y puff things, the one’s with peppermint? That place, I think my friends would really like it.”

“We shouldn’t split up.” Rocket protested even as Hogun and Fandral nodded, agreeing to her wishes.

Darcy turned her gaze on her furry and most chaotic friend, “It’s a tavern. They have the best drinks in the galaxy, bar none. I swear you will love it. It’s across from the market; after I come and find you we can go buy some Asgardian tech, and you can un-build it and rebuild it to your heart’s content.”

Rocket opened his mouth to argue, but her words must have sunk in and he just shrugged, “Yeah, okay.”

Darcy smiled gratefully, “Thank you.”

“Darcy--” Peter stepped forward, his eyes on Loki behind her, “Are you sure you want to be alone with this guy?”
Gamora lowered her voice and cautioned, “It is not wise to go up against such a powerful and angry monarch alone.”

“I’ll be fine.” Darcy said confidently, “Besides, we’re not adversaries…we’re family.”

Darcy and Loki watched silently as her friends departed. Neither of them moved until the door shut behind them, echoing in the giant empty room.

Darcy whirled around and ran up the stairs that led to the throne; Loki looked alarmed but stubbornly stayed seated on the throne as she made her angry approach.

“Loki!” Darcy yell-whispered while pointing at him, “You’re Loki. Not Odin. You were Loki the last time I was here too! You were Loki in disguise as Odin and Loki in disguise as Axel.”

Loki shrugged, “I am Loki.”

“Admit it!” Darcy snapped, “Odin then. Axel. Odin now. It was all you!”

Loki looked at her out the side of his eyes, feigning boredom, “Fine, I admit it. It was me. They were all me.”

Darcy’s mouth dropped open and she gasped, even though she knew it, it still felt like a shock to have it confirmed, “YOU BIG FAT LIAR!”

Loki looked at her with an amused but taken a back expression as she continued to yell at him, “YOU SUCK! I CAN’T BELIEVE YOU! WHY WOULD YOU ADOPT ME? WHAT THE FUCK MAN? SERIOUSLY WHY ARE YOU SO WEIRD!?”

“You are more upset about your adoption than my usurping the throne?” Loki questioned with the hint of a smile.

Darcy leaned forward and poked him in the chest. Not satisfied she did it again and again, harmlessly but annoyingly poking him all over until he became irritated enough to raise his hands and stop her.

“Enough, enough! Stop-ow—stop poking me!” Loki cried out. Darcy removed her hands and glared at him.

“Why did you adopt me? What the hell?!” Darcy demanded, more curious about his motivation on that matter than any other.

Loki pressed his lips together and looked down guilty, “I don’t know.”

“You don’t know?!” Darcy screeched. She grabbed up his scepter quicker than he could stop her and she began to poke him with the end of it, concentrating on his stomach this time, “You don’t know!?”

“Stop, stop!” Loki cried and then there was someone behind her, trying to pull the scepter out of her hands. Darcy turned to see…another Loki. She looked back and forth between the Loki she was jabbing with the scepter and the one trying to take her weapon.

Darcy, unwilling to lose, shoulder bumped the duplicate Loki away from her long enough for her to hurl the scepter like a javelin across the entirety of the throne room, lodging it securely in the wall
opposite them.

About the length of a football field away.

Darcy blinked at the show of her strength, surprised at how far she was about to throw.

Darcy turned back just in time to see the duplicate Loki dissipate. She turned to the real Loki and stared at him. She felt like a balloon that had been deflated. Her anger disappearing along with the duplicate.

“Why did you adopt me?” Darcy asked quietly, “Don’t lie just, tell me. Please.”

“You deserve it.” Loki answered looking uncomfortable, “It’s what my mother wanted…my..Odin agreed that upon your revival they would adopt you. Formally putting you under royal Asgardian protection and providing you with the chance to eat one of Idunn’s apples, granting you a greater lifespan and strength and…it’s what Frigga wanted for you before Malekith…”

“Before she died.” Darcy finished.

Loki nodded, looking away from her as he echoed, “Yes, before she died.”

Darcy exhaled loudly. She understood and understanding his motivations made her feel a little better about the ‘adoption’ no matter if it was legitimate or not due to his own illegitimacy. Darcy moved forward, and patted Loki’s leg, “Move over.”

Loki did as she asked but stared at her with begrudging amusement as she put a hand on his shoulder to steady herself as she hopped up to sit on the snake head armrest of the throne, one foot on the seat of the throne for balance, the other dangling free.

“Comfortable?” Loki asked with a grin. Darcy ignored him as she fixed her skirt, making sure all her important bits were covered.

“So…what's next?” Darcy asked.

“What?”

“Why’d you summon me? What do you want?” Darcy questioned as she tapped Loki lightly on the end of his nose, “Hungry for more weird incestuous make out sessions with my paralyzed body?”

Loki blushed ducking his head, “I am sorry for that. Kissing you, while you were strained was out of line. Even for me.”

“Good.” Darcy replied hoping he was being honest but unable to tell for sure.

“Are you not angry that I--”

Darcy held up a hand halting his words, “Let’s just get one thing straight, I am angry. I’m mad you lied to me. Kissed me. Tricked me. Usurped your dad, fooled all of Asgard into thinking you’re him. Let THOR believe his brother is dead, you asshole. He’s very sad about it.”

“He’ll get over it.” Loki interjected.

Darcy ignored him, “I’m made you fired and banished Hiemdall, for ‘dereliction of duty’ which is code for he can see through your bullshit if I’m not mistaken. And I’m really really angry you modified my body without my permission…” Darcy took a deep breath in and exhaled loudly before admitting, “But…if you hadn’t done what you did, I’d be dead right now.”
Loki tensed all over. Darcy sighed, “So... thank you? I guess. I’m... not happy about the deception and the lack of consent of it all, but it’s hard to argue with the results.”

“Who attempted to harm you?” Loki asked with an edge.

“Some random guy.”

“What method did he use to---”

“Shot in the face.” Loki quickly inhaled at that. Darcy grimaced and nodded her head, “Yeah, bad way to go, terrifying way to find out I’m as bullet proof as you Asgardians.”

“I can imagine.” Loki said quietly.

“Yeah, so. I’m angry, but not like forest fire angry, just like tiny little campfire angry.” Darcy joked.

“I say—you are certain it was the transformation spell that saved you?” Loki asked looking for confirmation. Darcy nodded. They both turned away from each other and stared at nothing while they let their conversation sink in.

After a few minutes of silence Darcy said, “You didn’t answer my question.”

“Hmm?” Loki grunted distractedly.

Darcy put her hand on his shoulder, “Why’d you summon me? What do you want? Why did you want me here?”

Loki smiled at her and the lack of menace in that smile almost looked unnatural on his face. “I proclaimed you a Princess. Therefore, we need to have a coronation.”

“You’ve got to be joking.”

“No.”

“No.”

“What no?” Loki asked.

“No to the coronation.” Darcy declared.

Loki looked at her with frustration, “For your claim to be legitimate, you must be ceremonially crowned before the kingdom.”

“Legitimate?” Darcy balked, “You’re not the real king dumbass!”

“Only if you reveal my true identity.” Loki fired back, “The King is whoever sits upon the throne. What is a name? What is a face? I sit upon the throne, I say I am King and therefore I am.”

“Do you actually believe your own bullshit?” Darcy questioned sincerely.

“I cannot undo what has been done and you do not seem opposed to being Princess knowing now that it was what Frigga intended for you all along. For you to be considered our Princess you must undergo the pomp and circumstance of the ceremony, it is tradition.”
“Where’s the real Odin?” Darcy asked changing the subject.

Loki paled but didn’t appear stricken with guilt or anything as he replied, “Off world.”

She answered without thinking, going with her instinct.


“You’ll attend the ceremony and allow me to crown you Princess of Asgard before all of our people?” Loki asked sounding surprised by her lack of continued protest.

“Sure.” Darcy agreed, “As long as it can happen tomorrow.”

Loki scoffed, “Tomorrow?! Impossible! Such a grand ceremony takes at least a month to plan.”

“Tomorrow.” Darcy insisted.

“Three weeks.” Loki bargained.

“No.”

“Two weeks?”

“No. I need to go home as soon as possible. Home being Earth.” Darcy said with a pointed glare, “You know that place you tried to conquer and rule once upon a time?”

“Darcy, you’re being unreasonable.” Loki complained, ignoring her jab at his former villainous actions, “You have to understand--”

“I don’t have to understand anything, you need to understand me. I am going home. Whether you like it or not.”

Loki clenched and then unclenched his fists before speaking in a measured tone, “It’s impossible to ready preparations for such an elaborate event so quickly…if you don’t give me at least a week I won’t have time to send word to Thor.”

That stopped Darcy in her tracks. Inviting Thor meant inviting scrutiny.

“You would invite Thor to come? Even though he might figure out it’s you and not his dad?” Darcy asked a little shocked that Loki would put himself in jeopardy that way.

“It is…expected.” Loki answered evasively. Loki fidgeted under her gaze. If he was willing to risk the throne she was willing to play along until reinforcements arrived. For some reason she didn’t feel like revealing Loki’s true identity was her place. Thor on the other hand, Thor was his brother and it was his father that Loki was impersonating.

Leaving Loki’s fate in Thor’s hands seemed like the best course of action. Especially when taking into account that while Darcy was being treated as the ‘princess’, she only had that power at Loki’s behest. Who’s to say that if she attempted to reveal who he truly was, she would be believed? Sure, the warriors three might believe her, but every other Asgardian subject? That wasn’t so certain. Best leave it up to Thor, who was the real Asgardian royalty.

“One week.” Darcy said sternly, “I’ll stay and play along if this whole thing happens in one week.”

“Agreed.” Loki grinned toothily.
“And my friends get to stay if they want.”

Loki’s smile turned into a pout, “Fine.”

Loki slouched and folded his arms across his chest, pouting he asked “What now?”

“What now? You’ve agreed to the coronation but I am hesitant to believe you speak the truth, that you would ignore my villainy and allow me to maintain my deception.”

“Well..”

Loki continued on as if she never spoke, antagonizing her with every word, “Why? Why would you do as you said you would? Why not expose me? Play the hero, have me imprisoned again or killed, and restore Odin to his rightful place? As any true hero would.”


“I know you Darcy Lewis. You are good, like my mother. Like Thor. Noble and kind, you believe in justice and peace…Thor would reveal me for who I truly am. He would not allow me to sit upon this throne after all I’ve done.” Loki said, “Why are you?”

“You’re dad’s a dick and I don’t like him.” Darcy said honestly, Loki let out a slightly hysterical sounding laugh. Encouraged Darcy continued, “As long as you rule Asgard without like…making it law to marry your dog, or like…other evil things, I don’t see any harm in leaving Odin exactly where you put him.”

“For true?” Loki asked with awe, “You would keep my secret?”

“On two conditions.” Darcy held up a finger, “One. You give me magic lessons, every day until I leave.”

“Done.”

“Two,” Darcy held up her second finger, “You have to let Hiemdall be free and not like…hunt him down or anything.”

Loki’s eyes crinkled as he squinted at her, “You would…you don’t want me to restore Hiemdall to his rightful position either?”

Darcy made a noise, “Pfft.”

“Pfft?”

“You can’t bring back Hiemdall!” Darcy exclaimed, “He’s all noble and unable to tell a lie or chop down a cherry tree. He’d be able to see through your illusion and he’d ruin the whole game. Let him live the frontier life for a little while, it won’t kill him to get in tune with nature.”

Loki threw back his head and cackled. Darcy felt a little guilty but knew Thor would return and set things back to right, so she didn’t feel too bad encouraging Loki and maintaining his charade.

Darcy stared at Loki amused by how delighted he seemed to be….even if his laughter was a little unsettling. Her motives fueled in part with knowing ‘King Loki’ would never last, and part just having sympathy for the man. She felt a thrill of excitement and unease at the thought of deceiving the God of lies.
After he’d stopped laughing, Loki gave her a sincere look of affection and said, “You are…the most perfect sister I could have ever asked for.”

“And you are exactly the person Frigga told me about.”

Loki’s lips quirked up at the mention of his mother. Loki looked up at her then, his eyes going to the diadem on her head.

“That was hers, wasn’t it?”

Darcy touched the crown on her head reassuringly, “Yeah, Thor said Frigga wanted to give it to me but she—Thor gave it to me for my birthday.”

“It’s enchanted.” Loki stated.

“I know.”

“It’s why you saw through my illusion.” Loki stated with smirk.

Darcy put her hand on his face and pushed his head back warning, “Don’t fool yourself dude, I could see through you even without the magical crown.”

“We’ll see.” Loki said cryptically.

“Stop being weird.” Darcy muttered as she slid off the throne’s armrest and got to her feet. She snapped her fingers in Loki’s face, “Now change into Axel and let’s go find my friends.”

It was Darcy’s turn to cackle as Loki grimaced, “Do we have too?”

Loki in the disguise of Axel, though she still couldn’t see it, dismissed the other guards who’d been assigned to her as they exited the throne room. The ‘King’ proclaimed him her personal body guard. Then ‘King’ which was actually just an illusion, claimed to need solitude and they were all ordered not to disturb him as he retreated to his bedchamber.

She and Loki, free of any other obligations, left the palace in search of her friends.

They headed first to the tavern she had sent Rocket, Gamora and Quill to. As they got closer to the building, Darcy realized from the light that it was much later in the day than she’d realized.

“How long were we talking in the throne room?” Darcy asked.

“A few hours.” Loki answered.

“Oh.”

Before even entering the establishment they could hear a great ruckus coming from inside. Darcy paused and winced, her shoulders raised up around her ears as the sound of glass shattering came from inside. “Please don’t be them. Please don’t be them.” Darcy whispered to herself as she opened the door and stepped through.

Loki shot her a superior look, “We could always leave them and return to the palace.”
Darcy ignored Loki’s comment as she surveyed the chaos inside. There was a brawl on one side of the room and at the center of it was Rocket, Gamora, and Hogun. On the other side of tavern, there was a little stage and on it was a visibly drunk Peter and Fandral. They were arm in arm, swaying and singing to a small crowd of disinterested looking drunks. Darcy turned her attentions to the fight.

There was a table broken in half, shattered chairs, spilled drinks, playing cards and little colored pebbles strewn all over the floor. The weirdest part of the whole thing was, she could see waitresses, moving about the chaos with ease. Stepping over broken items, weaving in and out of the fighting patrons and delivering drinks to the other non combatant patrons.

“I guess this kind of thing is normal here.” Darcy mumbled to herself, eyeing a waitress stealthy sidestep Hogun and the man he was punching in the face.

“I’ll -hiccup- take all ya bastards on.”Rocket slurred, catching her attention. He had a broken bottle in his hand and he looked all wet and angry. Gamora tried to pull Rocket back from the drunken Asgardian he was threatening but, then another man jumped on her back.

Gamora made quick work throwing the man off of her, but he was Asgardian, and thus super strong, even stronger than her, and so Gamora was unable to break the man’s hold on her, meaning when she flipped him over her shoulder, she also flipped herself. The man who had his arm around her throat lay on his back with Gamora on top of him, her back to his front. Gamora and the man then began to roll around on the ground, wrestling each other.

“Ew. Sticky floor.” Darcy mused as she watched her green skinned friend finally break the man’s hold and begin to kick and punch the man who had momentarily taken her down.

The drunk Asgardian Rocket had threatened suddenly drew a knife from his boot and yelled, “Swindling little rat!”

He and Rocket ran at each other but just before they made impact Darcy threw up her shield in between them. Comically they slammed into the magical energy field barrier, the man crying out and stepping back his hands on his face cradling his bloody nose. While Rocket fell back onto his butt looking dazed, a hand to his head.

“What the hell is going on?” Darcy asked. The drunk Asgardians who’d been fighting her friends stared at her with wide eyes and pink cheeks. The Asgardians bowed their heads at her and avoided her gaze. Darcy sought out Gamora with her eyes as the woman got to her feet, but Rocket once again drew her attention away.

Rocket who had gotten to his feet unsteadily, but without his weapon, was going around her shield trying to reach the man he was intent on attacking. The man however, seemed suddenly disinterested in fighting, he dropped his knife allowing it to clatter to the floor.

The Asgardian stood stock still as Rocket reached him and began to shove at the man’s lower half, pushing kicking and punching his legs. “C’mon asshole, fight back!” Rocket jeered as he tried to goad him back into fight mode. The Asgardian held fast though, ignoring Rocket even as he winced every now and then.

“Rocket! Stop!” Darcy yelled shrilly. Rocket got in a lucky punch to the Asgardians crotch and Darcy lost it, “ROCKET!”

Moving forward quickly she grabbed her furry friend by the back of his jumpsuit, hoisting him in the air rendering his attempts to further injure the Asgardian useless. Rocket kicked his feet and tried to hit her but in his drunken state he wasn’t capable of the necessary coordination. He merely flailed
about complaining, “Lemmy go! Let go a me Darce! I gotta show these guys who’s boss!”

“Stop!” Darcy commanded, “Calm down!”

“LET GO OF ME!” Rocked bellowed, his hands reaching up to scratch at her hand and arm, his sharp claws biting into her tender flesh uncomfortably.

“Calm down and I’ll put you down.” Darcy repeated sternly.

Rocket let out an animalistic noise and then stopped resisting. He let his arms and legs go slack, hanging limp in her grip he growled, “I’m calm.”

“Don’t believe him.” Gamora advised.

“I’m calm! I swear!” Rocket claimed all of his limbs held out as far as possible making himself look like a star, “I promise!”

Darcy turned him and lifted him higher until they were eye to eye, “No more fighting?”

Rocket held his hands up in surrender, “No more fighting.”

Darcy dropped him onto the ground. Rocket landed on his feet but dropped down into a crouch, after a second he got to his feet with his arms out for balance, wobbling slightly as he stood erect once more. With a sniff Rocket wiped at his mouth with the back of his hand, grumbling, “Wasn’t my fault any way.”

“Really?” Darcy questioned skeptically.

Rocket stamped his foot and pointed at the man he had been trying to attack, “He’s a sore loser who can’t take a joke!”

Gamora helped the man she’d beaten and incapacitated earlier into a chair as Hogun did the same to the other injured patrons. The Asgardian who Rocket was accusing turned red in the face, yelling out, “He lies!”

“You lies!” Rocket parroted back accusingly at the man.

“He speak falsehoods you would do well to ignore Princess! He is a foul beast and an unnatural one at that!”

Rocket bristled and shouted at the man, “He refused to pay up when I beat his ass at their stupid Asgardian version of checkers!”

“He also insulted Rocket repeatedly.” Gamora added, glaring at the man in question.

“He cheated!”

“He’s the one who broke the table!”

“He bit me!”

“He--”

“ENOUGH!” Darcy screamed, “Both of you shut up!”

The whole bar quieted down, the only sound came from across the bar where Quill and Fandral were
still singing, the familiar song caused Darcy to turn around and stare at the oblivious men, incredulous that they were so unawares or uncaring of the chaos that had erupted all around them.

“We are the champions my frie-aheh-ends!” Peter crooned into the microphone. Darcy blinked as Fandral banged his head along rhythmically.

“I totally regret teaching them both that song.” Darcy mused aloud.

Loki, who was just behind her shrugged, “I actually rather like it.”

Darcy rolled her eyes, turning back to Rocket and the others.

“He started it Darce.” Rocket plead.

“I did not!” The Asgardian man denied, “He--”

“Shut up!” Darcy commanded, “I said shut up!”

Darcy glared at Rocket and the man until both deflated, looking down and away from her gaze submissively. In a loud voice Darcy asked, “Can someone who is not drunk explain what happened?”

Gamora stepped forward, “Rocket won the game. The Asgardian got mad, insulted Rocket, poured his drink on him, and then refused to pay what he owed….however I am drunk, so you may want to ask someone else.”

Darcy narrowed her eyes, “This is you drunk?”

Gamora shrugged, “I can feel the difference even if you cannot.”

“Okay.”

Hogun stepped forward, “What the Lady Gamora claimed is truth. Ødger lost their game and refused to pay. He added insult to injury with many callous words and actions. His friends joined in when Lady Gamora stepped up to defend Rocket in his quest to receive his due.”

Darcy pointed at the drunken Asgardian, “You’re Ødger?”

The man nodded, “I am, but princess, he cheated!”

Darcy waved away the man’s claiming beginning, “I don’t want to--” but Ødger inerupted hollering, “HE CHEATED! Doesn’t that matter!”

Loki, who’d she almost forgot about, came up behind the man with a chair, he banged it into the back of Ødger’s legs while simultaneously shoving the man down onto the chair with a hand on his shoulder. Loki then leaned down and spoke menacingly, “You now address the Princess of Asgard. Show respect and hold your tongue or it will be the last time you have a tongue.”

Darcy shot Loki a look, “I don’t think I’m comfortable with that.”

“With what?”

“Cutting body parts off as a form of punishment.”

Loki smiled toothily and pat the man on the shoulder, “Well as long as Ødger uses the proper amount of decorum we can all keep our bits and pieces right where they are.”
Rocket looked Loki up and down in appraisal, “Who’s *hiccup* this bum?”

“Bum?” Loki repeated with flashing eyes. Darcy put a hand on Loki’s chest, not to hold him back, just to…remind him. Of what she wasn’t sure.

“This is Axel. He’s…”

“I am the Princesses personal body guard while here in Asgard.” Loki claimed puffing out his chest.

“He don’t look so tough.” Rocket criticized.

Loki smirked challengingly, “And who would make a more imposing protector, Rabbit? You?”

“Nah, Gamora of course.” Loki looked amused by Rocket’s response and Gamora herself couldn’t hide her proud grin.

Loki turned to the green woman, “Well, she certainly scarier than a rabbit.”

“He’s not a rabbit.” Darcy insisted giving Loki a look, “Don’t be rude.”

Darcy then waved her hands in the air as if erasing or rewinding the conversation, redirecting everyone’s attention back to her, “Okay, whatever, can we just…settle the tab and get oout of here?”

Rocket took a step toward Ødger in the chair, “Not unil this guy pays up.”

Ødger stared back at Rocket bodly declaring, “Never.”

Loki who loomed behind Ødger, squeezed the man’s shoulder hard enough to make him wince but not recant. Ødger looked over to her, “Princess, respectfully, I will not pay the rodent his due for he is a liar and a cheat. I beg forgiveness for myself and my companions, for losing our tempers and disgracing ourselves by engaging in heedless violence but I am bound by honor not to reward this charlatan!”

“That is quite a claim.” Darcy commented thoughtfully.

Rocket shuffled his feet morosely, “It only sounds bad because he’s usin’ all them fancy words.”

Darcy turned on Rocket with narrowed eyes, “Did you do it? Rocket, did you cheat?”

“When you say cheat…” Rocket said trailing off.

“Rocket!”

“He fell for it! Doesn’t that make me the real winner?” Rocket said with a smirk.

“No!”

Rocket looked at her with this disappointed exression, “I knew this place would change you.”

“Oh shut up!” Darcy snarled, “I’m not acting different, you’re just being an ass!”

“Sure you’re not, *Princess.*” Rocket said mockingly but with a mean expression.

Darcy took a step towards Rocket, muttering, “You little so and so.”

She advanced on Rocket while he glared, Ødger from the chair commented loudly, “The Princess hould save herself the aggravation and have her unruly pet put down.”
Rocket turned and roared at the man, “You POMPUS BASTARD!”

Rocket scurried under Darcy’s legs and threw himself at Ødger’s face, scratching and biting the man. Loki, who was right behind them, pulled Rocket off of Ødger and wrapped the tiny mamamal in a tight hug with both arms.

“Alright, that’s enough.” Loki muttered as he secured Rocket’s arms across his own chest, forcing Rocket to hug himself as he was pressed against Loki’s chest.

“LET ME GO!” Rocket yelled.

“No.” Loki replied calmly, “I’m taking you to jail.”

“Loki.” Darcy said, not sure if she should even protest seeing as Rocket was acting so out of control. Loki stared back at her sympathetically, “One night to sober up, one night of penance. Drunk and disorderly conduct. Fair?”

“Fair.” Darcy acknowledged sadly. Loki gave her a nod before he nodded at Hogun with his head, gesturing for the man to follow.

“You Asgardian bastard! There’s no prison that can hold me!” Rocket boasted as Loki carried him to the door.

“We’ll see about that.” Hogun muttered as he passed.

Gamora came up on beside her, throwing an arm around Darcy’s shoulders she commented, “Thank you for the recommendation, the ice cream-y puff thing with peppermint were truly delicious and very strong.”

Darcy turned so she could look at Gamora more clearly; the woman looked calm cool and collected. No noticeable signs of inebriation anywhere on her person or in her speech. Shocked, Darcy asked, “You sure you’re drunk? You seem very sober to me.”

“I am currently contemplating succumbing to Peter and his pelvic sorcery.” Gamora said dreamily, staring at the man in question as he threw up on the side of the stage.

“Yeah okay, you’re drunk and your judgment is impaired. Let’s go get some water.”

Somehow, Darcy got a drunken Fandral, Peter, and Gamora back to the palace without letting the two budding lovers make out. Darcy was just too good of a friend to allow Gamora to kiss Peter before he brushed his teeth following his impressive vomiting at the tavern.

When they reached the palace, Peter threw up again, this time on Fandral, causing the Asgardian to flee in disgust. Darcy didn’t blame him but she was annoyed at being abandoned to deal with the whiny mess that Peter dissolved into as the spins hit him.

Once she settled Peter down into bed, a bucket at his bed side and a canteen of water within reach, a cold compress on his head, she convinced Gamora not to sex him up in the middle of the night, least she get vomited on as well.

Gamora was the most easy going and deceptively sober acting drunk she’d ever encountered in her
life. Gamora claimed to be too wired from the Asgardian alcohol to sleep, so Darcy left her in the capable hands of Hogun who returned with Loki and offered to spar with the green skinned woman until she grew weary.

Leaving she and Loki alone once again.

“It’s still early.” Loki commented.

“It’s dinner time.” Darcy said, “We should go and get Groot at Volstagg’s house.”

Loki nodded, “We could do that…or we could send word that we will retrieve them in the morning due to unforeseen circumstances and spend the evening in other more entertaining ways.”

There was no insulation in his tone, no perversion in his gaze. Just mischief. Darcy was intrigued, “What do you mean by entertaining?”

After receiving word back from Volstagg, saying they would be delighted to host her friends for the night, she and Loki spent the evening practicing magic.

Darcy eagerly and proudly demonstrated her mastery of the infinity bag spell, for which Loki praised and complimented her for before challenging her to learn something new.

“I heard tell that you made an illusion while under the tutelage of my mother, something about making one apple appear like two?” Loki questioned.

Darcy nodded slowly, wary of what he was going to expect her to be able to do after she showed off.

“I’m not really good at magic though. You get that right? I might know one or two spells really well, but I’m not…a natural. Like you.”

Loki hardened at that, “You think my skill came to me with ease?”

Darcy shrugged, “You’re so good at all the magic-y stuff, I guess I assumed-”

“You assumed that I didn’t not practice and labor to achieve mastery of each and every skill in my arsenal? Mastering the art of illusion, mental manipulation, presence concealment, conjuration, telekinesis, they all take time learn. Years, centuries even.”

“Guess I’m screwed then.” Darcy muttered.

Loki waved his hand and generated a hazy green holographic butterfly; it fluttered its dull colored wings and flew between them, coming closer and closer to her. Darcy reached out a hand and froze, the butterfly came to rest on her outstretched finger, sitting there its wings moving every so often.

“This is beautiful.” Darcy said softly.

“Can you feel it?” Loki asked, “It’s small delicate legs gripping your finger?”

Darcy nodded. Loki began to circle her slowly, “It took me fourteen years to be able to create this butterfly. To create an illusion that was capable of corporeal touch.”

“Fourteen years?”

Loki nodded with a fond smile, “I was very bratty the whole time too. Completely frustrated with my
inability to master such a tiny thing, such an impossible task…until it wasn’t. And I did it.”

“You’ve come a long way.” Darcy commented as the butterfly blinked out of existence.

Loki nodded, “And I’ve got a ways to go further still.”

“What do you mean?” Darcy asked, “You’re the best scorcher this side of the cosmos! Aren’t you… haven’t you mastered enough?”

“The capacity to learn is a gift; the ability to learn is a skill; the willingness to learn is a choice….do you understand?” Loki asked.

Darcy smiled, “I…surprisingly think I do. Plato or Socrates or someone, they said something like, the only thing I know is that I know nothing. So…the adventure continues?…I’m mixing metaphors with quotes and I need to stop so let’s just get started on the lesson.”

Loki chuckled as she grew hot with embarrassment. Rambling and not remembering full quotes made her feel inept and she did not need any help in appearing stupider than she already was compared to the long lived everybody else on Asgard.

“We shan’t tackle corporeal illusions, but regular ones. Now,” Loki plucked a ring from off his finger and set it down in the middle of the room, “I’ve lost my ring, create another.”

“How?”

“Stare at the ring on the floor and imagine another one exactly like it in your hand.”

“That’s it?” Darcy asked skeptically.

“That’s it. See it. Duplicate it in your mind and imagine where you want the duplication to appear spatially.”

“Okay…I’ll try.” Darcy said, staring down at the ring.

Darcy fell into bed a few hours after midnight. Her evening magic lesson had left her exhausted, which didn’t even make sense because all Loki had her do was create illusion duplicates of tiny things. First his ring, then a button, a spoon, a hair brush, a shoe, and finally an ant.

She had breezed through the inanimate objects fairly quickly. Mastering duplicating them within two hours. Once she learned the skill, applying it to different objects was just a matter of practice and adjustment.

The ant however, the ant kicked her butt.

To create a living breathing moving living illusion? Apparently that was very hard. Darcy had spent the last four hours trying before she have up. The closest she got was to create a dark spot that looked like a sprinkle.

Loki had been kind and encouraging but she still felt like a puny failure.

After readying for bed she slipped under the covers and fell asleep almost instantly.
She woke up to the feeling of something gliding across the bridge of her nose. Blinking rapidly, to see what was on her, but also not allow a lot of light into her eye, Darcy caught a glimpse of Loki.

“What are ya doing?” Darcy grumbled, bringing up her hand to shoo him away.

“Nothing.”

“Suspicious.” Darcy blearily accused with a yawn.

Loki let out a giggle before moving away from her, calling out, “Better get up and get dressed. Wouldn’t want the kingdom to believe the new Princess is actually the new mistress!”

Darcy got up with a groan annoyed with Loki’s chipper early morning behavior. She dragged herself out of bed and into the bathroom. After relieving herself she washed her hands. As she did so, she caught sight of herself in the mirror.

There was bright red lipstick all over her face.

On her forehead Loki had written, ‘Loki is smarter than me’ on her cheek he’d drawn bird, and on the other cheek a smoosh-y looking brain.

Darcy ran and opened the bathroom door she stared into the empty room looking for the culprit to this ridiculous prank. She whispered yelled, not wanting to alert the guards outside that anything was amis, “LOKI! You get back here!”

She could faintly hear Loki’s giggle across the room. She directed her glare to the corner where she thought he was hiding and pointed, “You’re a child.”


“Not cool.” Darcy muttered as she retreated back into the bathroom to wash her face, muttering to herself, “Hermione can’t draw.”

She raised her voice to a whisper yell to tell Loki, “Your bird looks like a hamster and the brain looks abby-normal!”

Darcy’s robe and Slippers
Darcy’s Asgardian Gown -- Behind the scenes note, the reason there is only one dress for Darcy to wear is different than the reason she is given in the story
Mantis Asgardian Gown
Gamora Asgardian Gown - I got too lazy to colorize her, sorry.
Peter’s Asgard Outfit – behind the scenes note, this is Josh Dallas costume from ‘Once Upon A Time’ Josh Dallas Played Fandral in the 1st movie and he is what Fandral looks like when I imagine him—I just badly photo shopped Star Lord head on his body & Will do so again if Peter needs another Asgardian outfit!

Asgard Pretending to be Odin, and Axel the guard
Drax didn’t accept make over/free new clothes. Just accepted free washing of the pants he was wearing and wore same *but washed* clothes.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry chapter grew too large to be done with Asgard all in one go, will have a little more asgard in next chapter but maybe not the whole chapter, maybe just half, and then it's back to earth.

Also Hermione can't draw is a song and reference to the Harry Potter Musical 2.
Chapter 30 - Darcy Lewis

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up in her own bed.

Chapter Notes

Merry Christmas. Happy New Year.
Hope you like this insanely long and very plotty chapter.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 30 – Darcy Lewis

For the most part Darcy spent the week leading up to the coronation falling asleep and waking up in her own bed, however that did not mean she was alone. Following his release from jail and their retrieval of the other Guardians from Volstagg’s home, Rocket and Groot spent the bulk of the week bunking with her.

Darcy didn’t mind. She knew it was her last week with the Guardians… at least for a while.

Gamora and Quill had taken her aside and told her that once the coronation was over and she returned to Earth, they would be returning to the Milano. It was sad, but it had to happen. The Guardians belonged out in space, saving the galaxy and causing trouble, they weren’t meant to shadow her across the universe. So, they’d all acknowledged that this was their final week together and thus tried to enjoy it as best they could.

Loki had actually understood about how she was feeling and helped her play Asgardian tour guide. In the disguise of ‘Axel’ she and Loki showed the Guardians the Mystic Mountain Zanadu, the Pillars of Utgard, and the Glowing Desert of Skornheim.

Loki seemed to enjoy wowing everyone with his knowledge and the natural splendor of Asgard. Fandral, Hogun, and Volstagg joined them when they could but she really only got to see the trio at meal times as they had duties to fulfill during the day and her nights were reserved for magic lessons with Loki.

Alone time with Loki, now that she knew he was Loki, was very different from the alone time she had with him previously while in disguise. Loki was not as careful with his words, he let his temper flare and die out as he pleased. He seemed to behave genuinely with her, no artifice, no act, when they were alone Loki was unapologetically himself.

And Darcy was beginning to really like him.

During the course of the magic lesson she got to see more and more of the playful brother Thor had described to her. Whenever she pronounced a spell wrong or made the incorrect hand gesture, Loki would tug on her hair gently or pinch her fleshy bicep instead of telling her she was doing ‘bad’. He
encouraged her to try again and corrected her silently if he could. It was in those moments that she could see his mother in him.

Seeing as how her go to spell was her shield, Loki was intent on teaching her something offensive, something she could use to attack instead of just defend. It wasn’t exactly working. She either lacked the skill, the finesse, or the power to achieve any spell fully. It took her nearly three hours to get any type of traction and still she’d only accomplished half the spell, literally half.

Darcy stared down at dagger hilt in her hand. She’d been trying to conjure the weapon but had somehow cut it in half and only held the handle. The sharp metal blade was completely missing, severed during the magical transfer.

“I suck.” Darcy lamented.

“You do not.” Loki argued kindly as he plucked the handle out of her grasp and held it up to his eyes, “You merely lack practice.”

“Dude, I cut the knife in half.” Darcy groused, she and Loki were having their lesson in the closed off armory. He was trying to teach her how to ‘conjure’ a weapon out of thin air, which apparently was not really conjuring but teleporting. Teleporting an object from one place to another, aka conjuring. In this case, it was conjuring the dagger from its place on the wall into her hand.

“Well, you didn’t conjure the blade into the middle of your hand as I had feared you would.” Loki commented as he threw the handle over his shoulder carelessly.

Darcy’s eyes widened as she stared at the clattering object on the floor, “I could have what!?”

Loki smirked and shrugged, “I accidently conjured many objects through my hand when first learning this skill.”

“What!?”

“Indeed. I’ve been impaled by sword, spear, knife, dagger, shield, goblet, shoe, quill, helmet, rock, I could go on and on, but chances are if you name it, it’s probably spent some time lodged uncomfortably in my hand.” Loki held up his naked hand to her face, “But you see, no permanent damage done.”

“Yeah! Cause you’re a God!” Darcy screeched, she held her own hand to her chest her other one covering it protectively, “Why didn’t you tell me this spell came with the warning of possible impalement!”

“It didn’t seem relevant.” Loki said as he turned and surveyed the weaponry hung on the wall.

“How could the possibility of me getting a metal blade shoved into my hand not be relevant!?” Darcy demanded.

Loki turned on her with a cool gaze and just the hint of a smile, “Because while we share an innate talent for magic you,” Loki grabbed her hand away from her chest, holding her unmarred hand aloft in the space between them like evidence, “You seemed to be far more advanced at certain skills that it took me centuries of study and practice to master.”

Loki let her hand go and Darcy let it fall limply down to her side. Darcy could see the glimmer of pride in his eyes as he stared down at her and she just felt so…unworthy. He’d tried to teach her two spells now; illusion and conjuring objects, and she’d been unable to master either. She felt like a failure and a disappointment. All of her unsuccessful lessons with Queen Frigga and the various
teachers at Karma-Taj flashed through her mind.

“Every day this week I will teach you something different. I doubt you will master any spell or incantation. You will fail, a lot, but that is because you have given me seven days to teach you all I know.” Loki put his hands on her shoulders and squeezed meaningfully.

“Loki, maybe we should just stop--”

Loki held up a hand, halting her protest, “No. Every lesson I give you is important. You insist on gallivanting around with bullheaded heroes, it will get you killed if you’re not prepared. I won’t have you die just after I’ve made you royalty.”

Darcy pouted up at him, “A pretend king declaring a pretend Asgardian a princess--”

“Am I not a pretend Asgardian as well?” Loki countered with a sharp edge in his voice.

Darcy felt a stab of guilt knowing Loki’s true parentage she could have chosen her words better. She shuffled her feet on the floor as she grumbled, “You know what I mean.”

“I know only that my mother Queen Frigga of Asgard regarded you as kin.” Loki gently guided her chin up forcing her to meet his gaze, “My only aim with the coronation is to bring our fallen Queens wishes to fruition.”

He seemed so determined and sincere as he spoke of his mother. Darcy couldn’t help it; her eyes welled up with tears.

“Practice what I’ve taught you,” Loki advised with a nod as he let go of her face, “Sucking at something is the first step to being sorta good at something.”

Loki then held his hand out and conjured a bowl. With a gentle tone he said, “Surprise.”

“Wh-?” Darcy didn’t even have time to get out the whole word before Loki dumped the bowl onto her head, dousing her in flour. The large bowl toppled to the floor with clang but she remained motionless. Frozen with shock she was unable to comprehend Loki yo-yoing from sweet and caring to devious and plotting so quickly.

Only when Loki started laughing, stepping back to admire his handy work did Darcy spark back to life.

“YOU ASS!” Darcy screamed as she shook her head causing flour to fly out everywhere. Loki’s laughter rang out as he ran for the door and Darcy gave chase screeching, “I'M GOING TO KILL YOU!”

The next night Loki took her to a wooded forest area. He sought to teach her magical endurance and so she had to produce her shield and hold it up for three hours. During the three hours he pelted her with acorn, waxed poetic about Thor’s many failings, and peppered her with inappropriate questions regarding her sex life and feelings about Fandral.

Darcy had withstood all of his distractions. She kept her shield up the entire time. She did it. She had been a sweating, shaking mess, but the end of it but she’d did it.
When Loki told her the nights lesson was done and she could lower her shield, she fell to the floor. She didn’t pass out her body just collapsed in relief. It had been a major strain to hold her magical shield up for such an extended period of time and holding her arms up hadn’t been easy either. Every muscle in her body felt like it was on fire. She had a pounding head ache, she was exhausted and she literally could not move.

“Are you alright?” Loki asked sounding unworried, “Do you need me to fetch a healer?”

“No.” Darcy grumped, “I’m fine.”

“You’re in the fetal position on the floor…in the dirt.” Loki observed, “You don’t look fine.”

“Shut the fuck up.” Darcy grumbled as she let her eyes fall shut. She felt and heard as Loki descended to the floor beside her.

“You know I’m very impressed,” Loki commented as he stroked a hand down her sweat stained back, “I thought I was setting an unachievable goal and that tonight’s true lesson would be about how to handle distraction in battle and knowing one’s limits.”

Darcy let out a sigh as Loki maneuvered her jacket under her head and forced her to lay out flat on her stomach. The cold floor felt good on her heated skin. Loki began to massage her back as he spoke, “You are remarkable, just as mother said.”

It was awkward seeing as she was lying down on the forest floor and he was touching her all over, relaxing her tense muscles but Darcy could do little else but accept the comfort Loki was offering. They grew quiet as he worked on her. In the back of her mind she was worrying about kind of bugs might be crawling on her, but Loki’s massage was like a salve on her inflamed muscles and those worries melted from her mind along with the tension in her body.

During the day, when they were with the Guardians touring Asgard, it had been brought to her attention that Loki showed tiny slivers of attraction for her. Darcy hadn’t noticed it but apparently Gamora had.

Gamora brought it up to her, asking her if she was attracted to ‘Axel’ as he seemed to be sexually interested in her. Darcy had protested but Gamora cited several instances where Loki’s feelings for her were evident. Such as holding her hand as they walked, finding little ways to touch her innocently, holding the door for her, acting hostile to Fandral and Peter who could be considered rivals for her affection. Darcy had brushed off Gamora’s concerns as a misinterpretation of brotherly affection, but lying on the forest floor with Loki’s warm hands on her body Darcy felt a little alarm of doubt.

However, what he was doing felt really really good so, she decided to hit snooze on the worry alarm.

Loki had one hand on her left shoulders and he was working his thumb expertly into her shoulder blade. The other hand was on her calf, he was squeezing and releasing the muscle there in a pulsing rhythm. He had a hand on her lower back and one on her-- wait!

Darcy’s eyes jerked open and she let out a startled wail, “Eehaa!”

She quickly flipped onto her back. There were two Loki’s. One on her left and one on her right.

“Gah!” Darcy yelled, “Why is there--? Why? TWO!”

The Loki’s looked amused as they responded in chorus, “Too much?”
“Ehha, so creepy.” Darcy grimaced.

The Loki’s rolled their eyes and then one of them disappeared. The remaining real Loki frowned down at her, “I was only trying to alleviate the strain on your body most effectively.”

“Well, you should have warned me.” Darcy pouted, “S’creepy.”

Loki pursed his lips, “I apologize.”

Darcy sat up, a hand going to her head as she felt a wave of dizziness at the sudden motion. Despite the unsettling feeling she grunted out, “I forgive you.”

Loki put a hand on her back, supporting her he scooted closer until their legs were touching, “Darcy are you--”

“I’m fine.” Darcy assured, her eyes falling closed as the dizziness passed.

“Are you su--”

Darcy opened her eyes and stared at Loki. His face showed true concern and Darcy smiled at him tiredly, “I’m fine. I promise.”

“I did not mean to overwhelm you.” Loki conceded.

“It’s okay.” Darcy acknowledged, “I’m just tired now.”

Loki stared at her for a few seconds before nodding and rising to his feet. He extended his hand down to her, “Then let us return to the palace to rest.”

Darcy grabbed his hand and allowed Loki to pull her to her feet. He put a heavy arm around her waist and Darcy leaned into him as they began the slow walk back.

“I could carry you.” Loki offered.

“Nah,” Darcy denied, “Too damsel in distress.”

Loki chuckled, “And you are not that.”

“Nope.” Darcy sighed, “Not anymore.”

In the morning ‘Odin’ sent Darcy, ‘Axel’, and the Guardians to the Glade of Crystals. Apparently there was a special crystal thing and they were the only ones with enough ‘free time’ to go and fetch it for him. Odin heavily implied that it would be dangerous and he expected the weakest of the Guardians to die. This riled up the Guardians and had them itching to prove the pompous King wrong.

Mantis and Drax set out for the kitchens to gather up supplies for their journey, Gamora and Groot went to the armory to get everyone a weapon (as the king insisted), Rocket disappeared muttering about real weapons, and Quill disappeared without explanation. She and Loki were in charge of securing the horses they would be riding to their destination.

As they saddled the horses Darcy pulled Loki aside, “Why are we doing this?”
“You heard the All Father, he desires a unique cryst--”

Darcy pushed Loki hard on the chest making him stumble back a step, “Cut the bullshit! Why are you sending us out on this ‘expedition’?”

Loki’s eyes glowed for a moment and then he pushed her back with a snarl, “I’m telling the truth! I need a crystal.”

“But why us?” Darcy questioned, “Why not send a guard to go fetch it.”

Loki smirked, “Are you afraid?”

“No!” Darcy cried, “I’m annoyed!”

“Good.”

Their conversation ended abruptly as Mantis and Drax arrived each holding a basket. Mantis held hers up high declaring, “I have all the breads!”

“I have meats and cheeses as well as mead.” Drax announced with a smile, “Lots and lots of delicious mead.”

Behind the pair, Quill entered dragging a protesting Fandral. Loki’s nonchalant and teasing manner immediately shifted, “What are you doing here?”

Fandral glared at Peter, “I am hostage.”

“I kidnapped him!” Peter informed them all merrily. “What?” Darcy asked at the same time Mantis cheered, “Hooray!”

“King Odin did not ask you to accompany the Princess and her compatriots on her quest.” Loki said menacingly as he stalked towards Fandral, “Be gone philanderer.”

“Philanderer?” Fandral bristled visibly.

He wrenched his arm out of Quill’s grasp and strutted forward to meet Loki. They stood toe to toe with each other. Fandral snarled, “Who are you to speak to me this way?”

Loki glared at the blonde, “I am the King’s emissary and the chosen protector of Asgard’s future princess. We need nor want a lecher on our journey, so I bid you well Fandral. Go back to whatever tavern the fool drug you from.”

“Hey!” Peter squawked but both men ignored him.

“If the princess is to be in a perilous situation she would do well to be in the company of a real warrior.” Fandral said as he puffed out his chest.

“She is.”

Loki and Fandral snapped their heads to see Gamora standing in the door way, “Now stop acting like a pair of rival dogs sniffing after a bitch in heat,” Gamora threw each man a sword, “And let get this over with.”

Loki opened his mouth to argue further but Darcy annoyed with the macho behavior and even more annoyed at being referred to as a female dog, cut him off by storming forward to get her own weapon from Gamora, bumping into Loki and Fandral angrily as she did so.
“Gamora’s right.” Darcy grumbled as she buckled her scabbard around her waist, “Let’s get this over with.”

The ride to the Glade of Crystals was unremarkable. They rode, they bickered, Darcy fell off her horse. Twice. It was all very boring. However once they reached their destination all the strife and ennui dissolved from their party.

When they reached the Glade they were all stuck by the beauty of it.

The Glade of crystal lay in the heart of the forest of Gundersheim. The glade was an open space in the forest that shined and glittered. There were tiny mounds of crystals littered across the ground, almost like ant hills.

“We’re here.” Loki said breathily.

“What?” Peter jeered dispassionately as he dismounted his horse.

“We must tie up the horses, they cannot follow where we tread.” Fandral informed them all as he too dismounted.

Darcy frowned at the ground, she wasn’t the most graceful rider nor was she adept at getting off the horse without falling. “I need help.” Darcy admitted with a sigh.

Loki and Fandral both sped walk to her side, but a gentle hand on her other side had her turning to greet Drax with a warm smile. She allowed her platonic alien friend to lift her off the horse and down to the ground. “Thanks.”

“Not a problem.”

Fandral, Loki, and Drax all tied up the horses by the nearby river. Allowing the animals to drink and graze freely while they went to retrieve the special crystal thing from the seemingly open and unguarded field.

“So, which crystal are we after?” Rocket asked as they all lined up on the edge of the Glade and stared out at the glittering expanse.

Loki shrugged, “I’ll know it when I see it.”

Darcy glared at the man, “You don’t even know what we’re here for!?”

“That is not what I said.” Loki argued.

“So how do we find something we do not have a description of?” Gamora asked with an arched brow.

Loki let out annoyed sound and rolled his eyes, “It’s a crystal-”

Fandral made a sweeping gesture to the field, “There are many crystals here, care to narrow it down?”

Loki glowered at Fandral who grinned back impishly. Loki spoke through gritted teeth, “We are after a crystal of immense power.”
“What kind of power?” Rocket asked with a manic gleam in his eyes.

“I am Groot I can feel it.” Groot said holding his hands out and closing his eyes, “I am …Groot This place…this place is special.”

Loki stared at Groot with appraisal and Darcy put a hand around the tree boy’s shoulders, pulling him in closer to her body, shooting Loki a pointed look. Loki made an ‘I wasn’t doing anything’ face. Darcy just glared at him, knowing he was thinking something sinister-y and Groot related.

“How special are we talking kid?” Rocket asked Groot, “Special like you can find what we’re looking for? Or special like, we could make a lot a credits selling these crystal things when we’re back in civilization.”

“Asgard is the peak of civilization.” Loki scoffed.

“I –I-I am….am Groooookk Special like, I think I’m….I-I-I...uhhhhh.” Groot swayed on his feet and Darcy widened her eyes, looking at Rocket with a horrified expression.

Rocket pushed Loki out of the way in an effort to get to Groot and her, “Groot, you okay?”


“What’s wrong with him?” Gamora asked. Peter interlocked their fingers as the pair stared at them in concern.

“I don’t know…” Darcy said, Groot was now waving his arms and laughing.

“Does he..? Is he..?” Fandral trailed off only for Loki to finish his thought, “The tree child is drunk.”

“WOOOOOO!” Groot cried out, breaking away from both she and Rocket, Groot ran straight into the Glade.

“Groot!” Darcy called out, but Groot was ignoring her running in circles with his hands in the air laughing and dancing gaily.

“What the hell is in these crystals!?” Rocket yelled as he fisted his hands into the hair at the back of his head.

“I doubt they will have the same effect on us.” Loki said with a shrug.

A giant crystal emerged from the ground and enveloped Groot, freezing him like Han in carbonate. Darcy screamed out in horror, “Aaaaaaaah!”

“What happened!” Rocket yelled turning on Loki, “WHAT THE FUCK JUST HAPPENED?!”

Rocket attacked Loki, quickly climbing his body like a tree Rocket perched on Loki’s shoulder and grabbed his face shaking Loki’s head demanding, “What happened!”

Loki looked genuinely afraid as he pried Rocket from his body and threw him to the ground, he didn’t address Rocket when he was free though, instead Loki walked up to her and claimed, “I didn’t
do this. I didn’t know.”

“Didn’t know what!” Drax demanded as he grabbed Loki from the back, using his massive arms he lifted Loki off the ground and squeezed, “SPEAK! You bought us here and now our friend is imprisoned in crystal!”

Loki didn’t fight Drax’s hold merely continued to make eye contact with Darcy, pleading, “I didn’t know it would affect the tree child, I never would have allowed him to journey with us if it put him into danger.”

“Is he dead?” Darcy whispered her eyes tearing up as she looked at Loki.

“I don’t know.” Loki admitted.

Drax dropped him and Loki fell to the ground. Darcy let out a sob. Gamora moved to comfort her, pulling her into her arms and allowing Darcy to cry on her shoulder. Peter moved closer and hovered at her back.

Rocket however reacted differently. He threw himself at Loki once again, this time scratching and biting at the man. Fandral moved to stop Rocket, but Drax got in his way.

“Leave him be.” Drax advised.

“Axel is the kings emissary I cannot allow him to be harmed, no matter how much he deserves it, he merely lead us here at the kings behest. The tree child’s fate is not his fault.” Fandral argued.

Drax crossed his arms in front of his chest making himself appear wider and more imposing. He repeated himself in a gruff voice, “Leave Rocket be.”

“I cannot.” Fandral said as he drew his sword.

“He’s alive.” Mantis whispered only loud enough for Darcy, Peter, and Gamora to hear, as the others were fighting.

“What?” Gamora asked.

“Oh thank god.” Peter sighed.

“Are you sure?” Darcy whimpered.

“He’s alive!” Mantis cried out happily. Mantis had her hands extended towards the crystal captured Groot. Her antennae glowed signaling the use of her power as she repeated herself, “Groot’s alive!”

Darcy pulled away from Gamora and shoved Fandral and Drax out of her way. She grabbed Rocket by the back of his jumpsuit, pulling him off of Loki. “Stop fighting!”

“HE KILLED GROOT!” Rocked yelled accusingly.

“He’s alive you asshat!” Darcy argued throwing Rocket to the ground, she pointed at Mantis, “Look.”

Mantis’s brow crinkled and frown pulled at her lips, “He’s afraid. Very, very afraid.”

Mantis lowered her hand and her antennae stopped glowing, she turned and found Darcy locking eyes with her she informed them, “He wants his mom and dad.”
“How do we reach him?” Gamora asked glaring at Loki, “Will we also be imprisoned in crystal if we try to release him.”

Loki, instead of complaining or wiping away the bloody cuts that covered his face, got to his feet and walked into the field. He stopped when he was about five steps away from them. He held his hands out and stood stock still, as if waiting to be enveloped by a crystal prison as well.

They all silently watched him as Loki seemingly dared fate to try to trap him too.

When nothing happened Loki opened his eyes, “I told you I did not expect the tree child to be affected so. As far as I knew, the Glade of Crystals…I did not know the Glade had the ability to imprison beings. Had I known this, I would have never—We are safe. We will walk to the child and retrieve him.”

Rocket didn’t hesitate he walked out tensely, with sure steps he got closer and closer to Loki. Until, finally Rocket stood shoulder to knee with the Asgardian in disguise. Rocket stared at her with glassy eyes but his voice with grave when he spoke challengingly, “What the hell are you idiots waiting for?”

The grass of the Glade sparkled and crunched under their feet as they left the shield of the forest and entered the glade. Fandral made his way to her side as she moved forward. Gamora was on her other side, and Peter next to her. Mantis and Drax trailed behind them a few steps as they all made their way tentatively to Loki and Rocket.

“The ground is hard.” Drax observed.

“It is crystalline grass.” Loki informed them, “Hollow and easily destroyed by our footsteps.”

Peter lifted his boot and examined the grass dust that clung to it, “Oops?”

Loki shook his head assuring, “It’s fine. Crystalline grass is a weed it has very little value and almost no magical properties.”

“How are we going to free Groot when we reach him?” Darcy asked as she skipped a few steps ahead until she was in line with Rocket and Loki as the three of them led the way forward. Groot was about 120 yards away. The distance between them was heart wrenching though.

“We’ll think of something.” Loki asserted.

They walked quietly and Darcy then noticed that it was eerily quiet. No birds. No wind. No sounds of anything.

“Woah, do you guys see that?” Peter exclaimed pointing to their left. A dense purple fog was creeping its way across the Glade. Straight. Towards. Them.

“That can’t be good.” Fandral commented dryly, but Darcy could hear the underpinning fear in his voice.

Loki grabbed her hand tightly and interlaced their fingers. He grabbed Rocket and lifted the tiny mammal into the air, ordering, “Grab hold of me.”

Rocket thankfully listened and grabbed Loki’s head for balance, this time perching on the Asgardians shoulder in a non-mauling capacity. In a loud clear voice Loki called out to everyone, “It is the Lurking Unknown. Hold fast. Do not fear. And keep moving forward.”
They were enveloped into the fog. It was so dense and so opaque that Darcy could not see two feet in front of her let alone anyone else. Only Loki’s sure grip on her hand assured her that she wasn’t alone.

“What’s happening?” Rocket asked with a tremor. Darcy cuddled closer to Loki. She could see him and Rocket but not the others behind them.

Darcy called out, “Gamora? Guys? Are you okay?”

It was Fandral who answered, but he sounded so much farther away than the two steps they had just been, “Darcy! We are well!...All things considered!”

Gamora called out next, “Keep going! The fog has separated us!”

Drax added, “We must not stop!”

“We are being tested.” Loki muttered.

“By who?” Darcy questioned. Loki shrugged then advised her with a pointed look, “Don’t let go.”

Darcy nodded and they all began moving forward.

They walked for an hour.

“We should have reached him by now.” Rocket griped, “You know, I don’t care how advanced their tech is, I hate this mystical magical bullshit, give me a big gun and an Abilisk to fight any day.”

Loki shot Rocket an impressed look, “You’ve fought an Abilisk?”

Rocket smiled bragging, “Yeah the thing was eating batteries and the Sovereign hired us to get rid of it.”

“Hmm.” Loki said.

Offended Rocket questioned, “What?”

“I just didn’t think you or your people capable of accomplishing such a task.”

Darcy hung her head as she could feel the fight brewing before Rocket even responded.

“My people?!” Rocket squawked, “My people?!”

“Don’t get defensive. I was paying you a compliment. You are more capable than you appear.” Loki asserted.

“You were not trying to compliment him.” Darcy argued.

“You know pal, from this angle, I’m capable of gouging out your eye right?” Rocket threatened.

“You know from this angle I’m capable of ripping you in half.” Loki countered.

Rocket let out a growl and Darcy just knew it was going to get physical so she let go of Loki’s hands to physically separate the two…but when she let go of Loki’s hand they disappeared.
Poof.

Gone.

And then she was alone.

“Guys!!?” There was no answer.

“Lo—Axel!? Rocket?!” Darcy gulped, “ANYONE!”

There was no answer. She was alone.

“Shit.”

She walked for what felt like four hours. She did not hear from anyone she did not run into anyone. She was alone and completely surrounded by the fog. Unable to see the sun or the grass or the anything! So she walked. And walked. And walked.

Tired, afraid, and frustrated Darcy let out a scream and fell to the ground.

She brought her knees to her chest and wrapped her arms around them. And then she cried. She cried for a long time. And after a while she slumped onto the ground and fell asleep.

She woke up with a howl of pain. There was a monster attacking her and it was trying to eat her leg.

Darcy screamed and punched the creature in the face. Right in the nose. It released her leg and disappeared into the fog that still surrounded her.

The creature had had human features but also reminded her of a bear, but also a snake, as it had unhinged its jaw and fit the whole length of her leg in its mouth. The monster had been the same color as the fog that surrounded them, a purple grey color…except for its eyes. Those had been an inky black. And it’s teeth, those had been sparkling white.

Darcy grabbed her leg, the creature had bitten down right above the knee but below her thigh. She had worn a pair of strong leather boots and a chainmail skirt but there was a patch of skin where the two did not meet and that was where the beast had bitten her. Her boot and foot were covered in the creature’s saliva and it was sooooo gross.

“I bet if I had my crown instead of this stupid helmet I would be able to see through this stupid fucking fog.” Darcy muttered to herself. Initially Darcy had loved the helmet that Loki in the disguise of Odin offered her, it was fashioned after Thor’s and she had dressed to match it, but now she was regretting the sexy battle aesthetic fashion choices she had made that morning.

“Damn my need to look cute.” Darcy muttered as she pressed her hands against the bleeding wound with one hand and grabbed for her cloak with the other. Before she could tear the thing apart to make herself a bandage, the creature attacked again.
It hit her like a truck, knocking her down flat onto her back; Darcy held the creature off her with her hands. She pushed its shoulders away from her only managing to just keep its snapping jaws inches away from her face. It was trying to rip her throat out now.

“Ahhhhhh!” Darcy screamed as its claws slipped into the space between where her chainmail top met her skirt. The creature roared victoriously as it dug into the soft skin of her stomach.

“FUCK OFF!” Darcy bellowed as she used all her might to throw the creature off of her. The beast snarled and went to attack her again, but Darcy was ready to fight.

Darcy conjured her sword from out of her scabbard and into her hand and swung it. She caught the creature along its cheek; the long gash went from its ear to its nose, just nearly missing its eye. The monster bear-snake-man creature yelped and backed off, fading back into the fog and disappearing from sight.

Darcy gasped in pain, her free hand going to her side where the beast’s claws had managed to once again slip in between the cracks of her outfit which was supposedly designed for protection. She didn’t even get a moment to celebrate her successful conjuration spell as the beast was back again.

Coming out of nowhere, the beast attacked from her left, biting down hard onto the arm which held her sword, the long sleeve chainmail top she wore however, protected her enough that the creature couldn’t actually bite her arm off. So she held on tightly to the sword, not wanting it to drop onto the fog covered floor and be lost to her forever.

Darcy punched at the creatures face but it began to shake it’s head from side to side, thus in turn shaking her all about as it had its teeth dug into her arm. It got closer to her, and that’s when it dug it’s claws into lower half.

The beast started scratching at the exposed skin on her leg and it clawed blindly at her stomach, seemingly unable to find the seam of her garment as easily as it had last time, but knowing there was a weakness there.

Darcy screamed in agony, the creature’s claw felt like it was hitting bone as it mauled her leg. She dropped the sword.

And as she feared once it hit the ground, she was unable to see it. She searched out with her free hand, looking for the weapon, but she couldn’t find it.

She was alone, unarmed, and outmatched.

Rocket and Loki flashed in her mind.

Darcy changed tactics. Instead of trying to punch the creature she licked her fingers and then pressed them to the creature’s eye. She got her fingers around the squishy slimy orb and tried to pull it out of the beasts head. The monster let go of her arm.

When the creature tried to pull away from her, Darcy held onto its eyeball tighter, the act of the creature trying to escape is what led to its eye tearing away from the socket. Darcy had to suppress her own gag reflex as she stared at the inky black blood covered eyeball in her palm.

“Ew.” She threw the eyeball to the ground, happy to see it disappear from sight.

The creature roared and reared up on its hind legs, seemingly intending to come down hard on her, Darcy rolled out of the way and somehow got to her feet. She stared at the shrieking creature, only feeling a little guilty for maiming it.
“Fuck off Winnie the Pooh.” Darcy growled. She ran at the beast and jumped onto it’s back. Unfortunately she had jumped over the creatures head to get onto it’s back, so she was staring at its ass. Not exactly the prime position to do damage. Especially considering the creature’s tail looked long and thin…like a whip.

The beast tried to buck her free but Darcy held on. The creature snapped at her with its tail and Darcy was right, it felt like being whipped. The stinging pain flared across her arms and back and face, everywhere the creature managed to hit her. Not even the protective armor saved her from the bite of its tail.

Having figured out it couldn’t throw her off or whip her off, the creature fell to the ground and began to roll. Darcy let go and rolled away from the beast as fast as she could. She got to her feet and started limping away from the creature as fast as she could.

She could hear the angry whine of the creature as it lumbered after her. As she stumbled away Darcy tried to conjure her sword again. Except for the spell to work, Darcy had to know where the sword was and she didn’t, she didn’t know where the sword had fallen therefore she couldn’t call it into her hand.

She was not above admitting when she needed help, so she screamed, “HELP!”

No one answered.

She was alone.

And she was going to die.

The creature jumped onto her back and pinned her to the ground. It tried to bite her head but the metal helmet saved her. Darcy reached back trying to reach the creature, perhaps press her fingers into its bloody eye socket, but she couldn’t reach. The creature tried biting her back and arms, but the chainmail saved her.

Seemingly annoyed with her and its inability to eat her, the creature collapsed on top of her, pushing her face into crystalline grass below, pinning her body to the ground.

She couldn’t breathe. She was being crushed to death. Smothered.

She tried to struggle, but the creature was so much bigger than her. The more she panicked it seemed the bigger the creature got. The more weight was pressing her into the ground.

Somehow Darcy managed to get her hand free, but all that allowed her to do was claw at the ground helplessly. She dug her fingers into the hard grass and then into the soft dirt. Trying to…do something. Anything. Because she was dying. Asphyxiating.

Her hand helplessly searched the ground, looking for the sword she had dropped but knowing she wouldn’t find it. It was becoming hard to think.

Karl Mordo’s face flashed in her mind.

The sword she was loaned had been nice, but it was nothing like the one she had received for her birthday. Darcy felt a stab of regret she never got to really use her sword. The sword, which was
given to her by the Ancient One. The sword, who had a name. *Dragonfang*. The sword, which Tony had mounted on the wall of their bedroom for her back at Avengers Tower even though Pepper didn’t think it ‘went’ with the décor which was ultra modern.

The lack of oxygen was making everything feel very far away, but she felt it when the hilt of a sword appeared in her hand. Its heavy weight reassuring and its handle made for fingers to wrap around.

Darcy gripped the sword tightly and somehow managed to stab at the creature causing it to roll over. Darcy gasped as she was finally able to breathe again. She scrambled to free her legs which were still trapped, she blindly stabbed at the monster again. And just like that she was free. She pulled away from the creature, crawling away as she breathed deeply.

Drinking in the sweet, sweet oxygen, Darcy panted as she fell onto her stomach exhausted and in pain. She quickly rolled onto her back not wanting to be crushed down into the dirt again, not sure being crushed into the body of the monster was any better, she’d rather face her attacker all the same.

She brought the sword up to her chest defensively pointing it outward. She heard the creature approaching from the left but couldn’t see it so she jabbed out blindly, once she hit the beast she pulled back and stabbed at it again with more surety.

As she once again got her bearings, she sat up. The creature was whimpering and curled in on itself an arms length away from her. Darcy pushed her braid over her shoulder as she surveyed the sullen looking creature.

It was cowering in fear.

Darcy struggled to her feet and stared at the now pitifully wailing creature. She had stabbed out its other eye…somehow.

It was blind.

“Jesus.” Darcy sighed. The more confident she grew that the creature was down for the count, the smaller the beast appeared to be. And the smaller it got, the less she feared it would get a second wind and attack her. The beast shrank and shrank until it was small enough to fit under the heel of her boot.

“Not so tough now.” Darcy mused aloud.

She contemplated killing the creature, but decided against it. Despite its alien monster…extra-ness, it was probably just like any other animal on Earth, hungry and looking for food. She couldn’t fault it for trying to eat her. So she let it live.

And just like that, the fog began to disappear and fade.

“You’ve got to be kidding me.” Darcy muttered.

She was standing next to the crystalline Groot. Like, right next to him. Darcy reached out and put her hand on the glossy surface of the pink crystal encasing Groot. It was smooth and cold. And beautiful.

Darcy took a step away and brought her sword down hard. It cracked like an egg, shattering around Groot, the shards fell to the floor harmlessly. Groot blinked and rubbed at his eyes before really seeing her and crying out, “*I am Groot!/MOM!*”

He jumped into her arms and Darcy was so exhausted she couldn’t catch him, so they both fell
backwards to the ground, Darcy taking the brunt of the fall.

“I am Groot! MOM!?”

“I’m fine….I just…I need a minute.” Darcy closed her eyes and fell asleep.

She woke up to being slapped across the face. “Ow.”

“I am Groot!Mom! Mom, wake up! Mom!?”

Darcy waved her hands in front of her face, shooing Groot from trying to violently rouse her again, “I’m up. I’m up.”

“I am Groot! I am Groot! I am Groot! I am Groot! I am Groot! I am Groot! Mom! Everyone’s in the crystal, there trapped in their worst nightmare! It’s a fear crystal or monster, I’m not sure which. I’m just so glad you’re alive and you’re here and I love you and I’m so glad you rescued me and you look like crap! What happened to you?!”

Darcy allowed Groot to help her to her feet and ignored everything he was saying except to say, “I love you too. I will always rescue if you need me to, now help me walk over to the others.”

Everyone was no encased in a crystal prison. Mantis, Drax, and Fandral were each in their own prisons. Like Groot, they looked like gummy bears stuck in jello. Their crystal prisons were all yellow/orange colors. Loki and Rocket were encased in one together; their crystal prison was bright red and the two of them looked like they were fighting when they were trapped. Loki had his hands around Rocket’s neck and Rocket had a knife lodged in Loki’s arm. Gamora and Quill were also trapped together, but they were embracing and crying and their crystal was blue.

Surveying her friends Darcy couldn’t help but grumble, “Why was I the only one who had to fight a snake-bear?”

One by one Darcy broke everyone out of their crystal prisons. Everyone seemed shaken by the experience and everyone’s experience seemed to be different.

Apparently, they saw things in the fog.

Drax had to watch his family get slaughtered, Mantis, her entire species. Fandral refused to tell her what he saw as did Rocket. Loki revealed he saw a monster from his past, that apparently Rocket stood in place for, hence the two being locked in battle. Gamora saw herself as a child being adopted by Thanos, aka the slaughter of half of her world, and Peter saw Gamora die. The pair of them were emotionally crippled by what they saw and were openly holding hands, so Darcy knew it was a seriously disturbing experience. Especially for Gamora to be so needy and vulnerable.

Loki, broke away from the group only for a moment to collect the crystals they had journeyed there for. Prize in hand, Loki turned to the group and gestured to the horses, “Shall we?”
That night there was no magic lesson. Darcy didn’t tell her friends or Loki that she had conjured the Dragonfang sword across the universe and that was the only reason she had survived. She had told them about the creature that tried to eat her.

However before she could really brag, she began to quickly tire. Teleporting the magical object between realms, it left her depleted. Not as depleted and tired as she usually felt when she traversed the galaxy, but definitely tired enough to fall asleep while riding and fall off her horse…again.

Loki had her ride the rest of the way home with him. She slept most of the way, only really waking when they were back in the palace and Lady Eir the healer was applying some stinging salve to her various injuries.

All of them spent the next day just lying around the palace, eating and resting. Fandral came to check on her and the Guardians once but otherwise kept his distance as did Loki. Loki, in the disguise of Axel, only came to tell her that the ‘king’ had decreed that her coronation would be postponed until she was fully recovered from her fight with the Lurking Unknown.

The Lurking Unknown was apparently the creature she had fought. It was an extra-dimensional being that gains its powers from the fear of other life forms. Its size and power fluctuated based on its ability to instill fear, thus it shrinking once Darcy had gravely wounded it. It used the fog to get inside its prey’s heads and the crystal prisons were basically its version of a refrigerator. Darcy was just the victim it tried to kill and eat first. Luckily, apparently her greatest fear was to be alone. So the only thing she saw in the fog was…fog.

The Guardians, no longer waiting until the end of the week to see her coronation due to the postponement, decided to leave Asgard a few days early. Not that Darcy could blame them after their run in with the Lurking Unknown.

Darcy, the Warriors Three, and Loki as Axel, all accompanied them to the Bifrost Bridge to say goodbye. Volstagg was handing out treats his wife and children had baked them, he also had a toy for Groot, and a dress for Mantis that Hildegund and their daughters made.

Gamora and Quill gave her a hug goodbye at the same time. Both whispering in her ear how much they would miss her and how she was always welcome back on the Milano.

Drax shook her hand formally before pulling her into a surprise hug and lifting her off the ground. He didn’t say any goodbyes just kissed her on the cheek and moved out of the way so the next person could say their farewells.

Mantis was ugly crying, her antenna’s glowing uncontrollably as her own sadness caused her control over her power to slip, and then made her feel everyone else’s sadness, thus leaving the alien woman a weeping mess. Sobbing, Mantis called her a “Sister from another Mister” to whom she would always have space for in her heart or bed.
After that came Rocket.

He didn’t even address her right away, as Groot had been hugging her leg and crying into her waist the entire time she’d been saying goodbye to the other Guardians.

“C’mon Groot. Time to say goodbye.” Rocket spoke gently trying to coax Groot away from her.

“I am Groot! No!”

She and Rocket exchanged a look. She could tell that leaving her in Asgard was killing Rocket, but it was especially hard with how hard it was on Groot.

“Groot honey, it’s time for you to go home.” Darcy soothed even as she pried his hands off of her and got down on her knees so she could stare at Groot instead of having him talk to her stomach, which was still tender after her fight.

“I am Groot? Why do we have to leave?” Groot asked in a broken voice.

“Oh honey,” Darcy finally cracked, tears fell from her eyes blurring her vision as Groot leapt into her arms, this time winding his twiggy arms around her neck and burying his face in her hair. Crying, unable to speak, Darcy sought out Rocket with her eyes. She didn’t know what to do or say.

Saying goodbye to Groot and Rocket was breaking her heart. They were the scarecrow to her Dorothy.

Instead of cracking a joke or pulling Groot away Rocket shocked her. He jumped forward slightly, climbing Groot partially and threw his own arms around Darcy’s shoulder. Pillowing his head on the other side of her neck, Rocket buried his head into her hair and breathed in deeply.

“I’m gonna miss you.” Rocket admitted quietly, Darcy let out a sob and squeezed both alien’s tighter to her body, hugging them with as much strength as she dared. She could hear the tears in Rocket’s voice and to know that he was allowing himself to be this vulnerable with her….she just….couldn’t even think.

“I love you. I love you. I love you.” Darcy repeated, slightly rocking the three of them now, “I love you and I will always love you. I will always be your family…. I may not have control over when we meet each other again, but I can promise we will. I will see you again and I will always love you.”

“I am Groot. I love you too!”

“Me three.” Rocket whispered. They stayed like that, locked in a three way embrace for a few minutes.

“This is taking a very long time.” Drax commented, “It’s not as if she is dying.”

Darcy let out a laugh at that and it broke the spell on the three of them. Rocket was the first to pull away from her. She watched as he discretely wiped his tears and scurried away from her, moving to stand next to Skurge who stood at the ready to open the Bifrost.

Darcy wrapped both arms around Groot to give him one last squeeze. When she pulled away she wiped away the tears that were still falling from his eyes.

Cupping his cheeks she reminded him, “I’ll love you forever, like you for always, as long as I’m living-“
Together they finished the line, “I am Groot. My baby you’ll be.”
“My baby you’ll be.”

Darcy sniffled and wiped away her own tears as she stood, “No more sadness. No more tears.”

Groot looked up at her as he wiped away his own snot, “I am Groot. You promise this isn’t goodbye forever?”

Darcy smiled down at him and squeezed his shoulder reassuringly, “I promise.”

“I am Groot. I love you Mom.”

“I love you Groot.”

Groot pulled away and walked over to Peter, holding his arms up to be held, like he hadn’t in a very long time. Peter looked shocked but honored. He mechanically bent down to pick up the tiny tree child allowing Groot to pillow his head on his shoulder and wrap his limbs around him like ivy. Gamora stroked her hand down Groot’s back before turning to Skurse and nodding. “We’re ready to go.”

When they were gone Darcy collapsed on the floor and bawled her eyes out. Everyone was uncomfortable and she missed Lady Sif and Thor more in that moment than she had ever missed them before. Finally she calmed down and stopped crying.

Fandral and Loki walked with her back to the palace. They tried to get her to eat but she refused. Fandral, stubborn as ever, refused to leave her in peace. He stayed with her as she showered and got ready for bed, he stayed with her as she lay down and he stayed with her while she slept.

She woke up beside him in the morning and felt a little better for the company.

Over the course of two weeks Loki kept up the magic lessons. He also managed to send Fandral on a lot of day missions, under the guise of Odin, so she mostly spent the day and part of the night with Loki, in one disguise or another.

By the end of two weeks, Lady Eir declared her completely healed. And the coronation was rescheduled for later in the week.

In the days leading up to the coronation Loki had to spend a lot more time as ‘Odin’, ordering people around and event planning, so he graciously stopped keeping her and Fandral apart.

Fandral became her official royal guard and companion. He kept her busy shopping, swimming, making out, and horseback riding. Apparently he was a little in shock at how bad of a rider she was and had taken it upon himself to give her lessons. She appreciated the distraction.

On the day of her coronation Loki as Odin, broke the bad news that Lady Sif, who had been sent out to find Thor even prior to her arrival on Asgard, had yet to find the prince, and so he would not be joining them for the ceremony. Nor would Lady Sif be able to return in time.
After she had been primped and polished, dressed and done up, Darcy was feeling a little overwhelmed by her Grande gown and the impending royal…everything. She asked to speak to Axel. She wanted to double check with Loki and make sure that he still wanted to go through with this dog and pony show and she wanted a little reassurance that she wouldn’t be killed for deceiving the kingdom. Also she had to address the sexy feelings thing.

Loki came to find her in the disguise of Axel, but forewarned her that he couldn’t stay long because ‘Odin’ was kind of running the whole show.


“What did you wish to speak to me about?” Loki asked as he moved closer. She was leaning against the door to the bathroom, as the dress she was wearing had a huge train and was not conductive to sitting. Loki stopped in front of her.

“You know, I really liked you.” Darcy stated, decided to begin boldly.

“Liked? As in past tense?” Loki’s face paled.

Darcy put her hand on his shoulder and squeezed, “At first, as Axel, you became my friend and just because you tricked me into liking you under false pretences doesn’t invalidate the feelings I developed for you under the deception.”

“Feelings?” Loki tested.

Darcy blushed and covered her face with her hand, “We will never speak of me trying to kiss you while you were in hot guard disguise. Okay? Never again spoke of.”

“I’m not agreeing to that.” Loki said playfully.

“I just want to make sure that you understand…even if this whole coronation thing is bullshit, according to me and well, the law, it’s real too. After this, in my heart, we’ll be family. You, me, Thor…to a lesser extent Odin. Family.”

“….and I would never fuck my brother.” Darcy said the last part slowly while making lots of eye contact. Loki looked stricken; as if it just occurred to him that they would be family and not something more…libidinous.

Sternly Darcy spoke with clear intent, “We go through with this…no more little comments, no more tiny touches. Nor more innuendo. All that…crush stuff. That has to die, because incest is weird and I don’t have the stomach for it. You get me?”

After a long pause, clearly contemplating what she was saying seriously, Loki questioned her with just a tinge of hope in his tone, “And you would truly call yourself my sister?...Even knowing—even knowing who I am and what I’ve done and what I may do in the future?”

“Well, technically, I’ll be your daughter.” Darcy quipped.

“You know what I mean.” Loki huffed.

“Well, I doubt the real Odin will ever adopt me but, Thor and I call each other brother and sister. I feel like—we have that closeness between us.” Darcy shrugged, “Why not you too?”
“Because I am not Thor.” Loki growled. Darcy made a mental note not to compare Loki and Thor in the future.

“No you’re not Thor.” Darcy agreed quietly, “You’re the brother that will help me throw glitter in Thor’s face. Or shave Fandral, but only on one side. You’re the one who will conspire with me and help me carry out schemes and—”

“Betray everyone; get what I want at all costs?” Loki said coldly.

She could see it in the way he held himself, slightly hunched over, she could see it in his glare, in the snarl on his face. Loki hated himself. He had such self loathing she knew he had to be second guessing why she would choose to love him, accept him as her family.

She ached to reassure him that he was good enough, that he didn’t have to be someone else to be accepted. To be loved. Which, in her opinion, was what he really wanted. Which is why he was so close with Frigga, the one person who loved him no matter what. Mistakes, lies, and treason included.

Changing the subject, Darcy boldly but quietly stated, “You didn’t kill Odin….right?”

“I said he was off world.” Loki grunted.

“Off world could have been your tricky answer for Valhalla, technically ‘off world’ but you know… for dead people.’

“You think I killed the King before I took his throne?”

Darcy glared at the defensive man, “I just explicitly stated the opposite. I said you didn’t kill Odin….I just wanted to make sure because, you know, I’m supporting you. I’m supporting the lie, the illusion that you are the king and thus I might be, subject to punishment when the truth comes to light…so I just wanted a little reassurance that you didn’t kill Odin when you disappeared him.”

Loki snapped his head up to look at her, “You think Odin just decided to leave and go on vacation and not tell anyone? That there was no violence in me seizing the throne.”


Darcy wanted to lay into Loki, first for being annoyed she accused him of killing his dad, and then being annoyed that she didn’t think he had it in him. He seriously needed to pick a lane. However it was that yo-yoing that made him appear so…damaged, so brittle and fragile and in danger of snapping and going crazy, so she held her tongue.

This was who Loki was. He was hot and cold. Angry one minute, calm the next. He pushed people away as violently as he could, especially when he wanted to hold them so close that he was endanger of crushed them.

“Are you sure?” Loki asked putting a much menace and threat into the words and his expression as he could. “Are you sure I’m not the vile murderer everyone says I am?”

“I’m sure.” Darcy said quietly, “I know who you are Loki. I wouldn’t be willing to call you ‘brother’ if I didn’t.”

Loki pursed his lips and clenched his jaw. They stared at each other silently for a minute before he abruptly exploded, “You little idiot! You trusting fool! How dare you trust me, ME, I am LOKI god of mischief and lies!”
“But not murder.” Darcy countered calmly, “You wouldn’t do that.”

“You THINK YOU KNOW ME? We spent but a brief moment in time together, and you think that gives you insight? You think you can believe me!” Loki shouted getting to his feet and pacing in front of her and the throne, “How could you be so stupid!? How? TELL ME!?”

“I’m not stupid. I know you have trust issues, Frigga knows—” Loki shoved her shoulder as he interrupted her.

“ODIN IS NOT FRIGGA! Do not think my love for her transferred to him! I DID NOT LOVE HIM! He never spent any time with me, he didn’t love me! HE—ONLY MOTHER—” Loki stopped yelling abruptly, a choking gurgling sound leaving his lips before he hung his head.

She could see the change in his body as the anger evaporated. His shoulders slumped and he curled in on himself as he hunched over, his voice low and gravely as he continued, “I--I loved my mother, it’s true. I said I didn’t. I treated her cruelly, but I loved her. She was always there for me. Always on my side. Mine not Thor’s….Odin favored Thor, he had no use for me. He didn’t even understand me.”

Darcy felt like a fool to have brought this all up right before Loki was supposed to ‘adopt’ her and make her a princess, but the truth was the coronation, the pomp, the circumstance, the outrageously gorgeous but ultimately uncomfortable dress? It was all for him. She was willing to go through with the coronation because in a way it was her publically declaring Loki to be her kin. To tell him and prove to him, that she loved him…like a brother. Just as much as she loved Thor.

“You’re mother was very kind.” Darcy said, trying to temper his anger and navigate his emotions as neutrally as she could.

“She was.” Loki agreed, “My mother understood me. She could tell when I was in a bad mood. When I was frustrated. She knew what would bring me joy and what would bring me pain. She treated me as if I was her true born son and I threw it in her face that I wasn’t.”

Darcy felt like shit for even mentioning Frigga’s name. For bringing this all up for Loki…but in a way she wasn’t sorry for it. He obviously needed to get this out, and who else was he going to talk to? Who else could he trust and confide in besides her?

“She knew the truth, despite whatever you said to her or didn’t say to her, she knew you loved her Loki. You don’t—she knew.” Darcy said reassuringly. She suspected that Loki was now crying but he hid his face from her so she wasn’t sure. She didn’t know if he’d appreciate or welcome the gesture, but she moved forward and put her hand on his back.

She started rubbing circles as he continued to verbally purge himself, “I loved my mother…I was her undoing you know. You were here but unconscious, you don’t know, no one knows. Malekith and Kurse were looking for Jane Foster, I knew she would be with my mother. I gave them directions. I sent them right to her chambers. Dooming her. Killing her….why would you choose to call me brother when I am kill what I love. And love you in a way no brother should?”

“I choose to love you because I just do. Loki…” Darcy trailed off unsure what to say, instead she leaned over and hugged him as much as her constrictive dress would allow. His shoulders were shaking and he was definitely crying now.

Loki expanded in a muffled voice, his face buried in the crook of her neck, “She taught me all she knew of magic, like I’ve tried to teach you. She encouraged me in every endeavor I showed interest in, sheltered me from father’s wrath when I showed more skill for sorcery than sword play. She
showed me affection at every turn and I killed her. I don’t want to do the same to you. You should run. You should tell Asgard who I truly am. Have me imprisoned or executed or—"

“I would never betray you like that Loki.” Darcy argued quietly, “You didn’t kill your mom and you won’t kill me.”


Darcy quickly pulled away as Loki turned to her with wild eyes, all worked up once again. His mercurial nature was alarming but she was used to it now. Loki unfurled himself like an angry viper, “I hate him! Would that he be dead by my hand. That would be right, that would be justice for all that he’s done.”

In a steady calm voice Darcy said, “Loki, the opposite of love isn’t hate. It’s indifference. And you… are clearly not indifferent to Odin.” Darcy paused to lick her lips before continuing, “I know you didn’t kill Odin just like I know you would never kill Thor. They’re your family.”

Loki stilled. His eyes glowing from within as he stared at her. Darcy stared back, unwilling to back down. “You.” Loki said, “I would never kill you. You are my family.”

“I’m trying to be.” Darcy admitted quietly.

“Why?”

“Because you worth it.” Darcy answered.

“No, why would you want to?” Quietly Loki asked, “Why would you willingly join our family? Knowing the depths of our dysfunction?”

“What makes you think I’m not equally dysfunctional?” Loki’s lips quirked up as she added, “With my own less than desirable qualities and neuroses.”

Loki smiled at her then, with an openness that she hadn’t seen from him since the days when she didn’t know who he truly was. In that look, Darcy knew without a doubt that Loki had not killed the king.

“What did you do with Odin? Is he in the Odin sleep?” Darcy questioned.

Loki rolled his eyes, as he turned and took a step away from her so he could collapse back onto her bed dramatically. In an annoyed tone he answered her, “Yes he’s in the Odin sleep. I also placed a memory distortion spell upon him in case he should wake before I’m done.”

“Where is he?” Darcy pressed.

“Why do you want to know? Don’t tell me this was all a part of a long con to get me to divulge the—”

“I want you to trust me.” Darcy answered, “I want you to show me some trust. Especially as I’m about to lie to the whole of Asgard upon your behalf.”

Loki stared at her for a long moment before muttering, “Earth.”

“Where on Earth?”

“New York.” Loki answered looking a little guilty, licking his lips, “In a facility for the elderly called
Darcy nodded, “Okay…okay, thank you.”

After an awkward pause, Loki dug around inside his robe until he produced a ring. Darcy took tiny teetering steps over to him, the dress did not have a lot of give and it was very tight to the body. She grabbed onto the post of the bed and wrapped her arms around it for balance. She stared at the beautiful pink crystal ring he held aloft.

“I’m not going to marry you.” Darcy said flatly. Loki rolled his eyes and grabbed her hand, shoving the beautiful pink crystal ring onto her middle finger.

“It’s the fruits of your labors.” Loki chastised, “This is the ring I forged out of the crystals we collected.”

“You collected.” Darcy corrected as she held her hand up and admired the ring, “And why am I wearing the scary fear crystal?”

Loki frowned, “The crystals did not induce the fear, they merely preserved us to be eaten at a later date by a fear consuming extra-dimensional being.”

“Why am I wearing the scary refrigerator crystal?” Darcy sassed.

Loki grabbed her hand and admired the ring on it himself, “Because it will help preserve you.”

“For what?”

“From what.”

“What?”

“It will help preserve you from harm. It will make your skin more durable, your bones harder to break, it will boost your healing and endurance and--”

Darcy wrinkled her nose in confusion, “I thought being Asgardian already did all that.”

Loki brought her hand to his lips and kissed her knuckles with only a little bit of a creep factor, “Even Asgardians can be killed.”

“Oh.” Darcy looked away from his pained gaze, Queen Frigga’s fate went unaddressed. “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” They stood frozen, staring at her ring for a long minute.

Sounding emotionally wrung out Loki broke the silence, “What now?”

Darcy grinned down at Loki as he looked up at her from the flat of his back, “Now you got be the king, and I become Princess of Asgard.”

“And then?” Loki prompted.

“Then I go home.”

Loki scowled, “To Earth?”

“To Earth.” Darcy repeated with a nod.
“Ugh, fine.” Loki sighed as he got to his feet and made his way to the door, “But before you go we’re definitely doing that thing you said earlier.”

“Which thing?”

“That shaving half of Fandral’s body hair thing.” Loki cackled as he exited the room. Darcy chuckled as well.

When the door closed and she was once again alone, Darcy couldn’t help but muse aloud, “I have become the trusted coconspirator to a usurper and the moral supporter of a mad man…”

The coronation was a blur. Loki was in his element as King Odin, he enjoyed the spectacle, he loved the theatricality. He made a speech, put Frigga’s bequeathed diadem ceremoniously back on her head, the people cheered, she might have shed a tear or two and then…then here were revels. And they were epic. And she got drunker than she’d ever drunk before.

She made out with EVERYONE. Fandral, Hogun, Loki as Axel, Volstagg, his wife, anonymous guard number 2 and 3 and 4, their waitress, some prince from some other land, some hot guy she accidently bumped into on her way to the bathroom….It was an amazing party. And the after party was even better. And it fortunately came with an equally grand but much less restrictive party dress.

So of course she fell asleep and woke up on another planet in bed with a man she’d never met before.

And of course he put a knife to her throat as soon as she blinked open her eyes, demanding in a growl, “Who are you?”

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Here is the link to learn about the real Lurking Unknown from the Marvel Canon universe, I changed a lot to suit my needs but it was still cool to read about.
http://marvel.wikia.com/wiki/Lurking_Unknown_(Earth-616)

Little background on the Glade of Crystals.

Important Magical Items So Far…
Darcy’s Crystal Glade Outfit
WHAT DARCY SEES, VERSUS WHAT EVERYONE
VERSES WHAT EVERYONE ELSE SEES

Gamora’s Crystal Glade Outfit

Peter’s Crystal Glade Outfit
Mantis’s Crystal Glade Outfit
Fandral’s Crystal Glade Outfit * picture with appropriate facial hair
Rocket and Groot, (I made Groot shorter as he’s like 10 in this part) as seen in Crystal Glade

Darcy’s Coronation Dress
*This is Blake Livley’s Met Gala dress

Darcy’s After Party Dress, what she’s wearing when she returns to Earth
Any guess on who our new mystery man is? : )
Chapter 31 - James Barnes

Chapter Summary

Darcy re-meets James Barnes.

Chapter Notes

If you would indulge me in a peek behind the curtain:

Originally I had this fic’s chapter count finishing at 20 chapters. I wanted to be able to finish this story by the end of the year….that’s not gonna happen. As you might have noticed I’ve since changed it to 40 and I’m hoping to really wrap it up by that number but in all honesty this story isn’t mapped out, I only have an ending in mind and I’m working towards that.

This story has just grown like a weed, with tendrils stretching out far into the Marvel Cinematic Universe, beyond what I even knew existed. In truth it was the whole Guardians side plot adventure that really changed the timeline/trajectory of the story.

When I started I never pictured Darcy going back out to see the Guardians again until the very end, but developing the Groot/Darcy/Rocket family thing, that grew out of me not wanting to further write about Ultron and wanting to just get Darcy away from that crappy crappy movie. But once I put her back with the Guardians things just got out of control, because then I had to introduce her to Mantis, deal with the fallout of Peter’s abandonment and lying, deal with her learning about saving Yondu. And then I was like…why not go to Asgard and have more fun with Loki as Odin/Axel…and you see what I’m saying? I originally wanted to *fix* Age of Ultron by Darcy-fying it, but that just wasn’t in the cards…

I hope to keep following the MCU canon timeline up until Infinity War and as we are getting closer and closer to Captain America Civil War, I just thought I’d share with y’all.

*IMPORTANT*
This next chapter is occurring (on Earth)
1 year after Ultron
2 months before Crossbones Lagos, Nigeria incident.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 31 – James Barnes

The coronation was a blur. Loki was in his element as King Odin, he enjoyed the spectacle, he loved the theatricality. He made a speech, put Frigga’s bequeathed diadem ceremoniously back on her
head, the people cheered, she might have shed a tear or two and then…then here were revels. And they were epic. And she got drunker than she’d ever drunk before.

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So of course she fell asleep and woke up on another planet in bed with a man she’d never met before.

And of course he put a knife to her throat as soon as she blinked open her eyes, demanding in a growl, “Who are you?”

Darcy assessed the hostile man through bleary squinted eyes. Her mouth tasted like ass, her tongue felt like sand paper and she had an Asgardian sized hangover. She was in no mood to deal with the likes of a noob.

The man pressed the blade closer to her neck growling, “Who are you?”

“I’m the fucking Princess of Asgard bitch,” Darcy grumbled, “So get the fuck off me.”

The man didn’t move a muscle. “I’m serious, move.” Darcy warned.

“I’m serious, who are you.” The guy countered.

Darcy shoved the man’s chest when he showed no signs of moving, and unlike the bulky Asgardians she’d been surrounded by for the past few weeks (who also had super strength), the new mystery man went flying across the room. It was very satisfying to be around non-super strength people again, but she also felt bad as she had broken into the man’s home, presumably, and he had every right to demand to know who she was and why she was there. However, that was no excuse for a knife to the throat.

Darcy sat up and let out a groan, her hand going to her head as the world spun.

“Sorry.” She called out, as she squeezed her eyes shut waiting for the world to stop moving, “Sorry didn’t mean--are you okay? Did I throw you too hard?”

When she opened her eyes the man was on his feet and while he’d previously held a knife to her throat, he now had a gun pointed at her. “Who. Are. You?” He repeated.

“Darcy.” She said dramatically, there was just something about the man’s seriousness that made her want to act like a brat. Not to mention how he was seemingly unperturbed by her show of strength. She stilted her words as he had, mocking him, “Who. Are. You?”

The man cocked the gun and flicked off the safety, “I ask the questions. How did you get in here? How did you find me?”

“Uh…fate?” Darcy said with a shrug, her eyes quickly flickered around room. It looked like a one bedroom apartment and a crappy one at that. There was a little kitchenette, an ugly lamp, looking down she saw that she was sleeping on a twin bed. There wasn’t much else in the tiny room. “Dude, this apartment is very sad.”

The man narrowed his eyes at her, “Who do you work for?”
“I’m a, what do ya call it a…mooch? I think? Basically, I live off the kindness of others, but now that I’m alien royalty I’m sure there’s a higher class word I should be using like…freeloader, orrrr freelancing! Yeah, that sounds better. I’m freelancing my way through life right now.” Darcy boasted with a big smile, “Haven’t had to answer to a boss in a long time.”

“Who’d you used to work for?”

The man was so stiff. He held himself with the bearings of a man who was used to using his weapon. His voice was cold and his face was scruffy. He was very handsome but looked like he could do with a shower and some Zoloft. He also seemed weirdly familiar.

Darcy answered his question honestly, “I used to work for an astrophysics who was trying to find a way to travel between the realms via a portal or bridge. But more importantly,” Darcy inquired coyly, “Do you have any fizzy beverages? I haven’t been on Earth in a while and I’ve got a hankering for something carbonated.”

“Why are you dressed like that?” The man asked, for the first time not sounding hostile but at the same time not lowering his gun in the slightest.

Darcy grinned broadly as she adjusted her big skirt, fanning it out so he could appropriately admire the feathering detail at the bottom, “It’s my after party dress. You like?”

“You appeared out of nowhere.” The man stated it like it was fact, “I have footage to prove it.”

Darcy blinked owlishly, “You video tape yourself while your asleep?…Dude I think you have bigger problems than mysteriously appearing females.”

“You’re not wrong.” The man joked flatly. Darcy smiled but didn’t laugh. They stared at each other in a weird game of chicken.

Darcy blinked first, “So…soda? You got any?”

“No.”

Darcy pouted, “Phooey…wait, I am on Earth right? This is Earth? Terra, Midgard, good old third rock from the sun, Earth?”

The man’s brow crinkled, “As far as I know.”

Darcy pantomimed wiping sweat off her brow, “Whew.”

“You’re not from Earth?”

“No, I am.” Darcy ran a hand over her hair, checking to make sure she hadn’t lost her diadem, she hadn’t. “I just haven’t been back in a while.” Darcy said conversationally.

“Been riding around in a spaceship or somethin’?” The man asked in a disbelieving tone.

“Yeah actually. I have.” Darcy touched her ring, the pink crystal one that Loki got her; it was still on her hand right where she’d left it.

She looked back at the man, preparing to make a snappy remark about being on Asgard and being bros with Thor, when she realized that there was something wrong with the man’s hand, it was metal. And that rang a bell of recognition.

“Holy shit!” Darcy exclaimed, pointing at the man, “You’re that guy!”
Darcy bounded out of the bed and the man promptly shot her in the shoulder stopping her in her tracks. Darcy froze, not because it hurt to be shot point blank at such close range, but because he had just put a bullet hole in her pretty pretty dress!

Darcy’s jaw dropped, “You shot me!”

“Take another step and I’ll do it again.” The man warned.

Darcy glared and put her hands on her hips, “Fuck you, I’ll step where and when I want to asshole. Just watch!” Darcy took a step to the left and then to the right just to illustrate her point. The man followed her movement with his gun but didn’t fire as she taunted him while hopping about, “But if you put another hole in my dress so help me, I’m gonna slap you into next Tuesday.”

“You’re not bleeding.” The man observed. Darcy stopped moving to jeer, “No shit.”

“You’re enhanced.” The man marveled unemotionally.

“That’s one way to put it.” Darcy said with a smirk. The guy didn’t respond the way she thought he would.

The man asked a question, his eyes for the first time showing an emotion other than anger and confusion. “Are you here to take me in?”

Fear.

His fear, his arm, her being a sassy asshat. The mix of everything brought to mind her memories of the interrogation she suffered at the hands of the evil Hydra agent. And that reminded her of what the Hydra guy had called the man who stood before her now.

Darcy whispered, “He called you the Asset. You did everything he said. No questions asked, no protests, just pure obedience.”

The man who had been slowly lowering his gun, brought right back up, and took three aggressive steps towards her. Growling the man denied the title, “I’m no one’s Asset anymore.”

She’d never seen the Asset without his mask off, she held up her hand and blocked her view of the man’s mouth, trying to picture him as the emotionless soldier that had helped her escape by lending her a knife so she could stab herself, pass out, and teleport to freedom.

She had no reason to be afraid of the man in front of her. In truth he was no match for her, not even with his weapon and willingness to use it and whole menacing demeanor thing. He seemed to her like a frightened animal, ready to lash out or sprint away at the first sign of danger. She tried to project peace and non-threatening vibes.

“Good for you.” Darcy smiled sadly at him, “I like this handsome hobo/shabby chic thing you’re rocking. Mindless drone wasn’t a good look on you.”

The man clenched his jaw and stared unblinkingly at her.

“Do you remember me?” The man didn’t indicate either way, so Darcy continued to speak, “It took me a minute to remember you, recognize you without the mask, also my memories of the interrogation kind of got messed up and then I had to do this magic thing to retrieve them. So when I think about that event I’m not remember it directly, I’m remembering the act of trying to remember it, in which I remember it all…if that makes sense.”
The guy did not look amused by her ramblings so Darcy took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, calming her own inner nerves. She waved at him timidly trying to portray friendliness, “Okay, official introduction. Hi. I’m Darcy Lewis and you were there when I was kidnapped and interrogated by a Hydra asshole and you--”

“I’m sorry.” The man interrupted and took a step back, “I don’t remember you, but that wasn’t me--back then I wasn’t me.”

“You helped me.” Darcy said pointedly. “Well, the Asset-you helped me.”

“What?...You must be wrong. I didn’t help anyone as the Asset. Hydra used me to murder people. I did--I’ve done unspeakable things and I--”

“Stop.” Darcy waved her hand at him, as if she could wave away his words, “Fact. I was being tortured for information and the Asset helped me escape. Fact you are the Asset..or were. So, whatever. I mean, whoever you were or are….I owe you one.”

That shut the guy up. Darcy smiled wistfully, “So, yeah, I kind of liked the Asset, but if you’re not him anymore that means you’re not under Hydra’s control. Right?”

The man nodded.

“Huzzah.” Darcy cheered, putting on fist on her hip and using her other hand to point straight up in the air with one finger. She held the pose for an awkwardly long time.

When her odd choice of words and dramatic pose, made the man finally crack a smile, she licked her lips in victory. In an old time-y town crier-esque voice Darcy pronounced, “Hydra can suck it!”

He stared at her in a bemused fashion before remarking calmly, “You’re very weird.”

“I’m rich by proxy, which means I’m not weird I’m eccentric.” Darcy said breezily as she sauntered past the man heading for the little bathroom she could see behind him, “I’m going to go pee and rinse my mouth out and try to scrub away some of the grime from last night’s revels, but I’d really like to talk to you some more. So I hope you don’t rabbit and disappear into the night”

When the door closed behind her, she heard the guy mutter, “It’s the middle of the day.”

Darcy stifled her laughter and set about taking care of her bathroom business. The guy had no mirror so she wasn’t able to check out her smeared makeup or hair situation, but she just assumed she looked a wreck and decided not to dwell on it. She stole some toothpaste and brushed her teeth with her finger, luckily he also had some Listerine, so she took a swig and swished it around until she couldn’t stand the burning mint sensation anymore.

When she exited the bathroom, she found the man sitting on the tiny bed, gun in hand. He held it loosely resting the weapon on his thigh, finger off the trigger and safety back on.

“Last night you were here.” The man divulged quickly.

“What do you mean?”

“You said, you needed to scrub away the grime from last night’s revels, you were here in my bed last night.”

Darcy’s eyebrows rose high at that information, “Really?”
The man nodded, “You’ve been unconscious and in my custody for 28 hours and 13 minutes.”

“Oh.” Darcy was flabbergasted. Her interplanetary trips usually knocked her out for 4 days or longer, and only after a brief time of wakefulness, so learning she’d been asleep for little more than a day was…surprising.

“You appeared out of nowhere. I awoke and tried to question you but you were unresponsive. I didn’t know what to do with you, didn’t know if my position had been compromised and if so why they would send me a beautiful unconscious woman dressed like a fairy princess, so I’ve just been sitting here, waiting for you to wake up.”

Darcy mused aloud to herself as she took a seat on the only other seating available, which was a folding metal chair, “Maybe I’m getting stronger? Better at teleporting between the realms. Or maybe the ring…”

“Am I crazy? Or are you?” The man questioned with a half smile. Darcy wiped a hand over her face as she considered how to answer him.

“What is sanity,” Darcy said in philosophical tone, “But sharing the same delusion as everybody else?”

“That isn’t comforting.” The guy said in a monotone voice, his delivery made her chuckle.

“I think I’m still a teeny bit drunk.” Darcy informed him seriously.

The man grinned, “I won’t tell anybody.”

With a bubbly laugh Darcy burst out, “Dude, I still don’t even know your name.”

“James. James Barnes.” Darcy laughed at how he introduced himself so akin to the iconic Bond.

“Nice to meet you James. Glad to see you’re not working for the evil Nazi’s anymore.”

“Me too.” Darcy laughed again, at the irreverent way he responded.

“I like you James. Now tell me, where are we--wait a minute did you say ‘James Barnes’?”

It turned out they were in Austria, specifically Innsbruck. James was on the run from the government and trying to lay low while he sorted out his garbled memories. Finally free of Hydra he may be but the ‘Winter Soldier’ was still one of the worlds most wanted.

His time with Hydra had turned his brain to mush and now he had to write down all his memories in a notebook. A fact she discovered when he added their meeting in the past and now, to said notebook. Darcy was a little shocked to be talking to the illustrious *James Buchannan ‘Bucky’ Barnes*, as in Steve’s best buddy from the 1940’s, but he looked uncomfortable at being referred to as ‘Bucky’ and dodged all of her probing questions about him and Steve. He was adamant about staying ‘off the grid’ and away from his patriotic best friend. So, she changed the subject to food.

He’d scrounged some food together and made her a decent breakfast, even though it was like four in the afternoon.

Watching him putter around the place made her think of him as a Gorilla or something. Like an
animal raised in captivity and released back in the wild James Barnes was scared, cautious, untrusting and still unused to freedom. She could only hope with enough space and time to acclimate he would relearn how to live freely and without fear of being hunted.

“What do you want to do?” James asked her as he dragged the metal chair over and sat across from her over the little kitchen island/table.

“What about?” Darcy asked with her mouth full of scrambled eggs.

“What about you.” James said as he hid his amused smile behind his coffee cup, “Where do you want to go, who do you need to contact?”

“Good question.” Darcy said thoughtfully as she chewed. There were lots of options, but her first choice, for James’s sake was still Steve.

“We could call Captain America? I memorized his phone number.” Darcy offered, “I’m sure he’d be happy to see you. I know that you said--”

The words died on her lips as James shook his head no. “I’m not ready to see Steve again, my mind…I’m not ready.”

“Fair enough.” Darcy nodded and took another bite from her plate, “I ‘an ‘espect that.”

James grimaced at her, “God, didn’t your ma teach you to chew with your mouth closed?”

Darcy opened her mouth and stuck out her tongue so he got a good view of all her partially chewed food.

“Ugheeh.” James exclaimed, as he looked away and took another swig from his cup. Darcy chewed the rest of her food politely before speaking again.

“I could call Tony and Pepper.”

“Who are they?” James asked.

“Billionaire and CEO of Stark Industries.” Darcy answered succinctly. Thinking of her paramours had her chewing on her bottom lip, “If they’ll even still take my calls.”

James had given her all the pertinent news highlights of the past year. Through him she’d discovered that the whole Ultron debacle had happened a 16 months ago. For her only a few months had passed, but with the time difference, somehow, it always worked out to be longer than she thought.

She’d been gone for so long, a part of her was very afraid that her Earthly lovers would reject her after such a prolonged and unexpected absence. But part of her hesitance to contact them was also guilt based, as she had chosen to hang out on Asgard. She knew if she had pushed Loki would have let her taken the Bifrost home after a day or two. She chose to stay, then she got hurt, and then…it just felt like she could have come home faster if she really wanted to and she expected those she left behind to be a little pissed when they found out.

“But Pep might be too busy to drop everything and come get me. And who knows with Tony.” Darcy lied.

She knew they would, even if they didn’t want to be with her anymore there was no doubt in her mind that both Tony and Pepper would come running if she called. However, she wasn’t quite ready to see them again; especially if they were just gonna break up with her after they reunited.
Funnily enough she didn’t feel the same fear of rejection when she thought of her third option. “I could call my other boyfriend, Stephen.”

“Stev--”

“Stephen. With a –p.h.e.n. not –e.v.e.” Darcy explained, forestalling James’s objection. “He’s a former surgeon, terrible hand injury try not to bring it up, and now he’s a wizard on his way to becoming the next sorcerer supreme.”

James stared back at her blankly, “Wizard?”

“He lives at Asian Hogwarts.” Darcy informed as she sipped at her own coffee.

“That does not compute.” Darcy let out a laugh that was so unexpected that she began choking. James’s eyes widen, “You okay?”

Darcy nodded, “Went down the wrong pipe s’all.”

Darcy loudly cleared her throat as she eyed him suspiciously, “You’re very funny for an ex-prisoner of war who’s been used as a tool of evil for the past seventy odd years.”

James shrugged in response, “Maybe I’m just trying to impress you.”

Darcy felt herself blushing under the soldier’s stare. She puckered her lips momentarily just to get herself to stop smiling. She spoke hurriedly, “Well, quit it before I choke to death on these delicious and only slightly burnt scrambled eggs.”

“I did not burn those eggs.” James defended quickly with a sour look. Darcy’s eyes sparkled as she eyed him over the rim of her cup and took another sip.

“So, you gonna call your wizard then?” James asked, redirecting the conversation back to the matter at hand.

“I suppose he would be the most logical choice.” Darcy answered in a distracted tone.

“And who would be the most illogical choice?” James challenged. The look in his eye as he stared at her caused a shiver to run down her spine.

With a grin she explained, “Sometimes I think I teleport to specific people for a reason. I don’t think I’m guided by fate or anything, but...I like to think there’s a reason, a method to the madness that is my stupid power.”

James nodded encouragingly. Darcy licked her lips and lowered her gaze so she could peek at him from under her lashes, “Soooo, the most illogical choice would be to call nobody and just hanging out with you for a while.”

The light died in James’s eyes. The light and jovial atmosphere between them died. James lips flattened into a straight line and his eyes hardened as he stared at her.

Darcy gulped, “Or not.”

“We need to get you as far away from me as quickly as possible.” James stated expressionlessly, “Preferably without attracting too much attention.”

“Why?”
“For your own safety.”

Darcy frowned at him, “Dude, I’m bullet proof, kind of immortal, and I have magic not to mention super smashing skills now that I’m back among you puny mortals.”

With a hint of a smile James asserted, “Then for my safety.”

“But--”

James waved her off, “No. You can’t stay. I know you said you teleported via magic, but someone somehow is probably tracking you. You might have already compromised my position. And I--”

“You don’t know that.” Darcy gasped accusingly.

“You don’t not know that.” James winced at his own choice of words. He ran a hand through his hair and mumbled to himself, “God you’re rubbing off on me already.”

James heaved a sigh, “Look. You seem nice. I don’t want anything to happen to you or to me. I can’t risk getting nabbed before I get my head on straight.”

“But I could help you!” Darcy argued reaching across the tiny counter she tried to cover his hand with her own but James moved away from her. In a small voice Darcy contended, “Maybe the reason I was drawn to you was because I can help you heal.”

“I--” James began but Darcy bounced in her seat as an idea struck her and she started talking over him animatedly, “Hey! Yeah! What if I was meant to find you so I could help you with your memories! Just like the Ancient One and Stephen helped me with my memories from the interrogation when we first met?!?”

Darcy’s excitement faded as she stared at James unmoved face. He didn’t look hopeful or cheered by her suggestion, he just looked tired. And sad.

“Darcy. It’s real swell that you want to help a messed up guy like me, but I’m --broken, in ways that can’t be fixed. Except with time and--”

“Space?” Darcy guessed in a disappointed tone.

“Yeah.” James confirmed with a shake of his head. After a moment he added, “I think that’s what I need.”

Deciding to give her argument one last go, Darcy ran a frustrated hand through her own hair in an echo of James’s earlier action. “You know some people might call it a sign when a beautiful magical bulletproof girl literally drops into your lap and tells you she knows a wizard who can help solve all your mental problems. Some might even call it a flashing hot pink neon sign with a big arrow that says ‘listen to her stupid’.”

James covered his mouth with his hand in an effort to cover up his chuckle but Darcy wasn’t fooled. He liked her. She just didn’t understand why he was resisting her so hard.

“Girlie, you…are something else.”

Darcy smiled impishly, “Something good though right?”

James looked at her with a wistful expression on his face, “Oh yeah. Real good.”

Darcy saw her opening and entreated softly with a sincere look, “Then listen to me. Let me help
“You can’t help me because I can’t trust you. Just like I can’t trust anyone, not even Steve, because I can’t trust myself. Until that changes…”

James trailed off as he looked up from the countertop and into her eyes. Darcy, who had known this man for all of two hours, felt her heart break for him. There was a lot of pain and suffering in his eyes. She could only imagine the horrible things Hydra had made him do.

She spoke without thinking, “You’ll never be free of the past until you let go of it. Until you shift your focus onto a possible future, you’re never going to be able to enjoy the present.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” James licked his lips and then picked up his coffee cup, he downed the rest of the contents in one go. “Listen, just so we’re clear, the plan is to get you to a preferably untraceable and safe location so you can make your call to…whoever, for help. After that, I’m going to leave. Not just you, but here, Austria.”

“Why—”

James talked over her explaining, “After today I’ll be on my way to another safe house in another country chasing another lead. I’d appreciate it if you didn’t look for me and discouraged any mutual friends we might share from doing so as well.”

“Okay.” Darcy agreed dispassionately. They didn’t speak as she finished her food. It was only when she finished eating that something occurred to her and she broke the silence, “You said something about not attracting attention?”

James left to go out and get her some ‘street’ clothes and do some ‘recon’. And so Darcy spent an hour just hanging out in his apartment alone. She contemplated reading the few copies of past newspapers scattered around but in the end she decided to fold his clothes and wash the dirty dishes left in his sink instead. If he really was intent on leaving right after he got her to a ‘secure’ location, the least she could do was help him pack and tidy up.

When James returned and held up the dress he’d procured for her, her lip curled up in revulsion. “What the hell is that?” Darcy squealed pointing at the red dress.

“It’s a dress.”

“What the hell is that…foofy-ness? There, around the waist.”

“I don’t know?...I think it’s called a peplum.” James shrugged as he thrust the dress at her, “Just go try it on.”

“But it’s all foofy at the middle. It’s going to make me look fat.” Darcy put her hands on her midsection protectively.

James stared at her blankly, “Listen Princess, I’m sorry this free dress isn’t up to your high class
standards, but I’m working on a budget and it was the only thing at the thrift store that would even remotely fit ya, so how about you quit the belly aching and go put it on.”

Darcy ground her teeth together as she stared at the offending dress.

“Unless you wanna walk around looking like a golden peacock?” James added pressing the dress to her chest. Walking away he forced Darcy to grab the dress or let it fall to the floor.

Darcy held up the dress. It looked like something a sexy secretary would wear. It was cherry red with a pencil skirt and deep v neckline bodice thing at the top. And a foofy ‘peplum’ around the waist that looked like a mini-tutu got accidently glued to the dress.

She brought the dress to her nose and took a wiff, the fabric smelled clean and besides the foofy tutu thing, it was a pretty nice looking dress. Darcy turned to see James pouring himself another cup of coffee.

With a wry smile she asked, “Did you get me any underwear? I’m kind of free bra-ing it in this golden peacock gown.”

A muscle ticked in James’s jaw as he slammed his coffee cup down and headed out the door without a word. Darcy couldn’t help but cackle as the door shut behind him.

He returned twenty minutes later, shoes, underwear, purse, and a pretty blue coat in hand. He thrust the items at her angrily before stomping into the bathroom, hollering as he closed the door, “Let me know when you’re changed and I can come out.”

Darcy got dressed quickly, but spent an extra couple minutes folding up her pretty Asgardian gown until it was small enough to fit inside the discarded plastic bag James had carried the coat in, but then when she saw how bulky it was she imagined how annoying it would be to carry around so she then grabbed the purse James had bought for her and performed her infinity bag spell on it, making the purse have an infinite amount of space inside. She then shoved the giant dress into the tiny purse before setting it down next to her on the bed. She grabbed the shoes and set them up so she could easily step into them.

As she was leaning over to adjust the heel she called out to James, “Okay, I’m decent!”

When James opened the door and saw her, he froze. Pure shock and awe colored his face. And, Darcy swore she heard his heart skip a beat.

She couldn’t help but blush given his reaction. She stood up fully and smoothed down the skirt of the dress. Looking down at the pre-owned kitten heels, she took a few steps testing out their stability. When she looked up at James she couldn’t help but let out a chuckle as he was still frozen in the doorway of the bathroom, hand on the handle, eyes glued to her.

Darcy held out the foofy peplum like it was the skirt to a dress and did a curtsy. The move seemed to snap James out of his stupor so she did a little spin so James could see the outfit from all angles. “It’s a little small, but I think it looks decent, right? Even with the foofy thing.” Darcy conceded.

James had a hard time tearing his eyes away from her curves as he responded. “Fits like a glove if you ask me.”
Darcy extended her foot and frowned, “Do you think it’s too distracting that the red of the shoes is more of a burgundy and the dress is like red red and the difference in reds kind of clashes?”

James smirked as he slowly dragged his eyes up her from her ankles, over her body and up to her face, “Trust me doll, anybody who’s looking at you in that get up, ain’t gonna be thinking about shades of red.”

Darcy preened and bit her bottom lip nervously, she was aware she was basically fishing for compliments at that point but she didn’t really care. James was hot and she felt pretty and wanted her prettiness to be acknowledged, especially because there were no mirrors. “Are you sure it’s not too much?”

James licked his lips before answering, “I’m sure.”

Darcy gestured to the deep-V of the top, “I’m not too hip to Austria’s view on women and modesty. Will the cleavage get me stoned or…like arrested or anything?”

James pressed his lips together as he stared at her ample chest, “Nah.”

“Okay, good.”

“Yeah.” James exhaled loudly as he turned away from her.

“So I guess we’re ready to go.” Darcy said sadly.

“Not quite.” James countered; he moved closer and picked up her coat. He held it out for her and she smiled politely as she slipped her arms into the sleeves. When she turned to face him again she was half expecting him to offer to do up the buttons for her, but the look on his face told her something was wrong.

“What?” James was staring at her head and Darcy brought her hand up to pat at her hair. She tried to tame it best she could without a brush, but his stare was making her feel paranoid.

James tapped his own head, “Not a lot of women walking around with tiaras on their heads Princess.”

Darcy protectively reached for the diadem on her head, “So?”

“You should put it away while we’re on the streets….ring too.” James said with knowing look, “I think if you squeeze it, they’ll fit in the purse I got ya.”

Darcy raised her eyebrows at the man, “Oh it’ll fit.”

“Good.”

“But I’m not taking them off.”

“Darcy.” James said sternly.

“They’re not just ordinary jewelry dude. Their magic!” Darcy waved and wiggled her fingers to emphasize how ‘magical’ they were. James did not look impressed.

“Do they make you turn invisible?”

“No.”
“Can they turn invisible?”

“No.”

“Then put ‘em away.” James ordered.

“Nooooo.” Darcy whined.

James let out a noise of frustration before he turned away from her to grumble to himself under his breath. “You’re making things very difficult for me doll.”

“Why do I have to take the diadem off? It can pass for a fancy headband.” She argued.

James turned to her and gave her this soft look. He moved forward silently until they were practically nose to nose. With slow movement he used his flesh and blood hand to pluck the diadem from off her head. “Anybody who sees you with this thing on your head is gonna notice you and we don’t want to be noticed. Trust me, it’s gonna be hard enough keeping a low profile with that gorgeous face of yours. Not to mention that dress.”

In a husky voice Darcy reminded him, “You picked out the dress.”

“Guess I’m a glutton for punishment then.”

James picked up her purse and handed it to her, he watched as she opened it and then handed her the diadem. Without being asked again, she slipped the ring off her finger and chucked it inside too.

Before she closed the lid, James grabbed her hand and opened the top of her bag up. With the spell in place on the item the purse didn’t look empty it looked full of black nothingness. Like all it housed was a void.

It looked a little freaky but it was a very effective spell.

Darcy pressed her lips together so she wouldn’t laugh as he stared up her and asked, “Where’d the hell?”

Darcy waggled her eyebrows, “Everything’s inside. I just put a spell on the bag so it can hold more stuff.”

“Ooh!” She snapped her fingers as a thought occurred to her, “That reminds me.”

She took a step away from James and held out her hand. She pictured her sword Dragonfang and where she had left it back on Asgard. She’d left it in her room in the corner leaning against the bedside table on the left. She focused on the image in her mind and then the sword was in her hand.

James’s eyes widened and he looked as if he’d swallowed a frog as he stuttered, “You-you--”

“This is my sword Dragonfang.” Darcy gave him a shark like grin, “It can cut through any magical bullshit. Also, other things like a normal sword I guess. I had to retrieve it now before someone moved it and I wouldn’t be able to conjure it back from Asgard.”

Darcy took an obscene amount of pleasure in showing off as she set her tiny purse down on the bed and inserted the much larger sword into it. James’s reaction had her considering a future career as a magician.

As she snapped the purse closed and hung it off her arm nonchalantly she remarked, “It’s bigger on the inside. Like the Tardis!...Do you get that reference?”
“Not really.”

Breezily Darcy moved to interlock her arm with James’s who still seemed a little gob smacked, “Oh well, so. I’m all set. Ready to go?”

James stared at her arm where she had hooked it around his metal one.

“Problem?” Darcy asked kindly, knowing what he had to be thinking about her touching his prosthetic without flinching or seeming disgusted.

“I need my bug out bag.” James muttered as he disentangled their arms. Darcy made ‘umhum’ noise and let him go. He removed some floor boards and picked out a back pack and some notebooks. Darcy pointed to the clothes she had helpfully folded and he grabbed only the pants, stuffing them inside. She walked over to the longs sleeved shirts and flannel button up he left behind and picked the cleanest one up.

“Do you not have enough room? I could do a spell to make your back pack like my purse.” She held up her tiny purse to illustrate her point. “You wouldn’t have to leave anything behind.”

James looked at her purse thoughtfully, but ultimately he shook his head and moved over to the fridge, “Nah, I’ll make do the puny mortal way.” He grabbed a wad of cash from the inside of a fruit snacks box and stuffed it inside his bag.

He turned to her and paused, smiling fully for the first time since she met him, “But thanks for the offer.”

Arm in arm James lead her down unfamiliar streets towards an unknown destination. They didn’t speak much, and the people who walked along on the streets mostly ignored them.

After about fifteen minutes of walking, they came to a row of large old looking buildings. And at the end of the street, Darcy could see the familiar red, white, and blue colors of the American flag. It was far away and there was another flag mounted on the other side of the door partially obscuring her view, but the American flag was kind of hard to miss. The flag in the way was red and white and looked a little like a candy cane but she didn’t recognize it and had no idea what country it belonged to. Austria, most likely.

“Is that the American/Austrian embassy?” Darcy asked as they came to a stop. James pulled his cap even lower and turned her so she was facing away from the building.

“No.” James got very close to her and tilted his head so his lips almost touched her cheek, hiding his face from a passing police man. “The American embassy for Austria is in Vienna. We’re in Innsbruck. This is the fifth largest city in Austria. And that,” James used his head to indicate to the building with the flag, “That is the Tyrolean folk Art Museum.”

James pulled her towards the building behind them, moving them out of the way of foot traffic. “The museum is having this big American art exhibit. You should be able to find someone who speaks English in there.”

He leaned against the wall and pulled her in close, practically forcing her to straddle his leg. He once
again brought his face really close to hers, only this time he put a hand on the back of her head and slid it into her hair in a caress.

“What are you doing?” Darcy asked in a breathy voice, not sure if she wanted him to stop or tell him to stop teasing her.

“Public displays of affection make people uncomfortable, you caught the eye of a cop over there and I can’t take a chance and let him see my face.” James explained.

Darcy blinked at him, half wanting to turn around and see if what he was saying was bullshit, but knowing in her heart that he really was that paranoid. “Okay.”

Darcy slid one arm around his waist and put the other on his chest over his heart. She leant her head into his hand fully allowing him to angle her head to his liking. James adjusted her a bit and then froze.

They were so close that if she puckered her lips they would graze his cheekbone. She was half tempted to stick her tongue out and lick his face just because she could. And to break the building sexual tension between them.

“What are you thinking?” James asked sounding curious.

Darcy felt a slow smile spread across her face, “I’m thinking about doing something naughty. Just for funzies.”

James huffed a laugh, his eyes shifting from her face to just over her shoulder, “Like what?”

Darcy perhaps influenced by all the time she’d spent with Loki recently, decided to just give in to her most mischievous urges and damn the consequences.

She licked his face. And James started laughing. Like, really laughing. Darcy felt proud for having caused such a reaction…so she did it again.

“Okay, okay” James laughed turning his face away from her, “Down girl.”

“Ruff.” Darcy barked playfully. James eyes darted behind her once again and then they went back to her and narrowed.

The metal but gloved hand that had been resting on her waist, moved to her face. He tapped her on the lips as he put pressed their foreheads together, quietly he advised, “Stop. We’re having too much fun and gaining an audience.”

“Cops still watching?” Darcy asked with sigh, James had begun to lightly massage her scalp and it felt really good.

“Yeah….the shorter one’s got his eyes glued to your as-bottom.”

“You can say ass.”

James looked down coyly, “Nah, that’s not how you talk about a lady, let alone a princess.”

Darcy frowned, “I’ve just recently become a princess so it’s cool. I’m not too far away from my humble beginnings that a little crassness will burn my virgin ears.”

“I very much doubt there’s anything virginal about you.” James retorted quickly, but immediately his eyes widened and he looked at her with a horrified expression, “Sorry. Sorry, shouldn’t have said
that. I--that was rude.”

“I licked your face dude and if I shimmied a bit I’d be humping your leg.” Darcy slid her hand up his chest and under his hair so she could tug on his ear lobe, “We’ve achieved a certain level of intimacy, you don’t have to freak out about every little thing you say to me.”

James swallowed thickly and she watched as his Adam’s apple bobbed up and down, tracking the movement with her eyes. She let her hand fall to his neck and ran her fingertips along his stubble on his jaw.

“You know you got a jaw line that could cut glass.” Darcy mused. James’s hand tightened on her waist, squeezing meaningfully.

“And you got some killer curv—they’re gone.” James’s whole flirty banter demeanor vanished as he removed his hand from her hair and waist. He pushed her back slightly so she was no longer straddling his leg.

Darcy blinked a little discombobulated from the sudden shift in mood. “Oh. Okay.”

James pulled a little card out of his pants pocket and shoved it into her hand. “I wrote out the phrase, ‘I need help I’ve been robbed’ for you phonetically. When you get inside the museum you should be able to find someone who speaks English but if not, you can say this. Museum staff should be used to dealing with tourists though. I’m sure they’ll get you someone to translate and give you a phone.”

“Oh. Okay.” They stared at each other, both not knowing what to say. At least she didn’t.

“I need to leave.” James turned to walk away but Darcy grabbed his arm, his metal arm, and forced him to stop.

“Wait.” Darcy tugged James close enough to get her arms around his shoulders for a hug. He was stiff and tense all over, but she hugged him anyway.

“Thank you.” She whispered in his ear. And then she let him go.

He didn’t say anything else, but he looked very uncomfortable. He gave her a nod and then walked away, quickly disappearing into the crowd of pedestrians.

“Bye.” Darcy whispered once he was out of sight. She then fanned her face to dry her eyes which had begun to water. She did not want to cry in public over saying goodbye to a guy she’d known for half a day. But, she felt a little empty now that James was gone. She felt…incomplete. Like she’d forgotten to do something and it was important and it was on the tip of her tongue but she just couldn’t put her finger on it.

With a sense of unease, Darcy squared her shoulders and began walking down the street towards the Museum.

When she got to the Museum she was glad to find that there was no price of admission, which she hadn’t even thought about until she got to the door. She nervously stared at her magically enchanted purse as it went through an x-ray machine and then hurried to reclaim it.

Finally inside, she set about wandering. She didn’t really know if she wanted to do what James had
suggested, find someone and play the dumb lost tourist who’d been robbed. That just reminded her too much of lying to the king older woman when Peter abandoned her on Contraxia. After everything in Asgard and that little sexy scene with James, she was kind of sick of pretending to be something she wasn’t.

She wandered aimlessly from room to room, admiring the art and not really paying attention to anything else or anyone around her. It was weird but, it actually felt kind of good to walk around anonymously. She had been dealing with a lot of ATTENTION lately.

From Loki, the close quarters on the Milano, the people of Asgard, James, the cop who was staring at her ass. She felt she deserved to get lost in the crowd for an hour or two if she wanted.

Four hours later she started to get hungry and decided that it was time for the jig to be up. She was heading to the security desk; ready to make her S.O.S. call when she caught sight of a familiar pale Scandinavian face.

Darcy approached the man cautiously, sure that she was mistaken. The coincidence was just too… coincidental.

“Erik?” Darcy called out softly.

The tall wispy haired man turned around immediately. “Darcy!”

“Hi?” Darcy smiled with confusion.

“What are you doing here?” The older man asked as he moved forward to give her a brief but warm hug.

Darcy, still a little stunned, answered in a monotonous voice, “Looking at art?”

“I haven’t seen you in ages!” Erik exclaimed, seemingly not as shocked by their chance meeting as she was. “Have you heard about Jane? Winning a Nobel Prize! Can you imagine? Did you ever think you’d be interning for a world renown Nobel Prize winner?”

“I’m not actually her intern anymore…haven’t been for a while now.”

“Oh.” Erik shrugged. He looked her up and down, but not in a creepy way, “You’re looking well. I’m glad to see you’re expanding your horizons and traveling finally. Are you here for work or are you studying abroad…are you still in school?”

“I actually, dropped out.”

Erik’s face fell, “Oh no. Darcy, getting a well rounded education is very important. You should go back to school. I could write you a recommendation if you need it.”

“That’s not really possible right now. I don’t have—I’m not living the most stable of lives. Thank you though, for the offer.” Darcy admitted with a sigh. Seeing Erik, talking to him…he was so normal. His priorities, his concerns they were all so boring and unimportant in her eyes. She couldn’t even remember a time when she thought about school or worrying about having a job. That part of her life seemed like a lifetime ago.

“Dear girl, perhaps you were just in the wrong field of study. Why, with your experience helping Dr. Foster, and a glowing recommendation I’m sure you could leave…what was your major, political
“Listen, it’s really nice to see you again, but I’m kind of stranded here and I need to make a call. Can I borrow your phone?”

Erik’s eyes widened, “Were you robbed? Damn pick pockets. Can’t trust anyone now a days.” Erik retrieved an old school flip phone from his suit jacket and handed it over.

Darcy stared at the ancient technological device with a furrowed brow. She didn’t even have to say anything, she just gave Erik a look and he was bristling and folding his arms in front of his chest defensively, “Don’t judge. It still works.”

“Dude, in cell phone years this thing might as well be a rotary.” Darcy opened the phone and pursed her lips at the flat colorless screen. “So old.”

“Ugh, young people. If it doesn’t beep the latest jingle or tweet a hundred Facebook likes a minute you aren’t interested.”

“Calm down Grandpa.” Darcy muttered. She smiled at him brightly when Erik rolled his eyes at her, a small smile undeniably on his face.

“You’re welcome by the way.” Erik prompted.

“Thank you.” Darcy said automatically as her fingers flew across the buttons dialing the number she knew by heart.

She held the phone to her ear and all but held her breath in anticipation as it rung.

*ring*
*ring*
*ring*

“Hello?”

Darcy smiled and turned away from Erik so he wouldn’t see how her eyes were starting to water, “Hey, it’s me. I’m back.”

Reminder of Darcy’s After Party Dress, (what she’s wearing when she returns to Earth and meets Bucky)
The Outfit James Got For Darcy *yes I/Bucky styled it after the 1940’s/agent Carter aesthetic on purpose
Who do you think Darcy called to pick her up?
let me know what you think in the comments.

Chapter End Notes

If you would indulge me in a peek behind the curtain once again:

On one of my favorite fics an author put a note that they wait for 50 comments before posting each new chapter believing by then all of her weekly readers would be caught up by that point, and while I live for comments and often go back and re-read comments as I am motivated by feedback, that struck me as an odd way to judge who was reading your story and when.
So...yeah this led me to do a little calculating.

One could argue that the kudos count is a more accurate depiction of how many people have read and are reading your story but....somehow the math just doesn’t support that. & that’s okay because by using math I learned the truth? and it’s kind of awesome==

==By using the hit count I’ve been able to estimate, (I took the number of hits before I posted a chapter and then subtracted it from the number a week later right before another upload), I think I have a good estimate of the amount of readers I have…and I want to tell you I am shocked. I know it’s not entirely accurate and everything but it’s a good guess so....I’m shook.

As far as I can tell I have about 860 weekly readers, especially when I update once a week…
And, around 370 – readers after 2 days

All of this is just a little peek into me acknowledging all of you. The one's who comment and the one's who don't. I can’t believe you’re still interested in this crazy story and I’m just so glad that you keep coming back for more week after week.

So, thank you for reading and Happy New Year.
Chapter 32 - Erik Selvig

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to Erik.

Chapter Notes

Only waited 45 minutes to upload this so I could do it on JANUARY 1st 2019! Happy New Year Y'all.

Chapter 32 – Erik Selvig

Darcy woke up to the sound of Erik Selvig snoring. She blinked at the darkened room and immediately sought out the glowing alarm clock, checking the time. 4:37 a.m. She still had at least an hour and half more to wait until her ride arrived.

When Darcy started openly crying while on the phone, Erik led her away from the other Museum goers and into a secluded alcove near the restrooms. She finished with his phone after a ten minute conversation and immediately began thanking the older man profusely.

“Someone’s coming for you then?” Erik asked kindly as he put his phone away. Darcy nodded as she sniffled and tried to discretely wipe away her remaining tears.

“Yeah, they’re coming from far away though. It’ll take them a couple hours to get here, do you know of any 24 hour diners…does Austria have diners?”

Erik put a comforting hand on her back, “I have a hotel room nearby. And a new pack of playing cards? If you’d rather..?”

Darcy smiled up at the older man. She got to know him pretty well while working with Jane, but it wasn’t like the relationship he had with Jane. She was kind of in awe of how kind he was being to her. All things considered.

“Thank you.” Darcy said in a brittle voice, “You don’t have to--you shouldn’t feel obligated--”

“Nonsense,” Erik waved her off, “I know what it’s like to be all alone and in need of help. Think nothing of it.”

“Thank you so much.” Darcy lower lip trembled as another tear escaped.

Erik gave her a soft look then pulled her in for a hug; he patted her on the back as he comforted “I’m sure you would do the same for me, were I in your position.”
After a five minute walk, Darcy and Erik reached the hotel. There was a bar/lounge with a band. Erik ordered them a few drinks and they sat and listened for a while before she caught Erik nodding off. She roused him and helped him to his room and into bed. It was a twin bed so she sat in the chair next to the little desk and just stared out the window.

She must have fallen asleep because the next thing she knew Erik’s snoring was waking her up.

The room was still dark and she didn’t want to wake Erik so she decided to go for a walk outside the hotel. She had energy to burn and needed an outlet. She found some paper and a pen in the desk and scribbled a note telling Erik what she was doing.

Outside the hotel it was much colder than earlier in the day. The air was brisk and she could see her breath. The sun was just beginning to rise and the sound of the city was slowly coming back to life. It was still quiet though, for a city.

Darcy blew into her hands, warming them up as she walked around the block. She circled the hotel twice before anything noteworthy happened.

On her third lap, a pair of hands shot out from a darkened alley and pulled her into the opening. Darcy didn’t hold back and punched the person as hard as she could and they went flying, only stopping when their back hit the side of a dumpster. They assailant crumpled to the ground with a groan.

Darcy stalked forward ready to strike again, but as she got closer she recognized her assailant and whisper/yelled his name accusingly, “James?!?”

“Ow.” James groaned as he pushed himself up into a sitting position.

“What the hell dude? I thought you said you weren’t under Hydra’s control anymore?”

“I’m not!” James denied as he got back onto his feet.

“Then why are you trying to drag me into a dark alley at five o’clock in the morning?”

“What aren’t you on your way home yet?” James asked darkly, “Why didn’t you ask for help like I told you to?” His voice rose as he got more and more agitated, “Why did you spend four hours walking around the museum?! What kind of game are you playing?!”

Instinctively she wanted to yell back at him, but like she had learned with Rocket she could tell his aggression was coming from a place of pain. So she took a calming breath and tried to think about her actions from his point of view.

Darcy quickly surmised that James thought her whole story was bullshit. That she was a Hydra agent sent to mess with him somehow, or something equally nefarious. From his menacing tone and angry body language and interrogation like questions, it was obvious.

Darcy held her hands out placating, “Calm down. I can explain.”
James drew a gun out of nowhere and cocked it; pointing it at her face as he demanded, “Explain quickly.”

Darcy dropped her hands and tilted her head as she stared at him skeptically, “Really? A gun? You think that will help you when,” She pointed to the dumpster behind him, “I just threw your ass so hard into that metal bin that there’s a big James sized dent in the side.”

James didn’t turn to look at what she was gesturing to, he didn’t lower his weapon, he didn’t even blink.

“You got trust issues man.” Darcy stated in an annoyed tone.

“Talk.” James ordered.

“I. I just decided to look at the art okay? Sue me! I just wanted to feel normal, for like a second.”

“Who was that man that you met? Your Handler?” James asked. Darcy bit her lip. She didn’t realize how damaged he was before, well, she knew he was damaged, but she didn’t realize how…away from okay he truly was. There was no trace of that flirty sexy unresolved sexual tension that was between them just a few hours ago.

“He’s just an old friend.” Darcy said softly.

“Name!” James demanded.

Darcy stared at James and it just clicked in her brain that he wasn’t angry, not in pain, he was scared. She just didn’t understand why.

“I don’t want to tell you his name.” Darcy admitted.

“Why not? Afraid I’ll recognize him? Is he one of the people I’ve been looking for?”

“No, I don’t think so. He’s a teacher and a friend. And if I give you his name I’m afraid you’ll use it to track him down and interrogate him like your trying to do to me.”

James pursed his lips and Darcy took a step forward. He took one back. She stepped forward again. He moved back. With one more step, James backed himself up against the side of the dumpster. She moved forward until the barrel of the gun he was holding was positioned right over her heart.

“I never lied to you. Everything I told you was the truth. From being a Princess, to spending the last few months in space and then on Asgard. I never lied. It wasn’t a trick. Or a game. Or anything like that….James, do you believe me?”

James’s nostrils flared and his eyes looked panicked but he held that damn gun steady like a laser. “I believe I shot you and you didn’t bleed.” James volunteered after a moment. “I believe that I helped kidnap and interrogate you. And that gives you motive to want to hurt me.”

Darcy stared back at James, she didn’t really know what to say or do other than take the gun out of his hand and crush it. But, she had a feeling getting him to put the weapon down on his own would be better, so she did nothing.

“Did you put a spell on me?” James asked quietly.

“What?”

“Did you put a spell on me?!” James repeated more aggressively, “Did you do something to me?
“No!” Darcy denied, “I, are you okay? Is something wrong?” Darcy reached out to try to touch his face but he flinched away from her touch.

His trained his eyes just to the left of her head, looking past her. “I…stayed and watched you. I wanted to make sure you got home alright. But then you deviated. You didn’t follow the plan. And I….”

“Freaked out?” Darcy finished. James shifted his gaze back to her and silently stared at her for a long moment before moving the gun and tucking it away behind his back.

“Hence attacking me.” Darcy mumbled.

“I’m sorry.” James gasped.

“It’s okay.” Darcy said dismissively.

James began shaking his head with a frown, “No, no you can’t…I could have shot you. I tried to abduct you. Again! I’m..this was wrong. You can’t just brush this off.” He stared at her with glassy eyes, “I did this.”

Darcy closed her eyes so she could collect her thoughts without having to stare at his broken expression. When she opened them Bucky’s expression was filled with self loathing and in that moment he reminded her so much of Loki. She reached for his face again and he flinched but she didn’t let him shirk her touch. She cupped his cheeks gently but with a firm hand. He grasped her wrists and held on to her but didn’t try to remove her hands.

“People make mistakes,” Darcy started, “Sometimes things get so twisted up inside our minds that we can’t think straight. And things go wrong and people get hurt, but that doesn’t everything’s ruined forever.”

“I’m wrong. I’m broken.” James confessed in a whisper.

“You are not broken.” Darcy declared in a clear voice. James looked down and avoided her eyes. Darcy felt the prick of tears at the back of her eyes, but she held them back.

She jerked James’s head up, forcing him to look at her as she lectured, “One small crack doesn’t mean that you are broken, it means that you were put to the test and didn’t fall apart.”

She dropped her hands from his face and grabbed his shoulders; she pulled him forward into her body and wrapped her arms around him. Knowing what she knew about his past, about his relationship with Steve, the things he’d endured, the non-consensual body modification, the things he was forced to do as the Winter Soldier while working for Hydra…she couldn’t help but want to smother James with love and support until he healed whatever needed healing inside of him.

He didn’t hug her back. He didn’t tense up or flinch away. He just stood there limply, his arms dangling by his sides as she hugged the ever living crap out of him. She tried to put as much feeling and forgiveness into the embrace as she could.

She felt terrible. She didn’t have a phone number to give him, so he could talk to her if he needed someone to listen. She didn’t have any money to give him so he could go see a therapist or hire a lawyer. She didn’t even have any good advice.

So she just hugged him.
When the lighting changed, signaling the sun had fully risen James finally showed a sign of life and tried to pull away from her. She let him go.

“I’m sorry I attacked you.” He apologized looking at the ground. He sounded less broken but still empty.

“I’m glad you did.”

“What?” James exclaimed, his neck let out a popping noise as he snapped his head back in her direction.

Darcy shrugged, “When you left before, I felt like we were unfinished and I didn’t know why.”

“What does that mean?”

Darcy shrugged her shoulders, “I don’t know…. But I don’t feel unfinished anymore.”

James’s lip quirked upward on one side, “You really are very weird. Even for an alien princess.”

“Yeah but,” Darcy smiled softly, “You like me anyway. Right?”

“Too much maybe.” James agreed with a self-deprecating grin. “I should go.”

“Me too.” Darcy agreed. Neither of them moved.

After a minute of staring at each other making goo goo eyes or whatever, Darcy had enough. She ran a tired hand over her face before mumbling to herself, “Screw it.”

She grabbed James by his shirt and pulled him forward at the same time she surged forward. Kissing him right on the lips.

James froze but only for a second. He gripped her waist tightly and pulled her closer as he took control of the kiss, pressing his lips against hers urgently. The beeping sound of a nearby garbage truck startled her into letting out an ‘eep’ noise and James took advantage, stealthy sliding his tongue into her mouth.

Within seconds Darcy let out a guttural moan as he teased her tongue with his own. She felt like she was turning to putty. She was quickly learning that James Barnes was a very good kisser.

They broke away from each other with a gasp. James was panting as he stared at her with wonder. Darcy licked her lips and had to physically take a few steps back so she didn’t end up mounting him right there against the icky dumpster. James, in a reversal of before, took a step forward for every step she stepped away.

“You need to go.” James said with a smoldering expression.

“You want me to leave?” Darcy asked in a pretend hurt tone.

In a deceptively honeyed voice James told her, “I want to lick every inch of your skin and take your underwear off with my teeth.”

“Oh, challenge accepted?” Darcy as she backed up further, “Maybe not here in this gross alley but…”

She turned so her back was up against the brick wall. James closed the distance between them, “I don’t deserve this. You.”
He found her lips again kissing her chastely but with fervor. He turned her face to the side with a metal finger then broke away from her mouth so he could kiss his way down the side of her neck.

He spoke as his lips kissed and nipped her skin, “I’m not okay. I’m regaining all these memories but it’s all disjointed but—even with the memories I don’t—the feelings that come with the memories aren’t there.”

Darcy grabbed his face and pulled him away from her skin as his voice went from sexy talk to real talk.

“I don’t have points of view, likes or dislikes. I’m not…a whole person yet. But, I wanna be. And I need to work that out for myself, get back to some kind of normal so I can do things like this. With someone like you.”

“But not me?” Darcy asked trying not to sound so unsure.

James looked away to the alley opening, “Might take me a while to get my head on straight.”

“I’m literally immortal. I have time.”

“Immoral.” James repeated sounding stunned. She opened her mouth to reassure him that being ‘immortal’ wasn’t that special but when he turned back to look at her, the smolder was back lighting up his face.

He leaned in and kissed her quickly on the lips before pulling back to whisper admiringly, “Immortal and beautiful and funny and sexy. You probably got guys lined up around the block waiting for a chance to be with ya. I wouldn’t—I can’t ask you to wait for me. I don’t want you wait for me.”

“I’m polyamorous.”

“Polywhaterous?”

“I told you, I’ve got a boyfriend and a girlfriend and another boyfriend and when I’m on Asgard, I kind of hook up with Fandral, but we’re not official that’s just sort of thing that keeps happening.”

“That’s a lot a people.”

Darcy tensed up, “It’s not like I’m cheating on them. They all know about each other and they agreed to the whole non-monogamy thing…I’m not a slut who just bangs every hot person they come across.”

“I didn’t—I wasn’t—” James took a deep breath before continuing, “I’m not judging, what I meant was that’s a lot of people to measure up to.”

“My various relationships are not in competition with each other.” Darcy assured him.

James nodded before pulling away from her completely, he ran his hand through his hair a couple times and Darcy took the opportunity to do the same.

“I’m not…I’m not in the position to promise you anything.” James said, “You get that right?”

Darcy nodded. James reached out and grabbed her hand, giving it a squeeze, “I wanna get myself to a good place before I even think about adding someone like you to my life…is that okay?”

“Very okay.” Darcy agreed, “Just don’t exclude ‘me’ from the ‘like me’ category because if the opportunity arises, I’d…like the opportunity….if that makes sense.”
James chuckled and gave her hand one more squeeze before pulling away. He nodded to the entrance of the alley, “You go first. I’ll watch and make sure you get back into the hotel okay.”

Darcy smirked, “You do remember how I tossed your ass like a sack of potatoes right?”

James looked at her pleadingly, “Humor me?”

Darcy sighed, “Fine.”

She walked away from him slowly, keeping hold of his hand for as long as she could before letting go and walking out of the alley and back into the early morning light on the sidewalk. She didn’t know what she expected to come of her and James, if they had a future together, or just a future between the sheets, but she was excited about all the possibilities.

When she reached the door to the hotel and looked back at the alley, James gave her a salute with two fingers before disappearing. Darcy smiled to herself and then moved forward. Entering the hotel she was hit with a blast of heat, she hadn’t realized how cold it was outside until just then.

At the front desk there were two familiar figures arguing with each other while the concierge looked on with fear.

Erik had her purse and scribbled note in hand and he was gesturing wildly. Darcy called out, “Hey!”

They both turned to look at her. Erik’s shoulder sagged in relief and he muttered, “Oh thank god.”

“Hey.” Tony greeted softly, “There you are.”

“Here I am.” Darcy said quietly. She started off walking towards him but ended up running. She threw herself into his arms and started crying silently into his shoulder.

“I’ve got you.” Tony whispered, “I’m here.”

She was so filled with emotion, relief, overwhelming joy, pain at having been separated from him for so long, shame for having doubted that he’d want to still see her. Still care.

“I’m sorry it took me so long to come back.” Darcy whimpered as she fist her hands into the back of his suit jacket, incapable of caring that she was probably getting tears and snot all over his sleeve.

Tony squeezed her tightly. With one hand cradling the back of her head he kissed her hair, murmuring words in between kisses, “I don’t care. You came back. That’s all that matters. You’re what matters.”

Abruptly Darcy stood up straight and wrapped her arms around his neck. His hand fell away from her head as she leaned in and kissed him. His hands moved to her ass as she poured herself into the dirty open mouthed kiss. He gripped her fleshy bottom with open palms, using his grip on her body to secure her even tighter against his own.

She couldn’t find the patience to stay still and kiss him deeply, she wanted to touch and kiss every part of him too much for that. She began peppering his face all over with kisses. When she jumped up and wrapped her legs around his waist the tight red dress she was wearing tore audibly but she didn’t care. She moved on to kissing his neck and sucking on his earlobe, whispering dirty things
against his skin. At that point Tony turned to the concierge and said, “Yeah, we’re gonna need a room.”

“Preferably, one far, far, away from mine.” Erik added.

Darcy was a little embarrassed by her and Tony’s PDA in the lobby…in front of Erik and the star struck concierge, but honestly she was too happy to be bothered by it much.

Erik handed off her magically enchanted purse and bid her good bye as Tony paid for their room. She was so wrapped up in Tony that she barely paid him any mind, but she did remember to yell out a distracted ‘thank you’ as he got onto the elevator.

Tony told the concierge to send Erik a bottle of booze and arranged to pay for Erik’s room. He also told the man that they were not to be disturbed unless it was literally a world ending emergency.

She and Tony spent about three hours having sex…not that Tony could keep it up for three hours, he was only human. But in between two very vigorous love making sessions, preceded by two very length foreplay sessions, and one sexy sudsy afterglow session…Darcy was a very, very, satisfied girl.

It was while they were soaking in the giant Jacuzzi tub that Darcy told Tony everything that had happened while she was gone. *Everything, everything.*

She told him about reuniting with the Guardians, meeting Mantis, learning that she had saved Yondu with her prophetic warning, slowly learning how to understand Groot’s language, kicking ass and saving the other Guardians from becoming alien shark-ta-pus food. And how she got to use her heretofore unseen ‘spy skills’ to bust up an alien child slavery ring.

She told him about talking to Stephen in her dream and learning about the death of the Ancient One. She told him about returning to Asgard with the Guardians, meeting with Odin, who she revealed was really Loki, who she revealed was actually ALIVE. She told him about the whole Princess/royal adoption thing, the fight with the Lurking Unknown, her magic lessons, her new ring, her new ‘conjuring’ skill, her heartbreaking goodbye with the Guardians, the awesome party that came with her coronation and the kisses she handed out to practically everyone while she was drunk and happy.

She told him about the mysteriously shortened recovery time needed when traveling between the realms, she emphasized how important her current purse was seeing as how in contained her magic diadem, ring, and magic sword.

And then she told him about meeting James ‘Bucky’ Barnes. How he shot her, requested to be left alone…And how she had ended up making out with him like five seconds before she reunited with Tony in the lobby.

Suffice to say, they were both very prune-y by the time she was done catching him up.

“Wow.” Tony exclaimed in a stunned tone.
“Yeah.”

“That’s a lot.” He remarked.

“Yup.”

“No, that’s like a lot, a lot’

“Uh huh.”

“God…I don’t even know where to…Loki, Barnes, Princess…it is wrong that the first thing I can think of is getting my hands on your new crystal ring and getting it under a microscope?”

Darcy snickered, pressing her face into his naked chest. The water was starting to cool making her shiver. Tony ran his hand across her back and Darcy sighed snuggling closer. With his other hand Tony turned on the hot water, refreshing their bath.

After a minute Darcy asked, “Is it wrong that making out with Bucky got me all worked up so that when I saw you I was ready to jump your bones?”

“What?!” Tony gasped, “No! No, no no. I am very much in favor in bedroom teamwork. No matter who or what vibrating device is helping you eventually jump my bones.”

“I’m serious Tony…do you feel like I cheated on you? Or used you or something?”

“Well…I’m actually feeling very thoroughly used, but that feelings mostly confined to my penis.” Darcy barked out a laugh and Tony cupped a handful of the newly warmed water and poured over her back. His tone turned serious as he asked, “Do you feel like you cheated?”

“No.” Darcy answered quietly, but without hesitation.

“Me either.” Tony replied. “Part of the reason why I love you so much is the way you love so easily…you have a way about you…you’re open. I’m–I have a hard time loving people back the way they deserve. I have a hard time loving people at all. Most people annoy the shit out of me.”

“That’s not true.” Darcy argued, “You’re just as loving as I am. You’re kind and considerate and generous and sweet.”

“Not like you.” Tony turned the hot water off. The room once again quiet except for them and their breathing. “I never expected…when we got together, and Stephen was in the picture already, I knew then that you were special and to be with you I was going to have to make special concessions.”

“Concessions?”

Tony ran a finger down over her bottom lip, “I can’t be selfish with you Darcy. You’re too good. You’ve got too much love to give and too many lives to change. I can’t keep you all to myself.”

Darcy stared back into Tony’s eyes at a loss. Being polyamorous was literally the solution to all of her love related problems. It was the only way she could see herself being happy and when Pepper and Tony and Stephen and James all accepted the concept of non-monogamy so readily, she had been overjoyed. But discussing it now with Tony, he looked so sad.

“I’m sorry.” She whimpered.

“No!” Tony jumped up, shifting them so they were facing each other in an upright position, water sloshed over the side of the tub but neither of them paid it any mind. “No, no, no. Don’t be sorry.”
“I’m not normal.” Darcy quietly wailed as tears sprung to her eyes, “I don’t know why the one boy and one girl thing just isn’t enough for me.”

“No,” Tony protested. He kissed her lips hurriedly and pulled back to wipe her tears away with his thumbs as he cupped her face in his hands, “No don’t cry. Don’t be sorry. I didn’t mean—I wasn’t complaining. I wasn’t—I was just trying to explain, that I know who you are. And I would never ask you not to fall in love with somebody.”

“But--”

Tony kissed her again harshly this time. The kiss was hard and the hands he had on her face yanked her forward into his space allowing him easy access to her mouth. She panted out his name when he let her go, “Tony.”

Tony stared at her with a stern look. “Darcy, don’t. Don’t ever regret loving someone. Please. Not because of me.” He let her face go and let his hands slide down her arms.

Darcy held onto him. “But Tony--”

“You like this James guy. Barnes? I can tell and if you want to try hooking up with him down the road, I want you to feel like you can do that.”

“Tony, I don’t need James Barnes to be happy.”

“You like him though.” Tony countered sincerely.

Darcy stared at him with determination, “Like isn’t love Tony. I love you. I need you.”

“I believe you.” Tony used his thumb to smooth out the wrinkle in between her eyebrows, “I love you too.” Tony gave her look as he settled back against the tub and prompted her to follow him down. “Just don’t say no to things on my account. I know what I signed up for with you. I know who you are and I love you for it.”

Tony sounded genuine. He sounded real and she believed him. Believed that he didn’t secretly hate her for kissing James. Didn’t resent her for not being able to commit to a traditional man-woman relationship. And just like that Tony put her worries to rest.

“Okay. But just know that I love you the moistest.”

Tony flicked some water at her back as he teased her in an amused tone, “Moistest?”

“I meant most-est.” Darcy grumped.

“Most-est?” Tony let out a chuckle, “That’s not a real word.”

“All words aren’t real words.” Darcy argued petulantly.

“I have no way to respond to that statement without coming off like an asshole.” Tony said making her laugh.

“So, what happened while I was away?” Darcy smiled as she drew a figure eight around Tony’s nipple with her fingertip.

“Pepper and I broke up.”

Darcy felt her stomach drop. “What?”
“She made me choose between being with her and being Iron Man.” Tony’s body tensed even as he kept his tone light and conversational. “I actually haven’t seen her in three months.”

Darcy felt so conflicted and confused and she didn’t even know what to say. She opened her mouth several times to speak, to ask follow up questions, but nothing came out. She was speechless.

Finally Tony couldn’t take it anymore and he asked, “So..are we gonna break up too?”

“No.” Darcy answered automatically.

“You sure?”

“I know that I love you and I want to be with you. So, if I have any say in it, no. I don’t want to break up Tony.” Tony wrapped her up in his arms and hugged her close. “There’s a reason why you were the person I called to come and get me. And it’s not because I knew you would bring the private plane.”

The tension that had lined his body disappeared and she melted into his embrace, content in the knowledge that even if everything else was crazy and changing, she and Tony were still as solid as ever.

“I love you Tony.” Darcy whispered.

“I love you too.” Tony said with a slight tremor. Darcy pulled her head up and looked at his face. He was crying. He didn’t look away when he saw her see him; he stared down at her and repeated himself, “I love you.”

Darcy surged up and kissed him, when she tasted the salt from his tears it just made her kiss him harder.

For the first three days they made love and talked and ate and had sex and that was it. Tony told her about how the Ultron debacle ended with him taking a step back from the Avengers team, but how he was more committed than ever to being Iron Man and actively protecting the world, in any and every way he could. They exchanged sob stories over missing each other but, Tony refused to go into detail about his and Pepper’s break up. He didn’t want to influence her and in fact encouraged her to call Pepper and talk to her herself. On the fourth day Darcy gave in to Tony’s wheedling and called Pepper.

*ring* *ring* *ring*

“Hello?”

“Pepper?”

“Darcy!”

“Yeah, it’s me.”

“You’re back! Where are you? Are you okay? Do you need--”

“I’m fine. I’m—I’m with Tony, in Austria.”
“…."

“….So you guys broke up, huh?”

“We did.”

“And how...are you?”

“I’m doing---I’m well. I’m living my life. Working. Moving on.”

“Enjoying being normal?”

“…what’s so wrong with normal?”

“Nothing, there’s nothing wrong with normal. And if that’s what you want, if that’s what makes you happy, I’m happy for you.”

“I just need to do what’s best for me Darcy. And what’s best for me is not living with a man who treats me like an afterthought. I. I thought after he had the surgery to remove the shrapnel from his heart, he would change, that things would change. And they did, for a while.”

“But then…?”

“But then he rebuilt the suit. But then you left. He built Ultron. And then he buried himself in work. He started being Iron Man again. He...Tony feels like he has to be Iron Man to make up for what he’s done.”

“He has nothing to make up for.”

“I agree...I agree Darcy, but Tony doesn’t, he doesn’t get it. And I can’t spend the rest of my life trying to convince him that he is the hero he aspires to be. That he is good enough...he just won’t let himself have a life.”

“A normal life you mean.”

“Yes a normal life. He’s not capable of it. Not with me at least, maybe he’s different with you, I don’t know. Maybe the fact that you’re not around all the time is what will preserve yours and Tony’s relationship. I don’t know. All I know is that right now, Tony needs to be Iron Man. And while he is I can’t—we can’t--”

“Be together.”

“…."

“…."

“…."

“Darcy I know that we, Tony and I pursued you as a duo but that doesn’t mean--”

“I can see how being a superhero could get in the way of maintaining a normal life….Not to mention secretly dating a super powered flake.”

“Darcy I don’t think you’re a flake.”

“I disappear on you without warning and have no way of communicating with you while I’m away...so yeah I am a flake. You can’t count on me, you can’t find me when you need me. I’m a flake. And I don’t mean to be. But I am.”
“.…”

“I still care for you very deeply Darcy. My feelings for you are separate from my feelings for Tony and—”

“How?! I’m just as bad as Tony is. Only…I can’t just choose to stop being the way I am. He can choose to be or not to be Iron Man, but I’m stuck like this! I can’t--I can never be normal.”

“Darcy--!”

“I missed you. I still love you but, I am not normal and my life never will be.”

“Darcy--”

“I don’t think we should--I don’t think I can be with you, when you are trying to live a life that I don’t fit into….I don’t think I can be with you while you’re not with Tony.”

“…..”

“Pepper? …Are you there?”

“….but you can be with Tony while he’s not with me?”

“…..”

“I guess now I know where I stand in this little threesome of ours.”

“It’s not like that Pepper--”

“You’ve made yourself very clear Darcy. I have to go. I’m glad your home.”

“Pep-!”

“Goodbye.”

Tony held her while she cried. He didn’t ask her any questions as he’d listened to her half of the conversation and could surmise how it badly it had gone; Darcy didn’t see any point in hiding anything from Tony or seeking privacy as she would just tell him everything after the fact anyway.

Tony was her rock and the one she knew she could count on. He was the one she unburdened her soul to without hesitation upon reuniting. She told him about Loki and James and everything!

Tony Stark knew her, warts and all, and he still wanted her. She wasn’t a freak or an inconvenience. He loved her despite her debilitating power, despite the chaos it caused in their lives by ripping her sometimes literally out of his arms and hurling her across the world and universe alike. With him she felt safe and her conversation with Pepper left her more terrified of her power than ever.

With his every look and gesture Tony reminded her that loved her and he accepted her, freaky flaw included.
Perhaps it was greedy of her to ask for more, to fall in love with Pepper and Tony and Stephen and expect them all to maintain the same level of ardor for her after months and months of no contact. It shook her to her core that it was not sharing herself in a polyamorous relationship which was the downfall of her relationship with Pepper, but the concept of normalcy and her inability to achieve or maintain it.

_In the long run she was probably better off just dating the superhero and the wizard._

She and Tony spent the rest of that day enveloped in fluffy robes and snuggled in bed, eating junk food and watching old episodes of Doctor Who which Tony projected on the ceiling using some fancy doohickey. It was comforting and nice and exactly what she needed following her surprising break up. In between episodes and banter Darcy idly wondered where James was and if he was okay. Before going to bed she attempted to talk to Stephen, but got no answer.

The next day after several rounds of enthusiastic love making, Darcy tried calling Stephen again.

*ring* *ring* *ring* *ring* *ring* *ring*

“Hello, Stephen?”

“No, it’s Wong.”

“Oh..it’s Darcy.”

“Haha, Try not to sound too disappointed.”

“Sorry. I’m just—I really wanted to hear Stephen’s voice.”

“Of course. He told me how you were off world. Back now?”

“Yes. I’m back on Earth again.”

“Good. Strange will be glad to hear it.”

“Is he there?”

“Yes. But he’s in a meditative state, deep within the astral dimension.”

“Oh…will he be done, soon?”

“Can’t say.”

“…”

“Don’t despair. I will let him know you are back with us as soon as he returns to his body.”

“Okay.”

“Where can he reach you? At this number?”

“I suppose. This is Tony’s personal cell number. I think Stephen has it already though.”

“Fine. I believe it will be in the phone log if he does not have it already…so, may I ask where you
have turned up this time?"

“"Austria."

“"Austria? Hmm. I’ve never been."

“"It seems…nice. The little I’ve seen of it."

“I think The Sound of Music was shot in Austria. And if I’m not mistaken Austria is famous for its spas and hot springs.”

“Cool. I didn’t know that, but I uh, I don’t know how much exploring I’ll have time for. Tony and I are going to head home to New York soon.”

“Well that’s fortunate.”

“How so?”

“Stephen accepted the offer to act as the protector of the New York Sanctum. He and I have been working on a project together, so perhaps I will get to see you as well when you return.”

“That would be nice Wong.”

“Do you remember the New York Sanctum’s address? I believe I gave it to you--“


“Bleecker. Yes. 177A Bleecker Street. ”

“Okay, Tony says he remembers where it is…He also says hi.”

“Haha, you are with your other boyfriend? Are you with your brother Thor as well?”

“Nope sorry Thor’s in space. Just me and Tony here right now.”

“Oh well…actually, while I have you may I ask. Do you know of any other Asgardians that might be on Earth besides Thor?”

“…why?”

“The subject of Asgardians on Earth came up when Stephen and I were working on our project. I was just wondering, given your connections, if you had any insight.”

“Are you…are you guys looking for Asgardians? Or do you think you’ve found one?”

“…I’d rather not say.”

“Well, that’s infuriating.”

“Sorry.”

“…you know when I talk to Stephen; I’m just going to make him tell me everything. Right?”

“Hahah. I have no doubt that your powers of persuasion are potent enough to loosen many a man’s tongue. However it was Strange who asked me to keep our project private, if he chooses to share the details with you I will not object, but as it stands I cannot in good conscious betray his trust.”
“Aw. You’re an awesome friend Wong. I get it. I’ll just make Stephen tell me what’s up when I come to see you two.”

“I look forward to it.”

“Okay, see you later…like, in a couple days? Maybe. I don’t know. We don’t really have an itinerary that we’re following.”

“I understand. I shall pass along the information. I’m glad to have you back with us Darcy. Goodbye.”

“Byyyyye!”

On their sixth morning at the hotel, Tony woke her in the most mind blowing way. Darcy sniffed at the air as she was dragged back into consciousness by her nose.

“Bacon.” Darcy blearily called out.

“Bacon and dessert.” Tony answered as he pressed the strip to her lips and hand fed her. As she chewed the delicious and fatty meat she asked, “And dessert?”

Tony kissed her quickly, licking at her lips as he half hugged her, half moved to her up into a sitting position.

“I figured since this is our last morning in our little love cabana—”

“Hotel room, not a cabana.” Darcy corrected, but Tony ignored her repeating, “I figured that since this is our last morning, we might as well live it up with a decadent breakfast.”

“Hence the bacon.” Darcy surmised as she rubbed at her eyes and finally looked over at Tony. Tony was poised with another strip of bacon at the ready. Darcy gave him a drowsy smile and opened her mouth obligingly.

“Hence the bacon.” Tony repeated with a heated look. She might have sucked on his fingertips a little more than was necessary.

“I’m digging the decadence.” Darcy said as she chewed.

Tony’s eyes sparkled. “Thought you might.”

Tony stared at her just watching her chew in a weirdly adorable way. When she was finished he brought a cup to her face and encouraged her to sip at the straw.

“What’s in this?”

“Banana smoothie.” Tony leaned in and kissed her neck as she drank, “Delicious and healthy.”

Darcy ran her hand through his hair, scratching at the back of his scalp languidly. “Yummy. No kale.”

Tony pulled away with a pout, “That was one time.”
“And I’ll never accept a smoothie from you again without asking what’s inside.” She laughed lightly at Tony’s put out expression, “Aw, don’t be mad. I really like my smoothie. Thank you.”

Tony’s face softened. “You’re welcome.” His face quickly shifted into a devilish expression. “But that’s not all.”

“There’s more? What’s a more decadent breakfast than banana smoothies and hand feeding me bacon?”

Tony turned away from her and grabbed the breakfast in bed tray that lay over his legs. He tugged it closer and with a flourish he took the cover off a plate to reveal, “Donuts!”

“Yum!”

“Not just any donuts. Mexican hot chocolate donuts.” Tony explained. He brought one up to her lips and Darcy laughed.

“You know I can feed myself right?” She protested even as she opened her lips and took a bite of the dark chocolate doughy desert. “Mmmmm. S’good.”

“Indulge me?” Tony asked as he took a bite of her donut from the other side. With a full mouth Tony professed, “I just like ‘aking care of ‘ou.”

Darcy let out a sigh and then made a show of leaning back on the pillows. She eyed him and then opened her mouth expectantly. Tony smiled warmly and fed her another bite.

“I love ‘ou.” Darcy declared with her mouth full.

“That all it takes to win your heart?” Tony teased, “Bacon and donuts?”

“Don’t forget the multiple orgasms.” Darcy reminded.

Tony let out a loud laugh, “Good. ‘Cause after this I was thinking we have good-bye-hotel-room sex. Ya know, if you’re in the mood?” Tony gave her a comically lecherous look and waggled his eyebrows invitingly.

Darcy giggled as Tony pressed the donut to her lips again, only to take his hands off it and hold it to her lips with his own mouth, eating it from the other side like they were freaking Lady and the Tramp.

But donuts weren’t as easy to keep aloft as spaghetti so the donut invariably fell down between them. Uncaring, Tony surged forward and gave her a messy donut-full-mouthed kiss. As Darcy tried to simultaneously chew and kiss him back, she couldn’t help but think of Pepper and the last time the three of them had enjoyed breakfast in bed together.

“You’re mushing the donut into the comforter.” Darcy complained as Tony groped at her breast. But when he moved to straddle her waist and accidently spilled some of the banana smoothie down her front, she forgot about feeling guilty.

As Tony set about licking her clean of the healthy and delicious morning drink, she forgot about everything but Tony and how good he made her feel.

“Breakfast covered Darcy.” Tony moaned as he slipped beneath the covers to align his face with her lower half.
“It is the most important meal of the day.” Darcy quipped as moved to position her legs on top of his shoulders.

After a nutritious round of goodbye hotel-bed-sex, they made their way to the bathroom and had goodbye hotel-shower-sex. After that, sadly they had to get dressed.

The previous night Tony received a call from the new Jarvis, his AI assistant now had a woman’s voice and was called Friday. Apparently he had been waiting for some parts to be 3-D printed for a new device he was working on and the pieces were ready for assembly. Darcy who heard the whole conversation, didn’t want to be a burden and disrupt his life more than her appearance already had, so she insisted they go home in the morning.

Wrapped in towels they brushed their teeth side by side as they talked about their return to New York. The destination was to be the tower in the formerly named Stark Tower, renamed Avengers Tower, but, after Ultron Tony built the Avengers a separate facility in upstate New York, so who knew what the Tower was called now. D

“So, do you wanna make any stops on the way home?” Tony asked.

“Stops?”

Tony shrugged, “We could detour to fly over Paris? Italy? If you wanted--”

“Tony no. It’s time to go home and get back to real life.” Darcy insisted as spat out into the sink and rinsed off her toothbrush. “I can’t be this…sporadic wrecking ball that comes into your life and upends all your plans. You’re working on a project. Let’s just get you back so you can do what you were doing before I arrived.”

“You’re not--” Tony spat out into the sink and then grabbed her shoulders turning her to face him, “You are not a wrecking ball.”

“You know what I mean.” Darcy demurred.

Tony shook his head and pulled her in close, wrapping her up in a hug. His bare chest felt so warm under her cheek his skin was still hot from the shower. Darcy pressed her lips together in an effort to not to start crying. She grabbed at his back hugging returning his embrace desperately as she soaked in the physical comfort he was offering.

Tony stroked a hand down her back. “I’m not Pepper. I don’t crave normalcy. I don’t like routine. I don’t care about things getting messy. In fact I thrive in chaos. It’s inspirational, you’re inspirational.”

“But I show up and it’s like I expect you to drop everything and come running. It’s so arrogant. I’m so arrogant! Like a fucking a tornado I destroy--”

“Kid, we live in a rainbow of chaos. It’s the most natural thing in the world and the most beautiful.”

“Tony…” She said his name like it was a desperate plea but had no words to follow.

Tony gave her a hearty squeeze. “I’m a fan of your surprise appearance. It may suck being left behind but for me, that doesn’t outweigh how good it is when you are here.”
Darcy worried, unable to keep the tremble of emotion out of her voice. “I don’t want you to hate me.”

“I could never.”

“I’ll never stop leaving.” Darcy warned.

“I’ll always be here when you come back.”

“I don’t want you to resent me for appearing out of nowhere and ruining all of your plans.”

“Hey.” Tony threaded his hands into her still wet hair and tipped her head back so he could look at her face, “I love you. That’s the plan.”

He kissed her then, softly, and Darcy clung to him desperate to believe the things he said were true. That her trust in him, in their relationship, wasn’t misplaced as it had been with Pepper.

Tony left her in the bathroom to get dressed, as she didn’t want to be plagued with frizzy hair if they were going to be around actual people. She pulled out the little complimentary blow dryer and set about taming her wild mane.

When she came out of the bathroom her hair was dry and straight with only a slight wave. Her natural curls tamed by the heat and moisture, though she really was no good at styling with the blow-dryer so straight and untangled was the best she could do, especially with such limited supplies.

“I got you something.” Tony informed her as she emerged, “To replace that red dress you tore in your effort to get into my pants.”

He gave her a rakish smile and Darcy blushed. She had kept the red dress James had bought her, thinking she would have to wear it if they went anywhere but they never did leave the hotel room. Which was a good thing because Tony was right, she had torn it pretty terribly when she jumped into his arms when she first saw him. Right up the left thigh the dress had ripped almost up to her hip.

Tony opened a garment bag that he’d laid across the bed, she’d seen it hung up in the closet a couple of days ago but had assumed it was just another spare suit for Tony. She admired the expensive skirt and bustier he pulled out, but smiled really big when he produced a soft and cozy sweater from the bottom of the bag.

“When did you have time to go shopping?” Darcy asked.

Tony just held up his phone and waved at her in response.

“Oh, right.” Darcy mumbled.

“There’s also some hair and makeup stuff in the top drawer in the bathroom.” Tony informed her as he put on his perfectly pressed pants.

“When did you—how was I not aware that you got all of this stuff? We’ve been together this whole time.”

Tony smirked at her as he buttoned up his fly, “It all arrived when you passed out on day four after your eleventh orgasm.”
Darcy let out a laugh, “You are such a good boyfriend.”

She disappeared into the bathroom to get ready and reemerged fifteen minutes later, naked save her robe, but with perfect make up and actually styled hair. She put it up in a sleek twist and secured it with the hair ties Tony had provided.

Tony nodded in approval, “Very chic.”

“Thanks.” Darcy blushed, “I’m actually excited to put on clothes and go be out among people again.”

“Sick of me already?” Tony asked with a mock frown.

“Sick of these four walls is more like it.” Darcy said with a wink. Tony let her get dressed in peace as he tapped away on his tablet, probably contacting their driver or calling however they needed to get the plane ready to go.

When she was fully dressed she reached for the purse that James had bought for her but Tony let out an ‘ah ah ahh’ noise and she froze. Tony stood up from the chair he’d been lounging and pulled something from out behind his back.

He presented it to her with a “Ta da!”

Darcy bit her lip, before replying “Is that purse?”

“You like it?” Tony asked with an expectant grin. The purse looked like an upturned magician’s hat, with a pair of pink bunny ears sticking out the top. “I figured you could do that spell while I watched. I really want to see how the trick is done.”

Darcy loved the purse but looking back at the purse James had bought her she felt a little bad.

“You don’t like it?” Tony asked sounding disappointed.

Darcy looked back at him and moved to take the purse from his hands, “No I do. I really do. I just… my stuff’s already packed and it’s a pain in the ass to transfer it all.”

“Oh, that’s fine.” Tony’s mustache twitched as forced himself to keep smiling, but his smile looked plastic.

Darcy went up on her tip toes to give him a kiss on the cheek, “I really do love it though.”

Tony nodded and moved around her. He had a little overnight bag and he threw his tablet inside. When she reached for the blue coat that James bought her Tony made a noise yet again.

“What?” Darcy asked.

“I got you a better coat.” Tony opened the closet door and pulled out an expensive looking trench coat.

“Here.” He held it out for her and nodded to the blue one, “That one’s made of wool and its 78 degrees outside. Beside this goes with your whole outfit.”
“Okay.” Darcy agreed easily. She moved forward and allowed him to help her into the coat. She quickly buttoned it and tied the sash around the waist only to squeal with delight when she realized it wasn’t just a trench coat. “It has a cape!”

Tony leaned in and quickly kissed her lips, “I thought you would like that.”

“I love capes.”

“I know.” Tony cheered.

“I love capes because of Thor and his awesome cape.”

“I know.” Tony pouted.

Darcy laughed at his expression and patted him consolingly on the back, “I’m sorry honey, Iron Man would look stupid with a cape.”

“I know.” Tony said glumly. He looked adorably forlorn with cape envy.

Darcy went looking for her red shoes but they were nowhere to be found. “Hey, Tony. Do you know where I put my shoes?”

“I threw them out.”

“What!” Darcy gasped.

Tony crinkled his brow as he stared at her quizzically, “You said Barnes got them for you at a thrift shop. They were old. I didn’t think you’d care.”

Darcy opened her mouth to argue but, in all honesty she didn’t really want to wear thrift shop (possibly foot fungus infested) shoes. Especially not without socks. She had only done so out of necessity. Still though, she was annoyed that he threw them out as James had bought them for her. And thus they had sentimental value.

“I got you new ones, don’t worry.” Tony assuaged as he pulled a box out from under the bed.

Darcy scrunched her nose as she watched him sit on the bed and unwrap the shoes. “Who are you, Santa Claus? Why didn’t you tell me you bought me all this fancy stuff? And why did you hide it from me until now?”

“I wanted to surprise you.” Tony said, he then pat the bed, “Now come and sit so I can slip these very expensive and sexy shoes onto your delicate and dainty feet.”

“But their heels Tony.” Darcy pouted as she stomped forward and sat down on the bed as he had asked. She whined, “Heeeeels.”

“You don’t like them?” Tony went down on one knee in front of her, slightly amusing her with his intent to follow through with his Cinderella fantasy.

“Honey, shut up, you know you have amazing taste. They’re gorgeous. But that heel is like…three inches.” Tony nodded and picked up her left ankle. He leant forward and kissed her knee.

“I hear you.” He whispered against her skin. Moving down he kissed her shin, then he kissed the top of her foot. “I just want you to have all the best things Darce.”

He lifted her foot and kissed the sensitive arch of her foot. Smiling as she wiggled her toes in his
face. He grabbed her wiggling appendages and covered them with his hand, warming them.

“Don’t tell me you have some weird foot fetish I never noticed before.” Darcy teased.

“Nah, just a Darcy fetish.” Tony said with a wink. He released her foot and proved that he really was a genius when he pulled a thick band-aid out of his back pocket. “For your heels. I know new shoes can chafe so I also have a pair of flats in my bag but I figured if you where them to the plane and then off it, it shouldn’t be too bad and if it gets bad. Flats.”

“Okay,” Darcy conceded, “I’m a little less annoyed with you now.”

Tony opened the band aid and put it on her heel then slipped her foot into the pink heeled bootie. It really was a gorgeous shoe, it had this ballerina vibe but the pointy heel and toe made it seem badass and classy but in a soft way.

“I’m sorry.” Tony apologized as he repeated the process on her other foot, “I knew you would need some clothes to wear on the plane since your dress was destroyed and you said the dress you brought back from Asgard was a full on gown.”

Tony finished ‘shoeing’ her but stayed on his knees in front of her as spoke, “I couldn’t sleep so I indulged in some retail therapy after you passed out that first night. I bought the sweater first, knowing you like soft and fuzzy things. Everything else, I just caught up… I just want you to have everything you need…. I want to be able to give you everything you need.”

The look in his eyes was haunted and it had her sliding off the bed to join him on the floor. Tony backed up but remained kneeling. She copied his pose, going up on her own knees. She grabbed his hands in hers and interlaced their fingers. She opened her mouth to speak but ultimately closed it, lost for words. Instead she leant forward. Tony reading her intent, craned his neck down so their lips could meet. She kissed him gently but firmly. Hopefully telling him without words that he was enough.

Because it really wasn’t about the shoes. Or the clothes. She internally cursed herself for being so self-centered. She should have noticed how unsettled Tony was feeling before then.

Tony was her rock but he was also human. And he too had broken up with Pepper and had his confidence shaken. He too probably felt anxious about their future as a couple, felt ashamed for having been broken up with. And like her, he too needed reassurance that he was loved and had value and wasn’t less than for his flaws.

When their lips parted Darcy stared into his eyes and spoke decisively, “You. Are everything I need.”

She tugged on their joined hands, “If you had nothing but these two hands,” She let go of his hands and thread her fingers into his hair, she gripped his hair tightly pulling on it almost, “If you had nothing but this mad scientist brain. Your wit and charm. I would love you. Strip away all of the other things and the thing I love most about you, is you.”

Tony wrapped his arms around her waist as she let her arms fall down around his neck, “Do you believe me?”

Tony swallowed thickly and nodded. Darcy dove in and quickly kissed him on the lips. She then put her hands on his shoulders, using him as crutch to help her stand up she said, “Good.”

She smiled at the image Tony down on his knees looking up at her in wonder, “Good, cause I changed my mind. I want to transfer all my stuff into the purse you bought me.”
Within an hour and a half they were on Tony’s private jet and getting ready for takeoff. It was an 8 hour flight and Darcy was sure there was no one else in the world she would rather be trapped in the air with than Tony. Especially when he dismissed the flight attendants and they spent an hour christening the plane.

Darcy had never understood what the big deal was with the ‘mile high’ club, and now that she was a part of it, she still didn’t get the hype. It wasn’t like they floated while they were doing it. …Sex was still good though.

After sexing each other up, they settled in and passed the time by watching the classic Leslie Nielsen flick, Airplane! It felt good to sit back and relax with Tony and laugh. Not that they had done much else for the past week, but still. It was nice. Tony kept her awake the rest of the time by having her insert random object into her infinity purse and retrieve them, conjure things into her hand (mostly from inside the purse) and catch marshmallows in her mouth that he threw to her. Tony was a much better marshmallow mouth catcher than her.

When they arrived back in New York Darcy was surprised to see so many people waiting for them. They didn’t have any baggage to claim so after deplaning they went straight to the curbside pickup area. Happy was there waiting as she expected and he waved at them with a dour look on his face from his place by the car, but neither she nor Tony waved back. Forced to remain outside the airports sliding doors by airport security, there was a sea of photographers and reporters standing between Tony and Darcy and Happy and the car.

“Glasses.” Tony counseled as he slipped a pair of tinted shades onto his own face. He handed her a similar pair and she did as instructed, feeling a bit like a fool considering it was 11 o’clock at night. However the camera flashes and shining lights mounted on video cameras demanded the protection.

“Fuck.” Darcy cursed in an awed tone. Happy pushed his way in between the mob to get to them. Tony put his arm though hers and kissed her on the cheek, murmuring in her ear covertly, “Are you my public girlfriend?”

“I thought we agreed--” Darcy stopped herself as she realized that she was about to say ‘I thought we agreed not to go public with our relationship’ but she realized that they had agreed, back when it was the three of them. But now that it was just her and Tony? There was no fear for polyamorous-related scandal….unless they somehow found out about Stephen. But really he kind of lived like a monk. So….

“Do you want me to be your public girlfriend?” Darcy whispered back. Tony gave her a serious look, “Only if you want to be.”

“I want to be with you.” Darcy answered automatically, she gripped his arm with her free hand and smiled crazily, “You jump I jump Jack.”
Tony gave her this shit eating grin that Darcy knew meant he was about to do something very naughty.

Tony pulled her into his arms dramatically and lowered her into a dip. Right before he kissed her Darcy chided, “You are such a drama queen.”

The photographers and reporters went crazy. The sound of camera shutters going off was the only thing she could hear, but the only thing she could feel was Tony’s lips against hers and his arms around her waist keeping her safe and saving her from falling.

The Outfit Tony bought Darcy while they were on sexcation.

Tony and his shit eating grin right before kissing Darcy in front of a sea of reporters.
Chapter 33 - Stephen Strange and Tony Stark

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up with Stephen and Tony.

Chapter Notes

I am overwhellemed by all the love I recieved last chapter. Truly guys, thank you.

HOWEVER, my winter vacation is over. : ( which means we will return to weekly updates, (usually on the weekend sometime) Sorry, work sucks up a lot of my free time. But, here's a new chapter, so bad news, good news.

ALSO, I'm leaving the rating of the story where it is, I am not turning this story porny or graphic, but there is some sexy description in the chapter. If you think I should up the rating, I'm not doing that, I'll just edit the chapter and neuter it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 33 – Stephen Strange and Tony Stark

“Do you want me to be your public girlfriend?” Darcy whispered back. Tony gave her a serious look, “Only if you want to be.”

“ I want to be with you.” Darcy answered automatically, she gripped his arm with her free hand and smiled crazily, “You jump I jump Jack.”

Tony let out laugh then pulled her into his arms dramatically and spun her into a dip. Right before he kissed her Darcy teased, “You are such a drama queen.”

The photographers and reporters went crazy. The sound of camera shutters going off was the only thing she could hear, but the only thing she could feel was Tony’s lips against hers and his arms around her keeping her from falling.

Tony kissed the crap out of her.

When he pulled her out of the dip she kept hold of his arm as she was left a little dazed by the kiss. Tony pecked her lips quickly, promising “This is gonna be great.”

Happy finally made his way through the crowd to them.
“Hey Hap. How’s tricks?” Tony greeted his long time employee/friend.

“Why’d you have to wind them up like that?” Happy grumbled exasperatedly looking at Tony and then her, “There gonna be after us all the way back to the tower now.”

Tony, ever the showman, put a hand around her waist and pushed Happy gently aside so he could address the assembled press. He gestured to her body up and down and called out, “Hey fella’s, meet the new Missus.”

“I’ve made a huge mistake.” Darcy said quietly as questions began to be screamed at them.

“Mr. Stark, is this your new girlfriend?”
“Cute couple, look over here and give us a smile.”
“Where’s Pepper?”
“Hey, Tony, are you gonna make this new one CEO too?”
“Tony, hey Tony over here!”
“Are you and Miss Potts officially over?”

The paparazzi were relentless. Happy glared at them as he moved in front of them to shield them from the wave of inquiries. As Happy cleared a path through the reporters and photographers, she and Tony stayed closed behind him, using him as a human shield of sorts.

Darcy couldn’t help but cower and clutch at Tony as more questions were hurtled in their direction.

“What’s your name honey?”
“Give us a smile.”
“Why do you look so familiar?”
“Are you pregnant?”
“How old is she Tony? 25?”
“How does it feel to break up the most the world’s most high profile power couple?”
“Where are the other Avengers?”
“Isn’t this Pepper Pott’s best friend that she was always running around with last year?”

When they reached the car Happy opened the door for them and stood at the ready to close it behind them, but Tony held her back from scurrying inside like she wanted to. Instead Tony turned them towards the press, and whispered in her ear, “You look beautiful. Don’t shy away from the attention. Embrace it.”

Darcy who kept her head down the whole time they were walking gave a little glance up at Tony’s face. Tony took the opportunity to peck her on the lips and murmur some advice against her mouth, “Just smile and wave kid. Smile and wave.”

Darcy took a deep breath and turned to the photographers and smiled cheerfully hoping none of them would know how tightly she was holding onto the back of Tony’s jacket. She felt so uncomfortable with being photographed like she was a celebrity on the red carpet or something. She also realized as she was being nearly blinded with flashes, how bitchy her and Tony ‘showing off’ might seem to Pepper when she caught wind of this.

Tony turned and kissed her on the cheek at the same time he tickled her side, causing her to smile and laugh genuinely. Flashes went off like crazy.

And after a minute of posing Tony held up his hand warding the photographers off, and remarkably most of them lowered their cameras.
“Everybody get a good shot?” Tony asked with a smile, “Excellent, then we’ll be on our way. See ya next time guys.” A few of the photographers called out as they were getting into the car.

“Thanks Iron Man!”
“You’re the best Tony.”
“Good luck to you and your new girl Pal.”
“Thanks Mr. Stark.”

Once they were safely enclosed in the town car Tony turned to her and asked, “So how’d you like your first taste of the limelight?”

Darcy pursed her lips, “Signs are hazy, ask again later?”

“Fair enough.” Tony said as he interlaced their hands and brought her knuckles to his lips for a kiss. Darcy scooted closer and settled against Tony’s side, it had been a long flight and dealing with the press had freaked her out a bit. She was glad that the press wasn’t going to pursue them all the way home like Happy had feared.

As Happy finally got into the driver’s seat and started up the car Darcy asked, “Do they always swarm you like that?”

Tony put his arm around her shoulders and pulled her into his side further, “Nah, but being seen out and about with a new beautiful woman? Yeah, that’ll draw a crowd. Especially since there’s been rumors of a split between me and Potts flying around.”

Darcy fiddled with her crystal ring as she worried, “One of the paparazzi said I looked familiar and then one of them recognized me as Peppers ‘best friend’.”

Tony ran his hand over her hair comfortingly, “Yeah well, come morning they’ll have dredged up the old pictures of you me and Pep going out and probably the ones of just you and Pep, spinning a tale of friendship and betrayal.”

Darcy jerked her head up to stare at Tony anxiously, “Oh my god, you think?”

“Most likely.” Tony looked down at her with a sympathetic expression, “But don’t worry, we’ll handle it.”

“How?” Darcy frowned and put her head back down onto Tony’s shoulder, “I didn’t think this through.”

“Regret being seen with me already? That was fast.” Tony remarked amusedly, but Darcy sensed the bite underpinning his words.

“Regret being with you? Never.” She put a hand on his stomach, “Regret announcing we’re together without discussing it with Pepper first and possibly warning her and perhaps receiving some advice and pointers on how to deal with the insatiable press? Yeah, maybe.”

Tony didn’t respond. Darcy suspected he hadn’t really thought there little stunt through either. They rode back to the Tower in tired silence.

When they arrived at the Tower they said goodbye to Happy and basically passed out the second
they reached the bedroom. Darcy made sure that they were touching as they slept, just in case she teleported. If she was to be yanked across the universe she really didn’t want to do it alone. Especially after the intimate week she and Tony had spent together growing closer than ever.

The next morning, which was actually sometime in the afternoon, Darcy awoke to find the ‘info-tainment’ world all a twitter with the news of her and Tony’s coupling. Some focused on her ambiguous past connection to Pepper and Tony, some harped on the perceived age difference between the two of them, most of them though just compared her and Pepper to each other and speculated if she was just a rebound or if she was ‘in-it-for-the-long-haul’ home wrecker. A lot of the press made the same joke about awkward Stark Industries holiday parties. Darcy was mortified and Tony was ambivalent.

He was sweet and understanding about how uncomfortable this all was for her, but…he just didn’t relate. He was too used to being shit on by the media. Too used to having his person criticized, what he wore, who he dated, what products his company made, it was all fodder for public consumption. He just saw the whole media whirlwind as normal.

When Tony left her to go to the labs and work on his project, Darcy begged off. Usually she loved to hang out while he worked, but she didn’t feel like it that first day back. She made an excuse about wanting to relax and watch a movie but she really spent the rest of the afternoon and most of the evening reading and watching everything that was said about them. When Tony came up for dinner, Darcy hid the evidence of her media binging and put a happy face on. She and Tony ordered in and spent the rest of the evening eating take out in the bathtub. Afterwards they made love in the bed she and he used to share with Pepper. It was a little more emotional than the sex they had on vacation and Darcy actually shed a few tears from the emotion of it all.

The next day Tony again retreated to workshop. Again she made excuses and Tony reluctantly left her to her own devices. As Tony was wont to do, he got wrapped up in his work and she didn’t see him again until well past dinner time.

However, again she spent the day wrapped up in absorbing all the media coverage of her and Tony, and when he approached her quietly from behind she didn’t notice he was there until it was too late.

She was still in her pajamas with a blanket around her shoulders, staring at a tablet held five inches from her face listening intently as some ‘vlogger’ talked over a slideshow of pictures from Tony and Pepper’s past. The video blogger, was a hardcore Tony/Pepper shipper and they were analyzing the power couples body language as they were photographed at various events. “You see how Tony just makes Pepper’s poised and perfect shell crack? Look at this picture right here. Tony’s ignoring the press and totally focused on Pepper and making her laugh. And it works! Pepper’s hiding her face because Tony makes her feel more than she’s used too. He is the heat that melts her icy exterior. And in the second picture, can you see how warm her smile is? Everyone talks about how good Pepper is for Tony, but no one ever mentions what he does to make Pepper more likable. Without Tony, would Pepper Potts be as badass? Probably. But would be rooting for her? I don’t think so. Now, let’s take a look at the picture of Tony and his new ‘girlfriend’. The difference between the two women could not be more obvious. Pepper Potts is tall and elegant. The new one is a short and fat gap toothed bitch who screams ‘I live in a trailer park’--”

“Intervention.” Tony declared with a smile as he nimbly stole the tablet out of her hands.

Darcy made to grab it back but Tony threw it across the room onto the opposing couch far out of
either of their reach, he slid over the back of the couch so he was seated almost in her lap. He then stole her blanket.

“Hey!” Darcy exclaimed indignanty as she watched her boyfriend toss the blanket onto the floor behind them.

“You didn’t get dressed? Jeez Darce, don’t tell me you spent the day watching this trash?”

Darcy pouted but as Tony stared back at her steadily she couldn’t help but crack. With a down turned mouth and watery eyes Darcy wailed, “I’M A WHORE!”

“What?” Tony’s eyes widened comically as she began to cry.

“Entertainment Tonight said you downgraded from classy to trashy. With my trench coat on and all buttoned up and tied, no one saw my cute outfit! They said I might be a stripper or an escort you hired to hang off your arm to make Pepper jealous! They said I might be a stripper or an escort you hired to hang off your arm to make Pepper jealous! They said it was obvious I was naked under the coat and that the only thing I was good for was ‘consoling you’, cuz, cuz, the skirt was so short that it couldn’t be seen with the trench on!” Darcy let out a sob.

“So what?” Tony cooed, “Who gives a shit what one shitty infotainment show says?”

“It’s not just one Tony!” Darcy blubbered, “Access Hollywood said I’m young enough to be your daughter and we’re just a phase and that the supermodels of the world needed to beware because you were obviously on the prowl--”

“Darcy, honey--” Tony tried to speak but Darcy just talked over him as she sobbed, “One of the tabloids said I was too fat and too short to hold your interest for long. Said I was classic rebound junk food. I’m junk food! Something you eat when there’s nothing better around.” Darcy began to cry so hard that she couldn’t speak.

Tony grabbed her around the waist and pulled her closer before picking her up and plopping her on his lap. Darcy reflexively curled up against him, fitting her head into the crook of his neck to hide her tears. She was so embarrassed for reacting this way to a bunch of gossip mongers but she couldn’t help it. Every little jab at her appearance, every slight against her integrity and every dig at her motivation in dating Tony, it just got to her. It hurt her.

It hurt her to love Tony so totally and completely and to have that love judged and ridiculed and mocked. She felt betrayed by the lying and cruelty of the media. She felt exposed and vulnerable in a way she had never thought possible. All she wanted to do was hide.

Tony wrapped his arms around her and held her tight. His voice was steady and strong as he comforted her, “You are a goddess and they are all scum...But baby, you can’t let them get to you like this.”

Darcy pressed her face into Tony’s neck as she whimpered against him, “I can’t help it.”

The sounds of her muffled crying were amplified as Tony went quiet for a minute. He ran his hands up and down her legs and back, touching her comfortingly as he seemingly searched for the right thing to say.

“I’m sorry.” Tony whispered. “I love you.”

He held her and stroked her skin calmly until her crying died down into whimpers and sniffles. Darcy wiped her snotty nose on his shirt as she trembled, “One guy said that when you crawling back to Pepper it better be with a clean STD test in hand.”
Tony’s arms tensed around her and he paused in petting her before he continued touching her, “I’m so sorry. I should have never pushed for us to come out publicly. I’m an ass.”

Darcy shook her head ‘no’ before pulling back so she could look at his face, “No. No you’re not an ass…the worlds an ass.”

Tony let out a harsh sounding laugh.

“I didn’t realize how bad it was for you.” Darcy revealed, “I didn’t know what it was like being a ‘public figure’.”

“It’s worse for women.” Tony conceded. Darcy nodded. Even with her transformation into a ‘full’ Asgardian, she still looked physically just the same as she always had been.

Generally she didn’t feel self-conscious or hate the way she looked. Sure she wanted to be taller to reach things on high shelves, or sometimes wished her boobs were smaller when her under boob sweat was out of control or she saw a tiny bralette that looked cute but would never work to contain her ample bounty…she had curves and she wasn’t ashamed of them. But it felt like everyone wanted her to be.

She wanted to ask Tony if he thought she was fat, but she knew how he’d respond.

“Do you want to break up publicly and go back to dating in secret?” Tony questioned in a tight voice.

“No.” Darcy said without hesitation, “I’m all in.”

“You don’t have to--”

“I’m all in.” Darcy repeated more adamantly, “I love you and I hate the way I am being talked about but, it’s not enough to drive me away from you Tony. Nothing anyone else says will ever change how I feel about you.”

Darcy sat up and Tony wiped away a few stray tears, she leaned into his touch and he brought their mouths together for a gentle kiss.

“I’m with you.” Darcy declared softly.

“I love you.” Tony responded.

They spent the rest of the night making love.

Darcy and Tony ended up reverting back to their old ‘sex-cationing’ ways. They stayed hold up in the apartment, wrapped up in each other for the most part for two weeks straight. They had sex a lot, but they also did other things.

Darcy started accompanying Tony down to his workshop again. When they were in the workshop, she kept track of time for both of them and made sure they took breaks to eat and drink water and orgasm. Tony didn’t like stopping for breaks at first as he said, “breaks break my concentration” but once he started to associate break time with sex time, he was less annoyed with her insistence that he stop and take care of himself.
At first, Tony tried teaching her some of the basics of mechanical engineering, only to discover she had the basics down thanks to Rocket and his lessons aboard the Milano. Tony, excited about her interest in his chosen field, set her up at a table next to his. He gave her everything she needed to make a tiny robot toy that could stagger around and say ‘Danger Will Robinson!’ and challenged her to construct it by herself while he continued to work on his latest invention. Tony had been so proud of her when she finally put the damn thing together after a week of trial and error, that she was tempted by his offer to take her out on the town to celebrate. Still wary about venturing out into the cruel world, Darcy offered an alternative way to celebrate her success.

They ended up inviting Happy and Rhodey over for dinner. Sick of ordering in, Darcy offered to cook even though Tony argued they were celebrating her success and she shouldn’t have to do any work. Insistent, she tried to cook anyway. Happy and Rhodes walked in just as Tony put out the fire she had accidentally set in her attempt to make ‘shrimp flambéed with pastis’. It really hadn’t seemed all that complicated, she wasn’t sure how it had gone so wrong so fast.

“Hey.” Rhodes greeted with a bemused grin. Darcy blushed and crossed her arms in front of her burnt blouse. Good news was, being Asgardian had made her somewhat fireproof, bad news, her clothes were decidedly not.

“Hey boys,” Tony said jovially, “Dinners gonna be a little late. Technical difficulties. You understand.”

Darcy hung her head in shame, “I can’t believe this.”

Happy inched closer to the phone that lie on the counter top. “Hey boss. You want me to call Gino’s and order--”

Darcy cut him off with a shrill, “NO!”

She pointed at Happy with a stern expression, “Don’t you dare touch that phone Happy! We are eating a home cooked meal or so help me! I will not eat another meal that comes out of a box or is pre-packaged or microwavable. I just won’t do it!”

Darcy furrowed her brow in confusion as Happy’s cheeks pinked and he quickly turned around so she was facing his back. She turned to Rhodes but he too was averting his eyes to the other wall. Tony hugged her loosely from behind; he ran his hands across the exposed skin of her stomach. There was a big circular shaped burn in her shirt that extended from below her navel to just over the tops of her breasts exposing her pink lacy bra, which thankfully, remained intact. Reminded of her indecent state of dress Darcy blushed as Tony whispered in her ear, “Darcy baby, why don’t you go put on something a little less revealing. Wouldn’t want my two best friends getting jealous because I have an amazing and beautiful girlfriend and their still flying solo.”

“Excuse me.” Darcy muttered as she fled for the bedroom in search of new clothes.

When she emerged once again properly dressed for company, she found the three men joking and laughing in the kitchen. Happy was flipping something in a pan on the stove and he was ordering Rhodes to stir something slower and chastising Tony for eating the veggies he was chopping. “Those are for the salad boss, stop eating them!”

“I didn’t know you can cook Happy.” Darcy said as she ventured inside. Tony waggled his eyebrows as she passed him, she opened her mouth and let him feed her a fresh slice of cucumber. She walked over to Happy and sniffed deeply at the air over the pan he was holding. “That smells really good.”
Happy smiled proudly, “I watch a lot of Top Chef.”

In the end, with Happy directing everything they managed to make something tasty and edible. By the end of the night she was chatting and joking amicably with the two men Tony considered his closest friends in the world and she was happy that they all got along. She had been a little worried that they might hate her due to split loyalties between her and Pepper, but she didn’t sense any hostility or tension from either man.

When they finished eating Tony poured them all drinks and they played a wholesome game of Pictionary. It was a really nice night.

A couple days later, Tony finished his newest project and had Friday double check his work. This would apparently take several hours as he had Friday scanning his newest invention line by line, examining every bit of code that went into the thing.

They were taking the ‘day off’ to relax. Tony tried to get her to play a video game with him, but she had never been a fan of shooting games or car killing pedestrian games or the games that had a super long story arc and felt like a movie but weren’t. He broke down and set them up to play Mario Kart, which was one of the only games he had that she was familiar with. After an hour though, she grew bored and quit. Tony pouted but quickly changed the game to something more bloodthirsty where he had to shoot zombies.

In between all the robot building, sex, and mechanical engineering lessons Darcy had done a lot of online shopping. She knew that eventually they would have to leave the tower and she didn’t want the press ripping her apart again. So, she bought tons of new clothes, the classiest most expensive stuff that caught her eye. All with Tony’s blessing of course. But she also bought other things. Things that used to make her happy and she felt herself longing for.

When she sat down next to Tony with her ball of yarn, knitting needles, and a candy cigarette hanging from her lips Tony had laughed. “What the hell are you doing?”

“Not killing zombies.” Darcy answered in deadpan.

“You knit?” Tony asked as he paused the game and turned to face her fully.

“Yeah.” Darcy said with a shy smile, “I used to do it a lot, before. It’s very calming.”

“Before?” Tony prompted, his hand moving to draw mindless patterns on the exposed flesh above her knee socks and below her shorts.

“Before Thor.” Darcy answered, “After he arrived my powers got kicked into overdrive and I just never seemed to have time to knit anymore.” Keeping her eyes on her stitching she chomped down on her candy cigarette shortening the stick until only a little numb remained outside her mouth.

“Did you make this?” Tony tugged at the hem of her crocheted cape which was one of the few items she had from her life ‘before Thor’.

“No.” Darcy said with a sigh, she took her eyes off her hands and looked down at the cape she wore, “This. My grandma made me this for my sixteenth birthday. She’s the one who taught me to knit and sew.”
"You’ve never mentioned her." Tony commented as he put his hand flat on her thigh, “But I suppose I’ve never mentioned my Aunt Peg so--"

“She died. I loved her. What is there to say?” Darcy said in controlled voice, “She was old. It happens.”

Tony gave her thigh a comforting squeeze. “Aunt Peg is in an old folks home. She’s got Alzheimer’s…I used to visit her, but when she stopped recognizing me it just got too hard.”

“I’m sorry.” Darcy said quietly. “I didn’t know you had any family left…I thought you were like me.”

“I am.” Tony said with a forced smile, “Aunt Peg isn’t really related to me. She was just a friend of Howard’s. She was my godmother. Honorary family member. Or maybe family adjacent would be a better explanation.”

Tony looked down, staring at nothing. The expression on his face told her that he was lost in the past, and not in happy memories. Abruptly Tony looked up and forced a smile, “Let’s not talk about dead people anymore.”

Darcy stared back at Tony who was trying so hard to appear unaffected, “We don’t have to avoid talking about the hard stuff Tony. We can sit here and be sad together if we need to.”

Tony reached out a hand and caressed her cheek lightly. He then lurched forward and kissed her cheek while sticking his hand into the waistband of her shorts to retrieve the box of candy cigarettes she’d stuck there due to her lack of pockets. Tony obviously did not feel like commiserating so Darcy allowed the solemn moment to pass and tried to cheer up as Tony shook the candy box accusingly, “And what are these young lady?”

Darcy laughed at his tone. “I just had a hankering.” Darcy explained, “A sudden craving for some 90’s nostalgia.”

Tony opened the box and took one out and stuck it in his mouth before offering her another. She opened her mouth eagerly and he leaned forward to kiss her sloppily. Darcy laughed into his kiss, and quickly raised her hands in the air, moving her knitting out of the way. Tony took advantage and covered her body with his own.

Darcy let out a groan as their lower regions lined up and Tony began to grind at her. She licked at the candy stick he still had sticking out the corner of his in his mouth as Tony slipped his tongue into her mouth and teased her.

Tony moved away from her mouth and kissed his way across her jaw only to settle his lips on her neck. He began kissing and biting at her skin, try as he might to give her hickey her Asgardian tough skin would no longer allow it. Tony certainly had fun trying to mark her up though.

She let out a moan as Tony’s hand slowly dragged up the left side of her body, starting at her knee, up her thigh, over her hip, to her stomach. He dragged her shirt up, up, up until it exposed her bra. He kept his hand on her bra covered breast for a minute, just holding it and gently cupping her before he pulled the bra cup to expose her nipple. He then put his hand back on her knee and trailed his fingertips up her leg again, up over her thigh, her stomach, her breast, up up up until he threaded the hand into her hair. Darcy was tempted to drop her knitting onto the floor and touch Tony back but, if she dropped the stitch--

“Eh, hem.”
A voice cleared their throat and Tony jerked back off her. Going to his knees, still straddling and trapping her underneath him Tony was instantly alert. He quickly tapped at his watch and pulled something over his fingers so quickly that she could hardly see what he did, but a second later a thin version of his Iron Man gauntlet covered his hand. He did all of that before she even fixed her bra and pulled down her shirt. Tony kneeled tensely aiming the gauntlet at the owner of the voice she still couldn’t see due to being trapped flat on her back below him.

“Boss, Dr. Stephen Strange has arrived.” Friday informed them. Darcy sat up quickly, pulling her legs out from Tony as he climbed to his feet as well.

“A little late Friday.” Tony muttered as he lowered his hand. Darcy pushed past him so she could run to Stephen.

“I didn’t mean to interrupt—oof!” She jumped at Stephen who caught her but staggered back a step as she wrapped her legs around his waist.

“Sorry,” Darcy apologized as she grabbed his face in between his hands so she could lean forward and kiss him, “I’m” kiss “Asgardian now” kiss “hard to control my strength when I’m” kiss “Excited.”

Kiss. Darcy smiled into Stephen’s mouth as he responded just as enthusiastically to her kiss as the last time they had been together in her dream.

“I missed you.” Darcy whined as she pulled her mouth away from his so she could hug him properly.

Stephen squeezed her back, “I got your message from Wong, but you never called.”

Darcy pulled back with a wince, “Sorry. I..I totally forgot. There was this thing with the press and I kind of freaked out and we’ve been living like hermits ever since. And I…”

“Forgot.” Stephen said in a dry tone.

“Sorry?” Darcy leaned in and kissed him deeply, she kept kissing him until Stephen let out a muffled groan of pleasure. Only then did she pull back and ask with an impish grin, “Forgive me?”

Stephen laughed and hitched her up higher in his arms; Darcy tightened her legs around his waist. “How could I ever stay mad at you?” Stephen asked with an indulgent smile.

From behind them Tony made an annoyed noise. Darcy turned to see Tony standing awkwardly, with his hands inside the pockets of his sweatpants, “I’ll just leave you two alone to catch up.”

“No.” Darcy frowned and unwrapped her legs from around Stephen, “Just because Stephen came to see me doesn’t mean you have to go.”

“No, you two--” Tony’s eyes flickered from her face to Stephen’s, “I’m sure you want to get reacquainted after such a long separation.”

Tony seemed so annoyed and stiff and she just couldn’t let him leave. This felt like an important moment. Like whatever they did, however they decided to proceed, would affect them all for years to come. Relationship wise at least. Darcy quirked her head to the side and offered, “Why don’t we have a three-way date?”

“What?”

“What?!”
Darcy grabbed Stephen and tugged him along by the hand towards Tony where he stood in front of the couch they had just been making out on. “You’re right. It’s been a long time since I’ve seen Stephen and I missed him and I totally want to do some ‘catching up’ but first…why don’t we, the three of us, catch up. Together.”

“You want the three of us--?” Tony stuttered with wide eyes.

Darcy gave him a pointed look, “I want the three of us to spend some time together.”

“Darcy--” Stephen began, but Darcy glared at him and he shut up.

“I don’t want one of you to arrive and the other depart. I don’t want you two not to be able to have a conversation or be in the same room. I…I guess we never really talked about it but, I’d like--you are two of the most important people in the universe to me and I want you not to hate each other…is it so wrong that I want us all to get along?”

She stared imploringly at Stephen, knowing he was the easier of the two to convince. Stephen couldn’t help but buckle under the weight of her gaze, the confusion and discomfort melted off his expression and was replaced with begrudging acceptance. He pet a hand down her wild curls sighed, “Whatever you want Darcy. I just wanted to see you. I didn’t—this isn’t a booty call. I don’t expect anything from you and you don’t owe me anything.”

Darcy smiled and pulled him down by the lapels of his black sweater, she rushed up to meet his lips in a short but powerful victory kiss.

She then turned on Tony and fixed him with a sad pouty look. She even batted her eyes. Tony glared but she kept it up. Sticking her lip out she exaggerated her pout and asked in a pleading tone, “Please hang out with us Tony? Pleeeeeease?”

Tony rolled his eyes and Darcy knew she’d won. “Yay!” She celebrated with a little jump. She then turned to Stephen and pushed him down onto the couch in the left corner, “You sit there.”

She moved over to Tony and dragged him back to the couch and pushed him into sitting on the opposite end. She jumped into the middle and just smiled giddily, her head swiveling from Stephen’s amused expression, to Tony’s put out one.

“This is gonna be great.” She announced.

They sat stiffly and made polite conversations for five minutes before Darcy let out an loud exasperated noise, “Eraahghr!”

Tony smirked at her, “Something wrong dear?”

“This is so awkward!” Darcy declared shrilly.

“It could be worse.” Tony said with a shrug. When Darcy gave him a flat look he grinned mischievously, “I could have gotten more than just your top off when Stephen interrupted us.”

Darcy blushed and slapped a hand over her eyes grumbling loudly, “Awkward!”
Ten minutes later Darcy suggested they play a game.

“Spin the bottle?” Tony suggested.

“No.” Darcy denied.

“Go fish?” Stephen said.

Both Tony and Darcy shot that down, “No.” “Ugh, no.”

“Twister?” Darcy said with a shrug.

“Not unless it’s naked twister.” Tony said with a lecherous look, “Stephen can work the spinner.”

“Forget it.” Darcy grumped.

“How about poker?” Stephen suggested.

“Gambling’s not fun unless there’s risk and reward involved and Tony has more money than God so he wouldn’t be invested, and honestly money doesn’t really appeal to me either.” Darcy explained.

Stephen’s smile broadened and he raised an eyebrow, “Strip poker?”

Darcy was actually decent at poker, but Tony and Stephen were sharks, however what she lacked in poker knowledge she made up for with Tony/Stephen knowledge…and cheating. She could tell when Tony was bluffing and when Stephen had a good hand. They both had tells and that was the only reason she was still in the game….that and the cheating.

They’d been playing for an hour and half. Tony had lost his socks, his sweatshirt, and his sweatpants. Stephen was shirtless but still had his pants and one sock on. Darcy had strategically chosen to keep her socks and her shorts and her crocheted cape. The first item she took off had been her shirt. Her second had been her bra. Her boobs served as a pretty handy distraction device, but both men seemed to be committed to winning and after she won a couple hands in a row due to their inattention, both men were studiously avoiding looking at her at all.

“Call.”

“Two pair. Sixes and Jacks.”

“Straight flush king high.”

Darcy grinned mischievously, with neither man looking in her direction she stared at the pile of cards they were using to deal from and conjured an Ace into her hand. She discarded her unwanted Two slyly onto the floor as she cheerily announced, “Four aces.”

Both men groaned and Darcy toed her discarded Two card until the card was right under her foot which she pointedly kept flat to obscure her trickery.

“Come on!” Tony exclaimed as he removed his t-shirt.
“Either she is very good or we are just telegraphing our hands without realizing it.” Stephen sighed as he took off his other sock.

Darcy clapped happily, “Yay! I win.”

Next round Darcy let Stephen win. And after Tony pouted and whined about losing his undershirt, leaving him with only his boxers. Darcy stood and smiled devilishly. She climbed up on top of the table and untied the bow that kept her shorts up. She sashayed her hips and teasingly slid her shorts down her legs, bending over completely at the waist putting her butt on full display. She then snapped up and flung her shorts at Tony’s face. Stephen extended his hand for her to hold as she climbed down off the table and sat down like she hadn’t just strip teased the two of them.

“You’re evil.” Stephen said with a smile as he picked up the deck and dealt out a new hand.

“Fucking heartless kid.” Tony agreed.

Tony won the next hand and Stephen removed his pants, Darcy extended her leg up putting it on Tony’s shoulder. She tickled his ear with her toes and asked in a exaggerated helpless tone, “Help me take off my sock?”

Tony swallowed thickly and slowly dragged the lace knee high garment from her body. “You’re killing me Darce.”

Darcy smirked at Tony as she let her naked foot slide down his chest and rested it on top of his thigh, her toes just barely grazing his erection. She turned and gave Stephen an innocent look, “Am I killing you Stephen?”

“No.” Stephen’s eyes glowed (figuratively), “But you’re something-ing me.”

Darcy laughed and Stephen couldn’t help but let his eyes wander down her chest to watch her giggly parts.

She abruptly moved her leg off of Tony’s leg and sat up straight. She clapped her hands and gleefully demanded, “Another!” As she slapped the table.

She used her conjuring trick again and won. Both Tony and Stephen were only wearing boxers at this point so she had the biggest evilest grin on her face.

Tony glared at her, “I know you’re cheating.”

Darcy challenged, “Can you prove it?”

“No.”

“Then gimme those boxers.” Darcy demanded making grabby hands at Tony.

The playful glare fell from Tony’s face and his gaze shifted over to Stephen. “Maybe it’s time to stop playing games Darce.”

Darcy pouted and turned to look at Stephen, he was staring at Tony, “Perhaps Stark is right.”

“What?!” Darcy exclaimed, “But I won! You have to get naked. Them’s the rules!”

“Sweetheart--” Stephen said with a furrowed brow, “How far do you want to take this?”
“Take what?” Darcy asked honestly.

“Darcy,” Tony said her name flatly, making her turn her attention over to him, he fixed her with a serious stare, “You’re teasing us and I know that I have a raging erection, I’m guessing the good doctor has one too. So enough games.”

“I thought we were having fun.” Darcy said in small voice as she wrapped her arms around herself in a hug.

“We are having fun, but—the game’s over.” Stephen said softly.

“So?” Darcy asked.

Tony rolled his eyes, “So we want to know which one of us is gonna get to keep ‘playing’ with you and who’s gonna play one handed solitaire in the shower while thinking of you.”

Darcy blinked owlishly then pressed her lips together. She averted her gaze as she realized what a conundrum she had inadvertently created. In truth she had been hoping that things between them would escalate naturally and the three of them would fall into bed together without her having to spell it out.

In a small voice Darcy asked, “Do I have to choose one or the other?”

Darcy kept her eyes cast downwards but she could tell it was Stephen who loudly inhaled and Tony who pushed his chair away from the table.

She didn’t move, too afraid of what they would decide. She was being greedy again, like she had been with expecting too much of Pepper. She could easily imagine Tony getting angry with her for purposing such a thing and casting her out. He might have been willing to engage in threesome when it was two women and himself, but she might be pushing him too far with this particular request. And Stephen, god, he might just get fed up with sharing her all together, after all he had never actually had to share her, share her, given that all of their dates were scheduled around his availability or at the mercy of her power.

Someone swiveled her chair around but Darcy closed her eyes tightly before she could see who was rejecting her first. A single finger raised her chin as Stephen softly commanded, “Darcy open your eyes.”

“I’m sorry.” Darcy blurted out, “I take it back. Forget what I said.”

“Open your eyes Darcy.” Tony demanded. Slowly, Darcy did as they asked. What she saw had her biting her lower lip and suppressing the urge to cry.

Both Stephen and Tony were kneeling in front of her. Naked.

“You win.” Stephen conceded with a meaningful look.

“Time to collect your winnings.” Tony teased as he gave her heated look.

Tony and Stephen reached out for her simultaneously and Darcy went willingly into their combined embrace.
Stephen stayed with them for a week before going back to Karma-Taj. Many orgasms were had by all. And by the end of the week there was no more awkwardness between Stephen Strange and Tony Stark at all. The only thing between them was Darcy Lewis. And all three of them were very happy with it that way.

She had a terrible vision as she slept. She dreamt of a man with a golden glove killing people. She dreamt of Asgard’s destruction again, the same vision she’d before and told Thor about all those months ago. But she also dreamt of Tony facing off with Steve, she dreamt of Rhodes lying motionless on the floor in Tony’s arms, and Wanda in a cage wearing a straight jacket, with a collar around her throat and a vacant but pained expression on her face. It was a terrible dream and she was grateful when she woke.

The first thing she became aware of when she woke was her hand buried in Tony’s hair and his face pressed against her naked stomach. But it was a chuckle that had her perking up her ears. She turned her head to the left and felt Stephen’s familiar scarred fingertips glide across her jaw as he turned her head to his liking. She gasped as he kissed her neck before he began sucking at her pulse point. Darcy reached up with her free hand and ran her hand across his abs. She was confused by the turn of events but happily so.

Stephen teasingly kissed his way up her jaw to her lips. He kissed her fully awake and Darcy’s eyes squinted in the early morning light that filtered through the gauzy curtains wafting on the other side of the room. Stephen went back to kissing her neck and chest as she looked around.

She didn’t recognize the room, but she saw books piled up everywhere and a few magical artifacts she scantly recognized from her reading back at Karma-Taj. However it was the floating red cape in the corner that really caught her attention.

“Miss me already?” Stephen asked without giving her time to answer as he kissed her lips and gently pried her mouth open with his tongue, uncaring about morning breath. She kissed him back even as her eyes stayed locked on the floating cape. His hand found its way to her breast and Darcy moaned loudly rousing Tony.

“Wha—who’s going on?” Tony drowsily asked in a scratchy voice.

Neither Stephen nor Darcy answered as they were too wrapped up in each other. Undeterred Tony moved up her body until she could feel his heated naked skin warming her back as he snuggled into her from behind. Darcy slipped her leg in between Stephens and kissed him harder, well aware of her wizard-ing boyfriends erection grinding against her.

“I’m seriously confused. Did you teleport? Did you teleport with me?...When you two stop sucking face, I’m gonna need some answers.” Tony grumbled as he pressed his nose into her shoulder blade.

Stephen let her lips go with a whimper but immediately began kissing his way down her chest only to switch to kissing her back as she turned to face Tony who immediately captured her lips in a sleepy morning kiss.

“Hi.” Darcy greeted her billionaire boyfriend.

“Hi.” Tony smiled lazily, moving in to kiss her again. When he pulled away he looked at Stephen quizzically, “Didn’t you go back to wizard school yesterday?”

“This isn’t Karma-Taj.” Stephen informed them as he settled his chin on her shoulder so he could
look at Tony while being as close to Darcy as possible…without being inside of her.

“Is this the Sanctum?” Darcy asked unable to disguise the wonder in her voice.

“Indeed it is.” Stephen confirmed with a kiss to her cheek, "This is where I've been living lately."

“Somehow I pictured more cobblestones.” Tony quipped.

“I like it.” Darcy declared thoughtfully, “This room is much bigger than your quarters back at Karma-Taj. The bed too.”

“It’s sturdier as well.” Stephen said as he nipped at her shoulder. Darcy let her eyes fall shut as Stephen used his teeth to gently bite her skin before soothing away the sensation with his tongue.

“You sure this bed isn’t flimsy?” Darcy asked in a breathy voice, “Maybe we should test it?”

Tony moved forward to kiss at her neck as she turned and kissed Stephen. When hands started wandering and mouths went to intimate places all thought was chased from her mind and Darcy let herself get lost in the sensations her boyfriends inspired.

Tony however, never shut off his brain. And when he finally noticed the floating cape he shrilly exclaimed, “WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?”

Darcy and Stephen couldn’t help but laugh at his alarmed expression, the two of them dissolved into a hysterical mess as Tony got up butt naked to go poke the animated outerwear only to have his hand slapped away by the cloth.

“Stephen!” Tony demanded, “You’re cape just accosted me!”

Stephen, who was just as much of a troll as Tony but better at hiding it responded flatly, “It’s a cloak. Not a cape.”
Reminder of Darcy’s Outfit When She and Tony Get Caught by Paparazzi
Tony’s Lounge/Poker Outfit

Before Dr. Strange Arrived

& After he crashed the date (initially)
Darcy’s Lounge/Poker Outfit
Inspiration for this chapter was the Strange/Tony chemistry in Infinity War movie, but also these two pictures:
So...Pepper/Tony/Darcy is out and Stephen/Tony/Darcy is in...how do you feel about that?

TELLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLLL MEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE!
Chapter 34 – Peggy Carter

Darcy lightly moaned in her sleep, she was having a vision-dream and it was a disturbing one.

She watched in abject horror as she witnessed Steve and James tag teaming Tony and seemingly trying to beat the mortal man to death. Her heart jumped into her throat as Steve sat astride Tony’s armored chest and he brought down his shield, again and again, until he finally unmasked Tony. She gasped audibly as Steve lifted his arms up to bring the shield down again, this time possibly separating Tony’s head from his body, but the vision changed before she could see the outcome. She saw a man in black against a background of white, approaching a man in glasses. She saw a brightly colored person shoot rope from his hands and swing about New York City loudly whooping with exhilaration. After that brief vision of unbridled joy it was a shock to see five corpses encased in cryogenic tubes, lying motionless with bullet wounds to the head. Darcy, though she was in a dream like state, was aware of her physical body and felt it as her breathing became ragged and her heart rate increased rapidly.

She saw a giant robot grab Rhodes, in his War Machine armor, out of the sky and then the vision shifted as the same robot ripped out wires and caused damage to what looked like to her, the inside of a computer. She watched as a mustached man in military attire frowned at the Avengers. Steve frowned at a thick stack of paper as soundlessly Rhodes and Sam argued behind him. She saw an unfamiliar blonde get out of a car and kiss Steve while Sam and James looked on like creepers. She saw Wanda use her power to funnel some kind of explosion up to avoid detonating on a populated street, only to have it destroy a nearby building.

Images of people she had never met mixed with those she knew and loved made it dizzying. As the unknown faces were shown to her she assumed these people held significance, she did her best to memorize the faces that were unfamiliar but her efforts were for naught. Darcy felt as if her head was being squeezed by a vice. The flashes came faster and faster, until everything blended together in an ever shifting blur. And then it stopped. And there was nothing.

Darkness. Blankness. Total nothingness. She was surrounded by the absence of everything and it was more terrifying than anything she’d seen or experienced thus far.

She floated in the dark for what felt like hours, days, weeks, years. A millennia. Surrounded by nothing she became nothing. In the absence of the world she felt herself disintegrate and lose all sense of self. In the void she experienced the sensation of being ripped apart, atom by atom, slowly being erased until there was no more Darcy only the blank space where she used to exist.

She was nothing. And then there was something. A flicker of life and a vision of a familiar face. Slowly it came into focus and she pulled the pieces of herself back together and reformed and bore witness to the soundless image of Steve Rogers crying as he carried a casket in the rain.

“Gh-ah” She gasped as she came back to herself, as she came back to the world which still existed and consciousness which afforded her the reassurance that she was still alive. And still Darcy Lewis.

Her heart was pounding and she had a massive headache, her dream had left her shaking and she tried to stop the physical reaction, afraid of waking Tony who slept beside her.

She curled on her side and just shivered and shook as she willed her heartbeat to return to normal. As she slowed and controlled her breathing, internally she tried to sort through the mess of information that had been dumped into her brain. She couldn’t remember it all, not like other visions she’d had, her vision had not been like watching a movie or seeing a photograph. Upon waking only a few parts of the vision remained clear, the rest…felt like childhood memories nearly forgotten but etched into her with all the detail of a watercolor painting.

It was like waking from a dream only to forget the beginning of it upon opening one’s eyes.

Parts of her vision stood out with crystal clarity though. One, Steve and James trying to kill Tony, Steve almost decapitating him with the shield. Two, the masked kid who swung about the city. His happiness the only part of the vision that was not terrible and thus a brief respite for her troubled mind. And three, the oppressive nothingness. The empty void. The loss of her sense of self. The feeling of being unmade.

“You okay?” Tony groggily asked.

She opened her mouth to answer but a salty tear hit her tongue, alerting her to the fact that she was silently crying. She closed her mouth and prayed Tony would go back to sleep. She didn’t know how to process the blur of information she received and didn’t want to try to explain it right then.

“Darcy?” Tony scooted closer to her and put hand on the flat of her back, “What’s wrong.”

Through sheer force of will Darcy stopped shaking. She couldn’t stop the tears from falling but she kept the strangled tone out of her voice as she answered, “Nothing’s wrong. Go back to sleep.”

“You sure?”
Darcy blindly reached behind her and grabbed Tony’s arm. She pulled him closer until he was spooning her from behind, she put his hand on her chest above her heart and sighed as Tony kissed her neck and settled his head on the pillow next to hers. She covered Tony’s hand with her own. Her heartbeat was back to normal.

“I’m sure.” Darcy answered quietly. She did her very best to remain still and eventually Tony’s breathing slowed and he fell back asleep.

She stopped crying and spent the rest of the night lying awake. She stared at the glowing numbers on their bedside clock as it changed minute by minute. Haunted by the vision of Steve about to kill Tony, unable to get Tony’s terrified expression out of her mind, Darcy stared ahead blankly as she tried to remember more from her vision. She spent the rest of the night sorting through the fragmented images of her disturbing dream and thinking of ways to put what she saw into words.

Darcy awoke abruptly and was set upon by confusion as she was immediately aware she was lying on a floor where she had been previously been lying on top of Tony’s 500 thread count sheeted bed. She had sleep teleported again. She internally groaned as she lifted her eye mask off her face.

She had been trying to wait up for Stephen to arrive and join her and Tony, but nothing could hold her attention. Tony had been happily taping away on his computer while she mindlessly watched TV. The three of them, she, Tony, and Stephen had a ‘sexy’ date planned for that evening but they were waiting on Stephen to get the party started/Tony was in the middle of finishing ‘just one thing’ before she could expect his undivided attention. Stephen, who was as bad as Tony when it came to getting caught up in ‘work’ and losing track of time, was late. And thus, her boredom.

In an effort to ward off her impatience and annoyance, Darcy turned off the TV and asked Friday to read to her. Friday’s soothing voice never bothered Tony while he worked when she read to Darcy, but the light from Tony’s bedside lamp and tablet bothered her. So, she lowered her sleep mask and let Friday take her away to Westeros as she picked off from where they had last left off of George R. R. Martin’s masterpiece “A Storm of Swords”.

She stared up at an unfamiliar ceiling and listened intently trying to determine who and where she had teleported to. She heard the easy breathing of a person deep in sleep but that was all. She could see to her left was a bed and she idly wondered why she had landed on the floor and not in the bed as she usually did when she teleported. Slowly Darcy got up and peeked at the person who’s side she had teleported too.

It was an old woman.

A quick sweep of the room revealed that she was still on Earth, as there was a Captain America article framed on the wall and normal old lady stuff all around.

Darcy’s eyes widened and she swallowed thickly; she quickly gathered her outer sheer lace robe and wrapped it around herself hoping to obscure the sheerness of her outfit and her very visible and very erect nipples. It was drafty on the floor.

She was wearing a long floor length night gown with a matching robe, panties, and an under bust corset that served to make her ample bosom more pronounced as she wore no bra with the ensemble. She was instantly mortified at her choice of attire and cursed herself for falling asleep. Luckily, she had a wristlet on. She had intended the wristlet to be used to make access to lube and condoms easier
once she and her beaus were in the throes, but it also, like most of her purses now, had the infinity spell on it. And thus contained more than it appeared.

Darcy quickly unzipped the bag and retrieved one of the seventeen cell phones Tony had gifted her. She turned on the small device and tapped on the app Tony had made just for her. She hit the ‘Where U @’ button and her location came up rather quickly. Washington, D.C. She turned to the sleeping woman and hit the button labeled ‘Who dat?’, the facial recognition icon swirled as it thought and cycled through records. Tony had made the app specifically with her in mind. No matter where she was, it would tell her how far away she was from wherever Tony was… even off planet. She wasn’t sure it would work in Asgard, as it really wasn’t someplace you could fly to without magic, but it would help should she disappear and find herself in space with the Guardians again.

However since she was still on Earth, it stood to reason she could use the phone for its intended purpose as well. She didn’t want to risk waking the sleeping elderly woman by calling Tony though, so she sent him a text instead.

‘Tony! It’s me. I’m in an old ladies room. HELP! I am dressed for sexy times and will DIE OF EMBARRASMENT IF THIS LADY WAKES UP AND FINDS ME LIKE THIS! Also, what if she has a heart attack and I accidently kill her? SOS! HELP ME! Come quickly!!!!!!!!’

Darcy looked around the room and got to her feet quietly. She went to the door and opened it a sliver so she could peek out and get oriented. She froze and almost squeaked as a pair of nurses walked by the room at a languid pace, the two women chatted with each other animatedly as they pushed two elderly looking men in wheelchairs. Apparently she wasn’t in some poor old ladies house, but a hospital or a retirement home or something.

“Shit.” Darcy cursed as she closed the door.

“Hello?” A delicate voice called out from behind her, Darcy froze. “Are you new?”

Darcy reluctantly turned around with a timid smile. “Hi.”

The old woman took in her attire with a little laugh and her eyebrows raised high on her wrinkled forehead, “Dear, I believe you have the wrong room.”

“You have no idea.” Darcy muttered as she drew closer to the older woman. Thank god the lady didn’t seem to know she had teleported into the room, no, she just though she was some weirdo dressed like the cover of a romance novel cowering behind a door peeking into the hallway of… wherever they were.

“What’s your name?” The older woman inquired in a faintly British voice.

“I’m Darcy.” She answered with a blush as she wrapped her robe around her tighter, “And I’m sorry for waking you… and breaking in. I swear I didn’t mean to.”

“Bah,” The woman said dismissively, “This place could do with a bit of excitement. My name is Margret Carter, you may call me Mrs. Carter. Tell me, how did you come to find yourself in my room? I assume you haven’t dressed up so wantonly for my sake?”

“No ma’am.” Darcy grumbled as she avoided the older woman’s gaze.

Mrs. Carter reached out and patted her hand with her own wrinkled one. “Don’t be so embarrassed dear. I’ve done more ridiculous things in the name of love. Back in my more lively days of course… These days I spend most of my time with nothing to occupy me but the bloody television.”
Darcy pressed her lips together as the woman gave her an amused questioning look, “Come now, let us have it. Is there a doctor you fancy? A nurse? Whose heart were you attempting to capture in this little number?”

Too embarrassed and not able to think of a plausible lie, Darcy didn’t answer. Just stood there awkwardly like a statue. The woman’s tone turned from teasing amusement into something softer and more empathic. “You look beautiful by the way. In fact, you may not believe this, but I dare say you look a bit like myself when I was a young woman...you don’t need to tell me if you really don’t want to. You may hide here, from whomever you are attempting to dodge. I don’t mind. I actually—it’s been so long since I’ve had any company.”

The woman’s gaze took on a distancing quality and Darcy blinked at the pained expression that came over the older woman. She had a feeling she had inadvertently stirred up some old memories, and they didn’t seem to be happy ones.

“Mrs. Carter?” Darcy called out, the woman’s eyes slowly refocused on Darcy. She smiled at the older woman invitingly, “I was hoping to—I was dressing up so me and my—I was—it’s hard to explain.”

“Explain what dear?...You look lovely, a bit underdressed for—are you a friend of Sharon’s?” Mrs. Carter asked with a confused look on her face. It occurred to Darcy then, that Mrs. Carter might not be as lucid as Darcy had originally thought.

“I don’t know who Sharon is.” Darcy admitted.

Mrs. Carter gestured to the chair by her bedside, “Take a seat and I’ll tell you a story about my niece little Sharon.”

An hour later Darcy was convinced Mrs. Carter had Alzheimer’s disease. She kept restarting their interactions. Re-commenting on why Darcy was there and who she was before invariably guessing Darcy was a nurse, or a volunteer, or child of one of the residents who was involved in a scandalous affair of some sort and seeking asylum in the older woman’s room for some reason or another.

Darcy didn’t mind. She reintroduced herself again and again, avoided providing concrete answers and instead began prompting Mrs. Carter to launch into stories about her own past instead. Mrs. Carter, if she was to be believed, had led a very interesting life.

Mrs. Carter told her about her time in the SOE (Special Operations Executive), which was a secret British espionage agency which was active during World War II and spearheaded by Winston Churchill himself. She told Darcy about her brother Michael and how his death prompted her to join the SOE. Then apparently she joined the SSR (Strategic Scientific Reserve) and kicked Nazi ass and put soldiers in their place when it came to respecting women in the ‘field’. She talked about her time after the war with a winsome smile and Darcy listened with rapt attention.

“Wow. You are like the original HBIC.” Darcy commented breathily. She was starting to feel like when she ‘grew up’ she would be lucky to be half the woman that Mrs. Carter was.

“HBIC?” Mrs. Carter questioned, “I’m not familiar with that acronym.”

Darcy let the wide smile stretch over her face, “It means ‘Head Bitch In Charge’.”

Mrs. Carter smiled and began to laugh. Unfortunately she laughed so hard that Darcy rushed to her feet to retrieve the older woman a glass of water. After she took a sip Mrs. Carter smiled at Darcy
reassuringly.

“I usually don’t like the way young people casually throw the term ‘bitch’ around, but I have to say, that ‘HBIC’ is an amusing and empowering usage.”

Darcy nodded enthusiastically, “You are seriously the coolest old lady I’ve ever met.”

Mrs. Carter smiled at her tiredly, “It’s nice to have someone to talk to.”

Darcy’s smile fell a bit, “You don’t get many visitors huh?”

“My niece Sharon visits occasionally, but work keeps her busy and I know it is hard for her to get away.” Darcy nodded understandingly. One side of Mrs. Carter lips lifted into a self-deprecated expression, “And with my mind the way it is, it’s not as if I would remember if she did.”

“You don’t have any other family?”

Mrs. Carter shrugged, “That’s the downside of living to a ripe old age. Eventually you find yourself alone, and having outlived all those you loved.”

They fell into a silence. Darcy internally spiraled. Mrs. Carter’s words had her thinking on her own ‘immortality’ and what it really meant for her and her own loved ones. Tony. Pepper. The Guardians…maybe not Groot though. The Avengers, the one she liked anyway, the guy she hadn’t met who was the Vision struck her as potentially immortal but unless they unexpectedly became BFF’s, that didn’t really matter.

She would outlive them all. All except the Asgardians…if they managed to stop Ragnarok and didn’t all die in fiery destruction of course. She wasn’t sure about Stephen, she had a feeling that his powers as Sorcerer Supreme would alter his life span as it did the Ancient One; she just wasn’t sure by how much.

She took in all the wrinkles on Mrs. Carter’s face. The lines that showed how much life she had lived. How many times she had laughed. Cried. Smiled. Frowned. She saw the age spots and wondered how long it would take for her appearance to show signs of age. A hundred years? Two hundred? Tony was already a little uncomfortable with the age difference, he didn’t say anything to her about it of course, but there were little things. She’d seen the panicked expression on his face when Stephen pointed out a gray hair in his beard. She’d seen him in the gym, exhausted but still pushing himself. She’d been with Tony and Pepper on his birthday. The media had been all a twitter about his upcoming bash, but he shocked them all by not throwing a party, instead the three of them stayed in and had sex and hung out. Tony just barely let them feed him cake and sing to him. He really didn’t want his aging acknowledged at all.

She didn’t know what she would do when Tony died. But she hoped that when he did, he was as old and wrinkled and accomplished as the woman sitting next to her. It seemed to her that Mrs. Carter had lived. She’d done the most with what time she had and that was all that anyone could ask for. Right?

A knock at the door broke Darcy out of her internal reflection.

“Knock, knock.” Tony announced as he entered. He had a strained smile on his face. And when Mrs. Carter greeted him, Darcy understood why.

“Howard!” Mrs. Carter beamed at Tony, “What a lovely surprise.”

Tony froze for a second, before moving forward smoothly.
“Hey Peg. It’s been a spell.” Tony responded nonchalantly, but Darcy could see the pain in his eyes. Darcy felt like an idiot for not putting it together until just then. Mrs. Carter. Margret Carter? She was fucking Peggy Carter. Aka, Tony’s ‘Aunt Peg’. “I see you’ve met Darcy. Isn’t she a trip?”

Mrs. Carter turned to her, and in her eyes Darcy saw no recognition. The elderly woman extended her hand to Darcy, “Hello Darcy. It’s nice to meet you. Don’t worry, I won’t hold being a friend of Howard’s against you…much.”

Darcy and Tony gave a forced little chuckle at that. Mrs. Carter turned to Tony, and motioned him closer, “Come. Sit! I feel like I haven’t seen you in ages.”

Tony moved over to where she was sitting and sat himself on the arm of her chair. He put an arm around Darcy’s shoulder and Darcy resisted leaning into him.

Mrs. Carter’s eyes flickered between the two of them and she gave Tony a pointed look. “So, Howard has your new friend met your wife and child? Or is that something you forgot to mention when you picked her up in the…I’m assuming, boudoir sales department?”

They spent the rest of the afternoon visiting with Mrs. Carter. She never once recognized Tony for himself. She called him Howard the entire time and halfway through the visit she started calling Darcy, ‘Maria’ and commenting on how lovely her new hair style looked.

When they left, Tony practically ran away from her and found a supply closet to break down in. Darcy followed timidly, not sure if Tony would appreciate her seeing him cry. However when she finally got close enough to him, she didn’t find him in tears, she found him hyperventilating.

She talked him through it. Got him to calm down...somehow. She wasn’t even sure, she just told him to do things she’d seen on TV. She couldn’t find a bag to breathe into so she cupped her hands and had him blow into them instead. Once he was ‘okay’ aka not endanger of passing out, she called Stephen.

Stephen used his sling ring to appear in the closet with them and let them bypass the awkward/annoying trip home. Tony, who had flown to DC in an Iron Man suit, called it home remotely. Once back at the tower, Tony begged off saying he needed to be alone. Stephen and she let him go. Darcy knew pressing Tony right then would only result in him lashing out so she gave him space but resolved that tomorrow they would be discussing his painful daddy issues come hell or high water. Tony needed to talk. He needed to be able to feel like he could talk.

A lot of people wrote Tony and his personal problems off but his trauma was just as valid as anyone else’s. Just because he had fame, money, and brains did not diminish what he had gone through.

A father with intimacy issues, being orphaned and thrust into the limelight, being betrayed by his father’s partner, being kidnapped and having a hole in his chest, flying into a hole in the sky and discovering an alien army, Pepper getting kidnapped and injected with Extremis, trying to create something to protect the world and instead accidently making Ultron, breaking up with Pepper, dealing with all the extra shit that came from dating Darcy. If Tony didn’t want to talk to her, they would find him a therapist he could talk to.

Stephen brought her out of her thoughts with a hand on her shoulder. She turned to him with an expectant expression.
Stephen caressed her cheek with his fingertips, “Sorry, I was late. What happened? How’d you two end up in DC?”

Darcy moved forward and slipped her arms around Stephen and his arms and his cloak wrapped around her automatically. Stephen ran his hand over her back soothingly, “Are you okay?”

“No.” Darcy said. She fist her hands into the material of his shirt, “I’m really not.”

Stephen took her to the kitchen and made them both a sandwich while she told him about what had gone down with Peggy Carter. As they ate, she told him about her vision.

“Why would Captain America want to kill Tony?” Stephen asked, “I thought they were on the same side?”

“So did I.” Darcy said thoughtfully as she chewed.

“What do you want to do about what you saw?” Stephen asked neutrally.

Darcy gave him a look, “Stop it of course.”

Stephen gave her an encouraging smile as he repeated, “Of course.”

“I just wish my visions weren’t so jumbled up and fast. It’s like, if I just had a remote or like that guy from that show…PSYCH? If I had his brain or yours or Tony’s—gah, I just. I wish I was better at this.” Darcy lowered her head in shame. Maybe if she had a photographic memory like all the geniuses she knew, she wouldn’t be such shit at interrupting her visions.

“Better at seeing the future?” Stephen said in an awed tone, “Do you know how amazing it is that you have the ability at all? That your visions have any type of accuracy?”

Darcy gave him a annoyed look. And Stephen put his sandwich down and grabbed hers out of her hand. He turned her on the stool so they were face to face, their knees touching. He put his hands on her shoulders and forced her to look at him. “Darcy, there are millions upon millions of alternate futures. To see all the possibilities is to court madness…but you see what will be. Not what might be. Not that what has the possibility ‘to be’ if this, this, and this happens. You know. You see the actual future. No deviations.”

Well, when he put it like that…

Stephen stood and moved to hug her. He kissed her on the cheek before pulling back to look into her eyes. Darcy felt herself strengthen under his gaze even as her eyes began to water.

“You are a miracle. You are a gift. You have the ability to know and shape the future. And the power and determination to do so.” Stephen leant down and kissed her lips softly, “If anyone can turned this mess we call life, into something good, it’s you.”

Darcy put a hand around Stephen’s neck and pulled him down to her so she could kiss him.

“It’s you.” Stephen muttered against her lips as they began to kiss each other with increasing intensity.

“I love you.” Darcy whispered as she pulled at his clothes.
“I love you.” Stephen echoed as pulled up her night gown, gathering the fabric around her waist.

After a few rounds of passionate kitchen counter sex, Darcy and Stephen lay naked and breathless on the floor. They were lying on the torn remnants of her sexy gown and robe. Stephen’s Cloak of levitation covered them and kept the chill off their skin.

Darcy wasn’t sure how she felt about the animated Cloak at first, and she still didn’t know how she felt about it. Especially now that she was naked and it was alive and it was also clothing and touching her and…it was just a little disconcerting.

“Are you sure the Cloak of Levitation isn’t the trapped soul of some poor shmuck forced to live out the rest of his days as outerwear?” Darcy asked.

Stephen let out a little laugh, “I’m sure…does it bother you?”

“No.” Darcy answered quickly. She let her fingertips run over the collar of the cloak, the fabric rippled as if caught by the wind in response. “I’m just…it reminds me of the magic carpet from Aladdin, ya know? It…it feels like a person. And. And, it’s laying on top of us after we just had sex….you don’t find it the teensiest bit weird?”

Stephen pulled her closer and kissed the top of her head, “Holding you in my arms? Not freezing as we lay here on the floor? No. I don’t find that weird.”

Darcy rolled her eyes and let it go.

Stephen and Darcy eventually got re-dressed and finished eating. They took a quick shower together where only minor hanky panky was had. As she was getting dressed, this time in a sensible and conservative nightwear, Stephen was frozen with a towel around his waist. She could see the question mark on his face.

“Spit it out.” Darcy demanded.

Stephen frowned, “I have an idea.”

Darcy raised a questioning eyebrow.

“You want more control and clarity from your visions? I think I can help you do that. There must be a way to examine a vision/dream the way we saw your memories the first time you came to Karma-Taj.”

“Really?” Darcy smiled brightly, excited by the prospect at being to ‘see’ her visions in 3-D with pause and rewinding capabilities.

“I think.” Stephen tempered, “I’d need to do research first. And test it on someone else, I’m not sure if trying to revisit a memory is the same as a dream. And if it is there’s no way to know if a vision is the same as a dream. It’s all…theoretical.”

“But possible?” Darcy hoped.
“Perhaps.” Stephen said thoughtfully.

“Awesome. I say we do it.” Darcy enthused.

Stephen frowned at her, “I could leave now. Start researching immediately. I’m not exactly tired after our…activities.”

Darcy’s face fell a bit, but she maintained a strained smile. Stephen seeing her expression frowned deeper and moved closer.

Darcy tilted her head up as Stephen wrapped his arms around her waist and went in for a kiss. She hummed against him as their kiss became slow and sensual, turning from a thing of reassurance to one of simmering desire.

Stephen backed her up until her knees hit the bed and she sat down. They ended up making out for a little while, before the day’s events started to get to her and she yawned for the fourth time breaking their kiss. Stephen pulled back and pet her wet hair as he stared down at her with a pensive fondness, “You’re tired.”

“Shut up, no I’m not. Keep kissing.” Darcy puckered her lips but Stephen pulled away and stood up repeating, “You’re tired. You should sleep.”

“No.” Darcy whined, knowing that if she went to sleep, Stephen wouldn’t be there when she awoke.

Stephen ignored her and pulled back the covers on the bed, he helped her climb underneath and fluffed the pillow under her head.

“Stay with me until I fall asleep?” Darcy asked drowsily, her hand patting the space beside her.

Stephen gave her a tender look, “Always.”

When she woke up in the middle of the night, Stephen was gone and Tony was just sliding in to the bed. He gave her an apologetic smile. “Sorry. Didn’t mean ta wake you.”

His movements were jerky and his eyes glassy. He was drunk.

“C’mere.” Darcy opened her arms and Tony crawled over to her. He settled his head against her chest and wrapped one arm around her waist.

“Stephen’s gone?”

“Yeah.”

“I’m sorry I avoided you after—after seeing Aunt Peggy.” Tony slid his hand under her t-shirt, he wrapped his fingers around the gentle curve of her hip and just held on. “I-she-…it’s just hard. S’all.”

Darcy ran her hand through Tony’s hair, gently and soothingly. “I know.”

“I love you though.” Tony offered with a kiss on her stomach, “I love you and I hate myself and everything is shit but it doesn’t matter when I’m with you because you make everything better.”

Darcy’s hand stilled in his hair for a moment before resuming her ministrations. “I love you Tony. I
will always love you. No matter what, you know that right?”

“You—I—you say that now. But—”

“No buts. I love you. Old. Fat. Poor. Incontinent. Wrinkly. Gray hair. I will always love you.” That got a little chuckle out of Tony and she smiled. Her voice softened as she spoke with gravitas, not knowing how drunk Tony was or if he would remember what she said, she still felt compelled to say it all the same, “Even if our love changes over time, as all things do, it will remain. I swear it.”

He was awake, but he didn’t respond so Darcy let her promise hang in the air between them. She knew Tony didn’t think he was good enough or worthy enough of such love. Of such a promise. But he was. And if it took one hundred years, she would prove it to him.

The next day she brought up his father and he ran away from her making excuses. She pursued and he distracted her with science talk and claimed to have an urgent mechanical error on Dum-E to take care of. Then he had to go to the dentist. And then he was tired. And then he had to go to the bank and then the phone rang and it was the SI board of directors and he had to take it. For a week she tried to get Tony to sit down with her and talk about his parents, specifically his father, and for a week she barely saw Tony. So, she stopped trying, but he didn’t know that because he was still avoiding her. After another two days of trying to explain she wasn’t going to force him to open up to her, she changed tactics.

She cornered him in the bathroom, while he was indisposed and unable to escape. She felt a little despicable but it was an affective tactic. She kept her eyes averted and spoke quickly.

“I’m going to stop pressuring you to talk about your dad and Peggy and your feelings so you don’t have to avoid me anymore.”

“Glad to hear it. Get out.” Tony replied flippantly.

“You had such a hard time seeing Peggy but I think she was really nice and she seemed happy and I got the impression that she’s lonely and no one visits her.”

“Darcy, now really isn’t the time.”

“I think, despite your freak out. We should go and visit her once a week….or just me if you can’t handle that.”

“Okay.”

“Okay?”

“Yeah. I’ll…I’ll be fine. And you’re right. Peggy deserves better. I can, withstand playing the role of my father for her sake….can you get out now?”

“I can go alone if you want. I just didn’t want to do it behind your back—”

“Darcy! I said I’ll go with you. Now get out! This isn’t cute. This is a weird invasion of privacy and I can’t go unless you…go.”

“Sorry. Love you.” Darcy all but ran out the door.
To make up for her invasion Darcy agreed to go out, in public, on a fancy dinner date with Tony. They were hounded by paparazzi but Darcy didn’t cower or complain once. Tony was, amazing, and all he wanted to do was be with her and show her off a little. They had dinner in one of the ritziest restaurants she’d ever been in, they did a little dancing at a dive bar, and then got accosted by photographers and reporters on their way home.

She did not look at any type of media the next day.

A few days after their first weekly trip to see Peggy Darcy brought up seeing a shrink and to her surprise Tony agreed. The day after that, he revealed he was creating an AI that would make human therapists obsolete. His reasoning, he couldn’t trust any person enough to be vulnerable enough for therapy to work, so he was creating his own ‘Frued-Bot’. One that would never betray doctor patient confidentiality no matter how much money offered as a bribe.

Darcy was not thrilled but the only thing she said in response was, “If the AI is going to be your analyst and therapist you should call it the Analrapist’

Unable to crack Tony and his daddy issues pain, Darcy turned to the other man currently driving her insane with worry. She called Steve Rogers and after two rings, he picked up the phone.

“Hello?”

“Steve? It’s Darcy.”

“Darcy! You’re back. I—welcome home?”

“Haha. Thanks. It’s good to be back. This is the only planet with chocolate.”

“Wha--? Uh, how are you?”

“I’m fine….actually I’m not fine.”

“What’s wrong?”

“A couple of things, but I think what is most pressing is my latest vision.”

“What’s wrong with Vision?”

“What?”

“What?”

“I’m talking about the vision I had of the future. What are you talking about?”

“Vision the man…Android…never mind. What’s wrong?”

“I saw Wanda kill a bunch of people on a mission. You have to bench her, not that she should have ever been made an Avenger in the first place, but that’s a fight for another day.”

“…”
“Steve?”

“I can’t just bench Wanda because you had a nightmare about her. I know you and she had a… tempestuous first meeting.”

“You mean the first meeting where she attacked, drugged, and kidnapped me all because she saw a picture of me and Tony together and she wanted to hurt him so badly she thought hurting me would be the best way to do it? That first fucking meeting?!”

“Darcy. Calm down. You weren’t here for the battle with Ultron. You don’t know how she and Pietro helped turned the tide in our favor. Her brother gave her life saving countless innocents. She’s changed.”

“You mean after she---you know what. No. I am not having this fight right now….Steve. This isn’t personal. I don’t like the woman and I have very strong feelings about you idiots making her an Avenger, but this isn’t about me. It’s about what I saw. She kills people Steve. A butt load.”

“Darcy—”

“Ugh, it’s an accident. I think. I—there was a bomb, she redirects it, but she sucks so she fucks it up and accidently kills a butt load of people.”

“She’s been training very hard. She’s getting better every day.”

“That doesn’t matter. She’s still going to kill people.”

“…”

“Steve.”

“…”

“Steve!”

“I’m thinking….Do you know any other details about the supposed mission where Wanda commits this act? A setting? Location? Timeframe? Anything?”

“…”

“Sigh. Darcy. I can’t make Wanda sit out on her training or missions just because you have a bad feeling or a nightmare—”

“It wasn’t a fucking nightmare you pompous asshole. IT WAS A VISION OF THE MOTHER FUCKING FUTURE!”

“You need to calm down.”

“You need a swift kick in the ass.”

“…”

“…”

“I won’t do it.”

“…”
“I’m sorry Darcy. But Wanda’s a part of the team now--”

“Make me a part of the team.”

“What?”

“From now until whenever things blow up in your face and Wanda fucks up. I want to join the Avengers.”

“Darcy I don’t think--”

“I’ll drive up to the new facility with Tony tomorrow…maybe, I haven’t actually talked to him about this yet because I just came up with this plan now. But--hmmm, he might have some objections, but I think I can bring him around..”

“Darcy--”

“Or I’ll catch a ride via sling ring. Depends how fast I can pack and what Stephen’s doing and what Tony’s reaction is. Oooh! Maybe I can finally convince Stephen to steal me a sling ring of my own so I won’t have to commute and Tony can stay in the city instead of moving upstate with me. We did just buy a new lamp together.”

“Darcy…You can’t just decide you want to be an Avenger out of spite.”

“I’m not doing it out of spite. I’m doing it to protect the people Wanda kills in the future, that you refuse to take preventive measures to save.”

“Darcy that’s not fair, you said it yourself you have no proof that your visions come true.”

“Yeah well, on my last off planetary romp I got proof. I saved Peter’s adoptive father and I predicted my friends would meet Mantis and now I have proof. I’m telling you. What I see will come true unless I do something to stop it.”

“…”

“I’ll be there tomorrow at the latest. I expect to be treated like any other Avenger and go on every mission that Wanda does so I can stop her.”

“Darcy…Dar--….I’ll make up a room for you.”

“…You’re not gonna fight me on this? Tell me I can’t join the team?”

“You are more than worthy of joining the Avengers Darcy. I just hope that you’re doing it for the right reasons. And that you’re not motivated by past prejudices.”

“I’m not. I swear….but if I was that bitch would totally deserve it.”

“Darcy!”

“Kidding! Sort of….I’ll tone it down until I save the people she accidently kills. I’ll play nice…ish. But I’m not making any promises. You guys putting her on the team was fucking stupid and I can’t pretend I feel otherwise.”

“Your opinion.”

“Haha. Shut up, there’s more. I…good news or weird news.”
“Weird news? I guess.”

“I met your ex-girlfriend. And, Tony and I have arranged to go and visit her every week.”

“…You saw Peggy?”

“She’s really cool…really special.”

“I always thought so.”

“She seems lonely though. I don’t think her niece visits very much.”

“Sharon worked for Shield. Now she works for the..FBI. I think? I’m not sure.”

“Either way, not a lot of down time is what you’re saying.”

“Yeah…so, dare I ask what the good news?”

“I met James…Bucky, I met Bucky but he asked me to call him James.”

“Where?”

“He doesn’t want you to know.”

“Dammit Darcy! This isn’t a game. Where is he?”

“…”

“Darcy!”

“He’s on a very long road to recovering who he is and I think given time and space, he’ll heal. And then. He’ll feel like a real person again. And reach out.”

“…”

“…”

“Did he look okay?”

“Yeah. He looked okay….In fact he looked really good.”

“What does that mean?”

“It means that he told me he wants to lick every inch of my skin and take my underwear off with his teeth.”

“…”

“And I kind of want to let him.”

“…”

“Muahaha. See you soon Cap! Byyyyyeeeee.”

Darcy hung up and the smile fell from her face.
In her mind’s eye she remembered the look on Tony’s face as he lay prostrate beneath Steve as the super soldier readied his shield to strike again, prepared to bash Tony’s brains in or decapitate him.

She liked Steve and she wanted to forget her vision and cling to the dream that Steve wasn’t capable of the kind of violence she foresaw. But she couldn’t forget it. She couldn’t ignore it or deny it if she wanted to stop it.

Becoming an ‘official’ (temporary) Avenger was just the first step in changing the future. She didn’t really know what all the other steps were, but sticking close to Steve sounded like a good step one. Stopping Wanda and trying to get her ousted from the team also sounded like a good step one A.

Darcy stared at her phone a moment longer before she shook off her dour thoughts and went to find Tony to inform him of her conversation and the plan that was slowly forming in her mind. She had to remember to tell him about that spider kid too… she had a feeling he was going to be important.

Darcy’s Sexy Sleepwear/Seduction wear
It really bothered me that in the Civil War Movie Tony didn't attend Peggy's funeral. I loved Agent Carter the series and wished it had gone on longer. Love the actor they had playing young Howard and (human) Jarvis. And Peggy herself, gah, what a classy badass lady. Serious life goals.
Chapter 35 -Sam Wilson

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up in Sam Wilson's bed.

Chapter Notes

Here are some Halloween masks/Horror franchises that you might know or not know but, for this chapter to make sense would be good to know about before reading….

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 35 –Sam Wilson

Darcy awoke from her hellish dream with a groan. She dreamt of the nothingness again. It haunted her now. She dreamt of it nightly. Sometimes there were other visions and dreams mixed in but the void and the feeling of being unmade and remade always featured. It was disconcerting and an unpleasant way to start each day.

However, the eardrum piercing screech of a persistent buzzer was still unwelcome, even as it awoke her and saved her from the ever depressing dreamscape.

“Ho--Oh, it’s you.” Sam exclaimed, surprised by her sudden appearance in his bed. Darcy groaned and picked up a pillow and put it over her head. She’d been an official temporary Avenger for two weeks and teleporting to Sam Wilson’s side had become a common occurrence.

Sam let out a chuckle as he bounded out of the bed, “C’mon Sleeping Beauty, we’re wasting daylight.”

Sam was a morning person. And nice. And she loved him as a friend but she kind of wanted to kill him first thing in the morning. He was one of those awful ‘chipper’ people.
“Up and at ‘em!” Sam shouted as swatted her blanket covered behind.

“No.” Darcy protested. Sam stole the blanket from off her body and she screamed unintelligibly. In response, Sam only laughed.

With a grumpy frown Darcy rolled out of the bed and got to her feet. Following the sound of his laughter she staggered after Sam grumbling, “One of these days I’m gonna kill you.”

While she’d been at the new Avengers facility, she’d barely had any contact with Wanda. Steve, probably hoping to forestall any conflict, had sent Wanda and Natasha out on daily infiltration/spy skill missions, while he and Sam kept her busy back at the formally abandoned Stark industries warehouse turned official Avengers HQ.

Darcy didn’t mind though. Sam was good company and sticking close to Steve was one of the reasons she was staying at the facility in the first place, so it worked out.

Officially, the redhead was tasked with teaching the young witch how not to stand out in a crowd whilst gathering intelligence, scouting out locations, and hopefully some measure of emotional control. Darcy agreed Natasha was the best teacher for Wanda, but she’d honestly been a little insulted when Natasha deemed her too ‘high profile’ to benefit from any spy skill lessons.

Back at the base she spent most days training with Sam and Steve exclusively, though the Vision had joined them on two occasions. Her days had been filled with battle exercises, trust building exercises, and regular exercises. Two of which were entirely unnecessary. As, as an Asgardian, Darcy was the fittest person on the team. She was the strongest. The fastest. She had endurance and stamina for days, and she had the most control over her magic. (Between her and Wanda at least.)

That is not to say that she thought that Wanda was less powerful than herself, Darcy was not delusional enough to think she could go up ‘against’ Wanda and walk away unscathed. It was more that Wanda’s own mastery over her immense powers were at best, tentative and still tied so closely with her emotions.

Darcy had spent a couple hours reviewing footage of Wanda and the team practicing battle strategies and running training exercises as a unit. It was obvious to her that Wanda was the secret powerhouse of the official Avengers line up. Though, Vision might give her a run for her money, Darcy saw the potential for unparalleled greatness in Wanda’s raw and instinctual use of magic.

Wanda had more power in her tiny little body than all of the people studying in Karma-Taj combined. Stephen had agreed with her assessment when he came to pick her up for date night via sling ring. Date night being every other night usually entailed Tony, Stephen, and Darcy, a meal, a bed, and watermelon flavored lube.

Wanda just didn’t know how to wield that kind of power yet. And that’s what made her so dangerous in her opinion.

Darcy had not mastered every magical skill or spell, but the one’s she did know, she could perform effortlessly and with expertise. And she had to give Steve a little credit, his little training exercises weren’t all bullshit…well, making her run at the ass crack of dawn was bullshit, but the battle simulations they were put through had proven enlightening.

During one memorable training exercise, she and Sam had been pinned down by (fake) enemy fire.
Steve had tasked them with ‘rescuing’ a civilian (mannequin), while lugging his heavy (fake) injured ass around. The problem was in the scenario, the only exit was straight above their heads and Falcon’s wings had been damaged in their struggle to reach their target. It was through this exercise that she discovered an even greater understanding/mastery for her most formidable weapon, her shield.

Much like she did when she was with the Guardians and she was trying to keep Drax and Gamora from drowning, she created her shield and they all climbed aboard. With a wave of her hands, she, Sam, fake injured Steve, and a mannequin all shot up into the air, riding her circular shield like a bulletproof hover board. Up, up, up they went until they made it to the ceiling exit and were able to end the simulated scenario successfully. And that’s how Darcy learned how to fly. Sort of.

Everyone had been impressed and shocked and awed, but Darcy once it was all over, pointed out how if they had been really facing heavy enemy fire, they would have been completely exposed as they stood on top of the flying shield.

As a result she spent the rest of the day practicing flying around on her shield, trying to stretch and morph it into a bullet proof bubble so she could be like a butt kicking Glinda, but it didn’t seem possible. Still, learning how to surf around on top of her shield and fly was pretty cool…and she was bullet proof anyway.

Besides finding a new way to use her shield, Steve’s various battle training scenarios had lead to her finally mastering a few things that Loki had tried teaching her back on Asgard. Such as creating large object illusions and tiny living ones (big human illusions still eluded her though), a camouflage spell that erected an illusion that rendered her (mostly) invisible, and some frivolous appearance altering tricks.

It was the last one that had her most excited though, because Darcy, ever preparing for the day she had to go on a mission and stop Wanda from killing people, did not want to look stupid when the world finally saw her as more than Tony’s new girlfriend. It might be a little selfish and vain but she had put a lot of thought into what her ‘Avenger’s uniform’ should consist of.

The skill Loki had taught her that she and he had the most fun with was the ability to alter their own appearances with magic. Back on Asgard Darcy learned the basics of the spells fairly quickly, but Loki explained this particular brand of magic wasn’t so much about accuracy as it was about artistry. Through experimentation and creativity, she had become adept at altering her appearance in subtle and drastic ways.

So her plan was, as an ‘Avenger’, to wear whatever clothes she was already wearing into battle, but use magic to change her makeup and hair into something…special and different. Every time. An ever changing, colorful, and approachable look was what she was aiming for.

However, not everyone was not a fan. Steve said street clothes weren’t appropriate battle wear and Natasha and Sam agreed. Tony supported her though, even though he wanted her to wear something a little more protective. Stephen too.

She had toyed with the idea of fashioning a female version of Thor’s look, something akin to what Lady Sif wore into battle, but since she couldn’t change her clothes like Sabrina the Teenage Witch (yet), that meant she wanted her Avengers uniform to be quick and easy to put on at a moment’s notice, and armor like Thor’s and Sif’s, when not put on with magic involved a lot of straps and usually required help getting into.

She had asked Tony for help in designing an Avengers look for herself and he showed her some sketches of an Iron Maiden suit and offered to build it, in pink even if she wanted, but Tony’s heavy
and cumbersome armor didn’t really match her power set or her aesthetic.

When she’d booty called Stephen and presented the same problem to him, he suggested she just wear what Natasha wore, or something like it. Or the layered and robed look they sported at Karma-Taj. And as logical as that thinking was, Darcy didn’t want to run around in a form fitting cat suit or artfully draped and tied karate-esque wear. Nor did she want to wear something akin to the red fetish ensemble Wanda had chosen for herself.

Everyone had suggestions, but no one really thought of her lack of official costume as a priority or a problem. And truthfully none of them could relate. Steve wore his iconic suit, or a variation of it. Sam, wore normal army clothes and his tactical armor and wing pack. Rhodes wore armor like Tony and Vision was basically Sabrina the Teenage Witch. He could change his ‘costume’ at will. With a thought.

It was frustrating. And it made her feel pathetic that such a silly little thing was so important to her, but she honestly felt like the world wouldn’t accept her as an “AVENGER” unless she looked the part. And dammit, she wanted little girls to dress up like her on Halloween, not slutty Disney princesses or scantily clad bondage enthusiasts!

It was a familiar problem, the visual lack of team unity; it reminded her of the Guardians and their jokes about creating official Guardians of the Galaxy membership cards or at least a symbol or patch they could all incorporate into their outfits to showcase their affiliation like the Ravagers had. But alas, the Avengers weren’t the Pink Ladies or the T-Birds, they didn’t have matching jackets. They didn’t even have a symbol they all displayed proudly. Well they did, but not all of them wore it, in fact the big stylized ‘A’ that was the symbol for the Avengers was most consistently found on the property, paperwork, and themed merchandise. Not actual Avengers.

It worried her that the Avengers ‘brand’ was so…inconsistent. Especially since Tony and Clint both voluntarily retired from the team. Darcy found it very irksome that no one seemed to understand the importance of ‘branding’ (besides Tony, who understood but just didn’t care as he’d switched his focus away from the Avengers and back on to Stark Industries and his own philanthropic pursuits following the whole Ultron debacle). Was it too much to ask for a symbol that adorned everyone’s costumes that unified them as a team? According to Steve, Sam, Natasha, and Vision, yes. Yes it was.

Darcy finally decided, with regards to her own ‘Avenger’ mission/battle/official look, that her look would be not to have one. And anyone who had a problem with her decision could suck it. She was badass, she was bulletproof, and she didn’t need armor. She didn’t need the American flag painted across her chest to tell everyone who she was and what she stood for. In fact, she decided that her inconsistency would be her trademark…or calling card or whatever.

Street clothes + her diadem + her crystal ring + an ever present secret infinity bag utility belt/fanny pack that would house her sword Dragon Fang + energy signature shield + a little Loki spell on her hair and makeup = her look.

Her look wasn’t armor plated, bondage inspired, or a sleek utilitarian onsie. Her look wouldn’t be an official look as she doubted she’d ever be caught Avenging in the same outfit twice, unless it was laundry day, but she would stand out. She only hoped it wasn’t for all the wrong reasons.

Steve frowned at her as she and Sam approached. He was not a fan of her wearing booty shorts to
‘training’ as they were not ‘tactical’ and he found them ‘distracting’. However seeing as she didn’t ‘give a shit’ she wore them anyway.

“Why?” Darcy asked as they approached. She asked the same question every time she had to wake up early for one of Steve’s training sessions. She wore dark sunglasses over her eyes but the warm sunshine still made everything way too bright and cheery.

“You’re late.” Steve admonished.

“Whyyyyyyyy?” Darcy whined, Sam covered his mouth with his hand hiding his chuckle at her cranky attitude.

“Darcy.” Steve said sternly but Darcy just pouted and crossed her arms in front of her chest in response to being chastised.

“Man, you know I had to feed her before I brought her out here.” Sam excused throwing an arm around Darcy’s shoulders and pulling her into his side for a hug, Darcy looked up at Sam’s face with an exaggerated glare. “Girl gets nasty if she doesn’t get something to eat before you put us through our paces.”

Darcy pulled away from Sam’s one armed hug, “Do not try to tell me that hungry is not an emotion, because I feel that shit in my soul. Segue! Whyyyyyyyy? Why do we have to wake up so early and go outside into this hellish sunshine Steve? Why?!”

Steve gave her an amused look, “Hellish sunshine? It’s a beautiful day.”

“You sound like Mr. Rogers.” Darcy accused.

“Well, you look like a blue vampire. So we all have our quirks.” Steve sassed.

“Woo. Never would a thought Captain America was so good at throwing shade before I knew him.” Sam commented with a smirk.

“You guys are mean.” Darcy pouted. Her eyes caught a flutter of movement over Steve’s shoulder and her pout turned into a frown. Distracted from Sam and Steve laughing at her by the pair of approaching females Darcy pointed at the women asking, “What are they doing here?”

Sam and Steve exchanged a look and Darcy’s frown deepened, “You’ve got to be kidding me.”

Steve’s mouth tightened before he answered, “I know you have a lot of issues with Wanda, and by all accounts you’re not too fond of Natasha either, but if you’re going to be an Avenger you need to be able to work with them.”

Darcy glared at Steve, “She shouldn’t be an Avenger in the first place.”

Sam clenched his jaw and Steve narrowed his eyes at her, “That’s not your call.”

In a remark meant to incite guilt Darcy crossed her arms in front of her chest and looked at Steve with a hurt expression, “It wasn’t your call to give that witch my birthday kitten and yet you did it anyway. You welcomed her into the fold after she threatened me and drugged me and kidnapped me and took me to another fucking country and-”

“Darcy--” Steve had a wounded expression on his face and Darcy felt a little thrill at achieving her goal, but at the same time terrible for being proud of her emotional manipulation.
Darcy held up her hand and interrupted in a tired voice. “I don’t want hear it Steve.”

The women were now in ear shot. Darcy looked at Wanda and tried to keep her face blank as she stared at the witch. Darcy didn’t hate the young woman, and she even had a little sympathy for the girl losing her brother, but she fundamentally didn’t agree that the girl should have been rewarded after all she had done during the Ultron episode.

As Natasha and Wanda joined their little group Steve made a sweeping gesture, “We all need to be able to work as a team and continuing to train separately is not going to achieve that.”

Wanda scowled at her, “Then why is she here? She’s not even on the team.”

The hackles rose on the back of her neck. It was smart of Steve to keep her and Wanda apart for so long, just being in the witch’s presence filled her with rage and bitterness. And if Wanda’s tone was anything to go by, the feeling was mutual.

“At least if I wasn’t here I wouldn’t be in jail for mind rape and murder.” Darcy snarled. Wanda’s eyes flashed red and her hands began to glow.

“Don’t.” Sam put a hand on her shoulder, anchoring her. Natasha hooked her arm around Wanda’s elbow.

Steve shook his head at all of them in dismay, “This is what we can’t have.” Steve turned and pointed at Darcy’s chest, “You promised you wanted to be an Avenger to help people. That joining the team wasn’t about getting revenge.”

“It’s not.” Darcy stated through clenched teeth.

“And you,” Steve turned on Wanda, “Don’t pick on Darcy. She’s an Avenger same as you.”

“Why!” Wanda screeched, “I’m more powerful than her. We don’t need her. She’s just here to try to get me kicked off the team! She doesn’t want to be an Avenger, she just doesn’t want me being one because she hates me!”

“Do you blame me?” Darcy growled as she tried to take a step towards the witch, but Sam’s hand tightened and she remained in place.

Wanda’s hands were glowing and her eyes were as well as she accused, “She’s already poisoned Sam against me. And she’s working on you too Steve! Can’t you see?! She just wants to ruin my life!”

“Trust me honey, if I was going to poison anyone it wouldn’t be Sam.” Darcy said snidely at the same time Sam removed his hand from her shoulder and tried to reassure Wanda, “I’m not against you.”

Natasha glared at Darcy, “She’s on the team. If you can’t accept that, you shouldn’t be here.”

Darcy closed her eyes and took a deep breath in and opened her mouth to calmly state how she did want to be there and she could accept Wanda but then Wanda ruined it.

“Yes! See! Natasha agrees. We should send her away. She doesn’t belong here. We shouldn’t have to waste our time integrating her into the team when we all know she’s just going to disappear without warning anyway!” Wanda crossed her arms and smirked at Darcy, “She should go back to Stark and be his little ornament. She’s only here to cause trouble.”
Darcy blinked as tears sprung to her eyes. No one said anything in her defense and Steve and Natasha even looked thoughtful when Wanda pointed out how integrating her into the team might not even be worth it due to her random teleportation.

“You’re a bitch.” Darcy said in a tight voice.

“You know I’m right.” Wanda said with a triumphant smirk and glowing eyes, “She’s a cosmic slut and nothing more and no amount of fake Asgardian strength justifies putting her on the team.”

Steve glared at Wanda, “That’s not fair.”

“It may not be fair, but it’s true. She’s a whore. She’s only here because she’s fucking Stark and he, despite retiring, still funds this place.”

Darcy wanted to push Sam and Steve aside and lunge at Wanda and ring her neck. She wanted to use her shield to beat Wanda into the ground. She wanted to raise Dragonfang high above her head and cut the bitches head off. She wanted to pull her hair and punch her in the face and scream at her and throw her into the sun and fight and ---but she closed her eyes instead.

“Are you that afraid of me?” Darcy asked quietly as it occurred to her that all the venom that Wanda was spewing wasn’t fueled by hatred, but by fear.

“Wanda, shut up.” Sam ordered. “Darcy, don’t listen--” Darcy turned away from Sam and his comforting tone. She turned away from all of them and faced the outer fence as she struggled to soothe her pounding her heart with deep calming breaths. She could understand Wanda and where she was coming from, but that didn’t mean she could suppress her own emotional reaction.

“That’s not true Wanda and you can’t go around throwing accusations like that.” Steve chastised.

“Why not?” Darcy jeered in a dark tone, “It’s what you all think of me isn’t it?”

“Darcy, nobody thinks you’re a slut.” Sam said calmly, “Wanda’s just insecure and projecting--”

“Steve does.” Wanda interjected in a spiteful tone, “Steve thinks you’re a slut. And he doesn’t want you to add Bucky to your lengthy list of lovers.”

“I don’t--”

“He thinks your reckless and playing games and he doesn’t want you to hurt his best friends. He thinks you should just pick one man and be done with it. He doesn’t like that you treat people like charms, like things to collect and show off.”

“Wanda!”

“Natasha thinks you’re a threat and your growing harem needs to be cut down before you become more powerful. With allies to warm your bed and stand by your side all that time you’ve spent on your back has made you very dangerous—ow!”

“You really shouldn’t have said that.” Natasha counseled in a sharp tone.

“Darcy?...It’s not true. Darcy...Are you okay?” Steve asked sounding contrite. Darcy didn’t know what to believe. It had been her own secret fear that what Wanda said was true. She was afraid that people thought that about her. That Steve and Natasha and Sam would all reject her and take Wanda’s side against her.
“She’s baiting you,” Natasha advised, “She’s a child. Don’t let her words taint what you know to be true.”

“Wanda! I can’t—I don’t even know where to start. How can you say such things!” Steve began berating Wanda, but Darcy didn’t care to listen.

Sam approached her quietly. He didn’t say anything as he put his arms around her and hugged her from behind. Darcy was tensed all over and just barely shaking with controlled rage. She didn’t want to fight with Wanda, but she felt the urge to do so. She didn’t want to succumb to the witches’ level and prove to her and everyone that she was there for the wrong reasons, but it was all she could think about.

She was NOT a cosmic slut.

“I think you owe Darcy an apology.” Steve prompted.

“No.” Wanda refused with a petulant edge in her voice, “I’m not apologizing to the woman who would see me dead given half the chance.”

Darcy was there to save the people she saw die in her vision. That was her mission and that was what mattered. Not her hurt feelings or her grudge or whatever Steve and Natasha thought about her and her relationships. She tried not to dwell on the thought that killing Wanda would also save the people the witch accidentally killed.

Darcy opened her eyes and reached up to touch where her diadem usually sat, she’d left it behind today at Steve’s request. She patted Sam’s arm and he let her go. She stepped away from him before turning around and surveying the group.

Steve’s shoulders were lined with tension as he glared at Wanda, Natasha looked alert and ready to take action. Sam looked sad. Wanda looked…young. And she was. She was so young, Darcy wasn’t even sure the young woman was twenty yet. Wanda looked afraid in her eyes but there was a hardness to her face and expression. It didn’t matter though, Darcy could see through the bravado.

Darcy kept her mind clear of all ill intentions as she narrowed her gaze on Wanda. “I don’t want you dead.”

“Yeah, right.” Wanda replied flippantly.

“I’m not here to hurt you Wanda,” Darcy revealed in a measured and calm tone, “It’s true I don’t like you and I don’t think you should be on a team of heroes…not without paying for what you did, but that doesn’t matter because I’m not here for you.”

Darcy uncrossed her arms from in front of her chest and held her hands out with opened palms, “I don’t want to join the Avengers to cause harm of any kind. Personal feelings aside, I want to stop something terrible from happening to a bunch of innocent people. That’s it. That’s my entire motivation. I swear.”

Wanda’s eyes were shining as she stared back. Darcy could see the yearning in Wanda, she wasn’t sure what the young witch wanted from her but part of Darcy wanted to give it to her. She wanted to save Wanda from becoming this angry girl who had no family and felt so defensive and lashed out so readily.

“She’s telling the truth.” Steve advocated, “It’s like I told you before, she had a vision and she’s here to stop it from coming true.”
“No one’s conspiring against you Wanda, you need to have a little faith.” Sam added. Wanda looked to and fro between the males.

Wanda stared at her for a long minute before quietly admitting, “I can’t tell if you’re lying or not.”

“Well, luckily I don’t really give a shit if you believe me or not.” Darcy said with a shrug she kept her tone casual but her eyes remained focused on the girl, “I’m here. I’m staying. And no amount of bitchy comments or attempts to start a fight with me will get rid of me.”

Wanda’s eyes narrowed at her, but Natasha stole Wanda’s attention away with a comforting hand on her back and tender look.

“It doesn’t matter if she’s lying.” Natasha said kindly, “If she’s here to hurt you, we’ll stop her. But until she shows sign of betrayal, I would take what she says at face value. Darcy has a good heart and I’m sure, only the best of intentions.”

Tony’s face flashed in her mind. Tony had the best of intentions when he and Bruce created Ultron, but Darcy didn’t want bring that up. With a snide but joking tone Darcy said, “And with that ringing endorsement, how could you not trust me?”

There was a long pause as she and Wanda stared each other down, but Wanda eventually lowered her gaze and turned to Natasha and nodded. “Okay, okay. I believe you. For now.”

“Well hallelujah.” Darcy said in a deadpan voice, “I’m overjoyed at your begrudging acceptance.”

“Can you not?” Sam asked her exasperatedly. Darcy stuck her tongue out at the man but he pulled her in for a hug and Darcy let him.

Steve nodded at them soberly, “Great. Now that we’ve all set aside our own personal bullshit. Let’s move on to today’s team exercise.”

Darcy and Wanda simultaneously let out groans of disappointment.

“Finally, something they agree on.” Natasha commented with a smirk, “A mutual hatred of running, training, and exercise.”

“Oooh, tell a tedious story about how much bread cost back in your day so they can bond over how old and boring you are.” Sam cheered causing Steve to pout at him. Sam pointed at his friend, “Aw, don’t give me that look.”

Wanda shot her a quick smile and Darcy smiled back tentatively. She wanted Wanda to trust her, or at least stop resisting her presence. And if that meant playing nice with the witch, then so be it. She would not however, forget the awful things Wanda had said to her that day.

Steve and Sam lightened the mood by teasing each other. Steve’s age was always good for a laugh or two.

Silently Darcy reminded herself that she just had to keep it together until she stopped Wanda from messing up the mission and killing the civilians. When Steve and the others saw the catastrophe that Wanda would cause, which Darcy would prevent, that’s when she would strike. Then she could drive a wedge between Wanda and the team by making sound and logical arguments against Wanda. She would convince them all to kick the evil woman off the team and hopefully get the bitches ass tossed in prison.

“I’m not that old and bread is outrageously priced!” Steve playfully defended.
“Dude, I can literally hear your sphincter tightening when we go shopping.” Sam teased.

“Boys, enough. Let’s move on to business shall we?” Natasha said sounding like a bemused school teacher who was reluctant to get the class back on track. They all turned their attention on Steve, who put on his serious face and opened the binder under his arm. “Today’s mission we will be practicing fighting handicapped, Darcy without her crown and ability to produce a shield, Wanda you’ll have a hand literally tied behind your back, Sam you’ll be grounded, Natasha will be given noise canceling headphones and I’ll be blindfolded.”

“Whyyyyy?” Darcy whined.

“Don’t be like that,” Steve smiled at her trollishly, “This is gonna be fun.”

Two weeks later, Darcy had a vision of a man using a modified Ultron-arm-gun-thing to rob a bank. Steve jumped at the opportunity to test out their new ‘team’ and they made their way to the Queens bank that she had seen in her dream.

When the bank robber arrived they were all already in place and waiting.

Steve and Wanda went in having booked an appointment in advance to speak with someone about obtaining a housing loan. They were posing as a couple and were positioned at the first cubicle with an exasperated banker, bullshitting and stalling for time awkwardly. Natasha was at the standing counter in front of the tellers, pretending to write out checks. Sam was across the street drinking coffee and waiting for shit to go down. And Darcy, Darcy was in the bank’s bathroom fixing her hair, waiting for her cue.

She had walked into the bank and received a few looks but they let her use the bathroom when she asked and she’d spent fifteen minutes staring in the mirror as she be-spelled her hair into different colors and styles.

She settled on a pastel rainbow blonde French braid look. She quickly passed her hand over her face; this would be her first impression on the world at large as Darcy Lewis: Avenger. She created a large silver and purple lightning bolt across half her face, akin to the famous David Bowie look. She turned her lips purple-blue and nodded at her reflection. She looked eclectic and wild and girlie but tough. Sam’s voice crackled in her ear, “Show time people. I think the target’s here.”

“EVERYBODY DOWN ON THE FLOOR!” The robber shouted.

“Looks like our guy has friends.” Steve whispered through the com.

“There are three of them.” Natasha informed them quietly, “One’s got the Ultron weapon Darcy described, and the other two have 5.7 caliber pistols, those could have armor piercing bullets so try not to get shot.”

“I SAID DOWN ON THE FLOOR! EVERYONE! YOU TOO BITCH!”

“They’re wearing Halloween masks. Very cliché.” Sam told them, “But, at least they aren’t running around wearing Nixon or Obama masks toting surf boards.”
Darcy opened the bathroom door as quietly as possible and peeked out. The iconic faces of horror were used to obscure the robbers identities. Freddy, Jason, and the Scream killer masks adorned their faces. Rightfully, the man wearing the Freddy mask was the one doing all the talking but it was the Scream killer who held the Ultron weapon at the ready.

Wanda and Natasha sprung into action first. With a leg scissor move Natasha took down Freddy and stole away his weapon. At the same time Wanda used her magic to try to rip the dangerous Ultron weapon out of the Scream’s hand, her scarlet magic swirled through the air and surrounded the weapon lifting it into the air, but the Scream didn’t let go and he too was lifted in the air. The last of the trio, Jason, aimed his gun at Natasha only to be tackled to the ground by Steve. Darcy had not been a fan of the plan when Steve proposed she hang back. In training it had become obvious to everyone that Darcy had a little problem regulating her strength especially in ‘heated’ situations. Until she could punch a human with a restrained amount of force, she was to only engage if people were in mortal peril, especially given that their opponents on this mission were squishy humans. Ultimately she agreed, it’s not like she wanted to accidently kill anyone by punching a hole through their chest. In hindsight though, she should have protested harder.

Wanda couldn’t get the Scream to let go of the weapon and she wasn’t precise enough with her telekinetic ability to stop him from reaching the trigger. So the guy, dangling from the weapon fifteen feet in the air, got his finger on the trigger and fired.

The weapon shot out a blue electrical looking light straight at the entrance of the bank. The glass doors exploded outwards, shattering loudly. A passing car was struck and it swerved into oncoming traffic hitting another vehicle. The sound of the cars crashing into each other was heart stopping. Darcy put her hand over her mouth as she thought of Sam who had been sitting just on the other side of the road. She prayed that he was quick enough to get himself and any other civilians out of the way of the carnage.

Wanda’s shitty plan and the Screams determination to hold onto the weapon were the only reason that no one was killed, had the weapon been fired at another angle, or from a different height, several people would have been killed. The civilians started screaming and crying out and Wanda dropped the Scream to the floor. The weapon still in his hands.

“Fucking idiot.” Darcy muttered as she emerged from the bathroom boldly.

“Wanda! The weapon!” Steve called out, but it was too late the Scream had located where the witch was and he was preparing to fire on her. Darcy threw up her shield just in time to save Wanda from being exploded. The weapon struck her shield the two energies crackled upon impact. With a grunt she dug in her heels and refused to lower the shield until the man stopped firing, even though she felt like the bones in her hands were in danger of shattering.

“Scream RUN!” Freddy called out before Natasha punched the man in the face, Freddy spat blood at her and brought his weapon up to shoot. Natasha dodged out of the way as Freddy fired blindly screaming, “Don’t let them get the weapon! Run!”

Natasha threw some rolled up coins at Freddy, making him drop the gun. She then took a running leap at him, tackling him to the floor. The Scream turned his head just in time to see Freddy get his head smacked into the floor so hard that he was rendered unconscious.

Jason, who was actually as tall and wide as Steve, was stuck wrestling on the floor with the famed undercover Captain, but he had enough wherewithal to shout to his accomplice, “SCREAM LEAVE THE WITCH ALONE AND RUN! FUCK-ERghag-cuh!”

Steve got Jason into a sleeper hold and proceeded to choke the large man out. This whole time, the
Scream continued to fire the weapon at Wanda and all the bank employees in that area. And Darcy kept her shield up protecting them even though her hands were feeling numb but that point.

Darcy moved forward, keeping her shield in place she carefully stepped her way over civilians until she was about 6 feet away from the man in the Scream mask. A hand grabbed her ankle and she looked down. There was a beautiful brunette woman with her one arm around a teenaged boy with similar coloring. The woman shook her head ‘no’ at Darcy and pulled on Darcy’s leg trying to urge her down to the floor with them.

It occurred to her that this random woman was trying to save her, save her from doing something stupid. Because she didn’t know who Darcy was. Or what she could do.

Darcy shook her head ‘no’ at the woman and mouthed “It’s okay”. The kid stared at her with wide eyes as she shook the woman’s hand free and moved forward another step towards the Scream.

He stopped firing on Wanda and Darcy’s shoulders sagged with relief. She lowered the shield, but then she saw the Scream’s trigger finger twitch and she quickly erected it again. Just in case.

“Don’t run!” Darcy called out making the Scream turn and face her. “You can’t escape and if you try you’re just going to hurt people.”

The Scream raised the Ultron weapon threateningly in her direction, but Darcy maintained the shield around Wanda just in case he was quicker than he looked.

“Give up.” Darcy counseled softly, “And you will walk out of here. I promise.”

Jason, who Steve had in handcuffs, was helping the large man to his feet. Steve paused to give her an encouraging nod and Darcy smiled at him brightly, preening, proud that she was going to be the one to ultimately save the day. Happy that Wanda would come out of the incident looking foolish and incompetent. It was during this prideful exchange that Scream saw his opportunity and he fired at Darcy.

She was blown back with such force she sailed through the bulletproof glass that protected the tellers from the rest of the bank, creating a large Darcy sized hole. When she crashed to the floor in a pile, her chest felt like it was burning and at the same time there was an electrical current running through her body making her twitch all over. It felt as if she had stuck her tongue in a light socket. She couldn’t help but recall that famous quote about pride coming before the fall…

The revving of an engine could be heard and then tires squealing and then just crashing noises. It sounded as if a car was driving into the bank through what was left of the front doors.

“Darcy!” The ear piece in her ear crackled as she convulsed on the floor unable to stop her body spasms.

“GET IN THE FUCKING CAR!” A female voice screamed. Gunfire followed her order. She could only hope Steve and Natasha were keeping the civilians safe. Somehow.

The sound of the Ultron weapon being fired again reached her ears. Darcy only had time to widen her eyes as the ceiling above her collapsed. The shriek of a young bank teller on her left reminded her that she wasn’t alone. There were terrified bank tellers on either side of her. Darcy raised her jerking arms at the last second and created a shield to catch all the falling rubble stopping it from crushing her and the civilians around her. But the shield wasn’t secure, with her body still suffering the effects from the Ultron gun it kept flicking in and out of existence. Dropping the debris only to catch it a second later, lower and lower, the ceiling contents threatened to crush them all.
“Fuck.” Darcy cursed as she pushed her shield up, up, up until there was enough room for the civilians to crawl out to safety, “GO!” Darcy ordered, “Get clear!”

The tellers didn’t waste any time as they got to their knees and crawled towards the door that lead to the public banking area. Darcy could hear the sound of a car door being shut and then the sound of the car or truck or whatever it was, backing out of the bank. Darcy’s arms felt like they were on fire but the twitching in her body was disappearing.

“Darcy??” Wanda called out.

Darcy snarled, “I’m fine! Get the bad guys!!”

The earpiece crackled with the sound of Sam’s voice, “I’ve got eyes on them. No license plate, four door black SUV. The woman’s driving, Freddy’s in the backseat, Screams riding shotgun. The vehicle is heading south east on Bellmont Street. The police are setting up road blocks ahead.”

“Get your wings and follow from the air, but keep your distance.” Steve ordered, “We don’t want these guys firing that weapon in populated areas.”

“Is everyone out of this section?” Darcy called out as she lifted her head and looked around; she didn’t see anybody so she sat up and tilted her shield so that all the rubble slid down to the floor. When her shield held no more she let it disappear and got to her feet.

“Peter?!” The same brunette woman who tried to warn her off before looked around with a frantic expression.

“Margery, are you alright?”
“Tim! Oh my god, you’re bleeding!”
“Mr. Rosen, I quit!”

The other civilians began to call out to their friends and family, checking each other’s injuries out. With a sweeping gaze she took in the scene. Steve was already rushing out the hole where the banks doors used to be. Natasha had the largest of the three criminals, Jason, face down on the floor with his hands cuffed behind his back. His mask was discarded carelessly on the floor next to his prone body, revealing him to be a very large but still baby-faced teenage boy. Or at the very least a young man.

Wanda looked at her with a worried expression before rushing over to Natasha. Darcy paid the women no mind as she headed for the giant hole which Steve had disappeared through. Steve was way ahead of her, running. Darcy zipped up her jacket and stared at the back of Steve’s head with a determined gleam in her eye.

Darcy erected her shield, her mouth tightening as it caused her arms to throb with exertion. She climbed aboard the shield and started to levitate into the air. Once she cleared the crowd she moved to fly forward. She could fly on her shield about as fast as she could run, which was pretty darn fast, but flying meant not having to negotiate around pedestrians. …And it was more fun. She couldn’t resist letting out a little “Wahoo!” under her breath.

Darcy let her eyes flicker up and she saw Sam flying way ahead and she raised her shield up until she was at the same altitude, she cast her eyes down to the street looking at the people and cars that looked like ants. The wind whipped the errant strands of hair around her face but her braid kept her colorful locks out of her way. It was cold moving so fast and being up so high and she kind of regretting her choice t wear shorts, but she didn’t have time to regret her fashion decisions, she had bad guys to catch.
She was very angry with herself. She had been worried about her hair and makeup. Being better than Wanda. Being seen as the hero. Impress the team….she had fucked up. She might have fucked up by telling Steve and the others about this little hold up at all. She had the sinking feeling that had they not interfered, the robbery would have gone smoothly and things wouldn’t have gotten all explode-y.

Her eyes scanned the street and even though she didn’t see the car the robbers had escaped in due to being shot and lying on the floor, she knew it had to be the one driving like a maniac and ignoring all traffic laws. And that as long as she could see Sam, she was still on their tail.

Something blue and red and human shaped swung on a rope next to her and Darcy did a double take as the person called out as he kept pace with her flying form, “Hi!...I’m Spiderman…. I want to help.”

His costume looked…janky. He wore a face red face mask with huge goggles over his eyes. A red hoodie with blue arms, with what appeared to be a hand drawn spider on the chest, jeans and sneakers. If it were Steve this, Spiderman, was approaching she knew the old fashioned Captain would send the kid away. His costume gave her pause, it screamed DIY, but even though the kids voice was half stolen by the wind, could recognize the voice as the one from her dreams.

“Okay.” Darcy called out as she made her shield bigger, “Hop on!”

“Really?!” Spiderman exclaimed even as he executed a fancy looking flip and landed on her shield in a crouched position. “I really didn’t expect that to work.”

Darcy shrugged as she pushed her shield to fly faster, “Manners, initiative, a drive to help your fellow man and the ability to keep up while dressed in a rejected Luchador costume? All good things in my book.”

“Uh, thanks? So, what’s your name? Are you with the Falcon? Are you an Avenger? Are they the real Avengers? Because that blonde one running full steam after the getaway car looks an awful lot like Captain America. I’ve always wanted to meet him!” Spiderman babbled sounding full of excitement.

Darcy kept her eyes on the car and pushed herself faster, they were catching up. “The bad guys are bank robbers. The getaway car has three dangerous criminals inside. They’ve got one super powerful weapon and some normal guns. So far no one’s died and I aim to keep it that way. Any questions?”

“How do you plan on stopping them?” Spiderman asked as they watched the getaway car ram through one police barricade only to tailspin and smash into a little two door car before taking off full speed again.

“I…I don’t know.” Darcy admitted, “I’m sort of winging it here.”

“Cool. Cooool.” Spiderman trailed off as Darcy moved them so they were flying directly over the car.

Darcy turned to Spiderman and nodded with her head, “Hop off.”

“What?”

Darcy dropped her shield and fell through the air, landing on top of the robbers SUV. She looked up and saw Spiderman swing away from them. She punched down through the roof of the car and pulled it open like a can. Only to be blasted in the face with that fucking Ultron gun again.

Darcy flew up into the air, her body jerking as the electrical blast rendered her immobile.
momentarily. She braced herself for the inevitable fall back down to Earth and prayed that when she sank like a stone she wouldn’t land on anyone.

A pair of strong arms caught her though.

“Sam.” Darcy grit out.

“Gotcha.” Sam swung her legs up and held her in a bridal carry as they continued to pursue the thieves through the air. “Who’s the new guy?”

“Stay on them!” Steve ordered sounding slightly winded.

“Calls himself Spi-Spiderman.” Darcy stuttered.

The Scream, Halloween mask still in place, popped up through the impromptu sunroof she had created, gave them the middle finger and then he raised the Ultron gun and fired at them.

“Fuck!” Sam cursed as he moved to evade.

“No!” Darcy cried as she looped her arms around Sam’s shoulders and erected her shield behind his back with a gasp. The pain in her body from the blast coupled with her using so much energy to create her shield had her body screaming in protesting pain. She tried to keep the shield in place, where they had been; knowing that because they moved the blast would hit the surrounding buildings.

“Shit!” Sam exclaimed as he realized what she was trying to do, he flew to reposition them into the line of fire and only a little of the blast got past her shield as she moved her hands back in front of her.

“Throw me!” Darcy yelled.

“What?!” Sam responded, “NO!”

“Don’t throw her Sam! Darcy, just keep up the shield. I’m almost there.” Steve commanded.

“Throw me at them!” Darcy plead, the rushing wind stealing her voice as they continued to speed along after the crazy driver.

The Scream was still firing. Darcy kept the shield up, protecting her and Sam, but the driver was moving quickly, changing directions impulsively, making turns that left Darcy scrambling to enlarge her shield or move it so the beam of destructive light would not hit any buildings or kill any civilians.

“Sam!” Darcy said demandingly.

“I can’t throw you, I’m not strong enough to get you where you want to go, at best I could drop you on them but even that wouldn’t work because they’re a moving target!” Sam protested.

“Darcy, I’m about to intercept the vehicle. Maintain the shield and widen it if you can. Wanda’s gonna clear us a path.” Natasha’s steady voice directed, “No casualties so far and if you can continue to shield the buildings, we can keep it that way.” Darcy didn’t hesitate to obey.

It strained her but she embiggened the energy shield as wide as she could make it, making the whole thing about as tall as a three story building and wide as the city block they were careening down. Darcy felt the strain in her mind and muscles as she pushed herself to maintain the shield on the widest surface area she had ever attempted.
“Hurry.” She whispered as she felt something wet drip out of her ears.

Civilian cars were enveloped with Wanda’s signature scarlet magic as they were pushed out of the line of fire. Darcy spied Spiderman grabbing pedestrians off the street, moving them as the cars Wanda relocated found their way on the sidewalk. Then a familiar black SUV came out of nowhere and T-boned the thief’s getaway car.

The Scream, somehow kept his finger on the trigger even as he was thrown out of the car and forward into the street. Darcy let out a grunt as she expanded the shield further so it would protect the high wild arc that emitted from the weapon as its owner flew through the air.

Only when the man wearing the Scream mask slammed into the concrete, head first, did he stop firing the weapon.

Darcy dropped her shield with a moan. She felt exhausted and she turned towards Sam, resting her head on his chest as her body sagged with relief. The Scream looked like a smear on the concrete, it was gross.

A cry of agony sounded from inside the thief’s SUV. The female accomplice emerged from the vehicle, a gun in one hand. The woman ran towards the Scream, ripping her own mask off as she went.

Sam brought them back down to the street but kept Darcy in his arms, for which Darcy was grateful as she really didn’t feel up to standing or walking at the moment. Natasha and Wanda got out of their own SUV. Natasha with her weapon held at the ready, Wanda with a dazed expression but her glowing hands also looking ready to strike.

The woman getaway driver turned on Natasha and Wanda and yelled accusingly, “You bitches!”

The woman got off one shot before the gun was snatched out of her hand as Spiderman swung past her. With her enhanced hearing Darcy heard the young sounding hero exclaim, “Yoink!”

Weaponless, cornered, and caught the woman balled her fists in rage and let out a scream of anguish and anger. Natasha shot her in the neck with a tranquilizer and the criminal crumbled to the floor next to her dead accomplice.

Spiderman swung over to them and offered Sam the weapon, but with his hands full with Darcy she accepted the weapon from the webslinger. She held it with two fingers at the muzzle, not really wanting to touch or handle the destructive device. She turned to Sam and asked, “Is this evidence or can I smoosh it into a little ball of not hurting people anymore?”

Sam chuckled and shook her head, “It’s evidence. Don’t smoosh.”

“You’re really strong!” Spiderman gushed eyeing Darcy, “The way you ripped the top off the car and protected everyone from being shot with that amazing shield! So cool.”

Darcy smiled tiredly at the man…boy? Spiderman, to her ear, sounding young. And yet the name fit. Spiderman.

“Thanks for the assist Spiderman.” Darcy acknowledged, she turned to Sam and patted him on the chest, “I think I can stand, you hold the gun.”

Sam put her down on her feet and Darcy handed him the weapon. Darcy pulled Spiderman to her by his arm and wrapped her own around his, turning she whispered in his ear, “I lied. I can’t stand. Let me use you as a crutch?”
“Of course!” Spiderman said in a hushed tone, nodding enthusiastically, “Are you hurt? Should I get you to an ambulance? I’m stronger than I look. I could carry you if you need—”

Darcy pat her hand on his chest stilling his words, “I’m fine. I mean, I’m tired, hella tired. And I’m still feeling like shit after being shot twice by that stupid Ultron gun but I’ll survive. I just…I just need something to hold onto.”

Spiderman nodded and disentangled his arm from hers; Darcy sagged against him winding an arm around his waist as he settled his arm around her shoulders. Sam wandered away over to Natasha who was being approached by the police who had finally caught up to them.

Wanda stood off to the side, holding her arm with one hand looking awkward and out of place. Darcy averted her eyes and scanned the crowd looking for Steve.


Steve looked only slightly sweaty and pink from his run, gone was his hat and fake glasses. Darcy waved at him tiredly and smiled crookedly at him, “Hey Cap. Nice of you to join us.”

“Where’s the weapon?” Steve asked with a no nonsense expression.

Darcy shrugged and pointed in the direction of the blood stain that was the Scream, “Over there?”

“No. It’s gone.” Natasha revealed as she came over and joined them. “Someone snatched it up in all the commotion.”

“Son of a bitch.” Darcy exclaimed as she closed her eyes and fought down the urge to throw up, her head was pounding and the afternoon light was hurting her eyes.

“Darcy?” Natasha said concerned.

She felt Steve’s familiar hands pull her away from Spiderman and against his broad chest, Spiderman let her go and Darcy didn’t protest. She kept her eyes closed to combat the bout of dizziness that threatened to overtake her.

“Is she going to be okay?” Spiderman asked, his voice conveying his worry and youth plainly for all to see.

“She’ll be fine son. Thank you for your assistance but the Avengers can take it from here.” Steve said with a nod. His warm hand found its way to her hip, his thumb slipped underneath her clothing to rub back and forth against her skin.

Darcy smiled and turned her face into Steve’s chest further. No matter what she saw in her dreams, or the lies Wanda told, or the things Steve really might think about her…she felt safer with his arms around her and comforted by his very presence.

Spiderman wasn’t dismissed so easily, “What was that weapon? I’ve never seen anything like it. She, she, I never got your name sorry.” Someone poked her gently in the shoulder and Darcy opened her eyes. Spiderman stared at her expectantly.

“Darcy.” She supplied.

Steve and Natasha both made noises at that. She gave them a pointed look, “Guys, this is Spiderman, he’s not gonna go ruining my secret identify…I don’t even have a secret identify.” Darcy looked
around at the gathering crowds of gawking people, held back by the police who were tapping the area up and erecting wooden barricades to cordon off the crime scene...accident scene? She was fuzzy on the terminology.

“Darcy mentioned the weapon had connections to Ultron?” Spiderman asked sounding curious.

Steve and Natasha glared at her. Darcy shrugged, “It seemed like pertinent information to share at the time.”

The sound of a can being opened caught her attention. Behind Steve Wanda approached them with a can of Coca-Cola in hand. She held it out to Darcy with a small smile, “You look like you needed some caffeine. Or sugar. So I thought...”

Darcy accepted the can with a grateful nod and took a big gulp of the delicious sugar water. She pulled away from the can with a satisfied, “Ah.”

Natasha couldn’t hide her smirk. Steve removed his hand from her skin and put his hand flat on the small of her back, over her leather jacket. Darcy motioned to Spiderman with her drink, “Wanda this is Spiderman, Spiderman, Scarlet Witch. Black Widow, this is Captain America, and over there dealing with the police cuz he’s the best and the most patient of us all, is Falcon.”

Spiderman waved at Wanda, with big eyes, one by one he looked at all of them, “This is the best day of my life.”

A modulated voice from above called out, “Well then it’s about to get ten times better.”

It was Tony in the Iron Man armor.

“Tony!” Darcy called out gleefully.

“Hey honey, how was your day?” Tony asked as he slowly lowered his armor onto the ground next to them. Steve stepped away from her but kept one hand on her back so she wouldn’t fall. Darcy shot him a questioning look as she took another large gulp from her soda.

“Minimal structural damage and except for the crazy bad guy, no casualties. So pretty good day so far.” Darcy informed him with a crazed smile.

“Oh my god. Oh my god.” Spiderman whispered to himself, probably unawares that most of them could hear him. “It’s Tony Stark. It’s Iron Man. Oh my god.”

Tony turned to look at Spiderman, scanning the kid up and down, “Who’s this?”

Spiderman extended his hand, “Mr. Stark sir, it’s an honor to meet you. I’m a big fan. I just...I, you’re my hero sir.”

Tony ignored Spiderman’s offered hand and turned to Darcy while pointing at Spiderman, “Do we like him?”

Darcy grinned, “Yes. We like him.”

Tony tilted his head as if considering, “Okay.” He turned to Spiderman and then shook the kids hand once before muttering, “Nice to meet you kid.”

Darcy let out a laugh when Spiderman stared at his hand with wonder. The Iron Man armor then opened up and Tony stepped out of it, in a expensive and neatly pressed suit.
Darcy blindly shoved her can of coke into Steve’s chest before throwing herself into Tony’s arms crying out, “Did you see me?! Did you see me flying? And then when I opened the top of the car?”

Tony squeezed her tightly, hugging her close, he quietly responded in her ear, “I saw. I saw.”

Darcy pulled back and smiled manically at Tony, all her exhaustion and pain from before was diluted by her happiness and pride, “Did I look stupid?” She touched her hair, “Should I have gone with something darker?” She gestured down to her outfit, “Something less…me?”

Tony shook his head and ran a hand over her braid, “You look beautiful.”

Tony pulled her in for a quick kiss and Darcy threw her arms around his shoulders and turned the quick kiss into a long one. Steve made a clearing his throat noise and they broke apart.

Darcy smiled giddily at Steve and declared loudly, “First day and nobody died! Hooray!”

Steve couldn’t help but smile amusedly. She reached out towards the soda and he handed it over and watched her as she drank from the can greedily. She spied Spiderman discreetly checking his phone as Tony slipped his arm around her waist and kissed her cheek as she gulped the rest of the cans contents down.

Pulling away from the can with a gasp, Darcy handed the empty can to Steve and said, “Can you hold this? Don’t throw it away, it’s a recyclable.”

Steve frowned cutely down at the can but held it as she asked. Spiderman got everyone’s attention with a wave as he backed away from them, “Well, it’s been great—amazing—it’s been amazing meeting you all. But, I’ve got to go….so, bye!”

Spiderman shot out a web and off he swung. Darcy waved enthusiastically at his retreating form, calling out, “Bye Spiderman! See you later!”

“Will we?” Natasha asked with a raised brow, “Be seeing him again.”

Darcy smiled secretively and teased, “You’ll see.”

“Nat. I could use some help over here.” Sam called out from where a couple of angry cops were gesturing wildly to the dead body. And another pair of officers were trying to put the still masked Freddy into the back seat of a squad car but he was resisting. Natasha nodded to them, muttering, “Excuse me.”

Wanda moved closer to Steve as he fixed Tony with a questioning grin, “Not that we’re not happy to see you, but what are you doing here Tony?”

Tony affected a disinterested expression, “I was in the neighborhood. Sue me.”

“Tony.”

Tony rolled his eyes and pulled Darcy into his side with one arm, “It was her first mission! Excuse me for caring!”

Darcy’s brow knit as she stared at her boyfriend in confusion, “Did you secretly do something to help me?”

“No!” Tony assured her quickly, “I just…hovered and followed you. And only at the end. I didn’t
interfere though. This win is all yours.”

Darcy smiled placated. “Good.”


“Eh hem!” Steve coughed. Darcy and Tony stared at him blankly. Steve gestured to the crowds of people all around them with their phones out, “Maybe this isn’t the best place for that sort of thing. Nor the right time?”

Darcy rolled her eyes. Steve glared, “Remember, you’re an Avenger now Darcy. What you do reflects on the team as a whole.”

“And being seen in public with me reflects badly?” Tony challenged.

“No.” Steve argued, “That’s not what I meant.”

“What did you mean?” Tony pressed. Darcy put a hand on Tony’s chest and gave him a pointed look.

“Steve’s right. There’s a dead body 20 feet away, lot’s of drama, police. It’s my first day on the job. We should cool it with the PDA.” Darcy said with a nod.

Tony moved to take his arm away but Darcy grabbed his hand and kept it securely around her waist with a frown, “I said no PDA. Not no touching.” Darcy wrapped her arms around Tony’s middle and rested her head against his chest, “Besides I don’t think I can stand on my own. I’m fucking exhausted guys. Like, the soda helped, but I’m still fucking done.”

Tony held her a little tighter, concern coloring his voice when he asked, “Are you sure? You got hit with that modified Ultron Sentry arm blaster gun thing twice and you maintained your shield far longer and larger than you ever have before.”

Darcy let out a yawn. “I’m fine. I swear.”

She stared up at Tony’s frowning face with tired eyes. She reached up and stroked his beard comfortingly, “I’m okay. I promise.”

Tony didn’t look convinced by Darcy really didn’t have the energy to argue. “Okay.”

Tony looked at Steve then with a determined frown. “I’m taking her home. She’ll see you tomorrow if she’s up to it.”

Steve narrowed his eyes at Tony speculatively, but Tony was pressing a button on his watch, “Merlin, I’ve got the package, bring us home.”

“What?” Darcy said but suddenly everything became clear as a sling ring portal opened up. Tony ushered her forward through it and the Iron Man armor followed them blocking onlookers view of where they were disappearing too. And then it closed behind them.

Darcy smiled tiredly at Stephen as he came forward to greet her with a quick kiss. He pulled back and began running his hands all over her, obviously checking for injuries.

“This is nice and all doc, but I’m thinking it would be more fun if we were naked.” Darcy joked.

Stephen gave her a stern look, “You were shot.” He unzipped her jacket which now had singe marks
on it, Tony helped pull her arms out of the sleeves, “You were shot and I had to stay here and watch it happen.”

Darcy turned to Tony with a question on her face as Stephen un buckled her holographic harness and fanny pack, letting the items fall unceremoniously to the ground. Tony kissed her head and pet her hair comfortingly as he explained and Stephen moved to rip off the remains of her destroyed t-shirt, “Surprise surprise, the press caught the whole car chase bit on camera. Aired it live too. Had to practically sit on the doc to keep him from swooping in and saving the day.”

“You were shot in the face!” Stephen repeated as he ran his scarred and shaking hands over the unburnt flesh of her chest. Darcy looked down in surprise that her bra survived being shot at. “You were shot in the face.”

Darcy brought her hands up to cup Stephen’s worried face, “I’m fine.”

“You were shot in the face.” Stephen repeated sounding broken. Darcy ran her hands through his hair and brough his face down to hers so she could kiss him reassuringly. Stephen wrapped his arms around her bare torso and pulled her to his chest.

“You were shot—” Darcy cut off his words with a finger to his lips, “I know I was. And it hurt but I survived.”

The skin around Stephen’s eyes crinkled as he frowned, “I don’t want to watch you die.”

“Then make sure you die first.” Darcy quipped without thinking. Tony let out a laugh and Stephen widened his eyes before looking down and smiling to himself.


Stephen shook his head, “No I’m sorry. I…I’ve never had to watch someone I love in mortal peril before. I…I reacted badly.”

“That’s an understatement.” Tony muttered as he slipped his suit jacket off and hung it off the back of Stephen’s desk chair.

Darcy reminded Stephen with a meaningful look, “Just try to remember, I’m not exactly mortal anymore. K? It’ll take a lot more than one guy with a gun to take me down.”

Stephen nodded and Tony cleared his throat as he loosened his tie. In a patronizing tone he announced, “I’m a genius and I have an idea.”

Darcy lay her head on Stephen’s chest, her ear pillowed right above his heart. She allowed him to pull him as close to his body as he wanted as she finally allowed herself to relax and sink into the arms of one of the people that she trusted and loved above all others. She eyed Tony as he began to unbutton his cuffs. “What’s your idea Tony?”

“Well, you’ve had a long and hard day fighting evil doers.” Tony began working on the buttons of his dress shirt.

“Yeah?”

“You’re tired, you need to relax.”

“Yeah?”
“And you’re already half naked thanks to Doctor grabby hands.”

Stephen grunted but didn’t otherwise comment. Darcy smiled tiredly as Tony removed his shirt altogether, “Yeeeaah?”

“Well, I think you need a healthy dose of orgasms and then some strictly enforced bed rest.” Tony’s eyes flickered over to Stephen, “Do you concur Doctor?”

Darcy tilted her head up to see the smile slowly spreading over Stephen’s face, “Oh, I concur Mr. Stark.”
So...I wrote this whole chapter without Spiderman, and then I injected him and Aunt may into the bank, and then I was like....I want more Spiderman. So....yeah.
I'd be interested in what you all think.

Just remember Darcy's not perfect and this is not going to be a Wanda bashing story, personally I think Wanda and Tony AND BRUCE are all to blame for what happened during Sokovia/Ultron thing. And Clint's speech to Wanda in the middle of the battle, ABSOLVING her of all guilt and responsibility? Yeah, THAT is what I take issue with. "You step out there you're an Avenger" MY ASS!!!!!!!!
Chapter 36 - Darcy Lewis

Chapter Summary

Darcy doesn't teleport anywhere.

Chapter Notes

Super long chapter. enjoy.

Chapter 36 – Darcy Lewis

Darcy woke up to the sound of a news report. After spending the first night with her, Stephen grew antsy and skipped off to Karma-Taj, looking for a book he needed to continue his research on viewing prophetic dreams. Apparently there was no spell to view her visions as they had viewed her memories, so Stephen was trying to invent one. He was very excited about the prospect of creating his own spell. So for the rest of her recovery it was just her and Tony, eating, sleeping and sexing.

She could feel the heat of Tony’s body as he sat next to her, propped up. She turned over so she was facing him and listened with her eyes closed as the sound of woman’s pleasant voice assaulted her ears.

“I’m Christine Everhart and this is WHIH Wolrd News coming to you from the site of the Avengers latest battle. It ended in a grisly car crash where the perpetrator of a bank robbery died as a direct result of Avenger interference however he was the only casualty in the deadly face off, due to the actions of one woman. Darcy Lewis.”

Darcy smiled smugly. She had stayed away from all media while she rested so it was nice to know the world was heralding her as a hero.

“You may recognize the name as she was recently announced as Tony Stark’s newest girlfriend, but perhaps not the face as she donned a brightly colorful aesthetic while performing her heroic acts. The new hairdo and lightning bolt makeup combined with the casual street clothes have many fans asking, which is the real Darcy Lewis?” Darcy frowned and scooted closer to Tony, “Go online and let us know what you think. Which style is the real Darcy and which is her costume? Is she the sophisticated brunette who wore chic pastels and neutrals as we saw when she first announced her relationship with Mr. Stark? Or did she reveal her true self when she donned the rainbow hair, leather, and lilac combat boots? Tweet us @WHiHNews @DarcyLewisStyle.”

“Fucking hell. You know I changed the arc reactor’s design and no one even noticed. Not even a blurb in the style section about it…Sexist assholes.” Tony grumbled.

“Miss Lewis’s attire had many calling into question the super heroine’s affiliation with the Avengers at all.”

Darcy moved to pillow her head on Tony’s chest, he automatically moved to put an arm around her
as she snuggled closer. She could tell that he was watching the news program on his tablet as the sound was close but being played at a low volume. Content to listen she kept her eyes closed.

“Her clothing suggests she was unprepared for engaging in a dangerous faceoff with armed criminals, but sources assure us that Ms. Lewis is a fully fledged member of the Avengers, just one with a unique sense of style. Sightings of Ms. Lewis and her famous boyfriend have been unusually scarce since the announcement of their coupling.”

“Gee whiz, wonder why.” Darcy groused. Tony stroked her back soothingly.

“Tony Stark of course being a founding member of the Avengers, retired from the superhero group last year following the battle with Ultron in Sokovia. It seems his newest girlfriend aims to take his place on the team, with his approval of course. Once the battle was over, our cameras caught the couple canoodling, Iron Man seemingly only on the scene to congratulate the newest Avenger on her victory.”

“Ugh. That’s a terrible picture of me.” Tony complained. Darcy blinked her eyes open and wiped away the sleep but not quick enough to see the picture he was referring to.

“When questioned about the newest member of the team, leader Captain America was as tight lipped as ever, only willing to comment that Ms. Lewis was an Avenger and a valued member of the team. Other notable members such as Falcon, Scarlet Witch, and Black Widow were also on the scene but none were willing to speak to press. Not even about the assist from local vigilante, Spiderman.”

Darcy poked Tony in the stomach with a finger, “Why is Spiderman being labeled a vigilante and not a hero? What kind of weird brand loyalty racism is that?”

Tony chuckled, “You can thank The Bugle for that moniker. Editor over there has it out for the kid. Keeps labeling the kid ‘a menace’. Most of the press has followed suit, more or less.”

Darcy pouted, “Well that’s stupid.”

Tony sighed, “They do the same to those mutant groups. The X…-people? I think that’s what they’re called.”

Darcy frowned and focused back on the screen. “When we reached out for comment, Ms. Lewis’s people told us that after the exhausting battle she was taking some time to rest and recover. Three days later, we still haven’t heard back. We can only hope that Ms. Lewis didn’t sustain permanent damage or become skittish about her commitment to being an Avenger. This was after all, her first mission and supposedly her first taste of real combat.”

“Ugh. Did they really reach out? Or are they just making that up?” Darcy asked as she narrowed her eyes at the thin and pretty blonde on the screen.

“The team didn’t want to speak for you.” Tony said as he leant down and kissed the top of her head. “Neither did I, but when the media speculated you were dead. I issued a statement upon your behalf claiming exhaustion and blah, blah, blah.”

“When--?” Darcy asked but before she could finish her question Tony was answering her, “Yesterday. When you slept for the entire day and Stephen skipped out on us…It was just a little blurb about how you were doing.”

“Oh. Okay.”

Tony avoided her eyes as he revealed, “I was in the process of setting up an interview for us, you
and me, but Cap press-blocked me. Told me it wasn’t my place.”

She could hear the irritation in his tone. Darcy reached up a hand and caressed Tony’s cheek. Tony clenched his jaw and grit out his next words begrudgingly, “I’m not on the team anymore. Steve argued any interviews or statements you do have to be run through the Avengers media liaison. I… then you woke up and I let the issue go.” Tony smirked down at her, but she could see the tightness around his eyes that belied his anger as he claimed, “I’d much rather spend time with you than deal with that patriotic pain in the ass any day.”

Darcy made a noise in response but otherwise remained quiet. Simultaneously they turned back to the tablet where Christine Everhart was still talking.

“Though no official word has been issued from the Avengers themselves, we here at WHiH World News have an exclusive source close to the group who revealed the origins of Ms. Lewis’s abilities. There has been much speculation in the wake of the Avenger’s debut, but it would seem that the lightning bolt makeup was a clue!”

“Mother fucker.” Tony muttered. Christine Everhart smiled wolfishly as she revealed, “We have learned that Darcy Lewis is claiming to be the sister to Thor, God of Thunder. Yes, you heard that correctly, Darcy Lewis is allegedly an Asgardian Princess.”

“Well fuck!” Darcy exclaimed, instantly waking up, “Who the hell spilled the beans on that one?!”

Tony looked pensive as he stared at the screen which showed a picture of Thor and Darcy side by side. “I got a tip that it leaked, but I haven’t been able to find out who broke ranks and tattled. I made a call and…Everhart promised she would sit on the information until you were awake---I offered her an exclusive interview.” Tony’s mouth twitched, “Guess she got a better offer.”

Tony’s hand gripped her hip tightly, pulling her closer to his body. She could feel his muscles tensed and she could only imagine what was running through his mind.

“Though there appears to be some family resemblance,” A picture of Darcy and Loki from the battle of New York was put on screen. Darcy chewed on her bottom lip as she realized how alike she and Loki really were with their pale skin and dark hair. “The claim that Darcy Lewis is an Asgardian is being hotly contested amongst the masses and experts alike.”

“Darcy Lewis has a West Virginian birth certificate. The doctor who delivered her is a verified physician, though he does not remember Miss Lewis due to his age, now 93 years. Her parents, Amanda Kenly and Elias Lewis, were high school sweethearts and by all accounts entirely human. Both have since died, her mother of cancer her father in a car accident. Both were only children and as a result Miss Lewis has no other living relatives who could refute or verify Miss Lewis’s claiming to be of royal alien blood.”

“What the fuck.” Darcy commented dazedly, Tony just clutched her tighter as pictures from her childhood and yearbook were put up on screen one by one.

“This is so embarrassing.” She cringed at her middle school picture, frizzy hair, nineties fashion, and budding puberty were not a good look on her.

“By all accounts Darcy Lewis was a normal human girl who attended school, church services, and aged accordingly. She came from an average middle class family, had friends, boyfriends, and suffered human ailments, we tracked down her pediatrician and discovered she’d had chicken pox as a child, the flu, sunburn, acne, she even broke her arm as a teenager. However the tale of Darcy Lewis’s average existence becomes murky after the arrival of the Thunder God.”
“What the hell? What about doctor patient confidentially?!?” Darcy exclaimed shrilly, “What the fuck! They can’t do this. Can they do this?”

Tony scowled, “The press can report anything as long as it’s not slanderous. And, well….just prepare yourself for former boyfriends and best friends and teachers and neighbors, basically anybody willing to sell you out for a buck. They’re going to come out of the woodwork and give interviews about you, reveal the intimate details of your life. And don’t bother crossing your fingers; chances are they won’t be flattering.” Darcy felt like giant Mothra sized butterflies were flying around in her stomach.

“You’re in the limelight now babe. Thick skin and trust issues. Wear them like armor.” Tony warned.

The pictures from her childhood disappeared and Christine Everhart reappeared saying, “After Thor’s first trip to Earth, Miss Lewis stopped posting to social media, lost all contact with friends from her hometown, and dropped out of college to follow around astrophysicist, Dr. Jane Foster.” A picture of Jane appeared on screen. “We reached out to Dr. Foster but she declined to comment about her former intern or rumored intergalactic romantic partners connection to said former intern.”

“That’s right bitch,” Darcy jeered at the tiny screen, “My home-girl ain’t gonna sell me out!”

Tony smirked, “Friday send Dr. Foster a cookie bouquet.”

Friday’s pleasant voice sounded from the ceiling, “On it boss.”

“It is true,” Christine Everhart continued, “That Miss Lewis did display some abilities similar to the one’s we’ve seen exhibited by Asgardians before, however it is hard to believe that possessing super human strength and magic, can make someone an Asgardian Princess and sister to the Gods of Thunder and Mischief. Especially when that someone was born on Earth, grew up in West Virginia, and is currently dating Iron Man.”

The camera panned out, “For WHIH World News, I’m Christine Everhart and I encourage you all to follow us online. Have a good evening, and goodnight.”

Darcy watched the credits roll as Christine shuffled papers about on her desk, not really seeing the woman. She didn’t know how to respond. Should she be angry about how the reporter was basically calling her a deluded liar? Ashamed of her childhood being investigated and used as evidence against her? Or happy that, besides her childhood doctor, no one she used to know granted the news outlet an interview that could further besmirch her character? She felt unmoored from her emotions but, a glance up at Tony’s stony face told her everything about how he was feeling.

“Steve is gonna be so pissed.” Darcy mumbled as she pressed her face into Tony’s chest. Tony jerked his head and Darcy brought up her face so she could see Tony’s indignant expression.

“Who gives a shit?” Tony said with a hint of venom. He tossed the tablet onto the middle of the bed without shutting it off.

“What?…I do.” Darcy defended, “And Steve’s not gonna like how I’m being portrayed as a super powered crazy liar, especially when it reflects on the Avengers as a whole…duh.”

“That report aired last night. I had Friday summarize how the press and the people are feeling about you and the incident. Results are in, you’re a hero and the incident would have been a clusterfuck without you there to save the day.” Darcy felt one side of her mouth tick up reflexively in a half smile.
“Really?” She asked. Tony smiled at her warmly, “Really. That bitch Christine Everhart is the only one talking about your past…she’s also the only one who found out you’re Asgardian royalty, but that’s neither here nor there.” Tony said with a gleam in his eye, “The bulk of the media coverage has been focused on criticizing Avengers ’as a whole’ and praising you.”

“You didn’t tell me that.” Darcy interrupted but Tony ignored her continuing to rant, “There are a few dissenting opinions, a few people calling you the spawn of the devil, but that’s normal internet troll shit.”

“Tony--”

“Everyone who has half a brain credits the nearly non-existent casualty count to you and your actions alone. The team acted recklessly and if you weren’t there it would have been a catastrophe. The press hasn’t been able to get Steve to say one goddamn thing about you other than that you are an Avenger. He let them spin their wheels forcing them to come up with content and this trash is the result.”

“I don’t think Steve--”

“Steve’s the leader of the Avengers, not your father; you answer to him on the field not off it.” Tony found her hand with his and laced their fingers together. “You were right to worry about what you wore and how you looked. You were right about how important it was to make a good first impression on the world.”

Tony surged forward and gave her a quick kiss, but it felt like it was a kiss filled with sorrow. Darcy was confused, “What’s wrong?” She asked as he pulled away.

Tony ran a hand through his hair and Darcy leaned down and gave a kiss to his chest. “Hiding away for the past three days to recover may have been what you needed, but—god, I should have seen this coming.”

Tony stared at her with an aggravated and worried expression, “We should have had a statement ready to go. I should have anticipated the presses voracious interest in who you are and how you got powered. This is my fault--”

“Tony, no--”

“This is my fault.” Tony reiterated, “The press finding out where your powers come from was inevitable but we should have been the ones to reveal that information. Everhart’s story, has sparked vitriol online. No one thinks you’re an Asgardian Princess. People either think you’re too good to be related to Loki, or too short and mortal to be related to Thor…I should have never let the narrative out of our control.”

“Honey.” Darcy said earnestly, “I’m the one who can see the future. If anyone should have seen the media’s version of the Spanish inquisition coming, it’s me.”

Tony stared at her face quietly for a long minute. Then he nodded to himself. “It doesn’t matter.” He asserted. “We’ll issue a statement about your Asgardian lineage being activated through proximity to Thor. We’ll say you were adopted by the royal family thereafter. We’ll set the record straight and tell them who the fuck you are. Not the other way around.”

Darcy smiled as Tony’s lips curled up on the edges of his mouth as he cursed. He brought his lips to her and gave her a sensuous languid kiss that had her chasing his lips when he pulled away from her. He brought their foreheads together so he could speak and hold every inch of her attention.
“I won’t let the world get to you.” Tony promised, “They will know that you are a force to be reckoned with.”

Darcy closed her mouth, her words of protest dying in her throat as Tony stared at her with burning intensity.

“Trust me,” He plead, “Trust yourself.”

“Okay.” Darcy nodded. She tried not to worry about how mad Steve would be if she let Tony help her shape her image in the media. But she couldn’t help it.

Tony surged forward and pressed his lips to hers, kissing her wildly and with a sense of urgency. They had sex and it was amazing as always, but Darcy couldn’t help but feel that during the act Tony was trying to prove something to her. Or apologize for something. For what, she couldn’t guess.

With every kiss and caress she tried to assure him of how much she loved him, but something told her Tony was too mentally preoccupied to hear what she was saying to him without words.

Later, after they’d moved their intimate activities to the shower, they stood side by side getting ready to face the world. She was going back to the Avengers Head Quarters, Tony was headed for the workshop to work on a project.

“It’s called Barf.” Tony announced as he put toothpaste on his brush.

“Barf?” She questioned as she brushed out her wet hair.

“Binarily Augmented Retro-Framing.” Tony explained, he then spit out in the sink and picked up a bottle and began to apply product to his hair. “It’s a prototype created for therapeutic pursuits.”

“Therapy tech?” Darcy awed, “That’s…fucking cool.”

Tony gave her a dazzling smile, “Hell yeah it is.”

Darcy let a beat pass before she prompted Tony with a raised brow, “We’re still looking into seeing an actual human officially licensed therapist too though…right?”

Tony pouted, “Yes.”

“Good.” Darcy said with a triumphant smile.

She left Tony at the tower, wrapped up in his project and happily tinkering in the workshop. Darcy made him the promise that they’d meet up tomorrow night to visit Peggy and then go out on a date after. In public.

She was tired of feeling like she was hiding and Tony was right, she was a force to be reckoned with. She needed to stop caring so much about what people thought of her, at least when she was just acting normal and living her life the way she wanted to live it.

She was still going to insist on disguises so they could avoid the paparazzi though.
With a ‘fuck you, this is who I am’ attitude in mind, she returned to the Avengers Head Quarters alone and under her own power. Shoulders back and head held high. Despite feeling like she was going back to school to get disciplined by the principal.

She had had no contact with the Avengers since the bank incident. Part of that was due to needing to sleep for a solid 29 hours when her adrenaline high wore off, and part of that was just her own fault. After the incident the only thing she wanted to do was hang out in bed with Tony and Stephen, and when Stephen bailed, she made due with Tony.

She knew Steve made a request for her to come back to HQ yesterday morning to do a debriefing, but like a coward she responded to said request via Friday, and claimed needing more ‘recovery’ time. And then one day turned into two. And then before she knew it, three days passed. Four if you included the day the incident occurred.

It occurred to her that she tended to want to hide from the world. And Tony, god bless him, enabled that behavior. He was probably motivated by understanding her need for space and his own selfish desire to keep her all to himself, but that was just speculation on her part.

She had contemplated trying to fly on her shield all the way from the Tower in New York City, to the new Avengers facility but decided against it when Tony offered her the use of one of his snazzy cars. Darcy knew next to nothing about cars, but she could tell the car she drove was expensive. And it had a very good stereo.

When she parked the car, a scowling Maria Hill was waiting for her. She clung to her sense of aplomb and tried to project confidence.

“Hi Agent Hill.” Darcy greeted the woman perkily.

“You’ve been out of contact since the mission.” The no nonsense woman censured.

“Yeah. I needed to recharge.” Darcy explained as they got onto the elevator that would take them up to the ground level of the facility. “Friday should have told you--”

“You missed the mission debrief.” Agent Hill cut her off.

“Yeah. I know.” Darcy said with a pointed glared, “I needed to recharge.”

Maria Hill said nothing in response and the two women rode up in silence the rest of the way. Maria kept pace with her as Darcy headed for the kitchen. It was mid-afternoon, which meant she would most likely find Steve and Sam eating lunch after their vigorous morning training session. But when she reached the kitchen it was empty. Darcy turned to Maria and asked, “Where is everyone?”

“If you had been here like you were supposed to be you would know.” Maria glared.

Darcy tried to keep her face neutral as she repeated herself, “Where is everyone?”

“You put the entire team in jeopardy by disappearing.” Maria stated coldly, “After the duel of Johannesburg, the public--”


“That wasn’t a duel.” Darcy argued, “If anything it should be called a truel, because it wasn’t between a duo but a trio.”
Maria’s eye twitched and she waited a beat before picking up from where she left off before Darcy interrupted, “After the duel of Johannesburg, the public blamed the massive destruction caused on the Avengers. You were singled out as a key factor that kept the event from becoming cataclysmic, but you disappeared and were not present for the final confrontation with Ultron, so your part in the event was not highlighted in the resulting debates. They treated like you a footnote.”

Darcy grits her teeth but refrained from snarling at the woman as she really wanted to.

“You disappearing after a battle again is unacceptable. More so seeing as it was of your own volition this time.”

“I needed to recharg—”

Maria held up her hand, “I don’t care. I’m just reminding you that your actions and inaction have consequences. When you disappear after a fight, it makes the Avengers look weak. When you jump up and down and kiss your boyfriend after helping kill someone, it makes the Avengers appear callous. When you choose to fight an armed robber dressed like unicorn vomit, it reflects poorly on the Avengers. You are acting like being an Avenger is a game. Or an internship.” Darcy’s eyes widened at that. Maria obviously knew just how to twist the knife.

“Being an Avenger is serious business. And if you can’t handle it, you should let Steve know now so we can mitigate the fallout.” Darcy glared at the woman and stubbornly kept her eyes locked on Maria’s. She wouldn’t be the first to look away. Maria Hill had always acted with controlled politeness around her, but Darcy knew the woman didn’t like her for whatever reason. It would seem her little disappearing act was the final straw for the agent.

Darcy swallowed thickly and repeated herself, ignoring everything Maria had just said, “Where. Is. Everyone.”

Maria pursed her lips and for a second Darcy worried Maria would refuse to tell her, but she did.

“There in conference room B discussion how to clean up the PR mess you left in your wake.”

Darcy put a hand on her chest, “My PR mess?”

Maria didn’t respond. She turned on her heel and walked away from her without another word. Darcy wanted to childishly yell after her, some insult, but she refrained. She took deep breath and instead turned back to the elevator, intent on finding the rest of the team.

Darcy quietly made her way to the conference room, her high heels softened by the carpeting that lined the hallway. She opened the door silently and peered inside before entering. Wanda, Sam, Vision, and Steve were all sitting quietly watching a debate style news program that was being projected on the wall. Darcy softly closed the door behind her and slipped into a seat closest to the door. She had no illusion that her arrival was unnoticed, but still no one acknowledged her. Everyone stared at the screen on the wall.

Footage of the mission was being shown with a split screen, an older white man in a bow tie was on one side and a smartly dressed African American woman sat on the other. The older man’s image disappeared momentarily to be replaced with footage of the car chase. A blue circle was drawn around one of the cars Wanda had moved out of the way with her powers, “You can see, right here, that red mist is evidence of Wanda Maximoff’s magic. We know that she was in the car with Natasha Romanoff when the former S.H.E.I.L.D. agent intentionally crashed into the perpetrators vehicle, but
if you pay attention to what happened just prior to that, you can see that Miss Maximoff was using the powers *Hydra* gave to her, shoving cars off the road clearing a path for Ms. Romanoff.”

“Yes! So she could stop a dangerous criminal from causing untold amount of destruction to an unsuspecting city!” The woman argued.

The car chase footage disappeared and the man in the bow tie reappeared to glare at the woman, “You can clearly see Ms. Maximoff push the cars out of the way and onto the side walk. Where pedestrians were *walking*!”

“But, no one was hurt!”

“This time! And not even due to the actions of a recognized Avenger, but due to the vigilante known as ‘Spiderman’. A youtube sensation, if you can believe it.”

“That’s ridiculous. They’re heroes! They saved the city and stopped a madman. Again!”

“That madman was an eighteen year old boy who bought an illegal weapon to commit a crime, yes, but he did not deserve to die. Nor did his pregnant wife, his high school sweetheart, deserve to watch him die and suffer a miscarriage as a result of that stress combined with being shot full of tranquilizer by a former assassin!”

“He fired a modified Ultron weapon in a crowded bank!”

“Only when faced with super-powered opponents did that boy fire that weapon. He wasn’t even the ring leader! When pursued by said ‘Avengers’ the boy reacted! Like the child that he was. He lashed out and used whatever was at his disposal to escape his attackers.”

“Attackers?! We are talking about the Avengers.”

“Had Miss Lewis not jumped on top of the vehicle and tried to rip it apart like the *Hulk* inspiring an eighteen year old boy to fire a weapon he didn’t understand--”

“That’s ridiculous. You’re delusional.”

“Can I finish? Can I finish! Perhaps had these super-powered individuals not interfered, things would not have escalated to the degree which they did. Why were they at the bank in the first place? Do you know they teach tellers and bank employees to *comply* with all attempted robbers? Thieves are often caught due to trackers placed in the bags of money and--”

“Are you telling me you’d rather these criminals get away with stealing from a bank than accept that the Avengers did their job and saved countless lives with minimal structural damage and casualties?”

“I’m saying that if allowed the proper human authorities could have caught the criminals without a perilous car chase. Had the Avengers not pursued the assailants once they fled, the police could have ended the high speed chase without any bloodshed or danger to the public at large.”

“Don’t tell me you think Miss Lewis is to blame? She practically shielded the whole damn city! She contained the fallout and she’s the only reason this whole mess wasn’t a massacre.”

The man in the bow tie nodded, “On that we agree. Miss Lewis, the newest and most inexperienced Avenger by all accounts did the most to protect the people of the city. And for that she must be commended. However, I am merely making the point that mistakes were made. Where was Captain America during the car chase? Two blocks behind. Who gave the order for the Black Widow to crash into the getaway car and kill the perpetrator? No one. Who told Miss Maximoff to start
throwing cars onto the sidewalk where pedestrians were walking? Who knows? Who chose this mission for the Avengers? Why were they there at all? Why didn’t they attempt to negotiate or deescalate the--”

The footage cut off and a different scene came on screen. There were three white men sitting around a table. She didn’t recognize them.

The first, a balding man spoke calmly, “This was the wrong crime for the Avengers to be called into action for.”

The second man, a young millennial huffed and crossed his arms in front of his chest, “You can’t be serious.”

The bald man looked at the younger man with a knowing frown, “Calling in the Avengers to deal with a petty crime is like bringing a bazooka to a knife fight. They should have never been interfered.”

The third man ran a hand over his hair and scowled at the other two, “I don’t know why the whole team isn’t under some kind of supervision. You can’t trust the lot of them; I wouldn’t trust the Avengers to save a kitten from a tree!”

The bald man frowned deepened, “I wouldn’t go that far.”

“That’s the problem, no one is willing to go far enough!” The third man exclaimed, “Think about it. The Avengers roster is currently comprised of an ex-assassin, a rarely seen android, a reformed Nazi witch who has the power of an atomic bomb in her glowing hands, a traumatized ex-US Airman, and a soldier who doesn’t know what google is! And now there’s Miss Lewis!”

“Oh here we go!” The millennial man commented snidely.

“Miss Lewis, who we know nothing about!”

“She’s dating Tony Stark.” The first man informed them. “We know who she is.”

“Duh.” The millennial said with a roll of his eyes.

“We know who she’s in bed with, but who is she? Where do her allegiances lie? Is she a republican? Democrat? Is she in favor of the death penalty? Does she believe in abortion? We know nothing about these people we call ‘heroes’ and I just don’t trust that they will make the right decision every time. And you shouldn’t either.”

“That’s ridiculous. The Avengers saved us from an alien invasion. A robot uprising. And countless other threats.” The millennial argued. The bald man nodded agreeing, “I don’t believe the world is better off without them, I just think we don’t need to call in the big guns for every little crime.”

The third man looked back and forth between the other two with an expression of disbelief, “An alien invasion lead by Thor’s brother Loki. A robot uprising that the Avengers themselves created. Countless other threats, that could be dealt with conventional methods, but are instead punted to the Avengers due to their unregulated actions getting a free pass from every damn country in the world!”

“What do you mean unregulated actions?”

“No man or woman is immune to the corruption of power. That’s what oversight is for. That’s what a system of checks and balances is supposed to represent.” The third man ran a hand over his hair again, “Do you honestly feel that the Avengers are incorruptible? We saw how easily Wanda
Maximoff used her powers to agitate and incite violence in the Hulk back in Johannesburg. Or has everyone forgotten that the ‘Scarlet Witch’ sided with Ultron and fought against the Avengers?

The millennial looked uncomfortable as the third man leaned in and lowered his voice, inviting everyone to pay attention, “There is no one on this planet that the Avengers answer to. No one tells them no or dissuades them from wading into situations that their skill set is unsuited for. There is no one who can stop them. And that is a terrifying thought.”

The footage of the men was cut off and replaced with the bright set of a familiar looking infotainment show. Pictures of her and Tony kissing and hugging after the fight filled the screen as two women’s voices talked over them.

“Aw, aren’t they adorable?”

“Yassss! #relationship goals.”

“Agreed!”

“See this here, this is what America really needs. Strong women, out doing their thing and men supporting them!”

“#feminism.”

The woman laughed, “#IronManIsWoke.”

The footage changed yet again, this time it was a man and a woman sitting on a couch, it looked like Good Morning America or something.

The man had a stern expression on his face, “Are you telling me you didn’t see Christine Everhart’s piece on the Avengers last night?”

The woman affected an intrigued expression, “No. Tell me.”

“Apparently, Darcy Lewis is claiming to be a Goddess.”

“What?”

“She says she’s Asgardian. And that she’s Thor’s sister.”

The woman laughed, “Uh oh. Sounds like our new heroine has a…I don’t want to say screw loose but--”

The man looked at her with a pointed expression, “You don’t believe her?”

The woman’s fake smile fell a bit, “You do?”

“She can fly. Get shot in the face. And rip the roof off of a car like it’s made of tissue paper. There’s documented proof between her and Thor.” A picture of her, Steve, Thor and Hulk hovering over a prone Tony was shown on screen, “Captain America says she’s an official Avenger.”

The picture on screen was replaced with one of her on top of the car. “Why wouldn’t you believe in her?”

“Believing in her and believing her story are two different things.” The woman argued, the pictures fading and the two on the couch filling the screen once again. “Thor has been on Earth several times now, and he’s never mentioned a sister. It’s insane!”
The man pointed at the woman, “We thought people who believed in aliens were insane, space travel, portals to different worlds. Insane. But now we know their real.”

“But we’ve heard of Thor and Loki before—in mythology. There is no Darcy Lewis goddess of … rainbows.” The woman argued adamantly.

The man shrugged his shoulders, “Maybe she’s their little sister? Born after the stories and mythology were all written.” The woman stared at him blankly and he pursed his lips continuing, “She’s the first super powered person who has shown the ability to actually do what Captain America claims is the Avengers goal. She’s a shield that protects the masses from harm. Her powers while…mighty, aren’t totally frightening like the Hulks and Scarlet Witches. She’s not a living weapon like Black Widow or Iron Man.”

“You have a point there.” The woman conceded.

The man nodded, “And you know what, if you ask me Princess Darcy of Asgard has a damn fine ring to it too.”

The woman looked a little giddy, “Wouldn’t it be wild if she was made leader of the Avengers? I mean. She is the most powerful person on the team now yes?”

“It would be the progressive choice. I mean, I’m all for girl power. And Darcy Lewis is proving to be the most inspiring girl the world has seen yet!”

“I never understood why a god or a monster like the Hulk would follow Captain America’s orders.”

“Or a man with an ego like Stark!” The man joked. The two laughed.

The screen went blank. Steve called out, “Lights.”

Darcy blinked and tried to subtly wipe away her tears. Steve shot her a look but didn’t comment. Wanda did though, “Finally came up for air from your love nest?”

“Wanda.” Natasha said warningly.

“This is all her fault! She had the vision. She picked the mission. She’s the reason why everyone--”

“Enough!” Steve yelled cutting Wanda off.

“I’m sorry.” Darcy apologized in a small voice. “I didn’t realize…I should have-”

“Darcy,” Natasha got up and moved closer to her, “You are not to blame for what is being said about us. We are all responsible for the parts we played. We all chose to participate in the mission.”

Darcy ran a hand over her hair, “I didn’t know she was his girlfriend. Or that she was pregnant. Or that he was so young…”

“Is that what you’re most upset about?!” Wanda cried.

“Hey,” Sam called out, Darcy’s watery eyes flicked up to his face, “This is not on you. That kid had a weapon that could have wiped out hundreds. He needed to be stopped and we stopped him.”

“We killed him.” She whispered her eyes casting down to the table, unable to look any of them in the eyes.

“I killed him.” Natasha announced, “And I’d do it again.”
“That is not true.” Vision said, “Presented with the same circumstances but more information you would make a different choice.”

“Viz, not now.” Wanda chastised.

Darcy let her eyes rise and she sought out Steve’s face. “What do we do now?”

Steve clenched his jaw and stared back at her, “We get back to work. That is, if you still want to be an Avenger?”

Darcy’s brows knit together in confusion, “What? What do you mean?”

“I tried to come to see you. First they said you were asleep. Then indisposed.” Steve’s face was expressionless, “Were you? Really? Or were you hiding? Or were you so wrapped up in Tony--”

“Steve.” Natasha said warningly. She turned her eyes on Darcy, “We just want to know if…”

Natasha floundered her mouth open as she seemingly searched for the right words. Wanda took advantage, “We want to know if you’re too scared to stand with us. Did your first taste of battle prove to be too overwhelming? Are even worthy of being an Avenger?”

Before she had a chance to react in anger, Natasha reached out and put a hand over hers, “Being an Avenger is different than being a warrior on Asgard or a Guardian of the Galaxy, at least as far as you’ve described.”

Sam leant forward and steeled his hands as took his turn to explain, “You looked pretty shook. You seem upset now more about the one life lost than all the one’s you saved. Being an Avenger means dealing with mortals who sometimes die in gruesome ways.”

Natasha nodded, “And dealing with the political fallout of each and every battle. Which won’t get easier as time goes on.”

“They will always pick apart whatever we do. Casualties, structural damage. Talking heads on TV will replay battles over and over, pointing out what we did wrong, how we could have done better.” Sam counseled.

“Speculating on our motivation or ability to complete a task.” Vision added.

Steve nodded, “Dealing with the public pressure, that’s part of being an Avenger too.”

“Maybe the most important part.” Natasha concluded. “And it’s not one you can hide or run away from.”

“Like a little baby.” Wanda added meanly. Steve shot her a warning look.

Natasha squeezed her hand, “So we need to know, are you up for this? All of it? Death. Critics. Guilt. Pain.”

Natasha gave her a sincere look, “It’s okay if you don’t want to continue on. You shouldn’t feel pressured to be an Avenger just because you have powers.”

“Powers aren’t as important if the person wielding them isn’t certain about their intentions when using them.” Steve said, “I don’t want you on the team if you’re going to fall apart every time someone dies. Because, Darcy, people are going to die. That’s just the nature of the business.”

“You can’t hide in your tower Princess.” Wanda said with a pinched look, “The media monster will
get to you no matter what.”

“Don’t call them media monsters.” Natasha chastised.

“They’re calling me a monster.” Wanda pouted. Vision put a comforting hand on her shoulder and she leaned into his touch.

“Darcy.” Sam said, “We need an answer.”

“Do you want be an Avenger?” Steve asked.

Darcy looked away so she could subtly wipe away a tear. In a quiet voice she answered, “Yes.”

“Can you handle the criticism?” Steve pressed, “It’s not going to stop. The world will always have something to say about what we’re doing and why were doing it. We can’t listen. We can’t let the world tell us what is right and wrong.”

Darcy snapped her towards Steve, “What do you mean we can’t listen to the world? What kind of bullshit is that?”

Sam spoke up, “What he means is, we know what’s right and wrong. We can’t let outside influences dictate how we act or respond in any given situation. People have agendas and we can’t be like that. We can’t choose who deserves help and who doesn’t based on their race or political affiliation or sex or religion. We either help all people or none.”

“Yeah, that’s—what Sam said. That’s what I mean.” Steve said, “We can’t choose. We can’t let people tell us who we are and what we stand for. We need to tell—show, the world who the Avengers are. Not the other way around.”

“Okay.” Darcy said warily, “I agree. But, still. The media had a place in the world too. They have a function. And people, their scared. Curious. They want to know what we have to say. We should respond, make a statement or hold a press conference or something.” Darcy argued, “I mean, they found out what I am but they have it all wrong. I never claimed to be a goddess! And, and--They’re accusing you—us--their talking out there asses! Shouldn’t we fight back?”

Wanda sniffed, “On that we agree at least.”

Sam put his hands flat on the table, “Think about what you’re saying Darcy. Fight back? Against who? The people we’re trying to protect?”

“Not people, the press! And, not fight them, fight them. Just..argue. Present facts. Persuade. Cajole and otherwise fucking fix the messed up public image that the Avengers have due to—-”

Steve shook his head making Darcy closed her mouth and stop speaking. Steve crossed his arms in front of his chest his biceps flexing making him appear even larger, “Any defense we try to make for ourselves will be twisted and used against us. Best to say nothing. Our results speak for themselves. There was a threat and we took it out, no civilians were hurt and no buildings were destroyed… besides the bank. And even then, all of the money survived what more could they ask for?”

Darcy stared at him as everyone nodded and seemed to agree with Steve, but Darcy felt uneasiness in her heart. She felt like not putting out some statement was the wrong move, like they would come to regret it somehow.

“So are you in?” Sam asked.
Darcy’s eyes flickered from face to face. This team was comprised of people she loved and trusted and didn’t know and despised and didn’t like all that much but had developed a begrudging respect for. She wanted to stand with them when calamities struck and people were in danger. She wanted to be the heroic team she knew they could be. “I’m in.”

Following the press strategy meeting, Steve laid out some guidelines for dealing with the press moving forward. They were given a list of scripted responses that were Avenger approved and told not to deviate no matter how hard they were hounded. Darcy was made to promise not to disappear after battles unless it was to seek medical care.

After that it was business as usual.

Steve wanted them all to run a training simulation for the rest of the afternoon, but Darcy begged off. She claimed being tired and the rest of the Avengers let her go without argument. She felt their pity and it burned in her that they didn’t think she was strong enough to withstand the pressure of the job.

She found her way to her designated room easily and frowned at.

It was sparse and undecorated and only had the basics of basics in terms of her personal affects, but it had a bed and that was all Darcy really needed. In the privacy of her room she cried. She cried for the mistakes she made during the mission, the lives lost and the damage done to the Avengers reputation. She felt like the weight of the world was on her shoulders was getting heavier and heavier and in danger of crushing her flat.

She found her phone and hit speed dial number 2. Pepper picked up after the second ring.

“Darcy?”

“Pep.”

“What’s wrong?”

“Everything!”

“Sigh I saw the news…so you’re having one of those days huh?”

“Pepper, it’s so bad. I screwed up. I never should have been there.”

“The way it’s being told on TV, without you the mission would have been a disaster.”

“No, you don’t—I’m the reason they were there. I had a vision and I told Steve and they—we decided to go. To use the bank robbery as a trial run for the new team dynamic. It wasn’t supposed to end like that! Sob It was supposed to be an easy mission.”


“…”

“I’m glad you called.”

“…”
“I’m glad you’re okay.”

“I miss you so much Pep. I wish you were here, even if we’re not—ya know, together.”

“I miss you too.”

“…”

“…”

“Steve wants to say nothing. They’re on TV accusing us—I don’t know what to do or to say, or even if I have a right to say anything on the Avengers behalf or my own—I just feel like—I don’t. I don’t know. I feel like all my instincts are wrong and I don’t know what to do.”

“…Darcy, I can’t help you with this.”

“Oh…I’m sorry I called then.”

“No! I’m not—what I mean to say is, I’m not a PR expert, I hire people for that. I don’t know—I’m not qualified to tell you what to do. I don’t know what to tell you.”

“Pepper I didn’t—”

“I have no idea how to handle the PR nightmare that is the Avengers. Just like I didn’t back when Tony was a part of it. When I was there and Tony was a part of the team any dealings I or he had with the press during that time were redirected to questions about projects and interests that had to do with Stark Industries. I pivoted and evaded any questions that had to do with the Avengers, as I had no real affiliation with the team except for tangentially. Even now, Stark Industries stance on the Avengers is neutral more often than not.”

“Pepper. I didn’t really call you for answers.”

“Oh…then why did you call?”

“Because I feel like shit and I wanted to hear your voice…is that bad? Was I…out of line? I know we broke up but--are we—are we not on speaking terms?”

“No. No, honey its fine. It’s wonderful actually. I’m glad you called. I missed the sound of your voice too. I—just watching you on the news, my heart—I’m glad you called. It’s nice to know you’re okay, to hear from you in person that you survived unscathed. It was…when you were shot in the face on the top of that car, it looked so brutal Darcy. I swear--gasp, sob”

“…”

“I was so scared for you.”

“It…it was bad I’m not gonna lie….You know ever since I found out I was Asgardian and I started getting good at magic, I’ve been feeling invulnerable and acting like an asshole. I’m bulletproof and fire proof and Hulk smash proof, but that Ultron gun knocked me on my ass and it lit me up inside like a pinball machine of pain.”

“…”

“You know I tased Thor once? The first time we met. I thought—I though it only worked on him because he was depowered at the time, but I’m rethinking that now. Asgardians aren’t gods. They just live a lot longer.”
“I’m so sorry you were hurt Darcy.”

“It did hurt. It hurt a lot and it made me realize that I’m not indestructible. I’m not immortal. I’m vulnerable. I’m just as vulnerable as everyone else. My weaknesses are just harder to exploit, but I have them. I’m susceptible to electrical charge, I could drown or suffocate, and if I fell into a volcano lava would consume me. I could be killed. I can be killed.”

“Darcy--”

“And I still feel pain. I’m still--just because things don’t cause the same amount of damage doesn’t mean it tickles when I’m thrown into a wall or through some glass. It hurts.”

“Pain is a part of life Darcy.”

“Why do all the people in my life eventually sound like fortune cookies?”

“Heh ha, ha. Perhaps you just inspire wisdom?”

“Doubtful.”

“…”

“I’m scared…I’m scared to go on another mission and screw it up. I’m scared to tell Steve and the team about any future visions I have. I’m scared of being hurt. Or killed. Or worse. I’m so scared that I’ll somehow cause the Avengers to break up or get us all arrested. I’m not…I’m scared I don’t belong here. I thought I fit in so well in so many places, but with Wanda here, and the press dissecting every aspect of the mission—I’m not sure I fit in with the Avengers the way I thought I did—or would.”

“Darcy. Honey have you talked about all of this with anyone else? Steve? Or--”

“No.”

“…”

“Sam’s a sweetheart and he’s been my saving grace this whole time. I feel like he’s the only one on the team who doesn’t judge me for who I love or how uncontrollable my teleportation is. I’ve had no significant interaction with Vision and can’t help but resent him in part for embodying the undying legacy of Ultron and the death of Jarvis, which is irrational but still how I feel….Wanda hates me and sees and treats me like I’m the threat that needs to be removed from the team. And, ugly things were said upon Natasha and Steve’s behalves that may or may not be true, which have left me feeling unwanted and at times un-liked by the team as whole….it doesn’t even feel like a team. Or if it does, it’s not one I want to be a part of. I’m not sure my ideologies on heroism quite mesh with theirs the way I thought they did.”

“Oh honey. Personality clashes are common in many work places. Some people just don’t get along, but that doesn’t mean you can’t persevere and work together towards a common goal.”

“Yeah but…I don’t know if I’m cut out to be an Avenger Pepper.”

“…You are.”

“But what if I’m not? Heroes aren’t ‘fraidy cat babies and that’s how I feel right now! I feel like a fraud. The hair, the makeup, I don’t even have a costume or a code name! I feel like I’m masquerading as something I’m not. Like I’m a frightened child or a little girl playing dress up.”
“You were meant to be a hero Darcy; I believe that in my heart.”

“But—”

“Part of being human is being scared. And despite whatever magical ancestral Asgardian DNA that’s been activated inside of you, you, at your core are human. And no human is perfect nor do we have to pretend to be. All that is necessary is for you is to strive to be the best version of yourself that you can be. That’s all that can be asked of any human being.”

“But shouldn’t I be more? Shouldn’t a hero be more than that?”

“Heroes and cowards feel exactly the same fear. Heroes just react to it differently. They react like you. They protect and they sacrifice and they do everything they can to save those who cannot save themselves. Heroes aren’t ‘featherless, they are brave. And bravery requires fear. Being afraid when your life is danger is natural, being afraid of not measuring up or fitting in is normal.”

“…and what are my lucky numbers?”

“I’m not joking Darcy. Don’t deflect with humor like Tony does; don’t let him rub off on you like that.”

“I’m not.”

“Don’t doubt yourself Darcy. Honey, why would you ever let the world or anyone else tell you who you are? You’re amazing and beautiful and kind and warm and generous. You are a hero, when you’re beating up bad guys or just being yourself, inspiring others through your good works and actions. You are a hero….you’re my hero.”

“…sniff Aw, Pep.”

“It’s okay to have a meltdown every now and then, just don’t unpack and live there. Cry it out and then refocus on where you’re headed. And know that, you my love, are destined for greatness.”

“I love you Pepper. Thank you. Thank so much for…talking me down. I…didn’t realize how much I needed someone I trust to talk to. Someone who isn’t so invested in...all of this craziness . Someone who would listen and not judge…I’m so grateful.”

“I still love you too Darcy. I’m here if you ever need me. Always.”

“…that thing you said about inspiring others? Through good works and actions. I really like that. It sounds like---I want to be the kind of hero who does that.”

“You already are.”

“Ha, ha. How do you say the exact thing I need to hear the moment I need to hear it?”

“It’s a gift.”

“You’re a gift Pepper. I’m so lucky that you still—that you’re willing to still let me be a part of your life, despite, in spite, of everything that—you know.”

“I feel the same way. I—I would never not want to know you Darcy. I would never not want to talk to you. Or be there for you if you need me…thank you for reaching out.”

“…”
“I liked your hair by the way.”

“Thanks.”

“I—as I said, I can’t really—I don’t feel comfortable giving you advice on how to handle the way in which you and the Avengers are being portrayed and debated in the media. But. I would advise you and Tony to take control of your own narratives. As individuals and as a couple. Darcy… if you allow the world to know you, they will love you. And if they love you, public opinion mightn’t be so harsh after your next mission.”

“Are you sure? I seem to be grating on a few people at the moment.”

“And Tony isn’t grating? You and I both know Tony is not the easiest person to like or get along with, and yet people love him. You should talk to him about your fears and concerns about your image. Tony has a public persona that he’s crafted after years in the spotlight and even though it’s not him, not really, it’s a version of him. In truth Tony hates the media that’s why he only shows them a sliver of truth. A glimmer of who he really is.”

“…”

“I promise you, if you let the world get to know you, even a little, they will embrace you….how could they not?”

“Pepper, I…”

“Sniff. I would suggest more public appearances or spearheading a philanthropic endeavor. Speaking of which, I have to go…. Good luck.”

“Thanks Pepper. Bye.”

Darcy spent an hour or so lying motionless in the bed just thinking about Pepper and how much she missed her. How much she wanted the woman back in her life. As the sun went down and the lighting in the room changed she grew drowsy.

She pulled the blanket halfway over her form and thought about what Pepper suggested in regards to her ‘image’ problems. Eventually she fell asleep. And when she woke up later on in the middle of the night, it was with an idea.

“Why are we doing this again?” Tony asked for the fourth time. Darcy ignored his petulant tone and answered in a cheery voice, “Because inspiring kids to stay in school and go into the hard sciences will help make a brighter future.”

She and Tony were walking up the steps of Midtown high school, with only Happy trailing behind them acting as their ‘security’, not that they needed it with Darcy around, but Happy would in theory be able to remove any rabid or handsy fans. It tickled Darcy to think of Happy dealing with hormone monster fueled teenagers.

“Yeah, but whyyyyy?” Tony pouted. Darcy smiled at his adorable downturned mouth as she looped her arm with his, “Because you agreed to help shape my ‘public’ image by accompanying me on an outing of my choice that is completely non-Avenger related.”
“But, why a high school? Why this high school?” Tony paused and gestured to the banner above their heads declaring the building ‘Midtown School of Science and Technology’. “Why?” Tony whined.

“Because you love me?” Darcy offered with a smirk. Tony narrowed his eyes at her behind the dark lenses of his sunglasses.

“Okay.” Tony said in a begrudging tone, he leaned over and pecked her on her bright red lips before pulling back to mutter, “But if I start having traumatic flashbacks, we’re out of here.”

Darcy rolled her eyes and opened the door for the both of them to pass through. They were met by a nervous but stern looking Asian man in a bland suit. And a bored looking African American man decked out in Midtown high school merchandise. The gym teacher looked shocked as they strode forward, his eyes bugging out.

“Wow you’re here. I can’t believe it. I was actually expecting this to turn out to be an elaborate hoax or senior prank.” The Asian man said in greeting, “Welcome!”

Darcy extended her gloved hand for the man to shake, “Principal Morita I assume? Darcy Lewis. We spoke on the phone?”

The man shook her hand for an abnormal amount of time as he talked, “Yes. I’m him. Me. The principal. I’m Principal Morita. Welcome. Yes, we spoke. Uh, sorry I’m just a little stunned. Forgive me?”

“Don’t worry about it.” Darcy excused as she pulled her hand free. She turned to Tony and gestured to him with a dismissive hand, “You know who Tony is of course, but this is Happy.” Darcy turned and introduced Happy with a bright grin, “He’s our personal security guard. I didn’t mention him on the phone, it’s okay if he accompanies us too?”

“Yes!” Morita nodded vigorously, “Of course, anything.”

Happy extended his own for the man to shake, once in his grip he pulled Morita into his personal space, “How many fire exits does this gym have?”

As Happy grilled the principal on the layout of the gym they would be entering shortly Darcy tuned the two out. Instead she turned and smiled at the other man.

“Hello.” Darcy said with a little wave, “I’m guessing you’re the athletics teacher from your attire?”

The man slowly nodded but made no indication that he would speak or even move. He just stared at them with a stricken expression.

“Welp, we broke gym teacher.” Tony teased. Darcy slapped his arm lightly, “Stop it.”

Tony reached over and tugged on her earlobe, “Principal Morita?”

Darcy smiled cheekily, “Catch that did you?”

“He related to Jim Morita? One of the original Howling Commando’s that followed Cap all across Europe?” Tony guessed with a twitch of his mustache.

Darcy nodded, “You wanted to know why I picked this high school? He’s part of the reason. Well, he’s like the sprinkles on the ice cream sundaes of reasons.”
“Elaborate?” Tony entreated with a grin.

“Well, it’s in New York. It was less than an hour away from the Tower. Its population is diverse. It’s a school that puts emphasis on science and technology which I knew would appeal to you, and it’s the only school who was hosting a Science Fair this week.”

Tony clasped his arms around her back and pulled her in for a quick kiss, “You’re really something you know that.”

“I know.” Darcy agreed, “But if I ever forget, you’ll remind me right?”

Tony gave her bottom a pinch before letting her go with a laugh, “You bet your beautiful fanny I will.”

Happy and Principal Morita made their way back over to them, “Okay boss. Got all the details worked out.”

“Good.” Tony said in a disinterested voice, he narrowed his gaze on the slightly sweating Principal, “You ready for us?”

Morita nodded, “Yes, right this way. I’m going to take you through the backstage entrance, announce you, and then you can go out on stage and say a few words before we walk among the students and judge their Science Fair entries.”

Darcy smiled and gestured forward, “Lead the way Mr. Morita.”

Backstage Tony was annoyingly playful. While the Principal was on stage explaining that they were going to have a guest judge and trying to hype up the sparse crowd. Their presence was top secret. Darcy had invited only one reporter to attend the event. After all, this wasn’t really about getting media coverage, this whole idea of hers was about doing good just for goods sake. But she did want to shine a spotlight on the student who won the science fair and the secret prize and Tony for doing this and…there were reasons she wanted the public to know, but she didn’t need it to turn into a circus. So, only one reporter had been invited, and had been instructed they would have to act as their own photographer to boot.

On stage principal Morita announced, “I’m honored to introduce this year’s science fair judges, Tony Stark and Darcy Lewis!”

Darcy perked up at that, she wasn’t a judge. She turned to Tony, “I’m not supposed to be listed as one of the judges.”

Tony smirked at her, “You’re not the only sneaky one around here.”

Darcy narrowed her eyes at Tony even as he leaned in and kissed her deeply, sliding his tongue against hers teasingly.

“Mr. Stark?” Principal Morita called out nervously.

Darcy tried to pull away from Tony but he held on to her waist stubbornly. Against his lips Darcy gave a laugh, “Tony, go!”
“Mr. Stark? Are you? Are you still there?”

Tony pulled away and then darted in to peck her on the lips before smirking at her and adjusting his tie, “Duty calls.”

“Mr. St—Oh, here he is. Tony Stark everyone!” Tony walked out confidently, the relieved looking principal called out, “Let’s give him a hand!”

Tony smiled plastically at the teens as he ignored Morita’s offer of the microphone. The crowds applause was pitiful, most faces in the crowd looked shocked and disbelieving. Mr. Morita held the microphone out awkwardly, Tony gave him a look and held up his hands citing, “I don’t like to be handed things.”

Mr. Morita lowered the mic and looked at a loss. Tony ignored him and turned to the crowd. Tony moved forward so he was nearly at the edge of the stage, he projected his voice loudly and clearly so all could hear it without the electronic assistance.

“What am I doing here? Am I the best Tony Stark impersonator you’ve ever seen? Is this a joke? Are we all being Punk’d?” Tony posed, “You were all thinking it. I’m just saying it out loud so we can address it and move on.”

“Well, children you see, your Principal is the coolest principal I’ve ever met and yes. He got the Tony Stark to come to your little high school to judge your science fair projects. So, try not to vomit.” Darcy smacked a hand to her forehead. Tony really was incorrigible.

Tony gave a quick wink to where she was standing in the wings with Happy, “But Principal Morita can’t take all the credit for me being here today. In fact, now that I think about it, forget what I said. He didn’t do anything but answer the phone. The only reason I’m here today is my beautiful girlfriend, Darcy Lewis.”

There was a small smattering of applause and Darcy felt herself go pink.

Tony smiled roguishly, “She’s got it in her head that being a hero means more than smashing bad guys and saving the world. She actually wants to save humanity too.” Tony gave the audience a sideways glance, “Can you imagine?”

A ripple of laughter went through the crowd.

“At Darcy’s request I’ve arranged for a surprise prize for this year’s winner. And I’ll be donating ten thousand dollars to the school for…books? I don’t know. Stuff you guys need, whatever.” Tony said the words in a dismissive tone, but the effect of them was immediate. The crowd started clapping and yelling and whooping in glee.

“So, make sure you keep up that level of enthusiasm as I introduce you to my personal heroine, Darcy Lewis.”

Darcy’s face fell as Tony held out his hand towards her invitingly. She shook her head and whispered, “No!”

“C’mon Darcy. You’re fans are waiting.” The crowd cheered louder.

“You look great,” Happy said as he put his hands on her back, “Don’t trip.”

Darcy glared and turned to whisper yell at Happy as he pushed her out on stage, “Traitor!”
Happy smiled and stepped back when she started walking on her own towards Tony and the front of the stage. Her steps grew slower as the crowd of teenagers and parents and staff yelled louder and a few wolf whistles sounded throughout the crowd. She paused and gave everyone a finger wave and Tony moved to be by her side and guide her the rest of the way to the front of the stage.

She whispered in Tony’s ear, “I hate you.”

Tony kissed her on the cheek, “Smile and wave baby. Just smile and wave.”

After forty seconds of applause, Tony motioned to the crowd to quiet down and the space fell silent. Darcy was grateful that he slipped his arm around her waist, for if not for his support she might have pitched forward and fallen off stage. She wasn’t afraid of public speaking per say, but the fact that it was a stage in a high school and thus inspired unpleasant puberty related flashbacks coupled with the fact that she was unprepared to be presented to the crowd was daunting enough to make her a little weak in the knees.

“Darcy wanted to do something good.” Tony started, “She wanted to get me involved in doing something good. Something…not smaller, but more personable. That involved more human interaction than I’m frankly comfortable with.”

The crowd chuckled.

“And as such,” Tony squeezed her hip, “I think it’s only fitting that she say a few words.”

Darcy’s eyes widened and she shot Tony a panicked look, “No thank you.”

The crowd laughed.

“Aw, Darce. I thought we were here to inspire the masses?” As an aside to the audience Tony remarked, “Her words.”

Tony patted her lightly on the hip encouragingly, “C’mon honey, just…just say something.”

Darcy took strength from Tony being at her side. She took a deep breath and then looked out into the crowd.

“Hi.” She began with a little wave. “I’m Darcy. And, you might have heard of me…” The crowd twittered. Encouraged Darcy loosened up a little, “I’m sort of dating this self aggrandizing brilliant ass—uh, meanie jerk face who apparently has no problem just throwing me to the wolves.”

She shot Tony a playful glare and he wrinkled his nose at her. She turned back to the crowd, her eyes flickering from face to face, “I didn’t know what I wanted to do when I was in high school. I…I was good or adequate at so many things but I didn’t really love anything or excel at any one thing. So, figuring out what I wanted to do with my life was and still is challenging.”

The crowd of teenagers looked enraptured and Darcy was buoyed by the fact that not one kid had their cell phone out. “Tony had it right, what he said before. The only thing I’ve known for certain is that I want to do good. I want to leave this world better off than I left it. And if I, or Tony can inspire you any way, to feel the same…that’s why we’re here.”

She looked to Tony and he smiled at her encouragingly. Darcy gestured out to the crowd with her hand, “We’re here for you. All of you. You are the future. And I don’t say that to be cheesy but to really make you understand what that means. You are going to grow up and probably faster than you realize. And you’ll go to college or you won’t. You’ll get jobs and pay taxes and everything will get harder and harder….which now that I hear myself saying it aloud, doesn’t sound very encouraging.”
The crowd let out a little chuckle, Darcy saw a few teachers snort and she blushed.

“I just want you all to know that, you’re important. What you do with your life is important, even if you don’t think it is. Or feel that you are.” Darcy turned to Tony and licked her lips, her mouth felt dry but he just stared back at her with a look of…pride. And she felt her heart flutter in her chest.

“We’re going to come around with your principal and we’re going to talk to everybody. Because we’re here for you. To listen to you and your ideas. I’m sure Tony won’t be able to help himself and he might make a suggestion or pose a question and I don’t want you guys to feel judged, even though we technically are judges, but what I mean is…Tony snores. And farts. And has ear wax and boogers.”

The crowd started cracking up, when she turned to Tony she saw that he had dropped his jaw open comically and he was staring at her with a dramatic look of betrayal, “I do not fart.”

“He’s lying,” Darcy turned to the crowd, “He farts like all the time.”

“Yeah, well you burp. Loudly.” Tony accused.

Darcy nodded and smiled out at the crowd, proudly admitting, “I do. My burps are legendary. As is my penchant for laziness and putting empty containers back into the fridge or hitting the curb when I go to park on the street.”

The crowd was all smiles and twittering laughter at this point.

“The point is, we are people. And you shouldn’t feel afraid to talk to us or intimidated.”

Tony held up a finger, “Uh, no. Feel intimated. I’m intimating. Also compliments, you should give them out, specifically to me.”

Darcy put her hand over Tony’s face, “Ignore him.”

Principal Morita cleared his throat loudly, “Perhaps we’re getting off topic?”

“Sorry Principal Morita.” Tony and Darcy said in unison in matching forlorn tones. The crowd busted out in laughter. She and Tony gave each other surprised looks but Tony just laughed and leaned forward to kiss her cheek and whisper in her ear, “Bring it home babe.”

Darcy took a step away from Tony and addressed the crowd with a serious voice. “When we go around and talk to you I don’t want to take a selfie with you. And neither does Tony. We don’t want to talk about Iron Man or Asgard or the Avengers or any of that crap.”

She saw a kid in the back and the look on his face called to her and she started talking to him directly, “Tell us who you are. Tell us about this project that you’ve worked so hard on. You are going to have access to one of the most influential and brilliant men on the planet for about four minutes.” Darcy paused for dramatic effect, “Don’t. Waste. It.”

“Good?” Darcy asked as she turned to look at Tony. He smiled at her with this adoring look on his face, “Real good.”

A half an hour into judging the science fair, Tony got into it and really started challenging the kids
with probing questions. He asked them why they used the materials they used and where they saw themselves in ten years. What they would consider the biggest threat to the planet that they could solve using the resources of today.

Darcy and Happy exchanged amused grins as Tony got into a debate with a young African American girl with frizzy hair about the future of government surveillance in regards to tyranny and the loss of liberty and how much it was really worth.

The girl, whose name tag labeled her as ‘Watson, MJ’, spoke in a deflated voice but with a wit and twinkle in her eye as she riled Tony up, “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete. Buckminster Fuller. And so with this in mind I present the anti-people box.” The girl put a large brown people box on her head, only a mouth hole was cut out. “If we all wear these, the government can’t track us.”

“What!” Tony exclaimed, the girl was fucking with him. Behind her on her poster board there was a detailed account of how people were tracked via their phone, other devices, and what the data was being used for. She also had written in big sparkly lettering, ‘Do you even have an identity if it is so easily stolen from you? Would you even notice?’

“I suggest we all wear the anti-people boxes to block out negative perception of our facial expressions so we won’t offend others by the truth that our faces reveal involuntarily, since perception is just a concept, the lack of face shouldn’t really matter.”

Tony looked to her and then back at the girl with the bag on her head, “What?!”

Darcy laughed when she read the last line on the girl’s project; it read ‘if you can be distracted by a face book post or a political spectacle could you not be distracted by a girl with a paper bag on her head? And if so, do you think it would be easier to steal your liberty if your attention was focused on something so meaningless and ridiculous. Don’t pay attention to what is said, be aware, and be vigilant. The world is more than the crap that is put in front of your face to distract you from what is really going on.’

“Whoa!” Tony yelled, as a kid froze his hand halfway into Tony’s pants pocket. Tony raised his hands in the air and starting saying, “Bad touch. Bad touch! Darcy. Darcy!”

Darcy just smiled and the kid who was trying to pick pocket Tony snuck away and ran escaping into the crowd. She turned to the girl with the bag on her head and extended her hand, “Very nice project Miss Watson. Witty. Relevant. And smart.”

The girl took the bag off her head and shook Darcy’s hand with a firm grip, “Glad to know someone’s paying attention.”

“What?!” Tony exclaimed, Darcy gave him a look and he winked at her. He wasn’t as easily distracted as people believed, he extended his hand to the girl as well.

She stared at his hand for a minute before taking it. Tony complimented the girl, “This is like the performance art version of a very good science project.”

“And it its political.” Darcy added.

The girl smiled at them, her blasé sarcastic demeanor falling away just for a minute, she answered in a sincere voice, “Thank you.”
By the time they reached the last students Darcy was seriously regretting her stiletto heeled boots. She could tell that Tony was starting to drag energy wise as well, they’d spent about twenty minutes at each booth instead of the four she had promised, but she was happy about that. It might have made the whole day go much slower, but seeing Tony engaged on such a…intimate level with the future innovators of tomorrow, it was heartwarming. It was inspiring.

It also helped that since their appearance wasn’t promoted in any way, only the hard core nerds were in attendance. Most of the students there were surprisingly knowledgeable.

They walked to the last project at a slow pace, she had her arm linked in Tony’s, partially using him as crutch as she alternated lifting her feet every so often, relieving the pressure from foot to foot.

A very young brunette boy and a tan chubby boy smiled nervously as they approached. The tan one waved enthusiastically, “Mr. Stark. Miss Lewis. Hello. I can’t believe you’re here. I just, we can’t— this is the coolest thing.”

“The coolest.” The paler of the two added, though his tone seemed a little…inauthentic.

“Okay kiddos, dazzle me.” Tony demanded. The tan kid launched into a speech, reading off index cards he explained the project while the other boy stood by awkwardly. Darcy kept quiet, only half listening to the computer heavy exchange Tony and the kid had.

Her eyes stayed glued on the other boy. There was something…familiar about him, but also his energy seemed off. Unlike every other hormonal nerd in the room, he looked like he would rather be anywhere but there.

“What’s your name?” Darcy interrupted.

“Ned Leeds.” The tan boy offered, pointing to his prominently displayed name tag. The other boy reflexively touched the spot on his pant leg where he had put his name tag, only his was obscured by the ends of his button up shirt. “This is my best friend Peter Parker.”

Peter gave them a wave and Darcy smiled. Tony and Ned went back to speaking nerdy to each other. Darcy let go of Tony’s arm and moved over to stand next to Peter. She grabbed the boys arm and turned him so they were facing the poster board that detailed their project, she pointed to a random diagram and kept her tone low as she said, “Peter Parker?”

The kid stared at her with wide eyes. Darcy narrowed her own, “Have we met before?”

The kid swallowed, before answering in a timid voice, “N-no?”

“Are you sure? You look…are you sure?”

“No. I’ve never seen you before, well, except for on TV of course, but you said we weren’t supposed to talk to you about those things.” The boy scratched at the back of his head nervously.

Darcy decided to roll the dice. She stared at the kids eyes and whispered, “Spiderman.”

The boys eyes widened and he paled about five shades. Darcy felt a slow smile spread across her face. “Well, how about that.”
After informing Tony of Peter’s secret identity, Tony kissed her lips with a victorious smile. The identity of the Spiderkid had been a minor project the two of them had planned to uncover that weekend. But now they didn’t have to devote any time to unmasking the teen hero at all.

On stage once again, Tony announced that Peter and Ned won the science fair. Tony offered the pair an internship at Stark Industries and awarded the pair with a check for $5,000 dollars. Each. The Ned kid fainted.

Peter looked at them with shock and awe and a little bit of fear. As the crowd clapped and Principal Morita roused his fallen friend, Darcy hooked her arm into Peters so she could pull him close and kiss him on the cheek. Whoo's sounded as she made sure to transfer her lipstick print to the boys skin.

When she pulled away the kid was flush pink. She laughed and spun him so she could give him a matching one on his other cheek. Only when she pulled away she whispered in his ear comfortingly, “Don’t worry Spiderkid, your identity is safe with us. Having me and Tony in your corner is a good thing. I promise.”

When she pulled away Peter gave her a grateful look. Tony gave her a questioning squint but she just waved him off as Ned got to his feet again. Ned seeing Peter’s kiss marked face, leaned his face towards her invitingly.

Darcy laughed and pulled the other boy close so she could kiss his cheek too.

After the successful outing at Midtown School of Science and Technology, Tony declared that he actually had fun. While in the car home, he had Friday schedule a solo appearance the following month for MIT. He decided he would unveil B.A.R.F. to the public at the event as a way to inspire the future innovators as well as unveil a grant being awarded to all students giving them all proper funding to move forward with their own inventions and ideas. Darcy decided to wait and research different charities and volunteer opportunities before deciding on one.

And if she was lucky, no Avenger missions would derail her plans to give back to the community on the micro scale verses the macro.

Giving back and talking to the kids, had filled her and Tony with such…joy. Visiting the school was way more rewarding than just writing a check and it was written all over their faces. Darcy fell into the loose embrace of Tony’s arm around her shoulders as Happy cursed at the rush hour traffic.

“Love you.” Tony declared tiredly. Darcy smiled but didn’t respond. She reached across and laced her and Tony’s hands together loosely; she listened intently to the sound of Tony’s heart rate slowing as he fell into a light doze.

Leaving the school she felt more ‘heroic’ than ever.
Darcy’s Science Fair Look

Tony’s Science Fair Look
Principal Morita

MJ
How can one woman go from... Sleek and Chic TO

Energetic and Punk?

Which of her looks do you like better?
Let us know on Twitter @DannylewksStyle @WhitHNews
Darcy woke up abruptly as she was shoved out of a bed. She hit the floor with a grunt.

"Why are you bothering me?" Wanda whined, "Get out!"

Darcy had been teleporting into Wanda’s bed every night for the last week and a half. It had not brought them closer.

“I fucking hate you.” Darcy groused as she got to her feet and stumbled towards the door.

“Get out of my room.” Wanda snarled as she pulled her blanket over her head. “Get out!”

“Gladly.” Darcy growled back. She was at her wits end with her stupid power and the young Sokovian. She was more than ready for her forced ‘quality Wanda/Darcy time’ to end. She managed to make it back to her own room without banging into anything breakable, so Darcy counted it as a win as she crawled back under, her now cold, sheets.

She awoke again later in the morning via an annoying buzzing alarm. Reflexively she slammed her hand down on the machine but without any restraint she smashed the poor clock to smithereens. With a sigh Darcy rolled onto her back. A voice in the ceiling called out cheekily, “Good morning Miss Lewis, shall I order you another alarm?”

“Yes please.”

“Or I could wake you?” Friday offered as she had every morning Darcy destroyed her alarm clock, “I provide the same service for many of the other residents in---”

Darcy interrupted the A.I., “Nah. I find it weirdly satisfying to smash the little clocks. Just get me another one pelase.”

The A.I. didn’t respond to what she said merely moved on to another topic, “The time is 7:30 a.m.
You have half an hour to report to conference room C for the Avengers team meeting. Captain Rogers requests that you arrive promptly.

“Yeah, yeah.” Darcy yawned, “Whatever.”

Darcy arrived ten minutes late. Wanda rolled her eyes and Steve gave her a stern look but said nothing. Natasha smiled warmly and gestured with her head to the breakfast of bagels and coffee that had been provided for them. As Darcy poured herself a cup of water, because she didn’t drink coffee, and buttered a bagel for herself it occurred to her that she wasn’t the latest one this time. She celebrated in her mind. Wahoo, I’m not the most in trouble person today!

Wanda and Vision were whispering together and Steve and Natasha were fiddling with papers and a laptop near the front of the room. But Sam was nowhere to be seen.

Darcy sat down and ate her bagel as fast as possible. Just as she was eating the last bite, Sam arrived.

“Sorry!” He apologized with a wide grin, “My bad.”

“Sam.” Steve said unsympathetically, “You should have been here twenty minutes ago.”

Sam shrugged unperturbed by Captain America’s stern face, “I had a date and she…well let’s just say I had a very good morning.”

Darcy held out her hand to Sam and he gave her a fist bump as he passed. Steve scowled, “That’s not an excuse Sam.”

“Steve you can frown all you want. But honestly, I’m not even sorry.” Sam just grinned at Steve as he helped himself to a cup of coffee and sat down. Steve rolled his eyes and Natasha turned off the lights and turned on a projector hooked up to the laptop they had been working on.

“Well, let’s not waste anymore time shall we?” Steve said. Sam raised his cup and Steve cleared his throat, “It would seem an old foe of ours has resurfaced.”

A picture of a man in an altered hockey mask and a big white X painted across his armored chest was projected onto the screen next to Steve and Natasha. “This is our target.”

Steve droned on about the guy’s combat skills and past bad deeds but Darcy mostly let what Steve was saying flow over her. She got the gist. She was very interested in the gauntlet things on his hands but the photo changed before she could ask about them. A picture of a blurry scarred face appeared side by side with a more handsome one, obviously the same man before and after disfigurement. Apparently the man, now known as Crossbones aka Brock Rumlow or as Darcy knew him ‘fake Shield Agent’ who kidnapped and tortured her for information was intent on becoming an independent terrorist.

“Rumlow’s been robbing police stations all over various countries. He’s turned into something of an infamous arms dealer too.” Natasha informed them.

“Why infamous?” Wanda asked.

With the barest hint of amusement Natasha said, “Because his last buyers were members of Hydra, his former employers, and when they arrived for the sale Rumlow and his hired mercenaries opened
fire and laid waste to the lot of them.”

“Soooo, yay?” Darcy joked.

Steve glared at her, but it was Natasha who corrected her with a bemused expression, “No yay.”

Darcy pouted, “Seems like Mr. Ugly has learnt his lesson and is now out to hurt Hydra. Why no yay?”

“Because he’s killing people.” Steve said with a frown, “And it’s our job to stop him and bring him in.”

“He’s only killing bad people though.” Darcy argued just for the hell of it. Sam gave her a shit eating grin as he recognized her urge to play devil’s advocate for what it was.

“It doesn’t matter whom he kills!” Steve yelled, “He’s dangerous!”

Darcy gave a little laugh as making Steve as angry as possible was kind of funny on occasion.

“Yeah, but he’s just one man. It’s not like he’s a rogue Asgardian or Lutefisk monster.”

“What’s a Lutefisk monster?” Sam asked just to play along. Steve let out a noise of frustration and Darcy smiled as she explained, “The Lutefisk is a giant cyclopean monster cable of breathing fire. It’s from Asgard. It’s the monster that tried to kidnap Odin’s ravens Hugin and Munin. Don’t worry, Thor rescued them.”

“And they all lived happily ever after?” Sam said with a smirk. Darcy shrugged.

Natasha rubbed at the spot in between her eyebrows muttering, “You two are worse than Barton in the old days.”

“Darcy! SAM! Rumlow is not a joke. Due to his injuries he is immune to pain. He’s an expert tactician, both Natasha and I worked with him before the Hydra reveal. He’s a master combatant and marksman and spy. So if you two are finished with your little stand up routine can we get back to the meeting?”

Wanda grimaced, “If this man is as dangerous as you say why don’t we just kill him?”

Steve stared at Wanda with his brows knit together, his grim expression darkened as he told her, “That’s not how the Avengers operate. You know that Wanda.” Wanda looked a little embarrassed at the disappointed tone in Steve’s voice.

Wanda nodded agreeing quickly, “Of course.”

“However,” Natasha added, “If he were to die we wouldn’t be crying our eyes out or anything.” Wanda smiled coyly at Natasha’s encouraging look.

“However,” Natasha redirected, “Morality aside we have received reliable intel that Rumlow’s new target will be a biological agent from the Institute for Infectious Diseases in Lagos, Nigeria.”

Natasha hit a button on the laptop and a picture of the building in question filled the screen.

“Well that sounds terrible.” Darcy said making Sam grin.

“Don’t start.” Natasha chastised offhandedly before turning to the screen and gesturing, “This is where Steve and Sam will be stationed. Full tactical gear will be necessary for the mission. Wanda and I will be placed strategically, here and here. We will be in plain clothes blending into the crowd.”
Natasha pulled up a picture of a café, the café didn’t look familiar but the people sitting and the architecture around made something click in her head. Darcy sat up a little straighter.

“Wanda,” Natasha continued, “This will be a test of all the spy skills I’ve taught you. So don’t embarrass me.”

Natasha looked at Wanda pointedly and the young woman nodded. Steve then took over as he explained, “Vision, Darcy, we’ll be leaving you behind to guard the home front by yourselves. This is a big responsibility.”

Vision accepted this with a regal nod but Darcy visibly bristled. “Why?”

“Problem?” Steve asked as if bracing himself for an argument.

“Why am I being benched?”

“It’s not personal Darcy.” Steve said with a beleaguered frown.

“But why?” Darcy asked again with a little heat in her tone.

Steve opened his mouth to respond but Vision beat him to it.

“I imagine it is because you and I are the least likely to blend into any crowd. Me due to my physical appearance, and you due to your high profile status and many charitable public appearances as of late.” Vision said adding to the conversation for the first time, “Also yourself, Wanda, and I are arguably the most powerful members of the team. Seeing as how this mission involves going up against a moral man, it seems overkill to send two overly powered members on such a mission.”

Darcy swallowed thickly. Vision’s reasoning was sound and logical and not insulting at all and it made it very hard for Darcy to maintain her anger and indignation. But she managed anyway.

“Why not send me instead of Wanda? I have spy skills. I can blend.” Darcy waved a hand over her naturally dark and curly hair, making it turn pin straight, braid itself and turn a striking silver color. “See?”

“You can’t change your face though. And your rainbow bright aesthetic has become your calling card, so people will be able to spot you that much more quickly when and if you are disguised to stand out.” Natasha challenged.

Darcy’s nostrils flared at yet another sound and logical argument against her going on a mission with the team. She banged a fist on the table and then pointed at Wanda, “But I told you all I saw Wanda accidentally killing a bunch of people on a mission. What if this is the mission I saw in my vision? How can I stop her/save everyone if I’m not there?”

“Yes you told us. With no idea of the context, setting, or date--” Steve said, but was interrupted by a snippy Wanda, “Or proof that you can actually see the future at all.”

Darcy bit her tongue to stop from screaming in frustration. She took a second to formulate a less emotion fueled response. She turned to Wanda and gave the woman a look as sincere as she could muster given her distaste for the young witch, “Look, I know how it sounds. And for a long time I doubted that my dreams were real but I have proof now. I know I can see the future. My time with the Guardians of the Galaxy proved that. And--”

Wanda interrupted again this time her tone was more antagonistic, “But back her on lowly Earth we really only have your word to go by, don’t we?”
Darcy looked to the others searchingly. No one looked ready to jump in and back her and her ability up. It occurred to her just then that she had been operating under the assumption that everyone took her precognitive abilities as fact, but that was clearly not the case. Not now anyway…

In a voice that revealed more vulnerability than she meant it to Darcy asked, “Since when is my word not good enough?”

Natasha and Sam exchanged an uncomfortable glance, but Steve maintained eye contact with her. His face, his body language, it all read ‘come at me bro’ and Darcy just didn’t understand what had happened to her and Steve. They had been friends. Darcy had no idea how their once close relationship had dissolved so quickly.

Sam broke the silence first, “It’s not that we don’t believe you—”

Steve cut him off and in a frank tone asserted, “Until we have proof you can really do what you claim, we can’t treat it like fact. And we certainly can’t plan missions around some ephemeral possible fantasy you’ve dreamt up.”

Natasha glared at Steve adding, “I’ve spent a year and half training Wanda for this kind of mission and leaving her behind because you have a bad feeling—”

Darcy exploded, “It’s not a fucking feeling it was vision! Queen Frigga of Asgard confirmed my ability herself. I saved Yondu from suffocating in space! That picture up there looks familiar, and even though it’s not the exact location I saw in my vision it’s similar enough to give me pause. I think this is the mission where Wanda messes up, I need to go and she needs to stay behind.”

Sam’s eyes spoke volumes as he said, “Maybe you’ve already changed things, just by having this conversation? Isn’t that a possibility?”

“Are you really willing to bet dozens of lives on that?” Darcy retorted meanly. Sam not having her back in this little spat was a betrayal too far and she couldn’t help but feel attacked from all sides and without a single ally.

“Maybe.” Steve said coldly, “But in all honesty Darcy I have a hard time believing that my actions are not my own. That my free will means nothing and everything we do is bound by fate.”

After a beat in a quiet voice Darcy said with dawning horror, “You don’t believe me.”

None of them did. Darcy looked around and felt tears well up in her eyes. She finally leveled her stare at Steve. She could feel her lip quivering at the stone-faced expression he wore, but she suppressed the urge. She suppressed everything. She drew her lips into a line and spoke in a cold voice, “You don’t believe me. You don’t believe in me.”

Darcy felt like a fool. An arrogant fool. She was wrong. She was wrong when she told Rocket she fit in everywhere. She did not belong with these people or on this team. Still, she stupidly felt a flicker of hope in her friends and tried to appeal to their better natures. “You would risk innocent lives needlessly? Why? Why not err on the side of caution even if you don’t believe me? Just in case I’m right! Why not bench Wanda and let me go on the next couple of missions? Why--”

“Are you crazy? Next couple of missions!!” Wanda squawked. Her voice grew dangerous and she slowly rose from her chair as she ranted, “Why should they? You heard Natasha I’ve trained for this. I’ve earned this. You just show up and expect everyone to fawn all over you and do what you say! Why? Because you’re a fucking ‘princess’?!?”

Vision put a hand on Wanda’s arm and pulled her back down next to him. Wanda allowed this and
Darcy did not miss the way Wanda’s dangerously radiant hands stopped glowing the second Vision touched her.

“It’s not fair.” Wanda concluded quietly, “I don’t deserve—I haven’t even done what you said I’m going to do and you want to punish me for it. I deserve the chance to make up for what I did with Ultron. I shouldn’t have to worry about things I might do in the future too. Especially, when they hinge on the word of a suspicious snooty bitch.”

Darcy ignored the childish name calling, she knew Wanda didn’t like her and thought her a bitch. That wasn’t news. Darcy’s eyes burned as she stared at Wanda with a sense of wonder, “That’s the first time I’ve heard any one of you acknowledge that you were at fault in any way…”

Vision spoke in his monotone voice but there was…warmth nevertheless in his words. “Wanda feels deep regret over her actions. Every time she thinks of what she did to you the first time you met. To Doctor Banner, the innocent people of Johannesburg, she feels an overwhelming desire to balance the scales as it were, to atone.”

“As she fucking should.” Darcy said without thinking.

Steve gave her a censorious look and counseled, “None of us are perfect. We’ve all made mistakes,”

But, before he could get into full on lecture mode Darcy burst out, “And you’re about to make another one!”

“Darcy.” Natasha said chiding, “We’ve made a plan and I think it’s a good one. If you want to come along, I suppose you can but I—”

“If I want to come along?” Darcy repeated, “I’m telling you taking her with you might do more harm than good and your response is ‘I can come along’? Is everyone taking crazy pills?!”

“That’s not fair.” Sam said, “I don’t—Darcy, I think Vision and Natasha have made very logical and sound arguments for why they have planned the mission in this way. And I don’t think it’s fair for you to react like this. No one here is working against you, we are on the same team and we all want the same things. Right?”

“Wrong.” Darcy said without thinking again.

Sam looked somber but he nodded in agreement, “I’ve been expecting this for a while now. Not this, but a confrontation like this. Maybe you should—maybe we should all air our grievances now, so we can address them and move on. Stop all this interpersonal bullshit from affecting our performances in the field….why don’t we start with some ‘I feel’ statements?”

Sam was so damn….Sam. It was hard to maintain her ire at everyone, but especially him. He just had a way about him; he was so likable and trustworthy. He so very much just wanted to help, it was a pivotal part of his person and Darcy greatly admired that about him.

“I feel like that is a stupid idea.” Wanda said directing a glare at Sam.

Natasha raised an eyebrow at Sam, “You really think now if the time for a group therapy session?”

“I think letting things fester never leads to anything good.” Sam said diplomatically. He turned to her with an encouraging nod, “Darcy?”

She still trusted Sam despite him not having her back on her future seeing abilities. So, Darcy turned to Steve and spoke without fear or holding back.
“I feel like you don’t like me anymore.” She stated boldly, “I don’t know what changed, but you are the linchpin of the Avengers and as a result I have felt unwelcome on this team from day one.”

“That’s not true Darcy I--” Steve interrupted, his face finally showcasing something other than disapproval. “I like you.” His face softened and his arms unfolded and she saw a glimpse of the old Steve Rogers she used to know.

“Let her speak Steve.” Sam advised, shutting Steve down.

“…I changed,” Darcy said staring into Steve’s eyes she felt naked in her honestly, “It’s undeniable, irrevocable and I had nothing to do with it. In a way it was done to me against my will. Not that I’m complaining."

“Steve…” Darcy looked down at her folded hands, unable to maintain eye contact with any of them as she spoke so honestly, “I feel like you liked me better when I was a damsel in distress, like when we first met and I was all messed up with the flu. And now that I’ll never get the flu again, and now that I’m nearly immortal, and bulletproof, and stronger than you, and ya know magical, I don’t know. I haven’t changed on the inside, I don’t feel different I’m still the same person I was before, but..you of all people---whatever. Point is, I’m still me but I feel like you’d rather me be the me I used to be than the me I am now. If that makes sense.”

“Sweetheart.” Just that one word from Steve’s lips had her eyes fluttering as she tried not to cry. She looked up and found Steve with a devastated look on his face. “Sweetheart, Darcy, I like you. I’ve always liked you. Sometimes too much. I just… I don’t know. Lately, when I look at you or think about you I just get… I can’t explain it. I just think you’re too harsh on Wanda, but that’s not—I still like you. I don’t mind that you’re stronger than me, I appreciate it actually. I don’t want a damsel in distress…..not that I want you, want you.”

“Then why do you side against me all the time?” Darcy asked in heartbroken tone. Steve opened his mouth to answer but closed it after a couple of seconds. The silence was awkward as hell.

Wanda raised her hand, “Can it be my turn?”

Darcy felt like she was asking Sam, but Darcy responded, “Sure. Have it.”

“Darcy, I feel like you are plotting against me and have been since you joined the team.” Wanda volunteered, “And I have been actively against you because you are so obviously against me. End of story.”

“I’m not against you Wanda.” Darcy said looking up and catching the woman’s eyes with her own, “I don’t even hate you.”

Wanda let out a skeptical noise.

“Really.” Darcy assured her, “I mean, I don’t particular like you, but I don’t hate you. I’m not against you making amends or changing to become someone new. Someone who is powerful and good. I even want that for you. I…I asked Stephen about you and your powers once and you know what he told me? He said your magic was so great that he would wager you are the most powerful being on the planet.”

Wanda looked taken aback. All of them did. Except Vision.

Vision nodded, “I have often thought the same thing myself.”

“You could be the greatest Avenger of them all Wanda. Except--”
“There it is,” Wanda sighed.

“Except Stephen also told me that your magic is rooted in something so dangerous that until I brought you to his and Wong’s attention, they thought a being like you to be non-existent.”

Natasha had a grim look on her face as she prompted, “What’s the root of her magic?”

“Chaos.” Darcy said simply, “And chaos magic is the name given to magic so powerful that it can manipulate, warp and reconstruct the very fabric of existence and reality to the user’s very whims and bring about the total destruction of the cosmos.”

There was a long silence as everyone contemplated what she had revealed.

Wanda broke the silence with a cry, “You see, you are out to get me! You fucking liar!”

Wanda’s hands glowed as she blasted Darcy with her signature red magic. Darcy chair and all, flew backward onto the ground. She got to her feet quickly and held her hands up in surrender.

“No! Don’t you see?” She argued, “You’re the key Wanda! You could be what we need and I hate that you’ve gotten away with murder and I want you to suffer or pay in some way for what you’ve done----what you had a hand in destroying and driving away Tony from the team and fucking making Bruce leave the goddamn planet! But. But I don’t want you gone. Dead, gone. I just don’t think you should be on the team yet. You haven’t even scratched the surface on your abilities and putting you out in the field as you are, will only lead to mistakes and death.”

Vision and Sam both hand their hands on Wanda’s elbows holding the young witch back as Darcy explained, “There’s something else I haven’t told you. I’ve had the most horrific and unhelpful vision, I’ve actually been having glimpses of it for a while now. And this one, well, actually it is just a bad feeling type of thing.”

“What are you talking about Darcy?” Steve asked arms once again folded in front of his chest, skeptical expression fixed on his face.

Darcy lowered her hands to her sides; she didn’t want to fight with Wanda. She wanted Wanda to have to do community service, maybe even a little jail time, and for everyone to acknowledge that the young witch was dangerous and needed to be closely monitored. She didn’t want to constantly defend herself against her supposed ‘team mates’. Being a team wasn’t supposed to be this hard.

“I had a vision and I don’t know what it is or who it is. But something or someone is coming. From space. And their coming right now. But, it’ll take while. I think. I don’t know much I just know that…what’s coming is apocalyptic. And a lot of people are going to die, everywhere. Not just on Earth.”

“You’re right that is unhelpfully vague.” Natasha commented in a deadpan voice.

“And not presently relevant.” Sam added, “So let’s set the doom and gloom prediction aside for now. And let’s just all calm dow--”

“Steve,” Wanda turned to Steve with an imploring look, “I told you she was trying to get rid of me. I told you she would try to turn you all against me. You need to do something! You’re the leader.”

Darcy could see Wanda’s eyes subtly change. The green iris of her eyes turned red and Darcy turned to Steve to see if he saw it too but she let out a gasp as she saw that Steve’s blue eyes were a matching red color. She looked to Nat and then Sam, their eyes were red too. Even Vision was affected.
Wanda’s hands began to glow again as she spoke in an angry voice, “She’s the bad one, not me! Don’t listen to her. You all know me, all of you trust me. She’s a whore and liar and she is the one who is dangerous. She doesn’t belong on the team. I do.”

Wanda’s hands and eyes stopped glowing abruptly and Darcy felt afraid, despite that meaning Wanda was no longer using her powers.

“Wanda, what did you do to them?” Darcy asked in a whisper.

Wanda looked at her questioningly. Darcy saw no artifice in her face and heard no insincerity in her tone when she responded, “What are you talking about? I haven’t done anything to them but listen and learn and try to become a better person and a hero. But all you want to do is tear me down and erase all the hard work I’ve done! Why won’t you let me become the Avenger I’m meant to be? I’m sorry okay! I’m sorry for what I did to you. We shouldn’t have kidnapped you. Okay? Is that what you want to hear?”

“Wanda--” Darcy tried to tell the young witch what she had seen but Wanda continued to rant over her.

“My brother paid for our mistakes with his life. And I have to live with his loss for the rest of my days, isn’t that punishment enough for what I did? I’ve committed to being a hero so I can atone for the lives my actions took and I’m trying, really trying to be good! What more do you want from me hiccup? What else do I have to do--” Wanda dissolved into tears.

Steve moved over to Wanda and politely pushed Sam out of the way so he could wrap the younger girl in a hug, allowing her to sob into his chest.

“You’re paranoid Darcy.” Steve accused, “And like a bully you’re attacking someone who doesn’t deserve it. And you know how I feel about bullies.”

“Maybe it’s time we revaluate the current Avenger roster?” Vision said, “In the interest of harmony?”

“I hate to say it Darcy, but it sounds to me like you’re hating on Wanda and making up this chaos voodoo baloney and bullshit threat from outer space to deflect blame and evaluation of your true motives.” Sam said with a flat look, “Maybe you joining the team wasn’t such a great idea.”

Natasha took a step towards her, “You are obviously jealous of the close relationship that has developed between Wanda and Steve and in fact the rest of the team. We allowed you to join as you are a powered person and not unworthy of the title of Avenger, but perhaps like Tony, you would better serve the planet as a solo act.”

Darcy felt like she was in the Twilight Zone. She also felt very, very, afraid of what Wanda would do to the team or her if she argued any further.

She swallowed thickly before speaking in a trembling voice, “I quit.”

“I think it’s for the best.” Steve said as he rubbed a soothing hand on Wanda’s back.

Darcy nodded and ripped off the Avengers necklace Tony had made and sent her yesterday. She had put it on proudly that morning, but the stylized ‘A’ felt like a scarlet letter around her neck now. She threw it down on the table without a word. Then she turned and ran from the room.

She didn’t bother stopping in her room she headed straight for the garage. She had left Tony’s car keys in the little bowl next to her bed. She pictured the keys and where she left them and effortlessly
conjured them into her hand. Once in sight of the car she chanced a look over her shoulder. No one was behind her.

She ran faster and quickly got inside.

The tires squealed as she sped backwards and turned abruptly. She left the Avengers head quarters in silence. She drove robotically, only speeding a little. All the while in her mind she waffled between thoughts. Did Wanda know she was magically affecting the team? Or was it an unconscious influence that Wanda couldn’t control?

She didn’t know for sure, but Darcy had a feeling that Wanda was influencing the team unknowingly. A fact, which made her even more dangerous than Darcy had initially thought.

She fell into Tony’s arms sobbing when she finally made it home to Stark Tower/Avengers Tower. She told him everything, even though she knew it might make him paranoid about their safety, she didn’t hold back. Darcy left word for Stephen, but Wong said he was looking for a magical ingredient for this magical disease that was afflicting a child that had been brought to them, so he was out of reach until further notice.

Darcy decided to trust Wong and let him know that Wanda was influencing people with her powers unknowingly/maybe knowingly. Wong offered before she even asked, to do some research for them into finding a magical way to neutralize the chaos magic fueled witch.

Two days later she and Tony watched the coverage of Avengers mission in Lagos, side by side on the couch in silence.

It was a shit show. The Avengers were getting skewered in the press. Media outlets jumped on the event like a fat kid on cake, lining up to condemn and criticize the Avengers successful/unsuccessful mission.

While watching Darcy had clung to hope, that as Sam had said, by having the conversation she would have changed things enough for the outcome to be different than she saw in her vision. But alas.

The Avengers did technically save the day and get the biological agent away from the bad guys, but the king asshole bad guy decided to go out in fiery blaze of glory. Rumlow blew himself up and tried to take Steve with him. And when Wanda tried to contain the explosion, her shaky control on her powers caused her to fuck up and she inadvertently destroyed a nearby building, killing several relief workers from Wakanda.

Just as she predicted.

Tony found the silver lining though, “Well, now at least they have that proof they wanted. Maybe next time you warn them about the future, they’ll fucking listen.”
Darcy’s ‘Team Meeting’ Look
Chapter 38 - Bucky Barnes

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up in bed with Bucky Barnes.

Chapter Notes

So my mom was in the hospital this weekend which is why this is late.
But she's out now and back at home.

*didn't reread chapter so let me know if you spot any huge errors in the comments thank you!

This chapter is JAM PACKED and you might see some unfamiliar faces from the Netflix universe in a quick cameo appearance that doesn't really relate to their series from Netflix but more like their comic verse doppelgangers cuz...well, you'll see.
Anywhoo, hope you all enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 38 – Bucky Barnes

Darcy woke up from a light doze, her head bouncing gently off of Tony’s shoulder as he nudged her awake. She blinked blearily up at Wong who was offering her a steaming cup of tea.

“Thanks.” She mumbled as she blew on the top and then took a sip.

Wong had come to join them at the tower yesterday, along with Stephen. The two men had been made aware of the Wanda problem and they were supposed to be brainstorming magical solutions, but the TV coverage of the event in question was just so enthralling that they kind of got sucked in. And then Darcy had just shut her eyes for a minute….

The media had been ripping the Avengers apart, questioning, condemning, and outright blaming them for the incident. What’s more the media also seemed to focus on the fact that Darcy wasn’t present during the incident. Many speculated if the mission would have gone differently had she been there and most were demanding answers as to why she wasn’t. Many laid the blame at the feet of Wanda and Steve in particular. Wanda for causing the destruction and ultimately killing the innocent civilians and Steve for poor leadership and planning. The fact that the government and the Avengers remained silent about the whole thing just stoked the fires of the talking heads on TV and rallied public opinion against them, their lack of response had people thinking they had something to hide and really were to blame. Secretly Darcy reveled in all the scorn her former team mates were receiving. But then she felt guilty for her morbid feelings of schadenfreude and the whole thing just left her feeling…bad. And tired.

Tony and she had been inundated with requests for comments and interviews, the paparazzi and mainstream media outlets had been camped out in the Stark Tower lobby since the incident occured.
Neither she nor Tony had left the tower. Darcy was a little annoyed about that as she had to cancel several volunteer and charity events she had lined up. She had been looking forward to giving back and doing good after she failed so miserably.

“Here,” Stephen said as he came up behind Wong and handed her a strawberry pop-tart on a plate, “Eat.” He commanded before disappearing back into the kitchen.

Wong sat down on the sofa at the other end from her and Tony. Darcy smiled tiredly at him before she bit into her pop-tart with an audible ‘yum’. Tony caught her attention as he put his arm around her shoulders and pulled her into his side, kissing her cheek as she chewed.

“It’s coming on soon.” He informed her quietly. All day WHIH news had been running a teaser promo about having an exclusive statement from the Avengers about the Lagos incident.

“Good.” Darcy said in a petulant tone, “I’m tired of waiting.”

Stephen reappeared with two sandwiches on plates he handed one to Tony and then one to Wong. He then sat down next to her and gave her sad look. “You sure you don’t want something more substantial to eat?”

Darcy took another bite of her pop-tart instead of answering, making exaggerated noises of contentment. Stephen scowled at her, “Just because its strawberry flavored doesn’t mean it counts for your fruit for the day.”

Darcy rolled her eyes but smiled as she chewed. Stephen was always trying to make her and Tony eat healthier. It was kinda adorable.

“No sandwich for you?” Darcy asked.

Stephen shrugged, “I ate mine while I made Tony and Wong’s.”

“Shh. It’s on!” Tony shushed.

They all turned their eyes back to the TV and the volume raised several notches as the smug looking blonde introduced the exclusive segment.

“You’re watching WHIH World News and I’m Christine Everhart. And tonight we present you with our exclusive Avengers statement, regarding the state of the team, the future of the Avengers, and of course their response following the incident in Lagos Nigeria.”

The screen cut from the studio to the outside of the Avengers building. Steve and the team stood in front of a big ‘A’ logo affixed on the brick wall. Steve stood stiffly in the middle he was situated in front of a little podium, obviously the designated mouthpiece. Vision and Falcon were on his left and Wanda and Natasha were on his right. All of them wore their uniforms, or in Wanda’s case her unofficial uniform of a duster and corset with leather pants. Darcy stuck her tongue out at the image of the woman on screen.

Steve cleared his throat before he took a piece of paper out and flattened it so he could read from it. Darcy realized in that instant that Steve must be really nervous to need the paper, as she knew him to have a near photographic memory.

“Hello, I’m Captain America and I’d like to read a prepared statement to address the events that took place in Lagos Nigeria and the Avengers involvement in said event.” Steve looked up from his notes and gave a hard stare at the camera, “But before I read the statement I’d like the people to know that I was against making this statement at all. I believe I have earned the trust of the people and thus
Steve gestured forward, “We contacted Miss Everhart in an attempt to control tampering from the unchecked media who has proceeded to malign and condemn our actions without knowing—”

Sam cleared his throat loudly and Steve looked over at him. They exchanged a look and Steve rolled his eyes before turning back to the camera, “Sorry. I’m getting off topic.”

Steve smiled charmingly and then turned his eyes back down to the paper before him. He stared at the paper for a few seconds before looking up sharply with an argumentative expression, “It’s just that—I’ve been slightly taken aback by the way various media outlets have engaged in speculation, distortion of the facts and outright lies when it comes to my team. Don’t reporters have to do any investigation anymore? Don’t facts trump rumors? I believed so, I believed that it was the freedom of the press which made people in power accountable for the actions that they take but—”

“Steve.” Sam said in a stern voice. Steve looked over at Sam with an annoyed look.

Steve waved him off, “Yeah, yeah. Stick to the script. I got it.” He looked chagrín as he shrugged at the camera, “Sorry folks, you don’t need to hear an old timer’s diatribe about how things were back in my day.”

A feminine laugh near the camera could be heard. Steve smiled attractively in the direction it came from.

“On with the show as they say,” Steve joked. He turned back to his paper and he was quiet for a few seconds and slowly the smile faded from his face.

He looked up and stared down the barrel of the camera. Gone was Steve’s affable face, in its place was the commanding expression of Captain America. He spoke in a clear and emotionless tone, “On Tuesday the Avengers received intelligence regarding the actions of known terrorist Brock Rumlow, former Hydra operative. We learned he intended to steal a biological weapon from the Institute of Infectious Diseases in Lagos, Nigeria. Rumlow went by the name Crossbones after Hydra fell and he became an arms dealer where upon he accumulated a band of ruthless mercenaries into his service. The Avengers intercepted the theft of the biological weapon. To do this we had to engage the enemy in combat. The biological weapon was recovered….We did our job.”

Steve’s unwavering stare faltered as he glanced down at his notes and took a deep breath before continuing, “When Rumlow was confronted with the fact that he had lost he chose the coward’s way out. He detonated a bomb on his vest with the intent to kill me, himself, and as many civilians as possible.”

Steve looked behind him at Wanda with a soft expression, “I would be dead if not for the quick actions taken by Scarlet Witch. And so would several other Nigerian civilians. We owe her our lives.”

Wanda’s eyes shined with unshed tears even as her face remained impassive. Steve turned back to talk directly to the camera his voice full of compassion and sincerity, “Scarlet Witch used her power to funnel the explosion into the air away from the large crowd. It is unfortunate that the blast was so powerful she was not able to elevate it high enough to clear the buildings where several people sadly lost their lives. We mourn for these individuals and their families, but do not mistake our empathy for complicity.”

Steve swallowed thickly and looked down, gathering himself. When he glanced up his gaze had
turned cold. “The Avengers stand united. We believe we did everything we could to mitigate the
damage to the populous and apprehend our target and the dangerous biological weapon he intended
to steal and sell to the highest bidder.”

A bit of warmth returned to Steve’s expression, “We hope this statement clarifies the incident and
ends the rampant speculation and condemnation of our actions. I thank you for your time.”

As Steve folded up his paper and pocketed it Christine Everhart called out, “Captain! What about–”

Steve held up his hand, “No questions ma’am. I agreed to a statement, not an interview.”

Steve walked away from the podium even as Ms. Everhart called out her questions to him regardless,
“But what about Vision? Where was he during the incident? And Miss Lewis? Why weren’t they
with you in Nigeria?”

Steve paused, his back to the camera visibly tensed. He and Natasha exchanged a loaded look, and
when Steve turned around it was with his ‘Captain America’ hardened seasoned soldier face on. He
quickly resumed his place at the podium. “Vision was left behind in the states as a precaution. It’s
never smart to the leave the homestead completely unguarded.”

“And Miss Lewis?” Ms. Everhart prompted.

“Miss Lewis is no longer a member of the Avengers.” Steve stated with a pained expression.

“What?!”

“She—We--” Steve as he looked down at his hands, his shoulders drooping. “Darcy…”

Darcy let her eyes leave him to glance at Wanda. She caught the flash of red that flared up in them
and after the red faded from her irises Steve’s head snapped up and he stood up straighter.

“Miss Lewis’s departure was a case of clashing personalities. Her addition had a negative effect on
team dynamics. She was uncooperative, combative, and unwilling to have faith in her fellow
teammates. Her need for attention and penchant for passing off blame did not enable the team to
operate at peak optimization. We let her go for the good of the Avengers.” Steve stated with a stony
expression.

“Let her go?”

“Fired.” Wanda spoke up from the sidelines, with a smirk she repeated, “She was fired.”

Darcy let out a gasp. She barely registered the reporter trying to fish for more info as Cap and the
team scurried away. She ignored the shiny blonde anchor a she summarized and then signed off. She
felt like she was in shock. She was numb---

“That son of a bitch!” Tony shouted as he hurled his plate at the TV shattering it, making them all
jump. Tony sprang to his feet and began to pace and rant in front of the broken television.

“That sanctimonious asshole! How dare he? HOW DARE HE!” Tony was practically vibrating with
rage. Darcy looked over at Stephen hoping to find an ally in her shock at Tony’s reaction only to
find him equally as moved, if not more restrained in showing it.


“Yes! Slander! We’ll sue.” Tony agreed sounding manic, “We’ll sue and kick them out of the
Avengers facility and take back all my tech upgrades and make them regret--"

“No Tony.” Darcy interrupted in a soft small voice.

They ignored her, Stephen declaring, “We can’t let them get away with this.”

“Fuck no!” Tony agreed.

“Did everyone else see the Scarlet Witch use her power during Captain America’s speech?” Wong asked thoughtfully. “True with the Captain’s head angled down we could not see if he was affected--”

“Yeah, what about that huh? Is she an idiot? Or does she really not understand what she’s doing? Either way, more ammo for us when we rally the troops against her and get her ass kicked out of--”

“No!” Darcy stood up, asserting herself loudly making Tony stop in his tracks.

“What do you mean no?” Tony asked tentatively.

“I mean no. We will not be rallying the troops or kicking the Avengers out of the new facility or suing anyone or, or, any of it!” Darcy explained.

“You would have us do nothing?” Stephen asked in a dangerous voice, “Its character assassination Darcy. You have to fight back.”

“You cannot let them ruin your life by tarnishing your name.” Wong added with a nod.

Darcy looked at him with a soft expression, “They haven’t ruined my life.”

“Not for lack of trying.” Stephen argued.

Darcy shook her head, “It doesn’t matter. It’s me they are after and so it’s my decision. And I say, we do nothing. We don’t respond. We don’t sue. We don’t rally anyone. Nothing.”

“Darcy--” Tony started to argue but Darcy stomped her foot down hard, making the glass coffee table in front of her shake audibly.

“No.” Darcy said sternly, “Wanda is more powerful and ballsy than we ever gave her credit for. The team is under her influence to what extent, we don’t know. I’m not willing to hurt my friends if they’re not in their right minds. And until we have a way to neutralize her, to stop her from influencing the rest of the team further, we do nothing. We keep quiet, we keep out of sight and we stay out of the Avenger’s way.”

Darcy pinned Tony with a determined stare to let him know she meant business, “I don’t want anyone else I love and care for falling under that witches spell. So please listen to me. Just this once? Don’t go looking for a fight. Don’t poke the bear. And don’t be afraid to run and hide when it is the smartest course of action.”

Tony’s lips drew into a line across his face. Stephen caught her attention as he stood and took her hand, “But Darcy, if you lose peoples trust now, you might never get it back. When I was surgeon—it’s not the same of course, but you can’t let your reputation--”

“I don’t give a shit about my reputation.” Darcy said succinctly. She reached up and cupped Stephen’s cheeks, “I care about you guys. And I don’t want Wanda accidently killing you or turning you against me.”
Tony approached from behind her and Darcy turned to face him. He stared at her with a curious expression, “You don’t want to fight.” He summarized.

Darcy shook her head in disagreement, “No. No I want to fight.” As she spoke her tone became heated as she let her true feelings show without censor the words fell from her lips faster and faster as she became visibly incensed, “I want to fight back. I want yell and scream and bash their faces in. Deface posters and memorabilia with their dumb faces on it! Pull out all that witches hair and her teeth! And kick her in the face and I want to take to the internet and declare everything they just said bullshit and lies and burn down the Avengers building and salt the earth where it once stood!”

Tony merely raised his eyebrows at her and Darcy shrank. She let her shoulders sag as she took a deep calming breath. She gentled her tone and laced her fingers together, “But more than revenge, I don’t want to lose. I’d rather show restraint and exhibit decorum now so after this whole mess is solved I come out smelling like roses and those butt faced lying miscreants smell like the shit they are trying to pedal!”

Tony smiled and pulled her into a hug; he rubbed her back comfortingly and whispered, “Okay. We lay low. Whatever you want.”

Darcy breathed a sigh of relief. She didn’t know what she’d do if she couldn’t convince Tony to stand down. She sank into his embrace and wrapped her arms around his waist. “Thank you.” She mumbled into his chest, “We just got to remember Wanda is the criminal here, everyone else… everyone else is under her influence and they get a pass for now.”

“Darcy--” Tony started to argue, but Darcy squeezed him tightly compelling him to listen to her. “No, listen, we don’t know how far her mind control bullshit goes. We don’t know how long she’s been affecting them. They could be innocent in all this. We don’t know. We don’t know what she’s done, we don’t know if she knows that she’s doing it, we don’t know how to stop her or stop break her link to the others….I know it’s hard, but we can’t afford to react emotionally.”

“We have to be smart.” Tony agreed finally as he squeezed her back and kissed her on the top of her head.

Stephen came up and hugged her from behind declaring, “I promise to refrain from harming the butt faced lying miscreants until we have a way to neutralize the chaos witch.”

“Thank you.” She said with a smile. She basked in the double hug, feeling safe and loved and happy, despite the circumstances. Then Wong came over and made it four-way hug, saying, “I also vow not to take matters into my own hands to defend your honor.”

Darcy let out a laugh and ignored how Tony tensed at Wong’s touch. But no one moved for a good long moment…until Darcy joked, “Is it weird that I want to fart and ruin this tender moment?”

“Ew!”
“Darcy.”
“Hahaha.”

Following the Avengers statement public opinion became…divided. Steve’s statement seemed to sway a lot of people over to the Avengers side. #TeamCap became a thing. People were crying out to have faith in Steve and believe every word he said and everything he did and lead the Avengers to
do. They praised the Avengers for thwarting the bad guy and saving the day, despite the casualties they suffered. All the talking heads were praising Steve’s bravery in the face of criticism and a lot of women found the banter between Steve and Sam totally ship worthy. #AmericanFalcon was also a thing.

However for every flag waving Cap loving ‘Merica supporter there was an equally passionate anti-Avenger ally ready to argue how the team was out of control. In fact a bunch of online polls showed that more people disliked the Avengers more after the statement, than before Steve ever opened his mouth. While those who believed Steve’s statement at its face value found him charming and sincere, those who opposed the Avengers saw his performance as a show of arrogance and delusion. People were clamoring for the Avengers to be made to heel and brought into the fold government wise. The way Steve spoke of having earned the right to do what he wanted rubbed a lot of people the wrong way. And the fact that there were casualties, foreign casualties at that, well, that made #FireCapHireDarcy a thing. People were pissed that Darcy was fired and it seemed to be one of the major reasons people were turning against the Avengers opinion wise. Well, that and the fact that people were shocked to find out how little oversight the Avengers truly had. Either way, people were demanding change.

Tony was approached by Rhodey (and by extension the US government) to help shape the policy that would create the change that most people were clamoring for. And as such he left to go to Washington for a couple days.

With her blessing, Tony used the suit to escape the Tower without being accosted by the still voracious media. He tried to keep in touch, but honestly he was so buried in paperwork and legal secret policy stuff when he did call her he sounded so exhausted that she often ended up telling him she loved him before ordered him to get some rest.

Wong and Stephen had offered to stay with her in the tower, but she knew that if they had any chance in defeating Wanda and her mind compulsion, the guys had to get back to the sanctum where the magical research materials were. And so, that’s where they all went.

After three days of constant reading and being trapped in the Sanctum, Darcy was suffering from a serious case of cabin fever. She was nervous about Tony being away, something happening to him where she couldn’t reach him left her constantly on edge but she was trying to hide it. So far no one had said anything about how she practically leapt at her phone anytime it rang, but she knew Stephen noticed. She was also very worried about how the media was turning against the Avengers. Every day it seemed like another person disavowed Steve and the Avengers, condemning them for their lackluster performance during the mission and arrogant response in the aftermath. She was also going a little stir crazy with all the now weeklong indoor quarantine. They’d left the media mob behind at Stark Tower, but she still was a little hesitant to show her face among the people. This had led to her practicing her illusion/conjuring skills more and more. She wanted to be able to change her face completely like Loki, or summon a disguise/clothes onto her body instantly but she had only made headway with latter.

She Stephen and Wong sat in the windowless study, each of them buried in equally large and dusty old books. Darcy moved her lips as she read as fast as she could.

“Erg!” She exclaimed as she realized the passage she had been reading pertained to siren’s enthrallment and not just enthrallment in general. She slammed the book closed with more force than was necessary. Wong stared at her with wide eyes.

“Sorry.” She huffed apologetically. She pushed the large tome away from her gently, “There’s nothing useful in this one either.”
“Perhaps you need a break?” Wong suggested with a pointed look. Stephen didn’t look up from the book he was reading, but he made an agreeable noise.

She stared at the ten book high stack that was in her ‘to read’ pile and shuddered at the sight.

“Yes.” Darcy decided, “If I have to read another book about mind control that doesn’t apply to our current situation I think I’m going to scream and start setting things on fire out of sheer frustration.”

Wong pulled the book he was reading a little closer to his body as if to shield it from Darcy’s threats of destruction.

“Why not take a walk?” Wong recommended, “Go to the park, clear your head.”

“Sunshine.” Stephen mumbled, “Fresh air.”

“Donuts.” Darcy said sounding a little like Homer Simpson as she pictured a pink glazed donut with sprinkles in her head.

Stephen looked up at that, “Why not go to the farmers market and get us some fresh fruit and vegetables? The kitchen could use some fresh produce; we were low the last time I checked.”

Darcy made a face and stuck out her tongue, “Spoil sport.”

Stephen smirked at her. Darcy got up and went over to give him a kiss. Stephen smiled as he tilted his head up as she leant down, kissing him somewhat upside down as she stood behind him. Darcy pet his face with a gentle hand before releasing his lips.

“Just try to remember you need more than sugar to live?” Stephen called out as she walked away.

“Of course I do,” Darcy agreed with a grin, “That’s why god invented chocolate covered strawberries.”

Darcy giggled as she heard Stephen groan in response.

Before leaving the Sanctum Darcy took a quick shower, since their impromptu seclusion she had been shirking basic hygiene and lounging around reading wearing fancy pajamas for the most part. She was of the mind if she wasn’t leaving the house, why put on a bra or pants. After a few days that attitude carried over into the ‘why wash my hair’ and then into ‘I don’t smell that bad’ territory.

It was actually probably very healthy for her to get out of the house.

Seeing as how she was going out in public and did not want to be mobbed she decided neither to dress super fancy nor like a rainbow threw up on her. She put on a pair of yellow aviator glasses and a baseball hat, some simple jeans, a shirt, and a matching denim vest. A pair of cute sneakers finished off her look along with a simple brown bag.

The most exciting thing was she got dressed using magic! She conjured all the clothes from her closet back at the Tower onto her body with a wave her hand an shit ton of concentration. With a proud smile she put her hair up into two pigtail bun things.

She surveyed her appearance in the mirror and did a little spin. Nothing flashy nothing special her goal was not to stand out and she thought she did a pretty damn good job of it. However, she
couldn’t resist making her hair purple seeing as how it was mostly hidden by the hat and pigtail buns she styled it in anyway.

She also did some sort of contouring make up magic to make her features appear different. Her nose smaller, her cheek bones higher, her lips just a tad thinner. She’d also been low key watching a lot of makeup tutorials on youtube lately. She was actually pretty confident she wouldn’t be immediately recognized as the famous Darcy Lewis the second someone looked at her.

Maybe on the second or third look, but definitely not the first.

On her way home from the farmers market Darcy stumbled upon a bunch of people in a vacant lot. They were dividing up the ground with duct tape and they all had shovels and gardening gloves on. Darcy approached a dark skinned man with a clipboard and t-shirt that read ‘Concrete Safaris’.

“Hi. Can I ask what you’re doing here?” Darcy asked and the man smiled at her toothily. She swooned a little internally. He was super hot.

“Sure. I’m a part of an organization called Concrete Safaris.” The man gestured to his shirt, “It’s an organization that is a model for social change in which children learn how to alter the physical world around them by navigating New York City’s infrastructure, becoming more confident, experienced effective leaders at an early age, committed to the their health and the environment. We secure land through the NYC Housing Authority to secure land for gardens and then grown thousands of pounds of produce. Today’s planting day.”

Darcy smiled at the man, “Do you need an extra set of hands?”

The man’s smile faltered, “Not really. This experience is about giving kids the opportunity to learn the skill for themselves. I’m just supervising.”

Darcy pouted, “Oh.”

The man looked excited, “But tomorrow we are creating our annual obstacle race and ‘active living’ fair, we can always use extra help on those days. Setting up booths, setting out food, referring races. Are you looking for—do you need to do community service to meet a…class requirement or criminal—”

“No.” Darcy denied, “I just—I just want to do something good for others. I’ve been…I just want to help people, however I can.”

The man looked at her with a thoughtful expression. Darcy tried her hardest to keep her expression open and sincere. The man eventually nodded and retrieved a card from his back pocket, “Okay…why don’t you email me and I’ll send you the details. We can always use more grunts to lug things about, if you actually show up and do as your asked, we’ll see about giving you more rewarding responsibilities.”

Darcy lit up, “That sounds awesome.”

She looked down at the card in her hand then smiled up at the man, “Thanks Mr. Cage!”

“Call me Luke.”
The next day Darcy showed up where she was supposed to, she found the man she had met yesterday. It was very easy seeing as he was the only tall, broad shouldered, bald, and handsome dark skinned man around. He also had a little entourage of women around him.

Darcy caught Luke’s eye and waved. He waved back and pointed her over to another man with a clipboard. As she approached the other guy she tucked a stray strand of purple hair behind her ear. She was wearing the same outfit as she had yesterday because she’d only worn it for an hour seeing as how when she’d returned back to the Bleeker street Sanctum she’d immediately changed back into her Lion King pajamas. Internally she hoped Luke didn’t think she was some weird homeless do good-er who couldn’t afford to wash their clothes.

“Hi.” Darcy greeted. The man who had blondish curly hair glanced at her then back down at his clipboard before freezing. He then looked up at her slowly, his eyes moving up and down her body.

“Hi.” The man greeted slowly.

Darcy cocked her hip and gave the man a look that clearly said, ‘my eyes are up here’ even though he really wasn’t ogling her chest but her mostly bare legs. “I’m Darcy. I met Luke yesterday and he said I could help out, but he’s busy right now so….”

The man’s eyes slid over to Luke and then back to her, “Oh. Yeah, he told me about you. I’m Danny.”

The man held out his hand to her and she shook it briefly, “He mentioned you were down for free labor?”

Darcy smiled at that, “Yeah. Just looking to help.”

The smiled genuinely, “Welcome aboard then. I will show you to the many many boxes that need to be unloaded from my girlfriend’s car.”

Darcy spent most of her day moving things from place to place. Setting up the food items, handing out juice boxes, helping arrange the obstacle course. Darcy was just happy to be involved even if her role was basically a free manual labor helper monkey.

It turned out that Danny was sponsoring the whole event as a part of his humanity outreach program which was an extension of the children’s program he ran out of the Dojo he and his girlfriend ran. Luke was just his handsome best friend who got roped into helping organize the event.

When the day was over Darcy was sweaty, tired, and feeling more fulfilled than ever.

“Have fun?” Luke asked her as he helped her pick up trash.

“Yes.” Darcy answered with a brilliant smile.

Luke let out a laugh, “Good.”

“I’d like to do more.” Darcy ventured with a shy expression.
Luke looked her up and down, “You really up for more punishment without pay?”

Darcy shrugged, “I want to do good. Big or small. Every chance I get. And..to tell you the truth, money isn’t really a concern for me.”

“Lucky you.” Luke commented with only a tiny bit of bitterness. Darcy turned away a little ashamed of her billionaire boyfriend/unofficial sugar baby status. But Luke put a hand on her shoulder. When she looked at him she saw his brilliantly white smile back on his face.

“I’ll keep my ear to the ground then.” Luke promised, “If something comes up, I’ll let you know when and where.”

Two days later Luke called her up and told her about another volunteer opportunity, one he and Danny weren’t a part of, but since she showed an interest in all types of charity he thought he’d let her know about it.

And that’s how Darcy ended up volunteering in the children’s section of a local library, reading to senior citizens and then later on to a bunch of adorable little kids for story hour.

Darcy spoke animatedly as she read, “The next day was a disaster. Everyone at school laughed at Camilla. They called her “Camilla Crayon” and “Night of the Living Lollipop.” She tried her best to act as if everything were normal, but when the class said the Pledge of Allegiance her stripes turned red, white, and blue, and she broke out in stars!”

An annoying four year old boy snorted interrupting saying, “That’s not real. This book is stupid.”

Every other child was staring at her with rapturous attention except that kid. He was poking the little girl next to him, making noises with his mouth, and basically driving Darcy and the other kids to inattention and annoyance.

A little blonde girl turned to the boy and chastised him, “Shhh! I wanna hear the story!”

The little boy stuck his tongue out at the girl. The girl turned to Darcy with a face aghast with horror, “Miss Louisa did you see that? He stuck his tongue out at me!”

“I saw.” Darcy murmured as she stared contemplatively at the little boy.

“Nuh-na-na-na!” The little boy teased as he riled everyone up. Darcy looked around the room quickly, most of the parent’s had bailed once they saw that the book had paragraphs, claiming they’d be back in twenty minutes. Her teenage library ‘chaperon’ was glued to her phone with her back to Darcy and the kids. They were mostly sheltered by the stacks of books as the story time area was stuck in the back of the children’s section as far from everything else as possible. Perfectly secluded….

“You know,” Darcy started, “You were wrong…David” Darcy read the boys name tag, catching his eye, “This book is all real.”

“No way. This is baby made up story. Not real life stuff.” The child petulantly denied.

Darcy smiled mischievously, “Oh yeah? Are you sure?”
“Uh huh.” The boy affirmed, “Magic isn’t real. My daddy says it’s all bullpoop!”

“Then how do you explain this?” Darcy shook out her hair and turned her modest braided brown hair with a splash of green, into a torrent of rainbow colored locks that flowed around her shoulders in soft waves. The children gasped.

“Oh my god.” The blonde little girl exclaimed, “You’re a rainbow princess!”

Darcy smiled triumphantly at the shocked children; she held a finger to lips and said, ‘shhh’. She then turned her hair bright pink, then green, then fire engine red, then back to rainbow. She leant in close and lowered her voice to a whisper, “Magic is real.”

“This is so cool.” Another little girl squealed.

“And this book is all true too! It’s a secret but if you don’t tell anybody…”

The children all nodded enthusiastically. Darcy smiled, “Well, this is actually a story written about me when I was a little girl. The author just changed the names and made the girl look different so I wouldn’t have people asking me to change the way I look all the time.”

“Woooow.” A couple of kids awed in unison. Darcy stifled her laughter before looking at David, the little boy who had been so disruptive. She locked eyes with him, “So, if you all be quiet and pay attention, maybe you’ll find out how broke the curse and learned how to control my magical abilities?”

The annoying kid sat straight up and even folded his hands in his lap, the picture of innocence as he nodded at her enthusiastically promising, “I’ll be good. I swear.”

“Excellent.” Darcy praised, “And if your good for this story maybe I’ll read another story after this one about one of my brothers. Both of whom are also magical and have been on many adventures of their own.”

Darcy turned back to the book and began to read, “Where were we…oh, yeah. ‘the class said the Pledge of Allegiance her stripes turned red, white, and blue, and she broke out in stars!’”

Darcy never noticed the paparazzi following her at the volunteer event in the park. Or at the library. So she was just as shocked as everyone else in the world when pictures of her and her various philanthropic activities made their way to the front pages of newspapers and then on TV and online.

The media spin machine was in full force as it praised her for her good deeds and heroism, big and small. Luke and some of the seniors and children from the library gave interviews about her, waxing poetic about her kindness and altruistic nature. The Avengers backlash really kicked into high gear after her secret good deeds were revealed and her cover was blown.

The same day she was exposed was also the day Darcy ventured to leave the house and greet Tony and Rhodes as they returned to New York via plane. They were obviously mobbed at the airport since they chose to travel conventional means.

They managed to escape the airport without incident but when they were trying to get back into the Tower it was a mob scene. Happy was showing signs of real stress and concern as he tried to make a path for them to walk, directing various security guards to erect barriers so they could part the crowd
of onlooker, fans, and media persons.

Rhodes and Tony took up positions on her left and right. As they walked through the crazy scene Darcy had a hard time understanding anything that was being yelled at them. Some teenagers were outright screaming like they were the Beatles. There were a few people there booing them, but they were drowned out by the barrage of questions being hurled at them by the reporter people.

Darcy had to keep her head down just to avoid the camera flashes which threatened to blind them all. She relied on Tony and Rhodes and Happy in front to lead them to safety….not that Darcy was afraid, she was after all Asgardian, but still.

"DARCY!"
"HOW DOES IT FEEL TO BE FIRED FROM THE AVENGERS?"
"DO YOU HATE CAPTAIN AMERICA?"
"WE LOVE YOU DARCY, PLEASE JUST ANSWER ONE QUESTION!"
"WHY DOES SCARLET WITCH HATE YOU?"
"DARCY! OVER HERE! SMILE! SMILE PRETTY HONEY!"
"WHEN ARE YOU AND TONY GETTING MARRIED?"
"WHERE’S THOR? IS HE REALLY YOUR BROTHER?"
"ARE YOU PREGNANT?"
"ARE YOU AND TONY AND THE IRON PATRIOT A NEW SUPERHERO TEAM?"
"WHY HAVEN’T YOU MADE ANY COMMENT ON WHAT CAPTAIN AMERICA SAID ABOUT YOU?"
"ARE YOU REALLY A DIVA? DON’T YOU FEEL BAD ABOUT THE PEOPLE THAT DIED BECAUSE YOU WERE A DIVA AND GOT YOURSELF FIRED?"

It was a circus. And Darcy felt like the biggest circus freak in the world.

"This is insane.” Rhodes commented once they finally made it inside the building.

"For real.” Darcy agreed in a dazed voice.

"We should make a comment.” Tony affirmed. Darcy squeezed his hand and shook her head.

"No.”

"This is…it’s only going to get worse Darce!” Tony argued.

"No.”

“….Fine.” Tony conceded with a pout. He hooked his arm in hers and sighed dramatically, “Let’s go upstairs and have a couple drinks then.”

"Or maybe a dozen?” Rhodes joked. Darcy laughed and intertwined her free arm in Rhodey’s.

"That sounds good to me.” Darcy agreed.

Over the course of the night Rhodes and Tony explained what they had been doing in Washington for the past week or so.

Apparently 117 countries had come together to try to take on the Avengers, armed only with
paperwork. Darcy gave it a fifty/fifty shot of working.

“Why would they sign it though? I mean, why would Steve sign it?” Darcy questioned.

“Because he’ll have no choice.” Rhodes said with a shrug.

“Because the Avengers can’t continue to operate like a private organization without any accountability.” Tony elaborated.

Rhodes added, “Because they won’t let him be Captain America anymore if he doesn’t. He went into a foreign country and killed innocent civilians. To think that won’t create political blow back is insanity.”

Darcy took a long sip of her drink grumbling under her breath, “They didn’t kill anyone on purpose.”

“Whether the Avengers like it or not, this thing is going forward.” Rhodes stated adamantly, “And in four days General Ross is coming to meet with the team and we will all present the Accords to them. You’re invited to attend by the way. After that meeting, the team will have a few days to sign or resign from the Avengers completely.”

Darcy’s face paled, “No!”

“Honey,” Tony said placating, “It’s going to be fine.”

“But what if Wanda takes over everyone’s mind?! This general, you, Rhodes she could end up controlling you all! We can’t meet with them in person.” Darcy fretted and in her worry she accidently shattered the glass in her hand.

She opened her hand and let the shards fall to the floor. Rhodes who had been lounging comfortably on the sofa opposite her and Tony sat up and ran to go get a broom. Tony gently opened her palm and rid her off the pieces of glass that persisted in sticking to her palm, brushing them away with careful fingers.

“Darcy, it’ll be fine.” Tony assured her in a soft voice.

“You don’t know that.” Darcy argued weakly. Tony picked up her hand and kissed her palm where, if she were still mortal she would be bleeding profusely from. Tony then brought her unharmed hand and placed it on his cheek.

“I talked to Stephen and Wong this morning. They made a breakthrough with researching chaos magic and how to fight it. They found a way to repel her influence, some sort of magic fuck-off-bags we’ll have wear around our necks. Wong was complaining how they smell and Stephen said it would take another day at least to complete enough of them to protect—”

Darcy cut Tony off with a yell of frustration, “NO!”

“Darcy.”

“No!” Darcy repeated, “I can’t risk you. I can’t—I won’t risk you. You can’t come.”

“Kid, you know that’s not going to work.” Tony admonished. Darcy felt tears welling up behind her eyes. She shook her head and let out a strangled sob.

Tony lurched forward and pulled her into his lap. She wrapped her arms around his shoulders and
buried her face in his neck, silent tears rolling down her cheek as she pressed her lips together tightly suppressing any other sounds that threatened to escape.

“Baby. God, don’t cry.” Tony whispered, he slid his hand beneath her shirt so he could rub the skin of her lower back in comforting circles, “Please don’t do this.”

“I love you.” Darcy declared in a tight voice, “I can’t risk—”

“It’s not up to you.” Tony said seriously. Darcy pulled away from Tony’s shoulder and pulled his face to hers in a desperate kiss. Tony responded just as passionately and she fisted her hands into his silk shirt. When they parted both of them were gasping but Darcy was still silently crying.

“Talk to me.” Tony prompted.

“I don’t want her to take you away from me.” Darcy confessed, “I couldn’t—I won’t survive if she turns you against me and makes you hate me.”

“Never,” Tony cupped her cheeks and kissed her sweetly, “She could never.”

Darcy turned away, breaking the hold he had on her face, “You can’t—she could. She might.”

“No. She won’t.” Tony asserted, “I know you’re clinging to the hope that Wanda’s been slowly mentally poisoning the team against you this whole time, which is why they’ve all been such assholes but…I think part of the reason they turned on you so quickly is because their feelings for you—about you there’s a kernel of truth in how their acting towards you now.”

“Sam and Steve wouldn’t—they…” Darcy let out a strangled sob. It was true. She had asked Friday to compile a video of all the times Wanda used her powers visibly in the new Avengers facility. She had been hoping to catch Wanda exerting her influence over the others over a longer period of time, something to explain how quickly everyone seemingly was turned against her. But…Friday only found three instances where Wanda (maybe) unknowingly influenced the other team members mentally.

Granted those three times were right before or after she and Wanda interacted or the team member in question brought Darcy up in conversation, but still, only three times? Darcy held out hope there were other times that Friday just wasn’t able to capture on video, but she knew it was a longshot.

Hoping and wishing and praying seemed like silly things to do given the circumstances, but she did them anyway. She had to believe there was a reason Steve was so quick to distrust her, why Natasha seemed to genuinely hate her, to keep Sam from defending her…. She hoped that all the nasty things Steve and the others had said to or about her were all coming from Wanda and her influence but the truth was that might not be true. It could just be them and how they really feel about her.

“Wanda will never be able to turn me against you or make me hate you, because I love you.” Tony declared. “No secret jealousy, no deep seeded inferiority complex, I don’t fear you, I trust you. And I just…I love you.” Darcy felt Tony’s words wash over her like a bucket of warm water. Soothing her inner fears and anxiety like only Tony could.

“There’s nothing inside me for Wanda to twist up and use against you.”

Darcy bit her bottom lip, she didn’t know if that was true. She did love and trust Tony and what he was saying…she just wasn’t sure that’s what Wanda was doing. If that was how it really worked…

Tony picked up her hand and kissed her palm again. “Do you believe me?”
“Yes.” Darcy answered automatically, her eyes on her own hand in Tony’s grip.

“I love you Darcy. We’re going to get through this. We’ll break the connection, isolate Wanda somehow and...and everything will turn out ok—everything will turn out the way it’s supposed to.”

An idea struck Darcy like a bolt of lightning. She stared at her hand and the crystal healing ring on it.

“You have to wear my ring.” Darcy declared. Tony’s brows knit together as he eyed the ring that she was hurriedly taking off her finger.

“It’s real swell that you want to go steady and all Darce, but I don’t think that pink thing is really my style.” Darcy grabbed Tony’s hand and whispered a spell to make the band on the ring adjust to a larger size. She jammed the jewelry onto Tony’s ring finger only for Tony to let out a noise of pain. She pulled it off and slid it on his thinner pointer finger.

She grabbed the crown off her head next and put it on Tony’s. “This too.”

“Darcy no.” Tony frowned, “This is yours. Frigga gave it to you; I know what it means to you--”

“I think it’s why Wanda’s mental powers have never worked on me. You have to wear it.”

“Darcy--”

“No!” Darcy yelled, her voice belying her panic, “We don’t know if the warding spell bag things will work. Stephen and Wong...we’ve been researching and researching and this is--chaos magic is so very difficult to deal with. To control, to fight, to channel. It’s why it’s taken them this long to come up with any kind of deterrent.” Darcy stroked her hands down the sides of Tony’s face, “This crown will protect you even if the warding spell bags fail.”

She stopped any effort to hide her inner anxiety from appearing on her face. She let her naked worry and fear and love for Tony to rise to the surface as she plead, “Please wear it. Just...just wear it. Stephen can enchant it to be invisible but, I need to know you’ll be—I need to know she can’t hurt you.”


They began to make out pretty heavily and when Darcy reached for Tony’s belt buckle a loud sneeze broke the moment and made her freeze.

As one, she and Tony turned their heads to see Rhodes standing in the doorway awkwardly, broom and dust bin in hand. He gave a little wave.

“Didn’t want to interrupt, but...”

Tony sighed, “Way to cock block buddy.”

Rhodes smirked evilly, “Always happy to return the favor.”

Darcy let her head fall onto Tony’s chest to hide her blush.

Her supporters were out in droves. The media was reporting an unexpected number in people
flooding philanthropic organizations looking to help.

The TV was showing scores of young men and women on line with outrageously dyed hair, all waiting for the chance to do a little good in their communities. It was a heady feeling to see the effect of her influence and popularity. However since the people following in her footsteps were all volunteering at local shelters, soup kitchens, and other charitable organizations, Darcy didn’t really mind being considered a role model or a ‘trend setter’.

Still, it was impossible to leave the Tower and just get a cup of coffee or pastry from the local bakery without being followed and photographed or mobbed. So, the next day she, Tony, and Rhodes returned to the Bleeker street Sanctum via sling ring. Avoiding the media circus and getting back to the real important stuff they were set to tackle in the near future.

Stephen and Wong explained how the spell bags would (hopefully) block out Wanda’s mental influence. Rhodes left with a few of the bags, intent on meeting with General Ross and explaining why he would have to wear the smelly herb pouch around his neck, along with a few other select people who were VIP enough to receive the rare and expensive warding charms.

Wong continued to make more warding spell bags while she and her boyfriend’s retreated to the training room. She asked Stephen to spar with her magically. She didn’t anticipate a big showdown in the board room of the Avengers facility but as she was supposed to attend the big Sokovia Accords meeting along with Rhodes and Tony and the team, there was always a possibility that Wanda could become incensed by her presence and start a fight.

At first, Stephen kicked her ass…like a lot. He was so far advanced magically than she remembered or would ever be, he easily bested her. Only when Tony started heckling her, did Darcy start to use her magic in conjunction with her strength. Using spells and her shield to draw Stephen in close so she could throw him around physically. Finally giving her an edge and allowing her to hold her own against the talented sorcerer.

When Stephen was good and tired of being slammed into the ground, Tony offered to put on the armor and go a couple rounds with her. Darcy declined. Somehow she just knew sparring with Tony in the armor would become unbearably messy and wall explode-y.

The three of them retired to the bedroom and enjoyed some sexy three way alone time. When they were done having fun Stephen slipped out to go help Wong, while she and Tony remained in bed and got a little rest.

She dreamed of a man in a black literal cat suit running around after James Barnes. She saw the same man confront a nerdy looking guy in the snow. She dreamt of Ragnarok and Asgard burning. She dreamt of Wanda fighting an alien defending a damaged Vision on what looked like a vaguely European street. Then of the nothingness and the feeling of being undone. And then she woke up.

Her eyes snapped open and her heart started to pound as she stared up at an unfamiliar ceiling, instantly aware that she was not in the same place she had fallen asleep.

“Don’t freak out. Just me.” A gravelly voice called out from across the room. Darcy sat up on her elbows to see James Barnes in a tight white tank and slouchy jeans pouring himself a cup of coffee. He had a rag over one shoulder and he threw it towards the sink before turning and saluting her with the cup of coffee in his hand. He gave her a small smile as he greeted, “Hello again.”

Darcy stared at him dumbly, still a little sleep addled. James continued, “Nice surprise waking up to
such a gorgeous naked woman first thing in the morning. Do that often enough and you could give a fella ideas.”

Darcy lifted the threadbare blanket that covered her to look down at herself. He was right, she was naked.

With a sigh she fell back against the bed and concentrated on conjuring an outfit onto her body. She wanted something soft and fluffy, like her rainbow sweater. She was embarrassed to have teleported naked again so she felt like being more covered up, which meant jeans. Lastly she imagined the shoes and matching accessories her outfit would need to appear complete. She pictured each item in her mind, where they were (in her infinity bag which she left slung over a chair in the Sanctum’s library) and the clothing materialized on her body. Looking down she smiled at her effort. She lifted the blanket and sat up revealing her new attire.

James let out an impressed whistle, “Nifty trick.”

Darcy felt her hair and frowned at the rats nest that it had turned into during her sleep. She imagined it straight and combed and rainbow and grey and half up and she felt her hair instantly start to tingle as it untangled and transformed to her will.

She shot James a triumphant, but tired smile.

James raised his eyebrows and then a goofy smile spread across his lips, “I like what you’ve done with your hair. Your whole outfit is really nice; I mean I miss the ball gown and all the bare skin, but this get up makes me think of candy floss and Coney Island…. I like it.”

The mention of Coney Island brought to mind Brooklyn, which made her think of Steve. Darcy frowned at him. Blurting out her thoughts without thinking Darcy announced, “Captain America is being mind controlled by a witch.”

James choked on his coffee and sputtered, “What?!”

“Black Widow, Falcon, and Vision too. There all being mind controlled by Wanda Maximoff aka Scarlet Witch. Aka a woman who hates me and blames me for stuff that may or may not be my fault.” Darcy sat up and touched the strap across her chest reassuringly, she concentrated hard on the last purse she used and conjured her sword from that bag to the one she wore now.

She and Tony knew she would eventually fall asleep and teleport and they had been making plans. All of her bags had been enchanted using her infinity spell and filled to the brim with all sorts of things that could be useful if she somehow woke up next to an unfriendly person. Like Wanda or one of the mind controlled Avengers. Each bag held the same items like first aid kits, bottled water, flash grenades, snacks, emergency floatation boats, extra underwear and clothes for all seasons, an axe, fire extinguisher, tools, various weapons, electronics, SOS beacon, handcuffs, zip ties, smoke bombs, a bear trap, flare gun, cell phones + charger, ham radio, books and crossword puzzles. Basically everything she might possibly need should be stranded...anywhere. The only things she couldn’t duplicate was her magic sword Dragon Fang, the enhanced healing crystal ring, and Frigga’s crown. Two items of which she had already bestowed unto Tony.

“What? Steve—I saw the news and I thought it was weird but, how--why?!” James stalked towards her demanding answers. Darcy ignored him and conjured her phone into her hand from the bag that was now strapped across her chest.

“Hold on let me just text Tony and Stephen to let them know I’m alright.” Darcy typed a quick text letting the boys know where she was.
Tony texted back saying, ‘Find out where you are and Stephen will come get you. Bring Barnes. Might be useful in turning Steve away from the Dark Side.’ Darcy looked up at James and asked, “Where are we?”

James looked nearly purple in the face as he stalked over to her and stood looming over her demanding, “What the hell happened to Steve?!”

Darcy kept her face blank as she answered, “He took a witches side over mine. Now, where are we exactly?”

“Romania. Why does this witch hate you and what does she blame you for?” James answered.

Darcy texted their location and got a text back that read, ‘Can we get a little specific more than the country Darce?’ Darcy looked up from her phone back to James who was waiting patiently for her answer, “Where in Romania?”

“Bucharest.”

“Town, street number?” Darcy prompted. James looked annoyed and held his hand out for her phone. Darcy handed it over and he quickly texted their exact location to the guys.

“Now tell me, why does this witch have it out for you?” James demanded as he handed her phone back.

Darcy shrugged, “Dunno, she just…she just hates me.”

When she looked up she found James staring at her with this soft expression. He ran a finger over her brightly colored hair, murmuring “I can’t imagine anyone hating you.”

Darcy’s expression softened and she realized she hadn’t really greeted James yet. “Hi.”

James smiled at her crookedly, “Hi. Good morning.”

James let his fingertips ghost across her jaw and then lower lip. Her quick intake of breath parted her lips and she thought James would take advantage and do something weird like stick his finger in her mouth, but instead he leant down and angled his head with obvious intent to kiss her. Darcy tilted her head and puckered her lips slightly in anticipation. Their almost kiss was interrupted a second later when a portal appeared in the room and Stephen walked through. Darcy stumbled back away from James awkwardly as she thumbed at Stephen and muttered, “My ride.”

Stephen bypassed James entirely and put his hands on her shoulders, rubbing up and down her arms reassuringly, he asked “You alright?”

“Fine.”

Stephen nodded to the portal, “Let’s go.”

“Wait.” James called, “We--You just got here.”

Darcy took a step closer to Stephen as the wizard put an arm around her shoulders and shifted her closer to his side. “Like I said Steve and the Avengers are being mind controlled by a witch. So I’m kind of busy. Also there’s a big meeting about some government sponsoring superhero stuff and… shit’s going down, I don’t really have time to hang out with you. Sorry.”

Darcy stared at James with apologetic eyes willing him to understand. James left her to appraise
Stephen as Stephen narrowed his eyes at James in return.

“You’re Bucky Barnes.” Stephen stated like it was a fact and a question.

“Yes sir.” James straightened, his eyes swept up and down Stephen taking in his attire, his eyes lingered on the cloak that fluttered in the non-existent breeze. “Who are you?”

“Dr. Stephen Strange.” Neither man reached forth a hand to shake.

“He’s my wizard boyfriend.” Darcy explained, “My other billionaire genius boyfriend, Tony, said we should invite you to come with us but I’m not sure that’s a good idea.”

“I want to come.” James asserted with a nod.

“James, I’m not asking you to come.” Darcy tried to argue but James ignored as he moved around the apartment quickly, lifting up some boards he retrieved a few notebooks and shoved them into a bag along with a few scraps of clothing.

Darcy persisted, “You really don’t have to come. You’re not obligated in any way. I know you’re still working on..recovering, you don’t have to worry, Steve and the others will be fine. We have a plan.”

“We have part of a plan.” Stephen corrected. Darcy glared up at him and swatted his stomach.

“Shut up. Steve is his best friend and we all know this whole situation is going to end in some kind of fighty-fight confrontation or worse! And we shouldn’t be pitting him and Steve against each other.” Darcy groused.

James approached them with his bag slung over one shoulder, “You’re right. He’s my best friend. And you’re not pitting me against him; you’re giving me the opportunity to save him.”

Darcy suppressed the urge to quiver or swoon. James’s earnestness combined with his intensity was such a turn on. She blew out a breath of air and then rubbed at her forehead muttering to herself, “Well, how can I fucking argue with that.”

“You can’t.” James jibed, “Might as well just lead the way.”

Stephen ushered her forward and the three of them went to the portal.

“Make sure to clench your butt cheeks as you walk through.” Stephen advised making her snort.

“What?” James questioned even as he followed them through.

When they got back Darcy was immediately rushed by Tony and practically tackled. He grabbed her and tugged her out of Stephen’s one armed hold and into his. He hugged her tightly and breathed the question “You okay?” into her ear. But he then robbed her of the chance to answer him as he pulled back and kissed her squarely on the mouth.

Darcy kissed him back and sort of forgot about everything. Kissing Tony and Stephen had become something of an escape. Being with them felt so good and helped her shut down the part of her brain that was constantly worrying about Wanda, the people she loved, the space threat, Ragnarok, how and where Bruce was, the fact that Odin was on Earth without his memory, the nothingness, the media/public turning against the Avengers, the media/public putting her on a pedestal following her
charity work and firing from the Avengers from which she could only fall and ultimately disappoint.

Shutting her eyes and focusing on Tony she let out a sign. The man in her arms gave her such relief, if only for the moment. When he pulled back he brushed a stray strand of hair away from her face then cupped her face. In a serious tone he announced, “We should sleep in handcuffs.”

“What?” James questioned but Darcy merely raised an eyebrow at Tony’s suggestion.

The look on his face was smirking and lighthearted but she could see the panic in his eyes. In a tight voice Tony joked, “You keep disappearing on me in the middle of the night and I’m not gonna spring for the fur lined ones.”

Darcy didn’t respond verbally. She knew whatever she said would just force Tony to make a snappy comment so he could hide his fear and worry in front of the others around them. She drew Tony back to her, pressing her lips against his softly. Kissing him as gently as she could, she sought to reassure him of her presence and love and apologize for leaving and worrying him all at the same time.

She wasn’t sure all that she intended translated through the kiss, but when they broke apart Tony seemed more fortified than before so she counted it as a win.

“I love you.” She stated with conviction.

“I know.” Tony jeered with a sweet smile that belied his snarky words.

“Tony,” Darcy said as she stepped away from him, she gestured to James with a sweeping hand. “Meet James Barnes.”

James hesitated for a second but then offered Tony his flesh hand, “Actually I think I want to go by Bucky.”

“Yeah?” Darcy questioned.

“Yeah. I think it’s time. Feels right.” Bucky claimed with a small smile.

Tony did her pound by not refusing to shake Bucky’s hand. He did however weird everyone out by dropping the former Winter Soldier’s flesh hand quickly only to pick up his metal one and…feel him up?

Running his hands up and down the cool metal Tony took Bucky’s hand in his own and flexed the other man’s fingers, his eyes alight with mechanically minded curiosity.

“I’d love to get my hands on your arm. Maybe open it up and see how those bastards got this thing to tick--” Tony let Bucky pull his arm out of his grip, only pouting a little as Bucky dropped his bag and pulled out a sweatshirt.

As he pulled the long sleeved shirt on and zipped it, Bucky demurred, “Maybe some other time.”

“Tony,” Darcy said in a chastising tone, “Don’t be an invasive weirdo.”

Tony allowed her to pull him away from James. He turned on her to argue petulantly, “I’m a man of science Darcy! You bring me a defrosted centenarian with a metal arm, I’m gonna want to get my hands on it and take it apart so I can design a better one.”

“You brag about the weirdest things.” Stephen commented coolly making her laugh.
“Stark?...Tony Stark right?” Bucky said tentatively. His face was a mask, Darcy couldn’t get any sense of how he was feeling.

Tony nodded, “Yeah.”

“I…knew your father.” Bucky claimed hesitantly, “Didn’t I?”

Tony twitched his mustache, “Yeah. He uh, mentioned you and Cap once or twice. Said you were a good guy. He was sad you were dead.”

“I’m--” Bucky swallowed thickly, his eyes downcast, “I’m sorry he’s dead too.”

“Thanks.” Tony said briskly, “Moving on.” Tony turned to her and raised a brow, “We should go get Bucky bear fitted with a warding spell bag. Don’t you think?”

“A what?”

Stephen stepped closer to her and Tony creating a unintentional united front for Bucky to face. “The chaos witches magic is very strong and potent. In preparation of our meeting with her tomorrow we’ve been manufacturing warding spell bag to be worn around the neck which will keep her from influencing the wearers mind.”

“And you plan on using those things to get close enough to kill this evil witch?” Bucky asked with a serious expression.

“Yes.”

“She’s not evil.”

“No.”

Darcy whipped her head from side to side to cast pointed glares at each of her boyfriends for their responses, “No.” Darcy clarified, “She’s not evil.”

“Arguments could be made.” Tony remarked offhandedly.

Darcy ground her teeth before answering, “She’s not evil. She’s just scary powerful and emotionally unstable and not in control of the nearly god like powers she’s in possession of.”

There was a beat of silence as all the men in the room stared at her with various looks of shock and disbelief. Stephen shook off his reaction first shrugging, “Good and evil are relative terms anyway. Darcy’s right, it’s a more complicated issue than something so black and white.”

“So what’s the plan?” Bucky asked. Darcy shrugged.

Stephen moved over to Bucky’s side, entreating, “Why don’t I find you a room so you can stow your belongings?”

Bucky stubbornly stood his ground not allowing himself to be ushered away. “I don’t need a room. I need to know what the plan is to rescue Steve.”

Bucky stared at her intensely but Darcy didn’t know what to say. She didn’t know how to tell him there plan basically consisted of trying to talk Wanda down when they all got together for the big Accords meeting. At least, that was her plan.

Darcy looked to Tony and he must have seen the distress on her face. She, Stephen, Tony, and Wong were all divided on how to handle the Wanda situation. She wanted to try to talk to the
woman, explain what she was doing to the others unconsciously, and hopefully solve the whole thing peacefully. None of the men thought that would work.

Stephen and Wong wanted to use magic to bind her powers or suppress her abilities, possibly permanently if they were to let her go free and let her continue to live as a free woman. They alternatively suggested kidnapping the young witch/invite her to Karma-Taj where she could train and learn how to master her powers alongside Masters of the Mystic Arts. They even proposed using a spell to confine her to the grounds, like the one the Ancient One used on her when she was staying there and didn’t want to teleport away unexpectedly.

Tony wanted them all to work together to subdue her and the team physically. Quickly and sneakily Tony wanted to take Wanda out, either outright killing the witch or burying her in a black sight prison so dark and deep that she would never be heard or seen from again. Tony theorized that by separating Wanda from the others they might sever the connection and free everyone from the witch’s influence. Freeing the rest of the team to sign the Accords and reform/restructure the team according to the new guidelines he, Rhodes, and lot of heads of state had worked on drafting. Darcy was against killing Wanda completely and she wasn’t sure throwing Wanda in prison was the best plan considering she knew they would eventually need Wanda to be on their side when they faced the mysterious space threat.

So basically, Darcy had convinced all of them to try her way first, as it was the most peaceful and didn’t threaten to destroy any future relationship they might have with the powerful witch. If she failed, they would have to decide on which plan B they would go with, but until she failed Darcy refused to talk about it any further.

“Darcy?” Bucky said bringing her out of her thoughts.

“Hmm?”

Tony put a hand in the shiny pocket of her jeans giving her butt a gentle squeeze, “Daydreaming?”

Darcy smiled at him and removed her hand from her posterior, choosing instead to interlace their fingers rather than shove the PDA in Stephen and Bucky’s faces. “Sorry, I was just thinking.”

Stephen spoke clinically, “We don’t know if warding spell bags will work for certain, but I’m confident they will disrupt any--”

“It’ll work.” Darcy interrupted. “They have to.”

Bucky got a thoughtful look on his face, “Is it proximity that makes this witch so dangerous?” He gestured with his chin at the bag by his feet, “I’ve got a sniper rifle--”

“No.” Darcy said strongly, “We can’t kill her.”


“It’s not a half bad plan.” Tony said making a noise of consideration, “He is a famous sharp shooter. Hell he’s basically the spy world’s boogey man.”

“Tony.” Darcy said warningly.

Tony shrugged his shoulders, “I know you shot down the idea of piloting a drone or sending out an empty suit after her but...”

She and Tony stared each other down. Darcy’s mouth taking on a pinched look she tried to convey
with her eyes how much she did not want to fight about Wanda’s fate any further. Tony broke first.

With an affable smile he turned to face Bucky as he slid an arm around her shoulders he divulged, “There’s a big meeting. Darcy’s going to try to talk some sense in the witch. That’s plan A.”

“What’s plan B?” Bucky said quickly. Tony looked over at her expectantly.

Darcy frowned and folded her arms grumpily, “Signs are hazy, ask again later.”

Bucky’s faced screwed up with determination, “If this witch is as out of control as you say. Powerful enough to take over the will of the most stubborn man I’ve ever met, you may have no choice but to consider more lethal means of subduing her.”

She could tell from Bucky’s tone he thought she was weak or soft. She shrugged off Tony’s arm and took a step forward so she could poke Bucky in the chest, “No.”

“Darcy be reasonable--”

She poked him again, “I’m a badass magical hybrid alien princess. I am no damsel in distress or wilting flower who can’t handle the thought of blood and gore and killing. I understand the threat Wanda poses more than anyone here. But the answer is still no. We can’t risk killing her.”

“What not?”

Darcy stared into Bucky’s eyes and tried not to blink as she warned, “Because something is coming to Earth and if she isn’t around to help us fight it, we might be doomed.”

Over her shoulder Tony added, “Did she tell you about the whole seeing the future thing? Otherwise what she just said might not make much sense.”

In the end Bucky agreed to follow her lead and let her try talking to Wanda before contemplating any other options. Stephen offered to show Bucky the warding spell bags and introduce him to Wong, she and Tony peeled off for most of the afternoon so Tony could go the Accords with her. They went through the document page by page. Darcy ended up highlighting some parts and changing the language of some sentences that she found too restrictive or vague for her liking.

“We’ll take these suggestions to Ross tomorrow. Minor changes like these shouldn’t be too hard to get approved before the big signing.” Tony admitted.

After spending the whole afternoon sitting and staring at legal documents, the two of them were tempted to try to escape the Sanctum for a while and go out somewhere. Stephen advised against it though, rightfully sighting the increased publicity they’d been experiencing lately.

“Besides,” Stephen chided, “You wouldn’t abandon your guest here with only myself and Wong for company. Would you?”

The five of them shared an awkward to moderately enjoyable dinner. Stephen cooked so everything was delicious and healthy. Wong was a wonderful buffer and breaker of awkward silences considering Tony and Stephen were acting slightly territorial over her and Bucky was very quiet and
They all broke off at the end of the night to retire and Darcy volunteered to show Bucky to his room. They stopped to talk at the door before turning in for the night.

“This is you.” Darcy announced.

“Thanks.” Bucky said. He seemed to be debating something internally but Darcy didn’t know what he was thinking and she felt a little awkward asking about it. She did it anyway.

“Are you okay?”

Bucky’s eyes snapped up to hers. “Yeah. I’m fine.”

Darcy stared at him for along moment, “You don’t seem fine. Or, well, not-not fine. Just…off?” Darcy blushed, “Not that I really know you well enough to know when you’re off or on or—”

With an amused smile Bucky gently tapped her shin with his foot, “Be careful of that foot in your mouth, your shoes look awful pretty wouldn’t want you to ruin them.”

Darcy blushed but ducted her head to hide it. “Shuddup.” She playfully groused.

“I was just…thinking. About how we, I, how I kissed you. And meeting your boyfriend, both of them its got my gears turning.” Bucky explained.

Darcy’s eyes shot open wide. She jerked her head up to look at Bucky. He ran a hand through his hair and affected a chagrined expression.

“Feel kind of bad about what I said to you, what we—I, I shouldn’t have kissed ya.”

Darcy’s eyebrows raised in surprise. She would have bet a million dollars Bucky was thinking about the Wanda situation and Steve and the whole mess they found themselves in. It was shocking to learn that what was at the forefront of his mind was…her.

“It’s fine.” Darcy said dismissively, “It’s not like I hid it from them. They know about it.”

“Oh, I know that.” Bucky said, “They made it very clear that they know how I feel about you.”

Darcy smiled coyly, “And how do you feel about me?”

Bucky stared at her with this ‘deer in headlight’s’ expression. He swallowed thickly before answering, “You know.”

Darcy stepped closer until they were chest to chest and she needed to tilt her head up to maintain eye contact. “Spell it out for me?” She requested.

Bucky’s metal hand slipped around her waist, securing them together. His flesh hand slid up her back slowly, then he moved to trace his fingertips down her cheek and over her bottom lip. “I shouldn’t be doing this.”

“Why not?” Darcy challenged. She slid her own hands around his waist, locking her hands together behind his back.

“You already got your man…men.” Bucky fretted, “Better men than me.”

Darcy squeezed him, “Aw Buckeroo, don’t go selling yourself short.”
Bucky’s hand palmed her cheek and she leant into the touch. “Stupid. Shouldn’t be preoccupied with—we should be focusing on the mission. Saving Steve and defeating this evil witch, that’s what matters. Not…”

Darcy turned her head so she could press a kiss to Bucky’s palm. She turned back to stare at his face and in a breathy voice she questioned, “Not what?”

Bucky cursed before gripping her face once again in his hand. As he leant down to kiss her, Darcy surged up onto her tip toes to meet him. The kiss was spectacular and passionate.

When Bucky’s metal hand flexed at her hip, squeezing harshly she let out a gasp. As her mouth opened Bucky slipped his tongue inside. Darcy pressed the length of her body up against Bucky’s as she tried to get even closer to him.

Bucky broke away from her with a gasp of his own. Darcy took advantage, moving her kiss to just under his jaw and then down to his neck.

“We should stop.” Bucky breathily whispered.

“Why?” Darcy questioned as she tried her hardest to give Bucky a hickey.

Bucky let out a groan and then both his hands were on her ass and she was being hoisted in the air. Darcy wrapped her legs around his waist and Bucky threaded both hands in her hair as he directed her lips back to his own.

They stayed locked together making out for a long time. When Darcy’s wandering hands slipped under Bucky’s shirt he dropped her onto the floor abruptly.

She caught herself landing wobbly on her feet, confused and annoyed Darcy glared up at Bucky’s flushed face. “What gives?”

“We can’t.” Bucky panted, “I’m..” He glanced down to his pants and Darcy saw how it tented in the front and she smiled.

“That is so not a problem.” Darcy chortled.

Bucky ran a hand through his hair and opened the door they had been kissing against, “I’m not—I don’t…I’m sorry. Good night.”

Bucky closed the door in her face and Darcy was frozen. She was very confused. She knocked lightly on the door, “Bucky?”

Through the door Bucky shouted, “I’m sorry I can’t explain. I just—I need some space. I need to be alone to handle—I need time. Please? Darcy I don’t--”

“Oh...” Darcy called out, “Don’t worry.” She heaved a disappointed sigh, “I don’t understand but if you say you need space or time or want to be alone or just want to stop for...whatever reason. Than that’s what we’ll do.”

“I’m sorry.” Bucky apologized sounding pained, “I don’t...I’m sorry.”

Darcy leant her head against the wood, “Don’t be sorry. Just...don’t avoid me tomorrow?”

“Deal.” Bucky agreed sounding tired, “Couldn’t even if I wanted to.”

Darcy smiled at the wooden door that separated her and Bucky. With a goofy smile she kissed the
wood where she approximated Bucky to be behind the barrier. “Goodnight Bucky.”

“G’night Princess.” Bucky called out as she walked away.

When she turned the corner she jumped in shock as she ran into both Stephen and Tony. Her eyes widened in surprise and then narrowed in anger. In an accusatory tone she whisper-yelled at them, “Where you two weirdoes watching us the whole time?!”

“No.” Stephen denied as Tony nodded and confessed, “Totally.”

Stephen sent a glare at Tony. Tony just curled his lips into a sly smile, “Sooo. What do you think happened there?”

Tony tried to put his arm around her shoulders as they walked down the hall towards the master bedroom the three of them had been currently sharing since arriving at the Sanctum. “Performance issues?” Tony jeered, “Maybe he shot off too early? Or was about to?”

Darcy shoved Tony into the wall, “Don’t be mean.”

Tony shook off her annoyance and quickly got back into step with her and Stephen.

“Are you sure hooking up with the mentally damaged former assassin is the smartest decision?”

Stephen questioned in a neutral tone, his own insecurity barely peeking through. “I mean, you’re already dating Tony. How much more crazy can you handle?”

“You’re a dick.” Tony jeered flatly.

As they reached their room Darcy whipped around and wagged her finger at the men, “You don’t get to perv out and watch me make out with other people unless you let me know you’re there and me and the person I’m kissing consent to the watching. Otherwise you’re just acting like some weird sparkly stalking vampire from a young adult novel.”

“But--”

“We didn’t intend--”

“No.” Darcy stomped her foot cutting off their protests, “I don’t know why Bucky reacted the way he did. Maybe Bucky himself doesn’t know. It’s not your place to speculate. We didn’t invite you to join us or watch and I don’t think Bucky would appreciate that kind of invasion of privacy.”

Tony looked put out but Stephen appeared appropriately chastised.

“How are we supposed to vet your new beau if you won’t let us--” Darcy leant forward and put her hand over Tony’s mouth stopping his words.

“Bucky’s not my new beau. Until we, he and I, discuss what kind of relationship, if any, we want to engage in, you two knuckleheads stay out of it. If…” She removed her hand and leant back against the door to their room with a sigh, “If we want to…get together on a more…official basis, you will of course be notified and included in the conversation. But while things are still…developing, just…god, I don’t know.”

Darcy crossed her arms in front of her chest, “I feel like this bullshit romance drama is going to explode everything and I don’t want it to. Bucky was right when he said we shouldn’t be focusing on these trivial romantic entanglements, we have an evil witch on the loose and a mind controlled super hero team to contend with. My love life really pales in comparison.”
She felt herself getting a little teary but tried to hold back. Her voice came out sounding strangled, “I have no idea what I’m doing with my life, but I have a feeling I’m doing everything wrong.”

“Darcy, no.”
“Fuck kid.”

Both Stephen and Tony moved forward to hug her as one. With one arm around Tony and one around Stephen, each of their heads on either side of her own, she couldn’t help but doubt herself, their relationship, the things she had done, the plan they had come up with to deal Wanda, her contributions and acceptance of the Accords. Everything. She felt so unsure and everything in her life was so very important.

“I’m scared.” Darcy confessed as the first of her tears started to fall. “I’m so scared I’m screwing everything up.”

“No.” Tony denied flatly as if unable to accept a world where Darcy was anything but amazing, “No, you’re not screwing anything up. That’s my job.”

“You’re doing the best you can Darcy.” Stephen soothed, “That’s all that can be asked of you.”

“I’m just scared and worried and paranoid and terrified all the time and I don’t feel like a hero, I feel like--” Darcy’s words fell apart as she started to cry in earnest.

Stephen broke away from her embrace and she curled in on Tony who cuddled her close and kissed her hair and cheek as he rubbed circles on her back. Stephen opened the door and then he and Tony lead her inside. They all sat down on the end of the bed, Tony on one side and Stephen on the other. And Darcy, pathetically crying hunched over with her face in her hands, in the middle.

Tony and Stephen sat by her side, providing physical comfort as she cried herself out. When her tears petered out and her sobs turned into hiccups, she sagged against Stephen and Tony disappeared for a minute. Stephenstroked her hair silently. Tony returned with a warm washcloth, he wiped her face and then ran the damp towel over the back of her neck and then up and down her arms.

When he was done she had completely stopped crying. Crouched in front of her Tony gave her wistful look, “Feel better.”

Darcy shrugged, “Kinda.”

Tony tossed the cloth in the direction of the bathroom, not caring to look to see if it made it to its target. “You’re going to be okay.” Tony advised.

“You’re under a lot of pressure.” Stephen added, his hand rubbing large circles on her back. “It’s okay. You’re okay. If you need to cry, break down. It’s okay. That’s normal.”

“I’m--” Tony’s eyes flickered over to Stephen for a second as he corrected himself, “We’re here for you honey.”

Stephen nodded agreeing.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Tony asked. He dropped from his crouching position down onto his knees, kneeling before her. Darcy put a hand out and cupped his cheek, internally she worried about his knees but knew if she said anything Tony would get weird, so she held her tongue.

“I’ve been thinking.” Darcy started, “I…you know how I asked Friday to compile footage of Wanda using her powers?”
They nodded encouragingly, “Well, after that idea proved fruitless, I started thinking about my visions. Friday helped me make a list of them all, and if I have any others I’m going to add them to the list, you both are welcome to read it or—whatever. Point is, I noticed something about my visions.”

“What? A pattern?”
“Did you figure out who the mysterious space threat is?”

“No.” Darcy frowned, “I noticed that I’m never in my visions.”

“What?”

“Except the one where I…where I get unmade and ripped apart into little bits and abandoned in the place that is nowhere and comprised of nothingness…” Just talking about the vision brought it to the forefront of her mind and she became lost in the memory of the dream. Tony brought her back to the present with a little squeeze on her knee.

“Darcy?”

Darcy shook her head, “Sorry…anyway, after listing all the visions I’ve ever had, Friday helped me looked for patterns and we categorized them into groups. Visions about humans, aliens, Asgardians. Visions about good things. Inconsequential things….bad things. Deadly things. We made a bunch of spreadsheets and stuff, and basically came to the conclusion that the only thing every one of my vision have in common is that I’m not in them.”

“Except the one where you are unmade.” Stephen murmured. Darcy nodded, “Except that one.”

“So?” Tony posed, “I don’t get it, what’s the big deal?”

“I…I’ve just been thinking that maybe there’s a reason.” Darcy ventured sounding timid.

“Don’t say it.” Tony plead as a look of dawning enlightenment washed over his face.

“What?” Stephen asked.

Darcy locked eyes with Tony, he knew her so well and it made perfect sense to her that he would know where her train of thought would lead her given this information.

“She thinks she’s not supposed to interfere.” Tony alleged, “She thinks she’s the variable that’s creating these doomsday scenarios.”

“Not exactly.” Darcy tilted her head from side to side, making her neck crack loudly. “Close.” She acknowledged, “But not exactly.”

“What then?” Tony prompted sounding slightly hostile.

“What if I’m not in the visions because that’s how the world is supposed to be? What if all my visions were meant to be shared but that’s it. What if I’m not supposed to interfere? Just reveal what is to be and then let those in the visions handle things?”

“Bullshit.” Tony asserted.

“I don’t think that’s right Darcy. Those blessed with the sight—” Darcy shook her head cutting off Stephen.

“I know, I know it’s stupid. I know it’s just my…insecurities and bullshit paranoia getting to me
but…I feel responsible for all that’s happened. In my visions Wanda is a member of the team, she isn’t out of control she’s a fierce warrior witch and I can’t help but feel that everything I’ve done, just by…being here has altered her future beyond repair.” Darcy tugged on a strand of her hair before wrapping it around her finger, “There are so many theories about my power. Queen Frigga thought my ability was a curse and I would be unable to change the future. I asked Friday to list other possibilities and she came up with hundreds of answers. My ability could be a mutation, a magically activated mutation but still a mutation. Some far off being could be beaming these visions into my head. I could have a brain tumor and the visions are just a side effect. I could be seeing another parallel earth where I’m dead and that’s why the visions never feature me except that one--”

“Darcy!” Tony said her name sharply. She was becoming worked up again. She closed her eyes and leant into Stephen who pulled her into a one armed hug. Her eyes trained on Tony as he spoke with authority, “Darcy it doesn’t matter why you have the visions.”

“I know but--”

“You feel responsible for the way Wanda has acted, I get that, but you shouldn’t. What Wanda has chosen to do, what we might have to do to her is not your fault.” Tony asserted.

Darcy’s face crumpled and a lone tear made its way down her cheek, “But then why do I feel so scared for her and of her and guilty?” Her voice cracked on the word ‘guilty’ and Darcy clasped a hand over her mouth to muffle her sob.

“Guilty?” Stephen repeated, “That’s what this is all about?”

Tony nodded at Stephen before turning to her and taking her hands into his own.

“Honey, you have such a good heart. You are so good. You are—off topic a bit but the doc and I both know you’re way too good for us, and thank you, by the way, for slumming it with us.” Darcy couldn’t resist letting a little laugh out. Tony smiled encouragingly and his eyes narrowed with determination, “There is no doubt in my mind that you are one of the best people I’ve ever met. You are not the reason bad things happen in the world. You are not the reason people act like animals or assholes. You are not responsible for other people feeling jealous of you. You can’t control how people react to you or what they feel. That’s on them. Not you.”

Stephen kissed her temple, “Unburden yourself Darcy. The weight of the world and the cosmos is not upon your shoulders.” Stephen turned her chin to force her to look him in the eyes, there was a twinkle when he asserted, “You are just not powerful enough to be the sole reason for all the bad things in the world.”

Darcy smiled reluctantly. “I know.”

“There’s a difference between knowing something and believing it.” Tony cautioned.

Darcy cast her eyes down to her lap where Tony still held her hands, “I can’t change the way I feel though. I’m sorry for crying.”

“Don’t be sorry.” Stephen chided.

“I can’t help but feel overwhelmed sometimes. When I think about it. All of it. The micro things, the macro things. For me the ‘big picture’ encompasses the fate of the entire galaxy. And I…I do. I feel burdened. And guilty and responsible. And it’s irrational. I know. …I know intellectually I’m not in control I’m not the cause of all the strife we’ve had to deal with but, sometimes it feels like I am.”

Tony wrinkled his brow as he prompted, “But you know that’s not true.”
“I know.”

Stephen pet her hair, “It’s okay to feel like that sometimes though. If you need to cry about it, that’s okay too.”

“We’re here for you.” Tony swore, he brought their joined hands to his lips and kissed one set of knuckle and then the next. “I’ll always be here for you Darcy.”

Darcy let her head fall heavily upon Stephen’s shoulder. “Me too.” Stephen boasted quietly.

“I know.” She said in a small voice.

They sat there for a couple minutes, silently frozen in contemplation. Darcy broke them out of their stupor when she let out a loud and long yawn. Tony unlaced their fingers and stood up.

“C’mon. Let’s take a bath in that giant pool the Doc calls a tub and then hit the hay.” Tony cajoled.

Stephen helped her stand up. “Okay.” Darcy acquiesced. She let her lovers lead her into the bathroom where Tony ran the bath while Stephen set about helping her shed her clothing. Tony added bubbles and two bath bombs. Darcy watched the spheres fizz and dissolve as Tony and Stephen got naked as well.

The bath water was almost too hot and Darcy hissed as they stepped in. She curled her toes as she forced herself to kneel and submerge the entirety of her lower half into the steaming water.

Darcy expected things to turn sex-y as they usually did when the three of them got naked and together, but neither man took the activity in that direction. Tony encouraged Darcy to lay back against his front, using him as a human pillow, while Stephen used a fluffy pink loofa to soap up her skin.

When Stephen helped her sit up so Tony could lather up her hair, Darcy felt herself becoming drowsy and she let her eyes fall shut. Stephen kissed her lips chastely before hugging her, allowing her to rest her head on his shoulder while Tony cleaned her hair.

She must have fallen asleep because the next thing she knew, the three of them were under the covers and side by side. Still naked, with all their limbs intertwined. Tony and Stephen each lay on their side, their hands stroking various body parts of hers gently. Darcy felt Tony’s fingers in her left hand and Stephen’s in her right, but there was something else there.

Confused Darcy asked, “What’s around my wrist?”

Tony lifted their joined hands into the air so she could see that Tony had followed through with his threat and handcuffed them together with fuzzy handcuffs. Stephen jingled his own attached hand on her other side.

“You’re crazy.” Darcy accused with a smile.

Tony leant forward and kissed her, “Only about you.”

The three of them exchanged a few kisses but didn’t take anything farther than that. She was too tired and emotionally exhausted. They fell asleep holding hands, the metal bracelet’s around their wrists assuring that even if they let go of each other during the night, they’d remained connected.
Darcy’s outfit for doing manual labor charity with ‘Luke’ and ‘Danny’

Darcy’s outfit for reading to children and volunteering at the Library
Darcy’s outfit when she wakes up with Bucky (after arriving naked and successfully conjuring clothes onto her body from far away)
Chapter End Notes

References:
Children's book= "A Bad Case Of Stripes" by David Shannon
Luke Cage and Danny Rand = power man and iron fist, but more from comic canon
than movie canon, which I feel okay with given they will NEVER be featured in MCU
verse.

So let me know what you thought.
Chapter 39 – Joe Borrson

Darcy awoke with a thud and two twin moans on either side of her. She had woken up on the floor often enough to know that was where she was now. She put a hand to her head, her head felt as if it was being squeezed in a vice. The clanking of the metal against her wrist, along with the resistance of lifting the dead weight of another person’s arm told her she wasn’t alone at least. After a few seconds the unbearable pressure eased and she was left with a massive headache. Darcy let out a groan. Waking up in pain really was the worst.

“Ow.”

“It’s cold, stop hogging the blanket Doc!”

“Quiet.” Darcy ordered in a whisper, “We teleported and I don’t know where to.”

A loud snore alleviated some of her concerns. It was loud and indicated the person they had intruded on was in a deep sleep.

“We are also naked.” Stephen drawled with an extended yawn. His voice so casual Darcy wanted to throttle him.

“Shit.” Darcy cursed as she jolted upwards dragging Stephen and Tony’s arms with her as she moved. Her eyes went wide as she took in their surroundings looking for threats or witnesses, even though she could still hear the steady sounds of their unknown bed companion sleeping not five feet away.

They were in what looked like a fancy dorm room. The person who slept soundly lay on a twin sized bed. There was a dresser, a desk and chair but not much else in the room by way of personal affects. There was only one door and it was on the other side of the room, on the other side of the sleeping
person. There was however a large square window, the gauzy white curtains obscured the early hints of dawn that were just starting to peek through.

“Where are we?” Darcy thought aloud. Stephen sat up looking alert, while Tony remained curled up on the floor. Stephen got up on his knees to peek at the person who slept in the bed beside them, as he was the closest. Darcy turned to Tony and poked him in the stomach.

“Wake up Tony.” She urged quietly, “We are at defcon 5 here!”

Tony batted at her hand and whined, “I don’t play polo with amphibians Mr. President.”

“Tony!” Darcy whispered yelled as she shook his chest, “Wake up!”

Tony frowned but pulled himself up with her help. “No.” He complained even as he wiped a hand over his face and obeyed her desperate plea, “I’m tired let me sleep.”

A tug on her wrist pulled her attention back to Stephen. He was standing up, his hands in position to use his ever present sling ring to portal them all home. Darcy followed his lead and got shakily onto her own feet, pulling Tony up with her.

Darcy gasped when she was finally able see the face of the figure she had teleported to. “Odin.”

“That’s Odin?” Tony asked sounding unimpressed.


There was a beat as they all looked down at the man before them. He was just as old as the last time she’d seen him, but even in sleep he had a long drawn on frown that marred his face and belied the heavy burden a King must carry. He looked more unkempt than last time though. His hair was stringy and looked dirty. His beard had bits of stuff in it and looked stained with green in one spot. His golden eye patch was gone and replaced with a cloth bandage that looked old and well used.

Odin turned in his sleep, putting his back to them and let out a fart as he did so.

“Are you sure?” Tony asked skeptically, “This guy just doesn’t strike me as the ‘kingly’ type.”

Darcy frowned, “When Loki deposed him and took his place he had to stick Odin somewhere for safe keeping. He chose Earth.”

“Of course he did.” Stephen grumped under his breath.

Darcy continued in a low tone, “Loki confessed to me that he messed with his dad’s mind when he dropped him off here. Did something to him that would hopefully give Loki ample time to impersonate and enjoy being the King in his stead.”

“Does that mean you know where we are?” Tony asked.

“Still in New York.” Darcy answered, “I—Loki, he told me the name of the place…I can’t think of it right now. But it’s on the tip of my tongue.”

“Doesn’t matter.” Stephen dismissed.

Tony shook their handcuffed hands, “Good to know my kinky plan worked. However I’d like my autonomy back now.”
With a flick of his wrist Stephen released both set of shackles that had kept them bound through her nighttime teleportation.

“Thanks Doc.” Tony remarked flippanently as he bent down and scooped up the cuffs.

The sound of a hand on the doorknob nearly gave Darcy a heart attack. Tony froze bent over and Stephen began the motions to open a portal.

“Ahh.” Darcy quietly startled.

As the door opened Darcy’s thoughts raced. Visions of scandalous headlines danced in her head. She threw her hands in the air and conjured the first thing that came to mind that was large enough to obscure the three of them and the portal that Stephen was summoning.

A giant, round, and bright yellow life raft appeared within her grasp. Already inflated to its full capacity it blocked them from sight from the now opened door.

“What in the world?” A feminine voice said softly.

Tony and Stephen gave her twin looks that clearly said ‘WTF’. Darcy shrugged and mouthed the words, ‘I panicked’.

With another wave of her hand in a blink Darcy was dressed once again. Her two companions however remained as naked as the day they were born. She didn’t know how to magically dress up other people, only herself.

Feet were approaching their position. Stephen’s portal lay within the confines of her life raft.

“Portal out.” Darcy ordered. Stephen didn’t hesitate to obey walking through immediately.

“What about you?” Tony asked at the same time the feminine voice called out, “Hello?”

Darcy pushed him forward through the portal whispering, “Trust me!”

Just as the woman who entered the room got close enough to peek around her giant inflatable life raft, the portal shut behind Stephen and Tony. Leaving her alone, holding a giant life raft in the room of a sleeping man at like…? 6 am? Which was totally not suspicious. Right?

“Hi.” Darcy chirped as she held the raft upright, trying to do so in a ‘casual’ manner. As if such a thing was possible.

The middle aged woman in scrubs looked at her with befuddlement, “Uhhh. Can I help you?”

Before she could think of a lie, Odin woke up abruptly shouting, “Not unless I kill you first!”

Odin sat up and held his hand out as if he held an invisible sword. Darcy stood frozen as Odin cast his one good eye around the room. She tensed as his gaze landed on her, the inflatable raft, and presumably his nurse.

“You’re not Jörmungandr.” Odin said sounding almost disappointed. “She’ll be so cross to discover we’ve no fight to tend to this morn.”

“You mean the ouroboros legend is real?” Darcy asked, excitement leaking into her voice. The nurses head snapped in her direction.

“You speak his language?”
“You mean English?” Darcy asked.

“You speak English as well? Oh thank god.” The woman declared.

Seemingly uncaring of the nurse or Darcy’s presence Odin threw off his covers and got out of bed to stretch. Darcy hurriedly covered her eyes with her hand as Odin apparently slept naked no matter which realm he was in.

“She things never change.” Darcy muttered to herself.

“Mr. Borrson!” The nurse cried out as Odin made his way for the door. “You need clothes. CLOTHES!”

Odin ignored the nurse and strode out of the door declaring, “Bring me the drink you call coff-eee. I must relieve myself and then you shall bath me you twittering gnat.”

After an awkward but highly amused mimed argument the nurse convinced Odin to return to his room and put some clothes on. While Odin was attended to by his nurse, Darcy was taken to the facilities main office to meet with the management.

They were in a retirement home for ‘active’ seniors called Shady Oaks. The staff was confused by her arrival so early in the morning, not to mention her toting along an inflatable raft, but they were ultimately happy she was there and claiming to be Odin’s daughter. Only they knew him as Joe Borrson.

Their joy at her arrival was in part due to the facilities eminent destruction and partly due to the fact that Odin was not the easiest of seniors to understand or handle. He had apparently been hard to communicate with due to his stubbornness, penchant for nudity and violent outbursts, and nonspeaking English ways. The staff had been using translation apps and miming to talk with Odin.

Odin himself was speaking a mixture of northern Germanic languages. Switching sometimes mid-sentence from Icelandic to Norwegian, from Danish to Swedish languages with only a sprinkling of English thrown in from time to time. Darcy understanding his speech even with this language barrier helped convince the staff that she was related to the old man.

Darcy translated without knowing that was what she was doing; she only heard Odin’s words as English. It was a funny thing that she’d have to bring up to Thor or Loki the next time she saw them. Or when or if Odin ever regained his right mind.

A quick call to Tony for some falsified documents and lawyer wizardry and her arrival was considered a ‘blessing’ by all. Her reputation as Darcy Lewis famous heroine, former Avenger, and philanthropist also seemed to help grease the wheels of acceptance.

She was told that Odin had been checked into the facility by her brother ‘Lyle’. ‘Lyle’ had paid for three years of services in advance but the place was shutting down and the staff was at a lost when all their attempts to contact Odin’s next of kin failed. The manager told her they were all worried he would have ended up homeless as so many of the elderly did when they were discarded and forgotten about by their busy family members.

Darcy arranged for the facility to agree to care for Odin until the place shut down for good, which wouldn’t happen for a few more weeks. The staff seemed easy to appease her once they realized
they would be caring for a celebrity by proxy.

Odin himself was almost unrecognizable. Besides the mild disagreement about proper communal attire and the brief mention of the giant snake monster he was nothing like the all father she had met back on Asgard.

“B14.”

“Blasted old coot you sunk my last battleship!”

Odin and another elderly resident were playing together in a quiet nook of the social room. As she approached she couldn’t help but chuckle as Odin leant back in his chair with a smug grin on his face, watching amusedly as his opponent grabbed up his cane and slowly started walking away.

Odin called out, “Do you not want to play again?”

“Bah!” The other man exclaimed, not bothering to turn around to address Odin’s challenge.

Darcy put her hand on the back of the chair recently vacated. “Can I play?”

Odin stared at her thoughtfully, his eyes ran slowly up and down her outfit, his gaze settling on her face. There was no trace of recognition.

“I don’t know you.” Odin stated.

Darcy sat down anyway conceding, “No. Not really.”

Odin and Darcy went about setting up the game board to play again. Suspicion colored his voice as he said, “You told the servants you are my kin but I do not recognize you.”

“You understand what they say?” Darcy inquired truly curious how far Loki’s mind alterations went.

Odin looked insulted, “Of course I can understand them! They are the ones who do not speak my language or so it seems. I care not of this though, they do their work and we have found ways to communicate despite their dullness.”

“They aren’t servants.” Darcy said plainly, “They work here. For money. They don’t do it for free.”

Odin rolled his eye, “They serve a function. That function is to care for the needs of their elders. They serve, therefore they are servants.”

“Do you remember your son? Lyle? The one who left you here?” Darcy asked.

Odin ignored her as he studied his game board, when he looked up his face neither looked annoyed or curious. “Let’s begin. I’ll go first. D5.”

Darcy looked down at her own board. “Hit.”

Odin’s face lit up. “Aha!” He picked up one of the red pegs and put it on his board. He looked up at her eagerly, “Your turn girl.”

Darcy frowned, “I—“ She stopped herself, she wanted to press for more information about Loki.
What he remembered, but she felt that wasn’t the way to get Odin to talk. So she instead glanced down at her game board and said, “A1.”

Odin’s happy face fell into a pout. “Hit.”

Darcy smiled as she ducted her head and put one of the red pegs on her board.

“D4.” Odin said. Darcy smirked, “Miss.”

Odin’s pout deepened. Darcy picked a spot on the board at random, not wanting to put Odin in a bad mood by making him lose the game, “E6.”

“Miss!” Odin cheered, “D3.”

“Hit.” Darcy acknowledged, “E5.”

“Miss!” Odin announced with a grin. He seemed in better spirits the longer they played. After a few more rounds where Darcy did her best not to win she segued into the line of questioning she had abandoned earlier.

“Speaking of missing.” Darcy said casually, “Do you miss your sons? Do you not wish they would visit?...Do you remember you have two sons? Not just one.”

Odin looked at her flatly, “I am no simpleton girl.”

Darcy smiled gently, “No. You’re not.”

“Do not think because I take temporary refuge in this house of convalescence that I do not have my wits about me. My mind is muddled but still sharp. These idiot peasants don’t understand me, but I understand them. They think me difficult and dense. Praise the gods for their own stupidity or I would have fear that they would plot against me.”

“No one thinks you’re stupid. Not the staff and not me.” Darcy assured, “I understand you.”

She reached out to put her hand on Odin’s arm but he looked at her hand on his skin as if she were made of slime and she quickly retracted her appendage. “Sorry.”

Odin looked at her with distain, “Do not act familiar girl. We are not kin, no matter the falsehoods you are pedaling to the peasants. I look at you and I know you for what you are.”

Darcy narrowed her eyes, “Why do you call them peasants? Are you a king of some sort?”

“Don’t be daft girl. I am no more a king than you are a queen. But I am a man of breeding and wealth. And I will not suffer the idiocy of others below my station.” Odin stated snootily.

She was grateful Odin didn’t press for them to continue on with the game. He instead put his elbows on the table and steepled his fingers looking at her contemplatively. “You say you are my daughter but you are not. Why? Do you think yourself clever? Have you some sort of scheme to steal my fortune through some sort of ill conceived plot?”

Darcy shook her head, “No. I’m not after your money.”

“Why then? Why claim to be blood of mine when you are so obviously not.” Darcy narrowed her eyes at the implied insult.

“It’s complicated.” Darcy volunteered after a minute.
“…you look like her.” Odin said his voice sounding distant, “But you remind me of my wife more. Not in appearance, but in….”

There was a quality in his voice that was…honest and real. The look on his face had her thinking the spell was breaking down.

“Odin?” Darcy asked quietly. His eyes didn’t flicker up at the mention of his name. She tried jogging his memory again quietly stating “Frigga? Thor. Loki.”

“What?” Odin questioned with a frown, “What are you going on about girl?”

He shook his head and the far off expression disappeared from his face. He fixed her with a cold stare, “Girl. Why are you here? Tell me now. And tell me true.”

“We’ve met.” Darcy said as her mind raced trying to think of which was better. Let Odin remain in his fantasy world thinking himself a mortal man named Joe Borrson. Or break the news he was an alien King who’s son removed him from the throne so he could finally have the chance to rule?

“I’ve no memory of meeting you before this day.” Odin declared with the thump of his fist on the table.

Darcy stared at him quietly. He stared back, seemingly understanding she was coming to some decision.

“I know your sons.” Darcy started, “I love them. And they love me.”

Odin’s expression darkened but he held his tongue and let her continue.

“They call me sister. Your wife, bless her soul, was so kind and generous to me…I wish she really had been my mother.” There was a wistful quality to her voice as memories of Frigga ran through her mind, “When she died…I was beside myself. I was heartbroken. For myself and your sons and… you. Your love for her was obvious to those who saw you together and the loss….”

Darcy sniffed and wiped away a tear that threatened to spill down her cheek. She forced herself to cough and sit up straighter. “The point is,” She summarized, “After her death it was made clear to me that your wife, Frigga, thought of me as a daughter. She loved me. And I loved her. Your family adopted me and to them I feel kinship even though we are not bound by blood as you pointed out.”

“You said something about a point.” Odin prompted.

Darcy shrugged, “I’m here because I have magic that I can’t control and it takes me to places and people at random.”

Odin jerked his head back, “Fantastical nonsense.”

“And yet nonetheless true.” Darcy interjected before Odin could start to rant, “I’m here because I love your family and think of them as my own. I’m here because of them.”

“That is not an answer.” Odin argued, “That is outrageous drivel!”

Darcy closed her eyes and concentrated on her hair. She imagined her long brown locks braiding themselves up into a complicated fat braid, she imagined the color leaching from her hair only to be replaced with colorful but subtle rainbow colors with a base color of metallic pink.

Like with the children she hoped the display of bright colors and fantastic feats of hair styling would
do the trick in convincing Odin that magic was real and she wasn’t lying.

When she opened her eyes she saw the look of awe disappear from Odin’s face as he hurried to affect an expression of indifference. “A magic trick any street magician could perform I imagine.” Odin claimed, “Hardly proof of your tall tale and brazen allegations.”

Darcy huffed out annoyed and crossed her arms in front of her chest. “You really are a stubborn old man, you know that?”

“I know that my daughter rots in the prison I built for her, no matter your claim you are not she and to do so is an insult.” Odin spat angrily.

“What daughter?” Darcy asked, “I didn’t know you had a daughter?”

“I have no daughter!” Odin cried, “That’s what we’ve been discussing this whole time you daft girl! You are not of my line. You are no heir to any throne imaginary or otherwise! You are a commoner. A peasant like all the rest of them. You are not of my blood. Not of my kin. You are a wretch and I wish for you to be out of my sight!”

Odin knocked the game boards off the table dramatically and stood with his chest heaving as he looked down on her with an expression of anger and pain. “Get out! LEAVE! GO!”

Darcy stood and met Odin’s gaze head on trying to flinch as he bellowed, “You are not my beloved’s daughter! You have no place among my children nor claim to all that I leave to them! Just the sight of you reminds me---GO! GET OUT!”

“Calm down.” Darcy said commandingly.

Odin’s face reddened, he grabbed the table and flipped it over. The nurses scattered, shuffling patients out of the room as they complained about ‘missing the show’.

“YOU DARE ORDER ME? ME?!” Odin thundered, “YOU MORTAL GIRL!”

Odin reached out and grabbed hold of her shoulders and began shaking her, “You speak of things you know not! You lie and conceal the truth from me. I WILL NOT SUFFER THE BILE THAT FLOWS FROM YOUR MOUTH ANY LONGER!”

Darcy brought her hands up and pushed away Odin’s arms knocking the man off balance with her strength. Then she shoved him back into the chair he had been sitting in before he started his royal temper tantrum. Thinking of Tony she summoned the crown she had bequeathed to him in her desperation to save him from Wanda’s mind controlling ways.

The object appeared in her hands and before Odin could utter a word she slammed the thing down on his head.

Odin reached up to grab her hands that held the diadem securely to his head, he made to push her off but after a few seconds he stopped. He held on to her wrists instead, clutching her close.

Pain, confusion, despair, grief, loss, sorrow, sadness, rage, joy, fatigue, doubt, and then finally regret. She could read his feeling easily as they played across Odin’s face. Darcy felt the stirrings of sympathy for the old man.

“Girl.” Odin gasped.

“Odin.” Darcy stated.
His eye flickered up to hers as he said “Yes.”

He let go of her hands slowly and Darcy removed her own as it became apparent that Odin would not try to remove the magically enchanted ‘mind clearing’ diadem that she had put upon his head. He nodded once, his voice once again filled with the gravitas of an immortal nearly all powerful ‘King of Kings’ as he confirmed, “I am Odin….King of Asgard.”

Darcy smiled weakly at the man, “Welcome back.”

Odin looked around at the room as if he was seeing it for the first time.

“Loki chose a quaint prison.” His eyes looked said as he said, “Perhaps a kinder one than I deserve.”

“Speaking of Loki,” Darcy ventured, “You’re not going to…kill him or anything? It’s really not his—okay it totally was his fault, but he didn’t want to hurt you or anything. He just…wanted you out of the way.”

Odin ducked his head and smiled, “He always was my most ambitious son.”

“So you’re not mad?” Darcy asked with a hopeful tone. In truth she had a ‘oh shit’ moment the second Odin seemed to regain his senses. She had acted instinctually; restoring Odin’s mind and memories had not been her intention. He had just gotten so angry that she wanted to calm him down without kicking his ass. Not that she actually believed she could ever accomplish such a task even against a memory distorted Odin, but the whole crown thing really hadn’t been thought out. And now she couldn’t help but worry for Loki and the consequences she had inadvertently sped up.

Odin regarded her with an cool gaze, “I will not seek retribution against my son…Loki…” Odin sighed, “I made many mistakes in my long life. My love for my children—all my children—I was not the best father I think.”

Odin looked depressed, “Being known as the All Father is an irony I think only Loki could appreciate.”

Darcy let out a snort. Odin looked up at her and though he didn’t smile, his expression warmed. “You are Darcy.”

“I am.”

“Frigga loved you.” Odin said kindly, “And your concern for Loki’s fate tells me you have come to love my adopted son as you have my true born, Thor.”

Darcy shrugged, “I—when I first met Loki, he was disguised as you. I didn’t know, but he came to me later in a different disguise. We became friends. Then he tried to—you know what it doesn’t matter. In the end, we came to care for each other and now regard the other as family.”

Odin stood and looked down at her from his height with an unreadable expression. After a few seconds he put his hand on her shoulder and gently squeezed, “You are the chosen daughter of my wife. The chosen sister of sons Thor and Loki. I sense a change in you. You are not my kin, my blood, but you are more Asgardian than the last time we met.”

Darcy blushed, “Yeah. Um…Loki did a spell. Something to bring out the full potential or ancestral DNA or whatever in my blood that was part Asgardian.”

“And Vanir.” Odin added, “Like Frigga, you are of both.”
Darcy shrugged, not really sure what to say to that.

Odin removed his hand from her shoulder, he looked around at the room, “We are on Midgard.” He said it like it was a fact, but he was clearly asking a question.

“We are. This is senior facility.” Odin gave her a questioning look and so she elaborated, “A place where people are paid to care for old people when their family can’t or don’t know how to.”

“Oh.” Odin nodded understandingly. After a minute he said, “My treatment here has been fair, but all the same I would like to leave.”

Darcy nodded, “I think we can make that happen.”

Half an hour later found her and Odin walking along a quiet path in the park. She’d conjured up some sneakers and dropped her fancy heels into her infinity bag when they set out. Odin asked to go someplace where they could be around nature. Seeing as they were slap dab in the middle of one of the most densely populated cities in America, they really didn’t have many options and ended up in a nearby park.

It was a cloudy and overcast day. Not many people were out and Darcy thought that was for the best as it would mean pictures of her and Odin wouldn’t be all over the internet if they were lucky. Odin seemed content to walk around with her in silence and Darcy allowed this to persist even though she was dying to pepper the king with all manner of questions. Regarding the secret daughter he’d mentioned but she’d never heard of, what he planned to do next about Loki and Thor and Asgard, if she could have her diadem back….amongst other things.

Odin led them towards a pretty fountain that had a beautiful angel on a platform that partially covered figures of children under her taking refuge from the water she shielded them from. When Odin sat down on the edge of the fountain and removed his shoes to dip his feet into the water Darcy opened her mouth to tell him that wasn’t allowed but at the last second decided not to say anything.

She just sat down beside him and did the same.

They sat together staring at the beautiful statues that adorned the fountain for a while. Darcy allowed her mind to drift as the water flowed and trickled out creating white noise for her to focus on.

“I am old.” Odin announced suddenly breaking the silence. Darcy turned to stare at him slowly but his gaze remained fixed on the statue.

“I’m aware.” Darcy responded.

“Before Thor was born I was a warrior King. I conquered the nine realms. I fought many battles. Suffered great loss. Fell in love. Bore children. Established a lasting peace amongst the realms. And I ruled…for a very long, long time.” Odin turned to her, his one eye seeking to make contact with her own. “I was a good king.”

“Was?”

Odin ignored her, “I could have been a better man. A better father. A better king. But I also could have been worse….your Midgardian people called us Gods because they could not conceive of beings with such long life spans nor with such awesome power. Compared to the average
Midgardian I am a God. But Gods do not get tired. They do not feel despair or suffer grief. Gods can command death to return to them their lost loves. They can go back in time and change the fate of those whom they have loved dearly and failed so irrevocably. A true god, would not get old and die.”

Darcy felt a sense of foreboding settle over them. “What do you mean?”

“I am Odin. One of the oldest and most powerful beings in the cosmos and I am old. I am old and I will soon shuffle off this mortal coil.”

Darcy didn’t know what to say to that. She couldn’t help but think of Thor and Loki and the loss of their mother. If they were to lose their father as well….

“You are Asgardian Darcy Lewis.” Odin stated, seemingly changing the subject. He turned to her and put his hand over her heart, “I think I have it in me still to make it official.”

Darcy felt a searing pain spread throughout her body, the pain originated in the heart which Odin’s hand pressed against, entered her limbs and filled her head until all she felt, all she could sense was pain.

And then it stopped.

Darcy gasped, “What the hell?!”

Odin removed his hand and reached up to pluck the diadem off his head. “If I had warned you, it wouldn’t have hurt any less.”

Odin put the diadem on her head and Darcy felt a surge of adrenaline and… she was suddenly struck with a feeling of euphoria. It almost felt as if she was drunk or high.

“Whoa.” Darcy exclaimed. She put a hand on her head, and Odin put a hand on her arm counseling, “Steady girl. Breathe. Just breathe.”

Darcy did as he said and slowly the overwhelming feelings subsided. “What was that?”

“You are now my daughter.” Odin stated calmly. When Darcy’s jaw dropped and her eyes bugged out, Odin merely chuckled.

“Shut the fuck up.” Darcy cursed and Odin threw back his head and laughed for real.

“For truth,” Odin gasped, “You are a legitimate princess of Asgard now. Hence forth from this day you shall be known as Darcy Lewis-Odinsdottir.”

Darcy didn’t know if she liked that, the whole adoption without consent thing. But in reality she wasn’t exactly opposed to the idea, just baffled by the way he went about it. Darcy’s felt her face contort with confusion. “You just magically adopted me?” she asked for clarification.

Odin looked thoughtful for a beat then answered, “In the most basic of terms, yes.”

“No paperwork?”

“No.”

“No big ceremony?”

“No.”
“Bullshit.”

Odin’s laughter rang out and Darcy felt a smile lift to her own lips in response. When his amusement
died down Odin looked at her with a soft expression. “My dearest Frigga did confess her love for
you to me before her---before.”

“She was the best Queen I ever met.” Darcy said in a playful tone, trying not to let her emotions get
the best of her when reminiscing about the woman she would have called mother had she ever had
the chance.

“Indeed.” Odin nodded then turned his gaze back to the statue, “She would want it this way I think.”

The two of them stayed in the park for over an hour. Sitting side by side with the rightful King of
Asgard, now officially her adopted father, the cloudy skies overhead parted and the sun shone down
on them.

When Darcy asked Odin what he wanted to do next he claimed he wished to stay on Midgard for the
time being. He was content to remain on Midgard for the time being and let his son rule in his place.
As was the natural way of things after all. He held no ill will in his heart for Loki and what he had
done, and that was maybe the most shocking thing she’d learned all day.

When she offered Odin a place to stay back at the Sanctum, Odin refused.

“Darcy…daughter, my wife did not exaggerate your kindness. I have belittled you, your people, and
your home. Acted most base and yet you would welcome me into your home?” Darcy gave a little
shrug like it was no big deal and Odin gave her a tender if not a tad remorseful look, saying “Frigga
chose well when she deemed you worthy of her affection.”

Awkwardly Darcy thanked the King for lack of a better response, “Er..thanks?”

Odin chuckled, but then he became more subdued. He stared over her shoulder into the distance as
he spoke, “I would leave you now. Please be assured that your place on Asgard is secure with or
without Loki’s theatrics. Fate knows I count you as kin, for better or worse you are of Asgard now
and forever.”

“Gee whiz. Don’t make it sound too ominous. All the other girls and boys will get jealous.” Darcy
joked.

Odin directed his attention back to her, his lips twitched but he didn’t smile, “I will walk the Earth for
a while. You will be able to find me if you need me, but I doubt you will before I am gone.” Odin’s
gaze flickered down to the tank which was now revealed by the jacket she had discarded along with
her shoes and bag. The cheap tank top was tucked into her fancy dress pants and helped balance the
expensive look by adding a dash of ‘personality’ or so she thought.

With a mirthful grin Odin complimented, “I like your shirt by the way.”

When Darcy looked down to observe the shirt she had picked out in a hopes of jogging Odin’s
memory she felt the flutter of magic around her and when she looked up, Odin was gone.

Darcy stood there blinking at the empty air in front of her.

“Goodbye.” She called out to the man who was already gone. And with that she gathered her things
and started walking.
Darcy’s Outfit

Darcy’s Distraction
The Fountain is in Bethesda Park NYC

Info Lifted from Wikipedia: Jörmungandr (Old Norse: Jǫrmungandr, pronounced [ˈjɔrmunɡャndr], meaning "huge monster"[1]), also known as the Midgard (World) Serpent is a sea serpent, the middle
child of the giantess Angrboða and Loki. According to the Prose Edda, Odin took Loki's three children by Angrboða—the wolf Fenrir, Hel, and Jörmungandr—and tossed Jörmungandr into the great ocean that encircles Midgard.[2] The serpent grew so large that he was able to surround the earth and grasp his own tail.[2] As a result, he received the name of the Midgard Serpent or World Serpent. When he releases his tail, Ragnarök will begin. Jörmungandr's arch-enemy is the thunder-god, Thor. It is an example of an ouroboros.

&

Odin is the son of Bestla and Borr and has two brothers, Vili and Vé.

***Also, Loki turned Odin into an ‘average joe’ + He is the son of Borr, hence the name Joe Borrson

*** Picture that Inspired the chapter in such a weird way=

Chapter End Notes

I was going to write more, but at the end of the Odin thing it felt like such a good place to end the chapter, but rest assured I'm currently writing the next chapter as I'm posting this.

I hope you like this cuz I wanted to address the whole Odin homeless man deleted scene thing, apparently before it is rumored that the soul stone was behind Odin's eyepatch!
But then I guess they finished writing Infinity War and someone called Taika Waititi and he had to change Ragnarok a bit...
So yeah, inspired by homeless Odin behind the set pictures, but doesn't address it all!

Hope you liked the chapter.
Chapter 40 - Darcy Lewis

Darcy was slowly coaxed back into consciousness by the sound of one her favorite childhood movies. She woke up chanting along with the characters on screen, “Treguna Medoides and Trecorum Satis Dee….”

Blinking Darcy’s eyes opened to half slits, drawn to the glowing screen in the darkened room like a moth to a flame. After a couple more seconds ticked by, Darcy’s rubbed the sleep out of her eye and focused on the movie that was playing.

“Hey,” Bucky greeted as he shifted her off of his arm subtly. She saw him flex and stretch his limb and she felt a little bad for probably making it go numb by sleeping on it, given it was his only flesh and blood arm. He looked so handsome in the flickering light. He was so warm, Darcy snuggled against him shifting until more comfortably situated against him. “You back with me?” Bucky asked with a sly grin.

Darcy grumbled something to the affirmative but let her eyes shift away from Bucky back to the screen. Catching sight of Angela Lansbury trying to enchant a pair of shoes through the power of spell and song she frowned.

“Aw man.” Darcy complained as she sat up more fully, “I missed the beautiful briny sea song.”

Bucky chuckled, “We could rewind.”

“No.” Darcy pouted momentarily, but when the singing stopped and Angela Lansbury repeated the spell unaccompanied, she smiled. When the singing started back up she began to sing along and move her head in time with the music, “I don’t want locomotiary substitution, Or remote intransitory convolution, Only one precise solution is the key, Substituary locomotion it must be.”

Earlier

When Darcy returned home to the Sanctum and explained what had transpired between her and Odin, her boyfriends didn’t really know how to respond due to the morose tone she used to describe such a happy turn of events. Wong who had enough wherewithal to give her a hug and congratulate her on gaining a new member of her family, cheered her slightly. He then excused himself to attend
some personal business back in Karma-Taj.

Following Wong’s actions Tony realized she was happy about the turn of events even if she was a little sad about how Odin just up and disappeared on her before she could really question him. Tony kissed her mirthfully declaring ‘mazel tov’, he too had to make a quick escape though he quietly explained that he was going to visit their ‘arachnid’ friend and offer the kid the magical warding spell bag… just in case the Avengers tried to use him against Darcy. Darcy made sure to give Tony the magical diadem back, making Tony promise once again to keep it on. Which Tony agreed to do when Stephen used a cloaking spell to make it appear invisible and then Tony left.

Stephen was too suspicious to offer such simple support and after shoving a granola bar into her hand he disappeared to do ‘research’ on what Odin did to her. He was concerned about what kind of magic was used on her to cause her such momentary pain and then prompt Odin to consider her ‘officially’ Asgardian royalty. Darcy knew she wouldn’t be able to convince him that he didn’t need to worry, she despite everything, trusted Odin. And she knew whatever he did to her wasn’t bad. Still, she was curious so she wished Stephen ‘good luck’ and let him be on his way.

Which left her and Bucky, alone. Bucky seemed at a loss as to what to say or do, while she was relaying her tale with the King of Asgard he had lurked in the background, almost hiding in the shadows. While her boyfriends said their goodbyes he crept closer and closer. Now that it was just her and him left, he stared at her with this…hesitancy. She didn’t have enough energy to reassure him that he didn’t need to hide when Stephen and Tony were around. He, despite all the touching and kissing that made up a substantial amount of their interactions, was her friend. She wanted to tell Bucky that he could ask questions, offer his own word of warning or opinion, but frankly she was drained by the day’s events. And so instead she said, “Come with me.”

Without really giving him a chance to argue she grabbed his flesh hand and tugged him along behind her as she made her way to the Sanctums entertainment room. Small though it may be it did have a decent selection of movies, a big flat screen, and a comfy couch. She maneuvered Bucky onto the velveteen seat and went to the wall of videos to pick out a DVD. She set up her chosen movie and then made to leave the room.

“Stay.” She ordered thoughtlessly over her shoulder. She paused in the doorway realizing how bitchy that sounded, she then turned around and explained, “I’m going to the kitchen to get some popcorn and a soda. I feeling exhausted and tomorrow’s the big meeting and everything is all crazy and I just…I need to chill out for a while. I’m too wired to sleep yet I think so I…”

Bucky looked at her with this…tender expression. Darcy extended her lower lip into an exaggerated pout, “I want company while I veg out and watch one of my favorite childhood movies. Will you hang with me?”

Bucky swallowed thickly but nodded. Darcy smiled brightly but there was a strain to it, she really was tired. “Cool. BRB.”

While Darcy waited for the popcorn to pop she used magic to change into an outfit that was less…everything. She conjured a pair of cute sweatpants and a sweatshirt onto her body along with some adorable slipper socks. She was done with wearing shoes for the day. She was done with underwire. And sexy panties. She conjured a pair of her big unsexy period panties, the ones with the warn out elastic waistband that made it feel as if she was almost wearing nothing at all. She returned her hair to its naturally brown and un-styled state, giving a shake it felt nice to have all of her curls fly about her face again.
She had been having a lot of fun with the styling spells, but all the hair coloring and fancy clothes made her feel like a different person sometimes. And that wasn’t a bad thing for the most part. With colored hair and stylish clothes that were fitted and structured to fit her form like a glove, she felt more confident and grown up. However occasionally she longed for the days where she put little to no effort in her appearance as she didn’t really have anyone to impress. In the old days she would dress for comfort first and fashion second. Oh how her life had changed…

She hadn’t forgotten the media’s initial reaction to the news of her and Tony’s coupling. She remembered the infotainment shows that compared her to Pepper and found her lacking. She remembered the trashy magazines that called her low class and fat and criticized every damn thing about her person. The tide may have turned, those same infotainment shows now sung her praises and trashy magazines gave tips so people could emulate her style, but her style hell her whole public image was something that was in part contrived. It was something she thoughtfully cultivated through her hair and clothes, the only real thing the public knew about her was that she liked to volunteer and who she was dating. And even then that wasn’t the whole story.

The point was, it was tiring thinking about her hair and her makeup and her outfit and whether her clothes flattered her figure or how they would photograph if she was unknowingly caught by paparazzi. It was a respite to wear a baggy sweatshirt and not give a shit.

Darcy walked over to the sink and turned on warm water. She removed her magically applied makeup the old fashioned way and let out a sigh when her face was blissfully naked. After her weird morning and afternoon with Odin, she kind of wanted to retreat from who she’d become in to who she used to be. If only for a little while.

Her life had been an almost constant upheaval of change and it was taxing and scary and so filled with uncertainly, good things too but… Really, she just wanted to sit in front of the TV and turn off her brain. Was that so much to ask?

She returned to the room to find Bucky exactly where she’d left him. It looked like he hadn’t moved a muscle. When he saw her he didn’t look fazed by her make-under, he gave her a quick nervous smile then his features returned to their neutral state. His eyes tracked her movement as she set the snacks down on the little coffee table in front of the sofa. She conjured a blanket from out of her infinity bag that’s she’d left lying on the kitchen counter and climbed onto the couch next to Bucky.

Bucky was in the corner of the L shaped sofa, his legs extended in front of him. He was barefooted and wearing sweats, not unlike her own, however his were tragically basic. She was tempted to run her hand through his long locks, sit on his lap and initiate a make out session but she suppressed the urge. Instead she snuggled up to his side getting as close as she could so they could share body heat and a blanket.

Bucky sat stiffly but didn’t protest as she lifted his arm and put it on the back of the sofa allowing her to nestle into his side. When she covered there lower halves with the warm blanket and finally got settled she realized the snacks she had brought were now out of reach. She frowned at the snacks and internally debated her wanting of popcorn verses her not wanting to move. A glance over to Bucky’s face saw him gritting his teeth and a look of discomfort marring his beautiful features.

“Is this okay?” Darcy asked with a tired look, sure he wasn’t complaining about her manhandling him and basically kidnapping him to hang out with her, but she wanted him to know he didn’t have to stay with her if he really didn’t want to. “I wasn’t lying before. You and me and the TV. That’s all
Bucky’s brows knit together, his voice hinted at his concern as he asked, “Are you okay?”

She ran a hand over her face and thought about her answer before speaking, “To be honest I’m feeling a little overwhelmed. A little stressed out and a little… I don’t know. Nostalgic? For the old days where I wasn’t a superhero and laying around watching TV and eating junk wasn’t a special occasion but a regular occurrence.”

“Maybe we should—do you need me to call Stephen or Tony? Do you need to talk with your boy-?” Bucky offered.

“No.” Darcy looked down at her hands as she shook her head. “I just want to… I just need some down time. A little mindless entertainment and some company?”

She peeked at Bucky from underneath her lashes. The concerned expression remained on his face but his body relaxed against the arm of the couch. Wordlessly Bucky moved his arm off the back of the couch and put it around her shoulders. Darcy allowed her head to pillow against his broad chest and relaxed her body into a comfortable slouch.

“Thanks.” Darcy said quietly. She conjured the remote into her hand from across the room where she had left it and hit play.

“So what are we watching?” Bucky asked as the movie started.

“Bedknobs and Broomsticks.” Darcy answered.

“What’s a bednob?” Bucky questioned with a little grin, Darcy shrugged in response.

“What’s it about?” Bucky picked up a lock of her hair and began to wind it around his finger.

“It’s an old movie where they use magic to fight the Nazis. But also there are cartoon lions and orphans and clothes dancing on their own.” Darcy chuckled, “You’re gonna love it.”

After finishing the movie ‘Bedknobs and Broomsticks’ they watched ‘The Worst Witch’ and ‘Pippi Longstocking’. After Darcy’s short nap she managed to stay awake for the rest of their movie marathon, they ordered pizza and then made a huge slightly disgusting ice cream sundae after.

They added almost everything to their triple ice cream flavored monstrosity, including chocolate and strawberry syrup, sprinkles, a whole banana, marshmallows, a dollop of peanut butter, a heavy coating of whipped cream, a few crushed Oreos, a pinch of salt (on accident), a spoonful of jam, a handful of strawberries, peanuts, chocolate chips and pretzels, a few slices of pineapple, a sprinkling of honey, maple syrup, and cayenne pepper, a crunch layer of coco puffs and frosted flakes, and a splash of root beer flavored whisky. They had fun making it and Bucky ate some of it, but his face made her reluctant to even try it.

During the movies Bucky seemed to enjoy himself however he was quiet during the films, unlike her. She’d seen the movies dozens of times so she didn’t mind talking over them. She gave Bucky background info like which movies the actors went on to do that she liked. Or when she first saw the movies and how many times. She told him quick stories how she would dressed up like certain characters for Halloween when she was a child and which movie she wrote a paper on in college for
which she received a D+ and how after arguing with the professor she got it bumped up to a B-
….and a restraining order.

Bucky asked a few questions here and there to clarify certain things, but for the most part he seemed
content to just be with her and absorb her running commentary with a bemused expression. Darcy
hoped that meant that the weirdness following their early ended make out session was behind them.

Truth was she was grateful that Bucky was willing to indulge her. Relaxing and doing a normal
activity seemed to reset some internal clock she didn’t know was off. And even though by the end of
it she was tired and sleepy once again, at the same time she felt recharged. Like in her soul? Or guts?
Something to that effect.

It was scary knowing that tomorrow she would have to face the Avengers once again. She was
terrified that the warding spell bags wouldn’t work and Wanda would be able to influence everyone
against her. She wasn’t worried about what Odin had done to her magically speaking but she was
curious…and maybe a little bit worried the longer the thought festered. She was sad about how the
press was turning on the Avengers and felt guilty for being happy that the public seemed to have
embraced her and taken her side even if none of the Avengers did. She was nervous that Steve in his
stubbornness would reject the government’s proposal and refuse to read the Accords let alone sign
them! She was terrified of her vision coming true, she knew the Accords had the potential to pit
Tony and Steve against each other and she was desperate to change things for the better.

But hanging out with Bucky? Laughing with him, singing along to familiar songs, and giving herself
permission to not think about all the serious stuff for a while? That helped make all those anxiety
feeling things seem…manageable. After all that he had been through Bucky was still there with her
right? He was still trying to live in the world and start a new life, and that was fucking scary as shit!
If he could do that she could handle her own challenges. Especially with Bucky, Stephen, Tony, and
all her allies, in her corner.

When they decided to turn in for the night, Darcy gave Bucky a chaste kiss on the cheek and
whispered her thanks. Darcy didn’t miss the smitten expression he sported as he walked away from
her towards his own room, but she didn’t comment on it either. She had a feeling that despite the
initial heat and forwardness he had displayed when they had first met overseas, if she were going to
woo Bucky Barnes it was going to have to be a slow burn.

When she went to bed neither Stephen nor Tony were around. She was a little disappointed but too
tired to really do anything about it other than spread out and take up as much room as possible in
petty retaliation. She fell asleep quickly as the day’s events caught up with her.

When she woke some time later as someone slid into bed beside her, the person had to move her limbs out
of their way to create a space for themselves and this jostled her awake.

“’llo?” She called out blearily. The person didn’t answer verbally at first; instead he kissed her lips
somewhat sloppily, the familiarity of the lips and the kiss betrayed his identity. Darcy sighed into his
mouth, “Tony.”

“Present.” Tony confirmed as he fell back against the pillows and dragged her body closer to his
own.

The taste of his mouth had her asking, “Are you drunk?”
Tony let out a laugh, “Just a nightcap. Nothing to worry about.”

Darcy felt like that was lie but decided not to call him on it. She instead snuggled into his arms, pillowing her head on his chest as she mumbled, “Love you.”

“Ditto.” Tony muttered. They both fell silent and soon thereafter, asleep.

Her dream began with Ragnarok and Darcy recoiled from the scene. To watch the majestic building be destroyed was a stab to her heart, even though Asgard was not her true home the vision still evoked the feeling of great loss within her. There was a shift and she saw Peter Parker, in his costume, performing a feat of strength she hadn’t thought him capable of. Before she could marvel at the image of the boy lifting heavy rubble, her vision shifted again. She saw Wanda and Pietro fighting back to back with the rest of the Avengers against the army of evil Ultron drones. Wanda shot jets of light at the robots causing them to explode. Then the scene shifted as a look of despair overtook Wanda’s face as she fell to her knees crying, she screamed and the power within her shot out evaporating all of the robots around her. She watched as Wanda, with different hair, shot into the sky using her magic like a jet pack to propel herself into the air. An ability Darcy didn’t know Wanda had. The Tesseract, which she had seen in pictures following the Chitauri attack, the Aether which had only been described to her, an orb she had never seen or heard of before, Vision naked save the stone in his forehead, the eye of Agamotto which she had actually touched with one finger while at Karma-Taj before being chased away by Wong and finally a mountain jutting up high from the barren landscape of an alien planet. Darcy realized in that moment that the images she was being shown were linked and important but she wasn’t sure how or why.

Before she could think more on that the scene shifted again, this time it was Wanda using her power against Vision. She looked pained as she raised her hand against Vision and a ball of scarlet light formed in her palm. The light shot out of her and at Vision, focusing on the stone in his head. It shifted again. Jarringly Wanda cried not in pain but in agony. Darcy felt her heart go out to the young woman. Wanda displayed such control as she held her hand out aloft towards Vision while she created a force field with her other, blocking a imposing purple figure wearing golden armor. And then there was an explosion and Darcy was back to dreaming of the nothingness.

She didn’t wake up when Stephen slipped into bed with them, but he must have because when she woke up in the morning he was passed out next to her. Tony woke her as he disentangled her limbs from his own. In a hushed tone he informed her, “Gotta pee.”

She let him go without fuss and instead turned to face Stephen instead. She was tempted to fall back asleep but something in Stephen’s peaceful expression called her attention instead. She studied his face as he slept, so relaxed and at ease. His face nor his person were ever so calm as when he slept. Stephen Strange was a type A personality and he had the weight of a lot of worlds on his shoulders, he did not typically do ‘chill’.

She really admired the way he carried himself even as he took on more and more responsibily via the Mystic Arts and all the superhero bullshit he got roped into through their association. He let her and Tony move into his home at a moment’s notice. He dropped almost everything to help her with her chaos witch problem. In fact he offered to attend the Accords meeting and sign the document, outing
himself even though he didn’t have to! All because he wanted to be there, for her.

Darcy ghosted her fingertips over the planes of Stephen’s cheek, then his lips. She propped her head up on her hand so she could gaze down at his face. Even with the gray that was creeping into his black hair, there was no getting around how handsome he was. With a grimace she traced the tender delicate skin below his eyes. The skin there was purpling a reflection the late nights Stephen had been keeping on her account. Nibbling on her lower lip she couldn’t help but worry that he was pushing himself too hard.

“You wanna pen?” Tony asked quietly, making her jump and turn to look at him over her shoulder. Tony raised a brow at her and smiled mischievously, “We could right something vulgar across his forehead. Maybe a draw a penis?...” Tony’s eyes lit up as he added, “An octo-penis.”

Darcy exhaled through her nose loudly but pressed her lips together so she wouldn’t laugh out loud.

“I’d prefer you didn’t.” Stephen said making Darcy snap her head back in his direction.

“You’re awake.” Darcy accused. Stephen turned his head in the direction of her voice but didn’t open his eyes.

In that flat sardonic tone of his Stephen questioned, “Disappointed? Should I remain the sleeping beauty and allow you to further admire my incapacitated form? I think I can remain still enough if you stop teasing me with all the face touching.”

Darcy pouted and rolled away from Stephen, but the good doctor sprang to life and captured her. He hugged her from behind, the whole of his front pressed tight up against her back. His chuckled as she squirmed trying to evade his hold. His hands squeezed and groped eliciting gasps from her but the sound of Tony’s laughter had her scowling.


Tony climbed back onto the bed and he lay down on his side facing her and Stephen but didn’t reach out to touch her. “I think the only Sleeping Beauty around here is the one and only Princess of Asgard.”

Darcy internally twitched at Tony’s phrasing. His playful words made something itch inside her brain.

“I hate to admit it,” Stephen joked, “But when you’re right you’re right Stark.”

Stephen then let her go and turned her so quickly putting her flat on her back that she barely had time to react before he was leaning down and kissing her. She threaded her hands in Stephen’s hair and smiled into the kiss as Stephen moved his leg in between her own. When he pulled away from her he cheekily said, “Good morning Darcy.”

Dazedly she repeated, “Morning.”

As soon as the words left her lips Tony was there, comically shoving Stephen out of the way as he leant down for his turn to kiss her. Darcy laughed into the kiss as Tony was shoved slightly, probably in retaliation from Stephen, but he wasn’t jostled too hard as to unlock their lips. Stephen’s wandering hands and Tony’s busy mouth lead to night clothes being shed and naked parts getting the opportunity to touch. Darcy was grateful for the early morning sexy times.

Getting the chance to make love to her boyfriends before the big Avengers confrontation was exactly what she needed to start the day off right. It helped her feel relaxed and calm, what with the multiple
orgasms. It reaffirmed their connections to each other physically and mentally. And that’s what she needed. She needed to feel confident and strong and loved and valued.

Every encounter with the Avengers post-Wanda joining the team had left her feeling abused, insulted and weak. Darcy was glad that Tony and Stephen understood what she needed from them without asking, without her even knowing she needed it until after it was over, especially that morning.

When she walked back into the Avenger HQ she wanted the three of them to be an unbreakable united front. She needed to be level headed and nonreactive; she couldn’t let Wanda and her childish, hurtful behavior get to her. There was no telling how the Avengers would react to the Accords, to Darcy’s return with her two boyfriends by her side, or to the news that Tony and Rhodes had a hand in shaping the Accords themselves.

So…starting the day off with all the sex? Yeah, that was totally necessary.

The plan was for Stephen to portal them back to Avengers HQ where they would meet up with Rhodey who was escorting Secretary of State Ross to their little group meeting. Tony had some high tech spy camera embedded in his glasses; Bucky and Wong would hang back at the Sanctum and monitor the meeting. If the warding spell bags failed and Wanda took them all over or incited any violence, Wong would open a portal and he and Bucky would extract them.

Stephen chose to forgo his normal ‘wizard’ clothes and put on a really nice suit. Darcy suspected that Tony had a hand in his decision as their attire was weirdly complimentary. Darcy chose to dress in bright pastel colors. Taking inspiration from her earlier conversation with Tony and Stephen, she had this Easter-time hipster Sleeping Beauty thing going on. It was also strategically styled to make her appear soft, feminine, and sweet.

As they gathered to leave in the front hallway Bucky approached her with one hand behind his back.

“Now before you say no,” Bucky preempted as he pulled a tiny handgun from out behind his back, “It never hurts to be prepared.”

Behind him Tony let out a snort, Darcy shot him a pointed look and Tony mimed zipping his lips. Bucky looked over his shoulder but Tony just innocently grinned at him innocently. When Bucky turned back to look at her Darcy smiled gently, “That’s sweet.” She started.

Bucky grabbed her hand and put the pistol in her palm, “Look I’m not stupid okay? I know you’re super strong and bullet proof and you’ve got magic and all.”

“And back up.” Stephen interjected, proving Tony wasn’t the only one eavesdropping on her and Bucky.

Bucky turned and nodded sincerely at Stephen, repeating, “And back up.”

“Yeah, so I don’t really need this.” Darcy said as she grabbed his metal hand and tried to make Bucky take the gun back, he put his flesh hand on top of her own, effectively sandwiching the gun between their hands. “I don’t need it.” Darcy reiterated as she pushed the gun towards Bucky’s chest.

Bucky said nothing as he pushed the gun pillowed between their hands back towards her own chest. The push pull with the gun made Bucky step closer until they couldn’t move the gun between them anymore, because they were standing nearly chest to chest, the gun and their hands, trapped between
their bodies.

Just as she was about to explain that she had no need for the tiny pistol given that wide array of weaponry her magically disguised Disney purse/arsenal held within, when Bucky gave her this... desperate look. Darcy paused, the words dying in her throat.

“Please just take it.” Bucky quietly plead, “You don’t need it and you’ll never use it but it’ll make me feel better knowing you have it. I cleaned it this morning, it won’t jam on you, it’s small enough to fit in your palm and—and... it’s a hard thing to be the one who stays behind when there’s a fight on the horizon.”

“Bucky.” Darcy said quietly, “You don’t have to stay behind if you want. I mean...”

“No.” Bucky shook his head, “I’m not—It’s a good plan. My role is the vital given the worst possible scenario. I need to stay here, just in case.”

“Just in case.” She repeated. Darcy gripped the pistol more firmly and let her hand fall to her side and out of Bucky’s grasp. She tried to project confidence as she asserted, “But honey, there’s not going to be a fight. Not if I can help it.”

Bucky put his flesh and blood arm around her, slightly holding her body close to his as he asked, “But you’ll take it with you anyway?” Darcy raised her free hand and cupped Bucky’s cheek. He leaned into the action slightly but she quickly removed her hand.

“Everything’s going to be fine.” Darcy assured as she lifted up onto her tip toes and gave Bucky a kiss on the very edge of his mouth. As she was lowering herself back onto the balls of her feet, effectively pulling away from the kiss, Bucky turned his head catching her lips with his own. The arm that had been a slight hold around her body tightened and pulled her firmly against the wall of muscle that made up his body. The tips of her toes brushed along the floor as they kissed, Bucky’s hold on her body so secure that he lifted her into the air so he didn’t have to stoop down.

“This isn’t Gone With the Wind.” Tony jeered from behind them, “No one’s going off to war!”

“He is being a bit dramatic.” Stephen confirmed in a dry tone, “We’re not even leaving the state.”

“It’s just a fucking office meeting!” Tony exclaimed as she and Bucky continued to kiss. Tony made a noise of annoyance and began tapping his foot impatiently. “We’re going to be late!”

Darcy pulled away from Bucky, who was flushed bright red, and she glared at Tony, “And when have you ever cared about being on time?”

Tony stuck his tongue out at her and she made a face back at him.

“Tony’s right. We should go.” Stephen said as he raised his arms and opened the portal.

She glanced up at Bucky one last time, the blush was fading from his face and she smiled, “BRB.”

She pinched his butt making Bucky jump as she walked past him and toward Tony who was holding his hand out to her expectantly. She laced their fingers together and as one they walked through the magical gateway. Stephen followed right after and then closed the portal. Stephen moved so he was on her other side and she was tempted to hold his hand too.

Looking up at the familiar building she couldn’t help but feel all those negative feelings she associated with Wanda come rushing back. She felt small and afraid and out of her league.
Tony stopped her thoughts from spiraling when he asked, “So are you and Barnes going to be a thing now?”

Darcy tensed but answered honestly, “Not yet.”

“But soon.” Tony said as Stephen interjected in a matter of fact tone, “But you do want him to join us.”

“Us?” Tony questioned with a tilted smile, he stared at Stephen with a raised brow. Stephen rolled his eyes muttering, “I hate you.”

“Not as much as you want to.” Darcy quipped with a smirk. Tony let out a laugh and Darcy felt her face fall as she realized the three of them hadn’t really discussed the whole Barnes thing. “Is that a problem? If I want to try to…date Bucky?”

Tony’s mirthful expression sobered into something more serious. She turned to Stephen, but his face was a mask and she couldn’t decipher what he was thinking just from looking at him. Stephen made eye contact with Tony and the two of them conversed silently.

Nervous about hearing their answer Darcy tried to brush the matter aside, “Maybe we should table this discussion for a later date. As it is, we’ve got bigger problems on our hands.”

She made to walk forward but Tony’s hold on her hand held her back. Tony tugged her closer to him and she stumbled, he caught her against his chest. She kept her gaze locked on his tie afraid of what she might see if she looked him in the eye.

She could feel the vibrations in his chest as Tony spoke in a low reassuring tone, “Whatever you want Darcy.” Her eyes snapped up to his. Tony continued, “Whatever you need, whoever you deem worthy of your time and love….I’m okay with. I—I’m not saying it’ll be easy to bring Barnes into the fold but--”

Stephen put a hand on her back and stepped close to the two of them, “But the more the merrier.”

Tony looked annoyed at Stephen’s attempt at a joke but he nodded in agreement. His eyes turned sincere as he looked away from Stephen and back to her. Darcy bit her lower lip before asking in a tight voice, “Are you sure? I don’t—I don’t want you guys to feel like you’re not enough or like I’m some uber horny slut that just--”

Stephen made a ‘shushing’ noise and enclosed the two of them in a hug. Tony leant forward and kissed her on the cheek before pulling away and staring her in the eyes as he said, “You vast capacity to love the unlovable wretches of the universe, like myself, is part of what makes you special.”

“You’re not a slut.” Stephen reassured as he kissed her on the cheek. He kept his head close, leaning his forehead against the side of her face.

Darcy’s lip trembled as she tried to not to cry, “But--”

“My love for you is not contingent on exclusive ownership of your heart.” Tony stated in a stern voice. His arms came around her waist and he cradled her body as she slipped her own arms around the two of them, one around Stephen’s waist, the other around Tony’s.

“I’m committed to you Darcy.” Stephen whispered, “I know who you are and we’ve been honest with each other about our relationship expectations from the beginning.”
“I love you.” Tony said quietly.  
“I love you.” Stephen echoed.

Darcy felt a tear break past her control and roll down her cheek. “I love you too.”

Tony swallowed thickly before speaking, “You want to date Barnes? Fine. You want to get back together with Pep? Okay. You want to date the hot barista with the really long legs? I’m in. You want to date Rhodey? I’m less excited because he’s like family, but I could still roll with it.”

Darcy smiled despite herself as Stephen questioned cutely, “What hot barista? The one at the Starbucks over on 8th Avenue?”

Tony frowned, “There is no barista, it could be a waiter or waitress, a writer or an electrician. I just meant if she met someone normal, like a theoretical barista….which Starbucks the one next to the rite aid or the one next to the Chinese restaurant.”

“Boys.” Darcy said in a playfully censorious tone.

“Yeah, Stephen, stop going off topic.” Tony complained making Stephen look comically offended. Darcy couldn’t help but laugh at their antics.

Stephen’s fake expression was replaced with this tender look, “And, there’s the smile.”

Stephen leant forward and kissed her sweetly, “You don’t have to worry about our relationship Darcy. As far as I’m concerned, we’re rock solid. New additions or otherwise.”

Tony moved a piece of her cotton candy colored hair behind her ear, subtly redirecting her attention back to him. From the intense way he was looking at her she expected some sincere declaration of his love. Tony didn’t disappoint. “You and me? Sexy. You and me and the doc? Sexier. You and me and Doc and Barnes? Sexiest. You and me and Strange and this hypothetical sexy female barista? Exponential sexiness.”

As Tony spoke her small giggle erupted into real laughter. Darcy pushed both of the men away from her so she could bend over as her stomach cramped. Stephen’s own laughter helped to reassure her that the two of them really were okay with her romantically pursuing another person, be they Bucky Barnes or someone else.

She was sometimes surprised by how well Stephen and Tony got along considering they were forced into interacting because of her, but unexpectedly for all involved they did like each other. Genuinely. A fact that had been alluded to when during sex the two men had taken to kissing and touching each other as well as her, a development which Darcy was excited and hopeful would blossom further.

She hadn’t realized that she’d been worried about upsetting their delicate three-way balance until it was mentioned. That morning’s sex went a long way to reassure her that the three of them together, for lack of a better word, were solid. However, saying goodbye to Bucky and preparing to walk back into the Avengers HQ, reminded her of all the times her relationships had been maligned, her sexual orientation jeered, and her poly loving ways met with scorn.

She didn’t feel like a slut. She didn’t feel like a whore. That’s not how Stephen or Tony thought of her…or Pepper or Bucky or Fandral or any of the other people she loved and who loved her in return, felt about her. Platonically or otherwise. And that’s all that really mattered.

As their laughter died down Tony looked at them with this satisfied expression. “You finished?”

Darcy wrapped her arms around Tony’s shoulders and kissed him squarely on the mouth before
turning to Stephen and repeating the gesture. “I love you. I’m sorry I brought this up and freaked out but...knowing you guys—the sex this morning was fantastic but hearing this? Talking about Bucky or a barista or whoever, not being able to break the bonds we’ve forged between us? This—I’m so glad, I’m so glad you don’t hate me or resent me. I needed to hear this. I know that when we go in there, at some point Wanda or one of the others is going to accuses me of being a slutty whore and—just, thank you. Thank you for loving me despite all the bullshit.”

“Nothing about you is bullshit.” Tony said sternly, “You’re beautiful and kind and sexy and adventurous and good in a way those assholes aren’t. You make my life better. I--and I—" Tony looked a little choked up and Darcy melted inside. He so rarely let his vulnerability show, let alone in front of Stephen.

“Oh honey,” Darcy murmured as she moved to hug Tony.

Sensing Tony’s difficulty Stephen stepped in saying, “We are the ones who are grateful. You are better than we deserve and we know it. You shouldn’t have to endure the cruelty that’s been leveled against you, but in doing so you’ve demonstrated nothing but your grace and benevolence.”

Tony pulled back and nodded enthusiastically, “Yeah, so enough mushy heart talk Darce, you don’t have to doubt us. Or our loyalty to you or our relationship with you.”

“I never doubted you.” Darcy argued automatically.

“And you’ll never have to.” Stephen said quickly, forestalling any further mushy heart talk.

“So are we ready to do this?” Tony asked, gesturing to the Avengers HQ building with a sweeping hand. The three of them looked back up at the tall intimidating building. Despite what she said earlier to Bucky about it being a meeting and not a fight, standing there on the cusp of an uncomfortable reunion with her former team members, she felt ready to rumble.

“Let’s go.”

Vision met them at the entrance; just over her shoulder she could see Secretary Ross and Rhodes having a heated discussion. Vision welcomed them cordially, “Welcome back to Avengers headquarters.”

Tony gave the colorful android an annoyed look, “You know that I technically still own this place. Right?”

Vision shrugged, “I believe the phrase, possession is nine tenths of the law, applies in our current situation.”

Tony’s eyes narrowed, “You also know I helped create you. So I’m kind of your father.”

“If my life were told in allegory I doubt you alone would play the part of Geppetto, however if it means that much to you I can call you ‘papa’.” Darcy let out a snort at the android’s sass.

Before Tony could respond Stephen thoughtfully added, “Stark always struck me more of the Honest John the Fox type, or perhaps a drunken Jiminy, but it’s true the similarities in profession between Tony and Geppetto cannot be denied.”

Tony looked at Stephen with a look of mock betrayal, but Rhodes and Ross’s approach ended any further Pinocchio related references. Vision excused himself to alert the other Avengers to their
arrival as Rhodes greeted her and Tony warmly with a hug; Rhodes shook hands with Stephen and then set about introducing Darcy and Stephen to the United States Secretary of State. Darcy was a little nervous, she’d never met with anyone of such political importance before.

“Mr. Secretary, this is Darcy Lewis and Dr. Stephen Strange.” Ross looked her up and down all the while wearing a frown Darcy couldn’t help but fidget under his gaze. He looked at her as if he disapproved with every aspect of her brightly colored person, from her cotton colored hair to her pink heels with bows on them. Despite this he politely shook her hand when she offered it. When his eyes slid over to Stephen there was a wariness but more approval than when he had stared her down. The two men shook hands and then Rhodes added, “And of course, you remember Tony.”

“General.” Tony greeted with a head nod, he pointedly crossed his arms ignoring the older man’s hand.

Ross clenched his jaw as he dropped his hand, “Stark.”

“It’s Mr. Secretary now Tony,” Rhodes corrected in a reprimanding tone, “Ross is Secretary of State. He’s in charge of foreign policy and advises the president. He’s our liaison for the UN and he’s on our side and thus is due a little respect.”

Tony he rolled his eyes as he uncrossed his arms, “I know. I know.” Tony eyed the formal general, “How you doing Ross? Heard Betty won another award in biochemistry. You must be proud.”

Ross’s annoyed demeanor faltered as he took on an expression of surprise. “Yea-yes. Yes she did…I didn’t know you followed the world of biochemistry.”

“I follow all technological achievements of note.” Tony informed him with impish grin.

“Why don’t we head over to the conference room?” Rhodes said.

“Might as well.” Tony muttered as he took the lead and they all followed behind him.

They were in one of the largest conferences rooms in the facility. Darcy was happy it wasn’t the same one where she had ‘quit’ the Avengers the last time she was there. Ross and Rhodes set about making sure the audio/visual component of Ross’s presentation was set up to his liking. She went around and put warding spell bags in front of the empty chairs where the others were meant to sit and then she, Stephen, and Tony all sat down on one side of the long table, claiming the side opposite the door as theirs.

Tech element ready, Rhodes sat down on Tony’s other side and joined them while Ross remained standing.

“Are you wearing the warding sell bag we provided Mr. Secretary?” Stephen asked. Ross sent a glare at Rhodes.

“Yes.” He frowned patting his jacket pocket, “Though I appreciate the concern, I do wish it didn’t smell so pungently.”

“Couldn’t be helped.” Stephen said dismissively before leaning forward and continuing, “You understand why we required you and your bodyguards to wear them before this meeting though?”
Stephen gestured to the silent secret service looking guys that Darcy hadn’t noticed had been following them until just then. With raised eyebrows the two men in dark non-descript suits lifted their ties to show that they were indeed wearing the warding spell bags around their necks as instructed.

“Dr. Strange…” Ross said thoughtfully, “Do you represent the whole of the magical community or-”

“I don’t represent the magical community at all. …And we prefer Masters of the Mystic Arts.” Stephen said as he reclined back into his chair, “I’m here to support my dear friends in their quest to enlighten their former team mates.”

“Friends?” Tony repeated in a disenchanted tone. Stephen shrugged brushing off Tony’s mock indignation. Tony put a hand over his heart and scoffed, “We are awesome facial hair bros. We are not just friends.”

Stephen couldn’t hide his smile just as Rhodes couldn’t hide his laugh. Ross glared at the lot of them. Then he narrowed his eyes at her.

“And you Miss Lewis. I know you were mortal once, I’ve been made aware that is no longer so.” Darcy gulped. Ross folded his arms as he stared at her, “I’ve heard you claim to be sister to Thor. Can we presume you represent Asgard and all of its interests in this meeting?”

Darcy thought for a long awkward minute on how to answer that, finally coming up with the response, “I represent myself.”

“And who are you?” Ross questioned in a matter of fact voice.

Darcy answered right away, “I’m Darcy Lewis Odinson. Born of Midgard. Now heir to the Asgardian throne and Princess and guardian of the nine realms that fall under the protection of Asgard, Earth included.”

“Are you fucking kidding me?” Wanda’s voice interjected from the doorway, “Now you’re claiming to be princess of Earth.”

“That’s not what I said.” Darcy denied quickly, she eyed Wanda warily as the young woman stalked forward and pointed at Darcy.

“What are you doing here?” Wanda demanded, “You’re not an Avenger. You don’t belong here anymore.”

Darcy fought with her instincts, refusing to cower to the witch’s stern tone and flashing red eyes. The other Avengers filed in behind Wanda, assembling behind her in a line. Darcy regretted being seated already as it made her feel small having to look up at the group who stared at her with various degrees confusion and suspicion.

“Well?” Wanda pressed.

Darcy felt compelled to defend herself but hated how she responded in such a small sounding voice, “I was invited.”

Ross stepped up and moved to Wanda’s side intervening, “Why don’t you take a seat and I can explain why you all are here today?”

Wanda flared her nostrils but allowed the former general to pull out her chair for her, silently
ushering her to take a seat. The rest of the Avengers, Steve, Natasha, Vision, and Sam all took their seats as well.

Upon sitting Natasha and Sam’s interest was stolen by the warding spell bags Darcy had left out for each of the Avengers, while Vision and Sam, who sat on either side of Wanda, were quietly whispering to Wanda in calming tones. When Sam picked up the spell bag and took a big whiff, Darcy looked down to hide her smile as his face contorted in disgust.

Steve, alerted to their existence, finally set his gaze on the spell bags. He immediately picked one up and brought it close to his face for examination. “What is this?”

She and Tony turned as one to Stephen. They decided earlier that he would be the one to explain the magical items. Hopefully coming from him, a somewhat outside party, the protective charms would be taken at face value.

“It has come to our attention,” Stephen began, “That a threat is coming. One that may mentally or emotionally compromise the most powerful among us. As such I’ve created these warding spell bags that will hopefully repel any outside influences that try to invade your mind.” The Avengers looked down at the spell bags with thoughtful expressions.

“They’re magic?” Sam asked sounding skeptical, “Magic stinky bags that prevent mind probing from evil psychic aliens?”

Stephen’s mouth twitched in amusement before he replied, “Not exactly, but essentially yes.”

Darcy unexpectedly bubbled up in laughter. Everyone’s eyes shot to her. She quickly suppressed her giggles and pressed her lips together in embarrassment.

“Something funny?” Tony prompted with an entreating grin. Darcy shook her head ‘no’ but Tony persisted, “C’mon. Share with the rest of the class.”

Darcy looked down ashamed of what had made her laugh but at the same time admitted it aloud, “Brain condoms.” Sam and Tony barked with laughter, Stephen coughed to hide his grin.

A slow smile spread across her face as she saw that even Ross and Natasha’s expressions twitched with suppressed amusement.

“Sorry,” Darcy said not sounding sorry at all, “We’ve--Stephen basically invented these things and so far we’ve been calling them warding spell bags, which is a mouthful and—and--” She gestured to Sam, “And what you said just made me think…” She trailed off only for Sam to finish her sentence with a grin. “Magical brain condoms.”

With an impish grin Darcy said, “It just struck me as funny.”

“We’re not calling them that.” Stephen declared.

“Why not?” Tony cajoled as he moved his tie to expose the spell bag he wore around his own neck. Picking it up Tony shook it saying, “Better safe than sorry…. No glove no love….other idioms. I think magical brain condom is a great way to brand them.”

Sam picked up the spell bag and moved to put it around his neck but Steve stopped him calling out “Wait.”

Sam lowered the necklace back down in deference. Steve turned his piercing gaze onto Stephen, “What threat?”
“One that you would never see coming.” Stephen answered evasively.

“How do you know that they work?” Natasha asked.

“We don’t.” Stephen shrugged. He admitted, “We won’t know until their tested, but they give us a chance at defense.” Natasha nodded thoughtfully as she stared down at the object in question.

“How did you learn of this threat?” Steve asked. But before Stephen could answer Wanda and Tony exclaimed simultaneously, “It was her!” “Does it matter?!”

Darcy hated herself for it but she shrank a little in her seat as Wanda glared at her with flashing eyes, she couldn’t help but remember her vision, the power that Wanda would wield was immense and frightening. So having the powerful woman glare at her so, knowing how much Wanda disliked her. She couldn’t help but quiver. Under the table Stephen put a comforting hand on her leg.

Once again Ross stepped up to defuse the situation by demanding everyone’s attention, “Eh-Hem!” Everyone looked at the man. “Gentlemen, Ladies. Put the preventative magical mind probing necklaces on. If you do not there is point in continuing this conversation.”

Ross pulled out his own necklace, “I am wearing one, my men are wearing them and the President of the United States is wearing one. And we will continue to do so until the threat has passed. I am confident of their benign nature and need to be certain that you are in your right mind if we are to progress this meeting further.”

“I don’t like this.” Wanda groused quietly. Steve looked at Wanda’s frowning face then turned to Ross. When Darcy saw Steve’s expression she winced as she recognized the stubborn gleam in his eyes.

“Why are you here Mr. Secretary?” Steve challenged.

“I’m here on behalf of the president.” Ross said succinctly.

Steve turned his gaze on Stephen yet again, “What’s your stake in all this Dr. Strange? You never seemed inclined to help or let your community be known to the world at large before. Why are you here? Tony’s still one of us, an auxiliary Avenger member and benefactor. But you? Last I heard you were a wizard in training.” Steve’s eyes shifted to her and his expression softened. Something akin to regret filled his voice, “And Darcy quit the Avengers. She’s no longer affiliated with us. So loyalty to her doesn’t really explain you being here.”

“Yes!” Wanda exclaimed, “Exactly right. She needs to leave. The wizard needs to leave. They shouldn’t be here. She doesn’t belong here.”

“Don’t you dare.” Tony threatened. Darcy tried to reel him in, “Tony don’t--”

He ignored her repeating himself, “Don’t you dare. Darcy leaving the team was bullshit and you all know it. So, don’t you dare question her.”

“Don’t question her? Are you kidding?” Wanda balked, “Is she the new evil overlord? Queen of Earth? Are we her subjects? Is this not still America?”

Tony rolled his eyes at Wanda’s dramatics. To end the discussion and keep the meeting moving forward Darcy cleared her throat loudly. Diplomatically Darcy conceded, “Wanda’s right.”

“She is?”
“I am?”
Darcy nodded, “I’m not an Avenger anymore. And let’s face it I never really was...never got the chance to be….” Sam and Natasha both looked saddened, the latter of the two looking down to avoid her gaze.

“Great!” Wanda said brightly, “We agree. Bye.”

Vision grabbed Wanda’s hand and shook his head, silently counseling her to stop. In response Wanda pouted and slumped her shoulders, seemingly heeding Visions nonverbal advice.

“However,” Darcy said, her voice rising just a teeny bit, “I’m not here in the capacity of Darcy Lewis-Avenger. I’m here as Darcy Lewis, ambassador of Asgard and representative of Thor.” Darcy paused for dramatic effect, “Who still is an Avenger, even if he’s off world at the moment.”

Wanda clenched her jaw but didn’t respond. Darcy turned to Tony and smiled victoriously. Under the table he squeezed her knee supportively. Ross took the opportunity to ask, “Do you know where Thor is Miss Lewis?”

“That way.” Darcy answered flippantly, pointed up and to the left. Ross wrinkled his nose in annoyance but Darcy just raised her eyebrows at him challengingly. She was just guessing, she didn’t actually know where Thor was at the moment, but she knew he would be returning to Earth sooner or later.

Sam and Natasha put an end to the warding spell bag debate as they both put the necklaces around their necks. “That’s the spirit!” Tony cheered.

Steve gave him an annoyed look but he too picked up the necklace and put it on. Vision eyed the charm skeptically, “The probability that your magical charm would work on me considering,” Vision tapped on his forehead where the powerful stone lay embedded in his skull, “I have this--”

Tony cut him off, “Oh put the damn necklace on Pinocchio!”

Rhodes let out an undignified snort and Darcy had to avert her eyes to the ceiling to keep from laughing herself.

“You’re not all powerful, it won’t hurt you, all the cool kids are doing it, it’ll bring out your eyes--” Tony continued to badger, “Pick a reason and put the damn necklace on man.”

The hint of a smile graced Vision’s lips as he conceded and put the necklace on. Tony nodded at him approvingly.

Wanda was the last one unprotected but that hardly mattered as she was the one they all needed protection from.

“Wanda.” Steve said in an authoritative tone. Wanda glared but put the necklace on as well, grumbling, “Happy?”

“Finally.” Tony muttered as Ross moved to the head of the table to start the meeting in earnest.

“Five years ago, I had a heart attack. I dropped right in the middle of my backswing. If you had told me then that in the future I’d be putting my security in the hands of a crippled neurosurgeon turned wizard, I’d have told you, you were crazy.” The Secretary’s voice was low and his demeanor commanded their attention and respect. Collectively they fell silent.
Ross walked around the table as he spoke, “But the world’s change a lot in the last five years. Hasn’t it?” He stopped behind her, “Thirteen hours of surgery and a triple bypass taught me something forty years in the Army never could. Perspective.”

He continued his slow walking circle as he spoke, “The world owes the Avengers an un-payable debt. You have fought for us, protected us, risked your lives… but while a great many people see you as heroes, there are some… who would prefer the word ‘vigilantes.’” Ross came to a stop once again, this time next to the big screen. Darcy studied Steve’s expression as he absorbed what Ross was saying. He looked troubled, but she couldn’t read anything beyond that.

Natasha spoke up first asking, “And what word would you use, Mr. Secretary?”

“How about ‘dangerous’? What would you call a group of US-based, enhanced individuals who routinely ignore sovereign borders and inflict their will wherever they choose and who, frankly, seemed unconcerned about what they leave behind?”

Ross activated the screen behind him. News footage from past Avengers and Shield matters flashed on the screen as he spoke, “New York.”

On screen a Chitaruri leviathan flew through the air as its side scraped along a skyscraper raining down broken glass. Images of terrified citizens running, a soldier firing a gun at the invaders, and the Hulk smashing into a building sending out a dust cloud that engulfed the camera played in quick succession. Darcy saw the regretful look on Rhodes face and the pain on Tony’s. She had to say something.

“Hey!” Darcy called out causing Ross to pause the video on a picture of Hulk’s roaring face, “You can’t use the NY incident against them. The alternative was total destruction, enslavement or being blown the fuck up by our own damn government!”

Ross scowled at her, “And did Asgard send any aid back to Earth? Make an effort to make reparations? Do anything to atone for the untold destruction their crazed prince caused? No. They didn’t. Thor returned but he did so alone and without any of the so called advanced technology his and your people boast to be in possession of. Asgard did nothing. Except return a year or so later to destroy London!”

Darcy opened her mouth to argue before she realized she didn’t really have the ‘high ground’ and she snapped her mouth closed. Her righteous fury snuffed out by Ross’s logical rebuttal. She really didn’t have a leg to stand on.

“Continue.” Tony ordered as he found her hand under the table and laced their fingers together. Ross resumed playing his destruction-guilt-porn video.

“Washington DC.” Ross said as the screen showed the three Insight helicarrieres firing on each other, the destroyed Triskelion, and the helicarrier crashing into the Potomac and throwing up a massive wave, engulfing citizens and the camera.

Having been chastised so thoroughly by Ross she didn’t feel as bold as before and chose to only comment by muttering under her breath as she slouched down into her chair, “What were they were supposed to do? Let Hydra turn the US into the United States of Evil Nazis?”

Sam’s head which had lowered in defeat shot back up and he gave her a grateful look. She nodded subtly at him. She did not know that Ross was going to put this little show on and use all of the Avenger’s various battle footage against them. Taken out of context everything looked terrible and scary and destructive. It didn’t feel right to let Ross showcase the collateral damage without
acknowledging the extenuating circumstances that were involved in each instance.

Ross ignored her and continued on, “Sokovia.”

Darcy inhaled audibly as the footage showed terrified citizens running, the city rising into the air and a building falling over. Wanda shot her a glare but Darcy paid her no mind. She’d heard about the battle that resulted from the Ultron confrontation but she’d never sought out the footage of the event in full. She’d seen just little glimpses in her visions and clips when the news mentioned the event. It was more horrific than she imagined.

“Lagos.” The screen showed the burning building, she’d seen in her vision. Then paramedics moving a body. Finally a dead girl.

Darcy looked at Wanda wanting to see her reaction to the destruction her actions undeniably caused. Wanda appeared saddened and she was clearly distressed. Darcy felt like a dick for relishing in the girl’s pain. Seeing Wanda so upset felt like a victory, like the girl was actually acknowledging she was at fault.

Ross’s video kept playing. A sort of ‘greatest hits’ of the collateral and structural damage and carnage caused by the Avengers on the multiple occasions they’d had saved the world. It was disturbing footage and obviously shown to illicit guilt and horror by those who viewed it. Darcy scowled at the man as Wanda grew more and more agitated.

“Maybe we’re done with show and tell?” Darcy offered. She kept her eyes trained on Wanda looking for some sign that she was about to snap and lose it. Wanda glared at her and Darcy just stared back in confusion. She was just trying to help.

Ross didn’t acknowledge her request. “For the past four years you’ve operated with unlimited power and no supervision. That’s an arrangement the governments of the world can no longer tolerate. But I think we have a solution.” One of Ross’s aides handed him a thick book and Ross slid it across the table to Wanda. She picked it up and then slid it over to Natasha.

“The Sokovia Accords.” Ross explained, “Approved by one hundred and seventeen countries…it states that Avengers shall no longer be a private organization. Instead, they’ll operate under the supervision of a United Nations panel, only when and if that panel deems it necessary.”

Steve spoke up quickly, “The Avengers were formed to make the world a safer place. I feel we’ve done that.”

Ross stared at Steve challengingly, “You are no longer in contact with Thor or Banner and you’ve managed to alienate the only other Asgardian who showed any interest in working with you.”

Steve’s eyes shifted to her face and Darcy stared back.

“If I misplaced a couple of thirty megaton nukes, you can bet there’d be consequences.” Ross preached. “Compromise. Reassurance. That’s how the world works. Believe me, this is the middle ground.”

“There are contingences.” Rhodes stated firmly.

Ross nodded, “Three days from now, the UN meets in Vienna to ratify the Accords….talk it over.”

Natasha, always one for asking the hard questions, inquired, “And if we come to a decision you don’t like?”
Secretary Ross stared back at her sternly, “Then you retire.”

Natasha stifled a smile which Darcy didn’t understand.

Ross and his people left the compound. The group of them reconvened in the communal space of the Avengers HQ so they could talk over the Accords and the Secretaries presentation. Stephen had gone back to the Sanctum and changed into his ‘wizard clothes’ when they moved their little pow wow to a more ‘relaxed’ location. Weirdly he felt out of place in a fancy suit now, he much preferred the ease and comfort of his robes and cloak.

He and Darcy stayed quiet for the most part though; she and Stephen sat together on a small sofa to the side of the action. To her, it sort of felt like being invited to meet your boyfriends family, only to watch the close knit clan dissolve into bickering and arguments. In this metaphor, Tony and the Avengers were the family and she and Stephen were the boyfriend being introduced. Tony was across from them lying on the couch with one hand over his face. Sam and Rhodes were arguing behind Steve who was sitting and reading through the Accords page by page. Vision and Wanda sat together on a chaise lounge; Wanda for her part looked attentive and slightly uncomfortable. It was obvious to all that a huge chunk of the Accords was about trying to control powered individuals like her and the Hulk.

“Secretary Ross has a Congressional Medal of Honor, which is one more than you have.” Rhodes defended.

“So let’s say we agree to this thing. How long is it gonna be before they LoJack us like a bunch of common criminals?” Sam argued back.

“One hundred and seventeen countries want to sign this. One hundred and seventeen, Sam, and you’re just like, ‘No, that’s cool. We got it.’”

“How long are you going to play both sides?” Sam challenged.

“I have an equation.” Vision spoke up.

“Oh, this will clear it up.” Sam said in derision.

Vision ignored Sam’s disrespect and spoke calmly, “In the eight years since Mr. Stark announced himself as Iron Man the number of known enhanced persons has grown exponentially. And during the same period, the number of potentially world-ending events has risen at a commensurate rate.”

“Are you saying it’s our fault?” Steve asked.

“I’m saying there may be causality. Our very strength invites challenge. Challenge incites conflict. And conflict…breeds catastrophe. Oversight…Oversight is not an idea that can be dismissed out of hand.” Vision concluded.

“Boom.” Rhodes jeered.

“Tony,” Natasha said causing Tony to remove the hand over his face, “You are being uncharacteristically non-hyperveral.”

“It’s because he’s already made up his mind.” Steve surmised.
“Boy, you know me so well.” Tony said mockingly. He got up and winced, rubbing the back of his head, “Actually I’m nursing an electromagnetic headache.”

Darcy rose to her feet and went to his side. Seeing her concerned face Tony pulled her close with an arm around her waist, he briefly kissed her lips, muttering dismissively, “I’m fine.”

Darcy ran her hand down his cheek, “Are you sure?”

Tony nodded and made a move towards the kitchen, but Darcy stopped him, “You sit. I’ll get you a…”

“Coffee.” Tony supplied. He grabbed her hand and kissed it as she moved away from him.

Tony turned back to Steve, “I’ve got a headache Cap, its just pain. Its discomfort.”

Darcy set about making Tony a cup of coffee, her face wrinkling up as she discovered someone was putting coffee grounds in the disposal.

Tony put his phone on the table and tapped it. The phone projected an image of a smiling man and then another and then another. Tony looked down and then back up and pretended to notice the picture for the first time.

“Oh, who are they? They are the volunteers. The first is Derek Travers, great kid. Political science degree, 3.5 GPA. Parent’s pushed him into the field but he thrived. The next Charles Spencer. Computer engineering degree. 3.6 GPA, he wanted to put a few miles on his soul before a life of desk work. The next is Amelia Crane. Arthur Fring. Laurence Keen. Kids, all of them. And none of them---They didn’t want to go to Vegas or Fort Lauderdale, they didn’t go to Paris or Amsterdam to have fun. They decided to spend their summer building sustainable housing for the poor. Guess where, Sokovia.”

Darcy approached Tony slowly as he pulled out a bottle of pills. “All of them wanted to make a difference I suppose. I mean, we won’t know because we dropped a building on them while we were kicking ass.”

Tony spoke as he took the cup from her hands and swallowed a pill, “There’s no decision-making process here. We need to be put in check!” Darcy took the cup from Tony and returned to the kitchen to pour it out in the sink. She didn’t think Tony needed more coffee as he began to rant. “Whatever form that takes I’m game. If we can’t accept limitations, if we’re boundary-less, we’re no better than the bad guys.”

Steve spoke with compassion but steel coloring his voice, “Tony, someone dies on your watch, you don’t give up.”

“Who said we’re giving up?” Tony snapped back.

“We are if we’re not taking responsibility for our actions.” Steve said, “This document just shifts the blame.”

“That’s rich coming from you.” Stephen snorted, adding to the conversation for the first time. Darcy leant against the kitchen island with her arms crossed. She still felt out of place.

“You got something to say?” Steve challenged.

Stephen made a sweeping gesture to the group, “You are responsible for the team and yet you allow one of your youngest members call the shots. Thus shifting the bulk of the blame, the guilt, not to
mention the self loathing, onto her.”

Wanda straightened up in her seat. Steve narrowed his eyes at Stephen who stared back steadily. “You let her run amok and people got killed. Buildings were destroyed and in the aftermath the world has aligned against you. The world fears her…and you. As I understand it this document doesn’t shift blame, it lays it squarely at your feet.”

“Now hold on Doc,” Tony said carefully however whatever reaction he was hoping to forestall was too explosive to contain with a few words.

Steve shot to his feet declaring “The world needs the Avengers.”

“Do they?” Stephen rebutted as he got to his feet as well, his enchanted cloak billowing in the non-existent breeze. “What the world needs is security. And keeping a chaotic amateur on the team, one who hasn’t even scratched the surface of her power does not lend itself to peace of mind. Are you really surprised the world has reacted by demanding you be reigned in?!”

“I knew it.” Wanda whispered. Darcy pressed her lips together and dug her nails into her arms as she watched Wanda’s face. She could practically see the gears turning in Wanda’s head as she came to all the wrong conclusions. Wanda shot to her feet and yelled, “I knew it!”

Everyone turned their eyes on her, “I knew this was about me! I knew this was all some bullshit plot to get me back in a cage and on a leash!”

Wanda’s eyes and hands began to glow. Natasha was on her feet and next to Rhodes and Sam in a flash; she yanked the two back as Steve advanced towards the agitated woman. Vision got to his feet as well, “Wanda, this isn’t just about you. It’s about all enhanced individuals. Myself included.”

“You said it yourself Viz. It’s about causality,” Wanda turned on Vision with a look of betrayal. Her lip trembled as her voice became shriller, “It’s about strength inviting challenge and conflict. I’m not—I can’t become less powerful! You heard the wizard, I’m only going to get scarier. I’m only going to kill more innocent people!”

Her hands were glowing with a pulsing light. Darcy moved to Tony’s side.

“Wanda that isn’t true.” Steve spoke in a calming tone, “Wanda, I’m on your side. We all are. Just calm down.”

Wanda turned and glared at Steve, “Calm down?! How can I calm down when you’re going to sign away my freedom? They’ll lock me up and only let me out when there’s a bigger monster to fight! That’s what this is about isn’t it? What I did! What I am! WHO I KILLED!”

The purple figure in golden armor from her vision flashed in her mind. Darcy wanted to reassure Wanda that the Accords weren’t about locking her up. In her heart she knew that Wanda was acting out of fear and that she wasn’t a wicked person. She knew Wanda wanted to help and do good. She just…couldn’t forgive her for the nasty things she said and unknowingly did to the Avengers to turn them against her. So she kept her mouth shut and said nothing.

“Wanda, we’ve all got blood on our hands.” Tony offered solemnly, “The Accords aren’t about locking away people with powers. I would never support something like that. It’s about inviting the world into process. Giving the world we are trying to save, a say in the missions we go on and which individuals are deployed to solve which conflict. Mitigate damage. Control the fallout.”

Wanda’s eyes flashed, Stephen floated over to them. He hovered next to Tony on the opposite side as her. Darcy felt every muscle in her body tense in anticipation. Wanda had a crazed look on her
Vision put a hand on Wanda’s lower back, “Wanda, there are always going to be losses when one is fighting a battle against those who see no value in human life. You are not callous. You are warm and kind and you care about people. You are not the enemy. No one sees you as the enemy.”

When Steve moved to put his hand on Wanda’s shoulder she let out a scream and power rolled off her form in a wave. All were knocked to the floor except Stephen, Tony, and she. Instinctually she and Stephen had both grabbed Tony’s arm and kept him up when the power wave washed over them. Darcy had planted herself like a tree to be avoid toppling and Darcy suspected Stephen’s cloak helped him with stand the blast without crumpling like the others.

Wanda was shaking her head as the others got to their feet, “No, no no! You’re lying. You’re all lying!”

“Wanda, we’re not lying.” Darcy plead. When Wanda’s eyes snapped to her and the glowing intensified Darcy couldn’t help but gulp. She should have kept her mouth shut. She should never have been there in the first place. Wanda stalked forward angrily shouting, “You!”

Darcy let go of Tony’s arm and backed up a few steps, “I’m not against you Wanda. I know you think I want to hurt you but I don’t.” Darcy babbled. “Visions right, I know you’re not the enemy!”

“You are behind these Accords aren’t you? You’re the one—you destroyed the Avengers reputation, you made us look like the bad guys and then you got the government to turn against me! DIDN’T YOU?!” Wanda shouted. Darcy’s back hit the kitchen island and she came to a stop.

“Wanda! Darcy had nothing to do with this!” Tony called out, grabbing onto Wanda’s arm trying to stop the woman from advancing on Darcy. “I helped create the Accords. Not her.”

Wanda turned and with a glowing arm she backhanded Tony and he went flying. There was a sickening crack as Tony’s head hit the glass table and then a thud as his body hit the ground.

He didn’t move.

He didn’t groan.

He didn’t jump to his feet and make a quippy comment or call his armor to him or…anything.

“Tony.” Darcy said softly. Stephen was rushing to Tony’s side, his medical training kicking in as he assessed Tony’s breathing.

Darcy walked forward slowly; a pool of blood was forming around Tony’s head. “Tony?”

Stephen went into action, “Everyone back up! Someone call an ambulance.”

Steve stumbled back to comply with the doctors wishes and Natasha pulled out a phone. Rhodes stood frozen with wide eyes as Vision crouched down next to Stephen, a grim look colored his features as he stared down at Tony’s paling figure.

Darcy walked forward on numb legs; she gently pushed past Wanda who was no longer glowing with power but trembling in fear and shock. “Tony?” Darcy called out fearfully.

When she stood at Tony’s feet and finally got a good look at him she let out a cry. It was obvious from the angle of Tony’s head and the bones protruding unnaturally from his neck that Tony had a broken neck.
And he was dead.

Despite this Stephen was performing CPR, muttering for Tony to ‘just hang on’. Vision cradled Tony’s head and stroked his hair lovingly as the doctor worked. Off to the side Natasha was describing the scene to— whoever on the phone. Behind her she could hear Wanda’s whimpers turn into sobs.

“No.” Rhodes denied as he moved shook off Sam’s hand on his arm, “No he’s not—Tony’s not.”

Vision looked up with tears in his eyes and declared, “He’s dead.”

Wanda let out a wail. A true cry of agony.

And all Darcy could think was ‘how dare you’.

Before she had the ability to think of what she wanted to do, she had already conjured her magic sword out of her purse and into her head. She whipped around with the blade held high and swung at Wanda.

Severing her head so cleanly that it remained on top of her body for a few seconds there afterward.

Wanda stood erect as she made this gasping gurgling sound. Darcy’s eyes widened in shock at her own actions. She dropped the sword and it clattered to the floor loudly.

She lurched forward as Wanda’s eyes closed and her head slid from her neck and her body collapsed to the floor. Darcy wasn’t able to catch her or her head, which rolled backward and came to stop as her face hit the kitchen island.

Blood poured out of the stump on Wanda’s neck.

“Oh god.” Darcy gasped. “Oh, god.”

“Darcy--” Rhodes who was closest to her reached out and grabbed her shoulder, “Darcy.”

She could hear him and feel his hand, but she it wasn’t reregistering in her mind. All she could see was the headless girl on the floor. And all she could think was that she had just doomed the universe.

Things happened all around her, Darcy was in shock or numb or just fucking out of her mind.

Wong and Bucky arrived via sling ring portal.

Darcy was maneuvered into a chair.

Wanda was covered in a sheet that was quickly stained with blood.

Tony too.

Everyone was arguing. She didn’t know what about.

She didn’t care.

Darcy couldn’t breathe. She needed Tony. She wanted Tony.

She had messed up. She had royally fucked up. Killing Wanda…something inside her told her that
killing Wanda meant killing the universe and she couldn’t shake the feeling that she had just ended the world. All worlds.

And all she wanted was Tony to wrap his arms around her and tell her it was going to be okay. That they would find a solution, together.

For the first time since she killed Wanda, her gaze shifted away from the headless figure and over to her dead lover.

Darcy let out a loud wail. She didn’t cry, she cried out. She fell out of her chair and crawled on her hands and knees through the pool of blood towards Tony’s prone figure. She heard the others behind her but she couldn’t understand what they were saying, all she heard was noise.

She felt an arm around her middle trying to pull her away but she was too strong and too determined. She pulled the sheet back from Tony’s face and screamed. She screamed and screamed and screamed.

She grabbed his shirt and shook his body crying, “WAKE UP! TONY! WAKE UP!”

She grabbed his head in her hands and used her strength to try to realign his bones, put his head back in place. The bone that had protruded so unnaturally ripped through the tender skin of Tony’s neck as she shifted his head and she screamed as blood poured out.

“Ahhhhh! STEPHEN! STEPHEN HELP!” Darcy put her hands on the wound at Tony’s neck. His skin was cool to the touch.

While she was distracted two strong arms around her middle lifted her up off the ground and away from Tony. Darcy screamed and kicked and flailed her arms but the person marched her away from the grisly scene.

“Stop! DARCY STOP!” Steve ordered as he held her tighter. His voice broke as he said, “Tony’s gone. He’s…he’s dead.”

“NO!” Darcy screamed as she broke free of Steve’s grip. She spun around and faced Steve, the rest of the Avengers lined up behind him, including Stephen, Bucky and Wong. She glared at them all, “NO! HE’S NOT GONE! HE CAN’T BE!”

Stephen stepped forward so he was shoulder to shoulder with Steve, “Honey, I don’t want—Tony’s dead.”

Tears finally sprung to her eyes. “No.” She denied in a small voice. She shook her head, “He can’t be gone.”

“He is.”

“I need him.” She wailed as she covered her face with her hands and cried, “I can’t do this without him.”

No one said anything while she stood there and cried. Not for a good long while.

All of a sudden Darcy stopped crying as a thought occurred to her. She uncovered her face and fixed
Stephen with a hopeful look. “Undo it.”

“What?” Stephen questioned. Behind him the other Avengers looked on pitying and sad. But Wong instantly knew what she meant and his face hardened as he stepped forward so he was next to Stephen.

“No.” Wong said sternly. Darcy ignored him and focused on Stephen.

“You’ve done it before. Use the Eye of Agamotto and go back in time to undo this. Stop Tony from dying. Stop me from ending the universe.”

“What do you mean ‘ending the universe’?” Natasha asked.

Darcy ignored her still focusing solely on convincing Stephen. “Please. Please honey, I need this. I can’t live with this. I need Tony. We need him. The world needs him! You—I—Wanda! What I did can’t be undone without your help, PLEASE!”

“NO.” Wong yelled, “He can’t!”

“I can’t.” Stephen echoed with a pained expression. “I’m not—I can’t.”

“You have to.” Darcy cried. She stared at Stephen and her heart sank as he stared back. She saw resolve in his expression, pain and despair. He wasn’t going to help her.

“I’m not sorry I killed Wanda, it was instinct and she killed Tony and I would do it again.” Darcy declared in a numb voice, “I love Tony. I love you too Stephen. But I—the universe needs Wanda….I shouldn’t have killed her. It was a mistake.”

“Darcy. It’s okay,” Steven looked so sad as he tried to be reassuring, “You won’t—it was an accident. People will understand.”

Darcy shook her head. She locked eyes with Stephen. “I’m sorry I wasn’t good enough. I wasn’t smart enough or brave or whatever enough—that I made Wanda crazy and hate me! I’m sorry I messed everything up so badly. I’m sorry I have to ask this of you.”

She conjured her sword from where it still lay on the floor, back into her hand. “But I can’t live with the guilt.”

“Darcy.” Steve said warningly.

“I’m sorry.” Darcy whispered, “I’m sorry I have to force your hand.”

She stabbed herself in the heart with the sword and pain radiated throughout her body. Everyone lurched towards her but she managed to stumble back, giving her enough time to twist the blade in her heart and completely destroy the organ, sentencing herself to death.

She fell to the floor before anyone could reach her.

She didn’t die right away though.

Stephen and Steve were at her side before she knew it. She only had eyes for Stephen. She tried to talk, tell him she loved him. Say how sorry she was again, but no words came out.

Stephen began to cry and she tried to reach up to cup his face or wipe away his tears, but she couldn’t move her arm. He was saying something to her but she could barely make it out, “—cy! ‘ooo!’”
Her vision grew dark, like someone was turning out the lights on the world. Stephen’s crying face faded from her sight until there was only darkness.

“Yeah, so enough mushy heart talk Darce, you don’t have to doubt us. Or our loyalty to you or our relationship with you.”

“I never doubted you.”

“And you’ll never have to.”

“So are we ready to do this?” Tony asked, gesturing to the Avengers HQ building with a sweeping hand. The three of them looked back up at the tall intimidating building.

And then Stephen stumbled back and fell down onto his butt in the grass.

“Stephen?” Darcy cried out, turning and falling to her knees besides him, “Are you okay honey?”

“What’s wrong?” Tony asked gruffly his eyes scanning the area around them.

Darcy realized a second later that Stephen had changed his clothes—somehow. He wasn’t wearing the suit Tony gave him, he was back in his regular robes and cloak. And there was blood on them. And he wore the eye of Agamotto around his neck.

“Stephen?” Darcy’s hand trembled, hovering over Stephen, “What happened?”

Stephen looked up at her and then up at Tony. He reached out and grabbed her hand linking their fingers and then Tony’s, repeating the gesture. Tony looked at her in surprise but Darcy felt the icy fingers of dread gripping her spine and she had no room for anything else.

“What happened?” Darcy demanded again.

Stephen shook his head, “I can’t—I can’t.”

“Doc?” Tony questioned.

“We can’t go to the meeting. We need to go home.” Stephen said in a tired voice.

Just then a portal opened up behind them and Wong came through with an angry expression on his face. He glared at Stephen, “The eye?! Strange, what have you done?”

Behind Wong Darcy could see Bucky, gun in hand raised at the ready, his eyes scanning the surrounding area behind them though he still stay firmly on the other side of the portal, safe in the Sanctum.

“You turned back time!” Wong accused. Tony made a face and exclaimed, “You can you do that?”
“He is not allowed to!” Wong asserted.

“I had to be done.” Stephen claimed, “I couldn’t let her die.”

Everyone’s eyes shifted to her and Darcy blushed.

Later on they learned that the meeting went on without them. And nobody died.

Rhodes reported back to them that all of the Avengers were begrudgingly wearing the warding spell bags except Vision who didn’t think he was vulnerable to such mental attacks and couldn’t be persuaded otherwise by Rhodey. After the meeting with Secretary Ross, when the Avengers convened to discuss the possibility of signing the Accords. Rhodes was able to get Vision and Natasha on his side but Steve, Sam and Wanda all remained opposed to the idea.

While all that was going on, Wong confiscated the Eye of Agamotto and returned it to its rightful place. When he returned from doing that Wong set about lecturing Stephen on his poor judgment, betrayal, and reckless behavior.

Stephen then explained why he took the Eye and what he changed. Darcy didn’t know how she felt about what ‘other Darcy’ did to force Stephen’s hand, but she was glad that he did. She liked being alive. She liked not feeling like a murderer. And most of all, she couldn’t imagine living without Tony.

Tony took it in stride, learning of his death…. At least outwardly.

Wong somewhat changed his tune upon learning the details of why and what Stephen needed the Time Stone for. He still disapproved of Stephen acting so recklessly, but he couldn’t deny the results or claim to prefer the alternative, which would be living in a world where Tony, Wanda, and Darcy were all dead.

After all that occurred, Stephen claimed exhaustion and requested some time to recover. Darcy could sense that he wanted her and Tony’s company but he didn’t want to say it. Wordlessly she and Tony followed Stephen to their room. The three of them fell into bed together.

At first Stephen passionately and fervently instigated kissing and touching. Darcy expected the rest of the afternoon to devolve in delightful debauchery but soon after a few items of clothing came off, Stephen’s ardor waned. His kisses became slow sloppy things and his hands which raced to touch every inch of her skin as if to reassure himself she was really there, slowed down and lingered, then stopped all together. Stephen fell asleep with his arms wrapped around Darcy’s shoulders and his other hand threaded in Tony’s hair.

She and Tony exchanged a look over Stephen’s chest. Neither of them would be going anywhere. And neither would forget what Stephen had done for them.

The both of them cuddled up to Stephen, bracketing the man on either side. They held hands and quietly talked over Stephen’s sleeping body, but eventually the dim lighting, the even breathing of Stephen and her own secondhand exhaustion made her succumb to sleep as well. She assumed it was only a matter of time before Tony joined them.

Before she fell asleep though she asked Tony if he was still wearing the crystal healing ring she had given him.
“No.” He admitted, “I gave it to Aunt Peggy. I thought it might help her have more ‘good’ days, memory wise.”

Darcy decided to yell him about that little revelation, later.
Darcy’s outfit for the BIG Accords meeting
Chapter 41 - Lady Eir

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to Lady Eir.

Chapter Notes

Soooooo. It's become apparent that because I want to start every chapter with a dream or waking up, that my chapters have been getting longer and longer, so I just want to warn you that you might not get updates every week, but maybe every two weeks. It hasn't happened yet, but it might if chapter becomes super duper long or is harder to write than others.
I'm just warning you about the possibility so you don't think anyone's died in my life or that I've given up hope or anything.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 41 – Lady Eir

Darcy was dreaming of Asgard again. Luckily it wasn’t burning though. She was walking in the empty throne room. Queen Frigga sat atop Odin’s throne waiting for her. Darcy smiled at the sight and the Queen returned the gesture.

“My child. It is good to see you again.” The Queen said as Darcy ascended the many steps.

“Frigga.” Darcy said simply as she reached her adopted mother and fell to her knees before the golden glowing figure. “I miss you.”

Darcy sort of collapsed sort of fell forward to hug Queen Frigga’s legs in an awkward lap hug. Frigga wrapped her arms around Darcy’s back, hunching over to hug her back.

“I am so proud of you my sweet Darcy.” Frigga cooed. Darcy realized that she was crying as Frigga sought to soothe her with her soft words and comforting embrace. “You have brought my lost son back to himself, you have forced my fool husband to remember what it is to open his heart, and you have given the future King of Asgard peace of mind while he pursues his own journey.”

Darcy couldn’t formulate words as she continued to sob. Frigga’s words were a balm to her soul. In truth she often felt like she was floundering as she made her way through life.

She felt like the whole Avengers/Wanda fiasco was a big mess and completely her fault. She worried about how her connection with Bucky might further damage her relationship with Steve. She knew that moving forward there would be consequences with Stephen considering what she made him do. And with Tony…with Tony she felt feared their relationship was an exercise in futility given her immortality and his 100% human status, it would only end with her mourning him, no? Not to mention feeling like she abandoned Groot and Rocket and the life she could have had with the Guardians, all for the mess she had made back home with the Avengers.
To have Frigga ignore all that she had messed up and focus on the little good she could really point to? It was really nice. She clutched at the queen’s dress and sobbed out, “I miss you. I’m sorry I wasn’t there when you needed me. I know I could have—"

“Shhh. Hush now child. Hush.” Frigga pulled at her until Darcy was back on her feet then she pulled Darcy onto her lap. She knew they must look odd, her especially, but it felt nothing but natural to wrap herself in Frigga’s arms…into her mother’s embrace.

Frigga rocked her slightly as she spoke softly, “I once told you I did not think it possible to change the future that was foreseen. I was wrong. Oh, how I was wrong.”

“Changing things has just made everything worse!” Darcy whimpered. Frigga pet at her hair and Darcy snuggled her face closer to the woman’s neck.

“My lovely girl. In life I did not get to claim you as daughter. I seek to do so now.” Frigga guided her head up and Darcy stared into the queen’s eyes with her watery ones. “I love you now in death as I did in life. Our short time together forged a bond I thought myself never to experience again; you gave me the chance to be mother to my daughter. And for that I thank you.”

“I loved—still love you too.” Darcy said weakly. She felt a heaviness settle in her mind. Like the pull of sleep or exhaustion was suddenly besetting her.

The queen took Darcy’s face in her hands and slowly brought their foreheads together to touch, “Darcy Lewis of Midgard. You are a daughter of Asgard and Vanir. You are my chosen daughter and the chosen daughter of my husband King Odin. I bestow upon you a burden and knowledge.”

Darcy gasped as pain raced through her body momentarily. The pain was so immense that she thought she would pass out, but gone so suddenly that it merely felt like whiplash.

The queen pulled away so they could once again look in the eyes. “I was wrong. I have never been so happy to be wrong.”

“I don’t...” Darcy whispered tears building up in her eyes once again.

“You aren’t what I though. You are so much more. You are everything Darcy. The world—the universe is what you make of it. You have the power Darcy, you need only wield it wisely.”

“I still don’t understand.” Darcy confessed. Her eyelids suddenly felt heavy. She blinked rapidly trying to stay awake but it felt like a fruitless endeavor.

Her eyes shut and she let her head lean forward. Though her body was succumbing, her mind stayed alert to hear the queen’s departing words, “There is nothing to understand. There is no master plan, no fate, no path to follow. There are just people and their wills….Life is what you make it Princess. Make yours a good one.”

Darcy woke to the smell of delicious coffee. Blindly she reached out and someone put her hands in the handle of a hot mug. Those same hands steadied the cup as she brought it to her lips and took a small sip. “Mmmm.”

“Time to rise and shine Darcy.” The familiar voice greeted her.
“Pepper?!” Darcy exclaimed as she opened her eyes and then winced at the harsh sunlight that streamed into the room. Opening her eyes into slits she peered at her ex. Pepper looked gorgeous. She sat primly on the side of the bed, dressed in her sexy business casual attire. The sunlight shone right behind her making her look like an angle with a halo of light.

Pepper reached forward and brushed a lock of Darcy’s hair behind her hair. “Tony called me. Said you could use some back up.”

Darcy blinked dumbly, “But I thought you didn’t want—you shouldn’t be here. It’s not safe. We—I—”

“I want to be there for the people I care about when they need me.” Pepper said strongly but with a soft smile on her face. “I still love you and Tony and if I can help you—”

“No!” Darcy sat up with a cry. Pepper plucked the mug of coffee out of her hand and set it aside as Darcy gathered her thoughts, “You have no idea Pep. No idea how bad I screwed up and I—Wanda—the team and the Accords. And. Everything! You can’t—you don’t have to be here. You shouldn’t be—”

Pepper leaned forward and kissed her.

It was a soft kiss. Just a pressing of lips against lips, but for Darcy it was everything. She stopped talking and let Pepper silence her thoughts as she deepened the kiss. Darcy wasn’t sure if she pulled Pepper forward or Pepper pushed her back but somehow they ended up lying on the bed fully making out.

And after a little while, clothes started to be shed.

The familiarity of Pepper’s soft touch, her smell, the taste of her skin, it was a comfort. Her dream of Queen Frigga momentarily flickered in her mind, but the overwhelming sensations Pepper and her talented tongue helped banish all thoughts from her mind.

Darcy let herself get lost in the moment. She put the serious matters out of her mind as she made love to Pepper. She didn’t think about what this meant for their relationship, or how it would affect her relationship with Tony or Stephen. She just let Pepper take control and followed her lead.

As the two women basked in the afterglow, sexually sated, but now slightly awkward with each other Darcy couldn’t ignore two things. One, what a stupid mistake reuniting with Pepper in this way, without talking or thinking things through, might have been. And two, her growling stomach.

A loud noise came from her midsection that helped break the unsettling tension that befell her and Pepper in the aftermath. They looked at each other and laughed.

“Why don’t we take a quick shower and then head downstairs for breakfast?” Pepper suggested.

They showered together, but they kept their hands mostly to themselves. Tony had apparently conveyed the broad strokes of the problem they currently faced but left out most of the details. So as Darcy ran a sudsy loofa over Pepper’s back, she explained what had transpired in her own words. She told Pepper about the Accords, Tony and Rhody’s support of the Accords, Stephen rewinding time, her and Tony supposedly dying, and how she felt about all of it. Which was…undetermined.

There was a certain amount of guilt in knowing she forced Stephen’s hand into using the Eye of Agamotto to rewrite time. Also murdering Wanda. And knowing that she would absolutely do the
same thing again given similar circumstances. But she wasn’t sorry about it. She was even a little optimistic knowing she had failed bummed her out, but knowing how she had failed? That gave her hope that this time things would turn out better. Or at the very least differently.

While Pepper washed Darcy’s back she told her about what she’d been dealing with at Stark Industries. Pepper didn’t really have a lot to say, life as a corporate badass might be safe and normal, but it wasn’t exciting and therefore Pepper didn’t have a lot to relate about her life. It occurred to Darcy that was in no small part due to Pepper’s life being consumed in large part, by her work. Outside of Tony and Happy and some distant family members, she knew Pepper didn’t exactly have a large social circle.

She felt a little guilty about that. She knew Pepper not having a lot of ‘people’ wasn’t her fault. And she had not stolen Tony from her, but knowing that Pepper had been basically alone all this time? Yeah, Darcy felt irrationally guilty about that.

She also felt guilty about dragging Pepper back into the life of superheroes and constant life threatening situations, but Pepper brushed aside her concerns as they got out of the shower and got dressed. Pepper put on the business casual ensemble she had been wearing before as Darcy magically dressed with a wave of her hand. She decided to keep her hair brown but put it up into a fancy braid. She chose understated clothes that were classier than the flamboyant style she had been rocking recently.

When Pepper disappeared into the bathroom to put on a bit of makeup, Darcy followed. She studied Pepper’s steady hand as he woman expertly applied eye shadow and eyeliner then mascara and lip stick. When she was done she smiled at Peppers handy work.

“You look nice.” Darcy commented. Pepper blushed as she stowed her cosmetics back in her purse, “Thanks.”

Darcy turned to her own naked face in the mirror. With a wave of her hand she applied some makeup to her eyes, lips, and nails. When she turned to Pepper to see how her friend/ex-girlfriend liked the look she couldn’t help but grin at the gobsmacked look on Pepper’s face.

“You can do all that with a wave of your hand now?” Pepper asked.

“Yep.”

Pepper blinked then mockingly accused, “I hate you.”

Darcy cackled with laughter as they left the room. As they were about to head downstairs, presumably to meet up with everyone else who was still at the Sanctum, Pepper grabbed her arm and held her back.

“Wait.” Pepper plead, “Do you think we should talk…about ya know.” Pepper gestured over to the unmade bed.

Darcy licked her colored lips. “I…do you…I don’t know what--”

“We’re not back together.” Pepper declared matter of factly.

Darcy felt liked she had been slapped. “Okay.”

Pepper took a step closer to Darcy, “I love you. I still love you. And Tony. And I’m here for you.
“But…I’m just not ready to--”

“I understand.” Darcy quickly backed up, “I get it. It was a—mistake.”

“Darcy, no. Not a mistake.” Pepper grabbed her arm and Darcy let herself be caught. Pepper cupped her cheeks and kissed her lips. Darcy almost pulled away and ran out of the room. She couldn’t help but resent Pepper for treating her heart a little like a yo-yo. She was confused. She didn’t know what Pepper wanted or what even she wanted! But she knew enough to know they shouldn’t be kissing if they hadn’t figured it out.

Pepper kissed softly, but it soon became heated once again. Darcy let her body guide her even though her mind was screaming that this was not smart. “Being with you, loving you,” Pepper said as she pulled away, “That will never be a mistake. I will never regret it.”

Darcy swallowed thickly as she stared back into Pepper’s eyes. Pepper ran her fingertips down down Darcy’s arms, “I’m just not sure now is the best time for a reconciliation, considering the upheaval your life is in.”

Darcy felt like a bucket of cold water had been dumped on her. “What?”

Pepper looked up at her hopefully, “Maybe after the Accords business is through--”

Darcy jerked back. She nodded even though she wanted to scream.

“Don’t you think?” Pepper asked, “Don’t you think we should wait to decided if this morning—if we still fit together? In each other’s lives?”

Darcy clenched her jaw before replying in a cold tone, “Seems to me we fit together just fine not fifteen minutes ago.”

“Darcy.”

“No.” Darcy sighed. She pushed away all her hurt feelings and forced her face to reflect an air of unaffectedness. “I agree. We shouldn’t—I’m grateful you’re here to help. Let’s keep thing platonic from here on out? Not mention this little…tryst.”

“Until later.” Pepper added, “Until everything’s settled down.”

“Sure.” Darcy muttered as she turned away and led the way downstairs. “We’ll talk about getting back together when life’s back to normal.” Whatever that means. Darcy thought.

When they got downstairs for breakfast Stephen and Wong were nowhere to be seen. Tony was sipping from an overly large mug as he stood in front of the coffee maker leaning against the counter staring at Bucky’s back. Bucky stood in front of the stove flipping pancakes with a spatula. The former Winter Soldier greeted them with a charming smile. “G’morning ladies.”

“Good morning Mr. Barnes.” Pepper chirped back politely. Darcy just nodded at him.

Pepper went over to Bucky while Darcy moved over to Tony. She moved in front of him and hugged him tightly. Sometimes it felt like Tony was the only person who told her exactly how he felt when he felt it, and what he wanted and wanted from her in return. She trusted Tony like no other,
he was one of the only people in the world she felt comfortable being her true self around. His arms wrapped around her automatically and he kissed her cheek.

“Hi.” She said as she pulled away. Something in her voice must have given away the tumultuous feelings she was beset by because he eyed her suspiciously, his gaze flickering over to Bucky and Pepper before settling back on her. “You okay?”

Darcy avoided his eyes. “Fine.”

Tony put a hand on the small of her back as she stole his mug, stealing a big sip for herself. Tony lowered his voice and moved his mouth close to her ear to ask, “Was calling in Pep a mistake?”

“No mistake.” Darcy muttered, “Just…unexpected.”

Tony looked down at her with concern. Darcy lifted up onto her tip toes so she could kiss his lips softly. “I’m fine.” She stoked his cheek, “Really.”

Tony grabbed her hand and moved from his cheek to his lips so he could kiss her palm, “You sure?”

“I’m sure that yesterday we were both dead so, today? Yeah, definably an improvement no matter how you slice it.” Tony let her brush off his concern but the look on his face told her he would be needling her for more information later. Changing the subject Darcy asked, “Where’s Stephen?”

“Upstairs with Wong.”

“Oh.” After a beat she asked, “Is—are they really mad at me?” Tony gave her a look and she instantly knew the answer. Tony put a hand on her shoulder and guided her to the table. “Stephen’s more angry with himself, Wong the situation. Neither blame you.”

“Liar.” Darcy muttered under her breath as she fell into her chair.

“Darce-” Tony tried to protest but Darcy shook her head, “We all know this is a situation I created.”

“Or you could argue it’s a situation I created by supporting the Accords.” Tony countered, “Or a situation the Avengers created by existing in the first place.”

Tony sat down heavily in the chair next to her, “Or Loki by attacking New York.”

“Or by whoever gave him the scepter…” Darcy said thoughtfully.

Tony nodded in acknowledgement. “Anyway, as one of the resurrected parties in question let me just say that I’m grateful for the way things turned out. Stephen’s little attitude be damned.”

At that moment Bucky and Pepper approached to join them at the table, each laden down with plates of food. Bucky set a plate overflowing with food down in front of her and himself. Pepper handed off a plate more sparsely filled in front of Tony and herself.

“Eat up.” Bucky ordered. Darcy stared down at the perfectly cooked food, she eyed the bacon but couldn’t help but grimace.

“I’m not really hungry.” She pushed the plate away.

“Nonsense.” Pepper protested as she pushed the plate back in front of her.

Bucky gave her a look, “Trust me doll, you’re going to need your strength.”
“What does that mean?” She asked with a frown.

“It means,” Tony started as he stole a piece of toast from off of Bucky’s plate, “That while we let you sleep the rest of us were up at the crack of dawn brainstorming and planning.”

“Planning what?”

“Planning on what to do and say in our meeting with the Avengers to make Steve and the others sign the Accords. This time hopefully without all the murder.” Tony concluded with a crunch as he bit into the stolen toast.

“What? We barely survived the last meeting!” Darcy screeched, “How is that a good plan?!”

“I’ll be there.” Pepper said comfortingly.

“Me too.” Bucky added.

Darcy’s eyes widened. “What makes you think that will make a difference?! That could just make things worse.” Darcy looked at Pepper with a pleading worried look, “This time it could be you who gets accidently murdered.” She shifted her gaze to Bucky, “Or you.”

“Not gonna happen.” Bucky said confidently.

“How do you know?” Darcy asked in a small voice.

“Because,” Tony said with a wolfish grin, “Before the meeting, the wizards are going witch hunting.”

Darcy left the table without a word and thankfully the others let her go. She found Stephen in the mediation room. He greeted her with a tired smile, “Darcy.”

Darcy didn’t have time to mince words, “You can’t go after Wanda.”

“Wong has already left for Karma-Taj. The other sorcerers will be soon be here. When they arrive, we will attack as one.” Stephen explained calmly.

“That’s suicide. She’s too powerful!” Darcy exclaimed as she stalked forward. Stephen sat on a large pillow on the floor in the middle of the room. Darcy loomed over Stephen and glared down at him, “You can’t be this stupid.”

“She’s dangerous. She’s fueled by chaos magic and could rip apart reality itself if she so chose. She needs to be dealt with.” He seemed resigned but determined.

Darcy fell to her knees next to him. Her brow furrowed as she whispered her true fear, “But she could kill you.”

Stephen smiled at her concern. “Hopefully not.”

“But--”

“It’s already been decided Darcy.” Stephen said with authority. “The Masters of the Mystic Arts are an order of sorcerers who are committed to protecting the Earth from mystical threats. Your witch is
a threat of mystical nature. It was only a matter of time before we interfered.”

“That’s not true.” Darcy whispered, “If it wasn’t for me, you would have never known about Wanda. And then—”

Stephen cut her off by putting a finger over her lips, “But because of you I do know about the chaos witch.”

Darcy grabbed his finger, “Don’t do this.”

Stephen stared at her for a long minute. Darcy let go of his finger as she stared back. She was terrified for him. For Wong and the other masters of the mystic arts too. They had no idea how powerful Wanda was. She couldn’t let them go after her alone.

“Can I show you something?” Stephen asked in a quiet voice. “It won’t be pleasant but I think its important.” He warned.

Darcy nodded her consent. Stephen turned to her and faced the back of the empty room. He waved his arms summoning his magic in a familiar pattern. She didn’t know what he was doing but it looked familiar.

Poof, they were in the Avengers conference room. She turned to Stephen and he stared back at her. “This is the memory spell the Ancient One used back when we first met. When we had to recover your memory after your time as a captive at the hands of the Hydra agent and the Asset, we now know as Mr. Bucky Barnes.”

“I remember the spell.” Darcy mumbled as she turned to take the scene in. “This is yesterday?” She asked.

“The yesterday that never was.” Stephen said solemnly.

They were in one of the larger conference room of the Avengers HQ. Vision, Wanda, and Steve stood opposite she, Stephen, and Tony. The scene played without sound. Vision said something to Wanda then Steve tried to touch Wanda’s shoulder and the young witch let out a scream. Everyone was knocked to the ground except her, Stephen, and Tony.

The sound of the memory was suddenly turned back on like someone hit ‘unmute’ on a remote control. ”No, no no! You’re lying. You’re all lying!” Wanda screeched.

Past Darcy tried to plead with Wanda but that just seemed to remind Wanda how much she hated Darcy and it gave her someone to rage at. ”You!”

As Wanda advanced past Darcy broke away from her men, stumbling back away from the angry witch as she ranted ”You are behind these Accords aren’t you? You’re the one—you destroyed the Avengers reputation, you made us look like the bad guys and then you got the government to turn against me! DIDN’T YOU!!”

The scene froze. Darcy turned to look at Stephen. He held out his hand to her and she laced her fingers in his. “It’s about to get really bad.” Stephen warned, “But don’t look away. I think you need to see this to understand why you need to leave the witch to me and the other Masters.”

“I keep watching.” Darcy promised. As one they turned back to the scene.

Tony called out to Wanda trying to stop her from attacking Darcy, ”Wanda! Darcy had nothing to do with this! I helped create the Accords. Not her.”
Wanda turned and struck Tony with a glowing arm. Darcy gasped and Stephen’s hand tightened on hers. “Just remember he’s still alive.” Stephen whispered as they watched Tony’s head hit the glass table. The thud of his body hitting the ground had her heart skipping a beat.

Darcy squeezed Stephen’s hand as they watched past Stephen rush to Tony’s side. She saw herself and the little girl lost expression on her face as she called out Tony’s name. Her eyes were glued to Tony’s unmoving body as Stephen checked Tony’s paling figure for a pulse.

“Everyone back up! Someone call an ambulance.” Past Stephen ordered. Darcy let her gaze drift away from the fallen Tony as she observed the others in the room. Natasha was on the phone, Rhodes was frozen in shock much like her past self. Sam and Steve were eyeing Wanda with looks that were equal part horror and caution. She was surprised when Vision knelt down and began petting Tony’s hair.

“I didn’t realize Vision had enough Jarvis left in him to give a shit about Tony.” Darcy commented as past Stephen started performing CPR on Tony.

Stephen squeezed her hand prompting her to turn to him, “Earlier in the day there were some jokes about Tony being the Gepetto to Visions Pinocchio. The android even offered to call Tony ‘pa-pa’.”

Darcy smiled sadly, “That sounds like Jarvis’s kind of sass.”

“I wouldn’t know……” Stephen said with a drawn look. The sound of Stephen muttering to Tony redirected her attention back to the memory they were watching. “Hang on. Hang on Tony. You need to stay with me. Stay with us. She needs you. Hang on. Hang on Tony.”

Rhodes tried to go to Tony’s side but Sam held him back from getting closer to the grisly sight. Past Darcy stood frozen watching everything with a vacant look on her face but Natasha surveyed them all with a grim but plotting expression. Darcy noted how subtly and swiftly Natasha maneuvered herself over to Steve’s side. Darcy watched as Natasha put a comforting hand on Steve’s arm but it looked to her like the man didn’t even notice. Steve…god he looked heartbroken. He looked devastated. She could see the guilt and the pain written all over her face. Seeing Steve’s feelings of culpability so readily on display inspired her to look at Wanda, the true villain and guilty party of the macabre scenario.

Wanda appeared remorseful, the look of utter shame and shock colored every inch of her person. From her crestfallen face to her guarded body language, Wanda looked this was the worst day of her life. And Darcy felt a unrighteous thrill of satisfaction to see the witch brought so low.

It was clear that this past version of Wanda felt the full weight of what she had done in a moment of unbridled anger and loss of control. Darcy idly wondered had past Darcy not killed this version of Wanda, if life had just continued on without Tony, if his death at Wanda’s hands would have inspired change within the witch and how it would have reshaped the Avengers/Accords moving forward.

When Vision declared, “He’s dead.” Darcy’s gaze snapped back to Tony. There was an ever expanding pool of blood around his head. The sight of it made her imagine it happening to Tony, her Tony. She couldn’t bear the thought. She felt lightheaded and weak, her vision became obscured and she realized she was crying silently.

The scene froze and Darcy just continued to stare at Tony’s body. Stephen’s disentangled her hand from his so he could move and wrap her in his arms from behind. “It’s okay.” He whispered, “Tony’s still alive. This isn’t rea—this isn’t now. It’s okay.”
Despite his words of comfort and the warmth of his body at her back Stephen couldn’t chase the chill that had wrapped itself around her spine, numbing her with an unnatural coldness from the inside out. “I…” She faltered. Staring at Tony’s dead body, hearing it confirmed by Vision…she couldn’t imagine this being her reality, being stuck with this as her past.

“I can’t—this is—huuh—huuh—huuh.” Darcy’s words dissolved into these little gasping sounds. She didn’t know what she would do if the same thing happened to Stephen when he went after Wanda with the Masters of the Mystic Arts. “You—you—can’t—I couldn’t take it if you—you—huuh—huuuh.”

Stephen squeezed her tight whispering in her ear, “Shhhh. It’s okay. Everyone’s alive. This didn’t happen. I stopped it. I stopped this from happening to you.”

Darcy reached up and clutched at the arms Stephen had wrapped around her front. She didn’t want him to let her go. “Stay.” She pled. She felt Stephen nod ‘yes’. He gave her another squeeze as he asked, “You ready for what happened next?”

“No.” Darcy admitted quietly, “But keep going anyway.”

The scene started up again just in time to hear Wanda’s piercing wail of agony. Past Darcy conjured Dragon Fang into her hand, raising it high. And in one smooth movement she watched as ‘past Darcy’ turned and cut Wanda’s head off. She was tempted to close her eyes, she’d never been one to revel in gore or be particularly squeamish but she wanted to look away. She didn’t want to watch herself murder Wanda Maximoff.

But she did.

She watched as Wanda remained alive just long enough to realize she was dead. She watched her head and body topple to the floor. She watched her past self realize what she had done, the full weight of her loss of control and unbridled rage mirroring Wanda’s earlier actions in regards to Tony. When the sword clattered to the floor Darcy began to sob.

Stephen held her and pet her hair as they cried and watched Wong and Bucky arrive.

Bucky came through the portal first, machine gun raised, finger on the trigger. When Wong came through he looked at the bodies on the floor and muttered, “Jesus.”

“What the fuck happened!” Wong demanded. Everyone stared back dumbly. It was then that Darcy noticed that Bucky was aiming the gun at Vision, apparently pegging him as the most dangerous person in the room.

“I killed us.” Past Darcy whispered.

“No.” Past Stephen gasped out as he moved over to Darcy. Past Darcy looked unfocusedly past him as he guided her to a chair, “Sit.”

“I killed us.” Past Darcy repeated.

“We need to call the police.” Rhodes declared, “We need them to know that Darcy acted in self defense.”

Natasha glared at him as she pointed at Wanda’s severed head, “This was not self defense. This was revenge.”

“I can’t look at this.” Rhodes slipped out the door and disappeared down the hallway.
“It was an accident.” Vision whispered, “Wanda’s power—she didn’t mean to kill Tony. I know it.” Vision stood and looked angrily at Past Darcy.

“Sit down.” Bucky ordered, gesturing Vision over to a chair on the opposite side of the room as Darcy. “Before I put you down.”

Vision puffed up his chest, “I’d like to see you try.” Natasha was by Vision’s side in an instant. “Settle down.” She advised with a hand on Vision’s chest.

"Bucky?" Steve said sounding broken. “How—Why are you--? What are you doing here?”

Bucky moved over to Past Darcy’s side. His gun raised and at the ready all the while, “I’m here for her.”

Silently Rhodes returned with two sheets in hand. As everyone around him argued, James Rhodes first covered Tony’s body and then Wanda’s. He then retreated to lean against the wall behind her past self. He looked shell shocked and Darcy’s heart went out to the man. He was obviously at war with himself over what the right thing to do was. Rhodes was a military man and he just watched her kill someone, he wanted to hand her over to the proper authorities. She wondered if he was worried about how Past Darcy would fare under the strict regulations established by the Accords, considering she was avenging his dead best friend when she committed her crime.

“Darcy?” Steve asked sounding confused. “Why would you--? Are you dating her too?!” Darcy was surprised at how jealous Steve sounded when he asked that. Bucky stared back at his former best friend expressionlessly.

Natasha rolled her eyes and she and Sam exchanged a knowing look. Sam then moved over to Steve and put a hand on Steve’s bicep, in a lowered tone he advised, “Maybe now’s not the best time to get into Darcy’s love life? Hmm?”

“Darcy?” Stephen prompted Past Darcy trying to rouse some kind of response from the nearly catatonic woman.

“Darcy’s love life just got Wanda killed.” Vision said with a snarl.

“SHUT UP!” Stephen screamed back. He stood and moved forward threateningly towards Vision but Natasha moved to keep Vision back while Wong hooked an arm around Stephen.

“Wanda drew first blood!” Stephen yelled at Vision, “IF you idiots weren’t so stupid as to trust that chaos witch in the first place, none of this would have happened!”

“Wanda’s not the one who killed out of anger and revenge!” Vision argued back.

"If she hadn’t have killed the witch, I WOULD HAVE!” Stephen roared. Wong had to use two arms to hold Stephen back as the cloak seemed to also be pulling Stephen back away from Vision who phased through Natasha so he could advance on Stephen.

“You would have tried and you would have died for your effort.” Vision glowered.

Darcy, so enraptured by her fighting friends, was just as surprised as everyone else when Past Darcy cried out and slipped from her chair to crawl on hands and knees towards Tony’s dead body. Bucky dropped his gun and moved quickly, getting an arm around her middle he tried to pick her up and away from the sight of her dead lover but Past Darcy elbowed him in the face, knocking him back onto his ass.
“Don’t let her see him.” Rhodes called out, but it was all for naught.

Past Darcy reached Tony’s head and pulled back the sheet to reveal his face. Darcy let out a sob as her past self screamed and screamed and screamed at the sight. It was a horrific image to be sure, one that was surely seared into her brain the second she laid eyes on the bent necked image of Tony’s corpse. Through her tears she kept her promise, she kept her eyes open and kept watching, even though she knew this would haunt her forever more.

Stephen held her even tighter as she watched herself shake Tony’s lifeless body demanding he ‘wake up’. Everyone in the room looked on with a sense of pity, even Vision. When Past Darcy tried to ‘right’ Tony’s broken neck and accidently ripped his skin causing blood to pour from the wound, that was when there was a flurry of action from the onlookers. Vision looked away as did Natasha. Wong made a wretching sound as Sam discretely turned and vomited in the corner of the room, this freed up Steve to run forward and reach Darcy first. Stephen and Bucky exchanged a look as Steve carried a struggling Past Darcy to the other side of the room.

The memory froze and Darcy was left gasping. “I’m sorry.” Stephen apologized, “Maybe---maybe it was a mistake to show you this.”

“No.” Darcy whimpered. She turned in his arms and hugged him around the middle, pillowing her head on his chest she felt the cloak wrap around her and Stephen tying them even tighter together. “No, you were right. This was—I deserve this.” She let out a sob, “I deserve to see this.”

Stephen squeezed her, “This isn’t a punishment.” He explained, “I didn’t want to punish you—that’s not with this was about.”

She didn’t believe him. Well, she believed that he believed that he didn’t want to force her to see this memory to punish her, but deep down; maybe subconsciously she could see how Stephen would want her—to force her to bear witness to this traumatic and emotionally scarring scene. Just so he wouldn’t have to be the only one to carry this horror show in his soul.

“I wanted you to see this so you could know what we are up against. What kind of devastation—it’s about learning Darcy. I want you to be able to learn from this timeline as I have.”

She still didn’t believe him. She knew this was her punishment for forcing his hand. And honestly Darcy didn’t fault him for it. She didn’t think it was malicious of Stephen to show her this, considering it was her fault that he was the only one to retain memory of the event.

Darcy pulled away from his embrace and lied, “I believe you.” Stephen let her step out of his arms reluctantly. “Let’s keep going.” She prompted, “I want to see the betrayal.”

Stephen furrowed his brow, “You asking me to reverse time isn’t a betrayal.” He put his hands on her shoulders and squeezed, “Listen to me, I can tell you don’t believe me so don’t—don’t lie. I’m not trying to hurt you by showing you this.”

“Then why!?” Darcy cried out. She knocked Stephen’s arms off her body and pointed to Tony’s body, “WHY SHOW ME THIS!!?”

“I am the same man.” Stephen said in a horse voice, “I am the man in this memory. You are not. You are a very similar but different Darcy. This isn’t your past, it’s mine. It’s a past that doesn’t exist anymore. And I want to make sure it never will.”

Darcy took a step back and Stephen let her.

“That’s why I had to show you.” Stephen gestured with a hand to the memory that appeared frozen
in time before them, “Darcy, that’s why I had to show you, don’t you see? This is the natural order. This is what comes of our first and truest instinct.”

Darcy looked at the pain etched into everyone’s faces as Stephen spoke, “Engage people with what they expect; it is what they are able to discern and confirms their projections. It settles them into predictable patterns of response, while you wait for the extraordinary moment – that which they cannot anticipate.”

Darcy’s brow wrinkled as she realized Stephen’s words sounded familiar, “Did you just quote ‘The Art of War’ at me?”

Stephen shrugged, “The Avengers and the witch, they expect something similar to this to happen at the meeting today. They expect you and the others to show up and try to talk them into signing the Accords. This is the predictable pattern, and that is why we must break it. But to break it, I had to show you. So you could understand why the Masters and I taking the chaos witch out of the equation is the best possible move.”

“It breaks the pattern.” Darcy murmured. “Yes!” Stephen cried happily, “You understand? You mustn’t interfere. She hates you. For whatever reason, you are her trigger. You set her off. Which means that when we take her on, you can’t be there to make her more volatile and unpredictable.”

“You’re going to use me and Tony to act as a diversion as you separate Wanda from the herd to take her down.” Darcy guessed.

“Yes.” Stephen confirmed, “We’ll throw her threw a portal and battle her in the middle of nowhere, minimizing casualties and interference. It’s your job to keep the Avengers occupied so they can’t rush to her aid or try to stop us.”

“I don’t like this plan.” Darcy declared.

“I didn’t like your plan to stab yourself with a magic sword forcing me to reset time if I didn’t want to lose you, but here we are.” Stephen said starkly.

“Here we are.” Darcy repeated.

Stephen showed her the rest of the memory, it was hard to watch herself emotionally manipulate him but she couldn’t really argue with the results. And neither could he. They emerged from the meditation room together, hand in hand, but Darcy could feel that there was a fracture in their relationship now. One that was small and likely to grow.

Pepper’s face flashed in her mind and Darcy grit her teeth as they made their way to the entrance hall of the Sanctum. Everyone was waiting for them.

Tony greeted her with a kiss and he gave Stephen a hug and a pat on the back, wishing him ‘happy hunting’. Bucky was decked out like he was the Winter Soldier once again, but thankfully he had not donned the creepy mask… just weapons, lots and lots of weapons. He was strapped with a rifle, guns, knives, knives, knives, and other shiny dangerous looking things she could see and probably a bunch she couldn’t. Pepper was there looking polished and ready for board room levels of action. Rhodes was also there to her surprise.

She greeted him with a wave and he waved back. There was also Wong and a handful of the
Masters that she vaguely knew from her time staying at Karma-Taj. When Wong saw her he gave her a confident nod. Darcy returned it. She knew it meant he would do his best to bring Stephen back to her alive.

“So is everyone clear on the plan?” Tony asked.

“Not the details.” Darcy admitted. Tony nodded, “We’re heading to Stark Tower. Steve and the others are going to meet us there. We’ll talk about the Accords and basically stall for time. At some point Barton is going to call Romanoff and tell her to grab Wanda and get to a secure location so talk to her without anyone listening.”

“Isn’t Natasha going to be suspicious as to why she’s being asked to take Wanda along?” Darcy questioned.

Tony’s lips became a grim line as he explained, “Clint’s going to say something to the affect that Pietro’s been resurrected and taken by bad guys.”

Darcy inhaled a breath loudly, “Tony.”

Tony held up a hand forestalling her protests, “I know, I know its low to use her dead brother against her, but it’s our best play.”

Darcy turned to Rhodes, “You agreed to this?”

Rhodes looked down shamefully as he admitted, “It was my idea.”

“Rhodey!” Darcy admonished.

“Darcy, don’t. Just don’t.” Tony chastised. Darcy glared but she did understand. She thought it was a really smart lie too, it just didn’t seem ‘morally right’ or whatever.

“Point is, Nat will excuse herself and take Wanda along with her. That’s when we need to really stretch for time. Piss Steve off. Get him speechifying about America and justice and apple pie or whatever. If that doesn’t work,” Tony gestured to Bucky.

Bucky looked at her and sighed, “Then I’ll bring up some past memories and get Stevie talking about the old days. It’ll be sure to distract him long enough for the wizards to nab the witch and incapacitate the Widow.”

Wong picked up explanation from there, “At which time we will portal with the hopefully unconscious witch back to Karma-Taj so we can begin helping her heal her emotional wounds and teach herself restraint and control.”

“And if she’s not unconscious?” Pepper prompted.

“The supreme art of war is to subdue the enemy without fighting.” Stephen moved over to stand with Wong, “But should we meet resistance, we will take the witch to a isolated location and subdue her. With force if necessary.”

Darcy nodded understandingly. She looked around at the Masters of the Mystic arts, surveying the group with a critical eye. “And you all know this witch’s power is rooted in chaos magic? Making her one of the most powerful beings in the universe? Certainly the most powerful on Earth, now that Hulk’s fucked off to parts unknown.”

The Masters stared back without fear. Wong nodded, “We are prepared to take on even the most
powerful of beings should they threaten the earth. You know this Darcy. We will not falter.”

“I believe you.” Darcy confirmed. Her eyes bounced from Master to Master, finally landing on Stephen, “I have every confidence in you.”

Stephen moved forward brushing past Pepper and Rhodes until he reached her. He swept her up in his arms and kissed her soundly. Darcy kissed him back ardently, trying not to make the kiss feel like a goodbye.

When they broke apart she let out a giggle and Stephen quirked a questioning brow at her. Her lipstick had rubbed off and made a mess of his face. Darcy licked her thumb and reached up to wipe away her color from his lips. “On accident I made you all purty.”

Tony and Stephen snorted a laugh. Darcy finished ridding Stephen’s face of her lipstick and he bent down to peck her on the cheek. He paused to whisper in her ear, at the same time she felt him open her bag and slip something inside, “For emergencies.”

Darcy looked up questioningly, Stephen held up his finger to his lips miming ‘shh’. It was with that action she realized he’d slipped her a sling ring. Darcy knew the Masters of the Mystic Arts were very stingy with who they gave them to considering they were such powerful tools and in limited supply so she tried very hard to suppress her smile and squeal of excitement.

“So everything clear?” Tony asked.

“No.” Darcy said as she turned to look Pepper up and down. “Exactly what’s your part to play in all of this? I don’t want to put you needlessly in danger.”

Pepper smiled understandingly, “I’m here to keep the diversion discussion from turning violent.”

“Through sheer force of will?” Darcy jeered.

“And karate chop action if necessary.” Pepper joked. Tony put an arm around Pepper’s shoulder and pulled her close to his body gesturing to her face with one hand, “C’mon Darce. You know if Pep’s running the meeting everyone will be on their best behavior. Even ole stick in the mud stubborn Steve.”

Pepper pushed Tony off her shoulders and stepped away from him. Tony pouted but let her as he turned back to face Darcy. “It’s a solid plan.” He asserted.

“Sun Tzu did say that in the midst of chaos, there is also opportunity.” Rhodes added.

“Did you—is there a book club I’m not a part of? Why is everyone quoting ‘The Art of War’ at me today?” Darcy asked. She pointed at Wong, “Don’t think I didn’t catch your reference earlier either buddy.” Many of the Masters chuckled. Tony just grinned proudly.

Rhodes shrugged citing, “All war is deception.”

“Great, fortune cookie logic for all.” Darcy muttered.

“It’s a classic for a reason.” Rhodes argued, “This is us engaging in a covert war against one single erratic all powerful being. The book ‘Art of War’ is still relevant because humans and war haven’t changed. Just the players and the excuses.”

Darcy swallowed thickly at that. Somehow, hearing that they were at ‘war’ from Rhodey? It meant more. “Does the government know what we’re planning?” She asked him.
“No.” Rhodes answered, “As far as I’m concerned they only need to know if we actually pull this thing off.”

Darcy turned to Tony and was about to open her mouth when he held up a hand, “Which I know, totally goes against the policies lined out in the Accords, but this isn’t a war. This is a dialogue with some light kidnapping.”

Pepper cleared her throat, “Malala Yousafzai once said that ‘the best way to solve problems and to fight against war is through dialogue.’”

“Who the hell is Malala Yousafzai?” Tony questioned.

Pepper rolled her eyes, “You have google.”

Okay whatever!” Darcy declared stalling any sniping that Pepper and Tony were about to get into about…whoever that was that Pepper was referencing. “Enough quoting stuff. Let’s get down to business.”

Darcy winced as she realized what she had teed Tony up for. He didn’t disappoint when he sang out, “To defeat the huns!”

“I hate you.” Darcy declared quietly. He smiled at her and refuted, “No you don’t.”

“No I don’t.” Darcy repeated. She and Tony shared a gooey look before she turned to a near by mirror. With a quick scrunch face at her outfit she decided to change. With a wave of her hand her ‘classy’ look melted away only to be replaced with something more…more.

“What the hell is that?!” Tony exclaimed. Darcy looked down considering before answering, “A distraction?”

“That is underwear with a sheer cape and a fancy necklace!”

“Too simple?” Darcy said cheekily, with a wave of her hand she was clad in something slightly less revealing but infinitely more theatrical. “Better?”

“That is a metal dress with a swimsuit underneath.” Stephen chimed in.

“And half a cape.” Tony added with a head tilt. His eyes said everything and Darcy preened as she held up her purse which was shaped like Mjolnir.

“Yes but in this outfit I look like an acid trip version of a medieval bond babe.” She swung Mjolnir about comically, “How can I not be distracting dressed like this?”

“She has a point.” Pepper acknowledged with a head tilt.

A half an hour later they were all in place. Tony, Darcy, Rhodes, Bucky, and Pepper were waiting patiently in the common room in the penthouse of Stark Tower. While Stephen, Wong and the other Masters of Mystic Arts were on another floor of the building, waiting for Nat and Wanda to peel off from the group after receiving a text from Clint.

Darcy was curious as to how Tony roped Barton into this little charade but she knew Tony was well versed in making compelling arguments when he had to. Tony seemed very tense for all the light
hearted banter they engaged in on the way to the Tower. Bucky’s eyes hadn’t left her body since she changed her outfit into something more outrageous. The longer and longer they sat though, the more she regretted going with a metal dress, sitting on it for prolonged periods was becoming uncomfortable, and she just knew the pattern was embedded in her ass by now.

Rhodes cleared his throat alerting them all that the elevator was lit up, indicating people were getting on. Darcy and the others waited with baited breath as the numbers climbed, carrying the passengers higher and higher. When the elevator stopped one floor down, Tony clapped and exclaimed, “Hot damn!”

“Don’t celebrate yet.” Bucky counseled, “That was only step one.”

The elevator started to rise once again. “Yeah, but it means Barton didn’t betray us.” Tony said snidely.

“That was a possibility?” Darcy asked sounding shrill.

Tony shook his head ‘no’ but Rhodes nodded his head thoughtfully. Darcy ran a hand through her sunset colored hair, “Odin’s beard!”

“Odin’s beard?” Tony asked with a wide smile. Darcy grinned back, as tense as this whole situation was Tony always knew how to make the best of things.

“It’s a new curse I’m using.” Darcy explained, “You know, instead of ‘Jesus Christ!’ ‘Odin’s Beard!’”

“Is his beard that impressive?” Tony asked. She didn’t get to reply as the elevator dinged indicating their guests had arrived. Steve lead the male Avengers out of the metal box.

Steve carried a copy of the Accords under one arm and a tray of coffees in the other. Sam held a longish pink, white and orange box. Vision held nothing.

“You brought donuts?” Darcy asked surprised by the gesture.

“And coffee.” Steve said as they came closer. Darcy breathed a sigh of relief at the sight of the warding spell bags around Steve and Sam’s neck. “I figured if we’re going to have a tense discussion regarding politics and policy we might as well have snacks.”

Sam smiled jovially, “Oh please. The donuts were my idea. He just wanted to bring coffee.”

Steve froze as he seemed to finally catch sight of Bucky. Darcy looked between the pair tensely. Bucky greeted his friend first, “Hey Steve.”

“Bucky.”

Sam raised his eyebrows at her, obviously questioning how Bucky got there. But Darcy just smiled back mischievously.

“What are you—are you okay? Did you come to see me? How did you know I’d be here?” Steve dropped the hot drinks abruptly on the coffee table, causing a few to topple and spill all over. Pepper and Rhodes jumped up and went searching for napkins.

“I’m not here for you Stevie. But I knew you’d be here.” Bucky answered. He moved forward until he was standing directly behind her. “I’m here cause of Darcy and Tony. They told me about the Accords and how you didn’t want to sign.”
Steve turned to glare at Tony, “You’re taking advantage of a POW just to manipulate me into signing your damn--” A loud crashing sound cut Steve off. Everyone froze.

It was coming from below them.

“Odin’s beard indeed.” Pepper remarked quietly.

“What was that?” Steve asked with a suspicious tone.

“Construction.” Tony answered quickly. There were two more heavy bangs. Tony shrugged, “I’m knocking down a few walls.”

Suddenly the floor exploded outward and upward, right under the table they were all seated around. Darcy reached out and grabbed Tony, pulling him to her as Bucky from behind, pulled her out of the way, saving the both of them from falling into the newly created hole.

“Construction?!” Steve yelled.

“Good help is so hard to find these days!” Tony quipped right before one of the Master’s of the Mystic Arts was pitched through the hole. Darcy constructed a shield, stopping the man from slamming into the ground via gravity; slowly she lowered the man down.

Wanda, clutching Natasha to her side came shooting up through the hole next. She landed ungracefully near Vision, screaming, “It’s a trap!”

“It’s not a trap!” Pepper screamed back. Darcy was relieved to see Rhodes by her side, keeping her out of the action.

Gunfire erupted from just behind her head. Darcy screamed and ducked down needlessly, clapping her hands over her ears. It was Bucky. He was firing on Wanda.

He managed to wing Wanda in the arm before Vision turned on him with a snarl as he shot at Bucky with a energy blast derived from the mind stone in his head. Darcy turned, worried that Bucky was going to be the next death on her conscious as he sailed through the glass windows of the skyscraper. To her immense relief an Iron Man armor rose a second later, an unconscious Bucky in its arms.

“I got ‘em.” Tony reassured her. Tony pressed some stuff on his watch and suddenly he had Iron Man gauntlets on his hands. Stephen came flying up the whole just in time to shield them all from another energy blast from Vision.

Darcy locked eyes with Wanda as the woman let an unconscious Natasha drop to the ground beside her. Her eyes were glowing red and a quick peek at Vision told her who the witch was controlling.

“Betrayal.” Wanda gasped.

“Betrayal.” Vision echoed. And then he unleashed hell on them. Energy blasts started firing every which way. A portal opened up and the remaining Masters of the Mystic Arts, Wong included, flooded the room. Wanda began to shoot energy blasts as well, the only difference between her attack and Visions, was the color of energy being hurled towards them.

Tony started firing back with his hand held gauntlets, as well as through his Iron Man armor that he was piloting remotely. Darcy constructed a shield to defend him as Stephen and the others tried to surround the witch and android. However when one of the Masters got too close, Vision stopped blasting long enough to punch the woman out the window.
“On it.” Tony called out. The Iron Man drone dove out the window to catch the falling woman. Out of the corner of her eye she saw Bucky sit up and shake his head. Sam was kneeling at his side helping him get up. Hollering from the other side of the room caught her ear.

“Move!”
“NO!”
“Ms. Potts, please!”
“I CAN’T JUST LEAVE THEM!”

Darcy saw that Steve was trying to get Pepper to escape via the emergency stairs as Rhodes held the door open, pistol in hand and up and ready to fire if need be. There was a lot of noise so Darcy had to yell to make sure she would be heard.

“STEVE! PICK HER UP AND CARRY HER IF YOU HAVE TO!”

Steve gave her a look and Darcy tried to convey how much this was not plan. “PLEASE! SAVE HER!” Steve seemed to see the naked fear on her face or something, because the next thing she knew, Pepper was over his shoulder as he carried her screaming body towards the staircase and hopefully safety.

With Pepper and Rhodes out of the way and under the protection of Steve she felt a little piece of her, unclench. She turned to look at Tony who looked edgy as he fired shot after shot from his gauntlet. Silently she vowed that this wouldn’t end the same way it had last time.

“I love you.” She said to Tony quietly, knowing he wouldn’t be able to hear her over all the noise coming from the battle.

She dropped her shield and waved her hand to magic her shoes away leaving her barefoot. She couldn’t think of a pair of flats to conjure in the moment. She squared her shoulders, backed up a few steps then ran right at the hole in the floor, leaping over it easily.

“Darcy!”

She ignored everything as she dodged energy blasts. The Masters of the Mystic Arts and had created energy Eldritch whips and they were attempting to bring down Vision…or tear him apart, she wasn’t sure which. Wanda in distress at this, let out a fierce scream as she released a wave of energy, knocking loose all the lashes tied to Vision and knocking down all the Masters, save Stephen and herself.

There was a moment of quiet following Wanda’s attack. Darcy crouched down behind the sofa, spying at the woman from around the side. Wanda tenderly stroked Vision’s cheek. “Are you alright?”

“I am.”

Bucky broke the silence as he took up arms against the witch again. Though Sam was valiantly trying to deter him, Bucky was determined and objectively stronger. He shot Wanda despite Sam’s arm trying to dislodge his aim, again drawing blood, this time hitting her in the leg.

“Ahh!” She cried out.

“Stop trying to kill her!” Darcy ordered. Bucky flared his nostrils at her but lowered his weapon as Sam pulled at him trying to get the man to the emergency staircase that Steve and the others had disappeared to.
Vision took to the air as he seemed to single out Bucky for retribution. Bucky and Sam had no choice but to fight back. Together they fought as Vision stopped firing energy blasts and started to pummel the men with his fists using his enhanced strength and intangibility to beat both men bloody. Darcy ached to interfere and help them, but she knew this was her best shot at getting close to Wanda and she couldn’t let the opportunity pass her by. Stephen and other Masters went to Sam and Bucky’s aid soon after.

Her relief was short lived as Tony called out from where he had taken cover behind the bar, “Hey Wanda!”

Darcy’s eyes widened and she shout whispered not wanting to give her position away just yet, “Tony! No!”

Tony ignored her, “Wanda!? You still alive?”

“No thanks to you!” She snarled.

“You know this wasn’t personal right?” Tony asked.

“Really?” Wanda asked with wince, “Because using my dead brother to trick me feels very personal.”

Tony stood up from behind the bar just as the helmet of his Iron Man armor slid into place. His eyes glowed menacingly as his modulated voice sounded from inside the suit, “Well you did kill me yesterday.”

“What?” Wanda said sounding confused.

Tony extended his hands and fired as he flew at Wanda. Darcy scrambled to her feet, conjuring the sling ring from out her bag she opened a portal right in front of Wanda, saving her from being tackled by Tony. The portal would deposit Tony in the school gym of Peter Parker’s high school. Why there? She wasn’t sure why, but it was the first place that came to her mind.

“Wanda, please stop this. We need to talk.” Darcy pled, “Just you and me? Please, I know this isn’t the real you! TALK TO ME!”

A metal desk hit her in the head from behind, knocking her to the floor. Darcy looked up to see Wanda’s hands glowing. It was really annoying that Wanda had telekinesis and mind manipulation powers and shields and kinda flying ability and the energy blast things. Not to mention the possibility of reality warping…

“No more talking.” She Wanda whispered as debris and furniture started fly around the place wildly, smashing and crashing into the Masters. She was targeting them, beating them with whatever heavy objects she could lift with her powers until they stayed down and didn’t get back up again.

Darcy contemplated chucking something big and heavy at the witch in retaliation, but inspiration struck and suddenly she had a better plan.

Darcy threw the desk off of her then got to her feet. She opened a portal just behind Wanda. She then ran at the woman full speed, tackling the woman into the portal. Together they fell through it.

“AAAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHH!” Wanda screamed as they fell. Darcy kept her grip tight around the woman’s midsection. The portal had deposited them high above New York City. Exactly where she
had woken up when she had teleported to Tony during the battle of New York.

The sensation of falling was familiar and Darcy couldn’t help but spare a thought at her stupidly inappropriate fashion choice. The air was cold, the wind was harsh, and her metal dress was doing nothing to keep her warm. She had regrets.

“What are you doing?!” Wanda screeched.

“Saving you!” Darcy hollered back.

“What?!”

They were plummeting to the Earth faster than she thought they would. “Just hold on!” Darcy said.

She then wrapped her legs around Wanda’s legs, securing her arms around her back she called out into the wind, “SKURGE! SKKKKUUUUURRRRRGGGGGEEEEEE! OPEN THE BIFROST! SKURGE! OPEN THE BIFROST!”

She didn’t know if the Bifrost would work in midair, but Darcy was certain she would survive the crash back to Earth if it didn’t. Wanda too if she positioned herself right.

“What the hell are you doing!?” Wanda screamed.

“We have to go to Asgard!” Darcy yelled, “SKURGE! OPEN THE BIFROST! SKURGE!”

“AHHHHH!!” Wanda sounded so frightened as she screamed, “LET ME GO! I CAN SLOW US DOWN! We’re going to die. I’m going to die! YOU HAVE TO LET MY ARMS GO!”

Wanda’s eye’s glowed and Darcy cried out in pain. It felt like she’d been poked with a stick in her brain. Darcy ignored her and kept herself tightly wrapped around the witch’s arms and legs. As they continued to fall, she continued to call out for Skurge.

“LET ME GO!” Wanda screeched. The pain in her mind was overwhelming.

“LET ME GO!” Darcy felt sick. She refused to let go of her captive despite the pain and they continued to fall.

And then suddenly the pain stopped and a vision blocked her off from all of her senses and the physical world.

She saw herself sitting on a throne, one similar to Odin’s on Asgard but not as obnoxious and intimidating. The throne sat on a stage not unlike the one at Peter Parker’s high school. The empty space in front of the stage was packed with people. To her left was Tony and Pepper and Rhodes and Natasha and Vision and Thor and Frigga and Odin and Peter Parker and Gamora and Drax and Wong and Rocket. To her right was Stephen and Bucky and Steve and Sam and Fandral and Loki and Bruce and Sif and Volstagg and Hogun and Happy Hogun and Mantis and Peter Quill and Groot and Jane.

Everyone in the crowd started applauding. She felt this overwhelming sensation of love.

And then the lights went out and when they came back on she was alone. She ran out of the room but the whole school was empty, beyond that the streets were empty and the whole planet too. She was alone, deserted on an abandoned world with no hope of rescue or return of her loved ones. And then the world started to disappear too. Until she was the only thing left and the nothingness started to rip her to pieces too.
The pain of crashing into the ground woke her from her vision. She lay prostrate on the ground. A big Darcy sized crater all around her. She blinked up blearily at the sunny blue sky. It was, objectively, a beautiful day.

An angry Wanda suddenly filled her field of vision. At least, she thought it was Wanda. The woman looked wild and windswept.

With a glowing fist Wanda punched her in the face screaming, “YOU’RE CRAZY!”

The impact sent her head knocking into the broken rubble beneath her.

“You’re a crazy bitch!” Darcy was too dazed to block the woman’s assault as Wanda continued to wail on her.

As she was physically assaulted the piercing probing pain returned to her mind, depleting Darcy even more. Wanda silently punching Darcy for some time, saying nothing except for the occasional grunt of exertion and muttered curse. Darcy suspected, though she didn’t really know how long it went on for that it was more than fifteen minutes. Her brain was very fuzzy though.

She wanted to sleep. She wanted this day to be over. However she was still glad that it was just her and Wanda now. As long as Wanda was focused on her, no innocent bystanders would be harmed. Also, it was a relief to be free from the worry that she would have to watch one of her loved ones die a horrible death….for once.

In a blink, Wanda was suddenly gone. And though Darcy was curious as to what happened she was too tired and hurt to even move her head and find out where she had gone to. Her vision was also blurry as a man’s face swam in front of her.

“Darcy—okay?” The man asked. Her hearing wasn’t working right.

Darcy opened her mouth to reply when the man pulled out a gun and started firing. T’was Bucky then.

Darcy used all her strength to reach up and cover the muzzle of Bucky’s weapon with her hand, stopping him from shooting Wanda, or at least that’s who she assumed he was shooting at. Bucky only shot her hand once before he pulled the weapon down and away.

“—rcy! NO!”

Something red flew at Bucky and he was knocked off of her. Something that was Sam Wilson/Falcon wing pack shaped flew over her head, propelled by something red and energy-y looking.

Darcy could hear the sounds of battle all around her when another person, this time with a red and black veiny blob for a head, filled her field of vision.

“-iss Dar--?! Oh, --d. You don’t lo—so g—d.” Darcy tried to smile to reassure the red and black veiny headed blob, the blob’s voice sounded scared and young. Her mouth wasn’t working right though. “What –hould I –o?”

Darcy blinked and the blob disappeared. She could hear the sound of the Iron Man armor flying overhead. She heard a clang that sounded like Steve’s shield. She tried to sit up but she only managed to move a couple inches. She was down for the count.
She closed her eyes and listened as the sound of battle echoed around her and she prayed that no one ended up dead.

When she opened her eyes again she found that Wanda now stood over her, with one foot on her chest constricting her breathing by pressing what had to be a broken bone, into her lungs. Wanda also held a gun in her hand aimed at Darcy’s heart. Didn’t Wanda know she was bullet proof? She was so confused by what was happening.

“Darc-! --- never---me!” It was a futile effort to try to understand what was going on.

She recognized Stephen’s magic though, when a wave of golden light washed over all of them. Darcy saw her opportunity and took it as Wanda was momentarily blinded.

Darcy grabbed Wanda’s foot and held on with all of her might as she screamed, “ASGARD! OPEN THE BIFROST NOW!”

“What?!” Wanda exclaimed as Darcy yanked hard, causing the witch to fall next to her on the ground as the familiar rainbow light descended around them. Darcy felt the weight of a hand grabbing her ankle as they begun to be pulled into the air like a tractor beam drawing them back to the mother ship.

She felt the somebody trying to climb up her body as they sped along the rainbow gateway but paid them no mind. Soon she would be back in her adopted realm, and whoever was trying to hurt her while she alien abducted Wanda to another planet, would have to fight an army to get to her.

“Asgard.” Darcy whispered as Wanda began screaming again.

They landed in an ungraceful pile of limbs and rubble. The sound of someone retching signaled to Darcy she could let go of Wanda’s ankle, which, during her travel she might have accidently… broken. The golden arches of Heimdall’s Observatory provided her the comfort she needed to allow herself permission to give in to her injuries and pass the fuck out.

She was not on Asgard for one full minute before she was unconscious and teleporting away. She woke immediately as the woman beside her woke from her light doze on the chase lounge. Her arrival had for once, knocked someone out of their bed instead of the other way around.

The woman let out an undignified snort as she sat up on the floor. Her eyes met Darcy’s and widened. “Princess?”

“Lady Eir….help.” Darcy grunted, before once again, conveniently passing out.
Darcy’s outfit following her encounter with Pepper
Darcy’s first idea for an outfit to confront Steve and company in for optimal distraction value….

What Darcy wears to ‘distract’ Steve and company / What she wears during confrontation….
Soooooo...I kinda changed the ending on a whim. I always planned to send Darcy back to Asgard with someone we’ve never seen in Asgard, and when it became apparent that I’d created a nearly unstoppable villain in Wanda, I knew she was gonna have to go with. HOWEVER I did add someone else joining them, and who knows, maybe someone jumped on Wanda’s ankle too? So it could be 2 SOMEONES....but IDK.

I'm asking for who would be your ultimate dream person to join Darcy and Wanda in Asgard.

ALSO, we have a little more time before the whole HELA thing, so they are not going to fight Hela right away, I'm thinking that they've arrived just as rehearsals for Loki's play have started.....if your looking for some kind of timeline reference.

SO let me know what you thought of the chapter and who you would love to see in Asgard with Darcy and Wanda.
Thnx for reading!
Darcy woke up alone. She felt compelled to stand up so she got to her feet quickly, surprised by how well she felt considering the condition she remembered being in. She could tell by the décor she was on Asgard and all of her memories remained intact so she was rather confused by her flowing white gown and ability to stand.

When she fell to Earth back in NYC she was pretty sure she broke her spine, and then there was all the magically assisted punching in the face. Darcy ran her hand over her lips and eye, nothing felt swollen or sore. The lack of wounds made her worry about how long she’d been there, weeks, months? Her healing suggested she’d been there a while, in any case and she lamented being rendered incapacitated yet again.

When she turned around, looking for the door or an attendant Darcy’s jaw dropped open at what she saw. Horrified at the sight before her, she exclaimed, “Oh god!”

Her broken and battered body was lying on an Asgardian healing slab. And she looked like a dead body.

“I’m dead?” Darcy mused aloud as she leant down to look at her corpse more closely. Her body was obviously all kinds of fucked up and she idly wondered which injury was it that killed her or if it was the combination of all of them plus using her power one more time, that finally did her in.

Her body was bare save a small embroidered blanket used only to preserve her modesty as it only covered from her vagina to nipples. Darcy blanched at the thought of having to watch her own Asgardian autopsy. She knew that back on Earth part of an autopsy involved cutting a person open down the chest to take out their organs and weigh them…for whatever reason. She reached forward to pull back the modesty blanket to see if she had a scar like that, but found her hand passed right through the solid object.
“Fuck I really am a ghost.” She whispered to herself.

Darcy looked down at her dead body and lamented that she would be put to rest looking like she went ten rounds with Mike Tyson while he was hopped up on PCP. Her hair was a gnarly mess, her skin paler than the moon and her face! Her face was purple, her left eye looked swollen shut while her other had a severe cut down the eyelid that had been sewn together with white thread. Her lip was split open in three places but the largest split was on her lower lip near the left corner of her mouth, the cut extended down to her chin and she shivered at the sight imagining living with such a gruesome scar.

“Perks of being dead I suppose.” She groused with gallows humor. Her cheek bone looked slightly deflated, and her nose was bent awkwardly. She touched her nose tenderly, muttering, “That probably never would have healed right anyway.”

After staring at her dead body for a few more minutes, basically just feeling sorry for herself, she realized something….her chest was moving up and down. “I’m not dead!” She rejoiced. She was still breathing! Before she could process what that meant about her current out-of-body state of mind status, Lady Eir and King Odin burst into the room.

“I need to see her for myself!” Odin roared. Lady Eir held her hands out as if to stop him but she still walked backward allowing the king entrance.

“She’s resting my King. She needs time to heal.” Lady Eir explained calmly as Odin maneuvered around her to rush to Darcy’s side. “She’s in such a state, won’t you give it a day or two…”

Just seeing the murderous and scared expression on his face told Darcy that even though she was seeing Odin’s face, it was still Loki underneath in disguise. It was odd that she couldn’t see him for who he truly was, now that she was...not-a-ghost. It occurred to her that she might be in a coma and this might all be a dream…

“How did this happen?” Loki muttered under his breath, his hand hovered over her hair as if he wanted to comfort her but was afraid to touch her. His voice was small and vulnerable when he remarked quietly, “She looks like death.”

“Loki!” Darcy called out hoping he could hear her, “I’m here!” He didn’t seem aware of her presence.

“She is not dead.” Lady Eir rushed to reassure him. The elder healer pulled up some holography thing that hovered above Darcy’s prone body, “She’s has broken bones, here, here, and here. There was some swelling in her brain, which is why we’ve sedated her with the sacred nectar. I assure you sire, she will feel no pain as she heals, the nectar not only numbs the body it empties the mind. I assure you she sleeps dreamlessly. No visions, no nightmares. The sleeping nectar will make her recovery a painless one on both fronts. Mind and body.”

That didn’t sound right. Whatever Darcy was now she was certain she was a projection of her mind, which was in direct opposition to what Lady Eir said. “That’s weird.”

“She will heal though. Correct?” Loki asked in a more Odin-esque voice. He stood up and moved his shoulders back so his posture read as more rigid and formal. It was as if suddenly remembered he was supposed to be playing a part and he just realized he’d broken character.

“She is already on the mend my King. Faster than I anticipated even.” Lady Eir waved her hand and made the hologram thing disappear, “Believe it or not, her face looks better now than it did even an hour ago when she first arrived in my personal chambers.”
Loki’s eyes narrowed as he gazed down at her battered features, “Did she tell you who harmed her?”

“No sire, she asked for help and then fainted.” Lady Eir answered.

“I did not faint.” Darcy argued with a pout. “I heroically passed out due to exhaustion and massive injuries and stuff.”

“You’re sure her healing is progressing at an accelerated rate?” Loki asked with a thoughtful expression.

“Yes my King. I believe that given time and proper care while she does so, Princess Darcy will heal in a few days or so.”

“That soon?” Loki questioned sounding shocked. His expression darkened, “Where are her personal affects? Her crown and ring? You need to--”

“She wasn’t wearing a crown when she arrived my King. Her ring, however, is over there.” Lady Eir pointed at a pile of familiar looking fabric crumpled up on a chair she hadn’t noticed earlier. Loki stalked over and rifled through her things. When he found her Mjolnir shaped purse and his face twitched in irritation. Darcy snickered, “Loki if your branded fashion accessory wasn’t a pair of giant horns I’d rock that too. Don’t be jealous.”

When Loki opened her purse he found nothing inside, given her Infinity purse was only accessible by her. However underneath her underwear he found her lightning ring. He stared at the ring in agitation, muttering, “This is just a trinket.” He then threw it angrily on the ground.

“Her ring!” Loki exclaimed, “Where is her ring?” Seeing his distress Darcy felt a little bad about giving the healing crystal ring to Tony, who then gave it to Peggy Carter. Loki turned on Lady Eir with a scowl, “She needs it to increase her healing and—I gave it to her. She was supposed to wear it so something like this wouldn’t happen!”

Lady Eir took a deep breath before approaching Loki. The elder woman put a hand on Loki’s shoulder, “Whatever magic was in her ring, I doubt she needs. Her estimated recovery time….It…it’s surprisingly advanced given the Princess’s true Midgardian physiology.”

Loki snarled sternly, “She is of Asgard.”

Lady Eir removed her hand from the King’s shoulder and lowered her gaze and bowed, “As you say my King. However,” Lady Eir looked up and locked eyes with Loki, “I am telling you, she will be well soon enough. Healed and fully restored within a matter of days. There is no cause for alarm. Her injuries are grievous and I know they look life threatening but they aren’t…Which is why I wanted you to wait before you saw her.”

Loki looked down at her one last time, just a hint of his concern showing beyond the façade he forced himself to don. “I will come to sit with her after I deal with the mongrels she brought with her from Midgard.”

“Yes, my King.” Lady Eir bowed her head at Loki. Loki, bent down and kissed her briefly on the temple before leaving the room with a swish of his fine robes. Darcy stared at his back. She wanted to follow him to see what he would do with Wanda, but she didn’t know if leaving her body was a good idea or if it was even possible. However before she could make a decision either way, she found herself in another room.

The change of scenery happened in the blink of an eye and Darcy had no idea what prompted it, but it also affected her clothing. Gone was her ethereal white dress, and in its place was a short black
one, this time her outfit change came with a cape and crown. Darcy touched her head as the weight of the crown and collar across her neck was instantly felt. She stared down at herself in wonder.

“What the fuck is going on.” Darcy asked aloud. The change in location and attire weren’t jarring, she didn’t feel dizzy or sick, they were just unexpected and almost instantaneous. It was weird. She ran a hand down the velvety black fabric of her dress. Her head jerked up when a scream sounded behind her. She whirled around to see Wanda trapped in a white cell.

“Is that Loki’s old cell?” Darcy wondered aloud. While in the guise of Axel, Loki had shown her where the ‘fallen’ prince had taken up brief residence after returning to Asgard following his failed attempt to take over Earth. Darcy had learned that it was a specially fortified cell meant to be able to hold even the most masterful of magic users. To Darcy though, it kind of looked like a clean room, she half expected Wanda to be forced to wear booties and a hair net.

“LET ME OUT!” Wanda roared as she picked up a small circular table and chucked it at the wall, an impressive feat considering her hands were chained together. It harmlessly bounced to the floor, repelled by the magical transparent wall that made up the front of her cell.

Seeing Wanda trapped and throwing the contents of her cell around in her rage made her glad Loki had been so bad they had to build such a box to hold him. She only prayed it would be able to hold the Scarlet Witch as well.

To their right a voice called out tauntingly, “Would you give it a rest Hermione! Some of us are trying to use our brains to escape instead of our meager brawn to throw the least epic hissy fit ever. All your noise is distracting.”

“Tony.” Darcy breathed out. She hurried over to where his voice had come from.

Seeing Tony was like sinking into a hot bath. It hurt because she loved him and she couldn’t touch him or talk to him in her incorporeal state, but just seeing him? It filled her with warmth and comfort and a part of her relaxed she hadn’t realized was tensed in the first place.

Tony had no chains binding his hands unlike Wanda; his unoccupied armor was in a heap on the floor at his feet. It looked like a can opener had been taken to the armor at the stomach and chest. He must have been removed from it by force. Tony was squat down next to it, picking through the wiring in the left arm of the suit. Probably trying to salvage it or repurpose it or find something he could use to pick the lock of his more ‘traditional’ prison cell.

“SHUT UP STARK! THIS IS ALL YOUR STUPID BITCHES FAULT!” Wanda screamed.

Tony stood up and glared at Wanda. He opened his mouth, but then he shook his head and squat down next to his suit muttering to himself, “Don’t engage. Stay focused.”

“Well, well.” Loki said suddenly, making Tony and Wanda jerk their heads in the direction of his voice, “What do we have here?”

Loki in the disguise of his father and a guard two steps behind him, emerged from the shadows of the dungeon all dramatically. Darcy rolled her eyes at his theatrics. Loki could be such a diva. Turning away from her brother she cast her eyes back on Tony.

He didn’t look hurt or anything, so whatever they did to get him out of the suit couldn’t be that bad. His shirt was missing one sleeve though, and there was tightness in his face that spoke to his agitation. Darcy couldn’t help but stare at him longingly. She was so glad he was there with them. She wanted to be closer to him, staring at him from the outside of his prison cell was too far away for
her.

In a blink, she was by his side.

She stood next to him and without thinking she reached out to pet his hair, but her hand once again went through his body as it had earlier with her own. But, Tony visibly shivered giving Darcy hope. She stared at her hand in wonder, maybe she was more corporeal than she thought?

Loki stole her attention then, as he addressed Tony. “I am told you arrived with our Princess Darcy. I know of you from my son, Man of Iron. Do you know to whom you speak?”

Tony approached the bars of his cell, getting as close as he could to Loki who stood at the door of Tony’s cell looking superior and dangerous in the guise of his father. Odin’s face and glare certainly looked intimidating to her.

Tony smiled slyly, “I know who you are.”

“Good then we needn’t—”

Tony interrupted Loki, making the other man twitch in annoyance, “I know who you are.”

Loki glared, “I am Odin. King of Asgard.”

Tony shook his head, smirk now in place, “No man, I know who you are. Who you really are.”

Loki looked unsettled but Darcy could see it in his face, Loki thought Tony was bluffing. “Do you?”

Tony lowered his voice in a mock whisper, “I’m dating Darcy.”

Loki spoke in a mock whisper back, “I don’t care.” His voice returned to normal, “We will hold you here until Princess Darcy awakens to tell us in her own words, your relation to her. And how she came to be injured.”

Loki walked as if to move on from Tony’s cell to stand in front of Wanda’s, but Tony stuck his hand through the bars and grabbed hold of Loki’s arm. The Einherjar guard just behind Loki moved forward, the sound of his sword being drawn from its sheath had Darcy holding her breath.

Loki held up a hand, and the guard put his sword away. Loki looked down at Tony’s hand with a clenched jaw, “Remove your hand mortal.” Loki’s eyes flickered up to meet Tony’s, “If your heart belongs to Princess Darcy, I would hate for you to reunite with her lacking any important appendages.”

Tony ignored Loki’s threat to whisper, “We have no secrets, Darcy and I. I love her. I love her more than everything, my own life, my friends, my wealth. She is the only thing that matters.”

Loki removed Tony’s hand from his arm with a pinched look, “How nice for you.”

“I know who you are and I don’t care.” Tony repeated, his face pressed in between the bars of his cell, “I know how much she liked you, before she even knew you were you. She told me everything. …Everything, everything. So, maybe you should let me out and take me to Darcy before she wakes up and gives you a verbal bitch slapping.”

Loki stared at Wanda’s cell. Wanda was looking at the two of them with interest, her face curious and angry. Loki waved his hand at her cell, the walls covering Wanda’s cell became opaque and the woman inside became no longer visible.
Loki then moved back in front of Tony’s cell. “You think you know something.” Loki said carefully, “But I warn you, you are a mortal in a dangerous place. You are amongst the gods and monster now boy. It is not wise to make enemies of Kings and it is even more foolhardy to threaten--”

Tony’s face scrunched up in frustration as he interrupted Loki yet again, “I’m not trying to threaten you, you unbelievable douchebag!” Darcy’s eyes ticked over to the guard, he had a confused expression on his face, but Loki looked appropriately annoyed by the modern insult. Tony continued his voice growing more desperate, “I don’t care about any fucking political intrigue! All I care about is her. We got here and then she disappeared. She was... the height she fell from? It was... it was so bad. Please. Just let me see her. She was barely breathing... She-she’s alive, right? No inter-dimensional medical complications?”

“I’m here Tony.” Darcy whispered, she let her hand hover over Tony’s back, “I’m alive.”

Darcy’s heart broke for Tony in that moment. He was looking at Loki like he was drowning and Loki had the only life preserver in the whole ocean. Loki stared back at Tony coldly. Darcy knew Loki was cruel enough to enjoy watching Tony twist in the wind, but she hoped deep down he wasn’t spiteful enough to lie or leave Tony in the dark about her condition. That would be a step too far.

In a blink Darcy was out of Tony’s cage and she now stood next to Loki. Loudly she urged him to do the right thing, “Don’t you fucking dare Loki! You tell Tony I’m okay RIGHT NOW!”

Loki’s face didn’t soften but Darcy detected a slight deflating in his shoulder area. “Princess Darcy lives.” Loki said simply.

Tony’s eyes glistened as he nodded and asked, “And she’s gonna stay that way?”

“She will recover within a reasonable amount of time.” Loki said evasively, “As for what you know or think you know. I urge you to consider this Man of Iron, knowledge can be as dangerous as a blade, even in the hands of a fool. If I were you, I would watch what I say and to whom.”

“Darcy told me why she never told anyone, I’ll follow her lead.” Tony looked down and wiped a hand over his face, not so subtly wiping away any tears that slipped past his iron will. “You have my word; I literally couldn’t care less about your game of thrones.”

After a moment of collecting himself he looked up at Loki with his “Tony Stark” mask in place. All cocky bravado and swagger, “You know the last time you were in my home, I offered you a drink. If you’re not going to let me out of this surprisingly sanitary dungeon until Darce wakes up, you could at least return the favor... It’s only polite.”

Loki’s mouth twitched as he fought back a smile. Tony saw this and added, “I’m a fan of scotch.”

In the blink of an eye Darcy was back in the cell next to Tony. She clapped her hands excitedly, “Yay!”

She could tell already that despite himself Loki liked Tony, or at least he could like Tony given time to get to know him. She knew they shared a similar dark humor and were both fierce warriors in their own areas of expertise and had chips on their shoulders about being underestimated and compared to larger than life family members. They had so much in common she imagined they would become fast allies, especially with her being the linchpin that connected them together. Darcy encouraged Tony even though she knew he couldn’t hear her, “Keep going Tony. Make him like you more.”

She went to pat Tony on the back, momentarily forgetting her intangibility. She pouted as Tony
merely shivered again. Being not-a-ghost sucked.

Loki turned to his guard and whispered something to the man who nodded and then disappeared. Loki turned to Tony and informed him, “We do not have scotch here on Asgard, but I believe I can provide you with something equally as intoxicating...as you say, it is only polite I return the favor.”

Once the guard was out of sight and earshot Tony grabbed Loki by his robes and yanked his face into the cell bars. He growled at her adopted brother, “You better not try to date rape Darcy again you sick fuck! Not while she’s injured and--”

Loki grabbed the hand Tony was using to pull him into the cell bars and squeezed cutting Tony off midsentence, “Ah!” Tony cried out.

Loki looked more amused than annoyed by Tony’s forwardness, especially now that Tony was wincing in pain and trying not to let his knees buckle. “I do not know of this term ‘date rape’ but I assure you I would never defile the Princess in such a manner.”

Loki let Tony’s arm go and Tony quickly retracted his arm back through the bars. Darcy glared at Loki as Tony rubbed his tender wrist. Loki could have broken Tony’s wrist but it didn’t seem like he had. Still, Darcy muttered at her brother, “You’re an asshole.”

“I love her.” Loki stated boldly, “I will protect her with all the might and power of Asgard. No harm shall come to the Princess while in my custody.”

“Let me out to see her.” Tony demanded.

“No.” Loki denied with a blank face.

“Why not?” Tony asked in an exasperated tone.

Loki shrugged, “I don’t want to.” Darcy rolled her eyes at how bitchy Loki was acting.

“You tried to rape her.” Tony accused. Darcy knew that Tony knew this wasn’t true. She could tell Tony was just trying to get a reaction out of Loki. Unfortunately it worked.

Loki looked stricken, “Is that what she told you?” Darcy felt bad, Loki sounded so afraid.

“She told me the truth of what happened. I read in between the lines.” Tony glowered, the heat in his voice told her that he wasn’t provoking Loki just for funzies any more. He meant what he said, “You also preformed a spell on her that modified her body without her consent! You fucking raped her DNA! You wanted to fuck her but you decided against it at the last second, who’s to say you won’t change your mind now that she’s defenseless.”

Darcy’s head jerked in Tony’s direction at that. She had no idea that’s how he felt. In a blink she was outside the cell and back next to Loki. She knew that Loki had been torn in his feelings for her, but she never really thought he’d go so far as to sexually assault her.


“You changed her species without her consent!” Tony yelled quietly, “Just like that raccoon friend of hers, Rocket? She said you met him; he had that tragic back story and fur. Ring any bells?”

“I met the rodent man.” Loki acknowledged. “But I don’t understand--”

“You took her humanity and ripped it apart and replaced it with Asgardian shit. You gave her
strength and endurance and made her think she was invincible and she took that so called ‘gift’ and she went after the most insane and powerful woman in the world! AND LOOK WHERE THAT GOT HER! SHE NEARLY DIED TODAY!” The veins in his neck were more pronounced as he yelled. Tony looked like he wanted nothing more than to rip the bars off the cell just so he could beat Loki to death with them.

“Do you even know how far she fell? SHE CHOSE TO FALL FROM—she chose to fall and hit the ground from that insane height…I don’t know why she did that, but I know she thought she would survive because she was ‘Asgardian’. You—you fucking made her ‘almost’ immortal, which is basically just saying she’s mortal enough to get herself killed in a spectacular fashion!”

“I—” Loki tried to interrupt but Tony just talked over him, “Just like the robots ripped apart her raccoon friend, you took her apart and rebuilt her in your fucking image! You wanted her so you took her. You want her still, I can see it in your eyes.” Tony paused his shoulders slumping.

“And I can see the pain in yours.” Loki interjected.

The anger drained out of Tony’s voice, only to be replaced with sadness and exhaustion, “You can’t have her Loki. She’s mine. I belong to her and she belongs with me. Don’t hurt her. She loves you.”

“You’re angry and that I understand.” Loki said stoically, “One look at her battered face and I would burn a thousand worlds to avenge her.”

Loki and Tony locked eyes. Tony swallowed thickly as Loki spoke, his voice lowering and his eyes alight with emotion, “You would protect her if you were able. I see that and I appreciate it. I also know you are intelligent enough to recognize that you are not her equal.”

Loki leaned in close to speak softly, “You are worried that the barrier that separates you, Darcy’s Asgardian heritage, will serve to bring she and I closer while simultaneously and irrevocably widening the divide between you and she until the chasm is so far that you are severed from each other forever.”

Tony’s eyes widened and Darcy felt like an idiot. She didn’t know that this was what Tony was afraid of, she didn’t know he had all these thoughts and fears. He always seemed so steadfast and certain when it came to their relationship. Seeing Loki call him out on all his insecurities about her and their relationship left her wondering what else she didn’t know about Tony Stark.

Tony jerked back and put a hand on his heart, “Jesus, go for the jugular much?”

“You accused me of raping the one woman in this universe who still gives a damn about me. A woman who is not blood of my blood, but still calls me kin.” Loki explained, “I can see how much you love her, and I know Darcy…it is the only reason I haven’t busted open this cage open to beat you for your treacherous accusation.”

“You…have a point.” Tony conceded.

The men stared at each other in awkward silence. It was clear to her now that her earlier assessment of Loki and Tony being fast friends or whatever, that was just a pipe dream. The fact that they were so alike wasn’t a boon to future friendship, it was an obstacle.

“What happened to Darcy?” Loki asked with genuine emotion in his voice, “Who hurt her?”

“The chaos witch, Wanda Maximoff.” Tony answered, he eyed Wanda’s cell warily. “Can she hear us?”
“Not at the moment….I assume she’s still alive because--”

“Because,” Tony finished, “Darcy says she super important for a future fight against this evil person who’s going to wipe out half the universe. We can’t kill her and we can’t control her and for some reason she has a hard on for Darcy. Literally turned Captain America and the rest of the Avengers against her.”

Loki’s brow furrowed, “Turned them against her how?”

“Mind control.” Tony supplied, “She’s so powerful and dangerous, Strange said she could warp reality itself…” Tony trailed off his eyes growing unfocused for a second before he shook his head and continued, “But Darcy’s adamant we save her.”

Loki pursed his lips, “Darcy thought to bring her here in the hopes I could teach her control?”

Tony shrugged, “That or she thought your old prison was the only place that could hold her until she calmed down enough to try to talk to her again.”

Silence descended on the men once again. This time it was not awkward but contemplative as they all stared at Wanda’s cage. It was true enough. As soon as Wanda overpowered Stephen and the other Masters of the Mystic Arts, she knew Asgard was her only chance to help Wanda.

The silence was broken by a voice from the cell on the other side of Wanda’s, “You two know we can hear everything you’re saying right?”

“Shut up!” Another voice hissed.

Loki raised a brow at Tony who shrugged, “What can I say? We had a couple hop on’s when we were making our way here.”

“Mr. Stark? Are we going to go home soon?”

“Friends of yours?” Loki looked down the line of cells Darcy couldn’t see who was speaking but she recognized the voices.

“I wouldn’t say friends.” Tony denied.

In a blink she was standing in front of the cell on the other side of Wanda’s and wearing yet another new dress. Annoyed at the unasked for costume change, Darcy ignored her wardrobe to peer inside the cell. It was similar to Tony’s only with two ugly cots instead of one. Inside the cell sat Steve Rogers and Peter Parker.

“Fucking. Fuck.” Darcy muttered.

Loki approached her but in that moment Darcy felt her eyes suddenly grown heavy. So heavy that she couldn’t help but close them. It wasn’t like the sensation of falling asleep, it felt more like passing out. Just, boom unconsciousness. And with that she was gone from the Asgardian Dungeons.

After a few moments of not being awake, she woke up again. Or at least she thought she was only ‘asleep’ for a couple of minutes. The lighting in the healing room told her differently though.
She felt compelled to stand up so she got to her feet quickly, again she found herself unattached to her physical body. And in a new, barely there dress. She really had no idea what the changing gown situation was all about, but she looked fucking awesome so she wasn’t complaining. Especially given that her physical body self was still rocking the ‘naked except for a tiny blanket’ look.

Her face looked better. The sewed together skin on her right eye looked totally mended now. The purpling was gone from her face, but her split lip was still ghastly as was her still swollen closed eye. It was less swollen but still gross looking. She looked better, but not by much.

Darcy didn’t know how much time had passed, it could have been hours, as the dark skies indicated or this could be days later from her last…walk about. Walk about? That ringed a bell in her memory. Something about walking….She didn’t have a word for what was happening to her, what with the mind separating from the body and walking around on its own, but she knew the word, it was on the tip of her tongue. She just couldn’t remember…

There was no one around except some guards who stood immobile, like toy soldiers and a snoozing nurse who took refuge in a chair at a desk in the corner of the office attached to the healing room. Darcy decided to try to ‘blink’ over to Loki. She squeezed her eyes shut and thought of him.

When she opened her eyes she recognized that she now stood in royal chambers. She remembered them with a smile. The last time she had been in the royal bedroom had been the last time she’d seen Queen Frigga alive. It was also the last time she saw Odin naked….until now.

She still couldn’t see Loki for who he was under the disguise of his father, so when she looked around the room for him and found him in bed with two naked women, she couldn’t slap her hand over her eyes fast enough. “Why with all accidental royal penis?” Darcy whined as she turned on her heel and started walking at a brisk pace.

The sound of an ass being slapped and Odin’s high pitched “oh my!” had her running and commenting to herself, “Ew. Ew. Ew.”

Darcy knew Loki loved her and felt bad about what happened to her, but did he really have to distract himself with meaningless sex? Actually, Darcy really didn’t care if he did that. She just didn’t like walking in on it and accidentally seeing her adopted father’s naked body bent over the bed as he —“NO MORE. Baseball. Rainbows. Unicorns!” Darcy yelled at herself to stop thinking what she was thinking. She didn’t even want to picture it.

Darcy took the long way back to the dungeons, she wanted to see Tony but after interrupting Loki while he was ‘indisposed’ she didn’t feel like blinking to Tony’s side…what if he was pooping? She didn’t need to see that. Best to walk there the old fashioned way.

Well, she was going through a lot of walls and spying on various people, but it was more ‘old fashioned’ then blinking and instantaneously teleporting to Tony’s side.

She tried to phase through the floor once she was above the dungeons as she was easily able to walk through walls it stood to reason she could go through the floor but was unable to do so and had to use the stairs. Like a norm-y. It occurred to her how weird it was that she could descend stairs but also go through walls, like what made floors so solid and walls so not? Was it all in her mind? Could she will herself into ultra-floor-breeching-intangibility if she really wanted to? Or was her brain so hard wired to walk on the floor that to conceive of it as intangible did not compute therefore it was impossible to pass between? Darcy muttered to herself, “These are the thoughts that made me go hmmm.”

It also occurred to her that her blinking to people’s side could possibly take her all the way back to
Earth if she thought about someone there hard enough. Or maybe all the way to the other side of the galaxy? However, she had a sinking that feeling being away from her body that far would not be a good thing.

She walked past Tony’s cell first. “Tony?” She called out. His cell was empty. And his suit was gone. “Did you make friends with Loki enough to get parole or did you escape?” Darcy wondered aloud. Something told her Tony didn’t escape though, after all, all the walls were still intact.

She passed by Wanda who was still securely in her cell. The walls were once again see through meaning the witch could see and hear all that was happening around her. Darcy was tempted to try to enter the cell to see if the powerful witch could see her in her non-body-only-mind form, but she had a feeling whatever spells and enchantments were keeping Wanda in would keep, whatever she was now, out.

She kept walking until she came upon Peter and Steve’s cell. Only one of the occupants was missing. Steve sat alone in the cell. He was staring at Wanda who was stubbornly faced away from Steve pretending to be reading a dictionary, Darcy knew Wanda was pretending because the dictionary was in Xandarian.

The intensity of Steve’s stare told Darcy that below the surface, Steve was furious and exhausted. Steve had circles under his eyes and that in and of itself was astonishing. She didn’t even think Steve was capable of being tired let alone looking like it. In a blink she was in the cell with him and by his side.

Steve didn’t acknowledge her, just continued to stare at Wanda’s back. “You’re being childish Wanda.” Steve called out accusingly. Darcy’s eyes drifted to the witch. Her back twitched but she remained fixated on the book in her lap.

“Hey Steve.” Darcy greeted. She sat on the floor by his feet Indian style. “How are things?”

Looking at Steve and being ignored by him, brought up memories of how he’d treated her under the witches influence, even though in this instance his ignoring of her was entirely her own fault.

“I wish we could go back to when we first met and get a do over.” Darcy admitted out loud. Looking at him brought to the surface all of the feelings she had for him. And a lot of them weren’t nice ones.

Steve had hurt her. He’d hurt her feelings and it was all messy because of how unclear it was how much of his behavior was him and how much was him plus Wanda’s influence. Darcy blinked back tears. She wanted to forgive Steve and blame everything bad he said and did to her on Wanda. She wanted that so much, but in her heart she knew it wasn’t that black and white. Things never were…

“Steve,” She said with a quiver in her voice, “I have to tell you something.” Darcy let her shoulders slump, “I’m mad at you. And I know you can’t hear me, but I need to say this to you. I have to get it out…I liked you. I thought you liked me and when you said such...vile things to me and about me, you really hurt me. You made me feel like trash...less than trash.”

Darcy got up on her knees, with Steve sitting so low on the cot her positioning put her at eye level with the American icon. She pointed at his chest as she ranted, “You suck! What you did sucked. I’m a fucking Princess! OF A WHOLE PLANET! Odin and Frigga officially adopted me. And Odin is one of the most judgmental people ever so earning his approval is a big deal, okay.”

Darcy wiped the back of her hand across her nose as she sniffed, “Tony loves me. Stephen loves me. Bucky, you’re bestie? Yeah, he’s totally smitten with me and I’m starting to catch feelings for him
too. I have friends across the galaxy and all over the place. I’m likable and smart and fun and you
made me feel like shit. You made me feel like loving the people I love was wrong. Like I was made
wrong. And I hate you for that...but I don’t hate you.”

Darcy sighed. It was cathartic to say all these things she’d kept suppressed for so long, but it felt a
little empty talking to Steve knowing he couldn’t hear her. “I wish we could talk for real.”

She reached out to touch Steve’s cheek; she wanted to make him feel her, even if it was only the little
shiver reaction that she got from Tony earlier. However when her hand touched his cheek, she made
contact.

She and Steve let out twin gasps. Then Steve’s eyes rolled back in his head and he passed out onto
the bed. Before his head hit the pillow Darcy was transported to another location. Only she didn’t
think it was a real place.

She was in a concrete room all of a sudden, but the edges of the nondescript room were fuzzy, like
there was a blurring filter at the edges of reality. There wasn’t a door or a window or a clock. It was
just a concrete, grey, square room. It was honestly a little claustrophobic.

Being in the room felt different than before when she was blinking around the palace. She felt...less
tangible somehow. It was weird because while she was in her mind/not-a-ghost form, she could feel
her body. Or well, what she felt or projected as her body. Now, she felt strangely numb to her body.

When she ran a hand down the front of her newly appeared outfit she didn’t even feel it. She
admired the moon clasp that held her shiny pantsuit jacket together. She still had no idea what was
up with all these quick change clothing choices, but she knew they weren’t items of clothing she
owned. Which was just...even weirder? She put a palm flat against the skin exposed by the plunging
neckline of her jacket, she couldn’t even feel the heat from her own hand. It was disconcerting to say
the least.

In the center of the room there was a bland metal table and two metal chairs set up on either side of it.
Unlike the rest of the room, the objects looked entirely in focus, as did the man seated there. Steve
wore a simple white t-shirt and jeans, and a confused expression. But, when Steve looked over at
her, he saw her!

“Darcy?” He asked sounding surprised.

“Steve?” Darcy said excited at the prospect of interacting with someone.

“Where are we?” Steve looked around the room with curiosity, “Are we still on Asgard?”

“I think so.” Darcy said tentatively, she walked over to the table and chair. She felt compelled to ask
if she could sit down, but kept her mouth shut and just did it. She didn’t need Steve’s permission any
more.

“What’s going on?” Steve questioned.

“I don’t know.” Darcy answered honestly, “I think its my doing. So, sorry. For whatever this is.”

Steve looked at her quietly, “You look beautiful.”

“Thanks.” Darcy answered automatically. Then she yelled out, “ASTRAL PROJECTION!”

“What?”
Darcy smiled as the word she hadn’t been able to think of finally came to her. “Astral projection!”

She explained, “I’m—We are still on Asgard. Only I’m currently unconscious and in the healing center. While my body has been there recovering, my mind has been wondering around walking and going places and doing stuff. I couldn’t think of the word for it, but I just remembered. Astral projection!”

Darcy preened joyfully, “Stephen’s gonna be so proud! He astral projects in his sleep so he can cheat the laws of human biology and study more.”

“This is an astral projection?” Steven asked.

Darcy shook her head, “No. I don’t know. This is…something else, I think.”

“What?”

“I don’t know.” Darcy repeated, “I just…really wanted to talk to you, and here we are.”

“What do you mean here we are? Where are we? This place…I know this place.” Steve said in a distant voice.

“You do?” Darcy asked, “I don’t.” Darcy looked around the empty bland room again just to make sure she didn’t recognize it, “I don’t know this place.”

“I think…” Steve trailed off, “I think I’ve been here before.”

Darcy didn’t really care where they were. She suspected they were in a dream though, or maybe she and Steve had done the Vulcan mind meld or something. Either way, they weren’t in the real physical world so their longitude and latitude was a moot point.

“Cows opinon.” Darcy muttered to herself.

“What?”

“Never mind.” Darcy shook her head, she had gotten used to talking to herself. “It doesn’t matter where we are.” Darcy concluded, “I think what matters is that we’re here and you can actually see me.”

“Um…okay.” Steve accepted, “Do you need me to give a message or…”

“We need to talk.” Darcy stated boldly, “About everything that happened with Wanda and the Avengers and you and me and, all of it.”

Steve looked down shamefully, “Darcy, I don’t want talk about that.”

“Too bad.”

Steve looked up and glared, “Why do you get to decide what we do and do not talk about? Why do you get to decide what does and does not matter?”

Darcy shrugged, “I don’t know.”

“That’s not an answer.” Steve accused.

“Ugh,” Darcy ran a hand through her hair, “Fine, you want an answer, I get to decide because I’m the Princess. I’m the girl. I’m the one in the snazzy suit in this weird interrogation room and I’m the one with the magic powers! That’s why!”
Steve’s nostrils flared, “You really are mad with power like Wanda said you were.”

“ME!?” Darcy balked, “ARE YOU FUCKING KIDDING?!”

“Darcy--”

“No! Hell no Steve. I’m here ‘throwing my weight around’ forcing you to have a conversation. Not orchestrating you forcing out team members, mind controlling them, or bad mouthing them around town and in the press! Or just throwing people out windows all willy nilly! That’s you! That’s Wanda. That’s the Avengers.”

Steve was quiet for a moment before asking, “What mind control?”

Darcy sighed, “Wanda was using her powers on you and the other Avengers. Controlling you and influencing you. We—remember the warding spell bag things?” Steve nodded. “Well those were made to block Wanda’s power and give you guys, well all of us really, give us back our autonomy.”

“She—Wanda wouldn’t do that.” Steve defended. There was conflict on his face. He wasn’t so sure. She felt a little bad for him. It must feel like such a breach of trust to find this out, to know that he had been violated so insidiously.

“I don’t think she did it knowingly.” Darcy said quietly, “I think it was instinct or something. She felt her control on the situation slipping, so she turned the tables and brought you all around to her way of thinking.”

“She made us turn on you.” Steve awed.

“Maybe.” Darcy said stiffly, “Or maybe she brought what you really feel about me to the surface.”

Steve paled, “No.”

He shook his head and reached his hands across the table towards hers. Instinctively Darcy jerked back from his touch. He looked hurt. “I don’t—things, in my mind, when I think about you everything is so jumbled and confused. But I know I don’t want to hurt you.”

“So let’s unconfused things.” Darcy said calmly, “Let’s just talk and if anything seems…hinky, or mixed up about your memory or the way you feel conflicting with the things you did we can assume that it’s influenced based.”

Steve slowly nodded. “Okay.”

Darcy straightened up, “From the beginning then. Why let Wanda onto the team?”

“She was an asset. She wanted to do good and make up for her past mistakes.” Steve answered automatically. “I thought she deserved a chance at redemption.”

“Her mistakes like teaming up with a killer robot who wanted to take over the world. Those mistakes?”

“I believed she deserved a chance not to let her worst day define her.” Steve said in a clear voice.

“Days.” Darcy corrected, “She wasn’t having a bad ‘day’ it was days. She kidnapped me, drugged me, took me to Africa. Then she mind raped all of you. Incited mass destruction by going after Bruce. She aligned herself with the robot devil and committed atrocities in his name. And when he turned on her or she got wise to the evil of it all, she basically said ‘whoopsy’ and you forgave her.”
Steve clenched his jaw, “It wasn’t like that.”

“It fucking was like that and you know it.”

“I stand by my descision to let her on the team.” Steve claimed. “That’s on me.”

“Okay…moving on.” Darcy tapped her fingers on the table, “Why keep her on after I warned you she was a liability and going to kill a bunch of civilians?”

“I thought you were wrong.”

Darcy blinked at him. “You thought I was wrong?”

“I didn’t think we should throw someone away just because you had a feeling they might make a mistake. I thought if we trained hard enough, if I—if she could become one of us, that what you saw wouldn’t happen.” Steve seemed so earnest but his honesty was peppered with regret.

“Okay.” Darcy accepted.

“Okay?” Steve balked, “Just like that?”

Darcy shrugged, “Your reasons for keeping Wanda on the team, letting her join the team in the first place, has always been on you Steve. And it’s always been the stupidest thing you’ve ever done.” Steve’s nostrils flared but Darcy held up her hand placating, “But your heart was in the right place. I know that. I never doubted your motives in letting her join, just your reasoning.”

“Is there a distinction?” Steve asked, “Looking back now…I can see I was a fool. You were right; she shouldn’t have been on the team. And not so soon—I sent her into the field too soon. Me… It’s on me. I was responsible for her. For everything she did after she joined. I—” Steve started to get choked up. Darcy reached across the table and slipped her hand into his.

She held his hands tightly as he got his emotions under control. She couldn’t even imagine the amount of pressure Steve was under, being responsible for the team, the world, and reforming a former super-villainess? It was a lot. Darcy had empathy for the man and that outweighed her anger.

“I’m sorry.” Steve whispered. “I should have believed you from the beginning. I shouldn’t have gotten defensive and clung to Wanda. I thought I knew better than you. I wanted…I wanted to prove I was better than you thought I was.” Steve sighed. “Sometimes I feel like being an Avenger is the only thing I’m good at. Being a soldier, it’s all I know.”

“That’s not true.” Darcy interjected, “You’re so good at so many things Steve. You’re not—you don’t have to be a soldier if you don’t want to be….do you want to do something else? You don’t have to be an Avenger.”

Steve let go of her hands and crossed his arms in front of his chest. In a blink, Steve was wearing his Captain America suit. It was jarring to her, but he didn’t even seem to notice. He looked at her with such pain in his eyes as he asked, “Who am I if I’m not Captain America?”

“Steve. Rogers.” She said quickly and with conviction.

Steve gave her a sad look and asked, “Who’s he?”

“A kid from Brooklyn with a stubborn streak a mile long.” She quipped easily, “And more heart than an elephant…which I assume due to it’s large size, must have an equally big heart.” Steve didn’t even smile.
“I’m so far removed from that kid, I don’t even…life before this century feels like a dream.” Steve hung his head, “I’ve seen Peggy you know? She’s still alive, she remembers me, but it’s different. I have to pretend every time I go to see her, that’s it the first time we’re being reunited. She never remembers I’m back. I keep visiting though. She’s the one person alive, besides Bucky, who saw Steve Rogers before the serum and thought he was still worth something.”

“I’m sure if I met skinny short Steve, I’d have liked him just fine.” Darcy offered.

Steve frowned, “That Steve died when he went into that transformation chamber. The Steve, Bucky knew during the war died when I thought he died. And the Steve that was barely holding it together after all that, died when I put the plane down in the ice.” Steve’s face crumpled, “I thought I was done. I didn’t want to die but there was…I thought I would be able to see my ma and Buck and later on Peggy and the Commando’s when it was there time. I’d fought and I’d won and the price of victory was my life. And I was willing to pay it.”

His voice broke as he continued, “I fought my whole life, one way or another. I fought and fought and fought. And it was easy. Back then, it was easy. My enemy wasn’t shrouded in secret; he was a bully on the school yard, or a man with a red skull or a soldier wearing a swastika on his arm.”

“Life in the twenty first century is a lot more complicated. I’ll give you that.” Darcy conceded.

“I’m tired.” Steve admitted quietly, “I’m tired of failing or uncovering secrets and having to withstand betrayal.”

“Hashtag me too.” Darcy quipped in a monotone. She was really trying to joke it was just her default.

Steve gave her a look and she sighed. “We’ve gotten off topic Steve.” Steve quirked his brow. “We’re supposed to finding out how much haterode was coming from you and how much was Wanda.”

Steve nodded and straightened up in his chair. “Of course.”

“So, me being polyamorous. You being a hater. What up?” Darcy asked bluntly.

Steve blushed. “I was jealous.”

Darcy made a noise, “Duh.”

Steve’s face looked pinched as he admitted, “I don’t think you’re a slut.”

Darcy blinked several times so she wouldn’t start crying, “You don’t?” She had been most hurt by Steve’s personal attacks and vitriol. It was one thing for them to differ on team dynamics and other ‘work’ related stuff, but when he expressed personal…judgment, scorn, or disapproval, that’s what really got to her.

“No.” Steve looked at her searchingly, “I—never thought you were a whore. Or a slut. Or any of those disgusting words. I thought…l’ll admit that I didn’t and still don’t understand how you can love more than one person with all your heart. How you could commit yourself to them but also split your time between these different parties, and not feel cheated. I…”

“Say it.” Darcy prompted, “Don’t hold back. Now is the time for honesty Steve.”

He sighed heavily, “I—for some reason it seemed more acceptable in my mind when I thought about you, Tony and Ms. Potts being together. That seemed more…logical? Respectful? I don’t
know. But when it became clear you were also committed to Mr. Strange--”

“Dr. Strange.” Darcy corrected.

Steve blushed, “When it became you were in an intimate relationship with Dr. Strange and Pepper and Tony it just…it just seemed like you couldn’t really love all of them. I didn’t think—it didn’t seem possible.”

“And when you found out about my flirtation with Bucky?” Darcy prompted.

“I got jealous.” Steve confessed again. “There was a time…a long time ago, there was a time when I was in love with two people. The times back then weren’t like they are now and I guess. I guess I just got really jealous and nasty with you because of that. I--I was hard on you. I was harsh and … things get murky in my mind about how and why I treated you the way I did when we were all training together at the Avengers HQ. I know that in my heart I never wanted to hurt you but something in me just made me accept the evil things Wanda said about you, I was compliant and I aligned myself against you but I think, and I want you to know that I’m not shirking the responsibility for my part, but I think like you said, that period of time feels…tampered with.”

When Steve paused and made direct eye contact Darcy she knew she was crying even though she couldn’t feel it.

Steve spoke from the heart as tear drop after tear drop rolled down her face and onto the table between them. “I had a crush on you. I missed my opportunity. I was cruel and stupid. And I’m sorry. I’m so sorry Darcy. I can’t erase what was said or done, but I can promise to be different in the future. If you’ll give me a chance?”

Darcy stared at Steve’s earnest face for a long minute before wiping a hand over her own face. She was tired of not being friends with Steve. She didn’t know if she could ever trust him the way she used to, but she wanted to. She was just scared. She had looked up to him and it felt like he had trampled all over her heart and admiration.

“I can try.” Darcy declared quietly. Steve smiled gratefully at her.

He stood from his chair slowly, “Should we hug?” He asked with that boyish smile, “It feels like this is good moment to hug.”

Darcy snorted out a laugh and pushed her chair back, the feet scraped along the floor loudly. Steve was at her side in a second with his arms extended. Darcy tentatively reached out to hug him. It felt a little stiff and uncomfortable but…it was nice.

After the extended reconciliatory hug they broke apart and avoided looking at each other.

“So what do we do now?” Steve asked. Behind him, a door appeared.

Darcy blinked and pointed at it, she was certain this was a dream now. How could it not be? Steve turned and saw it. He turned back to her with a grin, he held out his hand asking, “Together?”

She put her hand in his gently and Steve squeezed it. She felt her lips twitch in a quick smile. They moved towards the door in tandem. “Forward we go.” Steve murmured as he reached for the door knob.

Darcy was back in the dungeon cell of Steve’s Asgardian prison. She was kneeling by his body as
he shot upright from the bed with a wheezing noise. Steve looked round with wild eyes. “Darcy?”

“I’m here.” Darcy answered.

Steve looked right past her as he called out for her again, “Darcy?”

She was in her astral form. He couldn’t see her. She put her hand through his chest and he shivered.

“You’re here. Aren’t you?” She touched him again and Steve shivered with a smile. “I’m not crazy.”

“No you’re not.” Darcy confirmed.

“Who are you talking to Steve?” Wanda called out from her cell, “Darcy isn’t here. You were
dreaming.”

Steve turned to address Wanda but Darcy felt tired all of a sudden again. Her eyes fell close quickly
and then she was gone.

When she woke up she did not feel compelled to get to her feet. She felt stiff and sore and kinda like
shit. She turned her head to take in her surroundings and let out a groan when she saw where she
was.

“Volstagg!” She called out, hopefully loud enough to wake the sleeping couple. “VOLSTAGG!”

“Wha-?”

“Who goes there!”

“It’s me! DON’T STEP ON ME!” Darcy yelled, before lowering her voice and changing her tone to
something more morose, “I ended up on the floor again.”

“Darcy?!” Hildy, Volstagg’s wife peered over the edge of the bed to look down upon her. “Is that
really you?”

The other woman was wiping at the sleep in her eyes obviously not fully awake yet. Darcy just lay
there motionless, she wasn’t sure she could get up even if she tried. A glance down at her body
confirmed her little ‘modesty’ blanket was still in place but she couldn’t find it in her to really give a
shit. She could hear Volstagg getting out of the bed on the other side. In a defeated voice Darcy
confirmed, “Yeah. It’s me.”

“By the gods!” Hildy gasped as she took in Darcy’s appearance. At the same time Volstagg
exclaimed, “Odin’s beard!”

Darcy felt the need to temper their shock with a little bit of levity so she asked, “Can you remind me
to get you guys a rug? It’s really cold down here on the floor.”

Neither husband nor wife laughed.

“Tough crowd.” Darcy muttered.
Darcy’s first Astral Look
Darcy’s Astral Look When She Goes To See Wanda (2nd look)

Darcy’s (3rd Look) When she sees Steve and Peter (not really mentioned or described but here it is)
Darcy’s 4th Astral Look (what she wears when she interrupts Loki’s sex)
Darcy’s 5th Astral Look (When she and Steve Talk)
*INSIGHT*
(commented suggested ladder of people getting pulled up the rainbow bridge to Asgard, just one after another, hand on ankle, the whole crazy crew getting lifted into the air. I liked that so here's this mental picture for you)
Darcy grabbed onto Wanda. Steve grabbed onto Darcy's ankle and Tony held onto him around Steve's middle. Then Peter webbed onto Wanda and pulled himself onto the dog pile. Then they all got abducted.

Also, crazy number of outfits is not because I'm addicted to searching for fashion inspiration for this story....well not the only reason anyway!

The end.
Chapter 43 – Peter Parker

Darcy awoke to a clatter.


The sound of Peter Parker fumbling around in the dark roused her into wakefulness momentarily. She called out questioningly, “Peter?”

“Uh. Yeah, it’s me. Sorry to wake you? I didn’t expect you to appear next to me in bed half dressed and I uh, fell off it. The bed I mean.” Peter confirmed. Darcy made a noise of acknowledgment.

“I didn’t think you were well enough to or well, I don’t know why you would choose to come to me and-” Darcy rolled over and fell back asleep in a matter of seconds. There was no urgent need to listen to the rest of what Peter had to say. She was comforted by the knowledge that she was safe and in the company of a friend, and that’s all she needed to allow herself to fall back into her restful slumber.

She was dreaming she was back in the sanctum, in Stephen’s bedroom. She was staring at herself in the mirror. She was dressed in the most gorgeous barely there dress, it was silver and sheer with glittery stars covering her important bits. She wore no undergarments, a fact obvious from bounty of spillage that was scarcely contained by the deep U shaped neckline of the dress. On her feet were matching sparkly shoes and on her head a tiara made of stars. Her makeup was simple but she had a bright bold red lip. Her skin practically glowed. She had never seen herself look more sexy and ethereal.

“You look like a dream come true.” His voice had Darcy whirling around on her heel to see Stephen sitting on the edge of the bed. He smiled at her, a small half smile that caused wrinkles to appear near his eyes. Oh, but he was a sight for sore eyes.
“Stephen.” Darcy breathed out. He was looking really foxy. He was shirtless and his muscles were glistening in the pale moonlight that streamed in from the open window.

“I often dream of you,” Stephen announced as she walked toward him, “but this dream feels different.”

She reached him and ran her hands through his hair. He had really good hair. Stephen closed his eyes as if savoring the feel of her fingers scratching along his scalp. She moved her hands down and cupped his jaw, tilting his head up.

And then they were kissing.

She sat astride his lap side saddle; her delicate dress would have ripped if she tried straddling him as she truly wished. Darcy let out a gasp when Stephen’s kiss moved from her lips to her throat. He sucked and licked at her pulse point and Darcy felt her heartbeat beginning to quicken.

They were lying down.

Darcy on her back, her hair spread out on the silky sheets and pillows. Stephen lie with his body parallel to hers, he held himself up slightly on one elbow as he pulled back from kissing her neck to stare at her. There was a sense of wonder in his eyes and Darcy glowed with pride for having put it there.

“This is a dream.” Stephen said quietly. Abruptly, he swooped down and recaptured her mouth in a heated kiss. Darcy let herself let go of logic and reason. She didn’t need such things where she was. All she needed was the man in her arms and his enthusiastic tongue.

She was naked. And so was he.

She had been worried about what would happen to their relationship, post-her-emotional-manipulation/time reversal but being with him this way, somehow eased her fears. The feel of his skin underneath her fingertips was reassuring. The tickling sensation of his beard against her skin as he kissed down her body was encouraging. As he made his way between the valleys of her breasts, across her stomach, and then finally at her womanhood, she was convinced they would survive all that had she had done to put their relationship in peril. Stephen set to work with his clever tongue and stiff and shaky fingers, he pulled the pleasure out of her with confidence. Bolstered by his physical show of love, Darcy set a goal in her mind to do the same for him.

Stephen was on the bed, lying on his back with his legs over the edge, his head was thrown back as he let out a guttural groan. Darcy was on her knees before him. She returned the favor with all the skill and enthusiasm she could muster.

He lie on top of her, they were in the middle of the bed, their legs entwined. Stephen stared down at her, tenderly he stroked a finger down her cheek. “I love you.” He declared softly. And then he was inside of her.

There was pleasure. Stephen moved over her and Darcy clung to him as their bodies came together again and again. There was sweat and heat and love. He kissed her and she dug her nails into his back. And when their lovemaking reached the climax they came together. And that was when Darcy knew it wasn’t real. Or at least this wasn’t actually happening. People coming at the same time was some bullshit that only happened in movies and romance novels. In real life someone was always playing catch up.

Stephen lie on his back with one arm behind his head, Darcy draped across his chest. They were the
picture perfect vision of a couple basking in the afterglow of successful intercourse. “This is a dream.” Darcy declared.

Stephen ran his fingers up and down the skin of her arm, causing gooseflesh to rise on her skin. “I know.” Stephen agreed, “It isn’t real.”

Darcy frowned, “I wouldn’t say that.”

“You’re on Asgard, probably already dead. And I’m stuck here on Earth, dreaming of you and a reunion that will probably never come to pass.” Stephen stated sadly.

“I’m alive.” Darcy assured him, “Tony too.”

“He was probably executed the second the Princess of Asgard arrived dead—”

“No.” Darcy slapped Stephen’s chest. “I’m alive and so is everyone else. We’re all fine and on Asgard.”

“You’re just a figment of my own optimism.” Stephen said dismissively.

Darcy shook her head defiantly, “No. I’m real.” She sat up on one elbow so she could look down at Stephen and make eye contact.

“I think this is really happening.” Darcy revealed, “I think us..talking right now, this meeting—it’s happening. Now. In real time, while we sleep.”

Stephen sat up, “What do you mean?”

“You said it yourself,” Darcy pointed out, “This is a dream, but it feels different.”

Stephen closed his eyes and Darcy watched as his eyes moved rapidly behind his lids. He seem to fade from her sight for a few seconds before returning to normal. He opened his eyes wide only to stare at her with awe. He pushed her away slightly so he could sit up fully; she followed his lead and did the same.

*She was wearing the sexy/ethereal gown and star tiara again.*

Darcy blinked in slight confusion down at her attire. She had just been naked. “How did I…?” She trailed off, touching the fabric of her top. She looked up at Stephen to see if he noticed her seemingly instantaneous change in clothing, but he seemed to not even notice the odd occurrence.

“I astral projected just to confirm that I am indeed asleep.” Stephen informed her, “I am.”

“I astral projected too! Not just now, but before. Back on Asgard.” Darcy relayed excitedly, “I can super duper nerd study like you now!”

Stephen lifted his hand to her face and cupped her cheek, “This feels realer than any dream I’ve ever had.” His hand fell away. “But this is a dream.” He stated with certainty.

“I agree.” Darcy said with a sigh, “But whose? Yours? Or mine?”

Stephen made an ‘hmm’ noise and Darcy stared at him contemplatively. “When I astral projected on Asgard I was under the influence of some healing nectar, and I was in a coma…kinda. But this doesn’t feel like that.”

“I dunno, I was in a coma.” Darcy reminded him sassily, “You’d need to talk to Lady Eir or Loki to find out. I can ask them the next time I’m awake if you want.”

Stephen waved his hand dismissively, “I don’t think the two instances are related.”

Darcy made a noise of disagreement. “Well, they are and they aren’t.”

Stephen looked at her expectantly. Darcy explained, “Me. I’m how everything’s related. Right?”

Stephen nodded in acknowledgement, “I see your point.”

*They were in the library of the sanctum. She sat in her favorite red velvet arm chair as Stephen paced in front of the shelved books.*

“Woah.” Darcy commented quietly, “I guess this little visit is about more than my need for a magically assisted booty call.”

Stephen stopped pacing, “What?”

“We were just in bed.” Darcy said frankly, she gestured to their current location, “And now we’re here.”

“So?”

“Do you remember how we got here?” Darcy asked. Stephen looked around the room that was so familiar to them both, as if just realizing where they were.

“I don’t remember.” Stephen murmured.

“The relocation was natural for you.” Darcy said observationally. Stephen’s eyes lit up as he stared at her and concluded, “But you noticed the change.”

Darcy stood and walked over to Stephen. She ran her hands up his now clothed chest and let them rest on his shoulders. Looking up at his face she could see his brain working. She smiled at him, “I love you too.”

“What?”

Darcy stood up on her tip toes and kissed his lips softly. She lowered herself back down to the floor and locked her fingers together behind his neck. Her smile grew as Stephen put his hands on her waist. “I didn’t get to say it back, before, when we were having slightly graphic dream sex.” She explained, she wished there was music playing as she repeated herself, “I love you too.”

*The room and all of its trappings fell away. They were left in a void of darkness, but it wasn’t foreboding it was special. They stood together, arms locked around each other. Stephen was smiling down at her with this loving expression. She was sure her face reflected her own stupidly in love-ness.*

*Music began to play. They swayed in place.*

*Stephen wore a tux. And he wore it very well. The void of darkness was a stage and a spotlight shone down on the two of them. They began to dance.*

Darcy knew in real life she and Stephen could never pull off the Ginger Rogers and Fred Astaire like choreography as they glided along the darkened dance floor. There were lifts and jumps and fancy spin moves that she had seen in movies but never even attempted in real life. It was a wonderful
The music changed. Stephen held Darcy, her face pillowed on his chest. They swayed slowly. Darcy hummed along with the tune. Stephen put his cheek on the top of his head. One hand ran over the back of her head, gently petting her hair.

“I think I spent about two or three days with the healers. I astral projected and saw Tony and Loki and the others, all while still being comatose.” Darcy said softly. Stephen held her tighter.

“You’re different.” Stephen whispered.

“After those two or three days, I finally healed enough for my stupid power to make a mess of things once again.” Darcy said with a slight chuckle, “I teleported to Volstagg’s house. Ended up on his and his wife’s floor, once again.”

“They must have been happy to see you.” Stephen commented. He kept up the illusion of dancing, swaying in time with the song, but she was content to stand there and just hug him. It’s what she wanted after all, to just have him in her arms and feel him and know that they were still…Stephen and Darcy. Even after what she did.

“I was still pretty messed up. The fall, it broke my back. Along with a bunch of other bones.” Darcy inhaled, she couldn’t really smell him but she imagined she could. “I was naked, except for a fancy Asgardian doily that covered my bits and pieces.”

Stephen let out a laugh, “And how did that go over?”

The smile fell from her face, “Honestly they barely even noticed. They were too horrified about the state my broken body was in.”

Stephen tensed in her arms momentarily before he continued to sway in place. “What happened next?”

“They sent word to the palace...I was in and out of consciousness, but I think what happened next was, Volstagg in his deluded chivalry wanted to get me of the floor and put me on his bed. When he moved me, I screamed so, so loud. Like I said, my back was broken and still healing.”

“You never move someone with a spinal injury.” Stephen muttered as he ghosted his hand up and down her spine, “Stupid oaf could have paralyzed you were you not Asgardian.”

Darcy shivered her voice growing distant, “I passed out from the pain. It hurt so much. I woke up to the sound of Loki in the disguise of Axel, berating Volstagg. Lady Eir and Hildy were helping a couple of guards move me onto this fancy backboard thing.”

“Good for Loki.” Stephen cheered quietly.

Darcy smiled despite herself, “Volstagg didn’t mean any harm. He just didn’t know any better.”

“He’s a fool.”

“He was trying to be gentlemanly.” Darcy defended, “He didn’t want to leave the Princess on his cold drafty floor.”

“Did Loki imprison him?” Stephen asked sounding hopeful.

“No.” Darcy answered quickly, “He wouldn’t dare. He knows whatever pain and punishment the
“Jails of Asgard provide, his wife would do so much worse after we left. Hildy told him to leave me where I was but after she left the room to deal with one of her children, his conscious got to him and overrode his good sense. Hildy was piiiiiissed.” Stephen chuckled at her exaggeration.

“I only remember bits and pieces of the journey back to the palace.” Darcy revealed, “Loki was by my side the whole time. Being awake, I actually got to see his real face which was nice, but it was very draining trying to stay awake so I didn’t fight it.”

“Good.”

“I remember once we reached the palace though, the whispers abounded and grew so loud that they woke me from my rest.” Darcy cuddled closer to Stephen seeking comfort.

Stephen held her closer still, “Do you fear the people of Asgard will reject you as Princess after seeing you in your weakened state?”

“No.” Darcy answered in a detached voice, “Just the opposite.”

She remembered them, all those eyes looking down at her as she was carried through the great halls of the court. The women looked on in confusion and pity. The men looked stone faced, eyes a blazed with anger. She imagined the sight of her battered body being escorted to the healers would gain her more good will from the Asgardians than she ever expected.

“Are you there now?” Stephen asked, “With the healers? In an induced coma?”

“I was…” Darcy began to shuffle her feet in time with the music, she didn’t want to waste her last moments with Stephen moping over her sad state of affairs. She answered him in an optimistic tone, “But no. I think I’m healed now. Or very nearly. I teleported to Peter.”

Stephen’s brow furrowed, “Peter Quill? The Guardian? Are you not on Asgard anymore?”

“No.” Darcy said with a smile, “Peter Parker. The Spiderman. Still on Asgard.”

“Who’s Peter Parker?” Stephen asked and Darcy suddenly remembered she and Tony had forgotten to tell Stephen about Spiderman’s super secret identify and age. “Whoops.”

“Hmm?”

“Don’t worry about it. You’ll meet him soon.” Darcy assured Stephen. The music that had faded into the background as they spoke suddenly grew louder again. Darcy hummed along.

“You’re coming back soon?” Stephen asked. She could see the desperation he tried to hide. She unlocked her hands from around his neck and used one finger to smooth down the worried furrow his eyebrows had twisted up into.

“When I’m wake up, when I’m well enough, I’m going to use the Bifrost to come back to Earth to pick you up and bring you to Asgard.” Darcy promised with a grin. Stephen looked a little taken aback.

“What?” She smiled at him shyly, “I miss you. And I want you with me.”

“I miss you.” Stephen admitted, he was a little glassy eyed, “This has been the week from hell. After what we went through…having to go through something so similar so soon. Not knowing if you survived. Watching footage of the vicious beating Wanda gave you. I’ve been driving myself crazy trying to get to Asgard to find out what happened to you and Tony--”
“Shhhhh.” Darcy put a finger over his lips, “You don’t need to worry anymore Stephen.” Darcy lifted up onto her toes and kissed him sweetly. Stephen’s shoulders sagged as she pulled him towards her, encouraging him to once again dance with her.

“I’m coming back for you.” Darcy stated earnestly, “We’ll be together soon.”

“You don’t have to--” Stephen tried to protest but Darcy just deliberately stepped on his toes muttering, “Shut up.”

“Dance with me?” Darcy implored. Stephen nodded; putting one hand on her waist he extended his other hand. Darcy blushed as she put her hand in his, a little uncomfortable with the old fashioned formal dance pose, she put her trust in Stephen and soon they were off. Twirling and spinning around the floor once again with skill and ability neither of them possessed in the waking world.

She could hear the sound of a door being opened and the soft padding of feet on a stone floor. She could feel sun on her face, but looking around she could see nothing but the darkened space she and Stephen were dancing on. They were alone but she could hear vague mutterings coming from somewhere…

“I think I’m waking up.” Darcy informed him sadly.

Stephen leant down and kissed her lips quickly. “Let us savor this till the last.”

He surprised her when he began to sing along to the song that was playing but fading, “I know you, I danced with you once upon a dream…”

Committed to dancing and being with Stephen for as long as possible, Darcy tried to ignore the encroaching sounds of the waking world. She could barely hear the music anymore, she sang along with Stephen, “I know it’s true, That visions are seldom all they seem, But if I know you, I know what you’ll do, You’ll love me at once…”

“The way you did, Once upon a dream.” Darcy mumbled the words as she was dragged into wakefulness. She could still feel the taste of Stephen upon her lips, she could feel the heat of his body against hers, but like a dream she felt the sensations fading quickly. She hoped that when she fulfilled her promise to pick up Stephen from Earth and bring him to Asgard to be with her and Tony, the realness of what they experienced in the dream world was proven to be true. But there was a sliver of doubt that it was all in her head.

“Dreaming about me?” Darcy turned her head to the side, her eyes fluttering open.

“Tony.” She said with a horse voice. She reached out for him and he sat down on the bed, crawling over to her. He put his head on her chest as he slipped his arms around her waist. She hugged him back tightly.

“I missed you.” Tony confessed, she felt the breath of his words against her skin through the lacy nightgown she was wearing. She did not dwell on who had dressed her. Instead she focused on Tony.
She threaded her hands into his hair and leant down to kiss the top of his head. “I missed you too.”

“I love you.”

“I love you.”

They held each other for a while and when she felt Tony’s tears of relief hit her skin she held him closer and kissed his head again murmuring, “It’s alright. I’m alright.”

“I thought you were going to die.” Tony whispered, “You look liked you were dead.”

“I’m sorry.”

Tony sat up and she got her first real good look at his face. He had dark circles under his eyes, there were worry lines around his mouth she wasn’t certain he had before, and his eyes themselves were red and bloodshot. “Don’t do that again.” Tony pled.

“I won’t.” Darcy promised, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry I worried you. I’m sorry I was so stupid.”

Tony cut off her words with a soft kiss. Darcy let her head fall back onto the pillow. Tony’s kiss became more desperate and passionate. He bit her lip and she opened her mouth to mewl, his tongue slid inside and she couldn’t contain her moan as his hands set to wandering her body.

The night dress she was wearing was lace and very nearly sheer, it put a barrier between her and Tony’s hands but still allowed her to feel the heat of him as he groped her chest and gripped her hip.

“Tony.” She gasped out. Tony advanced forward, climbing on top of her body until he was straddling her, aligning their lower regions. He looked down at her and she had a stray thought about how her hair must look. She raised a hand to her face and felt around. She couldn’t feel any raised lines or puffy swollen skin. She certainly didn’t feel like anything was broken, and she would have felt it with Tony practically sitting on her.

“Lady Eir said you would fully recover but I don’t think I believed it until now.” Tony said quietly. His eyes were scanning her face critically.

“How long?”

“You woke up at Volstagg’s house two days ago.” Tony informed her. He reached behind her neck, she lifted her head to assist, not really sure what his goal is. The night gown she was wearing went up to her neck, Tony unbuttoned it. She allowed him to peel the garment down her front, folding it to reveal her naked chest to his gaze.

He looked like he was going to cry. “You didn’t even scar.” He whispered reverently. He reached out to touch her stomach with shaking hands, only to retract them at the last second.

Darcy put her hand over his and forced him to touch her. Tony winced as he made his excuses, “No, we don’t have to. You just woke up, I shouldn’t have mauled you--” He looked at her with worried eyes, he made to get off of her but she quickly ushered his grasp higher until he was cupping her breasts. “I don’t want to hurt you.” He confessed quietly.

“You could never.”

Tony wrenched his hands off her person and got off of her. He fell beside her on the bed, she could see the erection clearly outlined in his loose pants. Tony shook his head denying, “Nope. I don’t want to take advantage. I can wait until you’re ready. Really ready. I don’t need--”
“Tony,” She interrupted. She gave him an annoyed look as she rolled on top of him, straddling him in a complete reversal of their positions only moments ago. “I’ve been in a magical coma recovering from a humiliating beating. I’m sure my hair’s a birds nest. I probably have morning breath and I’m not sure what room we’re in or who’s on the other side of that door over there, but Tony,” They locked eyes and Darcy tried to convey how much she needed him not to be afraid to touch her, “I need you.”

Slowly she lowered herself down until they were chest to chest. She let her mouth hover over his, their lips a hairs breath away from touching. “Tony?”

Tony tentatively put his hands on her hips. He slowly let his hands slide over the naked skin of her back, up and down he teased the skin of her spine. She moved slightly to the left and kissed the corner of his mouth. She kissed his cheek and then along his jaw.

She circled her hips, grinding down on his lower half. Something was driving her to establish a physical connection with Tony as soon as possible. Just like she had with Stephen.

“I need you.” Darcy whispered against the skin of his throat.

Tony let out a noise of frustration as he whined, “I’m trying to be good.”

“I don’t want you to be good.” Darcy answered as she ran her tongue along his lower lip, “I want you to be my Tony.”

Tony responded with a groan before he surged up and once again took possession of her lips. They kissed passionately as she literally ripped the clothes from his body. He bunched up the skirt of her long night dress around her waist and when he sank inside her she bit him on the shoulder.

Their love making was frantic and hurried and rushed. And he came before she did, but brought her to her peak with his mouth afterwards. Twice.

“I think that thing that Odin and Frigga did to me…did something to me.” Darcy confessed as she and Tony lay together in the bed following their intense coupling. Tony’s head was pillowed against her naked breast and his leg was in between hers. She was pretty sure he was drawing math problems into her skin with his fingertip.

“What do you mean?” Tony asked without lifting his head.

She ran her hand through the damp hair at the back of his head. Tony arched his back like a cat getting a good scratch. “I astral projected while I was in my magical coma.”

“Astral projected?” Tony’s head shot up. His face scrunched up in intrigue.

She nodded, “Yeah, I saw you and Loki meeting up in the dungeon.”

“What makes you think you astral projected to see our meeting? Couldn’t it have been a dream?”

Tony challenged.

Darcy gave him a flat look, “You accused him of wanting to date rape me and he attacked your fear of growing old and dying and me being out of your league. Which I’m not by the way.”

Tony clenched his jaw as he tried not to show his emotions. She saw the fear and insecurity though.
And the shock that told her she hadn’t dreamed that.

“It was like being a ghost.” Darcy continued, she cupped his cheek in her hand, “I tried to touch you but my hand went through you, but you shivered at the contact.” Tony’s face grew thoughtful and she could see gears turning in his brilliant mind.

“I also think I can dream walk.” Darcy offered more hesitantly, “This…this one I’m not a hundred percent sure about. Can’t be until I talk to the people I think I dream walked into?...That sounds so weird.”

“Dream walk?”

“Well, I could call it dream invasion or dream leaping but that former sounds so aggressive and the ladder makes me think of Quantum Leap the TV show and that’s not what I’m talking about.” Darcy chewed on her lower lip, a little nervous how Tony would react to learning she had ‘leveled up’ yet again.

Tony stared at her with this guilty and hurt expression, “I haven’t slept. I mean I have, but barely.” Darcy gently guided Tony’s head back down to her chest as he explained, “Ever since Loki let me and the kid upstairs, basically upgrading our prison to a nicer room, I haven’t been able to do anything other than pace and try to escape these fucking rooms to see you.”

“Rooms?”

“Me and the kid have an adjoining suit.” Tony explained, “When you woke up Peter by teleporting into bed with him, he was very flattered and adorably flustered by the way, I was being dragged back to my room by an amused and annoyingly mustachioed guard.” Fandral’s face flashed in her mind, but she said nothing and let Tony continue on with his story. “Apparently the guys Loki sent to keep us locked up and away from you, actually have a sense of humor so I haven’t been beaten with any socks full of soap yet….I made it as far as the healing room this time. When I came back, Peter was waiting for me. Told me you’d arrived.”

Tony hugged her around the waist and turned his face so he could kiss her sternum, “Practically knocked the kid out the window in my haste to get over here.”

“I’m sorry.” Darcy couldn’t help but apologize. She could see, just from looking at him, how much stress her little coma/beating/near death experience had put on her mortal boyfriend and she regretted causing him so much mental anguish.

“Don’t be.” Tony ordered, “You’re here. You’re healed and we’re together. What more could I ask for?”

“A normal girlfriend.” Darcy supplied quietly, “One who doesn’t come up with stupid plans that get her back broken and her face mangled and abduct you to another planet to deal with her bitchy adopted brother who invaded your home planet and threw you out of a skyscraper window that one time.”

“If I wanted normal I would still be with Pepper.” Tony lifted his head so his chin was resting on her chest, allowing him to stay on top of her and yet look at her face. “I want you.”

“I want you too.” Darcy said in a tight voice. Her eyes were watery and she tried not to think of the million ways her relationship with Tony could and probably would end in inevitable heartbreak.

“Are you sure I’m worth all this trouble though?”

Tony lifted up on his elbow so he was more sitting up, he had a determined and stubborn gleam in
his eye. He grabbed her face roughly and squeezed her cheeks so her lips puckered uncomfortably. “You don’t get to deny me now. One little brush with death is not enough to shake us Darcy. You hear me? We’re stronger than all the bullshit life throws at us.”

“But—”

He let go of her face only to plant his palms flat against the bed so he could hold himself above her, putting them nose to nose. “I’ll admit Loki got in my head for a bit there, but don’t tell me my insecurity rubbed off on you too. I had a lot of time to think about you and me and everything in between while you were asleep and I was in prison.”

Darcy felt the tears well up in her eyes as she admitted, “I don’t want to hold you back or give you a complex Tony. I love you too much to hurt you just by being myself and being with you.”

Tony’s determined expression melted away into one of understanding and love. “You don’t hold me back Darce, you hold me up.”

Darcy let out a choking sobbing sound. Tony lowered himself so he could kiss her cheek, “I love you and if we end up like Anna Nicole Smith and J. Howard Marshal so be it.”

Darcy let out a laugh despite her tears.

“You willing to go the distance with this old man?” Tony asked. She could sense the courage it took for him to ask her that. She also knew him well enough to know that he thought himself less than her, but still selfish enough to want her anyway.

A million responses raced through her head, all variations on a theme, some funny some heartwarming. She settled on simplicity. “Yes Tony. Yes.”

With just a hint of a smile, Tony leaned in real close and kissed her sweetly. When their lips parted Tony stroked her cheek and whispered, “‘Til death us part baby.”

“And beyond.” Darcy added.

An hour later she and Tony were showered and ended up eating breakfast in bed, even though it was technically the afternoon. While in the shower Tony’s eyes remained unfocused and his movements mechanical, and he couldn’t stop yawning. He washed his hair with shampoo twice and with body soap once. He was obviously exhausted. Secretly Darcy began to plot against him.

Servants had come by while they were in the shower and the bed sheets had been changed and the food was waiting for them. Darcy drew the drapes closed, dimming the room against the bright afternoon light. She lured Tony back into bed and under the covers with cooing words and gentle hands. She hand fed him and kept giving him kisses in between bites.

“I know what you’re doing.” Tony accused as he licked her fingertips of crumbs. Darcy smirked back innocently.

“I just want to snuggle with my Tony bear.” Darcy said in a sickeningly sweet tone, “I have no idea what you’re talking about.”

After finishing off the food, she drew him back against the pillows until he was all but lying down.
She told him about her dream with Steve and then Stephen. He postulated that the only reason she didn’t teleport or ‘dream walk’ to/into him when she was better, was because he was constantly awake. A theory she agreed to. He made it clear he wanted to join her on the trip back to Earth to retrieve Stephen, but she wasn’t so sure. She wanted to get Stephen by the end of the day, and Tony, frankly looked like a strong gust of wind might knock him over.

She traced the tender skin under his eyes with her fingertips. “You look tired.” She commented.

Tony frowned and pushed her hand away, “I’m fine we should get dressed.”

Tony made a move to sit up but she held him back down to the bed. Tony, try as he might, was a mortal man and he just did not have the stamina to go on a weeklong vigil and keep operating like normal. He needed to sleep. And she doubted he ate much while she was incapacitated either.

“You should stay here and take a nap Tony.” Darcy said in a no nonsense tone. “I’ll be fine on my own for a couple hours.”

“No.” Tony grumped, “I’m not letting you out of my sight.”

Darcy smiled at him, “I love you.” Tony looked conflicted with returning her loving sentiment and continuing on arguing why he should accompany her, everywhere, for ever after.

Darcy leaned forward and kissed Tony tenderly on the forehead. She covered his eyes with her hand and whispered in his ear, “C’mon Tony. Aren’t you tired? Don’t you want to sleep? Maybe you’ll have a dream about me? You and dream Darcy could have a very good time getting up to no good.” She coaxed in a sing song voice. She removed her hand from his eyes and let out a sigh of relief when he didn’t immediately open his eyes to glare at her.

“I’m not tired.” Tony protested in a drowsy tone. She kissed each of his eyelids and pet his hair. In a commanding voice she said, “Sleep.”

He was out like a light.

She admired his sleeping face and contemplated conjuring some makeup to draw on his face, but decided to let him rest. He’d be grumpy enough when he woke up and found her gone.

Darcy felt compelled to ready herself for battle, so to speak, but she also wanted to flaunt a lot of skin so any Asgardian passerby-ers could rest assured she was healed. She went to conjure herself an outfit, when she realized she had no idea where her bag was, and thus could not conjure anything.

With a pout Darcy knocked on the adjoining door that Tony had indicated he shared with Peter. She opened the door slowly, not wanting to run into another naked penis situation, especially when it involved a minor she didn’t actually know all that well. “Hello?”

“Miss Darcy?!” Peter popped up from behind the door to a closet. He had a bright smile on his face.

“Shh.” Darcy closed the door behind her as quietly as she could, “Tony’s sleeping. Keep it down.”

“Oh.” Peter looked pleased as he closed the closet and approached her, “How’d you manage that, wait, never mind I have really good hearing and I know how you wore him out.”
Darcy blushed, “Yeah.”

Peter frowned at her robbed attire. “You looking for some clothes Miss Darcy?”

“Yes please.” Darcy admitted quietly. Peter pulled out a hanger with one garment on it. It was a short green dress with stars all over it, a deep V and a waist that was cinched with a pretty belt.

“There are also accessories.” Peter informed her, gesturing with his chin she saw that a chair that held a bag, shoes, and some jewelry. “The Kings messenger sent this over late last night when he heard you would be waking up soon.”

Darcy took the hanger from him with a bashful smile. Peter smiled warmly at her, “The bathrooms through there.”

Darcy scurried past him as she clutched the top of her robe closed with one hand, she felt a little uncomfortable to be so revealing dressed while this teenager stood before her with his shirt open and his insane abs on display. “Thanks.”

When she emerged from the washroom dressed, Peter was also thankfully dressed and sitting on the bed cross legged. He was wearing Asgardian clothing and he looked like a puppy patiently waiting to be told he was going on a walk. “Asgard fashion looks good on you Peter.”

In response Peter’s face went cherry red, he stuttered out an embarrassing response, “You good look as well. Pretty. I mean, you look pretty as well um, Miss Darcy.”

“You don’t have to call me Miss Darcy. Just Darcy is fine.” His eyes tracked her to the chair as she slipped on the other items that had been left out for her. She opened the bag, it was pretty with a moon and sun on it, but it was not an infinity bag. Just a normal one.

“So are we going home now Miss Darcy?” Peter asked as she finished putting on her last shoe. “I mean, just Darcy.”

“If you want to you can.” Darcy offered. “I plan to go back to Earth today to retrieve Stephen, he’s my other boy—he’s a wizard.” Darcy didn’t know why she felt compelled to omit her true relationship with Stephen to Peter, but it probably had something to do with residual paranoia from being publicly judged and called a slut.

“Great!” Peter cheered, “When do we leave?”

“After I speak with the King.” Darcy muttered as she made her way to the door, Peter followed close behind. When she opened the door she was greeted by a happy sight.

“Hogun!” She shouted. The grim man’s faced transformed with a joyful grin. She ran forward and threw her arms around the warrior. “You’re here.”

“You’re awake.” Hogun responded as he squeezed her back lightly.

“I am also here,” She turned to see Fandral leaning against the wall next to the door she had run out of. “I am also awake.” He sniffed as if offended, but his laughing eyes told her it was all in the name of jest.

“Fandral!” She said with a smile. He met her half way as she went to hug him. “I’m so glad to see you.”

“As am I, Princess.” Fandral whispered into her ear right before he picked her up and spun her
around causing her to let out a squeal of delight. When he put her down back on her feet he swooped in and captured her lips in a deep kiss before she had time to even think.

“Let her breathe man.” Hogun jeered, pushing playfully at his friend forcing Fandral to break contact with her lips.

Darcy’s face felt flush. She spied Peter over Fandral’s shoulder and he looked confused and a little offended. Darcy took a step away from the warrior and her past beau. “You two have been guarding Tony and Peter?”

Hogun nodded as Fandral explained, “The King himself asked us to for care for your allies while you lie indisposed during your healing. I offered to guard you yourself, but the King chose to give that honor to his personal guard and attendant Axel.”

“Your man is a wily one.” Hogun remarked with the hint of a smile. Darcy smiled proudly agreeing, “He is indeed.”

“He loves you?” Fandral said with a questioning brow.

“He does.” Darcy answered softly, “And I love him.”

Fandral looked a little forlorn even as he offered her words of kindness, “I’m happy for you.”

“Mr. Stark barely ate or slept at all while you were in the Asgardian hospital Mis—Darcy.” Peter added. The young man eyed Fandral suspiciously, “Kept these guys on their toes with his escape attempts.”

“Yes, Princess your Man of Iron was most distressed by your absence and grievous injury. I was half worried he would kill himself with vexation alone before you awoke.”

“He’s sleeping now.” Darcy explained, “And I made him eat something.”

There was a lull in the conversation as Darcy stared at the door which lead to the room Tony was sleeping in. She was tempted to go inside and wake him up, just so he could be with her, because with him by her side she felt invulnerable in a way that had nothing to do with her body or Asgardian heritage.

“Who harmed you?” Hogun asked breaking the silence. There was steel lining his words. His question had an instanteous affect on Fandral’s usually jovial disposition.

“Yes Princess, pray tell us what rogue we may dispatch for you to avenge the abuse you have endured. We will do it gladly no matter what world the culprit is on.” Fandral added, there was no playfulness in his tone. She was reminded of the serious and intimate conversation they had shared long ago, when he vowed to serve Asgard until his death and with it if necessary. Fandral had his faults and his vices but he was a warrior of Asgard for a reason.

Darcy evaded answering the question with one of her own, “Can you take me to the King? I need to speak to him at once.”

Hogun and Fandral exchanged a silent look, both seemed to understand she didn’t want to talk about her savage beating and she appreciated them so much for letting the subject drop.

Fandral smiled at her toothily and offered her his arm, “Of course, Princess. Whatever you desire.”
Hogun and Fandral led her and Peter through the halls of the palace. Every person they passed bowed to her and as soon as they passed, she could hear the indistinct sounds of the people twittering. The more Asgardians who saw her and showed her undue respect, the tighter she clung to Fandral’s arm. She had been uncomfortable with the attention of paparazzi back home, she had never thought through how much worse it could be on Asgard, what with her being officially ‘royal’ and everything.

When they finally reached the grand throne room, the guards at the doors dropped to one knee before her with their heads lowered in reverence. “Princess.” They said in unison, hands on their hearts.

Darcy exploded, “What the fuck guys!”

“Princess.” Fandral said warningly. Darcy ignored him, letting go of his arm she approached the kneeling guards and knocked on of their helmets like it was a door.

“Get up.” The guard she had touched looked up in confusion. Darcy repeated herself more forcefully, “Get up!”

Both guards rose to their feet. “Princess Darcy?”

“You assholes are the same guards who have been stationed at these doors every time I’ve been here. You guys have tried to bar me from entering like a hundred times!” She realized she was exaggerating but really, the whole bowing in reverence thing was so uncomfortable for her she didn’t care if she was making a scene. “And now you’re down on one knee just ‘cause I rolled up to the door?”

“Uh…” The guards exchanged a fearful glance with each other.

“What’s your name?” Darcy poked one guard in the chest.

“Brúnn your majesty.” Darcy looked expectantly at his friend. “Vakr my liege.”

“Well Brúnn and Vakr, you’ve know me. I’m annoying and loud and not proper or polite at all. And yeah, now I’m the Princess and everything, but you and everybody else has got to cut this bowing shit out.”

“Princess?”

“I mean it.” Darcy punctuated her point with a finger to Vakr’s chest plate, “Spread the word. The Princess does not like being bowed to. I find it uncomfortable and demeaning and weird. I don’t like it, so just treat me normal!”

“Yes Princess.” The men answered in unison. They then stepped aside and opened the door for her.

As she walked forward Fandral whispered in her ear, “You can’t order people to stop bowing to you.”

Hogun added, “It is a sign of respect.”

“Yeah, well their respect is giving me hives.” Darcy muttered. Then she realized that all three men were following her inside. She whirled on her heel and held her arms out. “Stop.”

“What?”
“You’re not coming with me.” Hogun nodded respectfully and stepped back, once again standing on the other side of the threshold.

“Darcy, are you sure it’s wise—” Darcy cut off Fandral with a snap of her fingers and a command, “Go.”

Brúnn moved forward and put a hand on Fandral’s shoulder. Darcy couldn’t suppress the smile from her face as Fandral narrowed his eyes at the guard. In a completely self aware constriction she relished being the Princess and being obeyed blindly.

Fandral allowed himself to maneuvered out of the doorway without further comment. Her eyes then turned to Peter. He was scuffing his boot along the floor. Suddenly he became aware of her eyes on him and he looked up.

“You sure you’ll be alright on your own Mis—Darcy?” He glanced behind her at the throne. She didn’t have to look to know that Loki was lounging on it looking all dramatic. “I could go with you. I’d keep quiet and you know I know how to keep a secret.”

He earnestly just wanted to help her. She could see it in his face. Darcy smiled at the teenager tenderly.

She patted his bicep comfortingly, “I’ll be fine. Won’t even take that long, we’ll have you back home in time for supper…or breakfast, I’m not really sure how the time difference works from planet to planet.” Peter nodded and stepped back with Fandral and Hogun. She nodded at the guards and the door was closed on her friends.

Darcy kicked off her shoes and broke out into a sprint. The throne room had a very long walk to the golden seat of the king and she was anxious to see Loki, she had no patience for pretty but uncomfortable shoes.

She ran, the sound of her bare feet slapping upon the stone floor echoed throughout the hall. Loki dropped his scepter to the ground and descended the steps, meeting her at the first platform that led to the throne. She ran into his open arms and for some reason she started crying. She didn’t even know why at first but the second they were alone; it was like this damn broke inside of her.

“Loki!” She gasped in between sobs, “I was so stupid! So, so stupid!” Loki held her close as they fell in a heap on the floor.

She somehow ended up in his lap with her head on his shoulder. As she cried he ran a comforting hand in circles on her back. She cried for a long while before she was able to speak.

“I failed.” She admitted with a sniffle, “I fucked up so bad.”

“What happened?” Loki asked sounding desperate and concerned his true emotions on display for all to hear. “Your men admitted it was the witch that hurt you but none were clear on exactly how it happened.”

“Tell me.” He demanded sternly. Darcy pulled back so she could look her brother in the face.

There was such naked worry in his expression that she felt guilty for causing it and had to look away as she spoke, “I tried to take the witch on by myself. Well, after a failed attempt by a bunch of
wizards. They failed spectacularly, then failed I failed equally if not more so spectacularly.”

“How?” Darcy sniffed her eyes still downcast in shame and self pity. To admit the truth was hard, but she knew that if anyone could understand making poor life choices it would be Loki.

Loki repeated himself when she didn’t answer immediately, “How? Speak!” He lifted her chin so she would meet his gaze. “Darcy.” He implored.

Darcy took a big breathe and then explained as succinctly as she could, “Wanda killed Tony. I cut her head off. Stephen has a magical artifact and he can mess with time, so I killed myself in order to manipulate him into rewinding it to save me and thus Tony.” Darcy felt tears well up and fall over her cheeks but she continued, “So when the big fight came around the second time, which is actually the first since the first fight got erased, I didn’t want to fight her.”

“How?”

“She can’t die. She’s important. Too important to die before… I can’t fight her because if I do, I’ll kill her again.”

Loki squinted, “You remember this alternate version of events?”

“I was shone what happened so I could learn from my past mistakes.” Darcy explained, “But I know if the same thing happened, or if it was you, or Stephen or Thor or anyone else I cared about who got killed, my reaction would be the same. I’d kill her. No hesitation, no thought process, no considering of the consequences. I’d just murder her.”

“Revenge. It’s a powerful motivator.” Loki said knowingly.

“So this time, I tried to not fight her. And to not let her fight near the ones I love. I…tried to get her away via portal, but she got in my head and I fell and she didn’t. I broke my back and a lot of other bones. Then she started beating on me.”

Loki clenched his jaw. His whole body seemed to drop several degrees in temperature. She shivered at the cold as she admitted, “I could have fought, flat on my back I was still dangerous enough to defend myself. I could have blocked her punches, thrown some of my own. Grabbed her leg and squeezed until I crushed bone. But I didn’t, I couldn’t risk it.” Darcy let out a sob, “I don’t know how to fight this fight. I can’t seem to win her over and fix whatever I did to make her so hateful and crazy.”

“Maybe she’s just a crazy and hateful bitch. Have you considered you might have nothing to do with it?” Loki suggested. He was so on her side that it hurt. Darcy shook her head ‘no’ and curled her hands into the lapels of his robe, clinging to him tightly.

“I’ve seen her in visions. She wasn’t like this. She’s not supposed to be like this. I did it to her I know I did. I just don’t know how to undo it.” She began to cry again. The tears seemed to have no end. She cried for the pain she had endure, the worry she foisted on others, for Wanda and the woman she was supposed to be but wasn’t, and most of all she cried because this was all her fault. She had failed and it hurt to be proven so lacking.

Loki hugged her close to him, gently forcing her to rest her head on his shoulder as she silently cried. He didn’t coo words of comfort, but he was there for her and he was solid. He held her tightly and allowed her to vent all her fears and grief while in the safety of his arms.

“I need you to help me.” Darcy said quietly after her tears finally stopped flowing like a river.
“Anything.” Loki said in a dark voice.

“Teach her.” Darcy pled, “Teach her control and teach her how to get over her hatred for me.” She lifted her head to stare into his eyes, he looked like doubted his abilities to pull off such a request but she had faith. “Make her good again, Loki. Save the witch, save us all.”

The intimidated expression fell from his face as his eyes narrowed and he asked, “What do you know?”

“I know someone is coming to destroy the universe and we need her if we have any hope in stopping it.”

After some time discussing the details of how they would approach Wanda and her indefinite stay on Asgard, she and Loki got to their feet. Loki produced a bag from inside his robes and gave it to her.

“What’s this?” She asked. It was a small black drawstring pouch, small enough to be considered a coin purse.

“Your bag,” He explained. He opened up the sun and moon bag that had not been enchanted and shoved the pouch inside. “I grew bored over the length of your convalescence and broke the spell on your stupid hammer shaped infinity bag.”

“Hey!” Darcy said in an annoyed tone. Loki ignored her and continued on, “I was informed by your man that you have enchanted several other bags with the same spell. To do so is folly, if one creates too many pocket universes, eventually the spells will start to break down and things will come exploding out of your bags at the most inopportune times. Believe me, I know from experience.”

“And this?” Darcy prompted holding up the sun and moon bag. “It’s pretty and all but I’m a girl, I’m going to want to change my bag at some point.”

“I know.” Loki said dryly, “That’s why I enchanted the pouch to act as a vessel for your pocket universe, simply conjure the tiny pouch into your hand and transfer it into a new purse and the infinity bag spell will transfer over to that purse.”

“Really?” Darcy asked sounding skeptical.

Loki bristled, “I merely streamlined a spell you were already using and forestalled a future problem you would have invariably run into.”

“Thank you.” Darcy said earnestly, she eyed the bag dubiously, “How do I add new things though?”

Loki rolled his eyes and snatched the sun and moon purse out of her hand. He conjured a sword and then opened the sun and moon bag. He held the object above the opening of the purse and it got sucked inside like a vacuum. Darcy’s eyes brightened. “Cool!” She exclaimed with enthusiasm.

Loki looked at her with a soft smile, commenting to himself, “Ah, to be young again, and so easily amused by parlor tricks.”

Darcy looked around the room but there was nothing big enough for her to try putting into the bag, “So I just conjure the pouch into my hand like any other object and then transfer it to a new pretty
Darcy asked for clarification, she eyed his fallen scepter though she doubted Loki would let her have it. She closed her eyes and conjured the pouch into her hand. It was so small and innocuous, it made her wonder. Looking up at Loki with a devious smile she asked, “What if someone swallowed this, would they be okay? Could I store new objects inside by having them open their mouth?”

Loki chortled, “I wouldn’t know nor would I recommend finding out.”

“Okay.”

Loki took the pouch out of her hand and put it back inside the sun and moon purse, “I added some things I thought you could use. It contains every object you had in your old Thor’s hammer bag, as well as several hundred wardrobes worth of clothing, a food cache, Asgardian weapons, a few magical artifacts from my personal collection that I thought might come in handy one day, an apple from Idunn, and several thousand books. The Iron Man told me how you’d mastered the spells required to change you attire and appearance, I have to say I’m very proud.”

Darcy blushed but looked down as she admitted, “I can’t change my face or anything super shapeshift-y yet, but I’ve totally got super magical make over powers now.”

“You learn quickly.” Loki nodded. He extended his arm as they ventured down the steps and across the long hall back to where she had abandoned her shoes.

“You’re different.” Loki commented as they walked, “Something’s different about you.”

Darcy rested her head on his arm as they walked, “I broke Odin out of the old folk’s home and finally won him over. We’re officially adopted brother and sister now.”

Loki paused. “You what?”

Darcy patted his arm comfortingly, “Don’t worry, he seemed kind of depressed. Said he wanted to stay on Earth and see the world for a spell. I think he finally realized what a shitty father he’s been. I don’t think he’ll be coming back anytime soon.”

They continued walking. “I also dreamt of Frigga and got to say to goodbye to her…it seems silly to mention it as I was sure it was just a dream and nothing more than my subconscious’s need for closure, but now with my new Astral Projecting and Dream Walking powers, I’m not so sure.”

“Come again?” Loki asked as they came to a stop just before the door. Darcy leant down and grabbed her shoes, with one hand on Loki to steady herself she put them back on as she replied, “Yeah. We have more to talk about huh? I don’t want to repeat myself, so why don’t you turn into Axel and we can collect the Warriors 2 plus my underage plus one, and I’ll let you all in on my new weirdness.”

There motley crew gathered together in the corner of a darkly lit tavern in the middle of the city. It was as good as place as any to divulge the extent of her complicated new abilities. And Fandral had insisted the place had scrumptious ale, brewed at the tavern owners home and sold exclusively at that particular establishment. Darcy who was on her third pint had to agree, it was really good ale. And bonus, the more she drank the easier the words fell from her lips.

“And then I told him I’d use the Bifrost to pick him up later today and bring him here to Asgard.” Darcy concluded her tale. Loki in the disguise of Axel, Peter Parker, Fandral, and Hogun the Grim all stared at her with their mouths agape.
She had explained how she had witnessed events while she was in her Astral/comatose state. Then she told them about her dream reconciliation with Steve and her reunion with Stephen. She left out the sex parts though. And even though she promised to tell Loki about her dream meeting with his mom, she kept that story to herself to be told to him in private at a later date.

She took a long drag from her mug as she let the men process what she had just said. When her cup was empty she put it down with a bang. Peter jumped. She felt compelled to yell “Another!” and break the mug like Thor did when he first got to Earth, but she wasn’t a dick so she didn’t.

Darcy licked her lips getting every last trace of the yummy liquor onto her tongue and into her mouth. She turned to Loki, feeling more than a little buzzed at this point, and asked “So, can we go to the Bifrost now? I want to get Stephen before Tony wakes up ‘cause he’s gonna be grumpy when he finds out that I tricked him into sleeping and with Stephen around we can distract him with sexy times so’s he won’t be so mad.”

Peter made a choking noise. Darcy wondered if it was a mistake to let the kid drink with them. He looked a little green, Seemed only fair given he was a legit superhero.

“Excuse me.” Peter muttered as he made a mad dash for the bathroom. She wondered if maybe he’s quick escape was about something else…

“Whoops,” She said thinking aloud, “I forgot that I was not admitting to being all polyamorous with my two hella hot older male boyfriends, ‘cause it might offend Peter’s innocent sensibilities and or hero worship of Tony.” Darcy raised her hand waving obnoxiously at the waitress silently signaling she’d like ale.

Looking back to Loki she lowered her tone into as much of a whisper as she could manage, “Also ‘cause Wanda called me a slut, a cosmic slut, and Steve was on her side and it hurt my feelings. A lot. And I didn’t want Peter to hurt my feelings. So’s I didn’t want to reveal it to Peter, but now I did. So, whoops.”

Loki smiled at her fondly stating, “You are drunk.”

“I’m buzzed.” Darcy refuted.

Fandral saluted her cheekily with his own tankard of ale, “You have had a hard few days Princess, I support you getting pissed and removing all inhibitions and clothing if necessary.”

Hogun and Loki scowled at him.

Peter returned to the table with a quiet muttering, “Sorry.”

“Did you go throw up because of all the liquor?” Darcy asked bluntly, “Or where—I mean--were you so disgusted by my whoring ways that you were moved to vomit?”

Peter’s eyes widened, “What!?”

“You are not a whore.” Loki said sternly.

“Not that there’s anything wrong with being one.” Fandral muttered, “I’ve been called a man whore a time or two in my day.”

The waitress came by and exchanged her empty mug for a new one. Darcy tugged on her dress, stopping her from leaving without a word. “Wait.” She ordered.
Darcy turned to Loki and slapped him on the chest, “Money.” She demanded holding her hand out expectantly.

Loki glared at her for a second before rolling his eyes and retrieving a pouch of jingling coins from a pouch at his waist. Darcy took the entire thing out of his hand with a quiet ‘yoink’. She tossed the bag to the wide eyed waitress. “I love your ale. It’s delicious you have ruined me for all other alcoholic beverages.”

The woman curtsied and spoke reverently, “Thank you kindly Princess, my father will be most honored you think so.”

“Hey,” Darcy chastised as she wagged her finger at the woman, “No bowing. Princess Darcy doesn’t like bowing. I haven’t made up my mind about the whole curtsy thing, but I’m leaning towards no. Spread the word. I’m just a normal person getting normally drunk after getting normally ass handed to me….that doesn’t make sense.”

Loki pushed the waitress away from the table with a brief, “Thank you. Leave.” The waitress scurried away. Loki turned his eyes on her, “You just gave that woman enough gold to buy a new house.”

“Well then we should probably go to the market to get her a house warming present.” Darcy quipped. Peter and Fandral snorted while Hogun chuckled quietly into his own mug.

Loki couldn’t stop himself from smiling as Darcy lifted her mug to her lips and took a small sip, commenting mostly to herself, “Mmmm. Yummy.”

Three more ales for her later Peter was still on his second, luckily for her he was a very responsible boy and seemed to know he shouldn’t try to keep pace with the Asgardians he found himself drinking with. Hogun and Loki were also taking it slow, but she and Fandral were severely inebriated at that point. She’d drank at least 6 or 7 of the very potent drinks and Fandral had drank twice that.

It was weird, because back home she would never consider going out and getting wasted, what with all the paparazzi and cell phone cameras. But here on Asgard? If a couple people saw her stumble drunkenly with her friends, it would set tongues a wagging but she wouldn’t have to watch it on the TV come morning. There was a certain freedom in that.

“I love Asgard.” Darcy declared as they were leaving the tavern. A chorus of drunk agreement rang out from the other patrons.

“Come along Princess,” Loki encouraged, “Time to go.”

Darcy waved at the bars staff as Loki lead her out the door, “Thank you! See you later!”

It was late. Very late. Darcy spared a thought to Tony, but she had a gut feeling that he was still sleeping and she wished him pleasant dreams filled with sex and candy.

It was so early that Darcy tried her hardest to be quiet, they were in the heart of the city and she knew working people lived in the buildings all around them. Fandral on the other hand was singing what sounded to her like a sea shanty about a lusty mermaid and the man brave enough to venture into the ocean to bed her.
She was humming along with Fandral even as she let her mind wander. On one side Loki supported her on the other Peter Parker. Both men had tight hold of her elbows as her knees were doing a funny thing where they buckled every couple of steps. “Where are we going?” Darcy asked having forgotten. “Are we going to go pick up Stephen?”

“We’re going back to the palace so you can sleep off the rest of your good mood.” Loki said tersely.

“But, why?” Darcy balked, “Stephen! Sexy times!”

Peter made a noise and she turned on him. “He’s a wizard Harry!” She declared in her best Hagrid impression.

Peter stared at her with an amused smile, “Oh yeah, definitely over the whole intimidated by the Princess of Asgard thing now.”

Her head felt so very heavy, she let it loll onto Peter’s shoulder. She smiled up at him, “You’re so nerdy cute Peter. I just want to put a collar on you and take you for walkies….get it? ‘Cause you’re such a good boy!” She cackled at her own joke.

Fandral laughed boisterously as well. He turned pointing at Peter he jeered, “She considers the Raccoon her friend and you her pet! How laughable and demeaning!”

Loki chuckled silently besides her and Darcy frowned at Fandral. She felt compelled to defend Peter’s human non pet status but the mention of Rocket had lit up her mind with ideas. She turned to Loki, “Can we call Rocket and Groot? Do we have a telephone or intergalactic skype? I want talk to my babyyyyy!”

“You have a baby?” Peter asked. She ignored him to stare at Loki expectantly.

Loki looked annoyed but he conceded, “I’ll arrange something for you tomorrow.”

“Hooray!” Darcy celebrated loudly.

“Shhh.” Fandral shushed her equally as loudly, “The people of Asgard sleep m’lady. They have to get up and be boring in the morning. Working in fields, baking bread, or teaching small annoying children.”

“Sorry.” Darcy whispered yelled back. They began to walk along quietly. But the quiet was too quiet for her tastes so she began to sing softly thinking of all the sleeping citizens of Asgard.

“We’re your Dreamgirls, boys!
We’ll make you happy, yaaaaaaaah”

“I love that musical.” Peter commented with a smile. Darcy grinned in response and tried to keep from going off key as she sang out,

“We’re your Dreamgirls, girls!
We’ll always care
We’re your Dreamgirls,
Dreamgirls will never leave you!
And all you have to do is dream, baby, I’ll be there!”

It was weird but being the ‘Princess of Asgard’ was all fun and games until she thought about the people being people. People who had jobs and families and bills to pay, and who were in a way her responsibility. She didn’t like thinking of them as being her subjects but they were, if only
technically. Either way, she hoped she wouldn’t disappoint them as a ruler. She wanted nothing but good things and pleasant dreams for the people of Asgard.

She felt something warm and fuzzy bubble up inside her as she sang out more softly and in a more heartfelt manner than before,

“Dreeeeaaaaaam
Dreamgirls will help you through the night!
Dreeeeaaaaaam
Dreamgirls will make you feel alright!
Dreamgirls keep you dreamin’ your whole life through
Yeah, Dreamgirls can make your dreams come true!”

“SHHHHHH.” Fandral interrupted, “Think of the bakers and the candlestick makers!”

Peter giggled beside her and she chuckled a second later when she realized Fandral didn’t get the inadvertent joke he’d made. The warm and fuzzy feeling dissipated and she hummed along to the rest of the song as they continued walking.

“What were you just thinking about?” Loki asked. Darcy turned on him with a confused look. “Hmm?”

“While you were singing, what were you thinking about?” Loki repeated.

Darcy shrugged, “I don’t know.”

Loki stopped in his tracks, with her arm in his tight grip she was forced to stop with him, Peter too.

“Think Darcy this is important. Something very special just happened, I felt it. What were your intentions as you sang?” Loki prompted.

Darcy squeezed her eyes shut tightly as she tried to remember, “I was thinking about how normal Asgard is when you really break it all down. I mean, it’s got people who have 9 to 5 jobs and early morning days and ‘sponsibilities and I’m the Princess and that’s like … a lot. Being the Princess should mean something, I mean you and Thor could die at any moment and then where the fuck would I be?” When she opened her eyes Loki was staring back at her with this tense expression.

Darcy shrugged, “Yeah, that right. I’d be all, ‘oh shit now I’m in charge of all these bakers and candle stick makers and tiny children’ and that—that’s too much for me to think about right now. ‘Cuz of drunkenness. And, Ragnarok.”

“What’s Ragnarok?” Peter asked. Both she and Loki ignored him.

“No.” Loki refused, “That was not your intention as you sang….”

Darcy shrugged and puckered her lips, “Loki—I mean Axel, I wasn’t really thinkin’ about anything in particular I was just singing the song that popped in my head,” She put a hand on her chest, “And came from my heart.”

“Why that song?” Loki questioned further.

Darcy answered honestly and without thinking, “‘Cuz if I could make everyone in Asgard have nice dreams I think they would feel safe and I know the world is scary and filled with pain and heartbreak and in dreams I think all that shit should go away and leave my Asgardians alone.”
Loki stared at her for a long moment before his face broke out in a smile. “I love you.”

Darcy was confused but she returned the smile and the sentiment, “I love you too.”

They started up walking again. Darcy turned to Peter and whispered the question, “Do you understand what that all was about?”

“Nope.”

“Me either.”

“I’ll tell you later.” Loki promised, “When you are sober enough to handle it.”

“What’s that supposed to mean!” Darcy said accusingly.

“It means that you are very dear to me and I am glad you are here.” Loki said with a sly grin.

Darcy pouted and eyed her brother meanly, “You better go get Stephen for me to make up for being an evasive little shit and smirking all knowingly and letting me get drunk in the first place.”

“Letting you get drunk?!” Loki balked.

“You are my older brother. That makes you ‘sponible for me and all the stupid shit I do.” Darcy said with a nod.

“Is that what it means…” Loki said thoughtfully before shaking his head and returning to his normally blasé self, “Well, that certainly explains Thor’s gullibility all these years.”

“Wait! You’re Thor’s brother!” Peter exclaimed looking at Axel with wide eyes “Is that why you’re the Kings favorite…or are you…oh god.”

Darcy’s eyes darted ahead to Fandral and Hogun who were out of earshot due to their group’s slower gait and stops. She saw the shimmer of magic as Loki revealed his true self to Peter for a few seconds before once again donning the disguise of Axel.

“Crap.” Peter exclaimed.

“Whoopsy.” Darcy added drunkenly.

Loki stared Peter down threateningly, “If you tell anyone boy I will--”

“I’m not gonna tell!” Peter refuted earnestly, “I wouldn’t do that to Miss Darcy. She obviously knows who you really are and loves you anyway….and you love her. Don’t you?”

Loki eyed the kid suspiciously but Darcy knew Peter was being honest. “Thanks Pete,” She slurred, “You and Tony and Stephen are like the only people who know, so keep it on the DL. K? K.” She turned to address Loki, reaching for Peter she patted him on the face reassuringly, “He’s cool Loki, so don’t even worry about it. Spiderman’s got our backs.”

“Mr. Stark knows?” Peter gasped. Darcy responded with a “Duh!”

Loki ignored Peter and fixed her with a glare, asking, “Your wizard consort knows my true identity as well?”

A slow smile spread across her face, “Why don’t you go fetch him from Earth for me, and find out for yourself?”
Loki stared back at her with a blank expression. After a minute Peter raised his hand, “If you’re going to swing by Earth, do you think I could hitch a ride?”

Loki rolled his eyes muttering lowly, “Fine. I shall fetch your wizard consort-“

“Yay!” Darcy cheered drunkenly.

“After we get you back to the palace.” Loki finished.

The three of them buoyed by the prospects of getting what they wanted, picked up speed and caught up with the drunken Fandral and grim Hogun. Darcy crowed happily when they were near enough, “You guys! I get to show off Asgard to BOTH of my boyfriends!”

Darcy babbled about all she wanted to show Tony and Stephen in Asgard all the way back to the palace.

Loki and Peter got her back to the room Tony was in without further incident. Before they left the room fully she began stripping off her clothes as she made her way towards the bed where Tony still slept peacefully. The light was dim as it was only a crescent moon that night. Still she somehow managed to see that the dark circles that lined Tony’s face previously, were all but gone now.

“Score one for restorative sleeping properties of sleepy times.” Darcy crowed quietly as she clambered onto the bed and slid under the covers next to Tony.

She was asleep within seconds.

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Darcy’s Stephen-Dream Look
Darcy’s Nightgown (Tony Sexy Times)
Peter’s Asgard Look
Darcy’s Asgard Day Look
Infinity Pouch from Loki
Chapter 44 – Loki Laufeyson

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up next to big brother Loki.

Chapter Notes

You guys, these chapters are getting insanely long because I want to go from waking up to sleeping again. So enjoy the longness?

Also, I actually proof read this chapter! So...huzzah?

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 44 – Loki Laufeyson

There was a hulking figure towering over a smaller feminine one. Darcy was aware she was sleeping, but she wasn’t dreaming. She knew she was having a vision.

She was on an alien planet. The sky was a murky purple pink color and the place felt desolate. In the distance there was a large mountain and at its peak there were twin pillars of rectangular shape. It looked like a gateway or threshold of some kind. She was following the man and the woman. It was Gamora, but she did not recognize the figure that walked along side her.

The vision changed and she saw a man with a red skull scream as he arrived on top of the mountain in a beam of light and energy.

She saw a flash of Tony in a version of his Ironman armor that she had never seen before, that knitted back together and covered his skin as it was exposed by an unseen enemies blow.

She witnessed an older black man at what looked like a press conference or some UN thing, getting blown up. From behind she saw a different, younger dark skinned man don a cat suit that looked pretty badass, considering the thing had cute little ears on top. She saw the man in the cat suit fighting Bucky, chasing Bucky, and finally talking to Bucky who was dressed all in white and missing his metal arm. But for once, Bucky looked happy. Which was nice.

She saw Groot, bigger than last she saw him, grab two pieces of glowing hot metal and bind them together with his hand only to break off his own arm allowing the object to fall, an axe with Groot’s severed arm as its handle.

Darcy felt her heart beat quicken as she was shown the hulking purple figure fighting Tony. His armor looked a wreck, but he was still fighting. He formed some kind of sword out of his fist. He went to stab the giant grape man, but the man broke off the armored knife and stabbed Tony with it. The vision paused, showing her every detail of Tony’s face as he gaped up at the man who had stabbed him.
Darcy felt a numbing dread fill her body as she was shown the same man slamming the Hulk into the ground. Strangling Loki, dropping his lifeless body to the ground before a bound and struggling, one-eyed Thor. Gamora stabbing the guy in the heart with a tiny knife. The man trying to break through a shield Wanda erected as the witch did some glow-y magic thing to Vision. The man standing before a screaming blue robot woman who was being pulled apart. The man shoving a bearded man’s hands into buckets of piping hot metal. The man killing Nova officers left and right, making his way towards a highly guarded room. The man stabbing Heimdall. The man punching Steve in the face. Peter Quill give the man the middle finger before dropping back into a sling ring portal. The man pin Spiderman to the floor by his neck. The man killing Asgardians. The man slamming Thor into the floor. The man kicking Stephen in the chest.

Darcy felt like she couldn’t breathe. Flashes of dead bodies filled her mind. Nova officers. Xandarians. Asgardians. Humans. Aliens. Animals. So much death, so many different species she couldn’t identify them all. But it didn’t really matter, as all were dead.

The man’s face, purple with deep grooves on his chin and a golden gauntlet on his hand, blocked out all other visions. She felt his intentions as she saw him hold the gauntlet aloft, grinning at someone. She knew what the man wanted, he wanted death and in the trillions. He did not want it out of hate or an desire to rule and conquer, what he wanted was terrible but he had clarity of purpose and the best of intentions. She saw the man sitting alone, watching a sunset, and her heart seized in her chest. There was nothing more dangerous than a man on a mission who thought himself righteous.

Back where her vision started, she saw Gamora lying motionless on some rocks. Then she saw Gamora falling, her limbs flailing in the air. The vision cut away just before the dangerous woman made impact with the rocky terrain below.

And then she woke up….or so she thought. After a couple seconds of watching Gamora and Peter Quill have sex, she realized she was dream walking and she quickly turned around to face the wall. Blurry and dark at the edges, the place she found herself in was most definitely not reality.

“Darcy?” Gamora called out.

“No.” Darcy denied. She couldn’t feel her body, but looking down she found herself wearing pants and a brightly colored leather jacket, much like she wore on the mission to save Gamora and the others when they were captured.

“Why—What are you doing here?” Gamora asked.

*She was face to face with the green skinned alien woman and Peter was nowhere to be seen.*

“Not watching you and Peter have sex…intentionally.” Darcy joked. Gamora stared back at her blankly. “You’re dreaming.” Darcy told her.

“I’m dreaming of you.” Gamora said with the hint of a question in her tone.

“Maybe it’s the other way around.” Darcy posited thoughtfully.

*They were in the Milano mess hall.*

Sitting at the table with the other Guardians sitting around them eating a meal. Darcy felt the smile spread across her lips as she watched Rocket and Drax make fun of Peter and Mantis and Groot look on the scene with amused expressions. It was weird because the other Guardians were muted, but their camaraderie translated without words. Darcy and Gamora were next to them, but apart. The lighting on the others also seemed warmer, like there was a nostalgic filter on them and only them.
Stark lighting highlighted every plane on Gamora’s face as she asked, “Are you coming back to us?”

Darcy slowly tore her eyes away from watching the others. Their happiness was so obvious and inviting, she missed them. Seeing them like this, through Gamora, made her realize how much she really, really, missed them.

“No.” Darcy answered with a sigh. “I’m on Asgard right now.”

“That’s too bad.” Gamora remarked with sadness. “Groot still misses you and has entered the beginning of his ‘teenager’ phase. Rocket speaks of you often and has threatened to hijack the Milano to spirit you away from your home and back to us on several occasions. Most especially when Quill is being dense or Drax is being annoying….You are missed.”

Darcy reached out and squeezed Gamora’s hand meaningfully, “I miss you guys too.”

After a beat of silence she removed her hand. Gamora looked around the room and then at the other still oblivious and happily conversing Guardians. She squinted her eyes at the scene and tilted her head before returning to look at Darcy. With narrowed eyes but an open expression Gamora stated, “This is not like any dream I’ve had before.”

“Yeah.” Darcy agreed with a chagrin smile, “I think that’s my fault.”

Gamora’s eyebrows rose in a questioning expression, “Your dream teleportation and precognition powers have expanded into dream invasion?”

Darcy screwed up her face in distaste, “I wouldn’t call it dream invasion.”

“You entered my mind without permission.”

“Yeah but--”

“You viewed my intimate thoughts concerning my and Quill’s relationship.”

“Yeah but--”

“A most heinous invasion of privacy, wouldn’t you say?” Gamora challenged.

Darcy pouted, “It’s not like I do this on purpose.”

“Some things never changed,” Gamora laughed, “You so burdened by immense power but without any ability to control it. Do not worry, on you, lack of control is somewhat charming.”

“Gee whiz, thanks.” Darcy grumbled.

“We’re your intentions malevolent though, I imagine you could wreak untold destruction in the minds of your enemies.” Gamora gave her a knowing look, “Even without control, your abilities could be weaponized.”

“Hmm.” Darcy said considering, “I hadn’t thought of that.”

“No. I don’t suppose you would have.” Gamora said plainly with a small smile on her face, “You have lead a sheltered life in many ways, your instincts lean towards protection, not attack.”

Darcy frowned, “And that’s bad?”

Gamora smiled wistfully, “No. That’s just you.”
They were on an Asgard balcony where Gamora and the other Guardians had enjoyed breakfast when they visited. They were alone, sitting at a small round table across from each other. Asgard’s beauty and splendor laid out before them creating a fantastic view, the rising sun lit up the sky and shone down on the garden making the flowers there look alive.

“You heart bleeds like an open wound, you rescue and adopt all those you can and yet you do not die from such a lesion. It is impressive in many ways.” Gamora complimented. A teacup appeared in the woman’s hand and she took a sip.

Darcy blinked at the jarring appearance of the cup.

“Not impressive enough.” Darcy commented, a teacup appeared in her own hand and she put it down not wanting to drink anything.

“You doubt yourself?” Gamora questioned.

“I doubt us all.” Darcy whispered, “Something terrible is coming.”

“What?” Gamora leaned forward, “Have you had another vision?” Darcy nodded.

“A man.” Darcy said quietly, “I’ve been having visions of him for a while, just flashes and glimpses, but now I’ve seen…he’s going destroy everything.”

Gamora’s eyes betrayed her for only a second before they returned to their hardened state. But in that moment of betrayal, Darcy saw Gamora’s fear.

They were on another alien planet, one Darcy had never been to before. The man from her visions stood with a little green skinned girl who looked suspiciously like a little Gamora.

“What man?” Gamora asked. She seemed unaware of the scene just behind her, Gamora’s back was to the younger version of herself.

Darcy looked on at the scene with trepidation. It was like a snapshot frozen in time. The man and the little Gamora were right in front of them, but behind them...people who looked like Gamora were separated onto two sides. One side was wailing and cowering, the other was dead on the floor before a firing squad.

“Is this you?” Darcy asked she turned Gamora around and showed her the scene her mind had conjured, “Is this what happened to your people?”

Gamora turned away almost immediately and grabbed Darcy by the shoulders. She growled in Darcy’s ear, “Who was in your visions Darcy?”

Darcy looked at the tiny version of the deadly woman over her older counterparts shoulder; Gamora’s lips were a hard line across her face. Her eyes were alight with rage, but her younger self just looked sad. “This man.” Darcy pointed at the purple man, forcing Gamora to turn around and look at her younger self.

Gamora inhaled sharply before whispering a name, “Thanos.”

Darcy woke up with a gasp but she didn’t move or open her eyes. She lay there trying to assemble
all she had learned into some kind of order in her mind. There was so much information conveyed to
her, but it was all jumbled and out of order and she was overwhelmed.

Thanos. She knew the name from when she stayed with the Guardians. Gamora had told her of her
adopted father and the torturous practices he put her and her sister through growing up. Pitting them
against each other. Training them to be deadly and perfect. Everything she knew about him told her
he was an asshole and despicable.

To finally have a name to put to the far off and dangerous threat was a relief. Her visions and dreams
never gave her anything so concrete to work off of and she often found them more frustrating than
helpful. She was grateful her new dream walking ability proved to be more fruitful and informative,
even if felt it was an invasion.

Seeing Gamora in her dream made her just that much more determined to speak with the Guardians
at some point that day. If they could figure out intergalactic travel, they could figure out how to Face
Time. The gears in her mind worked quickly as she mentally planned a ‘to do’ list for herself and the
new day.

After ten minutes or so, Darcy felt she had a clear mind and a focused mission for the day ahead. She
allowed herself to finally stop thinking and let her other senses relay information to her once again.
She felt the warmth of the body next to her, she could hear the distant sound of birds singing to each
other, and she felt the warmth from the sunshine upon her face.

With a wandering hand she confirmed she was still in bed with Tony, his familiar flesh and muscle
met her fingers yieldingly. He was still fast asleep. His breathing was even and soothing and Darcy
couldn’t resist curling into his side and resting her head upon his chest. She worried about Tony most
of all. He was mortal in a way her other loved ones weren’t. She only hoped her plans for him today
would help ease her mind and give him the tools he needed to be the safest mortal he could possibly
be.

Wrapping her arm around his torso she rubbed her nose into his arm. She placed a kiss on the warm
skin and silently urged him to wake up. She wanted to get started with setting all her plans in motion
as soon as possible, but tearing herself away from a sleepy Tony was hard. He was so pliant and
quiet and warm…

“Mmmm.” Tony moaned sleepily. Darcy hooked one leg over his and kissed his shoulder, opening
her eyes she took him in. The bags were gone from under his eyes and he looked better rested than
she had ever seen him, younger even. Darcy nuzzled her face into the scratchy underside of his jaw,
planting kisses as she moved along his skin.

“Wake up.” Darcy coached softly, “Wake up Tony.” She scratched lightly at his stomach, “Wake up
and go get me coffee.”

Tony pouted cutely and she chuckled as he whined, “Why don’t you get up and go get me coffee?
You’re the one who’s fully awake.”

Darcy she murmured her reply against his skin, teasing him with her breath, “Because I’m the
Princess. Duh.”

“So sad to see,” Another voice sounded, “That the power has already gone straight to your head.”
Darcy bolted upright with a joyful cry, “Stephen!”

Stephen was floating at the end of the bed with his legs crossed and his eyes closed in a meditative pose.

“You’re here!” Darcy exclaimed.

“I am.” Stephen responded. He wasn’t looking at either she or Tony, but there was a small smile upon his lips.

Darcy shoved at Tony demandingly, “Wake up Tony, Stephen’s here!”

“I am awake.” Tony whined as he rolled over and put a pillow over his head. His muffled grousing could barely be heard as he complained, “Go say hi and leave me alone to wake up in peace.”

Darcy gave up on Tony and turned her attention back to Stephen. She was so happy to see him. She cried out his name joyfully, “Stephen!”

Stephen finally opened his eyes. This caused him to fall back down on to the bed with a bounce. Darcy threw back the covers and bounded over to him. She all but tackled him, eagerly she locked her arms around his neck and brought their lips together in an excited kiss.

Heedless of her nudity, she pressed her body against his forcing him back as they kissed and hung off the edge of the bed precariously. Stephen’s hands glided over her thighs, backside, and shoulders. “You came to me in my dreams.” Stephen stated breathlessly.

“I did.” Darcy confirmed in between kisses. She shivered as the brisk morning air leeched the body heat from her causing her toes to become frozen and gooseflesh to rise along her exposed back.

“How did you get here?” Darcy questioned as Stephen flipped them so he was the one hovering over her, trapping her body beneath his and lending her some of his own body heat.

He stared down at her with a look of reverence. His eyes moving up and down her exposed figure, not with lust in his eyes but relief. Darcy reached up and cupped his face. Softly she reassured him, “I’m alright. I’m healed.”

Stephen’s eyes snapped to hers. He stared at her quietly for moment before nodding. He leant down and kissed her passionately. Darcy responded in kind and started tugging at his clothes. The talking parts could wait…

After their first round of reunited-in-real-life-lovemaking Tony stopped playing the sloth and voyeur and joined in. He never was one to pass up the opportunity of sexy naked Darcy time, but she was heart warmed by the intimacy the two men displayed with each other as well. The three of them were really becoming a trio in every sense of the word.

For an hour or so Darcy had sex with her boyfriends and by the end of it she was left feeling invigorated. Tony looked equally peppy; however the opposite affect seemed to befall Stephen. He looked exhausted. She had ignored the signs of stress and fatigue written all over Stephen while they were otherwise occupied but in the quiet moment after, she saw it all.

Stephen lay in the middle with Tony and her on either side of him. Naked and sweaty they lay
together in a heap on the bed. Stephen’s eyes kept fluttering closed, and then he would shake his
head waking himself. Tony jeeringly prompted, “Just give in and get some shut eye Doc. You look
like you need it.”

His words were taunting but there was real concern in his voice. She and Tony exchanged a
knowing look.

“I look better than you.” Stephen said jokingly, “Especially given our current state of undress.”

“Har, har.” Tony sneered.

“You’re tired.” Darcy said observationally, “You’re safe here. We all are. You can rest Stephen.”

Stephen glared at her, “I’m fine.”

Tony snorted but said nothing. Darcy frowned at Stephen’s stubbornness. She knew he must have a
million reasons why he wanted to remain awake, but she could see the weariness in his body. “You
need to sleep.”

“I’m fine.” Stephen repeated with a clenched jaw.

Same as she had the day prior for Tony, Darcy turned on her side and propped herself up on her
elbow so she could look down upon Stephen’s heavy-eyed face. Using a feather light touch she
traced the purpling bags under his eyes. He had obviously not been taken care of himself in their
absence and given all the stress of seeing her almost die, after recently watching her actually die…
yeah. She could see why he would run himself ragged trying to find out what happened to her while
she was off world.

“I’m sorry I left you.” Darcy said quietly as she put her hand flat on Stephen’s forehead. She used
her other hand to draw patterns with her fingertips on his chest. “I’m sorry I made you worry.”

“I forgive you.” Stephen said easily. Under the blanket that covered them his hand found her naked
hip and he gripped her tightly, “It wasn’t your fault.”

“But it was.” Darcy argued, her eyes flickered over to Tony. She owed both of them an apology.
“Coming to Asgard… I didn’t think it through. I should have, but I didn’t. If you hadn’t of hitched a
ride and I hadn’t developed this new dream walking ability, neither of you would have known what
happened to me.”

Tony turned on his side, mirroring her pose and propping himself up on his elbow, “But I did hitch a
ride.”

“And you did come to me in my dreams. And later on you sent for me. Brought me here to you.”
Stephen said assuring, “There’s nothing to forgive Darcy.”

“Nothing.” Tony echoed.

“I disagree.” Darcy said quietly, “But I’ll let it go.”

“Good.” Tony said with a nod.

She looked down at Stephen with mischief in her eyes, “But I’m not letting you go on, keeping on,
until you collapse in a heap of snores and drool.”

“I do not drool.” Stephen refuted with a playful expression. The corners of his mouth dipped down
as he blinked rapidly, obviously fighting off the pull of sleep.

“I want you to rest.” Darcy said softly but with brazenness coloring her tone. “I want you to sleep.”

“I don’t—” Stephen tried to protest even as his eyes fell closed.

“Don’t fight it man.” Tony counseled as Darcy placed a sweet kiss to Stephen’s lips and whispered a command of “Sleep.”

He was out like a light within seconds.

Darcy smiled triumphantly at Tony and who stared back at her with a bemused expression. “You’re amazing.” The smile fell from his face and he glared at her playfully, “But don’t think I don’t know that you pulled the same trick on me.”

Darcy’s cheeks pinked as she stuttered a denial, “I didn’t—that wasn’t—what do you--”

Tony reached across Stephen’s sleeping body to put a finger against her lips, “Shhhh.”

Darcy pressed her lips together and Tony removed his fingers, “I’m not mad. I’m in awe…and a little intimidated.”

“I didn’t make him sleep.” Darcy denied.

“Uh yeah you did.” Tony refuted, “And you did the same to me. I’d guess it’s just another aspect of your growing sleep related powers.”

“But—but, I didn’t…mean to.” Darcy cast her eyes down to Stephen’s peacefully sleeping face and she realized in that moment that she was lying. She did mean to put them to sleep.

Sleeping, it was restorative and necessary and her boyfriend’s were stubborn sons of bitches who would push themselves to the limit if she let them. She wanted them to be able to rest and recover. She wanted them to be healthy and give their minds time to process all that they had gone through. And to do that, they needed to sleep and to dream. So she had made them…

Darcy looked up at Tony with a horrified expression, “I didn’t mean to I swear.” She repeated.

“No, no Darcy.” Tony shook his head. Darcy turned back to look at Stephen as her mind raced with worry at the thought of developing yet another ability she didn’t realize she had, that she also could not control. Darcy was so sick of being out of control. She tried to stem the tide of tears threatening to fall but was unable to, tears rolled down her cheeks as she cried not out of sadness but frustration and fear.

Tony was by her side and pulling back the covers before she realized he had gotten out of bed. He pulled her away from Stephen and into his arms. He carried her over to a chase lounge that was set up in the corner of the room. Darcy clung to him as she cried. She didn’t like appearing weak, but the problem was she wasn’t weak. Not even close.

“What if I keep getting new powers?” Darcy cried quietly. Tony rubbed soothing circles on her back.

“But what if I go out of control like Wanda?” Darcy worried, “What if I accidently invade someone’s dreams who hates me because of what I see in their mind? What if I accidently put
someone to sleep while their driving a car or a plane? What if I develop an even more uncontrollable and inconvenient power?! I mean, I can’t even control my sleep teleportation or interpret my precognitive dreams correctly and I’ve had those abilities way longer than these new ones!”

Tony cuddled her closer as she cried. Giving voice to worries she hadn’t realized had been weighing on her made her feel vulnerable in a way that hadn’t since she allowed Wanda to beat the crap out of her.

“I don’t know what will happen if you get new powers.” Tony said quietly, “But I know you. And I know you’d never intentionally hurt anyone. And if you accidently hurt someone with your powers, we’ll deal with it and hopefully you can be forgiven.”

Tony pulled her away slightly so he could look her in the eyes, “But I believe in you. And I don’t think you’re going to hurt anyone who doesn’t deserve it.”

Wanda. The Accords. The UN/press conference explosion. Ragnarok. The death of the warriors three….Thanos. She had so many things to worry about, so many more pressing and imminent things to deal with. Just this once Darcy decided to let herself off the hook.

“Okay.” She agreed. “Okay, I won’t worry about my new powers and the dangers they might pose to those around me.”

“Good.” Tony said as he wiped away the last of her tears. Darcy leaned forward and kissed him sweetly. Allowing Tony’s faith in her to console her and give her confidence, she pushed her own issues to the back of her mind.

“Let’s go take a shower.” She suggested. Tony nodded and picked her up.

“Tony!” She protested lightly, but snuggled deeper into his arms as he walked them to the bathroom.

“What?” Tony laughed, “What kind of royal consort would I be if I allowed the Princess’s precious feet touch the dirty floor?” Darcy’s laughter rang out as Tony shut the door behind them with his foot.

After their shower turned sex in the bathtub time, she and Tony emerged wrapped in towels and with goofy grins plastered across their faces. Tony might only be a mortal man, but oh what a man he was.

“You know it’s very impressive how long you can hold your breath Tony.” Darcy complimented.

Tony waggled his eyebrows at her, “I’d think you would be more impressed with what I can do with my tongue.”

“Yeah, but when you combined the two skills,” Darcy patted his cheek, “That’s when you really blew my mind.”

Tony cackled as they went through the door to the adjoining room that housed Peter Parker the previous day. They expected it to be empty, as Stephen had told him that Peter had returned to Earth when Loki went to retrieve Stephen for them. But the room wasn’t empty. It held one unexpected occupant.

“Bucky?” Darcy asked with a surprised smile.
“Hey.” The famed POW gave a little wave with his metal arm.

“What are you doing here?” Darcy asked as she tightened the knot that held her skimpy towel up.

“I came with Doc Strange…he didn’t tell you?” Bucky tilted his head, muttering lowly to himself, “Jeez, how long were you guys at it?”

“We got…distracted.” Darcy answered looking back to Tony who had a dangerously impish and gleeful look on his face.

“You were in here the whole time?” Tony asked with a sly grin. He stalked forward until he stood in front of Bucky. The other man’s eyes level with Tony’s nipples due to his seat at the desk chair.

Bucky blushed and Darcy moved to stand next to Tony. Bucky scratched at the back of his neck with his flesh hand, “I left when I heard you—I went and took a walk. Got back a couple of minutes ago.”

Darcy felt her face flush when Bucky looked up at her with a heated expression. “I’m glad you’re okay.” He said, his eyes moving up and down her body, “Don’t even see any scars.”

“Thanks.” Darcy squeaked out. The room filled with awkward tension but Tony looked nothing but delighted. Rolling her eyes at Tony and his love of drama, Darcy moved over to the armoire where clothes had been left for her yesterday. There were several mens outfits but only one female one. She knew that she could pick out her own clothes from her infinity bag, which was still in the sun and moon purse, but knowing the dress left for her was picked out by Loki, she decided to indulge him. It was really pretty afterall.

Picking out a reddish outfit and a bluish outfit, Darcy held up the hangers to Tony, eyeballing him she figured out which one was made for his shorter stature and she handed over dark burgundy shirt and pants.

“I’m not wearing this.” Tony denied, but Darcy just shoved the outfit into his hands, ducking inside the closet she retrieved a belt and small sword.

“It comes with a sword.” She cajoled in a sing song voice, “And you’ll look really ho-at-t.”

Tony stared at her blankly and she just blinked owlishly back until he relented grumbling, “Fine.”

He took the items and stalked over to the bed. He dropped the items upon the foot of the bed, and then turned to send her a naughty grin. With an impish wink in Bucky’s direction Tony untied his towel and let it shimmy to the floor. Then set about getting dressed, ignoring the both of them.

Darcy let out a sigh as she admired Tony’s body as he scowled at the Asgardian undergarments but still put them on nevertheless. Out of the corner of her eye she could see Bucky watching Tony’s little display with a confused but curious expression. Darcy shook her head as she turned to the gown that hung in the armoire. With a wave of her hand she conjured the garment onto her body.

She moved over to the huge mirror that hung on the wall and transformed her hair into a neat pulled back twist thing. She cycled through a few color combinations before settling on her natural brown locks. She added accessories and shoes and did her make up in a minimalist understated ‘natural’ style. Silently she admired her look. She looked regal and slightly ethereal. Like a real Asgardian….only shorter.

When she turned around she bit her lip at the sight of Bucky helping Tony attach the ties that held the sleeve to the rest of his shirt.
“No.” Bucky chided quietly, “It loops through and then you fasten it, see?”

“Well, that’s ridiculous. Who designed this shit?” Tony huffed. He gave up trying to fasten his own arm sleeve one handed and let Bucky do the rest.

Tony eyed her dramatic transformation. He spoke quickly and in a monotone voice as he remarked, “You look nice. I feel like an ass. Why doesn’t the one armed soldier have to dress like he’s going to a renaissance fair?”

Darcy took in Bucky’s dark jeans and t-shirt hooded sweatshirt. He did stand out. But it worked for him. “Because neither you nor I could pull off the handsome homeless hobo look half as good as he can.”

Tony made a face as if he agreed but still pouted down at his own outfit lamenting quietly, “Not fair.”

Dressed and ready to face the rest of the world, the three of them exited their rooms only to be met by Loki, in the guise of Axel. He held a wooden box in his hand and looked rather bored leaning up against the wall, his whole demeanor unlike the ridged and attentive royal guards whom he was emulating.

Loki smiled proudly when he saw her. “Beautiful.”

“Thanks.” Darcy said shortly, “What are you doing here?”

Loki extended the box. Darcy approached him with a grin, “More presents?”

Loki smiled sincerely as he confirmed, “More presents.” His eyes flickered to Bucky and he added, “From your father the King.”

She opened the box to reveal a crown. It was gold with giant sun and moon and stars. Her eyebrows rose. “What?”

Loki shot Tony a dirty look over her shoulder, “Since you seemed to have misplaced your mother’s diadem, the King has been gracious enough to replace it with this magically enchanted one.”

“I didn’t lose Frigga’s diadem. I know exactly where it is.” Darcy sniffed. Loki rolled his eyes but moved the box and tiara closer to her, prompting her to pick it up.

Darcy took the crown out of the box with delicate hands as she held it up so she could take in the diamond encrusted details more easily. “This is too much.” Darcy mumbled. Her eyes shot to Loki’s, “I can’t accept this.”

“You can and will.” Loki asserted as he hut and shoved the wooden box into Bucky’s hands.

“But…”

“What kind of enchantment.” Tony asked suspiciously touching his hair, where she assumed Frigga’s diadem still rested on top of his head, enchanted by Strange to appear invisible and stay securely on his head unless removed by Tony’s hands. The invisibly charm was so complete, not even she could see beyond the enchantment.

Loki grinned as he gestured to the center of the crown where the largest diamond resided. “Touch
it.” He encouraged.

Darcy did as he asked and the crown transformed into an entirely different crown, slowly the metal twisted and reformed until it was just one circular piece with silver stars extending up from the base.

“Again.” Loki prompted.

Darcy felt the smile lift at the corner of her lips unconsciously as she touched the center diamond again only for the crown to morph into a smaller and thinner tiara, one with an upright sapphire encrusted moon in the center. Loki plucked the crown out of her hand and pressed the center diamond several times making the crown cycle into several other iterations. It was a true sight to behold.

“The tiara’s true appearance is a plain and boring thing. The King, noticing your obsession with constantly changing attire, forged this crown himself to reflect your ever changing tastes. Each diamond and sapphire and emerald and ruby that can be seen upon the different crowns are real and true. They are merely,” Loki grabbed the wooden box out of Bucky’s hands and opened it to reveal that the box now held hundreds dozens of precious stones. “Transported to and from this box to this base.”

He closed the box and locked it. “The metal twists and forms to the shape that would best suit the gems being used to create it. The style and appearance are chosen at random or can be willed into existence by picturing how you would like it to appear in your mind as you touch a stone.”

“That is…” Darcy stared at the tiara in wonder.

“That’s useless.” Tony offered. Darcy jerked her head to glare at him. “That’s so generous.” She growled as she nudged Tony with her elbow.

“What!” Tony exclaimed, “The last crown you were given stopped mind control. This one just looks pretty in different ways.”

Darcy glowered, “Don’t be an ass Tony.”

A muscle in Loki’s jaw ticked as he clenched his jaw and clutched the wooden box so tightly that his knuckles went white.

“Well,” Loki began in a tightly controlled voice, “Perhaps when Darcy beheads the thief who stole her mother’s diadem she can give this one away who can appreciate the artistry required to create such a trinket.”

“Boys.” Darcy said sternly, “Cut it out.”

“I wasn’t--”

“But he--”

Darcy stomped her foot, “Don’t care! Just stop it.”

“Fine.”

“Whatever.”

Darcy took the tiara and put it upon her head. She turned to Bucky who, as the quietest one there was the least on her nerves and asked, “How’s it look?”

Bucky eyed the bejeweled adornment then let his eyes flicker back down to her own. He spoke
softly but his eyes conveyed so much more. “Good. Looks real good.”

Bucky was practically licking her with his eyeballs. The intense heat coming off of him was insane and she couldn’t help but blush. “Thanks.”

Tony cleared his throat and stepped closer to her slightly, “So where to now? You hungry? I’m hungry. Worked up quite the appetite this morning, didn’t we Darce?”

“Jesus.” Darcy cursed as she felt her face go redder.

“Pee on her leg why don’t you, you mongrel.” Loki muttered under his breath as he shoved past Tony so he was next to Darcy. He put his arm around her shoulders and proceeded to guide her down the hall, calling out, “This way. Breakfast is waiting on the Veranda overlooking the East gardens.”

Loki in the disguise of Axel, Bucky, Tony, and she all ate breakfast together with only the occasional slightly uncomfortable silence. Tony and she stared on as Bucky ate an impressive amount of food.

“Didn’t they feed you at the sanctum?” Darcy asked as Bucky reached for his third helping of eggs.

Bucky froze with his fork poised, “Yeah.” He answered. He then continued helping himself. He maintained eye contact as he put a forkful of scrambled eggs into his mouth as sensually as the action could be preformed. She blushed at the attention and patted her lips daintily with her napkin.

Bucky slowly slide the fork out of his mouth as he let out a little ‘Mmm’ noise. Darcy had to look away from the sight, it was too sexy and she did not have time to get distracted….again.

“Is it weird that I’m a little turned on right now?” Tony asked as he watched Bucky’s little display.

After the rest of them had finished eating, Bucky was still finishing up. Darcy contemplated waiting to reveal her plans for the day and beyond until after Stephen woke up, but she just knew to wait would be foolish.

“I had a vision last night.” Darcy announced. Loki and Tony jerked their heads in her direction but Bucky kept eating, his eyes still trained on her.

Darcy swallowed thickly, “I don’t…it’s hard to understand it all. The information, the visions happen so quickly most of the time, but this time it was quick and a lot of information all at once.”

“Tell us.” Loki demanded.

“I don’t want to get into the details without the rest of the major players here to hear it, but suffice to say, I have a plan…well, I have the beginnings of several different plans.” Darcy babbled.

Loki tilted his head mockingly, “Funnily enough, that does not install much confidence.”

Darcy glared at him, “Too bad.”

“What do we do?” Tony prompted. “What do you need?”
Darcy smiled gratefully at Tony and he took her hand under the table and squeezed. He was on her side unconditionally, a fact she knew but was always happy to have confirmed. She turned to Loki, “I need you to give Bucky a tour of Asgard.”

“No.”

“Why?”

Darcy glared at her brother, “Because I need you to give Bucky a tour of Asgard.” Loki stared back at her with an annoyed expression but Darcy was unflinching. After a couple seconds of this staring contest bullshit, Loki lowered his gaze.

Darcy didn’t smile in celebration she just continued on with her instructions as if she’d never been interrupted. “Start with the rainbow bridge and end just before the dungeons. Skip those, show him everything else. Do a fly over of any interesting or dangerous places. Show him the armory, let him swing a sword around with Fandral maybe? I trust you Lo—…I leave his Asgardian instruction in your hands, Axel.”

“I thought you wanted me to teach the witch?” Loki argued.

“I do.” Darcy said quickly, “But not today. Today I want you to escort Bucky around. And I expect your tour to take at least four hours so be thorough.”

“Why?” Bucky asked. Darcy massaged the bridge of her nose gently, she didn’t want to lie to them but she didn’t want to explain herself either.

“Can you just do it?” Darcy asked, fixing him with a pleading expression, she turned the look on Loki and added, “Please?”

“Tell me about your visions.” Loki bargained.

“Ragnarok.” Darcy said. Loki looked like she slapped him.

“When?” Loki whispered as he sat up straighter.

“Soon, I think.” Darcy frowned, “I promise to tell you everything else, the details, everything I saw. Later.” In her minds eyes she remembered the vision of Loki’s dead body. His death would be painful and his corpse would reflect it. An ugly death for a beautifully conniving and playful man. Darcy swallowed a lump in her throat and shook her head, determined not to mourn Loki before his fate even came to pass.

“Please?” She asked again. Loki and she engaged in another staring contest, but this one was less hostile more…sad. Loki nodded solemnly and Darcy allowed herself a sigh of relief. Sending Loki and Bucky out together for a ‘tour’ would hopefully keep both occupied and Loki too busy to cause any trouble while she was otherwise occupied.

She turned to Bucky and ordered, “Learn as much as you can.” Bucky nodded. She felt a little bad for taking his obedience for granted, but she just knew he would do anything she asked. He would fight for her if she needed him, he would whisk her away if she asked him. And if she sent him on a wild goose chase, chasing he would go.

Darcy straightened her back and tried to look commanding as she addressed Loki and Bucky, “Start now.”

Bucky stood immediately. Loki paused, his eyes flickering to her crown as he jibed, “I won’t always be so amenable to being ordered about, Princess. Don’t let that crown go to your head.”
Despite these words, Loki got to his feet and turned to Bucky, remarking, “At least you talk less than Stark. Come.”

“Have fun.” Tony called out cheerfully to their retreating backs. When they were gone he turned to her with a serious expression and demanded, “Tell me what you saw.”

Darcy looked back at him and tried not to cry. She felt like shit for manipulating Loki and Bucky and for the manipulation she would soon use on Tony.

She answered him in a small shaky voice, “Death. Lots and lots of death.”

Darcy led Tony down the halls of the palace by the hand. Tony respected her wishes to wait to divulge her visions and allowed the conversation to drop. She didn’t want to be all mysterious but, she had come up with a plan that morning and she intended to see it out. Alternatively Tony was being extra talkative because she was being extra quiet. Darcy tried not to squeeze too hard but Tony’s incessant questioning was really beginning to annoy the crap out of her.

“Where are we going?"
“Why didn’t you send me on a tour of Asgard?”
“Do you think Bucky will figure out who ‘Axel’ really is?”
“Why aren’t you answering me?”
“Do you think Bucky will kill Loki or vice versa?”
“Do you think it’s going to rain?”
“Can it rain here?”
“Are we…wherever yet?”

When they reached their destination she let go of Tony’s hand.

“What’s wrong?” He asked. Darcy shook her head, “Nothing.”

She gestured with a hand to the door that stood before them. “This is my surprise.”

“Surprise?” Tony questioned with waggling eyebrows. “Is a sex dungeon?”

Darcy snorted, “No.”

Tony pouted, “Then why all the ignoring me?”

“You’ll see.” Darcy said as she gestured to the door with a head and prompted him, “Open it up.”

Tony smiled roguishly at her but did as she instructed. When the door was fully open, Tony and she stepped inside.

“All around them Asgardian scientists or ‘sorcerers’ were tinkering or building or designing. The Forge was where all the great advanced technology on Asgard was made and things were tested and invented or reverse engineering other alien technologies that Asgardians acquired through the spoils
of war.

Tony took in the place with wide eyes and an open mouth. It must look like Mecca to him.

“You like it?” Darcy asked. Tony nodded mechanically. Darcy searched the room until she saw what she was looking for in the back, taking his hand once again Darcy led Tony over to a work station near the windows where Tony’s Iron Man armor had been taken.

“How?”

Darcy maneuvered Tony in front of the work table onto the little stool and gestured to the suit, “I want you to use all the superior technology here to make yourself a better suit. One that has more bells and whistles and protections and weapons.”

The armor she saw Tony wear in her vision had been so advanced, it dwarfed his earlier models technologically, by leagues. It occurred to her that the advanced suit she foresaw might be made of advanced Asgardian technology so bringing him to the Forge made sense. And if the advanced armor had been made back on Earth, then using the advanced technical Asgardian resources could only improve on the original design. So it was win, win.

Either way, upon learning of the Forge on her second visit to Asgard when she still didn’t know Loki was Axel, she had known that she wanted to bring Tony to this haven for mechanics and tinkerers. Yesterday, when she had been drinking with Loki and the others she had floated the idea past her brother and he agreed to have a work station prepared for Tony and his old suit to be delivered.

She had originally conceived that Peter Parker could have acted as assistant, but since he went home, she’d have to find him a new Igor.

Raising her voice she called out, “Attention everyone!”

The sound of working stopped as all the men and women stopped to see what the Princess had to say. Many looked shocked as if they hadn’t noticed she’d arrived do to being so involved with their own work.

“Hi guys!” Darcy waved, “I don’t know if you know me, but I’m Princess Darcy.”

A fair skinned older looking woman working at the table next to Tony’s said, “We know of you sweet Princess. Most of us were at the coronation the last time you came home.”

“Oh.” Darcy said, “Cool.”

“We’ve also heard tell you do not approve of bowing.” A younger male added from across the room, “Is that true? We would not intentionally show you disrespect your highness.”

“ It’s true. Not a fan of bowing.” Darcy confirmed with a smile. She turned slightly and gestured to Tony, “This is Tony Stark of Midgard. He’s my boyfriend and best friend. I love him with all my heart and not just because he’s pretty.”

A chuckle went through the crowd. Tony looked up at her with a slightly deer in headlights look. Quietly he asked, “What are you doing?”

Darcy ignored him and put her hands on his shoulders, “He’s a brilliant inventor and one of the sharpest minds in the entire galaxy.”
“Don’t tell them that.” Tony said sounding slightly self-conscious, “These people are working ionized cell growth and nano-atomization and cellular particle assimilation. And I think that old lady next to us is building a hover board.”

Darcy turned to the old woman Tony had indicated and couldn’t help but snicker, “Dibs.”

Darcy moved so she could look Tony in the eyes. “The fact that you understand all these holo-read out thingy’s and can figure out what they are working on just by looking at them is a testament to how smart you are.” Tony looked back at her with trepidation but she saw a hint of hope in his eyes.

“Don’t go all humble on me now sweetie.” Darcy coached, “Remember, you’re Tony mother fucking Stark.”

Tony smirked. Her joke proved fortifying as Tony straightened up slightly and she saw it the second his patented self-confidence slid back into place. She understood his momentary bout of insecurity, Asgardians advanced technology was intimidating and so far beyond anything they had back home on Earth. But she had faith that given time and resources Tony would be out inventing them all.

Moving so she once again stood by Tony’s side, Darcy cleared her throat, addressing the room once again in a loud and clear voice she said, “Tony’s going to rebuild his armor using Asgardian resources. Please be generous with your time and you patience. If he has a question, answer him. If he needs an extra pair of hands and you are available, please help him out. He may need more help at the beginning, figuring out how Asgardian tools work or how the holographic thingy works but don’t think him stupid. He’s a very smart man who has up until this point only been limited by the resources around him.”

There was a murmer of agreement and acceptance throughout the crowd. Tony tugged on her skirt and she leaned down so he could whisper in her ear, “You should probably stop calling the holographic interfaces, thingy’s.”

Darcy laughed and kissed him on the cheek. “Have fun.”

She moved to leave but Tony caught her hand and stood, pulling her into his arms. He kissed her and then spun her into a dip. There were a few whistles from the crowd of onlookers but she ignored them.

When Tony put her back on her feet he whispered against her lips, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” Darcy answered with a smile. Tony was already twitching with the need to get to work but his eyes stayed on her as he asked, “Where will you be for the rest of the day?”

Darcy stroked a hand down his cheek and answered evasively, “Here and there.”

Tony caught her hand and kissed her palm before linking their fingers together, “First you drive Stephen into a sex-aution coma. Then you send out tweeddle dee and tweedle deadly on a scenic tour of the city, now you’re pawning me off on--”

“Pawning you off?” Darcy interrupted haughtily.

“You know you’re going to have to drag me out of this haven of technology kicking and screaming. By showing me the Forge you effectively sidelined me for the rest of the day and most of the night if I have it my way.” His expression went from smitten and doting to accusing and knowing look. “I see what you’re doing Darce, I just don’t know what you’re planning. Why are you being so mysterious all of a sudden?”
“Because.” Darcy demurred.

“Because why?”

“Because I’m going to do something stupid and I don’t want anyone around to stop me.” Darcy answered honestly.

Tony looked alarmed but Darcy stepped closer and palmed her hands down his chest soothingly, “I’m kidding.”

“No you’re not.” Tony accused. Darcy couldn’t bear to lie to him.

“You’re right. I’m not kidding.” She confirmed.

“Darcy.” Tony said warningly.

“Don’t worry.” Darcy said quickly, “I’ll be fine. I promise.”

“Darcy--”

“Do you trust me?” Darcy interrupted. Tony frowned. He gave her a stern look, “You know I do.”

“Okay.” Darcy said as she leant forward and kissed his lips softly, “Then trust me.”

“Tell me where you’re going?” Tony asked when she stepped away. “What you’re doing?”

“I’m going to make a proclamation and save some old guy from getting blown up.” Tony raised his eyebrows at that. “Then I’m going to find away to talk to the Guardians.”

“You’ll be safe?”

“Yes.” Darcy said soberly, “I promise.”

Tony and she stared into each other’s eyes for a long moment before Tony finally looked down. He ran his hands up and down her arms and shoulders, “Okay.”

Darcy gave him a half smile, “Okay?”

“I’m trusting you.” Tony griped, “Don’t make me regret it.”

“You won’t.” She promised.

Grinning he asked, “And should I expect you be home for dinner?”

Darcy shrugged, “If everything goes as planned.”

“Well that’s not comforting.” Tony grumbled, but his eyes were already sliding past her to the suit and the tools laid out for him on the work table. She darted forward to peck him on the cheek before turning on her heel and beginning to walk away.

“Have fun Tony.” Darcy said breezily over her shoulder, “Remember to take the occasional pee break.”
Darcy stopped off at her room to retrieve her purse and kiss the still sleeping Stephen goodbye and for luck.

She figured enough time had passed that Loki and Bucky would have departed from the Bifrost by then so she portaled there using the sling ring Stephen had given her prior to the battle with Wanda. She had told the men to go there first so she would be reassured not to run into them when she made her grand escape. Well, not escape she wasn’t escaping. She was just leaving, briefly, without telling anyone she was doing so or where she was going.

Skurge was examining a shake weight when she arrived and idly she wondered where he got the thing in the first place. “Hey.” She greeted the man informally.

“Princess!” Skurge scrambled to bow. Darcy, in the interest of not wasting time, let it go uncorrected.

“I need to go to Midgard and then in an hour—no, two hours I need you to be ready to open up the portal again so I can come back.” Darcy informed the janitor turned inter-dimensional gatekeeper.

“Alone?” Skurge questioned.

“Alone.” She confirmed in a stern voice that just dared him to question her.

“Aim for New York.” She instructed as Skurge moved to do her bidding. He turned the sword and opened the Bifrost bridge.

Before entering she turned to him and commanded, “Don’t tell anyone I’ve left.”

Then she jumped.

She arrived in a grassy field, the skyscrapers just beyond the trees told her she was indeed in New York City. From the position of the sun Darcy was able to tell that it was near midday, she had no idea what day it was but from the amount of school children and families she would guess it was a weekend.

The city folk that saw her arrival via giant rainbow lightshow were all a twitter, most had their phones out and pointed at her. Darcy threw up the peace sign in the general direction of the onlookers and then conjured the sling ring out of her purse and onto her fingers.

She opened a portal to the Avengers HQ and stepped through quickly.

“Hello?” She called out, “Is anyone home?”

She was hoping for Sam, Rhodes, or Natasha, but it was Vision who greeted her.

“Miss Lewis?”

They were in the common room. The lights were all out and the windows covered, only the light of the large screen TV provided any illumination. His skin blended into the sofa color so seamlessly that it appeared as if the man-droid emerged from the shadows themselves. Darcy called out timidly, “Vision?”

The overhead lights came on automatically and Darcy almost gasped. Vision looked…like crap.
She didn’t know it was possible but the android looked like he hadn’t slept and he was dressed in sweat pants and a sweatshirt. It was the most disheveled she’d ever seen him look.

“You’ve returned.” He stated blandly.

“Yeah.” Darcy confirmed, “Are you okay?...You look like shit.”

Vision’s face transformed, “I attacked you and the first thing you ask is if I’m alright?”

Vision looked like he wanted to cry, Darcy wondered if that was physically possible. She tried to reassure him, “Vision I don’t--”

“I’m sorry. I’m so so sorry.” Vision interrupted as he stalked closer. He grabbed her hand, desperation colored his face as he continued to apologize, “I would have never—I’m sorry. I should have listened to you. Believed you. We all should have, but Wanda…I felt, I still feel--”

“You love her.” Darcy finished. She put a hand on Vision’s arm and rubbed soothingly she had compassion for the man-droid and she was seriously moved by how poor he seemed to be handling being made to be Wanda’s little puppet.

“It’s okay, I understand. You let your love for Wanda blind you to the truth. And that blindness left you vulnerable to her manipulation. I…know it wasn’t you. And, I forgive you.”

“I do not deserve your forgiveness, but I will humbly accept it.” Vision’s eyes looked wild as he added, “I’m not an Avenger anymore. I will never again cause harm to another living soul.”

Darcy frowned, “I don’t think you have to quit the Avengers over this Vision. I mean, who hasn’t had to deal with a little mind control induced violence? I didn’t blame the Hulk for what Wanda made him do in Johannesburg, I don’t think you need to shoulder all the blame for what happened at the Tower. You w--”

“Leaving the Avengers wasn’t really a choice. That was an over simplification on my part, I apologize. I am to be imprisoned following the signing of the Accords later today. I will be imprisoned on the raft, a covert prison designed to secure prisoners with abilities.”

“What?!” Darcy squawked. “How could you have been tried, convicted and sentence all in one week?”

Vision lowered his head as he spoke, “Following your departure the Avengers were left leaderless. With Steve and Tony both gone, there was no one with enough public capital to advocate for the team. Wanda was blamed for what was presumed to be your death. The Avengers were blamed for employing her. And I her associate in the attack, was left to suffer the consequences alone. The others have agreed to sign the Accords. As have I.”

“What?” Darcy put a hand to her head, she really hated having to come back here and deal with the Accords and consequences and fallout from the fight with Wanda. It would have been so much easier to stay on Asgard and pretend none of these earthly matters affected her, but she couldn’t not care. Sure she had Thanos and Ragnarok to deal with, but leaving Earth to fend for themselves without warning? That was something she was comfortable with. Especially because she knew Tony and Stephen would want to be wherever she was and she had a feeling they wouldn’t be coming back to Earth for a while.

Vision continued speaking revealing, “I will have no trial, but as I have agreed to surrender myself peacefully the government has allowed me to remain here until the Accords are official my confinement equally so.” He explained, “CIA agents guard the Head Quarters now, and the entrance
to this floor specifically."

“That’s insane!” Darcy argued. “They can’t imprison you without a trial!”

“Actually, that’s exactly the kind of procedure that is outlined in the Accords to help contain powered individuals in a timely manner.” Vision corrected.

“But I thought they fixed that!” Darcy distinctly remembered reviewing the Accords and giving her notes on changing the harsh and unyielding language used in them “I told them to change that shit, that it was unjust and un-American and--…Nevermind. Where is everyone else? Rhodes? Natasha? Sam? …ugh I’d even take Maria. Is anyone else here?”

“No. Miss Hill disappeared when the law and scrutiny befell the Avengers. Sam and Natasha, moved by your sacrifice and actions during the battle, changed their minds about signing the Accords and they have accompanied Colonel Rhodes to Vienna where the signing is taking place shortly.”

“When.” Darcy demanded.

“Two p.m.”

Darcy looked at the clock on the wall. It was one thirty. “I still have time then.”

She lifted her arm ready to portal away when Vision put his hand on hers.

“You plan on derailing the signing?” Vision asked. Darcy hesitated answering before nodding slowly and admitting, “Kinda.”

“I wish I could offer my help but--”

Darcy could see the answer on his face. She finished his thought for him, “But your still too afraid of yourself and hurting someone.”

Vision nodded once, “You are a very perceptive young woman.”

“You have a surprisingly expressive face for a man who is half robot.”

Vision sniggered and looked down, hiding his smile. “Thanks.”

When Vision looked up and met her eyes, they stood awkwardly staring at each other, neither of them really sure what to say next. She felt as if he wanted to ask her something else, but she could see he was holding back for some reason.

“Anything else?” Darcy prompted kindly.

“Wanda.” Vision said sadly, “Is she…alive?”

“Yes.” Darcy answered softly, “I put her in Loki’s old cell. It’s holding her for now, but I plan on letting her out tomorrow or maybe the next day.”

Visions brow crinkled slightly, “You would free her?”

“I would teach her.” Darcy said soberly, “Or rather, arrange for the best magic teachers on Asgard to teach her. So, it’s not freedom it’s more like parole.”

“Is it possible for her to learn control, as I understand it you have asserted in the past that her magic is borne of chaos? Chaos itself being defined in no small part by a lack of control?”
“I’m hopeful.” Darcy asserted, “I know there’s good in her. There’s just a bunch of layers of bitchy, fear, and insecurity obscuring it right now.”

“You are remarkable.” Vision declared sounding awed.

“Don’t go sounding so impressed.” Darcy waved off his reverent tone, “It’s just that I don’t believe in incarceration without rehabilitation. Sue me, I believe people can change. Wanda specifically.”

Vision took a step back a look of respect, “You are…you are a true heroine Miss Lewis. In every sense of the word.”

“Vision--”

“I must apologize again, for my heinous behavior. But I do not want to delay you when you have things to accomplish and wrongs to right.” Vision stepped back, “I’ll leave you to it.”

He left without another word. Darcy stared after him, half tempted to take him along with her, but she could tell that he was not in the right head space at the moment. One look at him wearing those worn out sweat pants and anyone would be able to see that Vision was in the middle of a good old fashioned wallow.

Besides, what she did next might change his fate anyhow.

“Onwards.” Darcy cheered quietly to herself as she used the sling ring to open another portal, this time she pictured the conference room from her vision. And off to Vienna she went.

As soon as she arrived the place UN delegates started to murmur among themselves. The noise of the crowd grew louder, but Darcy ignored them all as she searched the crowd for the face of the man she saw in her vision.

She found him talking to the younger black man who would don the cat suit and pursue Bucky…for some reason. She approached the pair swiftly and greeted them briskly. “Hello I’m Darcy Lewis.”

“Hello. Miss Lewis?” The older black man had an accent but it wasn’t so thick that she couldn’t understand it.

“I came to warn you. There’s going to be a bomb explosion and we need to get everyone evacuated.” Darcy looked into the man’s eyes and tried to convey how serious she was.

“Son, we must ignore her.” The older man counseled his younger companion, “We cannot fall prey to yet another tactic to delay the signing of the Accords. Miss Lewis, we will not be--”

“Dude.” Darcy grabbed the older man by the lapel and tugged him close. She ignored the bald women behind him that looked poised to strike, “I don’t know who you are and I don’t care. All I know is that you in particular will die when the explosion goes off.” She let the man go and smoothed down the crinkled fabric. “That’s why I came to you first.”

“This is King T’Chaka.” The younger man explained, “Of Wakanda.”

Darcy blinked at him, honestly she’d never heard of the place; her American public school education showing she remarked glibly, “Uh-huh.”
Undeterred by her lack of response the man continued, “I’m Prince T’Challa.”

Darcy fixed the guy with a look meant to put him in his place and hopefully convince him she wasn’t a raving lunatic, “You’re Cat Man.”

The Prince and King exchanged a look. Darcy waved her hands, “I’ve never heard of you or seen you be Cat Man but I also, again, don’t care about your weird fetish-wearing alter ego. For real, I’m just here to help your dad not die.”

“Darcy?” Darcy turned at the sound of a familiar voice calling her name.

“Sam!” Darcy opened her arms and Sam hugged her.

While in his embrace Darcy whispered, “There’s going to be an explosion. Should I just shout fire or is there a more orderly way to evacuate people?” At the same time Sam said, “I’m so happy to see you’re alive! I was so worried.”

Sam jerked back and shrilly exclaimed, “Wait, what did you just say?”

“I don’t know when it’s going to go off so I’d like to get everyone out of here sooner rather than later.” Darcy looked around for Natasha’s signature red hair. If anyone could help clear the room without causing a panic it would be her.

“How do you know--” Darcy gave him a flat look and Sam cut himself off, “Oh, right you can see the future.”

“This warning is borne of nonsense?” King T’Chaka questioned, “The girl claims to know the will of fate? Come T’Challa, we must--”

Darcy frowned at the King as she interrupted him, “You know if someone showed up and told me I was going to die and all I had to do was waste a little time to check to see if she was telling the truth. I wouldn’t gamble my life unnecessarily; I mean but that’s just me. I’m silly like that.”

“Father.” T’Challa said seriously as he placed his hand on his dad’s shoulder, “Perhaps we should listen.”

Darcy maintained eye contact with the King, unwilling to stand down. King T’Chaka looked away first, conceding, “Perhaps.”

Darcy smiled brightly at the pair. “Great! So how are we doing this? Is there a fire alarm we can pull? Or should I go find a microph--”

The explosion shook the building and knocked them all off their feet and onto the ground.

It took about an hour to get everyone out of the building. But, as a result of her arrival and intervention in the direct aftermath of the explosion, there were no casualties.

Darcy’s warning to the King saved him and delayed the proceedings. Her strength and quick thinking saved many in the crowd from being blasted with debris as she erected her shield. She was able to use the sling ring to open a portal directly to a hospital so the injured could receive immediate medical attention.
Darcy had wanted to address the UN directly but after the explosion she knew it was impossible so she had Sam and Rhodes, gathered up all the TV reporters and cameras in the area (of which there were many due to the newsworthy attendants and carnage) and she held a mini-press conference in a nearby park.

Darcy stepped up on her makeshift stage, which was in reality a wooden bench, with as much regal dignity as she could muster. The reporters had been instructed she would not be taking questions so they all waited respectfully while she looked over the crowd. There was a large of space blocked off by dividers to separate her from the crowd that had formed around the bench from which she had chosen to address the people from.

Besides the reporters, the King and his son stood in the crowd along with his personal lady guards. A few other uninjured UN delegates chose to stick around to see what she had to say as did some emergency services personnel, aids, and onlookers. It was a pretty big crowd, at least to her. She felt nervous standing alone with so many eyes on her. But catching sight of Natasha and Sam and Rhodes, gave her the peace of mind of knowing she wasn’t really alone.

She had no microphone so she just spoke as loud as she could without appearing to be shouting. “Hi everyone. I just have a few things to say, so..thanks for gathering here I guess.”

Sam gave her a thumbs up in and she looked down to hide her smile. Raising her head she made eye contact with the camera’s, “I’m D…I’m Princess Darcy of Asgard. Daughter of Frigga and Odin. Sister to Thor and Loki. I was adopted into the royal Asgardian family some time after befriending Thor upon his first arrival on Earth. I was born on this planet and raised as a human my entire life, but I’ve always had a power. Ever since meeting Thor my power has grown. It was revealed to me that I am very, very, very distantly related to the Asgardians that first visited Earth thousands of years ago.”

Darcy fidgeted with her hands. It felt weird to be telling so many strangers the intimate details of her life, but she felt it was necessary for the people of Earth to understand where she was coming from and believe what she had to say.

“Through a series of magical events, I was made fully Asgardian.” A ripple went through the crowd. “My natural powers are benign, for the most part. However by becoming embroiled with the Asgardians and the Avengers, I was given the opportunity to learn magic. That is how I learned how to create my shield, which you have seen me use in the past. It is also how I learned how to do this.”

Darcy transformed her gown with a wave of her hand. She chose something more…delicate. She changed her hair into a signature crazy color and altered her make up to appear more innocent and soft. She also transformed her tiara into an understated single crescent piece. “My ability to change my appearance is still a work in progress, but given a couple years to practice at the skill I might even be able to change my face and body one day.”

Darcy sighed, “But that’s just all background information. What I really want to tell you all about is the one ability that I know most of you will balk at….When I sleep, sometimes I can see the future.”

One reporter couldn’t contain themselves and shouted out, “Then why didn’t you stop the explosion?”

And once that reporter asked something, another one shouted, “Why didn’t you warn New York about the Chitari?”

The rest of the reporters started shouting questions and Darcy rolled her eyes. She then held up her hands and waited for silence. When it became obvious she wouldn’t be responding to the shouts
directed at her, the crowd settled down.

“My ability to see the future is not like Phoebe’s on Charmed. It’s less helpful and more jump cut and dream interpretation-y.” A chuckle ran through the crowd at her reference and diction. Darcy smiled charmingly, “Yeah, I know. Suck power.”

She reached up to run a hand through her hair before remembering it was in a fancy braid and was forced to lower her hand awkwardly. She clasped her hands together to stop from fidgeting.

“I don’t get names or addresses when I get glimpses of the future. My visions are neither time coded or helpfully labeled. But they are true. And they can on occasion, be helpful.”

Darcy looked directly at King T’Chaka, “There are many who will doubt me and that’s fine, but the main reason I’m here today was to save someone and I did that. I saved the person who I saw die and I can walk away from today feeling good about that.”

She turned her gaze and locked onto a group of cameras, “Except since I’m not an Avenger anymore nor a sanctioned agent of the government, what I did today was a crime…at least it will be when the Accords are signed.”

A ripple of chatter swept through the crowd. Darcy spoke over them, “The second reason I came back to Earth today was to make my stance on the Accords known.”

“I was given the Accords and asked for input, I am saddened to learn that the changes I suggested were ignored.” Darcy spied General Ross in the back of the crowd and the angry look on his face told her everything she needed to know about how he felt about her impromptu press conference.

Darcy stared him down as she announced, “I do not support the Accords.”

Ross snarled. Darcy let her eyes flicker over the other UN delegates in the crowd. She repeated herself for affect, “I do not support the Accords for the simple fact that they punish those with powers who try to help.”

“Why were you in favor of them before?!?” A reporter shouted out.

Darcy turned to look in the general direction the question came from, “Honestly? Tony. And Colonel Rhodes…and Wanda Maximoff.”

Once again the crowd was set a twitter.

“Is the wicked witch dead?”
“Where is the Scarlet Witch?”
“Did you take her back to Asgard?”
“Where’s Captain America?”
“Did you marry Tony?”
“Are the Asgardians going to invade Earth?”

Darcy waited for the reporters to stop shouting at her. Once again her patience won out and they quieted down rather quickly.

“Wanda has been imprisoned on Asgard in a cell designed to hold the most destructive and chaotic of magic users. She will not be returning until I say so.” Darcy found Natasha in the crowd. She spoke to her even as she addressed everyone else, “I have decided to show her mercy. She is a powerful being and yet still so very young. I neither condone nor forgive what she has done, to me, to others, but I am unwilling to write her off completely. She will be given a chance to reform on
Asgard and I will be the one who deems her worthy of returning home to Earth. What you chose to do with her after her return is your choice, but I believe in justice not vengeance and would recommend you considering her time on Asgard as time served and a sentence carried out and paid in full.”

Darcy felt her eyes glaze over slightly as she pictured all the death and destruction that Thanos was going to cause. “Besides, soon someone will come to Earth and we will need the Scarlet Witch to help us to defend the planet…Soon we will need all the help we can get.”

Unlike every other time she said something incendiary, no reporter spoke out of turn. Darcy moved her eyes over the crowd. She saw several faces pale and many looked stricken.

“I have dreamt of a man who seeks death and destruction for all. He will come here as he will go to all other planets that hold something he wants….my dreams are not clear, they aren’t precise, but this man I see with clarity. He is an alien of a species I have never heard of, he is bigger than the Hulk and pur--” Darcy stopped herself from telling everyone he was purple because she felt that would lead to people doubting her and making a mockery of her warning. “He possess a weapon of untold power and I have forseen him kill powerful beings.”

Darcy stared at Sam and Rhodey, “I didn’t come here just to help with the explosion. I was kind of always planning on hijacking the signing of the Accords so I could address you all…and warn you.” Her gaze flickered over to the King of Wakanda. “I know that there are those among you who have acted out of fear and believe isolation is the only path to peace or self preservation, but I want to implore you to share. Share your ideas with each other, share resources. Only when everyone comes together will this planet have any chance at defending itself from the coming threat.”

Darcy looked up at the sun, she was an hour or so late, Skurge had to be freaking out by now, but seeing as no one had come looking for her yet, she figured she was still in the clear, ‘consequences’ wise.

“I’m leaving.” Darcy announced quietly. The crowd who was talking amongst themselves hushed immediately.

“I wanted to say that I love you…Earthlings. This is my home and I will defend it. And as for Steve and the others who accompanied me to Asgard, they are not hostages. They are tourists. And they will return when feel like it.”

Darcy took a shuddering breath; she could feel the tears welling up in her eyes. She repeated herself, “I’m leaving and I’m leaving you with a warning. Prepare yourselves for an attack. Work together, come together. Let racism and sexism and political bullshit fall to the way side. You are humanity. Even those among you who are not strictly human, are still members of humanity. Powered and non-powered alike, you all live on this planet together. Earth is your home, I ask you humanity, isn’t that enough to unite you?”

Darcy felt a tear slip past and fall down her cheek. She didn’t bother to wipe it away, “I’m sorry I can’t help you figure out who set the bombs today, I’m sorry I can’t stay, and I’m even sorrier that I don’t really want to.”

Darcy sniffed and wiped away the stay tear. She forced her face to remain blank as she said her next words with a voice made of steel and a tone more serious than she had ever been in her life, “The government’s plan to outlaw the use of powers in the name of being helpful or heroic is insane and stupid. And I will not come back to this planet until it is abolished. And neither will any other Asgardian.”
Her voice was strong and her posture stiff and yet she couldn’t stop another tear from sliding down her cheek.

“This is my goodbye. My last act of kindness before I take leave of this place until such a time as you are all more worthy of my presence and that of my brethren.” Darcy felt more tears roll down her cheek as she looked out at Natasha, “I am sad to leave my home.”

She looked directly at Rhodes, “I am sorry to leave my allies in the midst of such turmoil, but please know my ultimatum regarding the Accords is not made lightly.”

She looked at Sam, and couldn’t stop the hitch in her voice as she said, “I will miss my friends.”

She then turned her gaze to the nearest camera. “Goodbye. Goodbye to those who know me and those who know of me. Goodbye to those who I’ve had the privileged to love and be loved by in return.

She turned and looked directly at different camera, “…Goodbye for now, but not forever. I believe you humanity. You will not disappoint me. And one day, I will return.”

She turned her head to face another camera as she felt more tears fall from her eyes she whispered her final farewell, “Goodbye Earth.”

She then looked upwards and shouted, “OPEN THE BIFROST.”

And thank god it did, she would not have been able to survive the aftermath if her dramatic exit was ruined so awkwardly. As the light surrounded her she threw up the peace sign and smiled at the few people who were waving goodbye. “Peace out.”

When she arrived back on Asgard Loki and Bucky were waiting for her. They stood next to a terrified and chastised looking Skurge. Darcy smiled as she wiped away the remnants of her tears and greeted them casually, “Hey guys.”

Bucky smiled at her but it was obvious Loki was not amused.

His body was lined with tension and her practically growled at her, “Let us go. NOW!”

Loki refused to talk to her as they walked back to the palace. Bucky, normally quiet, didn’t say much either. Initially he asked if she was okay and once reassured he remained otherwise silent.

Halfway through the city, Loki became annoyed with Darcy who was frequently stopped by Asgardians wanting to speak to her. Some just wanted to say ‘hi’ others gushed about how happy they were that she had healed from her debilitating injuries. Some asked her for her blessing? Which was weird. Others actually asked for an autograph, which she found entirely amusing.

Either way, Darcy was kind and courteous to all the citizens who sought her out. Her willingness to let people prattle on about how pretty she was or how kind she seemed or how impressed they were with her ability to hold her liquor, was seeming the final straw for Loki.

A little girl who looked around five held her hand and was swinging Darcy’s arm idly as she went
on and on about the nice ‘Princess’ was. “And your hair looks like a sunset and your dress is so pretty I’m going to ask mama to make me one just like it and I like your eyes and your crown—”

“Thank you.” Darcy accepted, trying to politely end the conversation, “Thank you, you’re very sweet.”

The little girl squealed, “Do you want to come to my house to meet my mama? You can teach her—Can you teach her how to braid my hair like yours?”

Out of nowhere Loki roared at the child, “WILL YOU GET AWAY FROM HER!”

The child’s face screwed up in fear and then she began to cry. Darcy glared at Loki who looked unrepentant. She scooped up the girl into her arms and made soothing noises. She whispered words of kindness and excuses for her ‘guards’ rude behavior as she patted the child’s back.

When the girl stopped crying Loki barked at them, “Leave her. We have much to discuss Princess.” Loki’s anger was tainting the way he held himself, his voice, and the look in his eyes. “The King has demanded an audience and you’ve already kept him waiting too long. He will be angry.”

“No shit.” Darcy whispered to herself as she put the girl back down on her feet. Her tone was all sugar and sweetness as she addressed the little girl, “Why don’t you go find your mom? If you come by the palace tomo---the day after tomorrow, with your mother, I’ll braid your hair and you’re your mother how to do it.”

The little girl wiped away a stray tear and stared up at her with wide eyes, “Really?”

“Really.”

“Yay! Goodbye!” The little girl ran away happily. Darcy glowered after her, “Now I have to learn how to fucking make a braid.”

Darcy turned on Loki and shoved him in the chest. “You’re an ass.”

Loki shoved her back.”You’re an ungrateful brat.”

Annoyed with his callous treatment towards the little girl and the stick that’s been up his ass since he found out about her little tiny eensy weensy deception, she shoved him even harder. “You know how you’re mad at me? Well, now I’m mad at you.” She shoved him again for good measure.

Loki gripped her shoulders and squeezed painfully. “How could you.”

“Lo-Axel get off.” Darcy demanded.

“You LEFT!” Loki screamed. Darcy jerked her head back as Loki began to shake her and repeat himself, “You left. How could you. How could you leave me?”

His eyes were wild and she could practically smell the fear wafting off of him. He stopped shaking her and his grip on her shoulder slackened until he was more clinging to her rather than clutching her tightly.

She knew his anger was steeped in fear but did he have to be such a jackass about it? With a sigh Darcy wrapped her arms around his waist and hugged him. He sagged against her.

“I came back.” Darcy said quietly. “I was always going to come back.”

“You didn’t tell me you were leaving.” Loki accused in a hushed tone, his own arms locking behind
“You wouldn’t have let me go.” Darcy confessed, “And this was one thing I needed to do alone.”

“Don’t do it again.” Loki warned.

“No promises.” Darcy answered frankly. Loki grunted and hugged her tighter.

They stayed there hugging for another couple seconds before Bucky cleared his throat loudly, catching their attention. “Uh, you’re attracting a crowd. We might want to…”

Loki released her abruptly. “Let us continue on.” He took hold of her hand and set off at a brisk pace, once again leading the way back to the palace. Darcy had no choice but to follow. Bucky not far behind.

Darcy made Loki detour so they could retrieve Tony from the Forge. He was one of only two still working in there. It was the early evening and most left for dinner she supposed. Darcy worried her lip; she doubted Tony left his work station all day.

“Tony.” She called out, “Quitting time old man.”

Tony didn’t look up from the suit he was working on, “Five more minutes.”

“Now.” She argued, “Don’t make me come over there and throw you over my shoulder. It will be hilarious and undignified for both of us.”

Tony’s eyes flickered up at that and he whined, “Aw come on Darce. Just five more minutes.” Tony stuck out his lower lip and pled, “Pleeease?”

Darcy folded, “Five more minutes.”

“Yes.” Tony celebrated as he went back to soldering something electronic-y looking.

Five minutes more lasted for twenty minutes. And then Loki and Bucky became annoyed enough to intervene despite her protests. Tony kept pleading for more time and she kept giving in because as wrapped up in his work as Tony was, Darcy was equally enraptured by watching him work.

With Loki on one side and Bucky on the other, Tony was carried out of the Forge, complaining all the way. The men didn’t let him down until they reached the room where Stephen was still sleeping presumably.

Loki glared at them all, “You have fifteen minutes to wake the wizard and join me in the royal chambers for dinner where you will explain why you left and exactly what you saw in your most recent visions.”

Darcy nodded and Loki left.

Tony turned to her with a confused expression, “What’s got his bee in a bonnet? ..Am I using that phrase correctly? I feel like I’m not.”
Darcy sighed, “C’mon. Let’s get Stephen so I don’t have to repeat myself.”

Waking Stephen was as easy as saying ‘wake up Stephen’. He like Tony that morning awoke completely reinvigorated and fully awake. On the way to the royal chambers Darcy explained that she had left Asgard temporarily and gone back to Earth.

When they reunited with Loki Darcy couldn’t tell if the others were seeing him as Odin or Axel, but she spoke freely and referred to him as Loki. Bucky, the only one not in the ‘know’ didn’t even bat an eye at this revelation.

Over the course of their evening meal Darcy relayed all the pertinent information of her journey back to Earth. She told them of the death and destruction she had prevented from happening, Visions imminent and willing incarceration, as well as some speculation on her part behind his heartbroken and mentally scarred status.

She told them about how the Accords were never changed to include her suggestions and when Tony looked away from her, she knew at once that he knew that her changes would be disregarded. And because of that she didn’t feel bad when she told them how she had denounced the Accords and made the proclamation that no Asgardians would be going back to Earth until the Accords were abolished.

Tony was suspiciously quiet. She intuited that her description of Visions fate might have tempered his tongue as well as his own deception of omission regarding her input to the Accords. Loki was a little annoyed at her for ‘speaking’ for Asgard in this regard, but he also didn’t rub it in her face that Odin was still on Earth, so she guessed, overall he approved.

She expressed her regret about making the promise not to return. As thinking back on it, she wished she would have offered to return to Earth every month to take powered people back to Asgard, offering her adopted home as a refuge for those who would be persecuted and imprisoned by an ungrateful world. But Loki pointed out there were so many ways an offer like that could have gone wrong that she didn’t stew over it.

When it came to telling them about her vision that morning, she hesitated. She had no problem revealing who the big bad was or what he was going to do in the grand scheme of things, but telling Tony he would be stabbed. Telling Loki how she saw him die. Going into detail about the red bloodshot eyes and the purple skin and the empty look on his face when he finally hit the floor….

She cried as she told them everything. And she did, she told them every gory detail that she could recall. About Loki and Tony and Gamora and all of it.

She mentally noted how Loki stiffened at the mention of Thanos’s name but decided not to ask him about it with the others around. She would ask him the next time they were alone.

After revealing all that, Darcy then told them her plans for the future. “I want to warn everyone.”

“What do you mean everyone?” Loki questioned.

“Everyone. The Guardians. Thor, if we can somehow get in contact with him. Xandar. Contraxia. The Ravagers. Everyone. Every world, every civilization we can get word to.”

“And tell them what?” Tony asked, “That a giant grape man is coming to kill them?”
Darcy was silent for a minute, “We tell them Thanos is coming. And Asgard and Earth are fighting back. We open up Asgard to the rest of the--”

“It’s not possible.” Loki shook his head, “If we leave the Bifrost open it will build until it rips apart wherever we are trying to connect to. It’s how I planned on destroying Jotenhheim. It’s why Thor destroyed the bridge. The Bifrost contains immense dimensional energy--”

“So we send them to Xandar. I’m sure the Nova could deploy extra troops--”

“Hold on.” Stephen interrupted, “You’re talking about calling up all the planets, and warning them a man is coming to kill them and redirecting them to a planet where they can join an army?”

“Basically.” Darcy said with a nod.

“That’s insane.” Stephen remarked, “People are too selfish. As long as Thanos is not targeting their planet--”

“But he is. He’s targeting EVERY planet. If we warn people, maybe we can actually change things.” Darcy insisted, “We just have to have a little faith in people.”

“Okay,” Tony said redirecting everyones attention back to him, “We can talk about that plan, after we figure out how to contact every planet. I doubt we’re all on the same cellular plan, engineering a mass signal is going to take a while, so let’s table that for now.”

“Fine.” Darcy conceded, “But I’m serious about warning everyone.”

“I believe you.” Loki said with a somber nod of acknowledgment, “And I concede that it is not a terrible idea. It may however paint us with a target so large that Thanos detours from his current trajectory to come destroy Asgard before continuing on his merry way, but I agree some sort of mass anonymous warning would be most wise.”

“I also want Loki and Stephen to work on Wanda together.” Darcy explained, “Teach her control and self discipline and how not to be crazy.”

Stephen gestured to Loki with his thumb, “You sure you want the god of chaos and lies helping the ‘chaos witch’ find self control?”


Stephen gestured to Loki with both his hands declaring, “My point.”

“He does seem an odd choice,” Bucky added speaking for the first time in a while, “How he reacted to your disappearance today is as testament to his lack of self control and emotional maturity.”

Loki shot Bucky an annoyed and slightly betrayed look. “And here I thought we really bonded today.”

Bucky just shrugged, “I calls ‘em hows I sees ‘em.”

Tony snickered then leaned over to whisper in her ear, “Okay, now I’m rooting for him to get with us.” Bucky blushed brightly, obviously heard Tony.

Darcy ignored the joking and fixed Stephen and Loki with a stern look. She repeated herself with more authority, “You will work together. Right?”

“I already said I would.” Loki remarked snippily, “You are my dearest sister and you asked me for
help, do not insult me by doubting my love for you.”

Darcy reached across the table and squeezed Loki’s hand, “I would never doubt you….unless you were trying to trick me.” Loki smiled back at her with a proud and amused grin.

“Well my sister is very clever, far cleverer than my brother, she would instantly see through any lies or tricks I could conceive so I see no point in even attempting such a feat.”

Darcy retraced her hand to fold her arms under her bust, “So you say, so you say.”

“I’m in.” Stephen offered, “You know I’m here for you. Even if I disagree with the game plan and think it’s going to blow up in our faces.”

Darcy gave Stephen an annoyed look. “Gee thanks.”

“Do I get a secret mission?” Tony asked, “Because if I have to do trust exercises with the one armed Army instead of working on my new suit, I think I might kill him so I can go back to the Forge even if I am surprisingly attracted to him lately, the Forge is my new favorite place ever, did I mention how much I love you for bringing me there oh, love my life and glorious sun of which my world revolves?”

Darcy and Stephen chuckled at Tony’s antics. “No. I’ve something else in mind for Bucky and Steve. You are to stay in the Forge for as long as you want as many days as you want.”

“Really?”

“When your armor is done…I just want your armor to be as armorer-y as it can be? I want you to build the best Iron Man suit that there can be. One that will protect you against the Gods themselves…metaphorically but actually kind of literally speaking.”

“Huzzah!” Tony lifted his glass in the air, as he declared, “I love this plan.” As Loki grumbled, “Thanos is no god.”

“Stark you are so easy.” Stephen muttered under his breath. Tony grinned at the doctor cheekily as he saluted him, “Damn straight.”

“And me?” Bucky asked, “What do you want me to do? Why am I here?”

Darcy turned on Bucky and tilted her head, “I was under the impression you volunteered to be here.”

“I am. I mean I did. I want to be here.” Bucky claimed, “I just…you stuck me with your brother this morning as a diversion.”

“Yup.”

“I don’t have powers and I can’t exactly help build any fancy new technologies.”

“Nope.”

“So, what do you want from me? Body guard?”

“Nu-uh.”

“Then what?”

“I’m going to sleep with you and Steve.”
“What?”
“Both of them?”
“Ugh, why Capsicle too?”

Darcy grinned devilishly at all of them, “You and Steve are going to be my guinea pigs. I’m going to practice my new dream walking, sleep commanding, and astral projection powers with/on you two.”

“Uh…can I help with the witch instead?” Bucky asked only half kidding.

“No.” Darcy denied with a smile, “You shall be my helper monkey.”

“HA!” Tony exclaimed. Loki, Stephen and she began to laugh. Bucky looked playful annoyed as being refered to in such a manner, but he was clearly amused by the lot of them.

After falling into bed with Stephen and Tony, Darcy fell into a fitful sleep. She dreamt of being ripped apart and re-assembled in the nothingness. The dark void of empty eternity haunted her. She woke to the gentle shaking of her shoulders.

“Darcy.” Loki called out to her, “Wake up.”

Darcy’s eyes fluttered open and she felt the wet trails sliding down her cheeks. Loki’s cold hands on her heated skin helped draw her back to the present.

“You were crying in your sleep.” Loki observed with a disturbed look on his face.

Darcy felt her lip quiver, “I think I dream about being dead.”

It was a secret fear whispered quietly to her brother in the dead of night.

“Come.” Loki commanded. She cuddled up against his chest and he stroked her hair soothingly.

Darcy silently cried as she explained her dream, “I’ve dreamt of the place before. It’s a void. A pit in which I sink and am scattered. A dark nothingness, where I am made and unmade for all time and without end. A cycle of not being and yet aware that I…was.”

“That is not death.” Loki denied, “That is a nightmare. You’re nightmare. It’s why it affects you so.”

“But--”

“Shhhhh. Listen.” Loki kissed her on the forehead, “When you die. A very long, long, long time from now. You will go where all worthy Asgardians go. Valhalla.”

“Is Valhalla real?” Darcy asked as she sniffed. “And isn’t it only for the Valkyries?”

“Valhalla is real.” Loki promised, “And it is the chosen afterlife of all warriors and you my dear sister, are most definitely worthy of entrance. You will spend the days of your afterlife sparring with the most noble of warriors, doing countless valorous deeds along the way. And every night your wounds will heal and you will be restored to full health. You will feast on the boar Saehrimnir and drink mead from the goat Heidrun. You will enjoy an endless supply of revels and enjoy the company of the beautiful Valkyries.”

“That sounds nice.” Darcy said quietly, after a beat she asked, “What kind of boar is a Saehrimnir?”

“Saehrimnir is the boars name. It comes back to life every time he is slaughtered and butchered.”
“Ew, gross.”

Loki chuckled. “Think of it this way, only one animal shall ever die to sustain you and your fallen comrades. All the other little piggies go to animal heaven.”

“There’s an animal heaven?” Darcy asked sounding excited, “Are there unicorns? Or ooh! Dinosaurs in animal heaven!?”

Loki laughed and squeezed her tight. “Sweet sister, the urge to corrupt you is only outweighed by my love for you and you’re adorable innocence.”

“Why wouldn’t warrior heaven include dinosaurs? I could joust or whatever while riding a T-rex! It would be so awesome.” Darcy mused, only half joking.

“That would be a sight.” Loki agreed.

In the dark they lay wrapped up in each other. As silence descended upon them, Loki continued to stroke her hair. Comforted by his presences and words regarding life after death, Darcy was almost lulled to sleep.

But then a thought occurred to her, sleepily she asked, “Will you be there? With me in Valhalla?”

Loki’s hand paused tellingly, before he continued petting her. He answered in a voice filled with pain and self loathing, “No. Valhalla is no place for a wretch likes me.”

“Where will you go then?”

“Hell.”

Drowsily Darcy protested, “Nooo.”

“We’ll see.” Loki soothed. He kissed her forehead again and whispered, “Think no more on this. Sleep. I know your dreams burden you so but you have power, you should use it. Make yourself dream of those fools you’ve given your heart to. They make you happy and irrationally I find myself overly concerned about how you feel.”

“I can’t make myself dream about something specific.” Darcy denied with a drawl.

“Try.” Loki suggested, “Close your eyes and try.” He kissed her forehead once more, his lips feather light on her skin as he whispered, “Sweet dreams sister. Sweet dreams.”

Within seconds, she was asleep.

Darcy’s Gamora’s Dream Walk Look

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Darcy’s Gamora’s Dream Walk Look

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Tony’s Asgardian Attire

Loki’s Choice/ Darcy’s outfit for everything up to and including departing and arriving on Earth
Darcy’s On Camera Outfit Change To illustrate powers to the public and to appear ‘softer’
So, what do we all think about that?
Chapter 45 – bucky barnes

Chapter Summary

Darcy Dream Walks Bucky Barnes

Chapter Notes

***I edited this chapter 3 days after posting it to make it less explicit sex-y, so if you notice a change, it's because I changed it. I was straying too far out of the rating and after some thought I decided to pull back and make it (hopefully) more in tone with the rest of the story I've been telling.

As a writer of some graphic sex stuff and a reader of it, I like that stuff, I think sex is real and talking/reading/writing about it is normal and I have no problem with any smutty stuff, but that's not what I wanted this story to be about. This is an epic adventure/fun romp kinda fic with some sprinkles of polyamory lovin'.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 45 – bucky barnes

Darcy slept and woke up in someone else’s dream.

It was a skill she had been working on perfecting for the past few weeks, this was the third time she had Dream Walked intentionally and reached her desired target. Her goal moving forward was to affect the dream itself. Dream manipulation, Loki called it.

On every other Dream Walk, she felt like she was only a passenger, like a piece of drift wood being washed down river. As the intruder she was often at the mercy of the ‘dreamer’, forced into witnessing and participating in acts that were not of her choosing. Loki and Stephen had assured her that it was only a matter of time and practice until she mastered the skill of being able to affect and direct the dream rather than just go along with it.

She was flat on her back in Bucky’s bed, the shitty one from Austria where they first officially met.

Bucky was lying on top of her and they were kissing. The room was cast in this spellbinding orange light, through the window on the opposite wall she could see the most spectacular sunset. Darcy could feel the long sleeves and heavy skirt from her gown; it was the one she was wearing when Bucky met and shot her. The gold and blue feathery bottomed one.

“Bucky.” She gasped in between kisses, “Bucky I’m here.”

“Yes. You’re here with me.” Bucky responded, his voice thick with emotion. His hands wandered over her body, she could feel the warmth of them even through the rich fabric of her heavy dress.
Bucky bent his head and started sucking on the underside of her jaw. Darcy let out a high pitched gasp as he kissed his way down her neck, sucking and licking the skin available to him by the deep-v at the front of her bodice. Bucky was still wrapped up in his mind’s fantasy version of her. Not that she was complaining. But, it usually took a while for him to realize she wasn’t dream-Darcy she was regular-Darcy.

“You saved me.” Bucky claimed as he kissed his way lower and lower.

“I’m here.” Darcy tried reminding him again, “Bucky. This is a dream.”

“You’re a dream come true.” Bucky responded densely. He moved away from kissing her clavicle to capture her lips again and Darcy groaned at how good it felt.

“My dream.” Bucky mumbled. He slid his tongue stealthy past her lips so that he may tease her own, Darcy found herself unable to resist getting lost in his kisses, if only for the moment and thus she gave in. They kissed passionately for a long while. Tongues sliding against one another’s, hands wandering over clothed bodies, and limbs entangled, they kissed and kissed and kissed.

“You’re more than I deserve.” Bucky whispered, he had this odd look on his face and it gave Darcy pause. That was all the warning she got before the scene changed.

* Darcy was under a different body, in a different place, being kissed by a different man. *

She was back on Asgard in the dungeons, in the cell where they had kept Steve. She lay on her back on the thin cot where Steve had slept for the first two weeks of his stay on Asgard. Above her a man kissed her as ardently as Bucky had just been doing but now it was Steve who was doing the kissing. Darcy struggled against his lips as she realized this.

She could feel that she was no longer covered in long and heavy fabrics, her dress was now made of a light breezy material and there didn’t seem to be a lot of it. Her dress was cut so low in front that it almost reached her naval. It allowed her to feel Steve’s hot skin against her front as he was shirtless and pressed so tightly against her. Her legs were splayed open and Steve lay in between them. She felt the cool air on her bare legs almost up to her hip, the slits in the dresses skirt so high that she felt exposed in a way that made her feel uncomfortable.

“Off.” Darcy called out as she pushed Steve off her body and onto the floor. Steve landed with a thud at Bucky’s feet. He had been watching them. This persistence of Bucky’s, his dreaming about her and Steve together in an intimate setting was getting very old.

Darcy sighed as Bucky looked down at her in confusion, “I thought you liked Stevie?”

“I like him just fine.” Darcy grumbled as she sat up. Her hand adjusting the front of her dress making sure her nipples were covered despite her scandalous outfit. “Just not into being pawned off onto your best buddy.”

“I just want us to be together.” Steve frowned, “I was just trying to make you feel good.”

Darcy glared at the golden skinned, perfect hair version of Steve that Bucky had dreamed up. “Yeah well, I’m still too mad at the real Steve for any of this dreamland hanky panky to make me anything but cranky.”

* The Steve on the floor disappeared.*

Bucky dropped to his knees before her. “No.” He plead, “No, that is not—I think I’m in love with you Darcy.”
Darcy raised her eyebrows. That was news to her. Sure they had been flirting and there was undeniable sexual chemistry but, she hadn’t thought Bucky loved her.

Bucky continued, “I thought you might like it if Stevie joined in too….You seemed to like it when Stark and Strange go at it.”

*They were standing in her Asgardian bedroom at the end of the bed.*

Stephen and Tony were kissing each other slowly, arms wrapped around each other’s naked bodies, their lower regions covered by a dark silken sheet. It was ridiculously hot and the lighting on the two men made them appear…ethereal and tempting all at once.

“I know you love them.” Bucky said softly, he then placed a tentative hand on her lower back. “Stevie’s told me how much he likes you. He wants to make amends. And maybe if the two of you patch things up, the three of us…”

Bucky turned her away from the sight of her boyfriends making out and put his arms around her waist. Darcy let her own hands settle on his chest. “It’s not that I don’t like you Bucky.”

“I more than like ya.” Bucky leant in and she went up on her tip toes, their lips met. It was a slow seductive kiss, one that had her gripping tight to the black linen shirt he wore. She could tear it off him is she wanted and she was severely tempted to do so.

“I want to please you.” Bucky whispered as they broke away to breathe. In a panting voice Bucky spoke with sincerity, “You are a goddess, I know you don’t think of yourself like that, but you are.”

*A crown, earrings, and a necklace appeared on her person.*

She imagined with the added accessories her simple white dress looked more ‘goddess-y’ and Darcy frowned, annoyed with herself. She was getting caught up in…the Bucky of it all. She wasn’t even trying to manipulate anything around her, thus allowing Bucky to control everything. Even what she was wearing.

Bucky continued to whisper quiet heartfelt words, “You are my goddess. You saved me, inspired me to save myself in a way seeing Steve didn’t and couldn’t. I find myself wanting to worship every inch of you, love you, pray to you, have you, be with you…all of you.”

“Bucky--” Darcy couldn’t deny being moved by Bucky’s words, she did however wish he told her these kinds of things in the waking world instead of here in his dream. It just made it all feel less…authentic.

“I can share.” Bucky said earnestly as he brought their lips together in a chaste kiss, he repeated himself, “I can share you.”

They were kissing again and Darcy felt a little dizzy because Bucky was a damn fine kisser. His tongue slipped into her mouth like he wanted to conquer it, she let out a breathy grunt as bit her lower lip and sucked it into his mouth. “Oh fuck me you’re good at that.” She groaned.

*They were in her bed. Stephen on her left, Tony on Bucky’s right.*

She and Bucky were locked in a loose embrace kissing but she could feel many hands on her. Stephen’s hand stoking her underneath the filmy fabric of her dress, Bucky’s hand on her chest, Tony’s stroking her hair.

“Nope.” Darcy whispered to herself. She realized that she wasn’t even going to try to stop or alter
this dream of Bucky’s. It was just too good.

Stephen’s clever fingers were slowly winding her up while Bucky’s worked on exposing her covered skin to the open air. She felt Tony climbing up from in between her legs, kissing his way from her ankle to her hip.

She was naked. Bucky was naked. And his metal arm was gone, replaced with a flesh and blood one.

Stephen started mouthing kisses along her back as his fingers worked. Tony’s moustache tickling her tender skin making her buck her hips up unexpectedly. Bucky continued to claim her mouth as his two flesh massaged her skin so expertly that she was practically quivering in excitement.

Bucky was poised above her, Stephen mouthing at one breast, Tony the other.

“I love you.” Bucky said as they came together in the most intimate of ways. The room which was aglow in the throes of an extended sunset, was unnaturally growing darker. The moonlight filtered into the room chasing away the absolute darkness, illuminating the planes on Bucky’s face.

Darcy let out a groan; things were going to be so awkward when they woke up. They always were after she invaded Bucky’s dreams. In her experience Bucky almost exclusively had sex dreams about her. Well, sex dreams and/or torture dreams about killing people. Not that it was any less awkward when she Dream Walked Steve.

Bucky made love to her with skill and attentiveness, he brought her to orgasm twice before spending himself. Afterwards, he fell to the side and watched as she made love with Tony first then Stephen, her love making with her other boyfriends was ephemeral compared to her time with Bucky. And when her boyfriends lay panting on either side of her, Bucky came to her. Taking the focus of her attention once again.

Through their daily practice a lot had been revealed to Darcy about Bucky and the way he felt about her, himself, and the world in general. They hadn’t talked a lot about what they did or saw while she was in his dreams, but the tension between them had been building and building. And everyone knew it.

Tony was entirely enthusiastic about Bucky joining her little ‘harem’. Darcy couldn’t work out if Tony liked Bucky so much because it annoyed Steve so greatly or if he genuinely liked Bucky. Either way, Tony’s support was balanced out by Stephen’s distain.

Stephen was always polite to Bucky but never warm or joking as he was with others. She had spoken to him about it but he brushed off her concern claiming to be open to an additional paramour, but reminded her that he was under no obligation to interact with said addition or develop feelings for the person. She knew Stephen would begrudgingly accept Bucky if she chose to take him as one of her ‘boyfriends’ but it was obvious to all that Stephen was quite happy with their relationship as is. Just her, him, and Tony. And honestly so was she. She was so happy with Stephen and Tony that the prospect of letting herself love Bucky too, kind of scared her.

She didn’t want to mess everything up by changing things. But her feelings for Bucky were growing and soon she feared it would be undeniable.

She was on top of Bucky. Stephen and Tony lay next to them on the bed, wrapped up in each other.
With his hands on her hips Bucky encouraged her to do what she like, his touch feather light on her skin. Darcy was mentally beating herself up for being so weak, she should be able to break free of the scenario Bucky set out for them, to end the sex dream or change it, but truthfully she didn’t want to. And so it continued.

“Ah-hh.” She exhaled in a breathy voice.

“You’re beautiful.” Bucky said his own breathing heavy. Darcy smiled down at him, he was so sweet and loyal and caring and good. She could see herself falling in love with him, she was halfway there already and yet…

She collapsed on his chest, her body tired and sated.

*There was another man’s naked body behind hers. The strong and hairy thighs brushed up against the globes of her ass.*

She tried to turn her head to see who it was who had joined her in straddling Bucky, but Bucky captured her lips and attention. Her skin broke out in goose flesh as the mystery hands travel up and down her naked back before cupping the globes of her ass, squeezing the plump flesh there before letting go and leaving her body all together. Seconds later a mouth, clean shaven, kissed a line down her spine. Darcy shivered.

*She was on her back again, Bucky over her, Stephen and Tony nowhere to be found. The mystery man was still there just behind Bucky.*

Bucky lay in her arms with his body wedged in between her legs as they slowly and sensually kissed. Someone lay on top of Bucky pressing them both into the mattress. It wasn’t a crushing weight, just a heavy one. Darcy made herself with considerable effort, open her eyes to see who was with her and Bucky in the bed.

It was Steve, of course, but his face was obscured in dark shadow like Bucky didn’t want her knowing it was him even if she looked right at him. However, she would know those abs anywhere.

Things between her and Steve had improved, their friendship was still shaky but it was on the road to repair. Over the course of the past few weeks, Darcy had come to terms the fact that Steve was in love with her, or at the very least infatuated. And had been for some time. It was a contributing factor to why he treated her so poorly when she was an Avenger. It’s what made him so susceptible to Wanda’s influence. It’s what fueled him into lashing out. Love. Envy. Jealousy. Spite. Anger.

In practicing her Dream Walking and sleep commanding powers on Bucky and Steve, she had learned so much. And through a lot of introspection and soul searching, Darcy found that she did not feel the same about Steve as he did about her.

She could be Steve’s friend, but that was it. At least for now.

This made Bucky’s many dreams of a Darcy/Steve/Bucky sexy sandwich, very awkward for everyone. And in fact lead to her favoring Bucky for practice as when she was stuck in one of Steve’s dreams she had to use violence to alter the dreams trajectory, which was not what she was trying to do. She was trying to develop the power to subtly direct the dreamer, not shock them into realizing that she was in control and that they were in a dream. Sometimes however, drastic measures were needed…

*Bucky was gone and on top of her in his place was Steve with his weirdly shadowed face.*

He was poised over her and she cried out in annoyance, “No! I don’t want this!”
Bucky was kissing her and massaging her chest. Steve still on top of her but inched back some, giving her room to breathe and think.

“I’m sorry.” Steve said, she could feel the slightest brush of his hand against her thigh, but he wasn’t trying to touch her. Still he remained where he was and this annoyed her.

Darcy bit Bucky’s lip drawing blood, causing him to jerk away from her. She pushed Steve hard and he went flying across the room. She turned on Bucky with an angry scowl, “I don’t like Steve like that, Buck. You know that! And yet you proceed to put me into these weird sex dreams with him! What the fuck!?”

Bucky blinked back at her owlishly. Darcy slapped him lightly across the face, “Wake up!”

She was once again in her scandalous dress and accessories. Bucky wore pants. They were alone. The bed was made and they sat atop it.

“I’m dreaming.” Bucky stated, his voice sounding clear and certain, “You’re dream walking me.”

Darcy nodded in confirmation. Bucky looked around at the bedroom they were in.

The lighting changed from night to day and the room filled with sunshine.

“Did you change it?” Bucky asked, “Or did I…?”

Darcy pouted and looked down, “You sexed my brains out and I got distracted.”

Bucky let out a little chuckle, “Sorry.” He did not sound sorry at all.

Darcy gave him a dark look, “You brought Steve into it again and I threw him across the room, had to slap some sense into you.”

The affect of her words was instantaneously. A mask fell across Bucky’s face and he became expressionless. “I’m sorry.” He said sounding sincere and yet robotic, “I don’t mean to do it.”

Darcy reached for his hand, it was once again metal, but he moved away from her. He tended to retreat into a Winter Soldier – lite persona when he felt shame and guilt. He often did so when she bore witness to some of his more grisly nightmare/memory assassinations. Darcy did not allow him to pull away; she grabbed his metal hand in her own and squeezed it comfortingly.

“It’s your dream.” Darcy said not unkindly, “Not mine. Don’t be sorry for what you want.”

“You’ll never want me like this in the real world.” Bucky confessed his eyes still downcast and unable to meet her own.

“Not true,” Darcy disagreed, “I may not want exactly what you want. But I do wan—...you know that we fit together really well. Real world and here. You and me,” Darcy didn’t know what to say to make him feel better so she stayed vague, “You know we have something.”

Bucky turned his head away from her as he declared, “I love Steve.”

Darcy sighed and let his hand go, “I know.”

Bucky ran a hand through his hair as he timidly confessed, “I love you too.”

“I know.” Darcy didn’t know what to say beyond that. She didn’t want to lie to Bucky, she didn’t love him like she loved Tony or Stephen, but she could. She just didn’t yet. She didn’t begrudge him
his sexual fantasies, nor his dreams.

Bucky turned and looked in her the eyes as he declared, “I want you both.” The look in his eyes was more coherent and present than any she had seen from him in the waking world. “I’m a greedy asshole.” He added with a smirk, “But I can be patient.”

“I don’t want to give you false hope Bucky, I don’t know if I’ll ever feel about Steve the way you want me to.”

“Well, doll.” Bucky used his flesh hand to stroke a finger down her cheek, “I guess time will tell.”

*They were outside in a grassy field. She and Bucky sat on either side of a small tree sapling.*

“Okay, back to work.” Bucky gestured to the young tree, “Make it grow.”

Darcy’s shoulders slumped momentarily. Mentally switching gears from sexy mode to emotional talk mode and back to work mode was like riding a roller coaster and knitting a sweater at the same time.

Darcy straightened her back and adjusted her crossed legs until she was more comfortable. She took a deep breath to clear her mind of any lingering distractions and then stared at the dream tree, willing it to grow.

Darcy woke up on her bed and was instantly awake. She sat up, her eyes darting to Bucky who lay on the chase lounge in the corner of the room. He sat up slower, his eyes seeking her out too.

Darcy pouted, “One leaf.”

Bucky smiled at her encouragingly, “That’s one more leaf than yesterday.”

Darcy allowed herself to fall back onto the bed with a bounce. Under her breath she grumbled to herself, “One fucking leaf.”

She and Bucky had spent most of the afternoon asleep, so they were wide awake and looking restful when they met up with everyone else for dinner in the great hall. When they arrived Steve, Fandral and Hogun were already there, drinking and eating appetizers.

Fandral, spied her first and got to his feet prompting the others to do the same. Fandral bowed deeply in her direction, “My Princess you look glorious and I thank you for the gift of feasting on your beauty as we dine in your benevolent presence.”

Darcy rolled her eyes at Fandral’s blatant disregard for her hating of bowing, Hogun and Steve nodded at her respectfully and she returned the greeting. She took her place at the head of the table. Bucky joined Fandral, Steve, and Hogun. The men greeted him with slaps on the backs making Darcy smile despite herself.

As her guinea pigs could only be used for practice one at a time, Steve and Bucky had been trading off days training with the Warriors Three, and practicing with her. However, after Steve’s last explicit and sexually graphic Dream Walking session, she favored practicing with Bucky. Her exclusion of Steve had not been commented on by either man.

The Warriors and the aged soldiers had become friendly right away. Fandral delighted in getting to
school the men in the art of swordplay, Volstagg loved having more potential babysitters, and Hogun found joy in mocking them all. Noticing one of her favorite knuckleheads was missing Darcy inquired, “Where’s Volstagg?”

Fandral took a deep gulp of ale before replying, “Hildy said the kids were forgetting what he looked like and that if he crawled into bed with her in the middle of the night drunk and singing one more night this week, she’d skin him alive.”

Darcy looked over at Hogun who shrugged, “And he missed her home cooking.”

“Ah.” Darcy smiled. An attendant scurried over to her offering her drink of choice, Darcy’s eyes lit up. “Yum.”

She’d begun to have the yummy ale from the tavern with her meals nightly. The brewer/tavern owner refused to give up the recipe even under threat of imprisonment so she let him instead deliver a keg every couple of days or so. The limited amount helped her from indulging too greatly and helped a local business grow and thrive and she got to have the deliciously alcoholic drink every day with her evening meals. It was a win, win, win scenario.

They were served salads and bread puff cream soup thingies. They spoke genially of her and ‘Odin’s’ upcoming announcement.

It had begun to weigh on her heart that she was keeping Loki’s secret from the Warriors Three and Steve, but she knew they would not take to the trickster god usurping of the throne well. And Darcy believed her brother was actually doing a pretty good job ruling Asgard, honestly, he didn’t deserve —well maybe he did deserve to rot in prison for what he did, but she didn’t care. She wanted him to remain in charge.

Either way, her friends were aware she was to make an announcement to all of Asgard similar to the one she made on Earth about Thanos. Her friends knew that she and ‘Odin’ had been having meetings all week, figuring out how much they would reveal about what was to come, how she came to know these things, and what they expected their citizens to do prepare. However no one but Bucky, Stephen, Tony, and Loki knew about Ragnarok.

She dreaded telling the Warriors Three, and the rest of Asgard, that she foresaw the destruction of their whole world. She and Loki, in the disguise of their father, would make the announcement the following afternoon. She was nervous and had a panic attack during a trial run yesterday but now she had note cards. The prospect of giving a formal speech, and not one she was coming up with on the fly, was very daunting for her. She only hoped she wouldn’t screw it up.

Just as their salad plates were cleared away, Loki and Wanda came into the room. Loki looked annoyed and tired. Wanda looked much the same if less disheveled. Wanda sat as far away from Darcy as possible, while Loki made a beeline for the chair next to her. He stole her cup and drank thirstily from her mug.

“Hey!” Darcy whined, “That’s my yummy ale!”

“You’ve got to stop calling it yummy ale.” Fandral counseled, “It’s starting to catch on.”

Darcy ignored him and focused on Loki who drained her glass until it was empty. He gave her a flat look as he gently placed the glass back in front of her. “I needed it.”

Darcy softened, reaching out she put a hand on her brother’s shoulder and stole a quick look at
Wanda before letting her eyes take in Loki’s appearance with a more critical appraisal. He had a small cut near his hairline. Bags under his eyes and a bruise under his jaw mostly hidden by the shadow of scruff that he’d recently allowed to take up residence on his face.

“Rough day?” Darcy asked as she massaged Loki’s shoulder lightly.

"Loki glared in Wanda’s direction, “One could say that.”

“No one dead?” Darcy asked her hand pinching Loki’s shoulder as she realized Stephen should have been with them.

Loki sensing her thoughts answered quickly, “Strange went to retrieve Stark from the Forge.” Darcy released Loki’s shoulder and he gave her an understanding look, “You know how Stark ignores the summons of the servants. Strange will drag him here to eat.”

Darcy looked over at Wanda. She and Steve were talking in hushed tones, it looked like Wanda was pleading with Steve and he was trying to brush her off without causing a scene. If she concentrated she would be able to hear them but she didn’t want to. She and Wanda didn’t talk much, hadn’t since the woman had been let out of her cage.

She’d been there when they released Wanda. Loki in the guise of Odin had threatened the young witch with fire and brimstone and all manner of scariness. It was made clear that Wanda was only being spared death and imprisonment because of Darcy and her mercy.

Loki had laid out the limitations to Wanda’s freedom, she wasn’t allowed to leave the palace without a magical guard (this meaning Stephen or Loki/Axel/Odin), she wasn’t allowed to talk or interact with any Asgardian citizens until deemed worthy of doing so, she would practice controlling her magic with Stephen and Loki every day or she would spend a week in the dungeon without food, she was not permitted to leave Asgard under any circumstances, she wasn’t allowed to leave the dungeons from midnight until sunup and she would remain in the dungeons every night until further notice.

Wanda had agreed to the terms with little fuss. After which Darcy had wished Wanda good luck with her lessons. They’d barely spoken since.

Steve had been cold and distant with the young woman following their releases from imprisonment. It was obvious to everyone Wanda was miserable and lonely and desperate. Steve was a good man with a kind heart; he couldn’t rebuff Wanda’s attempts to make amends or polite conversation forever. He just wasn’t that callous. Darcy assumed he’d soften towards her eventually, but thus far he remained resolved to interact with Wanda as little as possible.

Before Darcy could inquire further about Loki’s rough day of training with the witch, Stephen and Tony made their grand entrance. Side by side they hobbled into the room. Tony’s hand was wrapped in oodles of bandages and Stephen was walking with a limp and a cane.

“What happened?!” Darcy’s chair squeaked loudly as she got to her feet abruptly. Darcy turned an accusing glare onto Wanda and the young women blushed, her head ducked down, her stringy hair casting a curtain about her face.

“I’m fine.” Tony announced as he helped Stephen into the chair next to Loki. Darcy ran around her brother so she could push back the chair for Tony, she helped Tony unnecessarily to sit down then
crouched to examine Stephen’s bandaged knee more closely.

“What happened?!” Darcy repeated. Out of the corner of her eye she saw Fandral motion someone to go away, she turned and saw a servant back peddling pulling her cart laden with food back into the kitchen.

Darcy lifted her golden sequined skirt so she could kneel on the floor instead of squatting. Gently she touched the bandage on Stephen’s knee, there was no blood seeping through the white gauze so that was probably good, but still seeing either of her men hurt caused fear and dread to fill her body.

She was more concerned with Stephen’s injury than Tony’s as she knew his must have occurred when he was with Wanda and Loki earlier that day. Just beyond Stephen’s shoulder she glared at Loki, “What the fuck?!”

Loki reached across the table and stole Fandral’s mug of ale, commenting dryly, “He’ll be fine.”

“I’ll be fine.” Stephen agreed. He rubbed a comforting circle on her back on the naked skin exposed by her corseted top. Darcy leaned into the touch, his scarred hand not doing much to ease the tension in her body, but it felt nice all the same.

“What happened?” Darcy demanded darkly as she shook off his hand and stood to her full height.

Stephen’s eyes flickered over to Wanda then back to her. “It was an accident.” Stephen excused, “Nothing more.”

Darcy turned and glowered at Wanda. Steve subtly shifted away from the woman.

“An accident?” Darcy challenged.

Wanda raised her head and met her gaze tentatively. There was an uncomfortable silence as they stared at each other. “My fault.” Wanda admitted quietly, “I didn’t realize—I didn’t know my own strength, it won’t happen again.”

“She was reckless.” Loki interjected, “But did not act maliciously. Just foolishly and without taking our very prudent advice.”

“I’ll be better in a few days.” Stephen assured her. Darcy was more soothed by Loki’s blunt assessment than Stephen’s cooing words.

She turned to Tony and looked down on him with an annoyed expression, she had an idea what harm had come to him and she was not amused, “And what the fuck did you do to yourself this time?”

Tony raised his bandaged hand, “Accidently almost melted my hand.”

“Melted!?” Darcy screeched.

“Almost.” Tony defended as he grabbed her around the waist and tugged her towards him with his good hand. “Almost.” Tony repeated as he urged her to sit on the armrest of his chair. She sat and wrapped her arm around his shoulders, hugging Tony to her. Due to her sitting up higher on the arm rest, her clutching of Tony firmly placed his face in her breast.

“Lucky bastard.” Fandral muttered as he stole Hogun’s mug of ale and drank from it while he stared at her and Tony with a covetous glare.
Darcy ignored the commentary from the others and pet Tony’s hair as she lectured, “You’re supposed to ask for help when you need it.” She stroked his cheek sweetly before lightly slapping it as she reprimanded, “Not fucking almost kill yourself trying to prove—”

Tony pulled her into his lap completely, accidently making her kick Stephen in his injured leg. Stephen yowled, “Aah!”


“I hate you.” Stephen jeered.

“You’re a mess.” Darcy declared as she allowed herself to scrunch into a ball in Tony’s lap.

After Tony’s first accidental injury in the forge, she’d asked specific sorcerers to look out for the mortal man. The second time he came to bed injured she threatened them. The third time he was injured she joined Tony in the forge for a few days and discovered what the hell was going on.

Tony did not like to ask for help or how things worked. He poked at the Asgardian tools he didn’t recognize and figured out how they worked through trial and error and injury. He tried to move large pieces of metal alone. He poured hot metal into molds alone. He used metal laser cutting technology without someone holding the thing he wanted to cut steady. She would blame it all on his stupid male pride but she knew that he also felt the pressure of representing the human race in front of the other Asgardians. He didn’t want them to think the humans weak or stupid or incapable of competing with Asgard on an intellectual level.

Darcy tried to explain how stupid that kind of thinking was, but nothing she said seemed to get through to him. She slapped his face lightly again and then kissed him, mumbling against his lips, “Dummy.”

Tony’s mustache tickled across her upper lip and she smiled against his lips. With his good hand Tony grabbed her ass and readjusted her position so she was sitting up more fully on his lap. Tony smirked as he drawled, “If I had Dumm-E here, this probably wouldn’t have happened…U would have been more helpful though.”

Darcy let out a laugh and then brought Tony’s head close to her own once again. She kissed him sweetly but soon enough Tony was tracing the seam of her lips with his tongue inviting her to make a happy noise as she parted her lips and let his clever tongue inside.

After a few minutes of ignoring everything that wasn’t Tony, Loki exclaimed, “Ugh. Can we have one meal without having to bear witness to you mauling one of your paramours?”

“I’m not offended by it.” Fandral said in a joking manner, “I find the Princess’s passionate nature a most welcome display.”

“You’re disgusting.” Loki accused. Darcy broke away from Tony’s lips just in time to see Fandral shrug in response.

“Even more annoying,” Stephen added, “Why is he getting all the attention when he did that to himself? I’m the one who was accosted by an errant witch.”

Darcy looked up and saw Stephen pouting at her. She grinned and slid off of Tony’s lap, moving over to Stephen she sat on his arm rest and ran her fingers through his hair. “You’re right.” Darcy conceded, “You deserve attention too.”

Stephen tilted his head up expectantly as she leant down and brought their lips together in a soft but
sensual kiss.

“Why?” Loki lamented mournfully.

When the servants returned with food, Darcy took her seat. The conversation flowed naturally between all of them, for the most part. Tony and Stephen talked about the amazing medical services Asgard provided. She and Loki spoke of her upcoming announcement to the people of Asgard. Fandral and Bucky spoke of which weapon was the best for long range kills, Bucky mostly badgered the man about why they didn’t use guns and Fandral mocked his skill with a spear. Steve and Hogun spoke of Asgard and its rich history. Wanda ate quietly, observing them all and speaking to no one.

It warmed her heart in a way to see these two factions getting along so well. She had never dreamed the people she held dear on Earth would ever fit in so with those on Asgard. Only one group of assholes was missing…

When their meals had been cleared and desert brought forth, Darcy moved over to the seat next to Tony.

“How goes the anonymous Thanos warning system?” Darcy asked as he poked his blue gelatin desert with a dubious look on his face.

Tony frowned at the wiggly desert, “Good. Should be finished by the next day or so. Magic scientists are doing spells on the tech to mask the origin of the signal. After that, we record our message and essentially hit send. Everyone with a working video screen or radio in the galaxy should receive it.”

“And how about face timing the Guardians? I know I told you to prioritize the warning message over—”

“Oh that?” Tony interrupted as he looked up from his desert, “That was done three days ago.”

“What?” Darcy swatted his shoulder, “You didn’t tell me that.”

Tony clutched his shoulder with a wounded expression, “You didn’t ask….and I forgot.”

“I didn’t ask—” Darcy cut herself off and took a cleansing breath in, then let it out slowly. She glared at Tony, “I’d like to make that phone call now.”

“Fine by me.” Tony dropped his spoon and pushed his chair back, “Let’s go call the extended relatives and tell them they’re all going to die.”

“Not funny.” Darcy commented blithely as she stood as well.

“Don’t tell me you abandoning our company so early?” Fandral pouted at the two of them, “I’ve barley seen the Princess at all this week. Shall I join you?”

“No.” Tony denied quickly, “You’re not invited.”

Fandral turned to her and extended his lower lip in an exaggerated pout, “Princess, your man says I’m not invited.”

“You’re not.” Darcy confirmed with a smirk. She ran her hand along the back of Stephen’s
shoulders. He looked up and she tilted her head towards the door, silently inviting him to join. He was steepled in a conversation with Loki about ancient runes. Stephen shook his head but patted her hand lovingly, “Next time.” Darcy nodded once in acknowledgement.

Loki gave her an amused look, “Send your pet rabbit my regards.” Darcy rolled her eyes and swatted him on the back of the head as she passed. Loki took the gesture in stride and did little more than narrow his eyes at her.

Hogan called out to her in a sincere tone, “Tell your young Groot that the sapling he and Volstagg’s children planted, grows strong and is tended to daily.”

“Aw, that’s sweet. I will.” Darcy confirmed.

Tony offered her his arm in a mock of a gesture in gentility. With a smirk and a raised eyebrow he said, “M’lady.”

“M’Lord.” Darcy responded, she tried to keep a straight face, but she knew that one corner of her mouth ticked up ruining the gesture. Loki scoffed and Stephen laughed at them outright. Sometimes she and Tony were total dorks. Gods, did she love him.

Darcy waved to her brother and the others as she and Tony hooked arms and left the room. Quietly Bucky followed them. Secretly Bucky fancied himself her personal body guard and for the most part everyone acted as if it was his official title. He was unobtrusive and silent and discreet. Sometimes she didn’t even notice him shadowing her.

She overheard Tony and Loki questioning him about this behavior once, Bucky claimed to only want to keep her safe. He referred to himself as her last line of defense.

Once outside the room she heard Fandral whine to the others, “Why does the quiet one get to watch the Man of Iron and the Princess make love and not I?”

When they reached the Forge Tony lead them over to a table on the opposite side of the room than where he had been worked on his armor.

“Here it is.” Tony gestured to a large phone booth looking machine next to a small work table.

“You built me a Tardis?” Darcy questioned with a goofy smile.

“If only.” Tony grumbled, he walked over to the machine and picked up a small circular compact on the table next to the large machine. “No, this is it. I’m calling it the G. P.”

“Hmm?”

“Galaxy. Phone.” Tony explained, he held up the compact and opened it revealing something resembling a birth control dispenser only with buttons instead of pills and a screen on the other side and twice as large. “The big box is the G.A.M.”

“What?”

“Galaxy. Alert. Messager.” Tony pointed to the large telephone like box with his thumb, “That’s the thing we’ll contact the galaxy with.” He shook the smaller device in front of her face, “This is what we use to talk exclusively with your little space friends.”
“We really need to come up with better names for this shit.” Darcy muttered. Tony made a face and shrugged. She knew they had better things to do with their time, but really all these high tech items were a mouthful and the acronyms were not as snazzy as S.H.I.E.L.D.

Excited to talk to the Guardians but dubious about the size of the device Darcy asked, “Why’s it so small?”

Tony puckered his lips before answering, “Darcy no man deserves to hear that.” Bucky snickered behind them. And Darcy bit her lip to keep from smiling.

“Whatever,” Darcy encouraged tugging on Tony’s arm, “Just make it work. C’mon. Turn it on!”

“Patience.” Tony said even as he began pressing buttons. “Loki gave me frequency that their radio works on yesterday, I still need to adjust it a bit—there. Got it.”

The compact made a beeping noise and Tony looked up at her with a wide smile, “It’s working.”

Darcy cringed with every beep, it was a very annoying and piercing noise. “You need to change that sound.”

“Everyone’s a critic.” Tony grumbled.

The device’s screen suddenly went from blank to on and showing her the cockpit of the Milano. There was no one there. Tony set the device on the work table and encouraged Darcy to take a step back so she could be in view of the tiny camera.


The view of the Milano cut out and Darcy’s shoulders slumped. The excited grin that had been affixed to her face slid off and was replaced with a downturned pout. She looked pleadingly at her lover. “Tony?”

“I’m on it. I’m on it.” Tony began fiddling with the device, when he started to bang on the back panel Darcy let out a sigh.

“It’s a prototype Darce—give me a break.” Tony complained just as the box in his hands squawked to life, “—arcy?! Darcy is that you?!” The voice was slightly distorted, but familiar.

“Mantis?!” Darcy grabbed the compact out of Tony’s hands. The screen was still blank. She spoke to her alien friend anyway, “Mantis, can you hear me?”

“I can hear you!” The tiny device let out a squeal, as Mantis called out “Drax! Get Groot and Rocket!”

Mantis’s voice returned to normal as she addressed Darcy “Oh, Darcy I love your hair. It’s so blue and beautiful.”

Darcy frowned at the darkened screen in her hand. She looked searchingly at Tony, but addressed Mantis with her words, “You can see me?”

“Yes...your voice is very low, but I don’t know which button to press to make the volume louder.” As she pressed her face to the camera Darcy and Tony jerked back as Mantis’s eye filled the screen entirely, creepily blinking at them the woman gushed, “You look very pretty. I like your new crown. It’s very shiny
“Mantis, back up a bit. We can’t see…just back up? And hold on, the pictures not working on my end.” Darcy held the device out to Tony with a saddened expression, “Tony?”

Tony took the device from her hand and put it down on the work table; he opened up the back panel and did stuff with a screwdriver. Bucky put a hand on her lower back and she tried not to cry like a baby because her super cool galaxy phone wasn’t working right, but she was really upset. She wanted to see the Guardians and having the device malfunction was very frustrating.

“Keep talking.” Tony encouraged.

“Mantis, are you still there?” Darcy called out, practically shouting so she was sure to be heard.

“I’m here Darcy, but where are you?”

“On Asgard. Tony built me a phone to talk to you, even though we’re technically in a different dimension.” Darcy explained.

“Oh…who’s Tony again?”

“Iron Man.” Darcy supplied.

“The human in the flying metal can?”

Tony glared at her and Darcy felt a blush rise to her cheeks as she confirmed reluctantly, “Yeah. That’s the one.”

“Where is she—who’s that guy? And why are we looking up his nose?” Rocket’s gruff voice crackled across the device. Tony tilted the screen so the camera was angled differently and Rocket exclaimed, “Darcy! There she is!”

“Rocket!” Darcy cried out, she stared at the blackened screen, “I can’t see you guys. The thing—the radio thing isn’t working right.”

“Well, we can see you—oof!”

“I am Groot! Mom? Where --? Mom! It’s you!” Groot’s voice broke her. Tears welled up in her eyes quickly.

“Groot! Honey! It’s me! I’m here! I’m here.” Darcy strode closer to the device, hovering probably annoying close to Tony’s back as he worked on the device.

“I am Groot! Mom! Where are you? Are you coming home?” Groot asked. He sounded older and Darcy felt a tear roll down her cheek. She doubted she’d ever get to call him ‘baby’ Groot again.

“I am Groot! Mom?! Are you okay? Rocket! She’s crying!” Groot sounded panicked.

“Darce? Are you okay? Is that guy hurting you? Do you need us to come and get you?” Rocket’s voice relayed his fear, “Mantis, go get Quill and Gamora, tell ’em to fuck the supplies, we gotta go get Darcy!”

“No!” Darcy called out, pressing her front close to Tony’s back she all but laid against Tony, hugging him from behind, “No don’t—I’m not in trouble. I don’t need help.”

“Why are you crying then? Are you dying?” Drax’s flat voice interrupted.

“No.” Darcy denied with a chuckle, she wiped away a tear from the corner of her eye, “I’m not
dying. I’m not hurt or captured or…I’m just so happy to hear your voices.” She wiped away another
tear as it rolled down her nose, “I’m crying because I’m happy.”

“That’s dumb.” Drax replied.

“Shut up!” Rocket snapped.

“I am Groot! Mom, can we come and visit you again?” Groot asked, “‘I am Groot! Or can you visit
us?’”

“I don’t know Groot. Maybe.” Darcy put a hand to her head, she had wanted to speak to the
Guardians so badly and now that she was, she was dreading having to tell them about Thanos.
“We’ll see.”

“Who’s the human?” Rocket questioned, “The one with fur on his face.”

Tony scowled as the screen flickered to life for one moment before dying again. Darcy let out a cry,
as the screen showed her the Guardians for one brief moment. “Tony.” She whined as she buried her
face in his back. Seeing them, even briefly made her ache in her heart to get her arms around them.
Just one hug.

Wiping away some snot on Tony’s back she collected herself and pushed off of Tony, moving to his
side instead of hiding half behind him she poitioned herself in front of the camera and tried not to fall
apart. She affected a cheery tone as she exclaimed, “The picture just came back and—honey, Groot,
you got so tall! I miss you so much.”

“You got your screen working now?” Rocket asked.

Darcy shook her head, “Only for a moment.”

“I’m working on it.” Tony said tersely. Darcy patted him on the back, “I know you are Tony.”

“Tony?” Rocket said, “That’s the guy you talked about so much?”

“You talked about me?” Tony asked with a prideful smirk.

“He is much older than I imagined.” Drax offered.

“He is not nearly as muscular as she described.” Mantis added. Darcy glared at the blank screen.

Rocket barked out a laugh, Tony’s face was facing the camera so she imagined he saw the change in
expression their friend’s words inspired. Darcy patted Tony’s butt consolingly and kissed his cheek,
but the tension didn’t drain from his shoulders.

“This is Tony.” Darcy confirmed.

“Thought the guy was supposed to be some kind a genius? Can’t even get you a vid screen that
works?” Rocket taunted.

Tony glared at the device, his actions becoming rougher as he jammed a blue wire into place and
removed a little yellow glowing circle thing. “It’s not a radio or a phone,” He muttered as he went
over to a tool box and returned with a little red glowing circle thing, “It’s a cross-dimensional
communication device synched up to your stupid ships specific radio frequency which could be
anywhere in the galaxy and is powered by a magically altered lithium based battery.” He wedged the
red circle into place and then snapped the back panel back into place. “Which burns out quickly, but
is easily replaced--” He pressed a button and the screen came to life. “And I invented it on my lunch break.”

“You did it!” Darcy cheered. She grabbed Tony by the face and gave him a big wet kiss.

“Of course I did.” Tony preened, turning he smirked at the screen boasting, “I’m Tony Stark….wow, you really do know a talking raccoon and tree child.”

“Teenager.” Rocket corrected, “And I’m not a raccoon.”

“He’s a trash panda.” Another voice added.

“Quill?” Darcy called out, “Is that you?”

From behind the others Quill and Gamora appeared. “Darcy? Is that you?” The couple crowded around the others, they all slightly jostled each other for position in front of the camera as Quill let out wolf whistle, “Well, hot damn you look great. Guess the Princess life really changes a person.”

Darcy turned to Tony with a furrowed brow, “Do I look super different or something?”

Tony tilted his head, “This may be the first time they’re seeing you post-power up.”

Darcy looked down at herself, to her own eyes and knowledge she really hadn’t changed so their comments on her appearance confused her. “Huh?”

“You’re glowing.” Gamora said with a smile, “And you look slightly taller.”

“Nah,” Rocket disagreed, “She’s just standing next to that Stark guy, he’s unusually short for a human male. It’s a perspective distortion thing.”

“Hey!” Tony protested, “I’m not unusually short.”

“The why is that angry looking man behind you so much taller?” Quill antagonized, he turned to Gamora and mock whispered, “I’m sooo much taller than him.”

Gamora ignored Peter and Rocket’s taunts and focused on Darcy, “I had a dream about you recently.”

“I know.” Darcy said with a smile, “Guess who has new wacky powers.”

“I am Groot! You have new powers?”

“Yeah,” Darcy confirmed, “Sleep based powers. Nothing really all that cool and exciting.”

Tony made a noise of protest but Darcy didn’t even turn to acknowledge him.

“Dream invasion.” Gamora offered.

Darcy frowned, “Dream Walking.”

“I see no difference.” Gamora said dismissively.

Peter, uninterested in the topic went back to her love life, “Is the tall guy your wizard boyfriend?”

Darcy looked over her shoulder at Bucky. He had a stoic expression on his face but she could see the excitement in his eyes. It was one thing to tell him she was friends with aliens, it was another thing to
show him aliens that looked like aliens, unlike the Asgardians who looked the same physically as humans.

“This is Bucky.” Darcy said frankly, “He’s a soldier. And my friend.”

“He’s her body guard.” Tony elaborated, “And he’s not taller than me.”

“I am.” Bucky said with just the hint of a smile, “Her guard…and taller.”

“Traitor.” Tony whispered.

“I am Groot! Mom, Dream Walk me! Come and visit me like you visited Gamora.” Groot pled.

“I’ll try honey. I’ll try, but—I just recently started being able to aim that ability at a person, and that was when I was five feet away from the person I was trying to Dream Walk to.” Darcy sighed and fiddled with the moon clutch in her hands. “Try to remember I suck at control? My powers seem stubbornly predisposed to remain random.”

“Do trees even dream?” Tony questioned, able to pick up what was being said between her and Groot even with only one side of the conversation.

Groot’s face fell and Darcy rushed to reassure him, “If I can’t do it, I’ll keep practicing until I can. Soon, baby. Soon.”

Groot’s face hardened and he stomped his foot.

“Uh oh.” Rocket muttered.

Groot crossed his arms over his chest and snapped at her with a voice filled with teenaged indignation, “I am Groot! I’m not a baby.”

Darcy put a hand over her mouth and faked a cough to hide the smile on her face. He looked so cute when he was mad, laughing at how adorable he was would be the wrong move she knew, but she was tempted.

“Groot honey, I can see that you’re not a baby.” She spoke in a soft voice and made an effort to look as unassuming as she could, fighting Groot’s teenage attitude with unbridled honesty, she lovingly chastised, “But just remember what I told you. No matter how old you get…” Groot’s unaffected façade faded as she spoke the familiar words, “I’ll love you forever, I’ll like you for always, As long as I’m living…my baby you’ll be.”

Groot uncrossed his arms and took a step closer to the camera, “I am Groot! I love you too mom. Forever.”

“Even if you’re a disgruntled teenager?” Darcy prompted with a tiny grin.

Groot rolled his eyes and answered with a small smile, “I am Groot! Even then.”

“She even speaks moody teenager.” Rocket said sounding awed.

“Holy crap have I missed you,” Peter gestured to Groot and stuck his fingers up near his ears and then higher on his head, “Seriously, he’s been-” Peter stuck out his tongue and silently roared. She understood that he was trying to tell them that Groot’s adolescence was very trying for the Guardians but she couldn’t help but laugh at how ridiculous Quill looked.

“Is he having a stroke?” Tony quipped. Peter lowered his hands and glared at Tony.
“Why have you contacted us?” Gamora asked, “It’s nice to hear from you but I doubt this is a social call if my dream about you was true…Is it about him?”

Darcy turned to Tony. She didn’t really need his help finding the words, but when he nodded at her encouragingly she felt supported. His arm wrapped around her waist and they moved closer to the camera side by side as she confirmed, “Yes. It’s about Thanos.”

“Gamora’s dad?” Peter asked, “What did that asshole do now?”

“It’s about what he’s going to do actually.”

She explained her visions to the Guardians. She told them of her plans to warn the Galaxy about the mad titan’s plans. The Guardians agreed it was a good plan and encouraged them to make sure that the warning couldn’t be traced back to Asgard. Gamora confirmed Loki’s suspicion that Thanos would deviate from his plans to destroy the place just for raising the alarm.

They spoke for a little while longer about what the Guardians had been up to before her devices screen started to flicker and the sound begun to cut out. Tony informed them all that the battery was burning out again and then the thing caught on fire and sort of…melted.

“Shit.” Tony groused, “I was worried that might happen.”

Darcy lamented, “I didn’t get to say goodbye.”

Tony comforted her with a hug and a promise to build another device in the morning. She could see the exhaustion written on his face and she realized that it was very late in the evening, probably early in the morning. “Time for bed.” Darcy announced. Tony looked at her with a grateful smile and they once again interlaced their arms.

Bucky escorted them to their rooms and then bid them good night. Darcy wondered what he thought of her Guardian friends, and made a mental note to asked him about it the following day.

She helped Tony into bed beside the sleeping Stephen and before he could catch on to her plans, she kissed him goodnight and willed him to sleep. He was out like a light in no time. She was tempted to go find a guard to spar with or even annoy Loki into giving her a magic lesson as she wasn’t tired at all. But looking down at Stephen and Tony sleeping so peacefully in their bed that she couldn’t imagine leaving them.

Following her conversation with the Guardians, Darcy wanted nothing more than to be with those she loved and who loved her in return. The next morning she would have to address the Asgardian people for the first time in her official ‘Princess’ capacity and she was nervous and knew she wanted to look well rested so, she settled in between them and willed herself to sleep despite feeling like she didn’t need it.

She was asleep within seconds.

The next day she awoke with neither of her boyfriends by her side, but still in the bed she went to
sleep in. Loki hovered above her face with a paintbrush in hand, when she opened her eyes he froze and his eyes widened.

“What are you doing?” She asked instantly suspicious.

“Nothing. Just waiting for my dear sister to wake, so that we might dress and then ad-dress our kingdom and loyal subjects of the looming threats that are knocking on Asgard’s proverbial gates.” Loki shrugged, “I knew you would be nervous as this is your first royal proclamation and I wanted to…be here for you.”

Darcy narrowed her eyes on the paint brush in his hands. “What are you doing with that?”

“With what?” Loki asked innocently as he threw the paintbrush over his shoulder. “I’ll leave so you can bathe and dress.” Loki all but ran out of the room.

“You’re being weird and suspicious!” Darcy yelled out to his retreating form.

When she got into the bathroom she found that Loki had drawn a beard and eye-patch onto her face. When she burst out laughing, she discovered he’d somehow painted her teeth, each tooth a different color giving her a rainbow tinted smile. Darcy bent over, her stomach cramping as she laughed so hard at her ridiculous appearance.

Loki popped his head in when he heard her laughter, “Amused?”

In a gasping voice she cackled, “Lo—love you.”

Loki smiled reassuringly, “You’ll do great today.”

Her breathing returned to normal and she stood up to take in her appearance, assessing the job Loki did she asserted, “I look like lady Odin on acid.”

Loki snorted, but when she smiled toothily at him, he cracked up laughing. Which set her off again. The two of them spent a good five minutes lying on the floor of her bathroom, howling with laughter. It was a wonderful way to start a day where she would have to impart some terribly dire news.

When she got out of the shower, Loki was waiting for her, he had an outfit laid out for her and asked her to wear it. She consented and when she saw her reflection in the mirror she was a little awed by what she saw.

The dress was white and flowing with huge sleeves and silver stars scattered about. The headpiece was large creating a wire-y halo of stars around her hair and head. Loki gave her a star necklace and encouraged her to keep her makeup simple, allowing her ostentatious dress and accessories take center stage of her ‘look’.

“How do you like it?” Loki asked.

“I look...” She had no words, because in truth she looked like a goddess, but to admit that aloud made her uncomfortable so she settled on, “Nice.”

Loki narrowed his eyes at her assessment but said nothing more.
Loki, in the disguise of Odin, led her to the room with the balcony from which they would be addressing the whole of the Asgardian population. She could hear the crowd outside, hundreds, maybe thousands of people all gathered for a big announcement, the murmur of them speculating what would be revealed was sweat inducing.

“I can’t do this.” Darcy protested. Loki rolled his eye at her and made a gesture to the guards at the door.

Tony burst into the room through a side door, exclaiming, “Did somebody order some emotional support?”

Stephen trailed into the room behind him with a small smile on his face. Tony did a spin move, she could see the child like glee on his face, he was wearing a cape. There weren’t practical in the forge but he really liked them.

“You look fancy.” Darcy said as she moved away from Loki and towards her boyfriends. Stephen grabbed up her hand and kissed, eyeing her up and down with heated eyes making her blush.

“You look beautiful.” Stephen said quietly.

Tony circled the pair of them, looking her up and down, he glanced behind her at Loki commenting, “I told you it looked better without the stupid helmet.”

Tony gave her a light hug and kiss on the cheek as she asked, “What helmet?. Wait,” She turned on Loki and asked, “You consulted Tony on my outfit?”

“I did no such thing.” Loki denied. Tony moved over to Loki’s side, “Don’t lie. You showed me and Stephen like seven outfits.”

“Shut up.” Loki ordered disgruntled.

“Whatever.” Tony said dismissively.

A guard opened the door and informed them, “It’s time.”

Darcy’s eyes widened an she locked her hands together. Her palms were sweaty.

“You’ll do great.” Stephen said confidently. Tony moved to her side and put a hand on her back, guiding her to Loki. “You’re a goddess, their the unwashed masses. They’ll love you.”

“I’m not worried about them loving me. I’m worried about starting a panic or a riot or looting or—” Her breathing started to come up in gasps. Loki stared at Tony.

Tony rubbed her back and advised her to breathe. “In, and out. Just like that. In and out.”

Stephen came up behind her on the other side, “We’re here with you. We’re here for you. And so is everyone else out there. Those people are your people. Tell them the truth, show them how much you care and everything will be fine.”

Darcy grabbed Stephen’s hand and gave it a squeeze. Tony kissed her on the cheek and she turned and nodded at him. “Okay.” She muttered. Clearing her throat she repeated herself, “Okay.”
She let go of Stephen’s hand and stepped away from Tony towards Loki. Her brother offered her his arm; much like Tony had the previous night. Darcy raised her arm showing off her gigantic sleeve, physically illustrating why she couldn’t take his arm, “Um….”

Loki chuckled and held out his hand. Darcy smiled tightly and took it. Lacing her fingers with his, Loki nodded his head to the door of the balcony and ordered Tony and Stephen, “Open them.”

When the balcony doors were opened, Darcy squinted as light flooded the room previously ensconced in darkness. When Loki stepped forward she walked with him, into the light.

Dress Darcy is Wearing When she First meets Bucky/wearing in first part of dream

Dream Darcy scandalous outfit
Darcy’s dinner/Guardians Phone call outfit
Darcy’s Princess Proclamation Outfit
Chapter End Notes

I debated ending the chapter there but, ultimately felt like it so then I did.
Chapter 46 – wanda maximoff

Chapter Summary

Darcy dream walks Wanda

Chapter Notes

Happy Easter. Or Passover or weekend...
Over 18 pages.
Enjoy.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 46 – wanda maximoff

Tony was dreaming about her and she was Dream Walking him. It was the first time she’d mastered the art of being a silent observer. She had no physical form, she was invisible and undetectable to the dreamer she was visiting.

Tony was reliving the memory of their fall to Earth following the battle in NYC, only this time he was awake and she was just out of reach. Tony’s limbs, encased in his suit flailed as he tried to reach her. Dream-Darcy seemed serene in comparison to Tony’s desperation; she fell with her arms outstretched her long golden brown tulle cape fluttering around her body as is she was falling back onto a cloud. As they grew closer and closer to the city below she could see Tony start looking around for the Hulk.

Only he never arrived.

In Tony’s dream they both hit the ground at peak velocity and with full force. He survived, she didn’t. She died on impact.

Only her body didn’t look like it should, for having fallen from the great height at top speed. Her dead body was more artfully arranged, less splat on the pavement. She watched as Tony’s faceplate lifted and he dragged himself over to her immobile body, the look in his eyes shook her to her core.

He cradled her bloodied head and cried, he cried these loud mournful wails that were like ice picks to the heart to hear. Darcy wanted to reach out and touch him, assure him that she was alright, that his dream was just a dream, just a manifestation of his fear of losing her. But she remained silent and intangible.

Tony cradled her bloodied body only she now wore the outfit she was wearing when Wanda beat her up, the gold and metal dress with its blue half cape.

Tony stroked a lock of her hair before his eyes shifted to her Mjolnir shaped bag. He then looked up to the sky and screamed, “THOR, LOKI! HELP! HEL—HEY, ASSHOLES, OPEN THE BIFROST!”
The Bifrost Bridge’s light descended upon the two of them and they were brought to Heimdall’s Observatory. Unlike their real arrival on Asgard, they were met by Loki who smiled sadistically before using a sword to cut off her head. Her beheading was unnaturally bloodless, but Tony stared down at her decapitated body in shock all the same. Slowly he dragged his gaze up and away from her, to Loki.

“Why?” He asked her still manically smiling brother.

Loki in his horned helmet hissed at Tony, “You never deserved her.”

The broken look on Tony’s face fell away. His eyes became cold and hard.

Tony’s face plate flipped down and he got to his feet. Loki and he stared each other down for a moment. And then as one, the moved to attack.

Darcy, the observer, would have jerked back had she had physical form, but as it was she could only wonder if that was truly how Tony saw Loki. Still the crazed killer, still the blood hungry god.

Silently she followed the action. Tony fought Loki with all the tech in his suit, while Loki fought physically, striking blows with a sword that occasionally shot laser beams out the end and flickered back and forth between appearing as the Scepter he wielded back in NYC and a broadsword.

*Tony held the sword, his face plate once again up. Loki looked afraid.*

“Don’t.” Loki whispered just before Tony stabbed him. Silently Darcy noticed that the wound was once again weirdly bloodless.

They both wore expressions of shock and disbelief. Tony’s hand lingered on the sword before letting it go. Loki staggered back a few steps staring down at the weapon lodged deep in his chest. Her brother looked up at Tony with a betrayed expression asking, “Why?”

Loki didn’t give Tony time to answer though, as he fell back off the Bifrost Bridge into the void of space.

“Tony?” Darcy watched as Tony whirled around to see her dream self, alive once again. “What have you done?”

*Tony’s suit disappeared. He wore a disheveled suit.*

Standing on the ledge of the Bifrost her dream self was a vision in golden stars. She wore a plain simple dress, but she wore a sheer cape with stars of gold. Her hair was curled and pinned with similar adornments. Her skin looked bright and healthy, but her face looked drawn and sad. She cried as she stared over the ledge into the abyss.

Fat tears rolled down her cheeks as she accused Tony with a curl of her lip, “How could you?”

Tony rushed to her side, he tried to hug her but dream-Darcy slapped at his chest protesting, “No! No! How could you? I loved him!”

“He was crazy!” Tony defended, “He killed you!”

“He saved me!” Darcy cried, “He was my family. He gave me powers. He made me immortal. He made me into a goddess!”

“No.” Tony shook his head, “You made yourself. Just like me.” Dream-Darcy shoved Tony to the
floor and as he stared up at her, her eyes drew cold and distant.

“I’m nothing like you.” She whispered.

*Stephen appeared at her side.*

“We are nothing like you.” Stephen said callously, “You’re old and you’re getting older every minute.”

*Tony’s black hair grew gray streaks. His beard too. The lines on his face increased and his athletic frame grew thinner.*

Dream-Darcy put her hand on Stephen’s chest; turning into him the wizard put a protective arm across her shoulders. Darcy sniffed disdainfully, “You’re mortal Tony.”

“It’s only a matter of time before she outgrows you. If she hasn’t already.” Stephen spoke in a matter of fact tone that somehow seemed harsher than if his voice had held cruelty and spite.

“No.” Tony protested weakly. His face was growing older before her non-existent eyes. “I love you.”

Dream-Darcy and Stephen exchanged a look and then as one they turned away from the rapidly aging man. Tony struggled to get to his feet but his accelerated aging left him winded and frail, unable to stand.

“No, Darcy! Strange! Don’t leave me.” Tony coughed as he crawled on the floor after them, but she and Stephen didn’t turn around or stop. They just kept walking away.

“Darcy!” Tony yelled, “DARCY!”

If she had physical form, she would be crying. Tony was dying of old age in front of her and the cold treatment from her dream self had her cursing Tony and his abandonment issues. This dream of his was cruel and viscous, even just to watch in her second hand capacity. Her heart ached for Tony who had all these feared deep down in his psyche.

She felt like a wretch for not being more reassuring of her devotion or more sensitive to his legit concerns about their interspecies relationship. In her mind she chanted, *see me, see me, see me, see me.*

Physical form came to her slowly. First she felt the floor against her bare feet; the cool texture that made up the Bifrost Bridge grounded her. Next came her legs and hips, chest, arms, and finally head. She blinked rapidly, clearing away the odd feeling of having kept her eyes open and unblinking for a surreal amount of time.

She was naked but after a second of thought she wore a cape similar to the one her dream counterpart had worn, but in blue. Her dress was similar in color as well, but with blue and purple ruffles at the bottom. She made her hair look like the colors of a sky at dusk. She adorned herself in jewelry and a crown that reminded her of Tony’s first arc reactor. And then she ran to his side.

“Tony.” She called out. He looked nearly ninety-nine and weak and withered in a way that frightened her to behold. She fell to her knees beside him and picked up his head pillowing it on her thighs as she stoked his hair gently and repeated his name solemnly, “Tony.” Quietly she bid him to see her, the real her.

Tony’s ancient eyes cracked open, he stared up at her in confusion, then shock. “You came back.”
His feeble voice wheezed.

Darcy shook her head, “I never left you.”

“I saw you.” Tony accused.

“This is a dream.” She informed him gently, she gestured to the world of Asgard that was laid out before them, “This is all a dream.”

“You left me.” Tony repeated, “You and Stephen both.”

She tenderly ran her hand down his cheek, Tony turned away from her touch. “Don’t. I’m old.”

“You’ve always been older than me.” Darcy reminded him, “I don’t care.”

Tony stared up at her angrily, “Look at me!” He gestured down to his frail elderly body. He glanced up at her with this sad but awed expression, “And look at you.”

Darcy swallowed thickly. Leaning down she brought her face inches from his, they were eye to eye but upside down. The odd vantage point did nothing to hide the self disgust she saw in Tony. Darcy felt a steely resolve well up inside her. “I am looking.” She assured him. Tony didn’t look convinced.

Cupping his cheeks with her hands she shifted back so her lips aligned with his forehead, closing her eyes, she kissed him. She imagined the vitality returning to his body. She pictured his skin, once again tan and smooth, his body muscled and strong. His hair and beard unfettered with gray. She imagined him as she saw him in the waking world. Young and vibrant and full of life.

When she opened her eyes, he was the man she knew. He was the Tony she loved and saw when her eyes were awake. As she pulled away, Tony sprang up into a sitting position. He stared at his hands in amazement, patting down his body checking to see if everything was back in place before he turned on her, this look of wonder clouding his features.

“I love you stupid.” Darcy said with a small smile, she reached out and Tony pulled himself closer. They shared a sweet kiss.

When they pulled away from each other Tony pressed their foreheads together as he said, “I’m going to get old and die. You’re not.”

“You don’t know that.” Darcy countered. She ran her hand up his torso and rested her palm over his heart. She could feel the steady beat and she pushed away thoughts of what she would do when the damaged organ finally stopped beating.

“I’m human.” Tony stated as he pulled his head away from hers, “You’re not. That’s not going to change. Dream or no dream.”

Darcy scooted closer to Tony, not letting him run away from her. She gripped his shirt and pulled him in for a kiss. Tony’s lips were pliant against her own. She wanted to remind him of how much she loved him. Of how far she would be willing to go for him. She tried to pour all of her love and emotion into the kiss, but she doubted what she was feeling translated. How could it?

“I don’t care.” Darcy gasped breathlessly as they pulled apart, “I don’t care because I love you...”

Staring into his eyes she could see the uncertainty. She could see Tony’s insecurities and his fears warring for dominance, he wanted to believe her, she could see it. He just couldn’t seem to let himself.
She put her hands on his shoulders, “Do you believe me? Do you know? Do you know how much I love you Tony Stark?”

Tony slowly nodded, “I love you. I know you love me.”

“But?”

Tony sighed, “But our love doesn’t change our biology.”

A million thoughts raced through her mind in that one second. And she came to a decision. With a shake of her head Darcy smiled reassuringly, “Then we’ll have to make you immortal too.”

“What?”

Darcy didn’t bother answering. She pulled Tony close again and kissed his questions away. She kissed him until the scene changed and they were in a bedroom and wearing fewer clothes. She kissed him to distract him; she made love to him so he would forget what they had been talking about. The plan formed in her mind was instantaneously. When she woke up, she would procure an apple of Idunn and give it to Tony. After that, these fears of his would cease and he would be able to dream peacefully. And they would be free to be together, forever…. Or until one of them died horribly trying to save the world.

Darcy did not wake after leaving Tony’s dream, she slept on, but her mind awoke and she left her body entering the astral plane. She looked down on her sleeping form wedged in between her lovers. They were cuddled together and sound asleep. It had been another busy and long ass day. The three of them were exhausted and deservedly so. She was pleased to see a peaceful look on Tony’s face. Silently she wished him good dreams.

Looking down at her astral form, she smiled. Her dress reminded her of Glinda the Good Witch of the North, from the Wizard of Oz. It was pink and poofy and covered in silver stars. It made her happy, just like Tony and Stephen. Her men were her refuge when the onslaught of aftermath rained down following her big ‘royal proclamation’.

Apparently telling an entire world that their planet might get destroyed soon raised more than eyebrows. Who knew?

After her announcement about Ragnarok and Thanos, the Asgardian people had been in a tizzy to say the least. She’d had to hold several ‘town meetings’ as she liked to call them, to assuage the fears of the people in a more intimate setting, one where they could ask her questions and basically accuse her of lying/not having the ability to see the future at all.

It was tedious and often led to her repeating what she had told them when she made the initial announcement. ‘She had dreams that suggested Ragnarok was soon at hand.’ ‘Pack a bag.’ ‘Be ready to leave.’ ‘Keep living your life and don’t panic.’ ‘They would survive to meet the next threat, Thanos; of that much she was sure.’ ‘And if she was wrong, so what? It never hurt to be prepared.’

Loki, in the disguise of his father, was busy with overseeing war plans and protecting Asgard’s legacy should it fall. Magical items of protection were being retrieved and made readily available. Ancient items of significant historical value were being relocated. The history of Asgard, its vast libraries and texts, were being made mobile. The army was being drilled and readied for combat. Plans for mass evacuation were being drawn up.
Making plans, back up plans and contingency plans consumed Loki. Initially she worried how he would handle ‘ruling’ when Asgard was in turmoil, but he hadn’t shown signs of cracking yet. In fact, he was kind of excelling. But it was a lot.

Deciding what was of value, what wasn’t. Who was worth making a priority who wasn’t. Loki was overseeing it all. He was preparing for the worst, while she reassured people that all would be well. From the average Asgardian citizen’s perspective, the King and Princess were doing all that they could to keep society from falling apart whilst reading for impending doom and battle.

Fandral and Bucky were almost constantly by her side during her meetings, while Volstagg and Hogun were dispatched by Loki for various preparation tasks. Steve had taken over with Stephen in training Wanda, he had no magical knowledge it was true, but supposedly he was making progress on helping Wanda talk about her emotions, so that was good she supposed.

She had no destination in mind when she started roaming the palace in her astral form, but after her Dream Walk with Tony, she felt like checking in on her people.

She ended up in the royal bedroom first. Loki was thankfully alone, clothed, and awake. She pouted when her gown changed as she entered her brother’s presence, whisking away her Glinda gown and replacing it with a starry night ball gown. Her displeasure didn’t last long as her eyes were drawn to Loki. Seeing him alive…she wanted to see him she supposed if only to reassure herself that he was okay after watching his brutal dream-murder by Tony’s hands. However after watching him for five minutes she left.

Loki was being uncharacteristically uninteresting. He was engrossed in a large tome, reading silently and doing nothing else.

She next visited Bucky, her gown transforming yet again into a purple skirt red/crop top number that vaguely reminded her of something a fancy gypsy would wear, or maybe a Russian Princess. She couldn’t help but wonder if her astral costume changes were a result of her own will or if she changed to reflect how others saw her…or perhaps a mixture of both.

She found Bucky asleep and looking distraught. He was tossing and turning, his brow furrowed with sweat collecting at his hairline. Drawn to his side by the signs of his distress she hovered over him. He was having a nightmare.

It saddened her to see him so burdened, he was such a damaged person and yet when he was awake he was so intent on protecting her. Helping where could, doing anything that was asked of him. She hated watching Bucky torture himself like this. She wished he could rest in peace. Even if peace meant him having awkward sex dreams about her.

“It’s okay Bucky,” She reached out and touched his head, “I’m here.”

She let out a beleaguered sigh as her hand passed through his body and he shivered. If only she could assure him he wasn’t alone, touch him and let him know he didn’t need to be redeemed for the things he did when he was under Hydra’s control.

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“I’m here for you.” She repeated. Bucky moved his arm over his head. Shifting in his sleep onto his side.,

“Dar…” Bucky mumbled in his sleep. Darcy smiled down at him as the sweat cooled on his skin.
Soon his face relaxed and the furrow in his brow disappeared. He shifted again, settling the pillow under his cheek more snugly. She didn’t want to take credit for chasing away his nightmare, but the affect of her touch was undeniable.

“Sweet dreams.” She bid him softly as she turned and left the room. She wondered what Bucky was dreaming about and she was tempted to stay or try to Dream Walk him, but she had more people to check up on.

Within the blink of an eye she found herself in an unfamiliar room staring at an all too familiar man. Her outfit changed the second she entered the room. Looking down she was once again clad in something soft and delicate looking. Looking up she knew this was how Steve saw her and it both irritated and delighted her. Running her hands over the filmy fabric of her dress she stepped deeper into the room.

Lately, Steve had been coercing her into speaking with him at meal times more, their group dinner meetings being the only time of the day they saw each other given all the Asgardian preparations. He would ask her something serious about the upcoming threats; questions she couldn’t ignore, then once answered he would shift to more casual conversation. When she tried to extract herself from speaking with him, he would bring up Wanda and give her an accounting of her progress so far, once again forestalling her departure. He left her no wiggle room, she either had to respond and ignore things of importance or act like a complete bitch when he was just being polite. It was an annoyingly affective tactic to force interaction.

Sometimes she was so exasperated by his overtures that she was unremorsefully rude; other times… they fell back into an easy banter, the friendship between them alive and strong once again. Truthfully, she could feel the ice around her heart melting when it came to Steve. She wasn’t sure how she felt about forgiving him just yet, but she knew it was on the horizon.

Glancing over at Steve she found him lounging on his bed in his boxers. There was a sketch pad on his lap and a colored pencil in his hands. When she stepped close enough to see what he was drawing she let out a gasp. She knew Steve could draw, but she just didn’t realize how talented he was.

He’d drawn her. She was looking down and her head was turned, resting her chin on her naked shoulder. Her hair looked like the night sky, her lashes were full and thick, her lips pouty and plump. And on top of her head was a crown made of colorful sea shells, baubles, stars, and a moon that hung at the center. Her face looked so serene…she looked like a goddess of the night or something.

He was working on coloring in the dark red of her lower lip, shading the area with an expert hand. Her eyes traveled the length of his talented fingers up his muscular arm all the way up to his face. His eyes were focused on the task and he was gently biting his lower lip as he worked. The look of concentration on his face was endearing. She’d never seen him look so calm and fascinated at the same time. This artistic soul thing, was a side to Steve she’d never given much thought to.

Looking back at the sketch, she couldn’t deny it gave her a little thrill to see the gorgeous depiction. If Steve thought her even half as beautiful as he’d drawn her… She knew he had feelings for her, but seeing the drawing made it seem more real somehow.

She didn’t linger with Steve, she didn’t want to impose. This was, after all something Steve was doing for himself. She wasn’t meant to see the picture. She didn’t want to be accused of invading his
privacy…even though she totally was.

Her dress transformed into something dark and dramatic with a hat made of stars that partially hid her face as she reached her next destination. It actually felt like an appropriate choice considering she found herself in the dungeons, with Wanda.

She saw the witch in her cell, sleeping on her threadbare cot. She wore a frown as she slept, her eyes were moving rapidly behind her closed eyelids. She didn’t show the kinds of distress that Bucky had, but Darcy sensed that Wanda was experiencing something similar. Nightmares. Memories. A mix of both.

Acting without thinking, Darcy reached out and put her hand on Wanda’s shoulder. She imagined herself as a disembodied presence and found herself for the second time that night, an invisible voyeur in someone else’s dream.

Wanda’s dream was filled with muted sound. Like someone had been standing too close to a gun and had ringing in their ears but all around explosions were going off and you knew it was loud but couldn’t hear it.

Wanda was cradling Pietro’s dead body. Whispering words to her dead twin as chaos raged all around them. Ultron bot’s flew around incinerating random people. Darcy was puzzled as she knew that wasn’t what the bots had done.

*Vision arrived and Pietro disappeared.*

Vision reached down a hand to Wanda, she took it and let the android help her to her feet. The magenta colored man wiped away her tear tracks with his thumb and Wanda fell into his arms. Vision hugged her close for a second before being ripped away from her by Ultron.

Wanda screamed and let out a wave of magic that caused all of the robots to explode. The scene changed.

*Pietro’s dead body was back and on the ground. He was lined up next to hundreds of other dead bodies.*

The sight was unsettling, side by side in a line that stretched far into the distance; dead bodies lay unmoving on the ground.

“I’m sorry,” Wanda whispered to the corpses, “I didn’t mean to.”

*A version of Darcy appeared with her closest allies in tow.*

Darcy noted the attire her other self was wearing, her dress was floor length making her appear taller, the material looked like it was made of liquid gold, the cape on her shoulders made her appear broader. On her head she wore a medieval crown with a chainmail hair covering. Looking upon Wanda’s depiction of herself, she thought she looked like a Queen ready for battle

Dream-Darcy stood with Thor and Odin on her left, Stephen and Tony on her right. The group of them made a line in front of Wanda who looked surprised by their appearance. Dream-Darcy stepped forward and held out her hand saying, “Come with me Wanda. We can help you.” Her words were kind but there was something about her voice that made dream-Darcy sound shady.
“You.” Wanda’s eyes glowed. Her hands began to glow as she gathered scarlet energy in her hands, “This is all your fault!” Wanda accused shrilly.

Wanda thrust her hands forward sending a massive blast of magic at their group. Odin and Thor were thrown to the side and were sucked up into the Bifrost. Stephen and Tony smashed against a brick wall, crumpling to the floor but still conscious.

Her dream self was laid out flat on her back and though she remained in her intimidating garments, Darcy imagined her pose looked much the same as she did after Wanda beat her near to death. She could see her bloody face, her swollen shut eye, her broken nose, her busted lip. The sight was horrifying. She looked like she was on death’s door.

Nevertheless the witch stalked forward, seething with rage.

“Stop.” Dream-Darcy plead weakly, “I can help you.”

When Wanda reached Darcy’s body and looked down at her battered appearance, her glowing hands extinguished and her eyes faded back into their normal hazel-green color.

Bloodied and beaten dream-Darcy choked the word, “Why?” Then her dream self gurgled in her throat before sputtering and coughing up blood. The contrast of red on her pale white skin was stark.

Wanda looked aghast. “I’m sorry.” She said quietly, “I’m sorry.”

Wanda fell to her knees and crawled to Darcy’s side, “I’m sorry, I’m sorry. I’m so so sorry.”

Stephen and Tony appeared standing near dream-Darcy’s head.

They loomed over the women, their fierce glares focused on Wanda.

“You’re a killer.” Stephen accused. “You need to be locked up.”

“You need to be put down.” Tony added, “Hard.”

Steve appeared out of thin air.

He pulled Wanda to her feet and roughly put her hands behind her back, slapping a pair of handcuffs on her. “You’re too dangerous Wanda. You’re not Avenger material. You need to leave. You can’t come back, don’t even try.”

“But it was an accident—” Wanda tried to protest but she was interrupted.

Vision replaced Steve.

“It wasn’t an accident.” Vision countered, his voice was calm and his tone soft even as he pushed her forward with a rough shove to Wanda’s shoulder. “You wanted to kill her.”

“I wasn’t—I didn’t want to kill her.” Wanda defended. Vision guided Wanda forward towards an empty patch of gravel where the Bifrost’s unmistakable light was shining.

“You wanted to hurt her beyond repair.” Vision argued, “You wanted her gone.”

“I wanted her to leave me alone.” Wanda sobbed. “I just wanted to be a hero. No could see me with her there! She took up all the attention, she made me---she treated me like I was wrong, like I was irredeemable.”
Dream-Darcy appeared before Wanda.

Halting Vision from marching the handcuffed woman towards the Bifrost Bridge her dream self held out a hand stopping the pair. Her dream self was still covered in blood, her face battered, but now her skin looked deathly pale. Dream-Darcy’s voice was severe when she declared, “I’m a hero. You’re a witch. And you’re out of control. I never wanted to hurt you and you killed me.”

“I didn’t.” Wanda cried, “You’re alive! You’re fine! The made you a fucking Princess!”

“I died.” Dream-Darcy asserted malevolently, “You killed me for trying to help you.”

“I didn’t--”

“You killed me.” Dream-Darcy interrupted, “You killed me and everyone saw it. Everyone knows you’re a killer and a chaotic witch with no hope of ever going home again. Home, earth, they don’t want you. You’re only on Asgard as long as I’m willing to be merciful.”

Darcy was uneasy with the dark and menacing tone her dream counterpart was using. Her demeanor was so intimidating and she seemed to be getting taller while Wanda got smaller for some reason. It gave her great insight as to how Wanda felt about her, but she didn’t know how the information could help.

“You’ll never be forgiven.” Dream-Darcy affirmed, “Except by me.”

“No.” Wanda denied weakly.

Dream-Darcy smiled evilly, “Because I’m the good one and you’re the wicked witch.”

Thunder cracked above them and Vision disappeared from behind the bound woman. The grey sky grew even darker, setting the whole scene in this eerie eye of the storm atmosphere. Dream-Darcy strutted forward and poked Wanda in the chest, “I’ve been trying to help you from the beginning and you’ve been nothing short of a heartless bitch!”

Wanda shook her head and cried, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

Dream-Darcy ignored her, “You have no one. No one on your side, no one to stand up for you. Except me.”

Lighting flashed in the sky, highlighting dream-Darcy’s features in a way that made her seem deranged for a split second before returning to their injured form. However dream-Darcy’s eyes retained their manic appearance as she stalked forward forcing Wanda to stumble back.

“The more you reject my help the worse it will get for you.” Dream-Darcy lectured maliciously, “Without me, you’re nothing. Without Asgard, you’d be dead on Earth for what you did. You have no choice Wanda. You must submit.”

Wanda fell to her knees; she jostled her handcuffed arms behind her back as she shook her head back and forth, her hand whipping about her head from the motion. “No, no, no. I will not let you win. You can’t control me!”

Wanda’s eyes glowed and dream-Darcy smirked. She snapped her fingers and suddenly they were surrounded. In a circle around her and Wanda were her friends.

Tony, Stephen, Steve, Vision, Odin, Natasha, Sam, Thor, Fandral, Hogun, Volstagg, Pepper, Rhodes, they were all there and they surrounded them in a tight circle. Each person wore an
expression of anger or disgust. They loomed over the kneeling witch like a gang, they were imposing and menacing and at the sight of Darcy’s assembly of allies the light went out of Wanda’s eyes.

“You’ve already lost.” Natasha counseled.

“Give in.” Sam added. Lightning flashed in the sky and it began to rain.

“No.” Wanda contested weakly, “She’ll destroy me.”

The rain soaked the floor turning the dirt into mud. Wanda sank into the ground becoming filthy. Despite what was done to her by the young witch, despite the cruelty with which she was treated, Darcy couldn’t help but pity the woman. Wanda just seemed so small and alone, compared to herself and her multitude of allies...

Pietro appeared next to his sister.

He knelt next to her in the mud as rain began to pour down in earnest. Soaking them all.

“Wanda.” Pietro said gently as he cupped his sister’s cheeks. He gave her this look that Darcy couldn’t decipher but Wanda sobbed in response. “Pietro!”

“Wanda, Darcy is not the enemy.” Pietro said loudly, he had to yell to be heard over the wind as it began to howl.

Rhodes taunted the woman, “If you ever come back you’ll be executed for what you did.”

Fandral stared defiantly at the broken looking witch, “You killed our beloved Princess, all of Asgard hates you.”

Odin glared at Wanda. His voice vibrated as he growled, “If not for Darcy’s benevolence I would have your head mounted on my wall. You deserve death. You are a wild thing unworthy of love or peace. You will pay, for what you did. For what you would have done had not fate interceded.”

The harsh words coming from Odin reminded her of how awful the king had been to Bruce when she accidently teleported them into the royal bed, but she knew that these words Wanda had Odin speaking, were really Loki’s. Or at least what Wanda thought Loki would say in the guise of his father. After all, Wanda’s only interaction with the King of Asgard had been with the false King.

She knew Loki was capable of saying such hateful things, especially upon the behalf of someone he loved, but she wondered if what Wanda was dreaming had any kernel of truth to it? Her depiction of the Asgardians seemed more authentic than the others somehow. Darcy didn’t know what happened to Wanda after they arrived on Asgard following the big fight back on Earth. When everyone thought she was dead or dying, she could imagine how Loki would have dealt with the woman who supposedly killed her.

Pietro shook his head and waved his hand at the group surrounding them, “Don’t listen to them. They’re not real. I’m real.”

“You’re dead.” Wanda wailed.

“Yes.” Pietro confirmed, “But I’m also a part of you. And that piece of me will never die.”

Wanda’s lower lip trembled as she stared at her brother. Dream-Darcy grabbed the back of Pietro’s shirt and lifted him off his feet, remarking in a bored tone, “Of course if you hadn’t have attacked me when we first met, I probably would have remained on Earth and helped you in the final battle
against Ultron. Saving your brother’s life in the process.”

Dream-Darcy threw Pietro outside of the circle of people. Lighting streaked across the sky above them and dream-Darcy smiled vindictively.

The crowd closed in on Wanda. The young witch began screaming, “No! NO! Help! PIETRO! COME BACK! Please…please come back.”

Darcy couldn’t let the dream continue on like this. Wanda looked near the breaking point, mentally speaking.

_Darcy willed herself into existence._

Dream-Darcy disappeared. She willed away everyone around Wanda. She pictured the sky blue and the sun shining. She imagined herself wearing something less harsh and combative, more sweet and soft looking. She pictured them in the garden on Asgard, Queen Frigga’s favorite garden, the one with the bench and the tiny fountain. She saw Wanda free of the mud that stained her clothes and the handcuffs that bound her hands.

When she opened her eyes, everything she wanted to be, was.

Wanda stared at her with wide eyes and a traumatized expression. Darcy’s face softened. Wanda looked so young and afraid; she couldn’t help but feel for the woman. Part of her questioned her own soft heart. Was it not unwise to forgive her? Was it unjust to want Wanda to find peace? Darcy didn’t know the answers to those questions, but she knew that wouldn’t be able to live with herself if she sat idly by and bore witness to Wanda’s descent into madness and damnation.

“You’re dreaming.” Darcy informed her.

“I’m a killer.” Wanda said in dazed tone.

“So is Bucky.” Darcy pointed out, “So is Steve and Tony and Bruce and Natasha and Sam….being a killer doesn’t have to be all that you are.”

“It’s different.” Wanda argued, “I’m different.”

“Yeah,” Darcy agreed, “You’re fucking powerful.” She reached out and took Wanda’s hand in her own. The woman looked shell shocked. Darcy felt compelled to ground the woman in reality, or well, dream-ality. She laced their hands together claiming “You’re going to do things, amazing, impossible things. You need to let the past go, you can’t let it haunt you like this.”

Wanda stared at their joined hands. “Why are you being nice to me?” Her eyes flickered back up to Darcy’s, “It’s so hard to hate you when you’re nice to me, it makes me look bad. It makes me feel bad.”

“I stopped hating you a while ago.” Darcy revealed, “I don’t know when, but..I don’t. I don’t hate you because,” Darcy released the woman’s hand, “I don’t want to hate anyone.” She said with a shrug, “It takes up too much energy.”

“How?”
“How what?”

“How can you not hate me?” Wanda began to tear up, “I killed you.”

“You did.” Darcy acknowledged quietly, “And in an alternate reality, I killed you. Cut off your head.” Wanda didn’t even blink. She fixed Wanda with a probing stare, “Will you do it again? Wanda? Do you still want to kill me?”

“NO!” Wanda answered quickly, “I don’t—I can’t explain it…You make me feel weak. You were replacing me and I resented you. You outshined me, I was jealous. You made me the enemy and I felt guilty. I felt guilty from the moment Pietro questioned why we were kidnapping you. I hated Tony and wanted to use you against him, I knew it was wrong that you were innocent but I—that one decision, that one act of calculated hate…it set me on this path and I’ve been trying to get off of it but I just can’t.”

“Can’t not hate me or can’t stop hating me because it’s all you know?” Darcy questioned neutrally.

“I don’t know.” Wanda said sounding defeated, “I just want it to be over.”

“What?” Darcy asked for clarification, “You want what to be over?” She worried that Wanda might be suicidal after everything.

“I want…I want hating myself for hating you to be over.” Wanda said quietly, “I want hating you for something that I imagined to be over. I hated you for things that had nothing to do with you and I see that now but I don’t.”

“Then stop.” Darcy suggested, “Just stop hating me.”

“I can’t.”

“You can.” Darcy countered.

Wanda glared at her, “You think everything is easy just because it comes so easy to you. You want a boyfriend you bag a billionaire. You want power, you start dating a sorcerer. You want to be an Avenger, you find out your Thor’s long lost little sister. EVERYTHING is easy for you. But it’s not for me, okay? I have no one! No one but myself. I can't just turn off my feelings.” Wanda got this distant look in her eyes as she said, “I am all I have, if I lose myself, I lose everything.”

Darcy was quiet for a minute; she knew it was a possibility that this thing between her and Wanda would never mend. But she couldn’t lose Wanda, she was too important to fall into a well of despair and psychosis. She had to reach the witch, connect with her somehow. Darcy just wasn’t sure what the right thing to say was.

After a minute Wanda confessed in a whisper, “I want to be good.”

Darcy reached out to brush a lock of Wanda’s hair behind her ear. The young woman flinched but allowed the small contact. “Then be good.” Darcy said simply.

Wanda glared and opened her mouth, but Darcy held up a hand stalling her protest. “Hear me out.” Wanda clenched her jaw but remained quiet.

“You want to be good, be good. Good is something you do. Not something you are. If people were so black and white, Game of Thrones wouldn’t be half as interesting.” Wanda’s brow furrowed, obviously not understanding her reference.
“Never mind.” Darcy dismissed, “What I mean is, if you want to do better, be better. Do it. Be it. One day at a time. One hour. One minute. Act by act. Build yourself back up. Be who you want to be and one day, it won’t take actively trying to be that thing, you’ll just be it.”

Darcy knew she could have worded it more eloquently but she felt she got her point across. And the thoughtful look on Wanda’s face gave her hope.

They sat there quietly, thinking, for a while. It could have been a minute or an hour; time was weird in the dream world Darcy was finding.

All of a sudden Wanda’s eyes looked up at her, and Darcy could see the spark of life, or will to live, once again burning in the witch’s eyes.

“You’re here.” Wanda said with a narrowed gaze, she ran her eyes up and down Darcy’s attire, taking her all in. “This is you, the real you.”

“I told you this was a dream.” Darcy said, “You know I’ve recently gained new powers.”

“Yeah, but I thought they were random, that you couldn’t control them.” Wanda gestured to the garden around them, “I don’t know this. I’ve never been to this place.”

Darcy looked around the colorful but secluded garden. She realized that Wanda was right. “I do.” Darcy declared, “I have.”

“You’re doing this.” Wanda hissed in accusation.

Reaching out her hand she let the fountains water flow over her fingers, Darcy let out a sigh, Wanda was so paranoid it was exhausting. She explained, “This is the Queens garden. It reminds me of Frigga. I find it peaceful and quiet, a good setting for deep and emotionally revealing conversations if you ask me.”

“You’re controlling my dream.” Wanda said with a hint of wonder and fear.

Darcy’s back stiffened as she realized that she was controlling the dream now, totally. She chose the setting, the sounds the smell of honeysuckle in the air, honeysuckle which was not grown in the garden but grew at the back gate of her childhood home. Wanda was in control of her body and mind, but everything else... that was all Darcy.

And it was easy. It took practically no effort at all to take control of the dream and shape it to her will.

“I stopped your nightmare.” Darcy said carefully, “You made it rain. You put yourself in handcuffs and gathered everyone against you.”

“I did.” Wanda conceded, there was no sense of dawning revelation in her tone, just a matter of factness when she replied, “I dug my own grave and now I’m laying it being buried alive. Each person I’ve hurt is ready and willing to take a handful of dirt and help entomb me unto death.”

Darcy rolled her eyes and splashed some fountain water at Wanda exclaiming, “Oh come on! Don’t be so fucking dramatic Wanda.”

Wanda frowned, “I have to pay for what I’ve done.”
“Paying for the past with pain and suffering helps no one.” Darcy tried to sound wise but felt she was coming off like a bad fortune cookie. “Just, let yourself change. Commit to it. And it will happen.”

“It’s not that simple.”

“But it could be.” Darcy argued, she gave Wanda a soft encouraging look, “Not everything has to end in tragedy.”

“Easy for you to say.” Wanda groused.

Darcy’s lips twitched but she refused to let the smile form on her face. Instead she put a hand on Wanda’s shoulder and squeezed, “I believe in you.”

Tears welled up in Wanda’s eyes. Her lips quivered as she asked in a thick voice, “Why?”

“I just do.” Darcy let her hand fall and averted her gaze to the skyline; she didn’t want to watch Wanda cry, just then she was a pathetic looking creature and to add tears to the image would make her exponentially so.

“How can you forgive me?” Wanda sobbed.

“I don’t.” Darcy answered in a monotone, “But I will. Someday…forgiving you is different from giving you another chance. Believing in your ability to change. It’s different than stopping hating you even….Forgiveness is hard. It takes time.”

“I’m sorry.” Wanda whispered. “I’m so sorry for what I did. What I said. Everything. I would take it back if I could. I—I’m just sorry. I’m so sorry Darcy.”

“I know.” Darcy replied as she stood up. She looked down on Wanda who remained sitting, “Try to get some rest. I’ll come to you in the morning, we’ll talk. Really talk.”

Wanda nodded, tears falling down her cheeks. “Okay.”

Darcy looked around the garden setting, “Stay here if you like, it’s a place of growth and peace. Maybe when you wake you’ll be capable of both.”

Darcy closed her eyes and willed herself out of Wanda’s dream and back onto the astral plane.

When she opened her eyes she was no longer on Asgard, though she was still in astral form. She recognized where she was and who she was with instantly though, she was on Earth and she was with Peter Parker, Spiderman. Darcy was stunned. She thought the distance between her body and her astral form couldn’t be separated by such vast distance, but she felt fine.

The teenager was on a bus eating a granola bar as he scrolled through headlines on his phone. Looking down Darcy found herself once again draped in blue fabric, but her dress this time came with a coat that made her feel a bit like an army general. Looking back at Spiderman, she wondered if her dress was a result of him thinking of her as a commanding person or scary-intimidating like Wanda saw her.

Peter sat up and walked to the door of the bus. Darcy had no choice but to follow him as he led her into his school.
The kid had ear buds in and he was bobbing his head along to the music as he walked. Silently and half aware of his surroundings he avoided tripping over a fallen school bag and navigated around a teacher collecting dropped papers on the floor. It was a little impressive.

When he reached his locker, his friend and partner from the Science Fair was waiting for him. The two talked about a girl named ‘Liz’ and basically gushed about how cool and pretty the girl was. Darcy smiled at the twin teenaged looks of adoration. They were such nerds.

The friends parted with an elaborate hand shake. Peter stood by his locker, scrolling through his phone for a bit before jerking as a bell above rang. Peter slammed his locker closed and ran, only to retreat a second later to retrieve the book bag he’d left on the ground. Darcy followed Peter with an amused smile as he slipped into his first class just as the bell rang again.

His teacher gave him a look and Peter smiled at her sheepishly. Peter settled into his chair next to a kid who looked like he had enough hair gel on his head to wax a surf board. The other kid rolled his eyes at Peter, “Penis Parker, late again.”

Peter sank into his seat ever so slightly.

Darcy narrowed her eyes at the other kid snarling, “Hey, fuck you kid.” She gave the kid the finger.

The teacher called for attention at the front of the class distracting her from glaring at the mean kid next to Peter. The woman held a newspaper in the air above her head and waved it around asking, “So what do we all think of this fascinating turn of events?”

Darcy realized they were in a social studies class as she read the front page. In big bold letters the headline read, ‘Accords abolished. Threats confirmed.’ Underneath in smaller but still bold lettering it read, ‘But Will They Ever Come Back?’

With a wide grin Darcy’s eyes widened as she whispered to herself, “Holy shit it worked.”

The obnoxious kid next to Peter spoke up, “It’s a crime and a travesty.” Darcy’s grin fell and she turned to flip the kid the bird yet again.

“How so Mr. Thompson?” The teacher prompted as she set the newspaper down on her desk and leaned against it.

“The world has changed global policy based off the insane ramblings of one woman.” The kid explained, “It’s an overreaction and an unnecessary response to a non-threat. I mean, what did she really say would happen if the Accords weren’t abolished?. She and the rest of the gods on mount Olympus wouldn’t come back? Who cares? It never ends well when aliens come to New York.”

A student on the other side of the room raised their hand and the teacher nodded, letting them speak. Darcy recognized the girl from the Science Fair, the one who put a bag on her head and called it science, both baffling and impressing Tony and she. “Mount Olympus is the home of the Greek Gods.” The teen corrected in a disaffected tone. “She’s associated with Norse mythology, not Greek.”

“Yeah,” Peter added, “Miss Lewis comes from Asgard.”

The Thompson kid rolled his eyes, “Sure she does.”

“Douchebag.” Darcy muttered.

The teacher raised a brow at the boy, “You don’t believe Miss Lewis’s claims to be of Asgardian
descent?"

“I don’t believe anyone who claims to be able to see the future,” The kid stated boldly, “Nor should anyone else. She was cracked! Touched in the head. Crazy.”

“No she wasn’t.” Peter sat up straighter as he came to her defense, “Miss Lewis was—is, great. She’s awesome and powerful and kind and---”

“Blah, blah, blah.” The kid mocked, “Oh please, hid your boner Parker. How kind could she be? What with her threatening to invade the Earth if she didn’t get her way.”

“She didn’t threaten to invade the Earth.” Peter argued.

“You tell ‘em Spiderkid!” Darcy cheered. The obnoxious kid next to Peter screamed ‘little rich boy’ and him calling Peter ‘Penis Parker’ proved he was an asshole and a bully. She didn’t like him, she encouraged Peter like a devil on his shoulder, “Take his opinion and make him choke on it!”

Peter’s nostrils flared as he defended her, “She said she wouldn’t come to Earth. That was her threat. She would not come to Earth, nor would any other Asgardian.”

“Same difference.” The kid scoffed.

“Actually, no.” Peter gripped the edge of his desk, “Big difference.”

“Boys.” The teacher called sternly, redirecting the attention back to her. “This is the perfect opportunity for me to announce our next assignment.”

A collective groan echoed throughout the classroom. The teacher smiled, “I want you all to spend the next fifteen minutes working in small groups. We’ll hold our own UN debate and see if our results match the ones reflected in the real world, I’ll assign sides at random and you’ll have to defend your position. Those in favor of the abolishment of the Accords. Those who wish it to remain.”

As the teacher divided the class Darcy had a brief flashback to her own time as a student. High school was not an experience she was especially keen on revisiting, and seeing as Peter and MJ were on opposite sides than the Thompson kid, she expected there would be no squabbling until the actual debate, and even then they’d be sitting in judgment of their teacher so it was sure to remain tame. That was her cue to exit….Still, she lingered.

With a soft smile she watched as MJ lead the discussion and Peter wrote down the points the group made for the debate, offering his own two cents every now and then. Darcy put her hand on Peter’s back and watched as he shivered and turned his head around looking for the cause.

“Bye kid. Thanks for the update, and defending my honor.”

Leaving the planet and returning to her body on Asgard was as simple as blinking her eyes. To her surprise, the trans-dimensional astral journey had no ill effects on her mind or body that she could see. Unlike when she teleported, she felt fine. “How unexpected.” Darcy mumbled to herself.

The fact that she could planet hop in astral form gave her an idea. Well, two ideas.

One, conceivably she could find Thanos. And watch him. Invisible and silent she could sit in on his
plans, see where he was headed, and come home to report back. And two, she could find Thor who had been incommunicado since he left to ‘discover more about the stones’.

Staring down at her sleeping body she looked to the window and saw the early signs of dawn creeping in. To her sleeping boyfriends she made a promise, “I won’t go astral spy on Thanos without telling you guys, pinkies swear.”

She nibbled on her lower lip, “However, I might just have enough time to go find Thor before you wake up…objections?” Stephen and Tony soundlessly slept on. Darcy smiled, “Excellent. Then we’re all agreed.”

Darcy took a step back and closed her eyes. “BRB.” She muttered in goodbye.

Thinking of Thor, his voice, his face, his hair, his body, how he laughed, she filled her mind with the man she hadn’t seen in so long and yet missed so much. She felt something, and when she opened her eyes she was somewhere else.

Her head felt heavy, reaching up she found herself wearing a large golden crown adorned with wings that reminded her of Thor’s own helmet. Looking down she wore a colorful gown that was Asgardian in style and at her feet she found Thor was bound in chains awkwardly settled on the floor of cage. And even more surprisingly, he was looking right at her.

“Now I know what you’re thinking. Oh no! Thor’s in a cage. How did this happen?” Thor said not sounding at all concerned about his current predicament, “Well, sometimes you have to get captured just to get a straight answer out of somebody.”

“Thor?” Darcy said excitedly.

“It’s a long story but basically I’m a bit of a hero.” Thor continued. Darcy waved her hand in front of her brother’s face and called out his name urgently, “Thor!”

He ignored her and Darcy deflated as he prattled on, “See I spent some time on earth, fought some robots, saved the planet a couple of times. Then I went searching through the cosmos for some magic, colorful Infinity Stone things…didn’t find any. That’s when I came across a path of death and destruction which led me all the way here into this cage…where I met you.”

Darcy turned her head and found that Thor was actually speaking to a weird alien skeleton in chains.

“Oh, brother.” Darcy breathed out.

“How much longer do you think we’ll be here?” Thor asked the skeleton. Darcy glared at him answering even though he couldn’t hear her, “With your luck? Another millennia or twooo----Ah!”

The sound of metal gears turning startled her and then suddenly the bottom dropped out of the cage causing Thor to plummet until the chains cinch and abruptly halted his descent. Darcy, who was incorporeal at the moment of the floor literally being pulled out from under her, screamed. And floated in place.

Her eyes cast down to where Thor hung suspended off the ground, Darcy kicked her feet a she levitated in the air.
“How the hell do I get down?” Darcy whined. She kicked her feet with vigor and moved her arms like she was trying to swim, but nothing worked. She was tempted to try to burp her way down, like Charlie Bucket, but then she squeezed her eyes shut and blinked herself to Thor’s side.

“Oh, thank god.” She exclaimed in relief only to scream a second later, “HOLY SHIT WHAT THE FUCK IS THAT!”

Stationed in the center of a volcanic rock throne, sat the devil. Or what Darcy imagined a devil might look like if they were made out of fire and rocks. Looking around she found that she and Thor were in a hugely cavernous space. The walls, floors, and ceilings were all made of molten rock which creepily glimmered as if it had fire within.

The devil spoke in a charismatic voice, “Thor, Son of Odin.”

Thor spun comically, slowly coming to face the rocky faced devil man. “Surtur. Son of a bitch… you’re still alive! I thought my father killed you, like, half a million years ago.”

“Don’t piss off the devil Thor.” Darcy worried, “He’s the fucking devil for a reason!”

“I cannot die.” The devil informed Thor, “Not until I fulfill my destiny and lay waste to your home.”

“You know, it’s funny you should mention that because I’ve been having these terrible dreams of late.” Darcy tensed. Thor talked casually, “Asgard up in flames, falling to ruins, and you Surtur are at the center of all of them.”

Darcy turned and stared at the devil man, it was then that she realized what Thor said was right. He was the monster of destruction that she’d dreamt of. Everything clicked in place then. She remembered reading about him as well, Surtur, he was the ruler of Muspelheim. Muspelheim being one of the Nine Realms, specifically the one home to the Fire Demons and Fire Dragons, ruled by the demon Surtur. Turning her gaze back on Thor she raised her eyebrows as she realized she wasn’t the only one in the family who was dreaming the future…and wasn’t that interesting.

“Then you have seen Ragnarok, the fall of Asgard. The great prophecy---”

“Hang on.” Thor interrupted as he turned very slowly in his chains, “Hang on. I'll be back around shortly.” Darcy let out a snort. “I really feel like we were connecting there.”

“So sassy.” Darcy pat Thor on the shoulder as he rotated, causing him to shiver and cast his gaze about. “I missed you Thor.” Darcy smiled encouragingly, “You may not be able to see me, but I’m here for you big guy.”

She stared at the fire demon as Thor turned. She’d read that Surtur was defeated by Odin and was banished and his entire race to this barren world. Thus giving him motive to hate Odin, Thor, and any other Asgardian.

As Thor came to face Surtur, he addressed the devil man again in a conversational manner, “Okay, so, Ragnarok. Tell me about that. Walk me through it.”

The horned devil pontificated to his captive audience of one, “My time has come. When my crown is reunited with the Eternal Flame, I shall be restored to my full might. I will tower over the mountains and bury my sword deep in Asgard’s---”

The monster cut himself off as Thor turned slowly in his chains facing away from the ruler of Muspelheim, “Give it a second. I swear I’m not even moving, it’s just doing this on its own. I’m really sorry.”
“Liar, I saw that butt wiggle.” Darcy commented.

Once Thor was facing the demon properly, he addressed him in a matter of fact way, “Okay, let me get this straight. You’re going to put your crown into the Eternal Flame, and then you’ll suddenly grow as big as a house—”

“A mountain!” Surtur corrected.

“The Eternal Flame that Odin keeps locked away on Asgard?” Thor asked.

The demon smiled, “Odin is not on Asgard. And your absence has left the throne defenseless.”

Darcy frowned, “Spoilers.” She didn’t know how the reunion between Loki and Thor would go, but she doubted he’d be pleased by her willingness to keep his brothers secret, allowing him to rule while his father wandered the Earth.

Thor looked concerned at this news. Darcy scowled at him and batted a hand at his foot making him shiver, “Well, you big lug, if you came home! You would know these things!”

“Okay,” Thor said as he looked around unknowingly searching for her, “So where is it?” Thor set his gaze back on the demon, “This crown?”

Surtur pointed to his head, specifically the V shaped horns that above his eyes, “This is my Crown, the source of my power.”

Darcy slapped herself on the forehead, “Why would you tell him that? Don’t you know you should never monologue to the hero?”

Thor jibed, “Oh, that’s a crown? I thought it was a big eyebrow.”

“It’s a crown.” Surtur asserted.

Casting her gaze down to her bound brother, she chided, “I expect you have a plan to break out, grab the crown and save the day?”

“Anyway,” Thor said, “It sounds like all I have to do to stop Ragnarok is rip that thing off your head.”

Surtur stood up and approached Thor dragging his sword. Darcy took a few tiny steps backward as the imposing figure dwarfed them. She remarked to her brother as she stared in awe at the demon, “Dude. Somehow, I don’t think derailing the super old prophesy of Asgards destruction will be that easy.”

“But Ragnarok has already begun. You cannot stop it. I am Asgard’s doom, and so are you. All will suffer, all will burn.” The demon pointed his sword right at her. Darcy’s eyes widened in fear. “Not even your little ghost can help you.”

“AH!” Darcy screamed as the demon moved to cleave her in two with his sword. She fell back and out of the way but quickly got to her feet. She scuttled back and moved behind Thor’s body. Surtur let her hide as Thor craned his neck in an attempt to see where she had been standing. Quietly she heard him whisper, “Loki?”

“What are you talking about?” Thor asked. Darcy cowered and hated herself for it as Surtur stepped forward and grabbed the chain above Thor’s feet, holding it so he and Thor were face to face and effectively stealing her hiding place from her. Darcy backed up slowly putting as much distance
between the demon and her as she dared.

Thor was very blasé when he retorted, “That’s intense. To be honest, seeing you grow really big and set fire to a planet would be quite the spectacle. But it looks like I’m going to have to go with option B where I bust out of these chains, knock that tiara off your head, and stash it away in Asgard’s vault.”

Surtur cast a glance her way and Darcy shrank in on herself but remained standing, “You called it little ghost.”

Darcy shrugged answering with a trembling smile, “Well, he’s not very imaginative.”

Surtur let out dark laugh and Darcy straightened up. Silently she commended herself on making the scariest and evil looking dude chuckle. Likability, it really was her super secret super power. “Run little ghost. Be gone from this place and you shall meet your end with the rest of the Asgardians.”

Darcy shook her head no as Thor questioned the monster, “Who are you talking to?” Surtur ignored Thor’s question as he stared her down. The demon dismissed her with a shrug, “Suit yourself ghost girl.”

“Girl?” Thor gasped, “Mother?” Thor had so many dead people in his life, she imagined why he thought her Loki or Frigga. Darcy felt like shit.

Surtur focused back on Thor. “You cannot stop Ragnarok. Why fight it?”

“Because that’s what heroes do.” Thor said cockily, behind his back opened his hand and with a small gasp she realized what he was doing. She cast her eyes around looking for Thor’s faithful hammer.

When nothing happened Thor appeared annoyed with himself, “Wait, sorry. I didn’t time that right.” After a pause he cried, “And, now!”

With a boom Thor’s hammer crashed through the wall. Thor broke free from his chains, grabbed Mjolnir, spun and flew away a bit. He then flung Mjolnir back at Surtur, smashing the giant in the face. Holding his hand out, the hammer magically returned to Thor.

“You have made a grave mistake, Odinson.” Surtur warned.

“Oh crap.” Darcy sighed as the walls came alive. A seemingly infinite swarm of fire demons rallied to Surtur’s aid.

Cavalierly Thor declared, “I make grave mistakes all the time. Everything seems to work out.”

“Fucking Christ, Thor. Do you have piss right in face of fate?!” Darcy exclaimed as she started running away as the fire demons surged forward.

In theory she was intangible in her astral form, but in theory she was invisible too. Surtur and her interacting blew that theory to hell, she didn’t want to tempt fate and test her intangibility with an oncoming hoard of fire demons. So she ran.

Thor backed up hammering away, and then he leapt back spring boarding off the wall only to land hard slamming Mjolnir down on the ground creating a shockwave knocking back the legion of fire demons. Darcy kept running in the direction of...away.

Glancing behind her she saw a fire dragon straining against its chain leash. And Thor facing off with
Surtur. Darcy reached a giant fiery boulder and hid behind it feeling ridiculous considering her claims to be a hero and self rescuing Princess….but demons ya know?

She watched with her heart in her throat as Surtur created a humongous projectile wall of fire and Thor spun Mjolnir so fast that he created a shield of sorts. Then the two idiots started beating each other up. Each landed shots on the other; sparks of fire and electricity were shooting off into the air during their brawl.

When Thor slipped behind Surtur to take out his knees it gave Thor the opening to launch himself high into the air and summon a huge ass lightning bolt. As he descended down Thor lopped Surtur’s head off. The demon’s body, headless, deflated collapsing into a heap of charred bones.

“Wahoo! Go THOR!” Darcy cheered and jumped. Coming from out behind the boulder she whistled and clapped, proud of her brother but all at once she realized the danger had not passed and the fight was not yet over.

Thor was so busy strapping the crowned skull to his back that he didn’t see the army of fire demons regrouping as reinforcements flooded into the area, filling the space to capacity.

“TURN AROUND! THOR, LOOK UP!” Darcy screamed.

Thor finally looked up and saw the army that faced him. He thrust Mjolnir above his head and called out, “Heimdall. I know it’s been a while, but I could use a fast exit!”

Darcy’s eyes widened as she realized Thor had no exit strategy.

“YOU IDIOT!” She shouted as she ran towards him berating him all the while, “Why not call ahead and give a heads up that you might need to be picked up in ADVANCE!”

He didn’t move. He just stood there like a bump on a log as the fire demons advanced at him.

“…Heimdall?” Thor called out pathetically.

Having expected to have been Bifrost out of the lair Thor was overrun by the giant wave of fire demons. And then it was an all out clash of the titan’s level battle. Darcy despite her earlier hesitation, seeing Thor so overrun, attempted to help. And yet, she could do nothing. When she tried touching one of the fire demons her hand passed through them as they did all other organic beings.

She was useless in this form.

When the fire dragon finally broke free of its chain, just as she reached his side Thor took off rocketing up to the ceiling,. Darcy unnecessarily covered her head as bits of debris fell down as Thor crashed out of ground and landed on the surface. In a blink, she was by his side.

“Your cape!” Darcy exclaimed. It was on fire. Thor frantically pat out the flames, Darcy glared, “This was a shitty plan man!”


Darcy gulped as the ground began to shake. Thor and she backed up as the ground gave way all around them and then—

“IT’S A DRAGON!” Darcy screeched half terrified half kind of excited.

The fire dragon burst out of the ground and paused to let out an ear-splitting roar. Darcy covered her
ears but let out a laugh as Thor stuffed Mjolnir into its mouth, letting the hammer go. The dragon, being unworthy, hit the ground with a thud.

“Stay.” Thor ordered. Pinned down by its bottom jaw the beast thrashed and growled trying to break free.

“I’m running short on--” As Thor yelled at the sky the ground started crumbling around them like a field of sinkholes, giving rise to more fire demons. Darcy found herself torn by two options. To stay or to go.

To stay with Thor in her astral form was unhelpful and stupid. But to leave him and wake up and go for help, felt like abandoning him. “--Options.” Thor concluded sounding tired. She made her choice.

“I’ll be back.” Darcy promised as Thor called Mjolnir and took off flying, the giant dragon screeching behind him.

Darcy closed her eyes and willed herself home.

She woke up with a gasp and jerked upright.

“What?” Tony started. Darcy ignored him as she grabbed Stephen’s hand, waking him, as she stole his sling ring. Hers was… she didn’t have time to think. She stole Stephen’s ring and jumped up on the bed.

“What the hell is going on!” Tony called out.

“Darcy?!” Stephen yelled sleepily.

She ignored them both as she created a portal to the Observatory and jumped through.

Darcy could hear Thor calling out faintly, “Heimdall?”

“SKURGE!” Darcy screamed as she saw that the man was showing off to a couple of ladies. “OPEN THE BIFROST YOU FUC--” Darcy cut herself off before she started cursing the man out in earnest. “Open it.” She growled.

The man in question ran to do her bidding. Darcy watched tensely as Skurge grabbed up Heimdall’s sword and plunged it into the Bifrost opening the portal. Darcy shielded her face with her arm as Thor exploded out of the portal… along with the severed head of the dragon.

Blood and guts rained down on her, Skurge, and the two women. Drenching all of them with purple gore.

“So gross.” Darcy complained as she wiped the muck off of her eyes and mouth.

The dragon head slid across the floor coming to stop right in front of the women who were frozen in shock. Darcy called out breaking the silence, “Thor?”

The two women screamed and rushed out of the room. A second later, Thor staggered to his feet. He
was clean as a whistle and that was so not fair. Thor looked first at Skurge in confusion as the man wiped dragon guts off himself.

“Girls!” Skurge sighed, turning on Thor, “Well, look who decided to pop in. Thanks for scaring away my company and drenching my workplace in brains.”

“Who are you?” Thor questioned.

“Don’t you remember? I’m Skurge.” Skurge turned to her with a disappointed pout, “Princess, we fought together on Vanaheim, but he doesn’t remember me. Do I not make an impression?”

“Don’t despair Skurge, I find you very memorable.” Darcy said consolingly. Skurge perked up at that but then Thor was rushing to her crying out, “DARCY!”

Thor looked like he was about to pick her up and spin her around when he stopped himself short. Staring at all the blood and goo that she was covered in ponderingly he grimaced.

“Oh no big brother.” Darcy chided as she threw herself into Thor’s arms. Thor reluctantly caught her, but Darcy went a step further and rubbed her face on his chest. At the same time she effectively humped his whole body with hers, transferring as much icky goo from her person to his as she could. “If I get slimed, you get slimed.”

Resigned to being dirty, Thor let out a laugh and wrapped his arms around her, hugging her to him tightly.

“Sister.” Thor breathed, “It is a relief to see you again.”

“You have no idea big guy, no idea.” Darcy sighed, “Welcome home.”

Tony’s dream Flashback outfits
Astral Look When With Stephen and Tony
Astral Look When With Loki
Astral Look When With Bucky
Astral Look When With Steve
Steve’s Sketch (Found this on Pintrest did not make it credit to artist)
Astral Look When With Wanda
Astral Look When with Peter Parker
Sleep look when Darcy gets covered in goo and hugs Thor
Please leave a comment if you're excited about Ragnarok. Also, this might be the last chapter for the next two weeks, or maybe not. IDK. Next weekend I'm seeing End Game and I don't think I'll be writing then, so we'll see what happens.
Let me know your thoughts!
Chapter 47 – Darcy Lewis

Thor and Darcy left Skurge to clean up the brains and goo. Thor offered to fly them back to the palace via Mjolnir, but Darcy opened a portal instead citing, “I got this.”

Peering into the portal to her bed chambers she saw Loki conversing agitatedly with Tony and Stephen. It was her intention to intercede between the brothers before any strife could form. But his appearance made that tricky.

“Uh oh.” Darcy muttered under her breath. She kept her eyes glued to Thor as they stepped through the portal. Her eldest brother’s face revealed that he found nothing amiss with Loki’s attendance thus allowing her to sigh in relief.

“Darcy!” Stephen cried when he spied her entrance, Tony and Loki’s head whipped around and their eyes widened. Tony looked joyful but Loki appeared horrified. Both men turned to watch as the portal closed behind her and Thor.

“Darcy! Thor!” Tony cried out happily. Subtly Loki stepped back a few paces positioning himself slightly behind Stephen who remained where he was with an amused smile affixed to his face.

Darcy plastered a grin on her face and gestured to Thor theatrically, “Lookie who I found hanging out with the devil.”

Thor gave her a confused look as Tony smacked Loki lightly in the stomach muttering, “See, I told you she didn’t go off world again.”

Tony strode forward and put a hand on her clean-ish shoulder giving her a squeeze before shaking Thor’s hand heartily. Thor greeted him happily. “Man of Iron. It is good to see you.”

Tony’s face screwed up in disgust as he took in the sight of them, “What are you covered in? Is this alien ectoplasm?”
“Dragon guts.” Darcy explained succinctly. She opened her arms invitingly, “Anybody want a hug?”

Thor, Stephen and Tony chuckled. Thor extended his arm in front of her, “Do not fall for her tricks my friends, I could not resist embracing her once more and this be foulment of my person is the result.” Thor gestured down to his own goo covered body.

“You killed a dragon?” Tony asked her looking impressed.

Darcy pouted, “Thor killed the dragon, I just got covered in the aftermath.”

Thor chuckled, “The beast put up a worthy fight.”

“Well,” Stephen clapped his hands lightly, “Perhaps we should all return to our respective rooms so we can clean ourselves up? We can reconvene in the dining hall with the others,” Stephen eyed her suspiciously, “I suspect we have much to discuss.”

“Others?” Thor asked his own eyes trained on Loki’s shrinking form, “Do you speak of the Warriors Three?”


“Sabrina?” Thor looked to her with a questioning gaze.

“Lots happened while you were out being an uncommunicative hero type.” Darcy said. Thor frowned. She elaborated, “I got new powers. New visions of doom headed our way. It a whole thing.”

“One we can discuss when the two of you no longer smell of a dead horse covered in dung.”

Stephen said pointedly.

“Agreed.” Darcy said with a nod.

Loki disappeared and Thor left for his own chambers. As soon as they were alone Stephen and Tony turned on her with twin expressions of concern.

“You’re okay right Darcy?”
“What should we do about Loki?”

Stephen and Tony turned to look at each other, it was comical how in sync they were. Tony scowled incredulously, “Who gives a shit about Loki.”

Stephen rolled his eyes, “She is obviously fine.”

“Obviously,” Darcy agreed breezily as she moved past them and to the bathroom.

“She fought a dragon!” Tony insisted, following her into the bathroom with Stephen not far behind.

“I watched Thor fight a dragon.” Darcy corrected, “I was in my astral form. I was never in danger.”

She wasn’t going to mention how the demon Surtur was able to see her in her astral, not until later. Darcy bit her lip as she turned the water on as hot as she could stand. She took off the sling ring and
gave it to Stephen without a word then she slipped out of her silky sleep jumper and stepped under the warm spray of water. Stephen and Tony continued to converse as they lurked outside the shower leaning against the counter watching as she rid herself of the grim and goo that clung to her skin.

“Do you need any help?” Tony offered with a lecherous grin.

“No.” Darcy said not unkindly, “You guys shouldn’t wait for me. You should go get dressed.”

“Where did you go?” Stephen asked, not so subtly ignoring her directions.

“Muspelheim.” Darcy answered as she tilted her head back and let the water cover her head and hair.

“Gesundheit.” Tony quipped.

“Was that Surtur’s crown that Thor had strapped to his back?” Stephen questioned.

“Mmmhmm.” Darcy answered wordlessly.

“…Do you think he’s foolish enough to go and store that thing in Odin’s vault? Where the Eternal Flame is kept?” Stephen said in a flat tone indicating he very much thought that was exactly what Thor was going to do.

“Probably.” Darcy said with a shrug. She grabbed a bottle and squeezed out the liquid into her hand, rubbing it into her hair she lathered herself up until her hair was white and sudsy.

“No time for sexy times. We’ve got to get dressed and be ready quick as we can. If we let Thor and Loki alone for too long, Thor will figure out who Loki is. And if we don’t prep him properly Thor will overreact and it’ll probably get ugly.” Darcy sent Tony a playfully stern look as she washed the shampoo from her hair, “Now stop staring there ogling and go get dressed!”

Tony let his eyes wander over her naked form for a minute longer before he pushed off from the counter. He pointed at her and in a dark tone promised, “Later.”

Darcy grinned back at him.

Tony pushed Stephen and ushered him out saying, “C’mon, c’mon.”

Stephen frowned but allowed Tony to bully him out of the room. Darcy called out to them once they were gone, “Wear something nice! We might have to defend Loki to the people if Thor calls him out in public!”

“Yes, dear!” Tony replied comically.

Once clean of the dragon guts and wrapped in a soft towel, Darcy sat atop the closed toilet and thought. Getting to just be herself and be with Stephen and Tony without fear or judgment had been a dream come true. However, she had a feeling that her vacation on Asgard was over and they were about to get thrust into yet another life threatening adventure. She wasn’t scared just a little disappointed. She wished all this could have lasted longer. It had been nice to be the ‘Princess’ to have people come to her for advice or with questions on what to do. She had felt like a real leader the
past couple of weeks.

With Thor’s return she imagined the woman who she had a vision of killing the Warriors Three would soon be arriving. Or maybe that happened after Ragnarok, but she suspected not as the site of Volstagg and Fandral’s murder was familiar to her. She saw that they would be killed in Heimdall’s observatory. She and Thor had seen Asgard’s fiery destruction. She only hoped that Thanos would not show up while they were dealing with the apocalyptic threat to Asgard.

Plans raced through her mind. What to do with Wanda, Steve, and Bucky were at the forefront of her thoughts. She assumed Stephen and Tony would want to remain by her side during the whole ordeal but she had hope that she could convince them all to return to Earth. Where they would be safe.

Getting up she rummaged around the counter drawers. She brushed her teeth and applied some lotion to her still damp skin. She knew Tony would flat out refuse to leave her, but the thought of his mortality—reminded her of her apple plan. That thought brought about her concerns for Loki and his fate now that Thor had returned. She worried her lower lip as she found a hair brush and combed out her hair.

She had the beginnings of a plan concerning all who chose to remain on Asgard, she had several ideas on where to position her people best to defend Asgard and those who inhabited it, but in her heart she knew all of her plans and ideas may be for nothing. There were no guarantees when one was facing down the end of the world. However a clever man once told her, the best way to predict the future was to make it. And that’s what she fully intended to do.

She was not fate’s bitch. And she never would be.

When her hair was all brushed out, she pulled it back using her hands rather than magic. She parted her hair down the middle and created a simple low ponytail. She had a feeling that this would be her last moment of calm and quiet for a while so she savored the experience.

Conjuring her infinity bag from the table in the other room, into her hands, she transformed the bag into a constellation covered clutch. She then summoning a beautiful gown that reminded her of the celestial sky, she held it just looking at it for a few seconds, admiring the garment’s intricate beauty. She put the dress on with a wave of her hand.

She conjured accessories, shoes, and make up that was dark in color to match the gravity of the situation and her dress. She donned a ring made of healing crystal Loki had gifted to her the other day. A necklace that had specially made for her by one of her Asgardian citizens and given to her in tribute. She put pins in her hair, a cape on her shoulders, and a delicate crown of slim silver stars on her head.

And finally, just to give the look more drama, an eye mask of lace. She looked regal and strong and feminine.

“Let’s do this.” Darcy said quietly to her reflection.

She emerged from the bathroom as quietly as she could, but both men snapped their heads in her direction upon entering.

When she saw what Tony had put on she smiled brightly. He wore Asgardian attire in dark blue velvet, with a cape trimmed in gold just like hers, only it clasped over his one shoulder uniquely. The
fabric on his tunic was dotted with stars reminding her of the night sky. They matched.

Stephen wore his usual attire only instead of his blue robes he wore black ones. The effect made the red cloak of levitation stand out even more so. The grey in his hair too. He looked dark and mysterious and so very handsome.

Both men looked striking in their foreign attire and Darcy was half tempted to reconsider her delay on the sexy times, especially when they stared at her with twin looks of awe and devotion.

“Jezz—us.” Tony drew the word out as his eyes flickered up and down her figure.

“You look beautiful.” Stephen said simply.

Playfully Darcy did a little curtsy, greeting them demurely, “Good sirs.”

Tony let out a snort, “I thought you ruled out bowing and curtsies.”

“Way to ruin the moment.” Darcy glared at him without heat in her eyes, “Shall we go?”

Stephen offered her his arm and she accepted it with a smile. Tony ran to her other side and offered his arm as well. She brushed him off by walking forward, tugging Stephen along with her, “Nope. One escort is quite enough.”

“What?!” Tony squawked as followed closely behind. “That’s not fair.”

“Well, I’m not skipping down the halls arm in arm with both of you.” Darcy said trying to keep the humor out of her voice, “This isn’t the Wizard of Oz.”

“But he’s a wizard!” Tony complained, “And we’re off to--”

“Let it go Tony.” Darcy bantered.

“You are cruel and callous monarch, you know that?” Tony groused as he stomped alongside them grumpily. Darcy laughed at his reaction. Tony sent her a sideways smile and together they headed to the dining hall.

When they arrived they found the room in chaos.

Thor was being choked out by Bucky with his metal arm as the former assassin clung to the God of Thunder’s back. Thor was trying to shake Bucky loose but at the same time, get past Steve, who like a linebacker had his shoulder down and on Thor’s stomach. Steve looked like he was trying to push the God backwards, but he wasn’t strong enough to do more than stop him from moving forward.

Thor was trying to reach Loki, who was fighting off Volstagg and Fandral simultaneously, using magic and illusion copies of himself to confuse the men who stood back to back against him.

Wanda was off to the side pinned to the ground by Mjolnir which sat atop her stomach; however she was no passive observer. She had her arms wound tightly around Hogun’s leg, keeping him trapped with her. The warrior looked to be trying to pry the witch’s hands off his person without hurting her, only Wanda was stubborn and unwilling to budge.

“What the actual fuck.” Darcy quietly cursed.
“This is hilarious.” Tony commented gleefully as his eyes took in the frenzied scene. Darcy turned to Stephen with a pleading look. She didn’t feel like yelling or physically breaking everyone apart. He seemed to know what she wanted when he put his fingers in his mouth and let out a shrill piercing whistle. Everyone froze.

Darcy raised a judgmental eyebrow at the group asking, “And just what. The fuck. Do you think, you idiots are doing?”

Fandral turned to face her as the illusion of Loki he had been trying to catch disappeared, “It’s Loki Princess! He’s been deceiving us!”

Volstagg backed up his friend as he lowered his sword, “Tis true my lady. He’s been masquerading as the King and your loyal guard, Axel. It is treachery most foul!”

Loki suddenly appeared next to her, Tony, and Stephen. She tried not to smile at the sheepish expression he gave her as he not too subtly repositioned himself behind the three of them.

“Cats out of the bag, eh, tall, dark, and horny?” Tony taunted. Loki rolled his eyes but remained behind their human blockade.

Darcy turned her gaze on the others taking them all in. Steve now stood erect; his hands on Thor’s chest, no longer pushing but ready to resume doing so at the first sign of trouble. Bucky wasn’t looking at her at all, so intent on his opponent. However, Thor wasn’t slapping at the arm around his throat so she imagined Bucky was no longer choking him, merely waiting for whatever came next.

As her eyes shifted over to Wanda, the girl let go of Hogun’s leg. They locked eyes for a moment before Wanda lay back with a relieved expression on her face. She let her arms flop down at her sides but kept her head tilted in Darcy’s direction.

“Bucky. Get off of Thor.” Darcy ordered. Bucky let himself fall to the ground and Steve stepped away from the angry god. Bucky remained close to Thor’s side, his eyes trained on the tall blonde.

Thor turned and made to walk to her but she called out authoritatively, “Stop!”

“He’s killed my father. OUR FATHER!” Thor thundered. He stepped forward and Bucky shadowed him.

“He hasn’t.” Darcy revealed. She and Thor made eye contact and she tried to convey Loki’s innocence, as she assured him, “Odin’s fine.”

Thor halted. “How do you know?”

Ignoring his question Darcy gestured to Wanda with her chin, “Free Wanda and we can all sit down and talk.”

Thor looked over at Wanda but made no move to go towards her. “She tried to protect my brother.”

Thor turned to her and Darcy gulped when she saw the confusion and fury in Thor’s eyes. He marched forward; he was not in the right mind to listen to reason.

“Thor.” Darcy warned. Behind Thor Bucky once again jumped on the man’s back, his metal arm wrapping around the god’s throat. Fandral and Volstagg tried to rush to Thor’s aid, but Steve held them back. Wanda tried to grab Hogun’s leg again but the man was too quick and clever to get caught in the same trap twice. Stephen left her side to intercede upon Bucky’s behalf; he erected a mini shield and faced off with Hogun.
Wanda turned her attention to Volstagg who had just belly bumped the wrestling Fandral and Steve to the floor. Her scarlet magic surrounded the most voluminous man and he rose slowly in the air. She levitated him off the ground about five inches, effectively taking the man out of the battle. Without the ability to move forward Volstagg kicked his legs futilely crying out, “Witchery! How I hate this womanly art of combat!”

Had he not vocalized his displeasure with mild sexism Darcy would have had sympathy for her large friend, as she had recently been subjected to a similar experience in her astral form.

“This is the best team meeting ever.” Tony commented cheerfully. Darcy glowered at him. Tony looked pleased as a pig in shit and undeterred by her displeasure.

“Stop it!” Darcy yelled. “Stop! This is ridiculous!”

No one was listening.

Morosely Loki whispered in her ear, “I will not allow myself to be imprisoned again. But I could leave.”

“No.” Darcy said sternly. She reached behind her and pulled Loki forward so he was at her side in between her and Tony. She wrapped her arm in his, the same way she had with Stephen when they were walking down the hallway. Linking herself physically with her brother she sent a silent signal to the others as to whose side she was on. She promised him, “If you go. I go.”

Loki looked at her with shock but she was already focusing back on Thor, who’s wobbly knees indicated they were about to buckle, the lack of oxygen finally getting to him. Bucky withstood the god’s slaps and attempts to dislodge him with a determined expression. And while Darcy admired Bucky’s pluck, she didn’t want this. She didn’t want her friends and family fighting each other.

“We don’t have time for this shit.” She grumbled.

Thor reached out towards her and Loki, his face red and his eyes bulging as he gasped, “I will not be lied to…any.. longer!” With a loud war cry Thor pitched himself forward with enough momentum that Bucky was caught by surprise. He was slammed into the ground and laid out flat on his back with a stunned expression. Thor panted and caught his breath for a few seconds before lifting his eyes up to her and Loki and Tony.

Loki jerked away from her slightly, but she kept tight hold of his arm and forced him to remain at her side.

“You knew.” Thor alleged his eyes flashing in anger, “You knew all this time that my brother lived. How could you not tell me? You knew I grieved for him. That my heart was heavy with despair and guilt. You knew when you returned back to Earth after your first visit with the Guardians! You knew and you LIED TO ME!”

“I told you he might be alive.” Darcy reminded him, “I warned you.”

As Thor stepped forward, Bucky sprang back into action. Sitting up swiftly Bucky grabbed the god’s legs, much the same as Wanda had done to Hogun earlier. Thor didn’t even look down as he punched Bucky in the face, knocking the man out.

Darcy winced, “Did you have to hit him so hard?”

“Yeah big guy,” Tony added, “Barnes already has brain damage. You can’t go--”
“SILENCE!” Thor bellowed interrupting Tony’s quip. Thor stalked towards them unimpeded, “How could you? I claimed you as sister! My mother called you daughter! I TRUSTED YOU!”

When Thor was within arm’s reach of them, Darcy held out her hand and called silently to Mjolnir. The hammer flew across the room and into her hand.

Thor stopped dead in his tracts, blinking.

“Princess.” Fandral gasped in awe as his sword and Volstagg clattered to the floor at the same time.

Darcy held the hammer out in front of her threateningly but with a nervous expression. She had a feeling that if Thor called to Mjolnir the hammer would chose to return to its male master, but that didn’t matter really. She didn’t intend to wield Mjolnir, she just wanted to shock some sense back into Thor and claim some personal space.

“Thor.” Darcy said softly, “Let us sit down and talk. And everything will be explained.”

Thor’s eyes were wide as he stared at her. He nodded his consent with a dazed sounding, “Alright.”

There was a beat of silence as everyone stood around awkwardly, unwilling to be the first to move.

Tony exploded with noise exclaiming, “COULD SHE BE MORE AMAZING?!"

Stephen chuckled and lowered his hands, his shield dissolving. Wanda sat up and stared at her with a hint of fear. Darcy unlinked her arm from Loki’s and moved forward, offering Thor Mjolnir’s hilt. Thor took it from her with a hurt expression, “How long have you known you were worthy?”

“Since just now.” Darcy answered honestly, truly calling the hammer to her had been a gambit one she was pleased had paid off. She gestured to the table and overturned chairs; timidly she inched closer to Thor and put her hand on his lower back, her other hand on his bicep. When he allowed the contact Darcy exhaled loudly in relief.

“Let’s sit.” Darcy entreated. Gently she guided him to the table; she sat him at the head of the table and she sat to his right. Turning she invited everyone else, “Come.”

The Warriors Three and Steve fixed the chairs as Stephen went over to Bucky and produced a vial from his belt. He put it under Bucky’s nose and the man jerked awake, in a flash he held a blade to Stephen’s throat. Stephen remained unmoving and docile as Bucky’s eyes darted around the room.

Darcy waved at Bucky from where she sat and Bucky’s shoulders sagged. He re-sheathed his blade and allowed Stephen to help him to his feet. Tony followed the pair to the table and found a chair opposite her. Stephen sat closest to Thor, then Bucky, then Tony. Darcy looked to the chair next to her and found Loki. She blinked at him, she hadn’t even notice him sit down.

“Well,” Darcy said as the others took their seats, “Now at least everyone’s on the same page.”

Loki nodded his tone low and his voice a drawl that belied the tension she saw lined in his face, “It was becoming tiresome only having my true self acknowledged by your merry band of mortals.” He nodded to Steve who had an annoyed look on his face as he sat heavily in the chair next to Tony, “And even then some were more in the dark than others.”

Darcy made a noise of agreement. Fandral chose to sit opposite her next to Steve, while the other Warriors Three sat next to Loki and Wanda. Hogun positioned in between the two dangerous magic users, Volstagg on the end, furthest away from her. Everyone was looking at her expectantly and Darcy steeled herself, refusing to blush or wilt under such intense scrutiny. She was the Princess, she
had a hand in deceiving most of the people in the room, and therefore it was her responsibly to deal with the fallout.

“Darcy.” Thor said her name as he laid Mjolnir on the table before him. “You said you could explain. So, explain.”

There was a challenging tone in his voice and a cold expression on his face. There was no warmth in his voice when he said her name nor softness in his eyes when he looked at her. Darcy stared back resolved not to downplay her allegiance to Loki just because Thor seemed mad at her.

Darcy began from when she first met Loki and did not realize it was him, “After the Aether—after I teleported to Asgard with Bruce...I woke up and Asgard was in mourning. The Queen was dead. You were gone. Hogun was off world and Sif and the Warriors Two were on their super secret mission.”

“What mission?” Stephen asked as he leant forward.

“You don’t need to know.” Loki said neutrally.

“How do we know we don’t need to know if you don’t tell us what it is that we don’t know?” Tony prompted with a mischievous glint in his eye.

“Tony.” Steve said warningly, “This isn’t the time for jokes. This is serious. Loki invaded Earth and now we find out he’s been here acting as king all along? And Darcy knew about it.” Steve stared at her accusingly.

Tony shrugged nonchalantly, “I knew. Strange and your BFF did too.” Tony gestured to the three of them, “We’re inner circle, and you’re the one who we didn’t tell because he couldn’t be trusted.”

Steve sent her a wounded look and Darcy turned away because it was the truth, it didn’t matter that things had gotten better between them, there was still something fundamentally broken between her and Steve. It was mending now, but it was still a work in progress. And she wouldn’t apologize keeping him out of the loop.

Tony turned to Steve with wry grin, “And I seriously want to know what we don’t know.”

“QUIET!” Thor yelled. He turned to her and spoke in a normal tone of voice, “I am aware of what secret mission my valiant friends undertook, however, I was under the impression it was my father who sent them on their errand.” Thor glared at Loki, “But it was you. Wasn’t it?”

“Yes.” Loki admitted, “I sent them off to do as I bid. Were you in charge would you not have agreed with my decision?”

“I might have, but again, seeing as how I thought you were my father at the time you told me of the mission planned I accepted that decision at face value, would I have known it was you, I might have contested--”

Darcy rolled her eyes interrupted Thor, “Sending Sif and the others to take the Aether to the other side of the galaxy was a smart move, if you hadn’t Asgard would be in possession of two Infinity stones instead of one.” Darcy shrugged, “Don’t get snippy with Loki for making a decision you supported and let’s just drop the super secret bullshit. This is a discussion about people coming clean, yeah?”

Volstagg gasped dramatically hissing at Fandral, “How could you break the sacred covenant of our mission?”
Fandral defended himself with his hands raised, “I didn’t! I didn’t tell her a thing I swear!”

“I figured out.” Darcy announced stalling any further squabbling, “With what was said to my face about the mission, where we went, and my visions, I put the pieces together and figured it out on my own.”

There was a beat before Tony raised his hand, “Infinity stones?”

“The Tesseract.” Darcy said as she held up her hand and counted them all off, “The Aether. The Orb that Guardians gave to the Nova Core. The stone from Loki’s scepter which is now embedded in Vision’s head.” She nodded to Stephen. “The Eye of Agamotto. And…”

“And the soul stone.” Loki supplied, “No one knows where it resides or what it does. Thank the Gods.”

“You knew of the Infinity Stones all this time?” Thor asked with a confused expression.

Darcy shook her head, “I’ve been reading. Learning about them bit by bit, slowly over time a picture has formed about their existence. Through visions, texts at Karma-Taj and here, I’ve learned enough to know that by themselves the infinity stones are powerful weapons. But together…We’ve—I’ve discovered that a man named Thanos seeks to gather all the stones and wield them through a gauntlet made of gold, his goal is death and he means to bring it to the entire galaxy. And in my visions I’ve seen him succeed.”

Steve made a noise and she looked in his direction expectantly, “What?”

Steve shrugged, “It’s just that when you made your announcement to the people of Asgard, you didn’t make it sound so bleak.”

Darcy smoothed a hand over her slicked back hair grumbling, “Yeah well, I didn’t want to cause a panic.”

“Speaking of…” She looked around at her assembled allies. “I want to ask, before we face Ragnarok and possibly Thanos right after that, does anyone want to opt out?”

“What?” Fandral asked with his face scrunched, “What do you mean?”

Darcy took a deep breath before explaining, “Does anybody want to leave. Go home to Earth? Go to another planet maybe?” She locked eyes with Fandral, “I told you, I had a vision of your death.” Her eyes sought out Hogun and Volstagg, “All three of you.”

She swallowed thickly, “If you wanted to leave—retreat really, until the threat has passed, I wouldn’t think any less of you.”

Volstagg thumped his fist on the table loudly barking, “Preposterous! Princess, I’ve told you before and I’ll tell you again, I will not meet my end as you foresew. I will not be cut down before I even draw my weapon by a single woman!”

“What about your family.” Darcy said, knowing she was going below the belt, “What about your wife? And children? What if I’m right and this is the moment that could have saved you and--”

“No.” Volstagg interrupted, “I will not hide from a fight.”

“Volstagg---”
“Princess.” Volstagg held up his hand halting her words his voice low and serious and so unlike him, “I will take your vision as truth, only so far as to avoid where you said my death was to occur.”

Volstagg stared at her with a steely resolve, “If I am fated to meet my end, death will find me wherever I may be. But, I will not run and abandon my home on the cusp of battle. I will fight for my family, my wife, my children and my people.”

Darcy nodded solemnly. Her eyes slid to Hogun who grunted, “I will stay.”

She looked to Fandral, knowing what he was about to say even before he said it.

“I am a warrior of Asgard. And I will defend it with my dying breath if need be.” They were the same words he told her the last time she asked him to stay away from Asgard to avoid his destined death.

“Fandral.” She said his name with a longing quality, but she knew she would not convince him otherwise.

“I am confused.” Thor admitted, “You’ve seen the Warriors Three’s deaths at the hand of this Thanos? Is Thanos a man or a woman? Is he to attack Asgard in search of the Tesseract?”

Darcy shook her head, “Before Thanos, we face Ragnarok. And a woman, I don’t know how she ties into everything but she comes through the Bifrost and I saw her kill Volstagg and Fandral before they could even draw their swords. Later I saw her in a courtyard, surrounded by dead guards. Hogun alone survived the massacre, only to die by her hands as well.”

“In your absence we’ve been preparing for Asgard’s destruction.” Loki informed his brother, “We’ve transferred much of our sacred artifacts and texts into mobile pocket universes, I’ve created copies of what I could and given them to designated citizens whom will have priority should we have need to evacuate.”

Thor’s brow crinkled, “Evacuate? Asgardians are not cowards. We would not run from our home, from a fight!”

Thor’s attitude was what had been giving Darcy so many headaches in the last few weeks, as many of the citizen’s shared his feelings. The people of Asgard were resistant to preparing to flee, they wished to prepare for war instead, but she convinced them it was all for the best. Person by person, group by group, Darcy persuaded and argued and debated until the citizen’s finally relented and started to actively contribute to the preparations to preserve Asgardian society, should the truly be on the eve of its destruction.

“You misunderstand.” Darcy said quietly, she moved her hand and placed it on top of Thor’s, “All we have done has been in preparation of the worst possible scenario. If, Asgard burns. If, Asgard falls. If, and only if. I remain optimistic that my visions are not fixed points in time; I believe we can change things. I just don’t know how. So, we’ve prepared just in case.”

“Asgard will not fall and even if you were truly worried about such a fate, why would you allow my trickster brother to remain in power? After what he has done? Why not return Odin to his rightful place so he might defend us as he has done so many times before?!” Darcy shrank in her seat and retracted her hand from Thor’s.

The look on Thor’s face was one that she had not seen before. It made her feel small and silly and stupid. His eyes reflected nothing but disappointment.

Loki grabbed her hand and laced their fingers together under the table in solidarity. She looked at
him and found strength in the confidence of his glare.

Loki began to rant, “The evacuation plans, the warning of our subjects, all the preparations have been created because there were none in place. Arrogance was to be Asgard’s undoing, can’t you see that? Because of Darcy, we were given a chance, a real chance to defy fate, cheat destiny, and live. …Darcy told us what is coming, I listened. That is all.” Loki shook his head, “We have done nothing wrong.”

“Nothing wrong? Is he serious?” Tony muttered quietly to Stephen who motioned for him to be quiet.

“You coward.” Thor spat out at his brother, “You’ve done nothing wrong except forfeit a battle you’ve yet to fight!”

Thor’s arms bulged as he crossed them in front of his chest, “And one that shall not come to pass, thanks to me! I went to Muspelheim and killed Surtur, and stole his magic crown.” Thor glared at her and Loki, his voice pretentious as he ordered, “Ragnarok is averted, rejoice my siblings. You’re preparations are for naught. Asgard will not succumb to destruction. We will endure as we have for eons.”

Loki let her hand go before moving his chair back, it scraped nosily on the floor as he turned to face Thor more fully, “To not consider the possibility of your failure, is folly brother and we have corrected that. Darcy can see the future, you know this, she counseled caution and I listened. I believe her. Can you say Odin would have done the same were he in my place? Treated her with respect and equality?”

“Respect?!” Thor crowed, his own chair scrapping as he stood, “You have be-spelled her! You came to her in a guise most cunning, befriended her and bewitched her. You think she did not share with me how you immobilized her, forced yourself upon her against her will?! What more have you done to besmirch her honor in my absence I wonder.”

“Yeah!” Tony cheered. Darcy frowned.

“He did what?” Bucky asked in a dangerous tone, his eyes ablaze as he stared Loki down.

“It wasn’t like that.” Darcy tried to explain but Thor thumped his knuckles on the table and gestured to her with both hands, “Do you see! Do you see how she defends him?”

Thor glowered at Loki, “I do not know what you have done to my sweet sister, but rest assured, I will free her from your thrall.”

“Thrall?” Darcy questioned in flat tone. “He’s not a vampire.”

Loki got to his feet slowly, his eyes glittered intensely and with barely restrained ire. He all but threatened Thor as he hissed, “I made her one of us.”

“She already was one of us.” Thor argued, “You hurt her! You stole her.”

“I made her!” Loki boomed, for the first time losing his temper and raising his voice to match Thor’s angry shouts. “I brought out who she truly was, made her what she was meant to be! She is Asgardian now, blood and soul. She will live as long as we live. She will be strong. Fast. Cunning.”

Loki looked down at her as she stared up at him.

His tone softened as he declared, “I fell in love with her as you did, at first I admit I was confused about the nature of my feelings for her but we have since then made amends. She is my chosen sister
as well. And I didn’t want her to die. So I made her blood sing of the old Vanir and her body a map of Aesir power.”

Darcy swallowed thickly then stood. She hugged Loki. He was stiff and unyielding but she knew he needed the contact all the same.

“Thank you.” She whispered. Loki sagged against her momentarily before pulling away.

She turned to Thor and tried to affected a light tone, “He’s not wrong you know. If Loki hadn’t have brought my Asgardian DNA to the surface, I would be dead, possibly several times over.”

Darcy put a hand on Loki’s shoulder and pushed, silently urging him to sit. He allowed her to maneuver him back into his chair. She sat down as well before turning to Thor, with her hand outstretched she implored him, “Please, sit.”

Thor fell into his chair. His posture deflated as he stared at the two of them. She felt the strain of this family drama in the worst way, she had after all grown up an only child and therefore was unused to dealing with long standing grudges with painful wounds and scabs between her and the people she called family. It felt like it was taking everything she had to keep them talking, keep things civil.

Thor mused spitefully, “Dear sister, I never thought I’d see the day where I wasn’t your favorite.”

“Don’t even.” Darcy chastised sharply, “You’re the one who left with no way of contacting you. I would called. I would have sent you an email, or a raven even.”

Thor pouted, “I had thought you to be the one always able of reaching me. Your power being so great as to transport you across space and dimensions. But you never came to me.”

Darcy frowned, “You know I don’t control it.”

“I know.” Thor accepted as he averted his gaze.

Everyone was quiet and for once, no one broke the tension.

Stephen was the first to speak when he asked in a matter of fact tone, “So, are we all going to start fighting again, or are we forgiving Loki his crimes and allowing him to continue on with his charade.”

Tony snorted, “I mean, I don’t like him, but Darcy’s right, he’s not bad at this. Odin’s face has kept people calm given Darcy credit and helped offset the panic that spread following her public vision revelations. And his ‘end of days’ prep hasn’t been half bad either. He’s actually pretty thorough when it comes to the mind numbing banality of ruling an empire.”

“No.” Thor said darkly. “Loki will not impersonate my father one second longer.”

“Thor—” Darcy tried but Thor cut her off with a dark stare and a low tone as he repeated himself with an air of finality, “No.”

“You will not imprison him again.” Darcy insisted, straightening up in her chair she declared, “I won’t allow it.”

Thor chuckled darkly, “You won’t allow it? And how would you presume to stop me.”

Darcy called to Mjolnir, the hammer spun on the table so its handle was facing Darcy. She stared
back at Thor confidently, “We both know that if I really wanted to, I could stop you.”

Thor grabbed his hammer off the table and settled it in his lap, cuddling it almost protectively. The action made Loki snicker and her smile.

“She is the Princess.” Fandral said thoughtfully, “But on the other hand, Thor is our rightful prince, the trueborn heir to the throne of Asgard.”

“Which he denied.” Loki reminded them, “And ran away from when it was offered to him. By me.”

“A throne which I will sit upon and rule from if I must.” Thor said, reluctance coloring his tone. His eyes ticked up and met hers and there was a glint of humor in them that she did not understand. “However, my ascension is premature. Isn’t it brother?”

Thor looked to Loki, a smug grin slowly spreading across his face, “As you say, father lives. Does he not?”

“Yes.” Loki hissed.

Thor smiled broadly, “Well, then. We shall just retrieve him and restore him to his rightful place. He shall pass judgment on Loki for his treachery and villainy. He shall declare Ragnarok deterred for all time. And I shall be heralded, a hero.”

“You know it won’t be that easy.” Darcy countered; she put her elbow on the table and rested her cheek upon her hand. She felt the smile on her face slowly bloom as Thor’s jovial nature visibly returned to him.

“Bah,” Thor waved his hand at her dismissively, “Nonsense. The Allfather is wise and on occasion has been merciful; perhaps there is hope for Loki yet? Hmm? Shall we retrieve him now?”

“Odin isn’t on Asgard.” Darcy said, the look Thor shot her reminded her that Surtur had told Thor the same thing while he was captive on Muspelheim.

“How do you know?” Thor questioned with narrowed eyes, “Did you help Loki dispose of him?”

“What!” Darcy screeched, “No.”

“I sent him to Earth.” Loki offered, “Long before Darcy awoke from her coma.”

“Coma!” Darcy shouted, her eyes flickering over Tony as she made a mental note to ask Loki about the apple of Idunn before they left the room. Everyone stared at her due to her exclamation.

“Ignore me.” She deflected.

“Alright.” Thor said slowly, “Then we shall go and retrieve him. Now, together as a family.”

Thor motioned to get up but Darcy stopped him. Confronted with the prospect of going to Earth reminded her of something else.

“Wait,” Darcy looked around, “They never answered me.”

She made eye contact with Steve, “Do you want to go home to Earth?”

She looked over at Bucky, “You don’t have to stay because you feel obligated to do so, you’re not. You can leave. What comes next—if it’s as bad as I saw in my visions…You should leave.”
She turned to Wanda, “You too.”

“Really?” Wanda questioned looking shocked, “You’d let me go?”

Darcy ran a hand over her face. Memories of the small women punching her in the face with a glowing fist filled her mind. She pushed those thoughts away and nodded, “Yes.”

She cast her eyes down to the table, “It wasn’t right of me to spirit you away to another planet without your consent. Or imprison you without a trial. Or force you to take magic lessons and sleep in a cell.”

A thought struck her like lightning and she looked up at Tony with dawning horror, “Dude, I’m as bad as the Accords that I just got abolished!”

“You got the Accords abolished?” Steve asked with a wry smile on his face, “When?”

“Wait, what now?” Thor interjected.

“Wanda tried to kill Darcy.” Tony explained, “She beat her nearly to death… Wanda was mind controlling most of the Avengers, we let the wizards try to take her peacefully, but she freaked out and got homicidal.” His serious tone was such a contrast to the delightful commentary and glee he’d been showcasing since they entered the room, that it was disturbing.

Tony’s voice was stern and chilling as he glared daggers in Wanda’s direction. “She tried to kill Darcy and very nearly succeeded.”

Tony kept his eyes on Wanda but spoke to Thor with a forced sounding casual tone of voice. “But, with the very last of her strength Darcy called out to the Bi-frost and brought us all here. Asgard being one of the only places in the cosmos equipped to detain and subdue such a powerful and bloodthirsty…witch.”

Everyone turned and looked at Wanda. The young woman hunched her shoulders and looked down, her long dark hair obscuring her features. Darcy imagined Wanda looked very different from when they first arrived.

Wanda had come to the planet a raving lunatic, out of control, and with a distorted view of reality. Deluded. Violent. Wholly incapable of acknowledging her own faults, mistakes, nor able to accept responsibility thereof. And now, now she was so different.

Wanda audibly exhaled before looking up and locking eyes with Darcy. “I was sick.” She admitted in a staid tone, “I was paranoid.”

Darcy saw clarity in the young woman’s eyes as she spoke, “Darcy, I’m grateful that you brought me here. I don’t know how…I went too far, became something—somebody I didn’t like. The more I didn’t like myself the more I compared myself to you—I spiraled out of control. If we had remained on Earth, I would have killed you.”

Wanda sniffed and looked up as she tried in vain to contain her emotions, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry for what I did to you, to others. Controlling the people around me, infecting them, and robbing them of their own thoughts, shaping their opinions.” She looked over at Steve directing her next words to him, “I’m sorry.”

Her eyes flickered over to Tony and then back to her. Wanda swallowed thickly as she spoke in a trembling voice, “I don’t think I’ve ever said that aloud and meant it. I’m sorry. I was wrong. And I want to do better.”
Wanda lowered her eyes, a tear rolling down her cheek as she looked at the table top, “I’d like to stay and help defend Asgard if I can.”

Darcy pressed her lips together suppressing her own urge to cry. She nodded ‘yes’ but she then she realized that Wanda was avoiding her gaze and she gave voice to her answer, “Yes.”

Wanda looked up sharply. She smiled quickly before her face transformed into an awed grateful expression, “Thank you.”

“You’re welcome.” Darcy said quietly. She looked the woman over critically, her eyes noting the red crystal choker Loki had designed for her, the bauble was meant to help subdue her powers a little, she could take it off at any time though. The crystal ring on her finger brought her clarity of mind. She was dressed in a long gown in her signature color. She looked healthy. She knew that for Wanda ‘healthy’ would always mean something beyond the physical, her mental health would be something they would all have to be conscious of, but right now she looked great.

She really was a striking woman. Darcy hoped she wouldn’t have to kill her one day.

“You’re forgiving her?” Tony asked sounding skeptical.

“No.” Wanda answered for her, “But maybe one day, I will earn her forgiveness.” Darcy gave the woman a thumbs up and the girl smiled shyly in return.

“Well that’s all very nice I guess, but back to the matter at hand.” Thor said as he cleared his throat.

“Yes.” Darcy agreed, she turned to Bucky, “The matter at hand. Going home. Do you want to go back to Earth?”

“I’m a soldier. I’ll fight for you.” Bucky said in a gruff voice.

“You don’t have to.” Darcy offered, “You don’t owe me anything.”

Bucky ducked his head and smirked, “C’mon doll, we both know that ain’t true.”

“Bucky--”

“I choose you, okay?” Bucky interrupted, “Out of all the sides I could end up on. All the wars I could fight. I choose. To fight for you.” He couldn’t have telegraphed himself better if he shouted ‘Don’t rob me of my autonomy.’

“Okay.” Darcy accepted her voice tight with emotion.

She turned to Steve and he waved her away, “I’m staying, don’t even ask.”

Her eyes briefly sought out Tony and Stephen but they both glared at her, as if daring her to even try to convince them to leave her side.

Thor sounded exasperated as he declared, “Wonderful. You’re all welcome to stay as long as you like, now--” He glared at her without heat in his eyes, “Back to the matter at hand. Odin.”

Darcy grinned back a little chagrined. “I know where he is.” She volunteered, “Or well, I did.”

“What does that mean?” Thor asked.

“He was under a memory spell. I broke it. He said, and I’m paraphrasing here so don’t quote me, basically he said Frigga was right I’m awesome, he was wrong, he was a crappy father, he felt old,
he was tired, he was sad about Frigga’s, he something magic-y to me and made me ‘officially’
Asgardian. Whatever that means. He…he called me his daughter.”

Her voice lost its sassiness as she recalled her memory of her last day with Odin. She remembered
his beaten down demeanor. And how he seemed so full of regret and melancholy. Quietly she
finished, “He called me Darcy Lewis-Odinsdottir. Legitimate Princess of Asgard. Now and forever.”

“Horseshit.” Thor accused. Darcy barked out a laugh, pointing at Thor she claimed, “That’s what I
said!”

“IT’s true.” Loki declared, “Can’t you see it?”

Loki’s eyes searched his brother’s face for some sign of recognition, “Can’t you tell? Feel it? She is
different. Odin gave her power. His power.”

“What?” Darcy squeaked, “What are you talking about?”

Loki turned to address her, “I didn’t want to alarm you unnecessarily. I had a feeling you would
‘freak out’ had I explained earlier.”

“Well, I’m freaked. So, explain yourself.” Darcy snapped.

“You’re right.” Thor acknowledged, he was staring at her with wide eyes, “Loki…you sure this is
not another of your tricks.”

“I swear on our mother’s grave.” Loki said soberly.

Darcy looked down at herself, looking for some sign of what she they were talking about; in her
head she was thinking ‘midichlorians’. She looked up at Stephen with an alarmed expression.
“What?”

Stephen shrugged and his ignorance gave rise to a panicky quality seeping into her tone when she
turned to Loki and demanded, “What the fuck are you talking about!”

“Odinforce.” Thor said softly, “He siphoned off some of his own essence and power, and gave it to
you.”

“Well, get it off!” Darcy exclaimed. She jumped up and stumbled back her chair tipping over, “Get it
out. Undo it! I don’t want any more powers.”

“I can’t.” Thor said.

“No one can. No one, but Odin.” Loki informed her.

Darcy felt her heart beat speed up. She stared at the faces of her friends and family, they stared back
at her blankly.

Darcy’s thoughts began to spiral. First, she was born with a power she couldn’t control. Plagued by
visions of a future that was mostly horrible and hard to change and for others to believe. Then she
got shot in the face and found out she was going to live for a couple thousand years. Then new
powers, like dream walking which as Gamora pointed out, could be used for evil. And astral
projection, which at first had seemed useful and fun, but again left her impotent like her visions.
Forced to watch events she had no power to change or influence. It was scary.

All this change was scary.
She was becoming so powerful so quickly. Sometimes when she looked in the mirror she didn’t even recognize herself. The idea of getting more power, more responsibility it was a crushing weight on her chest making it hard for her to breathe. Darcy was tempted to duck her head between her legs she felt so un-tethered.

“What does that mean? What’s the Odinforce? I mean it sounds self explanatory but, I don’t know?! Am I pregnant? Did he impregnate me with the Odinforce?! Am I going to grow beard? Is my eye going to fall out? Will I be the vessel for his reincarnation?!” It felt like she was hyperventilating. Looking around at her friends, most of them looked taken aback by her reaction. “Help me!” She demanded on the verge of hysteria.

Loki approached her slowly, with his hands outstretched, “Calm down.”

“I can’t!” Darcy snapped, she backed up until she hit the wall. She tore the lace veil from her eyes as she babbled, “I didn’t know I could lift Mjolnir until I did it. I put Stephen and Tony to sleep just by saying ‘go to sleep’. I controlled Wanda’s dream, her whole dream, the setting the clothes the smell in the air, and it was easy.”

She slid down the wall into a pile of fabric and shaking limbs.

“All of my new powers are coming to me so easily now and I’m freaking out okay? I don’t know what power means to you guys, but to me it means blame, guilt, accountability. If we fuck up—and my god, how spectacularly we could fuck this up. Ragnarok, Thanos. The weird killer lady. The Accords. The Avengers. Wanda. Loki. Everything, everyone…” She ran out of words and just sat staring at nothing as she breathed raggedly. Loki reached her side and sat on the floor next to her.

She turned to him and grabbed his hand confessing in a whisper, “I don’t know if I can handle this.”

On the other side of her Thor crouched down by her side and put a hand on her shoulder. “You can.” He assured her.

“I’ll help you.” Loki pledged.

“We.” Thor gestured to his brother with his head, “We will help you.”

“The burden is not on your alone.” Loki reminded her, he gestured to Stephen and Tony who were on their feet but remained at the table, “You have many allies. You are well prepared. You were made for this.”

“I don’t feel prepared.” Darcy balked.

“You will be.” Loki promised. She looked at him. And his awful death flashed before her eyes, his purpling face and red blood shot eyes. She was crying. She didn’t even know when she started crying, but she suddenly realized she was crying. Her tears obscured her view of Loki leaving her only with the image in her mind.

“Do not be afraid, father has given you a gift. Perhaps he saw that you would need this strength in the coming war against this man Thanos. Perhaps he was fulfilling a vow to mother. Either way, he would never give you more than you could handle little sister.” Thor wiped away her tears and she crumpled into his arms. He held her close as she cried while Loki rubbed her back.

When Darcy had calmed down and stopped crying like a crazy person, she forced herself to her feet and didn’t look back at Thor and Loki as she moved to right her chair and once again sit at the table. Across from her, Tony mouthed the words ‘you okay?’ She nodded at him as she fanned her face
drying the tear tracts as she waited for her brothers to join them.

Once seated she addressed everyone, “Sorry for the melt down. I think that’s been building up for a while, but now that I’ve expressed myself, we can move on.”

“We don’t have to do this now.” Thor offered. Darcy shook her head, “No I’m fine.”

“Darcy--” Tony said her name with this pitiable tone but stopped himself; changing tactics he gestured to the group and spoke in a blasé manner, “Darcy, we, your assembled war council, await our marching orders. From that little display I assume Reindeer Games and Point Break are willing to back your play, now that bruised egos have been soothed and mysteries unraveled.”

Darcy smiled gratefully at Tony.

The peace lasted for one second before Thor looked around searchingly and asked, “Where’s Heimdall?”

Loki slouched down into his chair.

“Banished.” Fandral said with a stern tone, his glare fixed on Loki, “Odin—Loki banished him and put the janitor Skurge in charge of the Bifrost.”

Thor gave her a look. Darcy raised her shoulders and ducked her head, “He never sleeps. Literally, the guy never sleeps. I haven’t been able to get in contact with him either and then I …kind of forgot.”

“You forgot.” Thor challenged.

“I’ve been busy.”

Thor let her off the hook but addressed them all, “Well then I suppose we have two people to retrieve and bring back to Asgard.”

The rest of the meeting they talked logistics. It was agreed by all that Loki’s true identity was to remain secret. He would continue on in Asgard as Axel until Odin returned.

It was decided that Loki, Thor, Darcy, and Tony would travel via the Bifrost back to Earth to find Odin. Tony insisted on accompanying her and he couldn’t be talked out of it and truthfully she didn’t want to talk him out of it.

Stephen said that Wong would be capable of performing a spell to tell them exactly where the old man was, he gave her the title of a book and told her that Wong would need to reference it to perform the spell. So their destination was conceived to be New York, as close to Bleeker Street as possible.

When they were gone, Stephen and Fandral would go retrieve Heimdall who was most likely hiding in the forest or mountains surrounding the city. Stephen would locate Heimdall with magic, without the reference book Wong had access to he would use a rudimentary spell that worked a little like a diving rod; Fandral would navigate their way there with his knowledge of the land.

It was agreed that things should continue on in Asgard as normally as possible, which meant the citizen’s would continue on with their organized cataloging and storing of items and other Ragnarok preparations.
Darcy ‘decreed’ that the Warriors Three were absolutely forbidden from entering the Observatory until Heimdall returned. Luckily all three agreed without fuss.

Volstagg was to take Wanda to his home where she could be looked after by Hildy and practice her powers out in the open fields around his house. The idea was that being around children might soften her even more, and help her temper herself with such tiny innocent little motivators running around.

Bucky and Steve would join the army which was deployed in and around the city and palace. In groups they would host training sessions, running drills and sparring with the elite fighting force. Hogun would look in on them for time to time, but in truth he would act in Loki’s place supervising the continued squirreling away of Asgardian artifacts and knowledge.

Thor declared her ridiculous planning irrelevant as he thought retrieving Odin would take not but an hour, but he indulged her all the same. At the end of the meeting Loki summoned servants and they had brunch. The conversation amongst them grew genial and commiserative. Darcy couldn’t shake the feeling that it was to be their last meal together on Asgard.

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Darcy

Tony
Stephen
Wanda
Seating chart
This chapter reminds me a little of Game of Thrones.... because the best scenes on Game of Thrones usually involve people just talking and family drama and stuff. Though, fight scenes are cool too.

So, let me know what you think if you have a minute cuz I'd really appreciate it.

Little afraid to see Endgame tomorrow. Anyone else clinging to their favorite characters
with all of their imaginary might? **********NO SPOILERS
PLEASE*******************
Chapter 48 – happy hogan

Chapter Summary

Darcy dream walks Happy Hogun.

Chapter Notes

And...we're back!
Also, happy mother's day!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter 48 – happy hogan

Before leaving Asgard, Tony retrieved the Iron Man suit he had been working on. It was almost unperceivable under the clothes he wore and he really didn’t want to risk it getting left behind. They all had to change into Midgardian attire in the hopes of not drawing too much attention upon arrival. When Loki and Thor joined her and Tony in the Observatory she snorted at the sight of them.

They couldn’t be dressed more differently; they really were like night and day.

Loki looked sleek and expensive in an all black suit. Thor looked uber casual in jeans and a t-shirt layered with an open flannel and hooded sweatshirt. She cast her gaze over to Tony. He looked more like Loki than Thor, but his color pallet was far perkier.

For Darcy’s grand return to Earth, she had split the difference between formal and informal. She’d spent so much time in skirts and gowns on Asgard that when she put on a pair of jeans, she felt a little naked. So, on top of her skinny jeans she’d over laid a sheer tulle skirt. She wore a beautifully corseted top and a modern leather jacket matching in color. At the last minute she’d put on earrings representing Loki and a bracelet that was Thor inspired. She hoped her jewelry would subtly signal to the boys she was on both of their sides.

“Ready to go?” Tony asked the approaching gods.

“I must speak with this Skurge fellow before we depart.” Thor informed them. He grabbed Skurge’s arm and dragged him over to the pile of Midgardian junk piled against the far wall.

She, Loki, and Tony stared at each other awkwardly: she looked down at her golden clutch and fiddled with it. Opening and shutting it mindlessly. She was not dreading their return to Earth, but with the jig up, it kind of felt like the end of something here on Asgard.

Tony broke the tension tactlessly. “So how does it feel to be dethroned?”

Loki scowled and moved to walk away from them but Darcy snagged his arm and looped hers through his not letting him escape.

“Be nice.” Darcy chided her boyfriend.
Tony held his hands up innocently claiming, “I’m the nicest.”

Seeing Tony with his hands up in the air in mock surrender reminded her of Tony being defenseless. And that reminded her of, “The apple!” She exclaimed.

“You’re hungry? I mean, I guess I could eat.” Tony said ponderously. Darcy ignored him and turned on Loki, her grip on his arm tightening.

“I need an apple.” She revealed, “An apple of Idunn.”

Loki’s eyes flickered over to Tony and then back to her. “They are very rare. Not to be wasted in vain.”

Darcy frowned. Loki knew why she wanted one, that little glance at Tony said it all. Not that she was trying to be subtle about her motives.

“I need one. Now.” She informed him with a stubborn pout. “Before we leave.”

Loki’s mouth looked pinched as his eyes ran up and down her body in an exaggerated fashion. He played dumb as he asked, “Are you ill? Do you need replenishing?”

Darcy grit her teeth as Loki’s eyes flickered back over to Tony and his voice became tainted with distain, “Or is your goal fueled by misguided generosity.”

“Don’t be a dick.” Darcy said directly.

Tony interjected stepping a little closer to her, “Hey, I will take care of any replenishing needs Darcy has. Okay? And for the record, I am very generous.”

“Him?” Loki questioned in a weary tone.

Tony lowered his voice minutely as he promised, “Darce, when we get home I’ll buy you a cake cornucopia. Or pizza. Or gelato. Whatever you want....Mmmm. Gelato actually sounds really good right now.”

“Loki, please.” Darcy kept her eyes on her brother. “You know what he means to me.”

Loki rolled his eyes but sighed in a beleaguered manner that let her know he would give in to her request. She turned to Tony and put her hand on his arm and pulled him a few steps away from her brother. Desperation was evident in her voice as she asked, “Do you love me?”

Tony’s forehead wrinkled as he answered automatically, “You know I do.”

Darcy reached up and snatched the tinted glasses off of his face and handed them blindly to Loki behind her. Her eyes stayed on Tony as she stared at his face intensely looking for any signs of hesitation or indecision. “How much do you love me?”

Tony glanced at Loki over her shoulder then brought his gaze back to her. He put his arm around her waist and pulled her close. “Darce, what’s going on? Why are we talking so seriously about fruit?”

“I love you so much,” Darcy answered evasively, “I don’t want to lose you. To death. To time. To another person as we grow older and possibly apart. I can’t stand the thought of it, let alone the reality. I don’t know if you remember your dream last night, but I do. I was there. And I know that I wouldn’t be able to endure the loss of you.”

“Darcy--”
“Do you want to be with me?” Darcy asked.

“Until the end of time.” Tony whispered. His arms tightened around her waist and she slid her arms around his neck. She knew she was dancing around the subject and that she should just get to the point, but she was scared. Asking Tony to eat an apple of Idunn was asking him to be with her forever. To join her in a life of near immortality.

“Tony, if you eat an apple of Idunn…” The words were on the tip of her tongue, but fear of rejection made her hesitate.

“Marry me.” Tony said like it wasn’t a mind melting thing to say to her in that moment.

“What?!”

“Marry me and I’ll eat the apple. I know what it does Darce. I know what you’re asking.”

Darcy’s lips curled as she pulled away from Tony. She swatted him on the chest nagging, “You know about the apples of Idunn?! Then why were you playing dumb?”

Tony shrugged with a smirk on his face, “To watch you squirm.” She shoved him back away and he laughed as he stumbled and then recovered.

“You’re a monster.” She accused in a monotonous tone. Tony smiled at her genuinely as he grabbed her hand and tugged hard, forcing her back into the circle of his arms. She kept the frown on her face even as Tony lent down and kissed her softly.

She threaded her fingers into his hair and grasped it tightly in her fist, almost silently threatening to pull it if his answer displeased her. She guided his face away from her own and asked, “Why would I marry a cruel bastard like you?”

Tony looked at her with this heart stopping expression. “Because I love you. And I need you. And I will always be there when you need me.”

Darcy swallowed thickly. Half tempted to pull him by the hair into a heated kiss, but she froze instead mumbling, “That’s a really good answer.”

Tony looked at her with this heart stopping expression. “Because I love you. And I need you. And I will always be there when you need me.”

Darcy swallowed thickly. Half tempted to pull him by the hair into a heated kiss, but she froze instead mumbling, “That’s a really good answer.”

The left side of his lips ticked up. She couldn’t help it. She rose up on her tip toes and kissed him. The tight grip she had on his hair loosened until it was more of a caress.

She got lost in him. His touch on her waist creeping under her coat to touch the sliver of skin exposed between the top of her jeans and the bottom of her corset. His tongue, warm and inviting, playful and teasing. The heat from his body leeching into hers. The way his body molded so perfectly into all of her curves.

She kissed him and held on to him and poured everything, all of her happiness and hope and love for him into the kiss. All thought and awareness flew from her mind as she was consumed by feelings and Tony.

“Ahem!” A loud fake clearing of throat sound broke the spell and she and Tony reluctantly pulled apart.

Darcy turned with a sheepish expression to see that Thor and Loki were standing side by side, glaring at them.
“Can you excuse us? We were having a moment here.” Tony snapped. Darcy noted that Loki now held a shiny golden apple in his hand and internally she cheered, even as her eyes cast over to Skurge and frowned for he was also staring at her and Tony but, on his face was a lecherous grin rather than a disapproving glare like her brothers wore.

“We were leaving?” Thor reminded her.

“Uh huh.” Darcy blushed as she pulled away from Tony. She brought a hand to her lips and blushed further with the knowledge that they were probably red and puffy from all the kissing.

“Wait,” Tony pulled her close to his chest one arm around her waist as he asked softly, “Marry me?”

“Oh yeah. No.”

“What?” Tony asked looking perplexed. Loki sniggered and she spared a second to glare at him before turning back to Tony.

“No.” Darcy answered again more clearly, elaborating, “I don’t believe in marriage.”

“You…what?!” Tony’s face was the definition of confusion “Is this because of Strange?”

“No,” Darcy pet her pony tail for want of something to do with her hands as she explained, “This is about my divorced parents. The divorce rate in the U.S. And fundamentally not believing in the concept of ownership that is the backbone of marriage. A belief that is a direct result of a patriarchal society that treated women like goats and second hand citizens for most of history and was based more on property and alliances and people filing their taxes jointly, than ya know, love.”

Tony blinked at her, “Are you being serious right now? Because I can’t tell.”

“I don’t want to marry anyone. Ever.” Darcy inched closer to Tony; she grabbed his tie and pulled him towards her. “But I want to be with you, forever. Until there are no more days or nights and the world ends, however that may be.”

Darcy lowered her voice into a breathy seductive tone, “I want to be with you for the rest of my life Tony Stark.” She went up on her tip toes and kissed his cheek, “I love you.”

She kissed closer to his lips, “I will always love you.” She kissed him and he was stiff for a second but then melted against her. His hands gripped her hips tightly, keeping her secured to his body.

“Ugh.” Loki scoffed.

“Stop defiling our sister right in front of us.” Thor complained loudly, his voice served to break them apart once again. Darcy smiled when he added in a disgusted tone, “It’s gross.”

“You’re gross.” Tony snickered before Darcy pulled him to her lips again for one last, long, sensual kiss.

When they broke apart he looked at her with a furrowed brow and a question on his face. “So, no to marriage, but yes to me?”

“Yes to you.” Darcy repeated. Her expression grew soft and she knew she was doing little to hide the vulnerability she felt inside as she asked, “Yes to forever?”

“…Yes.”

Darcy conjured the apple out of Loki’s hand and into her own. She took a step back and held it at
eye level in front of Tony. “Take a bite.” She ordered softly.

Tony swallowed thickly, his eyes afraid just a second. Darcy bit her lip as Tony grabbed her wrist and lowered his mouth to the apple in her hand. His eyes were alight with amusement and love and sexy things and promises as his teeth pierced the skin of the apple and he bit into it with a crunch.

It was a weirdly sexually charged thing. Him, eating the apple out of her hand. She literally fanned herself with her free hand as Tony maintained intense eye contact, bite after bite.

“Well, this is disgusting.” Loki sniped.

“It is like he is having sex with her right in front of us.” Thor said with a hint of awe. “And yet, he is only eating an apple from her hand.”

Skurge added to the commentary saying, “I wouldn’t mind watching them have sex right in front of us.”

Darcy blocked them out and focused on Tony. She paid little mind to the juice that ran down her hand making her wet and sticky as it slid under the sleeve of her coat. He was devouring the fruit with such intensity and purpose and it was sexy as hell, but also meaningful. More meaningful than a scrap of paper declaring them ‘married’ ever could be.

When Tony finished eating the apple Darcy threw the core in Loki’s direction. She didn’t look when she did it and she faintly registered Thor whining, “Hey!”

She kept her eyes on Tony as he licked her hand clean of the juice the apple had secreted all over her.

“I think I might actually throw up.” Loki commented sounding nauseas.

Tony turned to face their onlookers as he slowly slid her ring finger out of his mouth. He smirked at the other men as he let the digit fall from his lips. With an air of confidence taunted her brothers, “You could have left instead of watching us like a bunch of weirdos.”

“If we had left no doubt you two would be on the floor undulating and naked, defiling all that is sacred.” Thor said in a disapproving voice.

“Sounds like a god time to me.” Darcy quipped. Tony chortled kissing her palm before letting go of her hand commenting, “You’re not wrong.”

Darcy laughed freely as Tony pulled her close and kissed her once again. His mouth tasted like apples and magic. Kissing him was numbing in a sense as they didn’t separate even though she was vaguely aware of the others jeering. She just kissed him and kissed him and kissed him until she lost all feeling in her lips.

“Okay.” Tony muttered as he tried to pull away from her, “No more kissing.”

Darcy grabbed the back of his neck and kissed him feverishly one last time before allowing Tony to break the connection. Once free, Tony darted forward and pecked her lips three times in quick succession. He grabbed her hands then pushed away from her, keeping tight grip on her fingers, almost like they were dancing, leaving room between them for ‘Jesus’ and were in middle school. He
gestured down to his body with his head, “Well, how do I look?”

“Like my Tony.”
“The same.”
“Like a sister defiling pervert.”
“Short.”

Darcy frowned over at the men. “Hey, peanut gallery. Shut up.”

Loki ignored her and walked over to Tony, his eyes raking up and down over his body in appraisal. “Sister congratulations, your mortal lover is now as long lived as we. However if you thought the apple would grant him strength or speed or any of the other gifts bestowed upon you following your ascension to Asgardianship, know now that you will be disappointed in this regard. You were already Asgardian, he would have to eat an apple a day for a month to even come close to matching a true Asgardians power.”

That was something she did already know. But from the disappointed sounding “Aww” Tony let out, she guessed this was news she should have shared before he ate the apple. She pet his face consolingly, “I knew that.”

“You did?” Tony asked.

She nodded. She gave his hand a squeeze, “But you’re immortal now. And we can be together forever. That’s what matters.”

“Providing you don’t die,” Loki interjected, “You will now age at the same rate. Allowing you to maintain a long lasting relationship, should you not fuck it up.”

Darcy snorted and smiled at Loki, “I don’t think I’ve ever heard you say ‘fuck’ before.”

“Fuck.” Loki repeated, his eyes a light with mischief. Tony chuckled.

“Wait,” Thor frowned, “Do you intend to give the wizard an apple as well? I thought you claimed to love your men equally?”

There was a challenge in Thor’s question, like he didn’t believe that she really loved Stephen at all. Darcy felt a splash of anger flare up inside her. She gave Thor a pointed look, “Of course I do dumbass.”

Thor’s frown devolved into a pout, making Loki smile. She elaborated as they moved to join Thor and Skurge in the middle of the room, “Stephen will be immortal soon enough. He’s going to be the most powerful sorcerer supreme in the last millennia and when he achieves that, he’ll be ageless by virtue of his immense power.”

She poked Thor in the chest when she was near enough, “He doesn’t need an apple to be with us forever.”

“Yeah.” Loki added with a malicious grin, obviously enjoying Darcy’s dressing down of Thor greatly. She couldn’t have Loki thinking they would be ganging up on Thor all the time so she turned and poked Loki in the cheek. He slapped her hand away as she taunted him in a mocking tone, “Yeaah.”

“Stop it.” Loki frowned, his eyes reflected worry and recognition of his miscalculation.

“Now he’s in trouble.” Tony muttered to Thor.
“Yeaaah.” Darcy repeated. She moved away from Tony entirely to pursue Loki who was backing away from her as she poked him with two fingers.

“Stop.” Loki whined.

“Yeaaaaaaaah.” Darcy continued her assault poking him even faster with both hands alternatively.

“Ah!” Loki exclaimed as he turned and quickly walked away from her. She gave chase with a wide grin and soon they were running around in a circle as Loki tried to evade her fingers which were now pinching instead of poking.

“Stark!” Loki called out, “Make her stop!”

Darcy cackled as Tony folded his arms and watched them with a mirthful expression. “Now why would I go and do a thing like that?”

Darcy took a quick turn, running over the center most platform where the sword was used to open the bridge, and she jumped tackling Loki to the floor. He turned at the last second and caught her, breaking her fall with his own body while Darcy laughed and squealed in delight.

“You’re terrible.” Loki commented dryly as she made kissy noises and puckered her lips at him.

Using a baby talk voice Darcy mocked, “But it’s because I lwuv you! Now, gimmie kisses!”

“No.” Loki said sharply as he threw her off of him and onto the floor next to him. Getting to his feet in one smooth motion he tugged on the lapels of his jacket. He sniffed down at her haughtily, “You are entirely without dignity or decorum. And I shan’t be dragged into your childish games.”

“Oh, shan’t you?” Darcy mumbled to herself as Loki tried to walk away from her. But she was up and on him in a flash, she wrapped her arms around his left leg and stared up at his exasperated face with a shit eating grin on her own.

“Get off.” Loki commanded.

“Walk!” Darcy ordered. She kicked her feet immaturely demanding, “Take me for a ride!”

Loki scowled and crossed his arms and stood still stubbornly. “No.”

Off to the side she could hear Thor whisper to Tony, “Are they always like this?”

“No usually in mixed company.” Tony replied, “But, yeah. The two of them tend to devolve into antics and absurdity if left to their own devices for too long.”

Darcy used her nose to raise the pant leg on Loki’s trousers and once she saw skin she extended her tongue and licked.

“Ah!” Loki jerked lifting his foot and trying to shake her off, “Stop it! Don’t—stop licking me!”

Thor’s boisterous laughter filled the room.

“Walk!” Darcy ordered, “Give me a ride!”

“I will not!” Loki cried out, “Get up Darcy. We don’t have time for this. Not now!”

Darcy bit him.
“I hate you.” Loki muttered before he started walking, dragging Darcy along the floor as she clung to his leg.

“Weeee!” Darcy exclaimed sedately. Loki was going pretty slowly and it wasn’t as fun as she thought it was going to be….she’d have to try it with Thor later. And without wearing a leather coat.

“Okay, I’m done.” Darcy announced when they were half way back to the others. She jumped up and got to her feet, brushing off her clothes. Loki shook his head and stalked away from her but she knew he wasn’t mad.

Looking over at Tony he gave her a big thumbs up which she returned. While they had been preparing for Ragnarok and training Wanda and doing a million other serious things, she and Loki somehow carved out time every day to be silly and affectionate with each other. They got up mischief of one kind or another and occasionally enlisted Tony’s help. With Darcy facilitating their interactions, Tony and Loki even grew friendly with each other...okay maybe not that friendly, but they were no longer openly hostile and antagonistic. It helped that Tony encouraged Darcy’s time spent with Loki when it involved silliness and frivolity. As from his perspective, anything that lightened Loki up was a good thing for everyone’s sake.

Thor stared at her with bright eyes and a huge smile, and yet she could sense something in his expression that spoke of awe. Loki slapped Skurge’s stomach roughly and ordered, “Open the Bifrost.”

With a snigger Skurge languidly walked over to the sword muttering, “As you command.”

Darcy approached Loki from behind and hugged him. He tensed, as he always did when she showed him physical affection and he didn’t see it coming, it hurt her heart that his first instinct was to brace himself for an assault.

Loki relaxed quickly enough though and allowed her to squeeze him gently around the middle. She pressed her face into his back and spoke quietly, “I love you Loki.”

He briefly covered one of her hands with his, but did not return the sentiment vocally. She knew he was uncomfortable with being so loving in front of Thor, so she let his lack of response go unacknowledged.

She let him go and moved over to Thor and held her arms out expectantly.

Thor sniggered as he hugged her. Wrapped snugly in his giant muscled arms she pressed her face to his chest and repeated her earlier sentiment, “I love you Thor.”

“And I love you little sister.” She felt him press a kiss to the top of her head and then rest his cheek atop it. “You have no idea what a blessing you are.”

After a beat, she felt Tony envelop her from behind, joining the hug.

“I love you guys too.” Tony said as he pressed a kiss to the side of her neck, he put his chin on her shoulder. Looking up at Thor he quipped, “Obviously in two very different ways.”

Their departure from Asgard held as little fanfare as their arrival back on Earth. They appeared in the middle of an alley at the end of a busy street in New York City, however except for a few double takes as people walked by, no one seemed to notice anything out of the ordinary.

“Where to?” Thor asked.
“Bleeker street.” Darcy answered.

Knowing Stephen wasn’t there, Darcy didn’t feel comfortable just opening the door and walking into the Sanctum, even though it was sort of her second home. So, she knocked.

Wong answered the door with a frown.

“Hi!” Darcy greeted him cheerfully. She was aware he was glaring at Loki and ignoring her. Obviously he could see beyond the glamour Loki had adopted to hide his true face in the city where he had once upon a time wreaked so much havoc.

“What is he doing here?” Wong questioned.

“We’re looking for our dad.” Darcy said, “Emphasis on the word our, as in, Loki’s with me so back off.”

Wong turned his glare onto her. Darcy jut out her lower lip, “Pleaaaase?”

“What do you want?” Wong grunted.

Darcy took a deep breath and responded without stopping, “Can we come in and can you help us find Odin with a locator spell and before you say anything, Stephen kind of already promised you would, so basically you have no choice, but also I’m so grateful and you know you like me the best I’m totally your favorite, so I hope you don’t mind us putting you on the spot and did I mention lately how much I love you and consider you one of my closest and very dear friends?”

Darcy grinned cheekily, unwavering in her hope of charming the frowning man, and unwilling to be the one who blinked first.

Wong sighed, his eyes going to the floor for a second before looking back up at her. “He can’t stay.”

Darcy let out a happy noise and clapped her hands.

“Wasn’t planning on it.” Loki jeered.

“Thank you thank you thank you.” Darcy chanted quickly as she jumped forward and gave Wong a tight squeeze.

Wong opened the door wider gesturing them forward with his head, “Come in. And you three,” He pointed at the men, “don’t touch anything.”

Darcy stepped through the door and put her clutch down on the table in the foyer. She kicked off her shoes and headed for the kitchen calling out, “I’m just gonna get a Capri Sun from the fridge, maybe a fruit roll up or two for the road.”

Behind she heard Tony grumble, “I don’t see why you trust Darcy with the touching and not me.”

“Because she’s right,” Wong slammed the door closed, “She is my favorite.”

Wong sent them via portal to a lush Cliffside, where exactly, she didn’t know. But as the portal
closed behind them, Darcy stood in awe of the natural beauty that they found themselves surrounded by. The sky was so big. And you could hear the ocean nearby. The grass underfoot was green and wild in a way suburban lawn care could never replicate. It was gorgeous.

A lone figure stood on the other side of the meadow at the cliff’s edge, staring quietly at the crashing waves below. It was Odin. He was dressed plainly but better kempt than the last time she had seen him. Thor rushed to his father’s side. She and Loki approached at a more sedate pace. Tony hung back, not walking forward at all.

“Father.” Thor called out softly.

“Look at this place. It’s beautiful.” Odin said.

“Father, it’s us.” Thor said, like he was trying to remind the All Father of who he truly was.

Darcy knew Thor’s fear of Odin’s addled mind to be unfounded, but the All Father did seem different. More sad, more resigned maybe. He seemed much the same to her as when she saw him last, filled with regret and weariness. But she knew this was a version of Odin so unlike the one she met on Asgard; and so she understood Thor’s hesitancy in believing that this tired old man was indeed his father.

“My sons. My daughter. I’ve been waiting for you.” Darcy grabbed Loki’s hand and squeezed it. He looked so surprised to be addressed as Odin’s son.

“We’ve come to take you home.” Thor said.

“Home, yes. Your mother, she calls me.” Odin turned to Loki and her asking, “Do you hear it?”

Odin didn’t wait for a response, he turned his eye to the horizon and Darcy closed her eyes and tried to listen, but she did not hear Frigga. Thor accused Loki of trickery.

“Loki lift your magic.”

Disappointed she was not in tune with magic enough to hear Queen Frigga, she opened her eyes and stared at Odin. He smiled at her and chuckled. “Darcy freed me of Loki’s spell. It was quite intricate. Frigga would have been proud.”

Darcy’s eyes flickered over to Thor. He looked angry. Odin turned and walked over to the log where Tony was standing. “Come and sit with me. I don’t have much time.”

Odin sat down heavily as if out of breath. The man was visibly weak and she could tell how seeing their father in this state was affecting Thor and Loki. Thor was pissed, Loki looked in shock. Darcy herself was resigned. Somehow, she knew what was coming. And she suspected Odin did too.

“I know we failed you, but we can make this right.” Thor promised.

Odin turned to Thor, “No. I failed you. It is upon us, Ragnarok.”

“No I’ve stopped Ragnarok. I put an end to Surtur.” Thor rushed to reassure his father.

“No. It has already begun. She’s coming. My life was all that held her back, but my time has come. I cannot keep her away any longer.” Odin looked up. And Darcy exchanged a sad glance with Tony. He looked stoic and uncomfortable. She didn’t blame him for having nothing to say but she was grateful he was there with her all the same.
“Father, who are you talking about?” Thor asked.


“…What?” Thor looked confused and betrayed and hurt. Darcy got up and moved to kneel in front of Odin so she could be closer to her older brother. She put a hand on Thor’s knee and squeezed, reminding him that he was not alone in his shock, nor in this life. He had her and Loki.

“Her violent appetites grew beyond my control.” Odin explained, “I couldn’t stop her, so I imprisoned her. Locked her away. She draws her strength from Asgard. And once she gets there, her powers will be limitless.”

“Whatever she is, we can stop her. We can face her together.” Thor tried to argue but Odin was quick to shut him down.

“No we won’t. I’m on a different path now. This you must face alone.” Odin turned away from Thor to look at her. Reached out he cupped her face with his hand. “I wish I had more time to explain, but as her powers grow I imagine the Goddess of Sleep will provide more opportunities in the future.”

He dropped his hand saying, “I love you my sons. And you, my chosen daughter.”

Darcy could see the tears welling in Thor’s and Loki’s eyes. It felt wrong to her, but she felt no such urge. She reached out and grabbed Loki’s and Thor’s; in this action she joined the three of them together. She knew her brother’s well and knew Odin’s passing would be hard on them in different ways. However, she had no tears for this fallen god for she knew in her heart that this is what Odin wanted. He was at the end of a very long journey and she knew that whatever came next, there would be peace for him. One way or another.

Odin pointed out at the water, “Look at that.” Ethereal sun rays streamed down upon the ocean. It was the very definition of natural beauty. “Remember this place.” Odin counseled, “Home.”

And then in the front of their eyes, Odin dissipated into stardust. Darcy gasped and let go of Thor and Loki’s hands. A few specks flew towards her face and she quickly got on her feet. The boys joined her as she turned, shivering as Odin’s essence flew past her body to space above the cliffs. Together they watched as their father’s glowing remains flew off and dissolved with the wind.

The sound of thunder and a darkening sky heralded Thor’s forthcoming anger and sorrow. Darcy turned around and shot Tony a panicked look. Tony raised his hands in a gesture that conveyed he had no idea what to do or say. Darcy turned to Thor and tried to calm him, “It’s okay. It’s going to be okay.”

Thor was breathing heavily and a dark cloud rolled overhead covering them in a shadow. The wind picked up as Loki also recognized the signs of Thor’s distress and he too tried to soothe Thor saying, “Brother.”

Electricity danced across Thor’s fingers as he turned and stared at them with eyes that burned with rage. Loki took a step back but Darcy held her ground. Thor directed his words at Loki, “This was your doing.”

“Thor,” Darcy said warningly, she was about to launch into a defense of Loki but a dark portal opening in the distance stole the words from her.
“Uh, guys…” Tony exclaimed sounding slightly panicked. Thor gave them a look that said ‘this isn’t over’ but as one the three of them marched forward towards Tony and the portal.

In a dramatic fashion, Thor called lighting forth and transformed into his battle attire. On her other side, Loki used magic to do the same. Darcy leant back so she could see Tony who stood on the other side of Thor. He did the same.

“Should we suit up too?” She asked.

“Seems like.” He concurred. He shed his suit jacket and unbuttoned his shirt quickly. Underneath he wore a sleek black under-amor shirt of which the arc reactor prominently protruded from. He tapped the symbol twice and pulled something at his waist. And then the metal of his suit like…grew out of the reactor. In the space of three seconds he was entirely encased in his new Iron Man suit. It was fucking impressive.

“How…?” Darcy wondered.

“Nanotech.” Tony answered in his modulated voice, “I love the Forge. So, if we could save Asgard. That would be great.”

Darcy looked down at her own outfit and lamented her choice to not decide on one branded Avenger look. She was constipated with choices. Her mind was bursting with ideas, she literally had thousands of choices and all of them overwhelmed her in that moment. She had no idea what to conjure. What would be appropriate? What would be needed? She gripped the tulle skirt in her fists tightly and looked up at Loki with a panicky expression.

“Allow me.” Loki said smoothly. He waved his hand and transformed her. When she looked down she wore a metal jumpsuit that was surprisingly light and flexible, over the jumpsuit she wore this top that reminded her of a princess gown. She could feel her hair as it braided itself and the weight of a backpack as it settled on her shoulders. With sturdy boots on her feet, she didn’t care what she looked like. She felt prepared. Smoothing a hand down the metal jumpsuit she shot Loki a grateful look before turning her attention to the figure that was walking out of the dark and ominous looking portal.

The figure was tall and dark, with hair hiding half her face only a sliver of alabaster skin peeked through. The portal closed behind the imposing woman. Darcy was in awe.

The woman’s voice was deep as she asked for confirmation in greeting, “So he’s gone?”

After a beat the woman commented dryly, “That’s a shame. I would’ve liked to have seen that.”

“You must be Hela. I’m Thor son of Odin.” Thor said not unkindly.

“Really,” Hela balked, “You don’t look like him.”

“Perhaps we can reach an arrangement.” Loki interjected.

Hela sneered at him, “And you? A guard?”

The Goddesses eyes shifted over to Tony. “And you? A guard?”

“I’m her boyfriend.” Tony responded as pointed to her with his thumb. After a beat he elaborated, “Wait, boyfriend sounds lame. I’m her…Not-husband?..Life partner. Yeah, I’m her life partner.”

Hela’s eyes narrowed as she took in Darcy. In an unimpressed tone she asked, “And you are?”
“Hi.” Darcy waved at the woman, “I’m Darcy.”

“Darcy who?” Hela pressed as she took one step forward.

“Darcy Odinsdottir.” Thor said as he tightened his grip on Mjolnir.

Hela clenched her jaw as she stared at Darcy. After a few uncomfortable seconds the woman spoke quietly, “So he replaced me then.”

“I wouldn’t say that.” Darcy denied quickly, “I’m adopted. Recently, adopted in fact.”

“No matter.” Hela said dismissively, “He’s gone. And now we can begin anew.”

Darcy smiled, “That sounds great.”

“Kneel.” Hela ordered.

“Less great.” Darcy muttered.

“Beg your pardon?” Loki contested.

Hela manifested a pitch black blade and commanded, “Kneel…before your Queen.”

“I don’t think so.” Thor disagreed. Darcy could tell he was about to do something stupid and she rushed to stop him.

“Wait, wait wait—” Moving quickly she put her back to the Goddess of Death and put her hands on Thor’s chest stopping him.

“Darcy, move.” Thor ordered.

“No.”

“Fine.” Thor raised his arm preparing to throw Mjolnir despite her protest. Darcy grabbed his arm and lifted her feet off the floor, putting her entire body weight on Thor’s arm.

“Darcy!” Thor protested, “This isn’t a game.”

“And I don’t think throwing a hammer at the rightful ruler of Asgard is a smart move.” Darcy argued.

Thor looked like she slapped him. “What?”

Darcy let go of his arm. “You heard me.”

“You can’t believe that.” Loki said.

Darcy turned and looked back at Hela. “Why not? It’s true.”

Hela was looking at her with a confused but cautious expression. Darcy gestured to the woman with her hand, “She’s the first born. That makes her Queen now that Odin’s dead. Right?”

“You heard Odin.” Thor countered, “She’s unfit to rule.”

“Says who?” Darcy questioned. “Don’t you royal types have to obey the line of succession or whatever.”
“Darcy--” Tony said warily but Loki interrupted him asking, “Sister, what are you doing?”

Darcy shrugged, “I don’t know. I just…”

She turned and looked at Hela. The woman looked dangerous and Darcy recognized her as the woman who murdered Volstagg, Fandral, and Hogun in her visions. She had a feeling that dealing with Hela would be as difficult as dealing with Wanda, maybe even more so. But that just made her want to try to change the future even harder. Also, there was something about the woman that just gave her pause.

She took a tentative step towards the other woman. She kept her tone inviting as she said, “Hela? Odin just died and revealed your existence to us for the first time. I think I can speak for all of us when I say, we’re confused and in shock. But, I want to know more. I want to know why. Do you think you could tell us your story?”

Hela’s eyes narrowed, “Why should I?”

“Because until just now I didn’t know who you were and neither does anyone else on Asgard. I think knowing all the facts would help us, help you, explain the transition of power to the people.”

“Darcy.” Thor snarled her name.

Darcy ignored his warning and swallowed thickly continuing to address Hela who looked intrigued by what she had to say. “By Odin’s own admission, you are his firstborn and the rightful heir to Asgard. He also said he imprisoned you but he didn’t say why.”

“But he did.” Thor said angrily, “He told us she was violent and out of control.”

“Actually,” Loki said thoughtfully, “He said she grew beyond his control.”

Darcy nodded, “Yeah.”

“He also said she draws strength from Asgard. And her powers will be limitless.” Tony added. “Maybe pissing her off isn’t the best idea.”

“You must kneel.” Hela announced bringing the attention back to her. Darcy frowned as Hela stood up straighter and pointed impatiently to the ground with her blade, “I will tell you my side of things, only if you first kneel.”

“I would never--” Thor protested. She could hear the heat and Asgardian pride in his voice and Darcy knew there was only one thing to do to stop the situation from escalating.

She dropped to her knees and lowered her head before the Goddess of Death.

“Queen Hela.” Darcy said, her voice slightly shaking, “I, Darcy Odinsdottir, kneel before you. As a sign of respect and acknowledgement of your claim to the throne of Asgard.”

Darcy shot a look at Tony and gestured to the ground with her head. He sighed audibly but copied her. Kneeling on the grass as he grunted out, “Ditto.”

She turned and looked at Loki with desperate eyes, “I implore my brother’s to follow my lead, choosing instead of violence, diplomacy. As I believe the preservation of Asgard is more important than pride.”

Loki maintained her gaze for a long minute. Internally Darcy was freaking out. If he didn’t comply,
there was no chance she would get Thor to see reason. And if she couldn’t get them to talk, they
would fight. Talking was the smart play. Loki knew this, he had to. If they fought, Darcy knew they
would lose. She had seen Hela in action in her visions. So getting the woman to talk to them, maybe
even like and trust them, that was the goal. Even if they couldn’t get Hela on their side, talking
would hopefully give them time to think of a brilliant plan that didn’t involve going up against a
woman with the moniker, Goddess of Death.

Loki’s face was like stone as he dropped to the floor. He said nothing as he lowered his head and
knelt before the woman who called herself Queen

“Brother.” Thor said in a shocked tone. “Not you too.”

Darcy grabbed for Thor’s hand and tried to pull him down but he shook her off. Redirecting his
anger at her he accused, “How dare you!?”

“She’s your sister Thor.” Darcy said in a quiet tone, “You don’t know her. You’ve never met her
and didn’t even know she existed until five minutes ago. Do you really want to hurt her? Do you
want to fight with her over a throne you don’t even want?”

“Odin--”

“Odin was an asshole.” Darcy declared stridently as she got to her feet and grabbed Thor’s
shoulders. “He was a shitty father and a crappy person.”

Thor’s nostrils flared and she could feel the heat as lighting danced across his fingers once again.
Over head thunder cracked loudly across the sky. Darcy softened her expression, “But he was a
good King. And husband. And in the end he was kind to me. He acknowledged his own faults and
he regretted things.”

Darcy let her hands fall away from Thor as the anger faded from his body. “He did good. And bad.
He was great and terrible. He lived his life and made his choices, and now it is our turn to live. And
choose how we do so.”

Darcy moved to his side and wrapped her arm around his, the one in which he still held Mjolnir. She
hugged his arm. And he let her.

Quietly she whispered, “Kneel. And surrender yourself to the idea that Odin was not perfect.”

Thor looked down at her from his greater height and there was such pain and vulnerability in his face
that she wanted to wrap him in her arms and keep him from all harm, from the truth, but she couldn’t.
That wasn’t possible.

“Trust me.” Darcy said with an encouraging nod.

She let go of his arm.

“I do.” Thor replied as he sank to his knees.

Darcy stared down at her kneeling brother for a long moment, Thor kept his head down. She was
honestly surprised he had listened to her. She looked over at Tony and then Loki and she couldn’t
stop the small smile of victory that bloomed on her face.

She glanced over at Hela and she froze. Slowly the smile melted from her face, only to be replaced
with a grim line. She saw something in the Goddess’s gaze that scared her, but Darcy refused to
show it. There was anger and a hint of jealousy in the other woman’s eyes. And in that moment,
Darcy realized her mistake.

She had made them kneel. Not Hela. But her. It was all Darcy’s doing and she could see that Hela knew it. She raised her chin and stared back at the Goddess unflinching.

Hela nodded at her once, “You have his power.”

Darcy allowed a beat of silence to pass before she responded, “No. Maybe. That’s really up for debate at this point.”

Hela took a step forward and reasserted, “He gave you his power, because you already possessed it.” Her face looked sad, but only for a fraction of a second before she adopted a haughty demeanor once again.

“Kneel.” Hela ordered sternly.

“Of course.” She was confused by what Hela had said, but she complied with the woman’s demand. She got down on one knee and rested her arm on her bent leg. With a tone that approached the borders of cheekiness she asked, “Anything else?”

Hela shook her head ‘no’, she looked unsatisfied but didn’t complain.

“Fantastic.” Darcy said as she shot to her feet and stalked forward. With boldness and adrenaline guiding her actions she grabbed Hela’s free hand and started leading the woman towards the others. “Now come, time for a family meeting.”

She didn’t know if it was surprise, hopefulness, or bemusement, but Hela allowed herself to be lead back over to the cliff side. Darcy’s men followed them and assembled in front of the women who sat side by side on the wooden log where they had said goodbye to Odin, not ten minutes ago.

“Why haven’t we heard of you?” Darcy started, she gestured to Thor and Loki, “No one on Asgard knows who you are. And recently we’ve begun cataloging old texts and ancient artifacts and stuff, in preparation of Ragnarok. There is no mention of you. Or at least, no one’s brought to our attention.” Her brothers nodded, silently backing up her claim.

Hela scowled, “I do not know what lies Odin peddled in my absence. I cannot explain your ignorance.”

“Who was your mother?” Thor asked in an emotional tone. “I am the son of Frigga. Was she also…?”

The question hung in the air and Darcy dammed herself for not having thought of the implications of Hela’s parentage. It was one thing to call Odin an asshole for locking away and erasing all memory of his ‘out of control’ daughter; it was another thing to think Queen Frigga would stand by idly as he did so. Or worse, help him to do the deed.

“My mother was a sorceress giantess named Angrboda.” Hela answered unemotionally, “She’s long dead.” Darcy’s shoulder’s sagged in relief. Thor nodded.

“What do you want?” Loki probed, “You wish to rule Asgard, but to what end?”

“To the only end that matters.” Hela replied.
“Which is?” Tony prompted.

“To unite all the Realms.” Hela revealed as if it was obvious.

“Huh. That doesn’t sound all that evil.” Darcy commented. Loki shot her a withering look.

“I was Odin’s weapon in the conquest that built Asgard’s empire.” Hela said, a hint of nostalgia seeped into her voice as she elaborated. “One by one, the realms became ours. We were glorious. Unstoppable.” Her tone changed and Darcy shivered at the sound of bitter anger in Hela’s voice, “But then, simply because my ambition outgrew his, he tried to kill me. And when he failed, he banished me, caged me, locked me away like an animal.”

“That does sound like him.” Darcy sighed.

“You,” Hela gestured to Thor, “You denied the throne?”

“I did not want to rule.” Thor replied honestly. Hela looked skeptical.

“He’s a hero.” Darcy explained, “His calling goes beyond the throne of Asgard.” Thor smiled at her gratefully.

“She speaks true,” Thor acknowledged, “I longed for adventure and conquest. I wished to serve the realm but not from atop a throne.”

“Besides, he’s got a lady love on Earth.” Tony added as he flipped up the face plate on his armor. “Kind of hard to date, when your ruling a kingdom.”

Thor blushed, “Actually we broke up.”

“What!” Darcy exclaimed, “You broke up with Jane?!”

“It was...mutual.” Thor offered weakly.

“Liar.” Loki accused.

“Shut up.” Thor sniped.

“Silence!” Hela commanded in an annoyed tone. Loki bristled at the order but Thor looked relieved that nothing more would be said about the state of his love life. Or lack thereof. The dynamic between the three of him had her suppressing a smile.

Hela turned and addressed Darcy, “Odin was weak and close to death. Your prince rejected the throne. I assume you have been ruling in his stead?”

“Why do you assume she’s in charge?” Loki grumbled under his breath.

“We.” Darcy corrected, she reached out and put her hand on Loki’s shoulder, “We’ve been doing it together.”

“You...share power?” Hela questioned with a puzzled frown, as if the concept of team work and sharing were completely foreign to her.

“Yes.” Loki said quietly.

“And you don’t worry that your brother may be secretly plotting against you?” Hela asked her, her tone heavily implying she thought Darcy stupid for this.
“Against me? No.” Darcy answered breezily, “Definitely not.”

“I love her.” Loki asserted with a blank face, “She is my sister. And I would never harm her.”

“And I’m yours.” Hela stated as she turned and redirected the conversation at Thor and Loki. She looked at him like he was this complex math problem she just couldn’t solve. And spoke as if she was issuing a challenge, “Do you think you’ll ever come to love me, brothers?”

Thor averted his eyes and said nothing in response. Loki just stared back at Hela unflinchingly.

“This is like the weirdest episode of Jerry Springer ever.” Tony muttered making her laugh.

“What’s Jerry Springer?” Thor asked timidly.

“Enough.” Hela said sternly, ending any chance of a response from Tony. “I wish to return home to Asgard. Let us leave this place.”

Hela got to her feet and Darcy jumped up too.

“NO!” She shouted. They couldn’t go back to Asgard where Hela’s power would continue to grow, not until they were sure about her intentions. Darcy sat back down slowly, realizing her exclamation made her seem shady, made an effort to lower her voice and appear less emotional and more logical as she repeated herself, “No. We can’t go.”

Hela glared down at her, “Why not.”

“Because…” Darcy trailed off as she considered the merits of several different lies.

“Because Heimdall, the gatekeeper, has been banished and does not guard the Bifrost any longer.” Loki chimed in. His lie so close to the truth that it was almost true.

Darcy sent her brother a mental high five as she jumped on his story and elaborated, “Yes! Exactly. Bifrost’s down. We’re trapped here until he returns to his post. Sorry, should have mentioned that earlier.”

“What?” Hela hissed.

“Yeah, sucks. I know.” Darcy said as she got to her feet and put a consoling hand on the woman’s back, “But what can you do? Good help is hard to find.”

Hela was vibrating with rage and Darcy let her hand fall away as the Goddess stalked forward towards the cliff’s edge. The four of them watched, mouths agape, as Hela let out a frustrated scream. When she was finished expressing her rage to the ocean below, Hela ran her hands smoothly over her head creating a terrifying battle headdress out of thin air.

“How could this be?!” When Hela turned around her eyes were wild and dangerous. Her voice held hanger but also a dash of madness as she ranted, “You are my kin? You? An oafish prince? A weakling younger brother? And a sister not of my blood, not of Odin’s line, but in more possession of his gifts than any of his natural children? A girl who has chosen to share power rather than take it for her own? What has become of my beloved Asgard? We were once the seat of absolute power in the cosmos. Our supremacy was unchallenged! Yet Odin stopped at Nine Realms. Our destiny is to rule over all others.”

“Hela, we’re not weak.” Darcy tried to argue but the Goddess ignored her.
“No, you are not weak, Darcy.” Hela said in a quiet but dangerous tone, “I can see that. If any one of you were to stand a chance against me, it would be you. But, you have intelligently chosen to bow to me, and for that I commend you.”

“Oh, thanks?”

Hela’s expression drew dark and crazed once again, “But I will make you stronger all the same. I will make Asgard stronger. I am here to restore that power which was lost to time and inadequate leadership. I want to help you. I will help you! BUT HOW CAN WE BEGIN IF WE ARE DENIED PASSAGE HOME BY ONE MEASLY GATEKEEPER?!”

“Okay, now I see it.” Darcy muttered under her breath. She approached Hela cautiously, with her hands outstretched as if calming a wild animal.

“Hela,” She called out soothingly, “It’s going to be okay.”

“You stupid child.” Hela snarled, but she did not raise a hand as Darcy approached. She let her get close, until Darcy was almost shoulder to shoulder with the Goddess.

The men got to their feet and took up defensive positions but Darcy held up a warning hand to them, halting their approach and any action they might attempt. Turning back to Hela she kept her tone sincere as she assured the woman, “We’ll help you. We’ll do it together.”

Hela didn’t look convinced so she added, “My Queen, you’re right. Asgard has fallen into disrepute. My brother and I have done our best, but we were never prepared to rule…We need you.”

The fuming scowl didn’t leave Hela’s face but her shoulders sagged and her angry heavy breathing decreased. Darcy smiled at the woman. “All of us here serve Asgard. We will do what is best for the kingdom. And the rest of the realms.”

“You’ll follow me?” Hela asked with just a hint of hope.

“Of course.” Darcy who had kept her arm outstretched to the men, called to Mjolnir and the hammer flew into her hand. With the momentum driving her swing she hit Hela right in the face, and off the cliff.

Darcy walked back over to the guys with Mjolnir outstretched to Thor. She admitted in a self-deprecating tone, “Okay Odin was right. Bitch is crazy. How do we kill her? Ideas?”

“She’s the Goddess of Death,” Thor said as took back the hammer from her, “how can we kill death?”

“You can’t!” Hela screamed. And that was all the warning Darcy got before she was hit with something. Pain bloomed in her gut.

Darcy fell back and was caught in Loki’s arms. She watched in horror as Hela climbed the rest of the way over the cliff, a short weapon in one hand and long sword manifesting in her free one.

Darcy looked down and saw a long sword sticking out of her stomach. “Well, shit.” She looked up at her bother and saw his devastated expression. Instinctively she tried to reassure him, joking, “Tis only a scratch.”

“Shut up.” Loki swept her up in his arms as the sound of Tony’s repulse blasts sounded and light shot out of his gauntlets. At the same time Thor wound up his arm and hurled Mjolnir at Hela.
It felt like everything stopped, like everyone stopped breathing even, as they looked on in terror and surprise as Thor’s mighty hammer came to a cold stop against Hela’s hand.

The hammer trembled like it was trying to go forward but Hela just smiled at them. Thor held his hand outstretched, calling the hammer back to him.

“It’s not possible.” Thor said stiltedly as the hammer stayed stuck in Hela’s grasp.

“Darling, you have no idea what’s possible.” Hela quipped. And then she shattered Thor’s hammer. The blast that resulted from Mjolnir’s destruction sent a wave of energy and lightning through them, all three men remained standing despite this.

Loki cradled her closer to her body, but she couldn’t stop herself from screaming out in pain as the energy ran through her body like the Ultron weapon had, electrocuting her from the inside out, and aggravating her stab wound tenfold.

When the energy dissipated and Mjolnir fell to the ground in pieces, Darcy couldn’t help but lament its destruction quietly exclaiming, “Mew, mew.”

Hela manifested two twin blades and Tony started firing at her again. Loki looked panicked. He looked up and shouted at the sky, “Bring us back!”

“NO!” Darcy and Thor screamed simultaneously.

Hela charged them as the Bifrost enveloped them all in rainbow light. And they were all hurtling through space along the rainbow bridge that connected the realms and would lead Hela back to Asgard and her seat of power.

“We have to stop her!” Darcy shouted to Loki.

“We can’t! We need to run!” He yelled back. He held tight to her body, keeping her close to his chest. Darcy looked over his shoulder and was relieved to see Tony and Thor flying along with them. But beyond them, she could see Hela.

“FUCK!” Darcy screamed as she pointed to the woman. “Tony!” She hoped Tony would blast her out of the dimensional bridge, but it was Loki who responded first to her warning.

He let go of her lower half and conjured a dagger. Loki threw it at Hela and his aim was true, but Hela was just better. The woman easily caught the dagger and threw it right back.

Darcy slammed her hands against Loki’s chest pushing him away from her. The dagger hit her in the shoulder and the force of it knocked her out of the Bifrost. She hurtled through space, tumbling head over heels in an experience that was painful and disorienting.

As she fell through space, Darcy could not even guess how many galaxies or solar systems she passed. Stars and planets whizzed by so quickly that they blurred into a pretty sparkly soup of colors. Darcy kept tight hold of the sword still lodged in her stomach as she fell.

Her journey came to a sudden end as she passed through a portal or a worm hole or whatever, she reentered an atmosphere that had gravity and she sank like a rock, straight down into the ground. The impact of her fall drove the sword deeper into her belly and she couldn’t contain her screams of pain.
She landed on some crunchy metal stuff. And it smelled. She lay there for a while, in shock and in pain, at some point she must have passed out because when she opened her eyes, she was in a dream.

She was once again a silent observer in someone else’s mind, but she suspected the dreamer was someone she knew as the figures in dream were very familiar. She was on Earth in a park in NYC, not far from Stark tower if she wasn’t mistaken.

Looking around she saw herself, Tony, Strange, Captain America, Wanda, and Bucky all blink out of existence, a shimmery rainbow dust fluttered to the floor in the wake of their abrupt departure. The other Avengers were left behind, staring at where they once stood with solemn expressions.

They barely had a second to grieve before a swarm of media persons converged on the downtrodden group. Sam picked up Steve’s fallen shield from the ground and looked ready to do battle, or at the very least, push his way through the dense crowd to freedom.

From on high a trio of figures flew down and got in between the voracious media and the gloomy Avengers.

“Back up.” A strong accented voice ordered from inside a black cat suit, “Give them room or face the wrath of Wakanda.”

“Do it now.” Pepper’s modulated voice sounded from inside an Iron Man suit. The threatening sound of her weapons preparing to fire as she raised her arm to the crowd, did nothing to disade the reporters from jostling for position.

The last figure wielded no super suit or weapon, but it seemed to her that his glare tamed the clamoring media personnel better than the threats from the others. Happy Hogun walked towards the crowd of reporters with his arms outstretched, silently urging them all to back away.

And they did. The crowd backed up at Happy’s command and the further he walked forward the less reporters their seemed to be. One by one the reporters blinked out of existence until they were all gone.

Happy turned around with a victorious smile declaring, “They’re gone.”

“Thanks man.” Rhodes said gratefully as he slapped his long time friend on the back, “You’re a life saver.”

“It was nothing.” Happy demurred.

“It was everything.” Natasha complimented, she then kissed Happy on the cheek in a very sensual manner.

Rhodes and Natasha lead the Avengers and the Cat Suit man away leaving Pepper and Happy alone. Happy held out his hand and the suit folded away from Peppers body, freeing her. Pepper took his hand with a charming smile and the two of them linked arms and started to leisurely stroll down a path.

The longer they walked the more things changed. Happy’s suit became more fitted and he grew taller and a bowler hat that sat perfectly atop his head. Pepper’s attire changed until she looked like someone out of Downton Abbey. The two came to a lake and sat down on a bench. Pepper cuddled into Happy’s side and out of nowhere ducks began to swim in the calm waters. Not just ducks, but
adorable baby ducks.

She didn’t know whose dream this was, she suspected it was Happy’s, but it could be Peppers or Visions for all she knew. Either way, it would seem the dreamer was content to allow the couple to spend the rest of the dream, sitting on the bench throwing bits of bread to ducks.

Darcy had seen enough.

She woke up and frowned. She was still lying on the cold ground, outside, in some weird smelly metal plastic pile of…stuff. Somehow she found the strength to stumble to her feet.

Blinking she found herself surrounded by darkness, the only light she could see was from the differently colored portals overhead, and the weak blinking stars. She walked forward and her shin hit something hard and metal and she toppled over.

“Fuck everything.” She cursed. Looking down at her body she could barely see her wound, but she knew it was deep and deadly. Her shoulder also hurt like a son of a bitch but she doubted it was a serious as the injury in her stomach.

“I am not smart.” Darcy berated herself as she got up again, “I am not good at plans. I’m not manipulative or politically savvy. I should not be in charge of anything. Lest of all hostile negations with crazy deities of death.”

Darcy really thought hitting Hela in the face with Mjolnir and off a cliff and into the ocean would have given them at least a couple minutes to talk and plan. Carefully Darcy inched her way forward, mindful of the stuff she couldn’t see due to the reduced visibility that was littered literally everywhere. She could hear something like people to her left, so she slowly made her way in that direction.

After a couple minutes she realized her hand was warm and sticky. “I’m losing a shit ton of blood right now.” Darcy mused. “And yet, I still can’t remember if it’s better to leave in the stabby thing, or pull it out.”

Darcy’s ears perked up; in the distance she could hear the distinct sound of cheering. “Please be a Taylor Swift concert or something.”

Realizing she wasn’t going to get very far taking baby steps in the dark, Darcy made a difficult decision. She constructed her shield and stepped aboard. She rose high in the air, straight up. Her wound bled freely without her hand on it to staunch the flow and she could feel her energy depleting at an exponential rate. But once she got high enough she could see lights and buildings in the distance. Looking down she realized she was in some sort of massive garbage dump.

Realizing what she had been laying in and how gross it was she looked down at her stomach and muttered, “Okay, that’s definitely infected.”

She flew forward, towards the lights and sounds.

As she was flying her shield flickered out of existence momentarily once or twice, but she made it to…wherever she was. The place that was the loudest and the brightest reminded her of a coliseum.
Like from Rome, with the lions and the gladiators.

She came to stand on the edge of the building, the view given to her from the vantage point was impressive and bonus, no one seemed to notice her arrival.

The place was filled with stadium seating and full to capacity with people. And aliens. All different kinds. In the center of the building was a dirt floor ring, and the main event was two people fighting. At least she thought they were people. One of them looked kind of like a rock monster so she wasn’t sure. Idly she thought it could have been an alien interruptive dance performance, but she wouldn’t bet on it.

Darcy began to blink a lot. She was trying to remain awake, but it was hard. Her thinking was becoming sluggish and spots were dancing in front of her vision. She stumbled a few steps, almost toppling off the edge of the building.

Quickly she constructed her shield once more and used it to lower herself down into the building. She stood and swayed at the top of the stairs, she was in line with the last row of seating, and the few aliens to her left and right noticed her then. They stared at her from their seats but made no move to help or hurt her so she ignored them.

She was on the cusp of passing out, Darcy made the decision to sit down on the floor least she toppled down the long flight of stairs. Her back slide painfully against the wall, the action irritated the wound in her stomach and shoulder, but once her ass touched down on the dirty sticky steps she let out a noise of relief.

She let her head fall back and closed her eyes.

She woke up to the sound of a mighty ROAR.

“Uwahh!” Darcy called out startled. Lights shined down on her and she held up a hand in an effort to shield her eyes.

“DARCY!” A loud angry voice yelled. Turning her head to the side she saw big green feet.

“Hulk?” Someone was pinning her to the ground but she let her eyes travel up the green feet until she reached the head attached to them. At the sight of her long lost friend, she smiled and cheered despite the disorienting pain she was in, “Hulk!”

Then someone pulled the sword out of her gut and she screamed.

Then they pulled out the dagger from her shoulder and her scream died.

She couldn’t hold on after that.

She passed out.

-------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Darcy’s Going Back to Earth outfit
Tony’s Going Back to Earth outfit
Thor and Loki’s Going Back to Earth outfits
Darcy’s Loki Provided Battle Hela Outfit
Hela. Hulk. And so much more are coming up. Let me know how you liked Hela and everything else, moving forward I'm a little unsure how I want to handle Grandmaster, Jeff Goldblum, is a hard man to capture and the character of Grandmaster was left more than a little ambiguous. So any feedback would be great.
Chapter 49 - Hulk

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up in bed with Hulk.

Chapter Notes

end of chapter has Saakar reference pics in case u forgot what stuff looks like

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 49 – Hulk

Darcy awoke in less pain than she expected. There was a tightness surrounding her midsection and a
dull ache in her shoulder, but other than that, she felt okay.

She was very warm on her right side and she could feel right away that she was naked. And as her
mind woke up fully she realized she was pressed up against someone who was equally so. When she
managed to pry her eyes open she was pleased to find herself in a room with dim lighting. With a
twist of her head she learned that her bed companion was none other than the Hulk. And he kind of
drooled a little while he was sleeping.

Blinking Darcy sat up, an action that caused her abdomen to throb momentarily. With a hand on her
gut and a hand holding the soft sheet to her chest, she took in her new surroundings.

It looked like they were in a hotel room. A swanky one. There was a hot tub in the corner, a shelf of
liquor, the bed they were sleeping in was huge and was obviously custom made to fit the Hulk’s size
and bulk. And best of all to the left there was a bank of windows.

Darcy slipped from the bed quietly and grabbed up, a neatly folded towel from a nearby chair. She
wrapped herself up and padded across the floor on bare feet to the window. She looked out and let
out a small gasp.

“Not Kansas then.” She quipped quietly to herself. The winding streets and ramshackle buildings
reminded her of how the Disney movie depicted the city of Agrabah, but with aliens. She turned
back to the bed and stared at the sleeping Hulk, silently wondering if the bed frame of the bed, which
consisted of a giant set of jaws, was made from a real alien skeleton or not.

She shuffled about the room, opening jars and smelling them, picking over the possessions and
snooping. She tried opening one door and was met with a denying beep. Another door though,
revealed to her a luxurious bathroom with a Hulk sized toilet.

“Hooray,” Darcy cheered unenthusiastically, “Let’s try not to fall in.”

After tackling the toilet and taking care of her bathroom needs, Darcy brushed her teeth with her
finger, with a tube of something that smelled minty and she hoped to god was toothpaste. It was
sitting next to a huge tooth brush so she had high hopes that she was correct in her assumption.

She had to climb on top of the counter to get high enough to see herself in the mirror.

Her hair was a blue knotted mess, but she was pleased to find her face makeup free. With a wave of her hand she untangled her hair and returned it to its natural brown curly state.

Next she examined her shoulder wound. There was a thin red scar but it looked like it was still or almost healed and there was no bandage covering it so she assumed all was well. When she dropped the towel to examine her gut, she found that under the white patched bandage, the wound there was more extensive than her other injury by far.

She could make out fine, clear stitches, still holding the wound closed as it healed. She hissed as she poked the tender skin around the area but, it didn’t look discolored or ooze pus, so she assumed it didn’t get infected after all.

She got down off the counter and rewrapped herself in the towel. She gave the shower a last longing look but, she didn’t fancy being wet and naked when the Hulk woke up and found her missing. There was no telling how he would react so she forwent the cleansing experience she really wanted, and settled for wiping herself down with a wash cloth.

As soon as she closed the bathroom door behind her, she could tell right away that someone had been in the room while she was gone. At a little table a breakfast feast had been laid out. Darcy looked around but didn’t see anyone except the still sleeping Hulk.

With a shrug Darcy sat down and started smelling and taste tasting everything before her growling stomach compelled her to throw caution to the wind and start shoving food into her face as fast as she could.

Half an hour later, she was stuffed and there was a pulling sensation at her stomach near her stitches. She patted her stomach gently; the feeling of being full did wonders for her mood but couldn’t chase away the worry from her heart. She felt a cloud of uneasiness settle over head as she realized that, wherever she was, she was probably going to be sidelined for the rest of the Hela episode.

Tony had looked for Hulk a good long while after he left Earth following the Ultron battle. And he had never found even a hint of where the big guy had ended up. Following that logic, it stood to reason that rescue was not going to be forthcoming. She was stranded on this strange alien planet until further notice. Of course eventually her own sporadic sleep teleportation would send her home, but there really was no relying on that to work in a timely fashion.

Her heart ached with the weight of the unknown. She couldn’t help but run scenarios in her head, like Tony dying with the Warriors Three by Hela’s hand when they arrived on Asgard, or Loki and Thor dying because Hela attacked them full force after Darcy’s deception riled her up. Hela killing Stephen. Then Bucky. And Steve and Wanda and all the guards and warriors in all of Asgard.

She was in misery in not knowing what was happening to her loved ones at that critical moment. And she felt worse for the fear that she might have contributed to Asgard’s destruction. She couldn’t help but wonder if all her meddling lead to a different outcome? Or if the addition of her Earthly allies in Asgard’s defense would turn the tide against the Goddess of death…or just add to the body count left in her wake?
Darcy felt sick and it had nothing to do with the amount of food she had just eaten. She turned and looked at Hulk. He still slept and at this point she was seriously debating the merits of waking him up and possibly pissing him off with the alternative being her dying of curiosity and unasked questions.

She was also a little annoyed that she couldn’t find her belongs anywhere. Not her jump suit, or back pack, or even her underwear. The towel she wore was so large that it stretched from under the arm pit to the floor, and even though it smelled clean and it was soft, Darcy would feel way more comfortable about everything if she had her infinity bag at her disposal.

Unsure what to do, Darcy set up a chair in front of the window and people watched for a little while. Then she paced for a little while. And then she sang to herself for a little while. And then she decided to chance it and wake the Hulk up because she was super bored and not as good at amusing herself as she thought she would be.

From across the room she called to the giant in a clear and commanding voice, “Wake up Hulk.”

The effect was immediate. Hulk sat up and blinked blearily.

“Hulk? It’s me. Darcy.” She called out as she gave a little wave. “Remember me?”

Hulk smiled drowsily at her and stretched his arms over his head. He then flopped back down onto the mattress and let out a long yawn as he stretched out his legs.

“Hulkie, I’m kind of dying here, so if you could provide me with some answers I would be really grateful.” Darcy babbled, “Not that I’m not grateful that you--did you save me? What happened? I remember passing out and before that getting stabbed and I saw a building and went towards it and then…what happened and where are we? And why am I locked in? Are we in a fancy jail cell?”

“Darcy safe. Hulk tired. Talk later.” Hulk said dismissively as he sat up and threw off the covers.

Darcy went bright pink as the naked Hulk, walked past her towards the bathroom. She stood frozen in shock as Hulk shut the door behind him she whispered her to herself, “So much penis.”

Hulk spent forty five minutes in the shower. By the time he finally emerged from the bathroom with a towel wrapped around his waist, Darcy was a ball of energy and kind of angry. She had tried to join him in the bathroom but he had locked the door and she didn’t think busting in on the Hulk when he obviously wanted privacy was the smartest course of action. So she didn’t break the door down.

“What the hell dude!” Darcy shouted as Hulk put his pinkie finger in his ear and twisted it about. Hulk pushed past her gently, ignoring her as he sat down at the breakfast table.

He frowned at the display before him, then he turned to her and accused with a pout, “You eat Hulk’s food?”

“Fuck yeah I did.” Darcy stated proudly, “You just spent an hour in the bathroom! I told you I was anxious and needed answers and you totally ignored me!”

Hulk scowled at her as he bit into a pastry that she had taken a bite out of but didn’t finish eating.

Darcy took the seat beside him and forced herself to calm down. Or at least appear calm on the outside. Under the table her she couldn’t suppress her jittery leg. She addressed the Hulk in a tightly controlled tone, asking, “Where are we?”
“Hulk’s room.”

“On which planet?” Darcy prompted.

“Sakaar.” Hulk informed her as he guzzled down a pitchers worth of juice.

“Never heard of it.” Darcy lamented. “…Odin’s dead.”

“Odin who?” Hulk asked.

“Odin, Thor’s dad….mine too, he adopted me.” Hulk grunted but said nothing so she continued, “Loki’s alive too. And Tony…they were all with me, we were traveling back to Asgard via the Bifrost but we were being chased by this—by Thor’s sister Hela, the Goddess of Death. She’s the one who stabbed me. I got thrown out of the Bifrost. Landed here on Scar.”

“Sakaar.” Hulk corrected. He picked up a bowl and brought it to his lips slurping the contents down loudly. Darcy loved Hulk, she really did, but in that moment she wished he was Bruce. Hulk seemed so disinterested in what she was saying; she knew Bruce would be more empathetic to her plight and fragile mental state. However from Hulk’s room she could tell, having the big guy as her ally would be more fortuitous than puny Banner.

“I need to go home.” She told him in an plain tone.

Hulk snorted as he put the empty bowl down. “No way home.”

“There has to be a way.” Darcy argued.

Hulk looked at her and for the first time since reuniting she saw a measure of emotional investment on his part. He looked sad for her, pitying, as he repeated himself, “No way home. Sakaar home now.”

She looked down avoiding his gaze as she mumbled, “Agree to disagree.”

Hulk put a hand on her shoulder and gently squeezed prompting her to look up. “Hulk keep Darcy safe. Darcy sleep magic home. Then Darcy save Tony. Thor capture Loki. All good.”

Darcy shook her head, “Loki’s not the bad guy. He’s--I love him.” Hulk gave her a surprised look. She rushed to add, “He’s my brother. Like I love Thor, I love Loki. He’s not—Hela, Hela’s the bad guy. She wants to conquer the galaxy and rule as its supreme leader or something crazy like that. Odin locked her away but when he died, her prison was destroyed and she was set free and he told me that he gave me his power and Loki said I have part of the Odin force, and what that means I don’t know and—and I don’t even have any underwear! And Tony asked me to marry him and I made him immortal and Stephen is left behind again and I made steps to reconcile with Wanda but then I had to bail and --and I just can’t believe I abandoned Asgard to deal with shit after all I—I’m supposed to be the fucking princess of Asgard and I’m here and not there! And she’s coming and I’m missing it! I left them. Again. I left when I was needed! And I-I-I—”

She was hyperventilating. Hulk looked alarmed but he didn’t move to help her, he just kept his hand on her shoulder as she freaked out. She scooted back her chair and ducked her head down in between her legs.

“Darcy.” Hulk said as he moved his hand to her back and rubbed slow circles. He didn’t say anything more than her name as she struggled to get her ragged breathing under control. He just kept touching her comfortably.
And eventually her breathing evened out. Hulk’s hand fell away from her body as she lifted her head and sat up. He pushed a glass into her hand and prompted her into taking a drink.

Hulk pet her hair as she drank from the glass greedily. His voice was soft as he attempted to consoled her, “Darcy safe. Don’t worry. Hulk help.”

“How?” Darcy asked, in her voice their was accusation and despair. Hulk stared back for a few seconds before looking away.

“Hulk help.” He dismissed her confidently. Hulk then pushed a plate towards her prompting, “Eat, better.”

Hulk himself picked up a fork and speared a big piece of meat, shoving it into his mouth whole. Ending his side of the conversation by occupying his mouth with the task of eating, the answer to her question was clear; Hulk wasn’t equipped to help her, even if he wanted to.

Sat quietly, zoning out as Hulk finished the rest of his meal in silence.

When Hulk was done he got up and lumbered over to a dresser. When he dropped the towel, mooning her, Darcy covered her eyes. After a couple minutes she called out, “Dressed yet?”

Hulk grunted and she slowly uncovered her eyes. He was wearing a pair of pants that, on him looked like board shorts. He sat down heavily on the end of the bed and looked at her expectantly. It occurred to her that Hulk could do rectify at least one of her problems.

“Do you really want to help me?” She asked invitingly. Hulk nodded his head slowly, as if he could sense that he was being set up.

Darcy tried to appear un-shrew like when she asked, “Okay, so help me. Number one, where’s my bag? Where are my clothes?”

Hulk a face and shrugged his shoulders.

“What do you mean you don’t know?” Darcy snarled exasperatedly.


“YOU THREW OUT MY STUFF?!” Darcy screamed.

Hulk winced and looked slightly apologetic, “Hulk, sorry?”

“Sorry? How could you throw out my bag? I literally had everything—everything in there!” Darcy felt like throwing up. In her mind she ran through all the things she would never see again. Her magic sword. The homing beacon that Tony said would let him find her no matter where she went in the universe. All her weapons. The books she’d taken from the Asgardian library. All her clothes. Her music players. The cool hat Loki gave to her that one time. All her first aid supplies and explosives—

In an effort to not explode into a shrill screaming crazy person, Darcy bit her tongue. Hard. Blood pooled in her mouth and the taste of the coppery liquid gave her something to focus on. Which helped.
“Bag important?” Hulk asked as he approached her where she still sat at the breakfast table.

She nodded. Swallowing down the blood in her mouth she insisted in small voice, “Very important.”

“Then Hulk get bag back from Grandmaster.” Hulk stated with a nod. He let himself fall to the floor so he was sitting on his butt before her with his knees slightly bent. The position put them at eye level and Darcy appreciated the gesture.


“Thank you.” Darcy swallowed tickly and nodded, “It’s not because it’s my bag, its--there’s an infinite amount of space in the bag and it’s got everything. A lot of irreplaceable stuff… not mention extra underwear.”

Hulk smiled at that. And that’s when she realized she had been kind of rude. And she hadn’t really greeted him properly. Slowly a smile spread across her face.

She got up and threw her arms around Hulks neck and squeezed him tightly in a hug. Breathing out softly she said, “Hi Hulkie. I missed you. Sorry I forgot to say that, before. But know that I’m so glad to see you again big guy. I’ve been worried about you.”


Darcy gave Hulk the highlights of what had been going on in his absence from Earth. The Accords. Wanda. The mind control. Her failed attempt to become an Avenger. Her reveling her apocalyptic visions to the world, Thanos, and the abolishment of the Accords.

He sat on a work out bench and did arm curls the whole time she was talking.

But Darcy didn’t mind. Not really. Hulk wasn’t the best conversationalist but she knew he cared in his own way. And mainly she was reassured by his familiar face. She had been stranded alone on a alien planet before, it had sucked, but this time at least she had a friend.

When lunch was brought in a little later, Darcy jumped on the servant who was wheeling in the cart of food.

“Hi. I need clothes.” Darcy announced. The servant looked at her but then ducked her head and continued loading the dirty breakfast dishes onto her cart. Darcy looked back at Hulk but he was admiring his bicep in the reflection of the window.

Darcy rolled her eyes and turned back to the quiet blue skinned woman. “Hi there, I’m Darcy. I don’t mean to freak you out or break the rules and I don’t know if you understand what language I’m speaking, but assuming you do, I need your help. I have clothes in my bag, but Hulk said that the..Grandmaster guy has it. He said he would get it for me, but in the mean time can I have some clothes? Please? Non Hulk sized clothes?”

“They don’t talk.” Hulk informed her. The servant quickly unloaded the lunch items onto the table and scurried away.
“Are you a prisoner here? Are we in a fancy penthouse prison? Or a zoo?” Darcy asked contemplatively, the door locked behind the servant as far as she could tell.

“Hulk not prisoner. Hulk champion.” Hulk boasted. He then sat down and began eating. When he noticed she was still lost in thought staring at the door, he tugged lightly on her hair.

“What?” Darcy asked in a distracted voice.

“Eat.” Hulk ordered.

“I’m not hungry.”

Hulk grabbed her arm and pulled her until she was sitting in the chair beside him. He repeated himself, “Eat.”

“I told you--”

Hulk cut her off pointing to her shoulder then her stomach, “Eat and heal.”

Darcy looked down at the food. Some of it looked so foreign and gross, but some of it smelled okay. And despite what she said, she actually was hungry again.

“Okay.” Darcy relented.

Hulk smirked, “Good.”

After lunch Hulk went back to working out and Darcy moved over to the window and resumed people watching. They spent a long time in silence, but Darcy didn’t mind. A few hours after doing nothing a servant arrived once again this time pushing an empty cart, but also carrying a garment bag.

The servant laid the garment bag out on the chair and said nothing as she loaded that afternoons lunch dishes.

Hulk came up behind her as she Darcy practically skipped over and picked up the garment bag, gushing, “Thank you thank you thank you!”

“Where’s food?” Hulk questioned the servant. But as he said, the servant didn’t reply. Not that Darcy cared. She was still so happy to be provided with some type of female non towel related clothing that she held the garment bag to her chest and did a little spin of happiness.

Overhead a voice sounded, “My dearest champion. I invite you and your pet to join me tonight for dinner before your big fight. Be ready in two shakes of a lamb tail. But no later than six.”

Darcy looked up at the ceiling, “Who was that? And did he just call me a ‘pet’?”

The servant left quietly as Hulk answered, “Grandmaster.”

“Who is this Grandmaster exactly?” Darcy asked as she unzipped the garment bag and frowned at the contents inside. She sighed disappointedly, “What the fuck?”

Inside was a pair of lace up gold sandals, booty shorts, and a long sleeved shirt. They were the only things inside. No underwear, no bra, no socks, no instructions. Oh, and to top it off the shorts and shirt were made of fucking metal, just in case the outfit wasn’t unappealing enough.
“No.” Darcy complained, “No, no no no no.” She held the items up for Hulk to see, “Are you fucking kidding me with this shit?”

Hulk shrugged, “Look nice. Shiny.”

“Oh fuck you.” Darcy cursed. Hulk laughed in response. Darcy’s eyes slanted over at him as she muttered, “You schadenfreude-ing asshole.”

Half an hour later, Darcy was dressed wearing the ridiculously uncomfortable and revealing outfit. The booty shorts were more like golden underpants in reality. And the whole overly sexual intentions of the outfit gave her vague Princess Leia gold bikini vibes.

She kept her towel from earlier wrapped around her like a giant toga/snuggie.

She felt so self conscious in the outfit due to the lack of undergarments, the fact that it had been provided to her by a strange alien overlord, and because it didn’t even look all that good on her. The gold tones washed her skin out slightly and the giant patch bandage stood out prominently ruining the sexy effect.

In her opinion being sexualized and forced to wear an insulting costume was one thing, failing to look good in said costume and in fact looking like a fat, pale, injured weirdo was a humiliation of a different kind entirely.

She was so uncomfortable, but Hulk’s offer to let her wear one of his shorts as a dress, really didn’t work out logistically. She hadn’t done anything to her hair or make up; she hoped to make this Grandmaster guy feel guilty for stealing her bag and providing her such a shitty and sexist clothing option. Besides, she was feeling so low that it was hard to gather the will power to get ‘gussied up’.

Hulk waved his hand at the lock on the door and led her down a bunch of hallways. Darcy stayed alert and tried to remember everything they passed but it was a very winding journey, and at one point Hulk himself got lost and had to ask a guard for directions.

When they came to a big set of double doors Darcy inhaled deeply. She felt like she was being dragged before Odin all over again. To be scrutinized and judged, and dealt with swiftly should she displease this ‘Grandmaster’ guy.

A pair of guards stood at the doors, and they opened them upon seeing Hulk and she approach. Darcy ducked behind Hulk when she realized they weren’t just dining the Grandmaster. There was a party in full swing and there were many ornately dressed people in attendance.

Darcy had been afraid her gold barely there ensemble would have her standing out for all the wrong reasons, that the clothes would mark her as someone who was to be objectified and targeted. She was so wrong. Everyone in the room was dressed similarly. Everyone wore tight fitting, sheer, or shiny party wear. Except she didn’t fit in. Because she had been insecure and arrived wrapped in a towel.

Like a weirdo.

Their entrance got them many looks, the Hulk by himself was obviously impressive, but her trailing behind him dressed as she was, seemed to set off a wave of gossip. Couples making out broke apart to whisper, those on the dance floor stopped moving and stared with mouths agape. None of the
gawking seemingly affected Hulk as he led them forward deeper into the party.

Darcy kept her head up even as she felt the urge to shrink in on herself. It was an awkward thing to walk into a room and know that everyone was talking about you. The party guests were eclectic looking in a galactic sense. She saw aliens with robot parts, aliens with animal parts, a rock lady, some ‘Yo Gabba Gabba!’ looking creatures. There were aliens there whose species she couldn’t even attempt to guess at. However there was a smattering of human looking individuals.

She followed Hulk as he brought them to a stop in front of a long table that had a full course set out. And at the head of the table was a guy with grey hair and a blue line under his lower lip that extended to his chin. He looked human but there was something about him that told her on an instinctive level that he was not.

The man had a girl hanging grapes in front of his face for him to eat from while another one massaged his shoulders. It did not escape her notice that each of the women attending to his ‘needs’ were dressed in shiny metal gold dresses, like hers, and they appeared human as she did. However the women attending to the Grandmaster looked pretty, polished, and thin. Unlike her who looked super pale, scruffy, and nearly spilled out of the metal top she wore.

Behind him and the women, there was a pair of serious faced soldiers. The women behind his right shoulder looked particularly intimidating. When the Grandmaster saw Hulk a smile lit up his face. He called out, “Hulk! Everyone, it’s our champion!”

The party guests began clapping and cheering for Hulk. Looking around Darcy smiled slightly at the sight. It was nice to see Hulk be appreciated, whatever the reason. As Hulk got closer to the man Darcy tried to make herself as small as possible in hopes the man wouldn’t acknowledge her at all. The whole Jabba the Hut/Leia thing was definitely looming in her mind.

“Grandmaster.” Hulk said in greeting. And then the big oaf got down on one knee and bowed to the man, exposing her to the Grandmasters gaze.

Darcy felt her cheeks heat up. The Grandmaster grinned at her with a wicked smile. “Oh, and you brought your own party favor.”

Hulk grunted and got to his feet. He put his hand on her back and pushed her forward, “This Darcy. Hulk’s friend.”

Grandmaster extended his hand and Darcy compelled to be polite placed her own in his grasp, “Hey.” She said in greeting.

Grandmaster held her hand motionless, not shaking it, just holding her hand. It was weird but she allowed it. He didn’t say anything as he stared at her intently. Darcy compelled by the silence scrambled for something to say, “Thank you, Grandmaster. I assume, my uh, stitches and not bleeds to death, are because of you—your kindness. Generosity. So, thank you.”

He didn’t respond for a long moment but then the Grandmaster shook his head and smiled charmingly, as if he had just zoned out while she was speaking and come back ‘online’ so to speak. He brought her hand to his lips and kissed her knuckles saying, “Hello. Pleasure. You are of course honored to meet me. The Grandmaster. I preside over a little harlequinade called the Contest of Champions. And our Hulk is my most beloved champion. And any friend of my beloved champion is a friend of mine. So, don’t be shy.”

“Uh…thanks.” Darcy stuttered. Grandmaster let her hand go and Darcy clutched at her towel toga in paranoia that it might unravel and leave her exposed. The action drew Grandmaster’s attention to her
outfit and he frowned at her.

“What is this? Topaz!” He called over his shoulder; the guard behind him with her hair in a tight bun took a step closer to him.

“Topaz!” Grandmaster shouted again unnecessarily.

“Here.” Topaz announced.

Grandmaster looked annoyed when Topaz showed up behind the shoulder he wasn’t expecting and he had to turn his head the other way. He glared at the woman, “I thought I told you to get Hulk’s pet something to wear. A festive ensemble so the poor thing wouldn’t feel out of place? And here she comes to us dressed in rags? No. No this won’t do.” Grandmaster turned on her and ordered, “Take that thing off, we’ll get you something more appropriate.”

“I did—I got the outfit you sent to our room.” Darcy corrected. She clenched her hands in the material of the towel even tighter. Hulk stepped closer to her. She wondered if he could sense her distress.

“And I thank you for it, really, so generous of you, but I…prefer this.” Darcy hated that her voice raised an octave at the end of her sentence making the whole thing sound like a question.

The Grandmaster’s brow knit together, “And the towel is…an exciting fashion choice. I like it. Really. Vagabond chic.”

Darcy looked down at herself, she knew she looked ridiculous, especially given the party setting but the Grandmasters willingness to gloss over her oddity left her feeling grateful, but unsettled at the same time. He reached forward and picked up a lock of her hair, he felt the strands in between his fingers in an evaluating fashion. After a few seconds he let the lank strands fall to her shoulders.

“I should have thought about providing you with some beauty essentials.” He made a contemplative noise, “Your face while beautiful on its own, lacks a certain pizzazz that I’ve come to expect in my Sakaarian subjects. And your hair…have you even showered?”

Darcy blushed as admitted, “I haven’t. I didn’t know if I was allowed to get my stitches wet, or if I—we would be summoned or…whatever.”

Grandmaster’s face lit up. “Yes. Oh yes. Your injuries. Pierced by a mighty blade you found us in your time of need. A blessing. And I being so gracious, uh, had my medical technicians heal you. You’re welcome.”

“Thank you.” Darcy said with a hint of skepticism. The man’s motives were not as black as white as he would have her believe. She knew that much. The Grandmaster’s eyes flickered up to Hulks face quickly before returning to her.

He smiled at her without lecherousness as he ordered, “Take off your robe and let us see how you are healing. Hmm? Oh, yes. Do that.”

“I’m not very comfortable in the outfit you provided, I mean I’m wearing it, but I—there’s a reason why I felt compelled to cover up. So, if it’s all the same to you, I’d rather not.” Darcy declined politely.

Grandmaster’s smile didn’t falter at her refusal. He continued, “Well, uh, how can we know if your wounds have become infected or not. You must show us. Come now, quickly, nothing to be ashamed of. I find your form quite pleasing but I’ve seen it all before I assure you.”
“Like I said, I’d rather not.” Darcy refused more sternly.

“Come on now don’t be a wet blanket—” Hulk cut Grandmaster off with a roar. He slammed his fist on the table making the glass wear chime as everything on the table jumped.

Hulk remained bent over, his fist on the table as he addressed the Grandmaster. Physically putting himself in between the Grandmaster and her, Hulk spoke in a threatening tone. “Darcy say no. Then answer is no.”

Grandmaster kept the smile on his face, but it did appear a little strained. He leaned back in his chair as he addressed Hulk in a friendly tone, “Very astute my champion. No does mean no. And yes means yes. Very good policy. A champion in the arena and a champion of people. So, admirable. Isn’t he folks?”

There was a smattering of applause from the party guests around them. Hulk undeterred by Grandmasters flattery asserted, “Darcy not pet. Darcy Hulk’s friend. Darcy safe. Or else.”

There was a twitch in Grandmaster’s expression, as if he wanted to lash out at being told what to do, but he held himself back. He addressed Hulk in the same easy tone as before. “You’re very protective over your friend. Darcy, was it?.”

He stared at her intently as he said her name, holding her gaze for an uncomfortable few seconds before Hulk move his head, blocking Grandmasters view of her. Hulk snarled and Grandmaster patted Hulk on the shoulder soothingly, “Calm down. No need to get territorial, I already promised her to you. Didn’t I? Remember, when she first arrived and started dying and bleeding all over the place? You asked for her life, and I gave it to you. I saved her for you.”

The tone Grandmaster used when talking to Hulk was almost seductive. And it did seem to calm the Hulk somewhat. Hulk stood up once again, leaving them side by side in front of the Grandmaster. Her view now unobstructed revealed that the Grandmaster’s guard was poised at the ready with a staff pointed at Hulk. The guard did not relax her stance once Hulk backed off. She remained poised and ready to strike.

Grandmaster talked as if unawares of his guard’s actions or that his life had been in danger at all, “Hulk. You are my champion and I spoil you. I always spoil my favorites. It’s a character flaw. No need to work yourself into a tizzy. You’ve made yourself very clear. We know that. Darcy belongs to you. No question.”

Grandmaster turned his head and addressed the guard who stood ready to strike, “Topaz? Who does Darcy belong to?”

“Hulk.” Topaz replied automatically, her body unmoving as she held the staff out threateningly. Darcy internally bristled at being referred to as if she was an object, one that could be given and taken away, but the woman’s eyes were cold and hard and they compelled her to keep her mouth shut, just this once. She had no doubt that given the word ‘go’ from the Grandmaster the lady body guard would do—whatever—with the staff, to the Hulk. And Darcy did not want to find out what weapon these people had that they thought could hurt the Hulk.

Grandmaster turned back to Hulk and patted the green man’s arm, “See. No one’s arguing with you. I gave her to you; she is your reward for being my most spectacular champion yet.”

Grandmaster turned his head to the girl holding his grapes, she brought the fruit closer to his mouth and he bit off one of the bright pink fruits and chewed. He turned to them and said cajolingly, “C’mon lighten up! It’s a party. Music!”
The volume of the music had lowered while they were all talking, given the other party guests the chance to eavesdrop more easily, but at his word the volume increased and those standing around watching the exchange went back to their activities. Around them the aliens went back to dancing, eating, and talking amongst themselves. Darcy let out a sigh of relief at not being the center of attention anymore.

She put a hand on Hulk’s back. “It’s okay big guy. I think he gets the point.”

Grandmaster’s plastic smile fell for a second and he stared at her with a perturbed expression as he replied, “Yes. Point gotten.”

Darcy tried to be diplomatic and smooth things over. She moved forward and stepped over the bench seat that lined the long table. She sat down closest to the Grandmaster; she gave the man a nod of respect before turning to Hulk. She smiled at him invitingly, “Why don’t we sit and eat big guy?”

She gestured to the mounds of food spread out on the table, “I’m sure you’re hungry Hulkie.” Hulk looked uncertain. She patted the seat next to her. “C’mon.”

Hulk’s eyes bounced from her to the Grandmaster who was watching their exchange with keen interest.

“All right.” Hulk patted her head messing up her hair further as he vowed, “But, we go if Darcy want to go.”

Darcy pushed Hulk’s hand off her head. She held onto his hand though and used it to pull him next to her, prompting him to sit on the bench with her. “Okay, big guy. Thanks. But let’s not be rude, also I’m hungry.”

“All right.” Hulk said but the look in his eyes suggested that the statement was more of a question.

Darcy wrapped her arms around his bicep and squeezed, “With you on my side, how could I not be?” Turning back to the Grandmaster she saw a look of intrigue on his face.

“All right.” Grandmaster chimed in as he raised his glass and toasted her.

All around her people were engaging in conversation. Even Hulk was fielding questions from his fans. She remained quiet for the most part, it was only Grandmaster who would occasionally ask her something or make a pithy remark in her direction. But it was a weirdly isolating experience, to be on the outside and so apart from everyone else who seemed to be having a good time.

Halfway through the meal Darcy became more self conscious about being the weirdo in a towel toga, who wore no makeup, and had barely tamed hair, than being seen as the girl with the big band aid on her stomach who barely squeezed into the golden booty shorts and top. And really once everyone was ordered to get back to partying, her extreme modesty seemed a little overboard and silly.

Her actions may have been aided by the two cups of wine colored ‘fizzy juice’ that she’d drunken but, ultimately the desire to fit in drove her to unwrap the towel from around her body. Revealing the gold metal outfit she braced herself for commentary and ridicule, but looking around she found that no one really noticed or found the action worthy of interest.

Buoyed by her stealthy act of conformity, she looked around at all the all the exotic and beautiful aliens. There was so much pretty in the room she didn’t know what she wanted to do or who she
wanted to try to copy. One woman with a floor length purple braid caught her eye but ultimately her
gaze was drawn back to the attendants serving Grandmaster. They had gold glitter in her hair and
gold shimmery makeup with the coolest gold glittry lipstick; it made them look like subtle
cosplayers of Jill Masterson from that James Bond movie. Or maybe more like Beyonce from Austin
Powers.

Either way, just as she was about to replicate their make up onto her own face, the Grandmaster
himself caught her eye. He was staring at her. He had noticed her change in attire and as they stared
at each other, he clapped his hands soundlessly in approval.

Something about the look in his eyes had her wanting to impress him. Or maybe not impress him,
but… She didn’t know. However, when she raised her hand to magically apply the makeup to her
face, she took her style cue from the man himself instead of his attendants.

With a wave of her hand she applied lipstick and eye shadow in a deep blue color. She added gold
accents and starry nail polish. As she changed her hair color from its natural brown state to an ombre
rainbow, more people took notice.

All around, people began clapping. Darcy felt her face flush but she took a few mock bows at the
waist, showing gratitude. Grandmaster eyed her appreciatively but merely smiled slyly as he sipped
from his cup.

Hulk grinned down at her and put a hand on her head mussing her hair again, “Darcy pretty.”

“Yes.” A woman complimented from across the table, “Very pretty.” The woman herself was quite
attractive with dark hair and bright eyes and brown skin. She wore face paint above her eyes that
some of the body guards sported, but she wasn’t wearing a uniform.

Hulk smiled at the woman and called her ‘angry girl’, but she didn’t hear the rest of their exchange
because her attention was drawn back to the Grandmaster. He picked up her hand from the table and
held it loosely capturing all her attention.

Darcy frowned at the man as he drew idly with one finger on the back of her hand. He’d been polite
since Hulk interfered upon her behalf, but she got the impression that Grandmaster wasn’t used to the
word ‘no’.

He paused in his ministrations to ask, “How’s about you and me play a game? Hmm?”

“What kind of game?” Darcy asked cautiously.

“A get to know you game. A question and answer game.” Grandmaster said with a charming grin,
“Rules are pretty self-explanatory.”

Darcy didn’t answer she just began to play by asking the first question. “What does that staff do?
And do you really think it can take out the Hulk?”

“It’s my melting stick.” Darcy jerked her head back. Grandmaster chuckled, “Yeah, if people
displease me, I can melt them.” He said it so casually it was disturbing, he was obviously a man not
squeamish about using violence to keep his subjects in line. He turned her hand over and put two
fingers on the pulse point of her wrist.

“Who are you?” Grandmaster looked at her seriously. “Why do you seem different. Special. I’m uh,
drawn to you, in a way, and oddly your beauty is just icing. It’s not my main attraction it’s a side
attraction. So what makes you, you?”
“I’m Darcy Lewis Odinsdottir.”

“Come on.” Grandmaster wheedled, “Give me a little more. Who are you?”

Darcy tilted her head to the side as she thought over how much she wanted to reveal, “I’m from Earth originally and I’m besties with the Hulk. Obvi. Annnnnnd,” She debated about revealing her title as Princess of Asgard, so she concluded with the fact, “I’m adopted. But all of my parents are dead.”

“Hm. Interesting. But not the answer I was looking for.” Grandmaster informed her.

“Too bad.” Darcy answered flippantly.

“You have power.” Grandmaster challenged, his grip tightened on her wrist, “I can feel it.”

“Ah, ah ah.” Darcy chastised, “My turn. Hmm let’s see…How old are you?”

“Time works real different around these parts.” Grandmaster answered evasively, “On any other world I would be millions of years old but here on Sakaar…”

Grandmaster’s were alight with mischief as he let his words trail off. He looked so pleased with himself it annoyed her into asking the question she had been hoping to slowly build to in hopes that he might slip up and answer the question honestly as she lulled him into the habit with asking easy questions.

“Where’s my backpack. You have it, I want it back.” Darcy demanded.

“Ah, ah, ah.” Grandmaster mockingly chastised as she had earlier, “Not your turn.”

“Well maybe I’m done playing.” Darcy said tersely. Without looking she smacked Hulk on the arm alerting him to the conversation. She repeated her demand shortly, “My bag. Where is it?”

Hulk grunted at the Grandmaster in between bites of this blue jello looking stuff, “Shiny bag. You give it back to Darcy.”

“You mean your magic bag? The one with its own pocket universe?” Grandmaster asked with a raised brow.

She was surprised that the he recognized the enchantment. She suspected from the beginning that Grandmaster was more than meets the eye, but if he was over millions of years old, he would not be easily fooled by the mere magic tricks she had mastered. It was an intimidating and depressing thought. She had hoped he was more of a hedonistic power mad careless ruler type. But if he was smart and ruthless too, it didn’t bode well for her.

“Yeah,” She said in dazed tone, “That’s the one.”

“You have weapons in that bag.” Grandmaster stated matter of fact-ly. He turned to address his bodyguard, “Topaz, how many weapons did Hulk’s girl try to smuggle in?”

“752.” Topaz replied.

“752.” Grandmaster repeated.

“Weapons?” Hulk asked looking down at Darcy speculatively.

Darcy shrugged and crossed her arms in front of her chest, “It’s not like I was trying to smuggle
anything in here, I just ya know, carry a lot of weapons on my person these days. Just in case.”

“Darcy don’t need weapons.” Hulk said confidently.

“And I’m afraid I couldn’t give them back to you even if I wanted to. Rules.” Grandmaster said in a false tone with a shrug of his shoulders.

“But, but—” The smug look on Grandmaster’s face told her that pursuing the return of her bag in its entirety was out of the question. So she changed tactics and tried to bargain. “Okay. Keep the weapons. Take them out. Or I’ll take them out. I don’t care about the weapons, but can you give me the rest of my stuff? It is my stuff.”

“Topaz?” Grandmaster called over his shoulder, “Where is the girl’s bag now?”

“In the armory.” Topaz answered, “It is a weapon. And thus treated as such.”

“You see.” Grandmaster gestured to his guard with his hands, “I’m afraid nothing can be done.”

“But…I need my bag.” Darcy whined unable to deny the sadness in her voice.

Grandmaster patted her shoulder gently, “There there.” He pushed a cup of the fizzy juice closer to her, “Here, have a drink. Don’t worry your little head. You are the Hulk’s friend and my guest. As long as he remains my champion, you will be provided for.”

Darcy took the offered drink and sipped from it grumpily. “But I really just wanted my own underpants.”

Grandmaster threw back his head and laughed. “Oh is that all? You had me worried for a minute there. Topaz! Fetch the bag; you can supervise as Darcy retrieves a few items from it. Then it will be put back in the armory.”

Darcy perked up, “Really?”

Grandmaster smiled attractively and tapped her on the nose, “Really.”

“Ohay.” Darcy cheered. “Hooray. I’m so happy, thank you.”

Grandmaster licked his lips, “See, I’m not such a bad guy? Reasonable. Powerful. Handsome. I’ve got it all.” Grandmaster raised his glass and Darcy raised hers, her good mood reframing the Grandmaster’s ego in a charming light. They clinked the rims together and then drank.

Hulk put a hand around her back and hugged her to his side, “Darcy like it here.”

“I’m beginning to buddy.” Darcy conceded as she threw back her head and drained the glass. She put the empty cup on the table she let out a little hiccup, the ‘fizzy juice’ was as good if not better than the ‘yummy ale’ back on Asgard. The liquid warmed her from the inside out and made her head feel float-y.

“I’m really beginning to.” Darcy repeated as Grandmaster motioned to have their glasses refilled.

A little later Hulk left her to get ready for his big fight. Apparently the whole gladiator thing was a thing and Hulk was the star. She was admittedly a little drunk, but not overly so. So when the party
guests started to leave and only the inner circle was left, she allowed the Grandmaster to link arms with her as they walked.

They were heading to the VIP viewing box so they could watch Hulk kick ass in style. She was actually excited; Hulk seemed cheerful as he left her in Grandmaster’s company and she’d never attended a sporting event, except for some women’s gymnastics exhibitions when she was a child and teen. She wasn’t a sports fan, so it was but she was enthusiastic about the event all the same.

“What are you?” Grandmaster asked as they walked.

“I’m a girl.” Darcy answered succinctly.

Grandmaster rolled his eyes, “Yes, I can see that. But, what uh are you? You have power, old power, power I haven’t felt in a very long, long time.”

Darcy shrugged and nearly tripped on the doorway as they walked into the booth, “I’m just Darcy. I mean, I’m Asgardian. And human. And a Guardian of the Galaxy. And I was an Avenger but then I quit/got fired and now I’m with Tony and Stephen and kind of a Princess, but really, I’m just Darcy.”

Grandmaster blinked at her as he kept her steady and led her over to a long white couch. He settled in the corner, and compelled her to sit right next to him.

“Kind of a princess?” Grandmaster marveled.

“Kind of.” Darcy answered. She could feel the goofy smile on her face widen as she reached out and tapped Grandmaster’s nose like he had done to her earlier, “Boop.”

“You are more entertaining than I thought you’d be.” Grandmaster said with a sense of true surprise.

“Well, you are weirdly charming. Like a hot grandpa or a super old uncle who is also a Marie Antoinette meme come to life. But knowing you know that Hulk will fuck you up if you touch me makes it so much easier to like your whole thing.” She gestured wildly to his body, “All of it. Just like all of your stuff.”

Grandmaster looked amused. He put an arm around her shoulders and whispered conspiratorially, “We’re touching now.”

Darcy giggled and swatted the older man’s chest lightly, “You know what I mean.”

“No. What do you mean?” Grandmaster asked with an indulgent smile.

“Bad touch. Touch me.” Darcy whispered back.

“Oh.” Grandmaster said with a nod his voice mocking and knowing all at once, “So you’re a virgin.”

“NO!” Darcy denied loudly, her eyes widened when she realized she had yelled, “I mean, no.”

“So you want me to touch you?” Grandmaster said with a sly grin.

“Ugh.” Darcy scooted away from the man, “If you’re going to get creepy again--”

Grandmaster followed her, scooting closer, “No, no no. I’m just joking. We’re joking. Topaz?”

“Here.” The guard announced.
“Topaz are we joking?” Grandmaster asked.

“We are.” The woman replied flatly.

Grandmaster put his arm around her shoulders and pulled her into his side, enticing, “See, we’re having a good time don’t get cranky on me now.”

“Then stop talking like you want into my pants.” Darcy replied bluntly, “Everytime you do your charming score nosedives until your swimming in pervert-ville.”

“But you’re not wearing pants.” Grandmaster joked. It was so corny, Darcy couldn’t help it, she laughed. And that’s when she knew she was more than buzzed or tipsy, she was drunk. Inebriated. Tanked. There were so many words for drunk it was actually kind of interesting. Sloshed. Wasted. Hammered.

“Hammered” She giggled covering her face unable to stand her own silliness.

Grandmaster smiled at her. “There, laughing, joking, smiling. Much better.” He fingered a lock of her hair, “Can you do any more party tricks?”

Darcy smiled mischievously at the man, “Dude. You have no idea.”

Darcy mostly ignored the fights, Grandmaster had more ‘fizzy juice’ brought to them and they drank and talked and joked. When he dropped the whole ‘Grandmaster’ king poo-ba persona, he was just a weird and funny guy. And he was full of stories. Granted they were mostly about himself and how awesome he was, but they were also informative about Sakaar and how it run. And best of all, Grandmaster was a distraction. From her worry’s that were worlds away and out of her control. From the panic she felt when she thought of Tony and Stephen and their fate. From all of the responsibilities that had been weighing her down as of late.

Darcy knew it was a little stupid to keep drinking with the man as he may have seemed jovial and fun, but he was the ruler of the little planet she now found herself on. He had power and there was a layer of menace just beneath the surface of his ‘good time’ kingly persona, but she found herself liking him anyway. Also, by that point she was already drunk, so she saw no point in refusing to drink more. After all, you couldn’t reverse drunkenness.

They only stopped ignoring the fights when it was Hulks turn.

“Yay!” Darcy screamed as she jumped up, “GO HULK!” She waved enthusiastically as Hulk roared at the crowd and soaked up the thousands of fans chanting his name.

“HULK, IT’S ME! DARCY! HI! HI HULK” Darcy shouted. Turning around she looked at Topaz, “Can he see us in here?”

The woman ignored her. Grandmaster stood and move to her side. He snapped his fingers and Topaz and another guard surrounded them and turned on handheld machines pointed at them. Darcy gasped as their image appeared in the main arena as a giant hologram. “Big round of applause for all of our worthy competitors so far. Really, give it up. Half of them died for your entertainment.”

Darcy blinked at him, “Wait, these matches are to the death?”
Grandmaster ignored her question but pointed to her dramatically, “And, look who’s joined us! This is Princess Darcy! Say hello.” The crowd cheered. “You might have seen her dramatic entrance the other night and been wondering about her connection to our illustrious champion.” The crowd cheered even louder.

Grandmaster waved his hands, “Settle down, settle down. Now, I know rumors and speculation have been flying around like crazy, but I’m happy to inform you all that Princess Darcy isssssss Hulk’s best friend!”

The crowd cheered like crazy. And Hulk let out a mighty roar and thumped his fist on his chest. Grandmaster leant down and whispered in her ear, “Give ‘em a wave. They’ll love it.”

Darcy did as Grandmaster asked and waved. The crowd cheered even louder, but when Darcy saw Hulk wave back at her, she melted a little and waved at him in particular calling out, “Hi Hulkie! Hi!”

“Look at her, nearly healed from being stabbed if you can believe it.” Darcy blushed and pressed her lips together as the crowd continued to scream excitedly. Grandmaster put his hand on her waist and tugged her even closer remarking, “Talk about a tale of beauty and the beast! Theirs is a friendship spanning the galaxy itself and they are so grateful to be reunited here, on SAKAAR!”

The crowd screamed with pride. Grandmaster turned to her when the hollering died down and addressed her directly, “Say Darcy dear, did you happen to catch any of the fight the last time you were here?”

“Well then, I guess its main event time!” Grandmaster called out to the crowd and the cheered and screamed so loud that it was deafening.

The match was terrible.

It was exciting and fun to watch at first, but then it was just terrible. As the matches wore on, Darcy shrunk further in on herself. She stopped cheering and commenting and responding to anything Grandmaster said to her.

First Hulk fought this big robot man, android? Cyborg? She wasn’t sure, but he reminded her of Vision. And so when Hulk ripped the guys head off and punted it into the crowd as a souvenir, she felt a little nauseous.

In the ring Hulk had flair and power and he just dominated, whenever a match took longer than a few minutes, it was apparent Hulk was just toying with his opponent. He was unstoppable.

After the robot man they sent in this giant bear mutant creature, Darcy wasn’t even sure it was
anything more than an animal as it had no weapon nor paid no attention to the crowd. The creature actually did pretty good against Hulk for a while, it even managed to scratch his arm and draw some blood, but then Hulk got angry and broke the things legs. Then it’s arms. He left it whimpering on the ground and the beast was dragged out to make way for the next competitor.

After that there was this big muscle-y guy with tomahawks and a blade strapped to his back. The guy talked so much shit. Like, just so much. He first told the crowd that Hulk was all hype and that every match was fixed. He then bragged for about five minutes, boasting of accomplishments past that were so outlandish they had to be fake. He then literally called Hulk names. Hulk stood back and let the man talk and talk and talk. Seemingly unaffected.

But then the muscle-y guy pointed to the VIP box and said he would be Grandmaster’s new champion. And when he was, he would take his prize...from behind, from the front, all day and all night. And she would thank him for saving her from the great and terrible green monster who held her captive high up in the tower.

When the guy basically threatened to rape her, Hulk snapped. He grabbed the guy’s foot and began smashing him into the floor. He alternated sides, just smashing and smashing, until there was nothing left of the man’s face but goo in his helmet.

The crowd went wild.

After seeing Hulk destroy the competition she woke up in the middle of the night from a nightmare, right next the figure that had haunted her in her dreams.

She had sleep teleported from her bed back into Hulks and she couldn’t help but scramble away from the sleeping giant as fast as she could. She dreamt that Hulk was ripping apart the Avengers, killing his former teammates like he destroyed the people in the arena.

She knew it wasn’t a prophetic dream, but a regular nightmare. She wasn’t sure how she knew the distinction, but she did.

After the fight she’d asked Grandmaster for a cot or something, so she wouldn’t have to sleep with Hulk in the future. He’d had a separate bed brought into Hulk’s suite and it was a thing of beauty she hadn’t expected. Her new bed was really cool; it was just a boat, with a mattress inside. But it was soft and snug and surprisingly comfortable. A repurposed relic and forgotten item, made useful again. That seemed to be the unofficial motto of Sakaar.

She’d explained to Hulk it was more about fear of being crushed or dying of toxic fumes when he farted than wanting to be away from him. He’d laughed at her joke and accepted her reasons as truth and helped the guards move her new boat bed into his room.

Making Hulk laugh, seeing him smile and be happy made her feel so guilty for being afraid of him. She could see that Hulk felt at ease on Sakaar in a way he never had back on Earth. Here he wasn’t a monster, but a champion. Here his size wasn’t a hindrance, it was accommodated. Knowing the levels of his self-loathing made her feel like shit for resenting how Hulk had embraced life on Sakaar so thoroughly, even though such brutality was demanded of him in return for his acceptance.

She’d never feared Hulk before, not really. After all the first time they met, he’d saved her and Tony’s lives. How could she ever see him as anything other than her hero? She didn’t think it was
possible, until she’d seen him in the arena. And she saw what he could do and how he enjoyed doing it.

Quietly she padded over to the big glass window and looked out at all the houses that made up the city. She couldn’t understand how a society could be so blood thirsty. And she knew she was being hypocritical and judge-y, because the Romans did the same thing back on Earth, people also enjoyed boxing and sports of that ilk, but….it was just so gleefully violent. It was jarring. She was jarred.

She sat in a chair and sang softly to herself to calm her nerves,

“Well, you may throw your rock and hide your hand
Workin’ in the dark against your fellow man
But as sure as God made black and white
What’s down in the dark will be brought to the light

You can run on for a long time
Run on for a long time
Run on for a long time
Sooner or later God’ll cut you down
Sooner or later God’ll cut you down

Go tell that long tongue liar
Go and tell that midnight rider
Tell the rambler
The gambler
The back biter
Tell ‘em that God’s gonna cut ‘em down
Tell ‘em that God’s gonna cut ‘em down”

She fell asleep in the chair and didn’t wake until late into the afternoon the next day.

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Darcy’s OutFit

Darcy’s Make Up & Hair
Soooooo....I had initially envisioned a kind of rape-y vibe/sex fiend version of Grandmaster where he covets Darcy as a sex slave or something equally NC-17 ridiculous, but then I was like, no that's not who Grandmaster is. He's not a rapist, he's a lusty power mad tyrant who enjoys orgies with willing participants and Loki's suck up-ness in the movie shows us that people are always vying for his favor so him having to get all rape-y isn't an issue, he's got willing orgy participants hanging off his arm and clamoring for his attention in the upper social climber crust of society of Sakaar. And he's more than the hedonistic louse that he projects at surface level. So, I hope you like my version of Grandmaster, he was hard to write for because Jeff G.'s performance is so unique and so JEFF GOLDBLUM ya know?

More for Ragnarok/Grandmaster/Sakaar/Hulk/Darcy/Valkyrie to come!
Let me know what you thought of the chapter.
Chapter 50 - Grandmaster

Chapter Summary

Darcy wakes up in bed with the Grandmaster

Chapter Notes

____________________________________________________________
IMPORTANT
____________________________________________________________
So, for this chapter I’m trying something new. I’m embedding links for some of the outfits. So if you see a word UNDERLINED, it is a link that will take you to a page with a picture on it. I suggest right clicking and opening a new window to view the picture so you don’t lose your place when reading.
Really hope this works! let me know if the links don’t work, i checked one but was too lazy to check them all.
Also, happy Memorial Day.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Chapter 50 – Grandmaster

Grandmaster kept his word and he let her retrieve a few personal items from her infinity bag. Under Topaz’s watchful eye she withdrew a few items of clothing, a music player and charger and little else. Retrieving the clothing items was a ruse anyway so it didn’t matter how little she withdrew. What really mattered was the small black drawstring pouch.

The black pouch that Loki gave her was the real “infinity bag” and she took it out last. Without the pouch the gold backpack remained but was devoid of the magic, becoming once again an empty backpack. She smirked to herself as Topaz took the bag away, presumably to be locked away in the armory.

Loki had said using the pouch and transferring it into new bags to transform whatever bag she wanted into an infinity purse would be better practice than casting the spell on several different purses, and he wasn’t kidding.

First chance she got to be alone, she pulled out her S.O.S. beacon from Tony and activated it. She didn’t know the likelihood of him coming for her, but she knew that her turning the thing on would at least let him know she was still alive. And in a small way she didn’t want him to come for her, she wanted him to come for Hulk. She knew eventually her sleep teleportation would have her escaping, but she wasn’t certain she would be able to take Hulk with her.

In addition to letting her retrieve her own belongs, Grandmaster also had a whole rack of clothes sent to Hulks room for her. She apparently, would be required to attend every fight in the VIP booth from then on. And she was heavily encouraged to accept any and all party invitations. Participation was voluntary but attendance was mandatory.
The arena fights happened once a week or every two weeks depending on the amount of contenders they were able to scrape together. So, Hulk and she would be commitment free until Grandmaster threw a party or next week’s fight, which ever event came first.

Living in such close quarters with Hulk, who was nothing but kind to her, helped chase away the last remaining wariness left over from her seeing him fight in the arena and her nightmare. They spent a couple days together, alone in his room. Hulk may be accepted and adored by the people of Sakaar, but that love didn’t transform him into a social creature over night.

He attended Grandmaster’s parties when the man insisted, but Grandmaster had revealed that Hulk was still very reclusive. He didn’t really have any friends or go into the city, even though he was free to do so.

So in the days following his big arena fight, they stayed in. And they just hung out.

They played a game of paper football that got uber competitive and lead to several broken bottles. She tried to teach him how to do ‘Cats Cradle’ with some string, but his fingers weren’t dexterous enough and he ripped the string into pieces. They played “egg hunt”, where one of them hid a tiny coin somewhere in the room for the other to then go find with the hider only saying ‘hot’ or ‘cold’ to help direct them, but that too devolved into accusations of peeking and playfully wrestling on the floor. The games helped her remember the good nature that lay at the heart of Hulk.

In the evenings after they’d exhausted themselves with their various bonding activities, they’d wind down by soaking in the hot tub and listening to Darcy’s meticulously created playlists from her old ipod. Isolated together, she kind of fell in love with Hulk in a best friend way. He reminded her a lot of Thor which made her sad sometimes, but also hopeful that every night when she fell asleep, she would wake up back with her family.

For four days she and Hulk stayed cooped up together, but on the fifth day Darcy decided that time was up. If she didn’t leave the room she would go stir crazy. When Hulk made it clear he intended to spend the rest of the day in his room again, she pressed him to take her outside. She still couldn’t unlock the door on her own. She had a thirst to explore the alien world they found themselves on and she wouldn’t let Hulk’s anti-social behavior stop her from quenching it.

She whined and wheedled and sang off key on purpose until she annoyed him into doing what she wanted.

The planet may have had wormholes in the sky and aliens in the streets, but like most places she’d visited throughout the galaxy it seemed to her that people were just going about their day. Just like back on Earth. Or Asgard. Or Xandar. It was kind of comforting in a way.

It was Hulk who was acting most oddly as they walked down the streets of Sakaar.

He seemed apprehensive as they walked through the streets but Darcy couldn’t figure out why. He was unnaturally quiet and moved slowly as they walked, making no sudden movements. Sure, people dove out of their way, giving Hulk a wide berth, but it wasn’t fear that drove them. It was reverence. People on Sakaar loved Hulk, when they shouted his name he’d wave at them but when he smiled it seemed strained.

“Why are you acting like you expect a lynch mob to form any second?” Darcy asked as they entered
the clothing area of the marketplace.

“Hulk not scared.” Hulk said defensively.

“I didn’t say you were.” She paused to look over some pretty glass baubles on display at one of the little stands.

“Hulk be careful.” Hulk said as he gently picked up one of the glass globes. He held it up to his eye and squinted at it, before cautiously setting it back down on its little stand.

“Being careful is…good.” Darcy said neutrally.


Darcy suddenly realized what he meant and her heart broke a little for him in that moment. She grabbed his arm and hugged it.

“I…” She tried to comfort him that things back on Earth would change for him or maybe warn him that eventually they would escape the planet, but she couldn’t find the words. Instead she pressed a kiss to his bicep and then linked their arms at the elbow.

The one sleeved jumpsuit she wore had them pressed up against each other skin to skin and she couldn’t help but feel a little special that Hulk let her get so close to him. It also made her feel a weird sense of responsibility. She’d noticed that Hulk really only had physical contact with his opponents in the arena and she aimed to fix that. She wanted Hulk to know that there was more to life than the violence he witnessed and participated in on Earth, and here on Sakaar.

Hulk smiled down at her and she grinned up at him. “Love you big guy.” Darcy said affectionately.

Hulk took one finger and ran it across the pink spiral braid on the top of her head, “Hulk love Darcy friend too.”

She tugged on his arm leading him across the road to a stall that had several mannequins on display dressed in shiny clothing. A particular green/aqua shiny top caught her eye, “C’mon. Let’s see if I can talk this merchant into giving me something for free just on the basis of your celebrity capital.”

Hulk groaned and pretended to resist forcing her to tug him across the street as he complained, “Hulk don’t want to wait outside while Darcy try on clothes. Clothing montage boring in real life.”

Darcy cackled and only pulled on his arm harder.

After learning Darcy and Hulk had ventured out onto the streets of Sakaar for an impromptu shopping trip, Grandmaster requested/demanded their company for dinner that night. He told them via holo-message that the evenings gathering would be a small intimate dinner party and they should dress appropriately.

Hulk wore his gladiatorial shorts/skort/loincloth thing, but added a few beaded necklaces instead of a shirt. Darcy giggled as Hulk struggled with the multitude of little straps on his sandals before pushing his fat fingers out of the way and securing the little belt loops herself. Hulk grunted his thanks and left her for the bathroom, giving her privacy to decide on her own outfit.

Darcy was more apprehensive about their evening with the Grandmaster. It occurred to her after that
first day, the man might have drugged her, as she had gotten ‘drunk’ far quicker and for longer than she should have from the initial few glasses she had with dinner. She could recall planning to keep quiet about herself, only doling out little morsels of truth as needed, but then after a few glasses of the fizzy juice, she practically told Grandmaster everything!

Of course it also occurred to her that the Grandmaster might have had nothing to do with her lack of self control. She had to consider the possibility that the liquor on Sakaar was just more potent for some reason and therefore affected her differently. Either way, she was nervous.

She chose to dress for that evening’s event in the clothes Grandmaster had sent to her, with a few of her own Earthly accessories. She put on a beautiful rainbow and golden star corset. The corset itself was made well, but it had ties in the back and she had no magic she would have needed assistance lacing it up. As it was she donned the garment with a wave of her hand.

She admired her reflection in the window before blushing and realizing it was a window and therefore contained the possibility of people standing there in her underpants and corset.

She was building the outfit around the top, turning back to the rack of clothing, she found a mid-calf skirt that was two different colors of shiny magenta and purple. The skirt itself was long enough to make up for the scantiness of the top but had enough pizzazz on its own to pair well with the corset. Its length also made her feel more confident somehow, like it offered some sort of protection. She didn’t let herself linger on that thought.

From her infinity bag she summoned shoes, earrings, and a bag. She made her lips purple and only used mascara on her eyes. She made her hair a dusty purple color and added a dream catcher headband.

She decided on leaving her infinity pouch in the room, she hid it inside an empty martini shaker. She made sure to memorize where it was in case she needed to conjure any items from inside it. As long as she left it in the room, it would look like any objects she conjured would be appearing out of thin air.

Topaz had not realized when she had removed the charmed black pouch from the backpack they had locked in the armory, which suggested it was the Grandmaster himself who recognized the magical enchantment. Meaning she couldn’t have her infinity purse on her when she saw him again. She conjured a chocolate bar and put it into her non-infinity purse. She figured it couldn’t hurt bring something for her to nibble on or possibly share to gain favor.

“Ready.” Darcy called out as she smoothed her hands down the shiny material of the skirt. Hulk emerged from the bathroom a few minutes later and they left.

They were escorted via silent servant to a different room than the one they partied in before. When they entered Darcy’s eyebrows rose. As promised there were far fewer guests than before, and the atmosphere was completely different too.

Soft music played as the guests quietly conversed and mingled. The room was almost divided in half by décor styles.

On one side of the room the lighting was a little brighter and highlighted by lots of colorful light. The furniture on that side of the room looked ultra modern and slick and circular. There was a little day
bed/egg, and on it a couple of alien women were kissing and touching intimately so Darcy quickly averted her eyes. Next to the day bed was another similarly designed…bathtub? Hot tub? She didn’t know what to call it, but the water glowed and it looked like the cover which was open, had the ability to close, so Darcy posited it could have been a sensory deprivation chamber. There were flower petals in the water and the person lying inside was topless but still wearing pants. She looked familiar but Darcy couldn’t place the woman, but she had to admit the woman looked peaceful as she floated in the water, occasionally sipping from a champagne flute that rested on the capsules edge. Across from the two cocoon furniture items there was a little circle bar set up. There was a light in the middle of the table and three people stood around it chatting as they sipped from their glasses. To the side of that table was a wall with a fold out counter laden with tiny fancy food, mostly on sticks.

Hulk walked into the room and headed immediately for the food. Darcy trailed after him but broke off to peer around the long oblong shaped couch/bed that divided the room. On either side of the oblong couch/bed there were two open doorways, Darcy walked through and surveyed the other half of the room.

On the other side of the room the lighting was softer and warm giving the space a cozy feel. There was a long wrap around white couch with brown pillows in the middle of the room. The couch was wrapped around what looked like a boat propeller with a sheet of glass on top acting as the coffee table. Behind the couch on the wall there were these frames of light that Darcy could see were actually mini holograms. She was too far away to see the images clearly, but she suspected they were of the Grandmaster.

The Grandmaster himself was sitting in the center of the long couch, one of his female attendants was seated on his right, on his left sat an alien with pale skin yellow eyes and a bumpy lined bald head. Next to that man was Grandmaster’s other attendant, she didn’t look pleased. Darcy wondered if it was her distance away from the Grandmaster that incited the frown on her face, or her close proximity to Grandmaster’s guest.

Darcy wanted to slip away before being noticed, but Topaz caught her eye and knew escaping was out of the question. Topaz leant down and whispered in Grandmaster’s ear from where she was stationed behind him and the couch, Grandmaster’s face lit up as he caught sight of her.

“There she is.” Grandmaster remarked as he stood moving to greet her. Darcy suppressed the urge to sigh and moved forward. Grandmaster hugged her and she stood stiffly allowing the action but not reciprocating. She bristled and pulled out of his embrace when he started smelling her skin.

“Grandmaster,” She began. “Thank you for inviting us to your little gathering.”

“Gathering.” Grandmaster repeated distractedly as he grabbed her hands and stood back, his eyes roved up and down her body. “Don’t you look delectable.”

“Thanks.” Darcy said flatly. Grandmaster let go of her hands and circled her, taking in her outfit from all angles.

“Just gorgeous.” Grandmaster mumbled to himself. When he came to a stop in front of her again he frowned mockingly at her. “You mustn’t stay locked away for so long again. You can’t deprive me of your company. Your beauty. No. Not again.”

“Sorry,” Darcy demurred, “I was just—Hulk and I just needed some bonding time after being away from each other for so long.”

“Understandable.” Grandmaster dismissed. He then offered her his arm and reluctantly Darcy took it. He lead her over to the couch. With a wave of his hand he commanded his other guest, “Beat it
Carlo. I don’t want to hear any more talk of you ‘exploring’.”

The man bowed nervously as he scuttled away. He kept his eyes downcast as he rushed out of the room.

“Exploring?” Darcy prompted as they sat down on the couch together.

Grandmaster didn’t answer her right away; first he turned to the attendant on his right and said, “Angora love, go get the Princess a drink.”

“Actually,” Darcy put a hand out halting the woman, “I was hoping to keep my wits about me this go round. Perhaps some water instead?”

The woman, Angora, looked questioningly at Grandmaster. He in turn looked at her. With an inviting smile he wheedled, “Aw c’mon Princess. It’s a party. Have drink. Have several, get loose. Fun.”

“Water.” Darcy said succinctly.

“If it’s water you desire, why don’t we visit the soaking pod?” Grandmaster nodded his head to the other room, “You could strip down and float in the water for as long as your heart desires. Don’t worry about being rude, I’d sit next to you so you could remain in the conversation.” Darcy stared at the man stubbornly.

Grandmaster rolled his eyes but waved Angora away, repeating, “Water.”

The woman nodded and left, disappearing through the door. Grandmaster gestured to the attendant who now sat next to her, sandwiching Darcy in between the woman and the Grandmaster. “This is Gamilla. She’s very good with her hands. And her tongue. Perhaps she could give you a massage? Something of the non-libation variety to help you loosen up.”

The woman put her hands on Darcy’s shoulders and began kneading gently without being given the okay. Darcy pulled away and turned to the woman with a charming smile, “That’s okay. I’m fine. Thank you for the offer though.”

The woman, Gamilla, nodded and put her hands in her lap as if to visually assure Darcy there would be no more touching without consent.

Grandmaster pouted, “Don’t be a party pooper now.”

“I thought this was intimate gathering? Not party, party.” Darcy countered.

“Semantics.” Grandmaster smiled and put his arm on the back of the couch behind her.

Within fifteen minutes of drinking her ‘water’ Darcy was certain Grandmaster was drugging her. She felt tipsy and the raspberry flavored water being the only thing she consumed since entering the party, had to be the culprit. This revelation combined with her slightly inebriated state left her grumpy and frustrated.

She wanted to confront the man, but she knew to do so would be tantamount to declaring war. Because if she accused the Grandmaster of roofing her, Hulk would hear it, and then there would be fighting and melting of people (possibly). So she kept her mouth closed and took little tiny sips to appease Grandmaster who kept encouraging her to drink or eat the tiny finger foods that were being
A few of Grandmasters others guest filtered in from the other room, joining them on the couch. Not Hulk though. The other guests at least divided Grandmaster’s attention, allowing her to get away with drinking and saying so little.

“Darcy?” Grandmaster prompted.

“Hmm?” Darcy had zoned out, “What?”

“My dear Angora asked you a question.” Grandmaster explained, gesturing to the female attendant on his left.

Darcy looked at the woman expectantly. The woman smiled at her, “I said I love your hair. And the trick you did at dinner the other night. How do you change your hair color so easily? Is it synthetic fiber optics? Or a wig?”

Darcy smiled slyly answering cryptically, “It’s magic.”

The attendant Gamilla, who sat next to Darcy chimed in saying, “Oh stop! Don’t be shy. Tell us. Tell us how the trick’s done.”

“Can’t.” Darcy declined, un-swayed by the pleading expressions worn by both women, she whispered “It’s a secret.”

“Mmmm.” Grandmaster said, his eyes locked on her face. Darcy stared back and tried to convey no emotion, neither encouraging his interest nor insulting it. Hopefully.

“You sure you can’t tell us? Everyone’s been talking about it, your…uh, transformation.” Grandmaster’s eyes flickered down to her lips then back up to her eyes, “I promise I can keep a secret.”

“So can I.” Darcy bragged, unwilling to divulge any more details.

“Show us.” Grandmaster commanded his gaze hard and lacking any of the teasing nature it held just a second earlier.

“Yes!” Angora clapped her hands happily, “Can you? Can you show us your trick?”

“You needn’t explain your trick if you’re willing to give us a demonstration.” Grandmaster said as he ran one finger down her bare arm.

“I…” Darcy looked around the room and felt the weight of all the eyes on her.

Grandmaster stood suddenly, clapping his hands and raising his voice to announce, “Attention. Attention! Uh, Princess Darcy is going to put on a show. So, um, gather round.”

Darcy felt her cheeks heat up and she tried to object, “I don’t really--”

Grandmaster took her arm and helped her rise to her feet, shushing her, “Shhh. You’ll be great. Just remember, razzle dazzle, smile and show us what you’ve got.”

The other guests filed dutifully into the room. The long wrap around couch looked just big enough to seat everyone, including the Hulk. Darcy stared at her large friend with panic in her eyes, but he was talking with someone who Darcy recognized as the topless floating woman, now thankfully clothed.
As if sensing her unease at being put on the spot, Grandmaster snapped his fingers and Angora rushed forward with a glass. Grandmaster pressed the flute into her hand and Darcy knocked the whole thing back in a few gulps.

Once filled with more liquid roofied courage, Darcy quietly accused, “I know your drugging me.”

Grandmaster smiled slowly, “I’m drugging everyone. Myself included. It’s one of the uh, perks of attending my parties. Better than liquor, probably the only reason Scraper 142 ever attends. Better than liquor on its own, the Lavidin, laced in the drinks and food help everyone loosen up and forget their troubles. For a little while anyway.”

Darcy pursed her lips and thrust the empty glass into his hand. “You know, I think you’re actually telling me the truth.”

Grandmaster smirked at her, “You know I think you’re actually beginning to like me.”

Darcy scowled, she didn’t want him to be right, but he was endearing himself to her. And she hated herself for it because she wasn’t stupid. The man was a tyrant who made people fight to the death for his own amusement. …but he was kind of fun.

He turned from her then and addressed the crowd. “Quiet down.” He used his ring to tap on the empty glass, causing all conversation to cease as everyone turned to look at her and the Grandmaster expectantly.

“Princess Darcy showed us at our last party she has the ability to change her appearance at will. She’s stubbornly tight lipped about how she acquired this ability but has deigned to give us a demonstration.” Grandmaster gestured to her with a sweeping hand, “Let’s show some appreciation.”

Everyone began clapping. Hulk looked at her with a confused expression but Darcy ignored him. Her eyes were drawn to Grandmaster as he walked away from her and sat down on the glass table, positioning himself as front row and center as possible. Darcy glared at the man, which seemed only to amuse Grandmaster more. He teased her, “Well? We’re waiting.”

Darcy made an annoyed noise, she turned away from the crowd and faced the dividing oblong couch/bed. She huffed out, “Give me a minute. I wasn’t exactly prepared for this. And drinking drugs isn’t exactly helping my concentration.”

Grandmaster laughed and a few others joined him chuckling quietly at her disgruntled attitude.

Darcy wasn’t feeling too drunk yet, but her thoughts were a little slower than normal. She squeezed her eyes shut and held out her hand conjuring her an ipod, mini-remote and speaker. She set them up on the floor and quickly found the song she wanted.

Darcy bounced her head along with the music as it began to play Roy Orbison’s shopping montage classic, ‘Oh, Pretty Woman’. Concentrating on her infinity bag, she mentally drew from her ‘Asgardian Collection’ of clothes. With a wave of hand she draped herself in a black sheer shimmering dress, complete with cape and moon details. She fanned her arms out to showcase the caps intricate pattern and spun in a circle as her makeup melted away to be replaced by a black lip color and a silver eye shadow with wing. Her hair turned into a rainbow color.

Everyone ooh’d and awe’d making Darcy smile. Encouraged by Hulk’s wolf whistle she decided to keep her looks on theme, maintaining the same make up for every outfit she only changed her hair and gown. The next gown was strapless and included an intricate head piece. The next was a two
piece that only showed a sliver of belly, but had a sheer skirt that showcased the black booty shorts underneath. The one after that was even more covered up and elegant with a cape that drowned her figure, its sheerness showing off the dark moons, stars, and planets, that adorned the cape.

At that point the applause she received upon each change only garnered a smattering of applause. Darcy decided a more modern look was needed to keep everyone’s attention. She concentrated on her infinity bag and thought of Pepper and the dress the woman had bought her back when they were just friends and enjoyed shopping as a bonding activity.

She waved her hand and donned a business suit type dress with a very high slit and ample cleavage showing but covered in sheer star speckled black tulle material. She added a hat that had a veil that covered her face for a bit of drama, but the crowd didn’t look all that impressed. Darcy bit her lip.

Grandmaster held up a hand and Darcy paused the music. With a pitying look on his face he suggested, “Perhaps no more black?”

Darcy nodded and with a wave of her hand donned a sheer cape dress that covered her in shimmering fabric from neck to her toes. Grandmaster gave her a flat look before he snapped his fingers and Gamilla rushed forward handing him a glass filled with the wine colored fizzy juice. He strode toward her and put an arm around her shoulders, turning her so they were facing the wall instead of the crowd of bored onlookers.

“Drink.” Grandmaster said needlessly as she all but snatched the glass out of his hand and downed it as fast as she could.

“They don’t like this. We should stop.” Darcy worried.

“You’re stiff as a board up here.” Grandmaster said in a consoling tone. He put his hands on his shoulders and began massaging her briefly before running his hands up and down her arms.

“You need to relax.” His hands returned to her shoulders only this time he shook her body playfully. “This is a party. You are just providing a bit of fun. Don’t over think it.”

He turned her back around to face the crowd. Lowering his voice he whispered in her ear, “Pick a different song and just show a little more personality.” He darted forward and kissed her lips so quickly she barely had time to blink.

He smiled at her victoriously as he walked backward to his seat, “Just breathe.”

Choosing not to be annoyed by his stolen barely-even-a-kiss, Darcy inhaled deeply and then exhaled slowly. She looked down at her little remote and tried to find the perfect song. She briefly considered playing Britney Spears ‘Pretty Girls’ but then her scrolling randomly revealed the perfect song. She hit play and straightened up.

Staring right at Grandmaster she began to sing,

“Come on, come on, turn the radio on
It’s Friday night and I won’t be long
Gotta do my hair, I put my make up on”

As she sang those lyrics she transformed her hair into two shockingly bright colors split down the middle. She her makeup into something outlandishly 80’s with pink blush all the way up into her hairline and KISS inspired black eye makeup that covered her face almost like a mask.

As she continued to sing she transformed her ethereal pale gown into one of the outfits Grandmaster
had provided her. With a wave of her hand her body was encased in a futuristic silver rainbow glittering jumpsuit, with giant shoulder pads and humungous heels. The look showed off all her curves and made her look very futuristic psychedelic.

“’Til I hit the dance floor
Hit the dance floor
I got all I need”

Darcy sang and strutted across the open space, striking poses as she sang along with the fun and upbeat song. The crowd began to get into the song more and everyone looked entertained and impressed. Darcy beamed and spun in a circle.

“I ain’t got cash
But I got you baby”

Her jumpsuit melted away giving rise to a rainbow feathered gown that flared out prettily as she spun. Her hair became a bright blue, purple, and yellow rainbow of intricate braiding that was half up and half down. She made her eye makeup loud using gold and pink to accentuate her eyes. And for her lips she did pink with purple at the center. The crowd clapped and several people whistled.

“Baby I don’t need dollar bills to have fun tonight
I love cheap thrills
Baby I don’t need dollar bills to have fun tonight
I love cheap thrills”

She began to dance, spinning once only to shake her hips and raise her hands above her head as she sang,

“I don’t need no money
As long as I can feel the beat
I don’t need no money
As long as I keep dancing”

She next transformed her hair into a grey base with strands of rainbow, up do. She made her eyes electric blue with green at the edges of her eyelids. She made her lips dark blue as she moved her shoulders up and down in time with the music. With flare she once again spun on her heel transforming her dress as she did so. She chose a one shoulder blue dress, with hip high slit. When she came to a stop she saw that several people were on their feet dancing in place as they clapped along with the song.

The dress she wore was a bit slinky so she but a little more ‘bada-boom’ into her hips as she moved forward towards Grandmaster. Moving slowly she sang just to him, because in a way his little pep talk really had helped.

“You’re worth more than diamonds, more than gold
Let the beat just take control
You’re worth more than diamonds, more than gold
Free up yourself, get out of control”

Grandmaster looked up at her with this happy look on his face as Darcy finally let herself really belt out the next lyrics, her voice rising high above the little speakers.

“Baaaaaaaaby, I love cheap thrills!
Cheap thrills, heeeeey”
As she really unleashed her voice full force she shook her body she donning a short gold fringe dress, complete with ostentatious gold head piece and gold makeup. As she shimmied back ward Grandmaster got on his feet and followed her. He danced alongside her making her laugh at his ‘moves’ which consisted of a two step and hip swivels and intense eye contact.

When he grabbed for her hand and hip she transformed her outfit once again into something from her ‘Asgardian Collection’. Her body was magically covered in a long column dress with shimmering fabric that was both gold and green simultaneously. The dress made her think of Loki, so she made her makeup evoke his aesthetic with a deep green color and golden horns and black lips.

Grandmaster held her close as they danced to song but she didn’t get any creepy vibes. She was happy he didn’t grind on her, but even happier he didn’t want to dance more formally. He basically held her as they swayed their hips in unison and she sang along. He spun her a few times and that was it. The song was over.

He left her, moving to the side as everyone in the room clapped, and she stood blushing. As a finale she took a bow and transformed her dress so quickly that by the time she stood up, she was wearing this metal star bikini, she had her hair up in a braided twist with silver tinsel weaved into the purple strands, and shimmering silver makeup. Wolf whistles sounded, the loudest one coming from her right.

She kept the smile on her face and did her best to appear ditzy and happy as Grandmaster whistled and clapped and stared at her with this triumphant expression, even though on the inside she felt a little unsettled with how he was looking at her.

Darcy waited for the adulation to die down before she changed back into her original party outfit. It took a long time for the crowd to disperse. It seemed like everyone wanted to compliment her, or congratulate her on her performance.

She finally found some peace and quiet when dinner was served in the other room, slowly everyone filtered out until she was alone. Looking around the room she was drawn to the rainbow holographic display mounted on the wall behind the large couch.

She was right, they were pictures of Grandmaster, but in each one he was standing next to someone else, someone wearing gladiator garb.

“They’re former champions.” A voice behind her informed her, making her jump. She turned and found the dark skinned woman who had been topless in the water, soaking and floating, when she and Hulk first arrived. The woman offered her a glass of fizzy juice. Darcy took it and nodded her thanks taking a small sip.

Pointing to the green one which showcased an angry Hulk with an ecstatic looking Grandmaster hugging him, she said, “I figured as much. I recognize a few of them from the sculpture on the façade of the palace.”

Pointing to one of the red lighted holograms, the woman said, “That one was called Ares. Claimed to be an Olympian.”

Darcy’s eyebrows rose, the man in the picture wore the gladiator garb well, a helmet covered most of his face though. “Ares as in, God of War Ares? Mount Olympus? Zeus and Hera? Hercules?!” The
idea that there were more worlds like Asgard, alien races mistaken for gods when they visited Earth had her mumbling under her breath, “Holy crap.”

The woman’s eyes narrowed at her, “That is what he claimed to be called on his home world. God of War. It was an apt title. He fought viciously in the arena, his matches were legendary.”

“What happened to him?”

The woman gave her a blank look, “Same thing that happens to all champions. Eventually he was defeated and replaced by a new one.”

The woman moved over, examining one of the more inhuman looking champion pictures. “This one, this one was called Man-Thing. Claimed to be the protector of the Nexus of All Reality. Whatever that is.”

More intrigued by the woman than the history lesson she was doling out Darcy asked, “What’s your name?”

“Grandmaster calls me Scrapper 142.” The woman answered evasively as she drained her own flute of fizzy juice.

“And what did your mother call you?” Darcy pressed, exchanging her mostly full glass with the woman’s empty one.

The woman threw her head back, drinking the glass’s contents all in one or two swallows. She pulled the glass away from her lips with a satisfied sound. The woman smirked at her, “Never much cared for the name my mother gave me.”

Darcy frowned. “Well I’m not calling you Scrapper 142. That’s stupid and demeaning.”

The woman shrugged as if uncaring what Darcy called her. Except she didn’t move away, she stayed with Darcy staring at the wall of champions.

“Mildred.” Darcy declared.

“Hmm?”

She put her hand on the woman’s shoulder, prompting her to turn and look at her once more as she explained, “If you won’t tell me your real name, I’ll call you Mildred.”

The woman’s face screwed up like she had just ate a lemon whole. “Why?” She gasped out, “Why Mildred?”

“Dunno.” Darcy shrugged her shoulders, “I look at you and I think,” She paused and put her hand in the air as if gesturing to a name in lights, “Mildred.”

“No.” The woman said in an authoritative tone.

“If not Mildred, then what?” Darcy prompted with a cheeky grin.

The woman sighed heavily before conceding, “You may call me Val.”

“Val?...Val doesn’t sound like a name one wouldn’t be fond of.” Darcy pressed, “Is it short for Valagingavitus? Valgina? Valdamorta? Cuz then I can understand why you wouldn’t want to divulge your real names. Valagina is totally worse than Mildred.”
Val snorted and looked at her with an amused expression, “Grandmaster is right about you. You are special.”

“I'm going to choose to take that as a compliment.” Darcy declared as she turned and lent her butt against the back of the couch.

“It is.” Val confirmed as she moved to copy her pose, “A compliment.”

“Thanks.” After a beat of silence Darcy turned to the woman pointing, “I'm not going to let the real name thing go. One day, I will discover who you really are.”

Val laughed lightly. She clinked her empty glass with the one Darcy still held loosely in her own. “Good luck.”

After chatting amicably for a while, she and Val went into the other room to join the others. Darcy gravitated towards Hulk who was shoving cookies into his face, Val stuck close following her. Seeing them approach Hulk smiled, his teeth obscured with a red jam like stain, “Angry Girl!”

“I'm not angry.” Darcy denied immediately.

“No I am.” Val informed her. She slapped Hulk on the back and he shoved her with his shoulder making her stumble back a few steps before she shoved him back, making him bump into Darcy. Darcy went flying into the wall.

“Whoops.” Hulk said contritely as he lumbered forward. “Darcy okay?”

“Darcy’s fine.” She grumbled. She shook off the accidental assault then pinned Val with a look. “You're pretty strong, huh?”

“I could say the same about you.” Val countered.

“Cake?” Hulk held out a platter in between the women. The cake was huge and square shaped and it looked and smelled delicious. He grinned at Darcy probably sensing how tempting his offer was he explained, “Grandmaster made it special for Hulk. Champion treat. Hulk share if Darcy and Angry Girl want some.”

Darcy leant forward and took a big whiff. She sighed, “Yes.”

Val reached forward and grabbed a handful of the cake, ruining its prettiness. Biting into the cake she spoke with her mouth full, “Mmm. Is good.”

Darcy gave her a look of disgust, but then turned on Hulk who copied Val’s example, digging into the cake with his bare hand. She glared at the both of them and muttered, “You guys are heathens.”

With her free hand Val reached forward and scooped up more cake, only to mash the handful into Darcy’s face saying, “Just eat it Princess.”

Darcy let out a squeak of indignation, before the taste of the cake really hit her tongue making her moan in delight. She reached out and grabbed Val’s hand, keeping her from pulling away from her mouth least any of the cake fall onto the floor. She ate out of the other woman’s hand, not stopping until she was all but licking Val’s fingers dry.

Her hand empty, Darcy let go and finally looked at the woman’s face. Val blinked at her, a lusty
expression on her face, in a thick voice she remarked, “I guess you were hungry.”

“That cake is insane.” Darcy replied. Reaching forward she claimed another handful, then eyeing what was left, she took another handful with her other hand. She glared and pulled the two handful’s of cake close to her chest. “These are my cake handfuls.”

She eyed the two suspiciously as she slowly took a bite from her left handful. Heedless of her full mouth she warned her two friends, “And ’m not sharing.”

As soon as the cake had been thoroughly demolished by the three of them, the Grandmaster popped up. He eyed Darcy as she licked around her mouth getting the excess icing off from around her mouth. He then cast a glance at Val who was doing the same. In a voice that was devoid of emotion he said, “Oh no. Don’t tell me you ate the cake.”

“What?” Val asked him, but Darcy could see that the woman’s eyes were actually glued to her. Darcy paused she’d moved on to cleaning herself of the last bit of icing that clung to the skin of her left hand, which meant she had completely engulfed her ring finger with her mouth. The look on Val’s face suggested she looked accidentally erotic while doing so.

Glancing over at Hulk, she found him licking the pad of his pointer finger, blotting the platter gathering up every crumb left over from the cake. Secure in her behavior not being weird, the cake being just weirdly awesome, she continued to lick her fingers clean.

She cast her gaze back to Grandmaster who looked as pleased as the cat who ate the canary. “Did you two partake in devouring Hulk’s special champion cake? The one I had made especially for him?”

“Yeah.”
“Yeah.”

“Oh no.” Grandmaster lamented with a smile. “I had them lace the cake with extra Lavidin and a dash of Haspero, so it would be potent enough for the big guy to feel the effects.”

Darcy pulled her finger out of her mouth with a pop. “What!?”

“Shit.” Val sighed as Hulk grunted, “Huh?”

Grandmaster picked up her hand and licked at her wrist, claiming a bit of icing for himself before releasing her hand and elaborating, “I never imagined he’d share it.”

“You drugged that delicious cake so that Hulk could get high!?” Darcy squeaked, after a beat her voice returned to normal as she asked, “Was it the drugs that made it so delicious or can I get an equally delicious cake sans the drugs?”

Grandmaster put his arm around her and pulled her into his side laughing, “Oh, my precious Princess. You are in for the trip of a lifetime.” He turned and smiled viciously at Val, “You both are.”

She experienced the rest of the party with a disassociated/euphoric feeling distorting her perception. After learning she and Val had been super-roofied she became paranoid for a bit. She hid in the cocoon bed she’d seen near the water soaking pod. However once the effects started to kick in, she
felt a lot better. All of her anxiety just melted away, until the only thing she could feel was...good.

Grandmaster checked up on her a little while later, drawing her out of her hidey hole and onto the dance floor. She danced with him and a few other people. And when she caught sight of Hulk, rocking out playing air guitar, she couldn’t help but smile. Seeing Hulk come out of his shell made her appreciate her ability to benefit from a little bit of liquid courage every once and a while.

She joined Hulk and seeing her, he lit up. “Darcy!”

“Hulk!” She replied with equal enthusiasm.

“Hulk feel great!” Hulk declared, “Hulk like drunk cake! Hulk want more.”

Grandmaster appeared next to them unexpectedly making her jump. He put a hand on her shoulder to settle her, “Sorry big guy, the ingredients for the cake are a little rare. Probably take Scrapper 142 another couple of months until she can find enough to make another cake half as potent.”

Hulk pouted. His face so adorably sad, Darcy felt compelled to hug him. He hugged her back, petting her hair as they listened to Grandmaster consol them. “Don’t get blue on me now big green. The effects should last for 24 hours, at least.” He stared at her, “Longer for the Princess and Scrapper 142, due to their differing biology.”

Darcy frowned, “How long for us?”

“A week.”

Darcy’s eyes widened, “A week of being drunk high?...Dude.”

Grandmaster laughed, “Don’t worry little Princess, I’ll take good care of you.”

Hulk growled at the man. Grandmaster’s eyes flickered up to Hulks face, “Correction, we will take good care of you.”

Near the end of the party, as guests were dispersing, Val found her again. Darcy called out to the woman happily, "Valgina!"

“Brunnhilde.” Val replied.

“Huh?” Darcy was lying naked in the soaking pod, her hair fanned out framing her face as she floated. Hulk had abandoned her when he realized if she was going to float, that meant his only option to stay near her was to sit and do nothing. So he went back to the dance floor or so she thought. She had no idea how long she’d been floating in the water watching the colors dance across the lid.

“My real name is Brunnhilde.” Vale explained as she leaned over the lid, her eyes dancing across Darcy’s exposed body parts.

Darcy frowned, “You’re giving it up just like that?”

Val smirked, “I doubt you’ll remember.”

“Why say your name is Val? Why not Bruno or Hildy?” Darcy questioned, but with a giggle she realized something, "I know a Hildy. She’s married to Volstagg. He’s fat but he's also the Lion of Asgard and a super awesome warrior, but now they call him Volstagg the Voluminous. Cuz of the
all his roundness."

“I told you to call me Val because I was a Valkyrie on Asgard. My profession was always more of who I was than my real name ever could be.” Darcy jerked upright, her head bumping on the lid.

“Holy shit! You’re from Asgard! I’m from Asgard!” She exclaimed excitedly. Val licked her lips as she stared at Darcy’s chest.

“I know.” Val continued to stare at her, but that didn’t make her feel uncomfortable, it was the chilly air that had her sinking back down into the warmed water.

“No.” Val stopped her, reaching out a hand and pulling Darcy back upright by her shoulder. “Time to get out.”

Running her hand across the surface of the water creating ripples Darcy whined, “I don’t wanna get out.”

“Too bad.” Val informed her, “Grandmaster’s in a good mood. Said I could be the one to come and fetch you.” Darcy locked eyes with the other woman, “I guessed you’d prefer me to him, given your state of undress?”

Darcy felt her cheeks grow hot. She stared at her discarded clothing where she had thrown it after getting into the water fully clothed. “My stuffs wet.”

“I’m pretty sure I watched you dance and change clothes while gyrating provocatively just a little while ago.”

Darcy pursed her lips, “I did not gyrate provococo—provocitvo—I did not dance all sexily.”

“Agree to disagree.” Val said with a sly smile. The woman stuck her hand in the water and flicked some drops at her face. Darcy made a noise of displeasure but that made Val laugh out loud.

“C’mon Princess, time to get out.”

“No.”

“I’ve got a big fluffy towel.” Val said enticingly, “I’m feeling drunk enough to help you dry off, only minor-ly groping you as I do so.”

“Noooo.” Darcy protested as she moved backward, making her body as small as possible so she could fit at the feet end of the tub of water, leaving her out of Val’s reach.

“Don’t make me come in there after you.” Val warned with a big smile, her voice sounded suspiciously gleeful as she warned, “I will if you make me.” She cupped her hand in the water and poured it over her arm, staring as the water slid down her arm.

Darcy splashed the other woman, “I don’t wanna leave. I don’t wanna put clothes on! I love the water. This pod is small and it has a lid and I feel floaty. I want live here now. Just close the lid, maybe Grandmaster won’t notice me.”

Val stared at her quietly for a few seconds before shrugging, “Alright then.”

Darcy smiled and clapped her hands, “Yay! I’m gonna be a mermaid!”

Val smirked and then unbuckled her belt. She then unzipped her pants and slid them down her legs, leaving her in a pair of black panties. Darcy’s eyebrows rose high on her forehead, “Am I missing
something?”

Val didn’t answer as she took her top off, she was braless. In two steps the woman had joined her in the little pod of warm water. Darcy’s mind flashed back to all the lady love making she had experienced with Pepper. But this woman, Val, was so different from Pepper. Pepper was pale, Val had dark tan skin. Pepper’s lips were thin, Val’s were plush. Pepper was slim, Val had an athletic build. And curves. Like her.

It was crowded in the water pod now. Val pulled her forward by her arms and encouraged Darcy to lay back, float on top of the water like she had been doing when Val first came upon her. Darcy allowed the other woman to direct her to her liking. She felt a stirring in her lady parts as Val took a cursory look around the room before she reached up and closed the lid on them.

The music still playing, the people saying their goodbyes to Grandmaster, the servants cleaning up the debris, all of the sounds from the party were cut off from them. The quiet rippling of the water, her breathing, and Val’s were the only thing Darcy could hear.

Purple light illuminated the other woman’s features as she settled herself on her side, facing Darcy, looking down at her as Darcy stared up. Val reached forward and moved a wet strand of hair from off her forehead, her touch lingering on her face.

“I broke up with my girlfriend.” Darcy blurted out. Val chuckled sensually, “So you like women?”

“I love my boyfriend.” Darcy declared equally without filter.

Val slid her hand across Darcy’s stomach, resting her hand on her hip, securing Darcy to her side. “You like both?”

“I made Tony immortal, gave him an apple of Idunn.” Darcy revealed. Val’s teasing thumb stroking her hip, stilled at that news.

“You gave an apple of Idunn to your boyfriend so you could be together? He was mortal? Not Asgardian?”

Darcy nodded, “I love him. I love him as much as I love Stephen. My other boyfriend.” Val smiled but quickly tried to conceal it, she continued stroking her skin with her agile fingers.

“Not bound to one soul then?” Val challenged.

“Fell in love with too many people all at once.” Darcy said.

“Grandmaster told me you claimed to be a princess. And an Asgardian.” Val raised one brow at her, “I never would have guessed Odin would father another daughter after what happened to his first born.”

Darcy frowned, “I’m adopted. But also, fully Asgardian, by way of royal voodoo magic stuff.”

Val snorted. She stared at Darcy for a long moment before slowly leaning down. She kissed Darcy’s forehead echoing Darcy’s words with each kiss, “Royal.” She kissed Darcy’s cheek, “Voodoo.” She kissed Darcy’s neck, “Magic.” She kissed Darcy’s chest in between her breasts, concluding, “Stuff?”

“You’re really hot.” Darcy admitted.

Val smiled and moved her head back up Darcy’s body so they were once again eye to eye, “You’re gorgeous.”
Val then leant down and kissed Darcy fully on the lips.

Darcy kissed her back, but thought of Tony. She enjoyed the feeling of Val’s arms slipping around her body cradling her close, but she wanted Stephen. She opened her mouth allowing Val to slip her tongue inside, but she felt tears well up in her eyes. She tangled her hands in Val’s hair. Tears rolled down her cheeks and she let out a sob.

Val jerked back. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing.” Darcy gasped, she fought for control to make her voice sound normal as she said, “Nothing’s wrong ignore me. Kiss me.”

“You’re crying.”

“Ignore me.” Darcy pled.

Val cupped Darcy’s cheek and wiped away one of her tears with the pad of her thumb, “What’s wrong?” She asked again, her voice much softer this time.

“I’m sad. And turned on. And frustrated. And I like you. But I’m worried. And I’m trapped on this planet with Hulk, whom I love, but isn’t—I wish he was Bruce so I could talk to someone who understood and I’m ruining the mood. And we’re naked and you’re hot and I’m crying and thinking about Stephen and Tony and---I don’t know. I don’t know what the Grandmaster wants from me but I know it isn’t good and I like him but I think I’m going to have to kill him because he’s kind of evil and you’re warm and you’re here and I want to forget everything, he said the drugs would help me forget and feel good but I’m crying right now. And I’m just…I don’t know.”

Val leant down and kissed her hard, pressing her body flush against Darcy’s, her hand slid up and down Darcy’s body quickly. Val’s hands stopped moving, her hands gently groping Darcy’s chest before she pulled away completely. Val turned and pressed a button, the lid to the pod began to lift slowly.


“Wait.” Darcy called out but Val didn’t wait, she got out and began putting her clothes on.

Darcy sat up and watched her with a forlorn expression on her face. “Please don’t leave me.”

Val’s head jerked up. She locked eyes with Darcy. Silently Val bent down and picked up a fluffy towel, she held it out ready to envelop Darcy the second she got out of the water.

Darcy swallowed thickly and stood. On shaky limbs she climbed out and walked into Val’s open arms. Val closed hugged her while Darcy kept her arms down and at her sides, allowing the woman to wrap her up snuggly. Val’s kindness really touched her and she felt compelled to apologize, “I’m sorry I ruined the moment. Sorry my drug addled brain made me emotionally vomit all over you. I wasn’t trying to jerk you around.”

Val moved around behind Darcy and she squeezed the water from Darcy’s hair.

“Maybe when your mind is clear, we can try again.” Val whispered as she groped her butt and then moved to press a soft kiss just to the left of Darcy’s lips. Darcy’s mouth twitched with a suppressed smile.

“My mouth tastes like purple.” She announced as the odd sensation occurred to her. She eyed the
purple lights in the pod, “Do you think that’s the drugs or was there something in the water?”

Val barked out a laugh before cupping Darcy’s face in her hands. She kissed Darcy briefly on the lips before pulling back and leading her away, her arm securely around Darcy’s waist.”

Val lead her dripping, naked, and once again towel clad body through the empty halls of the palace. When they reached her and Hulk’s room, they found Hulk sleeping face down on his bed. Snoring louder than ever. They exchanged amused grins and quietly crept over to Darcy’s bed boat.

Val pulled back the covers and let Darcy use her arm to stabilize herself as she dropped her towel and climbed in, allowing her to snuggle under the blankets. Val then surprised her by stripping herself of her own clothes once again.

Darcy blinked at her. Val answered the unasked question as she walked around to the other side of the bed boat. “My mouth tastes like red. I can’t feel my nose because it’s numb. My lips are tingling. My ears are ringing. I out drank Hulk by a couple gallons and while my tolerance is high, if I try to make it back to my ship in this state, I’m going to end up sleeping in a ditch again. And I neither want to be man-handled or robbed.”

Val pulled back the covers and slipped into the bed beside her, “You don’t mind do you?”

Darcy smiled at her drowsily, “Welcome aboard matey.”

Val gave her a look, obviously not getting the boat bed related humor. Darcy turned and cuddled up against the woman; Val entwined their legs and wrapped her arm around Darcy’s torso, holding her close.

“Mm. Feels nice.” Val commented as she pressed her face against Darcy’s neck and breathed in deeply, “Been a long ti---” Val’s thought was interrupted as the woman yawned.

“Good night.” Darcy whispered sensing Val was about to drift off. The other woman didn’t reply as her breathing slowed and she all but passed out.

Darcy felt like shit. She felt like she was taking advantage of Val’s attraction or leading her on in some way, but she couldn’t find it in her to climb out of the bed and join Hulk in his where she would be assured that things would remain strictly platonic. Instead she pet the other woman’s hair as her own eyelids grew heavy and sleep tugged enticingly at her mind.

“Oh my!”
“Where did she come from?”
“Who cares? He likes her, maybe he summed her...don’t touch her.”
“I didn’t know he had that kind of power.”
“Neither did I.”
“Keep sucking him, with her draped on top of him, maybe he’ll come quicker and we can sneak away for a couple hours.”
“Why don’t you suck him Angora? I woke him up yesterday, it’s your turn.”
“Gamilla, you’re the newbie. You do it.”
“Ugh. Fine.”
She woke up inside a fancy sports car that was driving down a winding road at top speed. Stephen was driving. Before she could say anything the car swerved and they were flipping in the air. The scene shifted and they were in a hospital room. Stephen lay on his bed, his hands hoisted in the air in metal contraptions. He screamed in despair and rage, ripping his hands free of their harness. And then he saw her. The scene around them changed and they were back in the Sanctum.

“Darcy.” Stephen sighed in relief, he pulled her into his arms and hugged her. “You’re alive. Hela said she killed you.”

“I miss you.” Darcy whispered ignoring what he had to say, she pushed herself up on her tip toes allowing her to kiss her boyfriend without him bending down to meet her. She fisted her hands in his cloak as they broke apart. “Why are we always the separated? Why do I always have to miss the people I love?”

Stephen cupped her face gently placing a chaste kiss on her lips, he mumbled, “Maybe to make the reunion that much sweeter?”

“No Stephen’s here I’m afraid. Just you and me and this big empty bed.” It was the Grandmaster. “Whatever will we do with all this time on our hands?”

Darcy opened her eyes but upon doing so felt a wave of dizziness wash over her. She groaned and squeezed her eyes closed; beyond the veil of her eyelids she could still sense the harsh bright light. She pulled at the blanket she felt on her back and covered her head.

“Feeling shy? Come on now Princess, it was you who climbed into my bed in flagrante.” The hand on her hips moved to her ass. She made a noise of disapproval as he cupped her bottom gently.

“’top.” She groused and to his credit his hand left her naked ass and returned to her waist. He patted her side as he mused thoughtfully, “Not long now until you’ll be begging me, ‘don’t stop’, ‘keep going’, ‘harder, softer, more tongue less tentacles’.”

“Wha?” She couldn’t get her speech to work properly but the extreme tiredness she felt overrode any worry that might arise from that inability.

“Not ready yet I see.”

“’m go b’k.” Darcy mumbled. She tried to open her eyes but they were so heavy. She was confused and concerned. She’d just been with Stephen. She couldn’t understand where he’d gone.

“Still sleepy?” Grandmaster moved his hand to her back and rubbed soothing circles, “I didn’t expect you to wake up for at least another couple of hours, maybe a day or so. The drugs you ate in that cake really weren’t meant for you. You should—” “--put sunscreen on if you’re going to spend the day lying around in the sun.”

Darcy recognized Pepper’s voice almost immediately. She smelt the salt that was in the air and felt the sun as it beamed down on her. The ocean created perfect white noise as waves crashed onto the shore nearby.

Darcy was lying down on a beach chair, the familiar rubbery material digging into her skin. She
was naked and there was a book on her face. Familiar hands began to rub a cold liquid into her skin starting from her legs and working their way up.

“Don’t worry about it honey, you just lie there. I’ve got you covered. And maybe if you’re lucky I’ll even give you---” “---a present.”

She vaguely recognized the no-nonsense voice but the name escaped her groggy mind. Darcy pried her eyes open and found herself in the VIP viewing box of the Sakaar arena. Only her view was sideways. She was lying down on the couch, her head pillowed on a pair of legs. A hand idly pet her hair, it felt nice but it made her feel like a cat which she didn’t like.

It was Grandmaster’s voice that spoke next asking, “What kind of present?”

“What.” Darcy breathed out the word as she struggled to sit up. Grandmaster’s petting hand fell away as he helped her get upright.

“Well, sleeping beauty awake at last.” He grinned at her, “Feeling better?”

“What.” Darcy repeated, she tried to raise a hand to her head, but her limbs felt like lead. Turning she found Topaz looking at her with an unreadable expression.

Grandmaster snapped his fingers, redirecting her attention back on him. He cupped her face, leaning forward he stared into her eyes with a frown, “Nope. Not done yet.”

“What?” Darcy repeated again, her voice a little more angry. She was confused and didn’t understand what was happening. “Where’s Pepper?”

“Just don’t fight it.” Grandmaster counseled, “Enjoy the ride.”

He pulled her to his side and let her rest her head against his shoulder, “Sleep little princess, sleep now and when you wake up--” “But I want to wake up now.” Darcy whined.

“Why would you ever want to do that?” Steve asked. He bent his head and kissed her lips gently. They were lying on a blanket, outside back on Earth. He had his arm around her and they were lying under the stars, her head pillowed on his muscle-y bicep. Fireflies glowed, flickering in and out of sight in the air above them. It was tranquil in a way her real life never was.

“Seriously Darce, if this is a dream, why would you ever want to wake from it? This moment is perfect. You’re perf--” “RRRRAAAAAAHHHHH!”

“Aah!” Darcy jerked her head back with a scream. She looked down in confusion. She was standing, but it felt like she just woke up. She wobbled precariously but remained on her feet. Looking up she found Hulk breathing heavily in front of her, staring at her with wild confused eyes.

“Darcy?” Hulk asked timidly. He had blood seeping from a wound under his eye. There were slashes up and down his arms. And there was a spear embedded in his thigh.

“What happened to you?” Darcy reached out to touch him, but found a knife in her hand. With blood on it. She dropped it and it clattered to the floor. The dirt floor. “What the fuck?”

Looking around she became aware of the crowd cheering and screaming for them. They were in the arena.

“Darcy better?” Hulk ventured closer tentatively, he limped heavily and she felt a wave of nausea wash over her. “Hulk sorry but don’t understand. Why did you--” “You’re the most beautiful person
I’ve ever met.”

Tony kissed her and she wrapped her arms around his neck, her whole body shaking. She was so confused and so happy to see him, she let out a sob and began to cry.

“Darcy?” Tony pulled back and it was then that she realized they were naked and in bed and currently having sex. Darcy’s eyes widened, horrified. Tony pressed her asking, “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing. Everything. I don’t know what’s going on…is this now? Is this real? I don’t think I can tell the difference anymore.” Darcy clung to Tony even as he disengaged his body from hers.

“Baby, shhh. You’re okay. I’m okay. Everything’s okay. Calm down.” Tony tried to console her but she couldn’t stop crying. Her body was heaving as she gasped for breath. She felt like she was drowning. Tony ran his hands up and down her arms cooing at her, “Darcy. Darcy baby, calm down. Honey you’ve got breathe.”

“I love you Tony.” Darcy said with an edge of desperation, “I love you more than everything. You know that right?” She had to let him know before he disappeared the way Stephen and Pepper and Steve had.

The scene around them changed. They were now in a park sitting on a bench overlooking the water. And also fully clothed. It was a sunny day, the sky was blue and cloudless, joggers ran past them not paying them any mind. It was so normal and peaceful it just made her more sure that it couldn't be real. Tony reached for her hand and locked their fingers together, grounding her in the moment. She stared into his eyes, allowing his presence to calm her. He stared back and after a few seconds he began to speak. “I love you more than the sun, the moon, and the stars. And if I had to choose between an empty galaxy and you, I’d choose you and damn everything else.”

“I’d choose you right back.” Darcy assured him. He pulled her head forward and they met in a fiercely passionate kiss. When they broke apart Darcy couldn’t help but tease him, “Even if you are a cheesball. Seriously Tony? The sun, the moon, and the--” “--stars.”

“Yeah, think about all the outfits she changed into at last week’s party. I think she really likes stars.”

“What about blue?” Darcy blinked and found that Angora and Gamilla, Grandmaster’s two attendances/personal slaves, stood in front of her. They were holding up dresses to her body. Darcy was standing in front of a mirror on a circular platform.

“Isn’t white more traditional for a wedding, you know back from where she comes from?” Gamilla asked.

“What wedding?” Darcy asked. She felt exhausted, but she also felt wide awake for the first time in what felt like a long time. Her head felt clear and thoughts no longer sluggish and drowning in confusion. She felt in control of her mind and body in a way she suspected she hadn't been for a while.

“Oh. You’re speaking.” Gamilla said surprise evident in her voice.

“I’ll get Grandmaster.” Angora excused before scurrying from the room.

Darcy turned her attention to Gamilla, repeating herself more firmly, “What wedding?” Looking at her reflection in the mirror she suspected the answer before Gamilla said the words, but still she needed the confirmation.

“Yours of course.” Gamilla replied with a bright smile, “Yours and the Grandmaster!”
“Fucking hell.”

"So what do you think?" Gamilla asked holding up two dresses, "White or blue?"

Darcy Shopping with Hulk

Hulk Party look
Darcy Party look
Cozy Party Furniture
Modern Party Furniture
“Pretty Woman” Dresses

“Cheap Thrills” Outfits
Grandmaster's Bed, not mentioned but this is what is in my head

*also boat bed added to last chapter if you wanna go back and look at what that looks like

Chapter End Notes

So how did you like the embedded links to the looks? It's a lot more work *technically* but I thought for this montage outfit heavy chapter, going the extra mile might make it a little more special.
Chapter 51 – Val

The news of her upcoming nuptials was enough to distract her from her state of undress, but as the shock wore off she became increasingly uncomfortable. She was naked on a platform in front of a trio of mirrors. Well, almost naked.

The female attendant Gamilla didn’t seem to find her near nudity out of the ordinary at all. Darcy however, was not okay with the disco ball stickered boobs and barely there holographic thong ensemble she was currently rocking. Looking down at her breasts she picked at one of the silver stickers experimentally, it came off and she threw the sticky square onto the floor.

Closing her eyes she tried to conjure clothes onto her body, but it didn’t work. She stared at her hands in contemplation.

“Is something wrong Princess?” Gamilla asked interrupting her thoughts.

Turning on the woman Darcy glared and ordered, “Go get me clothes.”

The woman held up the wedding dresses, “We’re supposed to be--”

Darcy cut her off with a harsh growl, “Robe. Or clothes. Now.”

“At once Princess.” Gamilla mumbled quickly. She set the dresses down on a nearby chair and all but fled the room.

Looking around Darcy frowned at the giant clam shell bed and the nude portrait of the Grandmaster. Turning her head she caught sight of her back in the mirror and found the skin there bejeweled. As she tried to reach her arm behind her back to pick off the jeweled stickers she muttered, “Seriously.”
The jewels on her back were too awkwardly placed for her to remove all of them so she gave up after a while. She was very confused about what had transpired after her getting drugged by Hulks cake, but she had a feeling she had been massively taken advantage of. And she was not happy about it.

Looking down she found that all of her pubic, leg, and arm hair had been removed. She shifted awkwardly in the plastic feeling thong, the lack of hair made the already uncomfortable thong that much more irritating. Darcy had never gone completely bare in her ‘down there’ area and she was highly disturbed to find herself as smooth as baby’s butt. Just as she was picking the string of the thong out of her butt cheeks, Grandmaster swan-ed in with Angora, Gamilla, and Topaz trailing behind him.

Gamilla was empty handed and Darcy felt her lip curl in derision. Grandmaster smiled at her and Darcy forced herself to stand up right, with her shoulders back. She put her hands on her hips and glared at the chipper looking man. She wound not allow herself to appear weak any longer.

“Princess, love of my life, you’re awake.” Grandmaster said the words with a wide grin on his face but Darcy saw a flicker of nervousness in the crinkling around his eyes.

“What the fuck happened.” Darcy demanded of Grandmaster before she flickered her eyes just over his shoulder at Gamilla, “And where the fuck are my clothes?”

The woman rightfully shrank under the weight of her gaze. Darcy was pissed and two seconds from lashing out at everyone within arms reach.

Grandmaster stepped forward, his attendants hung back but Topaz shadowed him as he approached her. “Clothes? My love, you needn’t worry about such things whilst in our bedroom. I know your prudish upbringing incites shyness from time to time but--”

“I’m not your love.” Darcy interrupted, “And this isn’t our bedroom and I’m going to start hitting you if I’m not given something to wear in the next five seconds.”

Darcy ignored the way Topaz lowered the melting stick, holding it in a more offensive ‘ready to attack’ position. Grandmaster ignored her threat and snapped his fingers. Gamilla disappeared silently as he chastised her, “Now, now, no need to get hot and bothered. We’re all friends here. Some more friendly than others…”

Bravely or stupidly, Grandmaster stepped up and joined her on the platform. “Save your more violent tendencies for the arena my love. If you’ve aggression you wish to work out of your system, another match can be arranged.”

Darcy was beset by a vision, but not the prophetic kind. She saw herself standing in the arena opposite Hulk. There was blood. And growling. And pain. And the cheering crowd. And chants of ‘Princess’. Grandmaster grabbing her arm and raising it high, declaring her ‘Queen of the Arena’.

In a daze she uttered his name, “Hulk.” The vision of her green friend pulling a spear out of his leg only for her to grab the weapon out of his hand and use it to attack him from behind, literally stabbing him in the back, swam in her mind. The event felt real and not real, it was as if it was both a memory and a dream. She felt numb and sick and more confused than ever.

Grandmaster drew close enough to take hold of her hand, he entwined their fingers and he rested his other hand on her hip. His voice lowered into a seductive tone, “Yes, you bested my beastly warrior. You my love, are the most magnificent creature I’ve ever encountered. Watching you in the arena it was more exciting and erotic than my last three birthday orgies combined.”
His hand traveled up from my her hip over her rib cage up towards her breast as he declared falsely, “My love for you grows with every passing minute and I cannot wait until we are man and wife and rule Sakaar, together.”

Even though the declarations of love sounded authentic, they rang false in her ears. She did not feel bad when she took their linked hand and she squeezed hard enough for his other wandering hand to pause. She then turned his hand around and bent his fingers back painfully. “Ow, oh wow that’s painful, ow, ow!”

Topaz advanced and Darcy grabbed Grandmaster’s throat with her free hand and squeezed. She snarled at the woman, “I’ll kill him. Fucking don’t move or I’ll kill him, I swear it.”

Grandmaster made a painful gurgling sound and Darcy lifted him into the air by his throat. She kept her eyes on Topaz, “It would be easy. To strangle him. Snap his neck. Throw him out the fucking window. And I could do it all before you got to me.”

“We’ll see about that.” Topaz threatened but she stayed still, heeding Darcy’s warning.

Gamilla re-entered the room with four guards, each one holding guns trained on her. Darcy wiped her free hand over her face, she was more annoyed at being seen nearly naked by more strangers than the fact that more enemy combatants had entered the room.


The woman was now slowly advancing on her position. Darcy sized up everyone in the room and couldn’t help but arrogantly boast, “I still think I could kill him faster than you could stop me.”

“Kill him and we’ll kill you.” Topaz swore, “And your brother.”

Darcy’s grip on Grandmaster’s throat loosened at that news, “Brother?”

“Lo-kee.” Grandmaster wheezed out. She stared into Grandmaster’s eyes and saw truth in them. Gently, he patted the hand she was using to strangle him, as if he was trying to comfort her.

She let him go and he fell to the floor in a heap.

“Where’s my brother.” Darcy demanded of Topaz, but she ran to Grandmaster’s side. He waved her off. Unexpectedly, Topaz switched her focus back onto Darcy, quickly pressing the melting stick to her throat, catching her off guard.

“Don’t.” Grandmaster wheezed, but then he began coughing. Darcy took the opportunity and grabbed the stick. She squeezed, crushing the end hopefully making it un-operational. Topaz blinked at her, surprise clearly written across her features.

Darcy then snatched the thing from Topaz’s hands and hurled it with all her might at the guards who still had their weapons trained on her. Gamilla and Angora screamed as they and the men dove out of the way of her improvised javelin as it sailed through the air.

Grandmaster coughed on the ground but called out, “Calm down, settle down. Everyone.”

He looked up at her and extended his hand, obvious expecting her to help him get up. Darcy stared down at him dispassionately ignoring his hand and demanding, “What have you done to me?”

Grandmaster grabbed her hand and though she tried to shake him off he used her anyway as he struggled to his feet. Once upright, he smoothed a hand through his hair and straightened his clothes.
Then he turned his attention back on her.

He glared at her with a frown, before shrugging out of his yellow overcoat/robe. He offered the garment to her and she snatched it out of his hands quickly putting it on and holding the open robe closed. His frown twitched at her actions but he said nothing to her as he turned to address his people. “Leave us.”

Gamilla and Angora ran out of the room nosily, their heels clicking on the floor as they fled.

“Sir I don’t think--” Topaz tried to protest but Grandmaster glared at her harshly and she lowered her gaze.

“I don’t like repeating myself. Topaz? Do I like repeating myself?” Grandmaster asked.

Topaz raised her head and glared at Darcy, “She’s a threat.”

“She’s my bride to be and I’d like to have a private conversation with her.” Grandmaster countered. He looked past Topaz to the other guards and commanded, “Leave.”

The other guards nodded and marched out. Grandmaster then glared at Topaz expectantly. “I’m waiting.” He said impatiently.

Topaz ignored her master and focused on Darcy instead, threatening, “If you hurt him--”

“If I hurt him I’ll come after you next.” Darcy snapped. Topaz’s nostrils flared but Grandmaster took her by the elbow, leading her down the stairs and off the platform.

“She won’t hurt me. She wouldn’t dare risk her beloved brother’s life so carelessly.” Grandmaster said to Topaz, but the words were obviously meant for her. And Darcy stiffened at the veiled threat.

Grandmaster all but shoved Topaz out the door. When he turned to her he smiled charmingly and quipped, “Alone at last.”

Darcy stalked forward following as Grandmaster walked further into the bedroom. He headed over to a little nook to the right of the bed. It had a long velvet chaise lounge opposite a mini bar, a large floor to ceiling window obviously the focal point of the small space.

Grandmaster poured two drinks and sipped deeply from one as he sat down on the chaise lounge. He patted the empty space next to him invitingly before laying back relaxing into the soft cushions.

“Come and sit. Have a drink with me.”

He held out the second glass to her and she sneered, slapping it out of his hand. The glass shattered dramatically. The floor must have been slightly tilted because the dark red liquid slowly traveled across the floor threateningly heading straight for the shaggy white carpet under the lounge chair, staining the edges as it got soaked up. Grandmaster’s mouth appeared pinched as he dryly commented, “That was a bit uncalled for.”

“WHAT THE FUCK!” Darcy shouted, “WHAT THE ACTUAL FUCK HAS HAPPENED!”

She blinked rapidly as tears sprung to her eyes, she couldn’t help it but she refused to cry in front of the man and angrily she rubbed her eyes before any liquid could escape. Grandmaster gave her a
cold look before he rolled his eyes and sat up straight, his carefree lounging posture disappearing. “Let’s address what I feel, is your chief concern.” A serious look came over his face as he made direct eye contact stating, “I didn’t rape you.”

“I don’t believe you.” Darcy said softly but with heat coloring her tone.

Grandmaster took a big sip from his glass then set it aside on the little table to his right. He then scooted forward and steepled his fingers as he spoke, “You have been under the influence of drugs and alcohol for the past two weeks, your reaction to the mind altering substances were most… unanticipated. You became semi-narcoleptic, weaving in and out of consciousness at random, and when you were awake you were mute but agreeable. I of course, kept close watch of you. And in your time under my care, we grew very close.”

“Bullshit.” Darcy muttered as she began to pace.

Grandmaster continued as if uninterrupted. “Nevertheless you resisted my sexual advances despite your compulsive compliance. Counseled by your brother, I came to the conclusion that your prudish upbringing was holding you back from indulging in the more pleasurable activities that Sakaar and I offer to you. So, I asked you to marry me and you said yes. We will consummate our relationship upon our wedding night, as is the custom of your people. And just between you and me, I. Can’t. Wait.”

Darcy stopped pacing and stared Grandmaster down. He wore an open and honest expression, and she could tell he believed the story he was peddling. And yet, the temptation to start punching him in the face still called to her.

“It would seem that the last of the drugs have finally left your system.” Grandmaster concluded. He smiled at her wolfishly, “I’m eager to become as well acquainted with your sober self as I am with your ‘less in control’ self.”

“I thought you just said you didn’t rape me.” Darcy’s questioned with narrowing brows.

“We never had penetrative sex, but that didn’t stop us from indulging in other pleasurable activities.” Grandmaster bragged.

Darcy felt bile rise up in her throat, “I’m gonna vomit.”

Grandmaster frowned, his eyes going to the large window that overlooked the arena, “It’s a shame you would only allow your inhibitions to fall away in the presence of Scrapper 142 or your pet human. I’m uncharacteristically looking forward to having you all to myself on our wedding night.”

Darcy’s heart jumped in her chest. “My what?”

Grandmaster looked back at her and grinned, “Your wedding. Well, our wedding.”

Darcy all but jumped onto the chase lounge next to Grandmaster, “No. Not that—my pet—my pet human? What pet human?”

Grandmaster frowned, “You know I don’t think I’ve ever been jealous before, I’m usually so good at sharing, but the concern you show for that fragile creature almost makes me question myself. And your feelings for me.”

Darcy grabbed the blue fabric of his shirt and yanked him close as she shrilly repeated herself, “What pet human!!?”
“Snark. Stank. I forget his name.” Grandmaster waved his hand dismissively and Darcy let go of his shirt. She was filled with shock and hope and her heart was pounding at the thought of being reunited with Loki and Tony. Her mind raced and she barely listened as Grandmaster explained further. “Your brother said he was your favorite pet, he negotiated for his life quite impressively. I like your brother by the way; he’s got flair and style, there’s a definite family resemblance.”

Darcy leant back onto the chaise lounge, her whole body felt numb. She let Grandmaster’s words wash over her. “I mean, I was going to kill your pet as overpopulation is not something we tolerate here on Sakaar, but dear Loki convinced me that even though he didn’t seem all that remarkable, your pet would be very useful in helping acclimate you to your new life here on Sakaar.”

Darcy nodded dazedly muttering, “I’m glad you didn’t kill him.”

Grandmaster narrowed his eyes at her and he pasted a wicked smile on his face, “I see now what your brother meant by Snarks usefulness….you love him. Truly love him.”

Darcy couldn’t stop her eyes from flickering up and meeting the Grandmasters. She didn’t say anything, but she could see it in Grandmaster’s victorious expression. She must have given away how she felt just by the look on her face.

“How useful.” Grandmaster remarked as he reached for his glass and took a sip, the small smile playing on his lips all the while.

“What did I do to Hulk?” Darcy asked after a few seconds, “I remember…I don’t know if I can trust what I remember.”

Grandmaster patted her leg consolingly, he left his hand on her knee as he spoke and it took everything she had not to grab his hand and break it. “You faced off against my champion and won. You are the first ever female champion on Sakaar, the Queen of the Arena, and the people’s Champion.” With a wink he added, “Don’t worry after we’re married you’ll only fight in exhibition matches.”

“How?” Darcy breathed out as she tried to remember beyond the bits and pieces in her memory.

“Well uh, you accompanied me to every party and you were featured by my side during announcements to the people. You became popular very quickly. And soon rumors and speculation ran rampant as to your true...loyalty. A match was proposed by popular demand. Beauty verses the Beast. With a little encouragement, you fought him.”

“And I won?” Darcy asked for clarification. The idea of her defeating Hulk in combat was completely ludicrous to her.

Grandmaster demurred, “I was surprised as well, but Hulk was reluctant to fight you from the very beginning. I knew you would survive. Well, I didn’t know, know. But I did bet on you.”

Grandmaster traced up her arm with one finger as he declared, “It was watching you fight Hulk which truly set me on the path to secure you as my wife.” He ghosted his finger over her lips and Darcy was tempted to bite him. “I’m millennia’s old and never once thought to tie myself down to one being forever or well, as long as your lifespan lasts.”

“I’m honored.” Darcy said sarcastically.

Grandmaster ignored her tone and his eyes lit up as he responded, “As you should be.” He scooted
closer, putting his face very close to her own as he reveled, “During the fight your brother negotiated for the life of your pet, and after when I announced my intentions to all of Sakaar, we haggled over your bride price and dowry.”

Grandmaster lowered his voice as if telling her a secret, “Despite your initial reaction, or maybe because of it, choking during sex is something we’ll have to look into, I’m very excited to get to know the new you. The real Darcy.”

Darcy’s mind stuck on the phrases ‘haggled’ and ‘bride price’ and she couldn’t stop herself from suspecting Loki of some trickery that resulted in her being sold to Grandmaster for his own protection and favor. She decided not to dwell on these dark thoughts, she wanted to believe that Loki would never sink so low, but she knew self preservation was ingrained in his soul and therefore she could not ignore the doubt that bloomed in her heart.

She changed the subject by asking, “Where are they now? Hulk? And my..pet? Loki? Where are they?” Calling Tony her pet made her want to scream, but she was reluctant to let Grandmaster know how much she truly valued him, more than she had already given away.

Grandmaster licked his lips. The expression on his face looking like the cat that ate the canary and then got taken to the canary store for good behavior. “Hulk is still in the same suite you left him in. I’m not petty enough to downgrade his living conditions even though he was defeated by your hands. He’s still my champion. He’ll still fight. Except now…he uh, knows his place. And that little swagger, that little kernel of unshakable confidence he had whenever we interacted, that voice in his head that whispered he could take over Sakaar and kill me whenever he wanted. That’s gone now. All thanks to you.”

Darcy swallowed thickly, “I didn’t--”

“You nearly killed him. It was spectacular! Actually made him transform into a human version of himself, if you can believe it!” Grandmaster marveled excitedly. He looked at her wistfully, “I know your memories are affected by the various drugs you’ve ingested lately, but I wish you could remember that. You defeating the Hulk it was…it was extremely arousing.”

“What--wait, did you say various drugs? As in I took more drugs after the cake drugs wore off?”

“Of course! I had to help you keep the party going by introducing more drugs into your system; if I hadn’t interceded you would have been sober within a few days. Your body is incredibly adaptable and the rate at which you heal is impressive to say the least.” Darcy squeezed her hands into fists at this news. She wanted to pummel Grandmaster into paste.

“You gave me more drugs so I would fight the Hulk?” Darcy grit out tersely. The rage she felt inside threatening to bubble out and explode all over the man’s smug face.

“I gave you all the drugs to find out how each affected you and your unique physiology.” Grandmaster put his hand on the back of the chaise lounge, “The results were very intriguing and for the most part, from what I could tell you enjoyed yourself. You’re welcome.”

“I didn’t enjoy it.” Darcy whispered. Her voice sounded haunted and she felt like curling into a ball and crying. When Grandmaster looked at her the smile fell from his face. She stared back at him and let all the hurt and pain of what he had done to her play across her features. For a moment he looked remorseful.

And then he changed the subject and continued talking.
“Getting back to the topic of your people, I’m afraid I’m going to have to keep you apart from Hulk from now on. He’s back to being his good old green self. Not exactly happy about the multiple obedience disks we implanted while he was in his weak and defenseless incarnation, but the shocks set him back to rights quickly enough. However the sight of you tends to result in shrinkage and degreenification. Constantly ‘correcting’ his behavior is very unseemly. No matter how affective.”

Darcy blinked; overwhelmed with guilt she had nothing to say. Grandmaster didn’t mind, he obviously loved the sound of his own voice and he continued on, “As for your brother Loki, he’s in a suite not far from Hulks. Though, those two, let me tell ya, they do not get along. Boy did I learn that the hard way.”

Finding her voice, Darcy asked, “And To—my pet human?”

“He’s bunking with your brother.”

Darcy couldn’t help but snort, “Bet they love that.”

“Your brother seems to be enjoying it.” Grandmaster commented as he took another sip from his drink.

Soon after their revealing conversation, Grandmaster left her alone.

Before departing, he politely ordered her to dress appropriately for dinner using the clothing left for her in the closet. He said nothing about her infinity bag, so she didn’t know if he was responsible for her inability to conjure things from it, or if it just got moved and therefore wasn’t where she thought it was and thus rendered her unable to access it.

When he snuck in a kiss she slapped him and his resulting smile had her heart pounding. He told her that Scrapper 142, her brother, and his most ‘loyal friends’ would be attending their pre-wedding party. Apparently the wedding was scheduled for tomorrow night and this was to be their combined bachelor/bachelorette party.

Finally alone, Darcy wanted to crumple into a sobbing mess but she didn’t. She only let a few tears escape before throwing Grandmaster’s coat off from her shoulders. She didn’t want to be wrapped up in his smell for a second longer than she had to. She found the bathroom and put the water on as hot as she could stand. She did a thorough inspection of her naked body, feeling and looking for any signs of those ‘obedience’ disks Grandmaster had mentioned. She appeared to be clean.

Once under the spray of water she washed away the glitter that she hadn’t noticed before; she peeled off and washed away all the stickers on her boobs and back. She scrubbed her skin until the feeling of icky gross violation left her skin red and angry looking. She tried to make her mind blank, not linger on anything, least she fall to pieces. Only a few sobs bubbled out before she left the shower.

Once wrapped in a towel, thoughts of Val flooded her mind. She wondered if the woman was complicit in Grandmaster’s plans. He seemed to imply that they got up to sexy ‘group’ stuff with Val and Tony, but the thought of it had her running for the toilet. She dry heaved for a few minutes before falling onto the cool tile floor, pressing her face against the tiles she worked on blanking her mind. Truly pushing away all thoughts of how she had been manipulated and defiled. She had to box up all her feelings or else she wouldn’t be able to function.

Using techniques taught to her by Frigga and Wong in hopes of controlling her sleep teleportation, she slowed her breathing, cleared her mind, and set aside all of her feelings. Once suitably
emotionally repressed, Darcy got up and searched the drawers for a comb and set about brushing her hair.

Keeping her mind focused on the logistics of her situation rather than the emotional fallout or implied violation, she tried to plot out her next moves. Initially, before Loki was mentioned, she had been acting on instinct and the loose idea that if she killed Grandmaster and his most loyal soldiers, she could free Sakaar and set up some kind of democracy for the betterment of all. With the threat hanging over Loki and Tony’s heads, that plan was no longer an option.

She had no doubt that if she killed Grandmaster without a good plan in place, Topaz would be loyal enough to kill Loki and Tony in retaliation. Both of whom probably had obedience disks implanted on their persons.

On numb legs she made her way to the closet that Grandmaster had indicated held clothes for her. She was disappointed to find that Grandmaster was as controlling as Loki could be. There was only one dress. And one pair of shoes. And again, no underwear was provided.

Begrudgingly she got dressed. The dresses silver and red color scheme reminded her of Thor and as he had not been mentioned at all, with a wave of her hand she colored her nails in subtle tribute of her older blonde bro. She had hope that he would soon arrive and give her the added boost she needed to overthrow Grandmaster and his tyrannical strangle hold on Sakaar, but she would be content with the man running interference with Topaz so she could escape this planet without anyone she loved dying.

With a wave of her hand she did her make up in dramatic fashion. Once again putting on girlish frills like they were war paint.

After a half an hour of looking out the window at the empty arena, Grandmaster arrived. Topaz trailed close behind him with a box in her hands instead of the ever present melting stick, which was now being held by Grandmaster.

“My love! You look exquisite. I knew this dress would suit you.” He pulled her close and kissed her cheek and Darcy allowed the act of affection.

During her time of quiet contemplation she had decided that getting close to the Grandmaster and hopefully getting him to let his guard down would be the best course of action. Following Val’s advice, she would smile and play along; hopefully convincing everyone she was nothing more than a physically powerful airhead.

“You look dashing as well.” Darcy said quietly. Grandmaster looked amused by this for some reason.

“I brought you a gift.” He turned his head and Topaz stepped forward, opening a black onyx box. Inside was a tiara/headband of sorts.

“You like stars.” Grandmaster said in explanation. He then moved behind her. He pulled the hair tie from her hair, undoing the sleek pony tail Darcy had originally styled it in. Almost massaging her scalp, Grandmaster shook out her hair, until it fell around her shoulders in loose waves. “There, that’s better.”

He moved back to Topaz’s side and took the head band out of the box. Darcy ducked her head when
he moved to put it on top of her head, making the process easier. Grandmaster smiled happily, “Good girl.”

Darcy internally bristled at the phrasing but took Grandmaster’s arm when he offered it. “Come my love, we’ve much debauchery to engage in before the nights end, it is after all our last night of unmarried freedom.”

Darcy was pleasantly and unpleasantly surprised that the night’s festivities were being held in the same room as the last one she remembered. The one with the divided décor, half sleek and modern, half cozy and warmth. The memories the space brought to the surface had her fighting for emotional control, but she liked knowing the layout and was comforted by the knowledge that the worst had already happened here.

When they walked in everyone stopped what they were doing and clapped for them. Darcy’s eyes desperately searched the crowd looking for her loved ones, but she didn’t see them right away. Grandmaster motioned for the crowd to quiet down and made a speech as they stood in the doorway.

“Friends! I welcome you to the first stop on our bachelor/bachelorette evening. My love Princess Darcy comes from a land where those on the eve of marriage engage in wild erotic and outrageous acts of debauchery and sin. In honor of this custom I invite you all to make love and indulge in all manner of pleasurable delights. Though I am to take to bed many a various partner according to this custom, I do so only in hopes of honoring my lovely bride.”

The crowd clapped and Grandmaster soaked in the adulation. He slid his arm around her waist and turned her so they were face to face and he was talking directly to her, even though he was blatantly still projecting his words for the crowds benefit. “My love, after tomorrow I shall never again take another into our bed without you there to join us or record the event for posterity.”

Then he kissed her and she fought herself, resisting the urge to bite off his tongue as he swept it inside. However she could not stop herself from making a distressed/surprised noise as Grandmaster’s tongue probed her mouth with more length than was humanly possible. When he pulled away from her and smiled charmingly at the crowd, Darcy covered her mouth to hide her coughing.

“Now that the formalities are done with, back to having fun!” Grandmaster declared with a flamboyant gesture.

Grandmaster used the melting stick, like a walking stick as he lead her around the room and introduced and in some cases reintroduced her to the party guests. He kept tight hold of her hip; his arm around her waist secured her to his side tightly as if he expected her to run away.

Darcy kept a smile on her lips and her comments to a minimum. She was pleasant and polite whenever directly addressed but said no more than was necessary. In truth she was very distracted with looking around for her family.

She did not see Loki or Tony or Val, until they left the bright white side of the room and entered the brown cozy side. Val caught her eye first. The woman’s expression was blank and slightly
inebriated, she was clutching a bottle in one hand and the back of the couch with the other. As if she was so drunk she was endanger of toppling over and needed the stability the furniture provided. When Val saw her, the woman gave her a rubbery smile. Darcy waved and Val let go of the couch to wave back. She then stumbled back and fell to the floor. Apparently she did need the couch’s help to remain upright.

When Darcy tried to go to help Val, Grandmaster’s grip tightened, keeping her by his side. He looked down at her face with a pout, “Abandoning me so soon?”

“Val just fell, I was going to help her up.” She explained, pointing to the woman who had stopped climbing back to her feet to drain the bottle whilst still on her knees. Darcy winced at the sight. She hadn’t realized that Val was an alcoholic, but seeing her choose booze over dignity, she suspected her new lady friend had a problem.

“Scrapper 142? She’s fine. More than fine!” Grandmaster said dismissively, “She’s happier when she’s got enough credits to drown herself until there’s more alcohol than blood pumping through her veins. It’s one of her best qualities.”

“Yeah but--”

“And after the bounty she acquired from her latest catch she’s rolling in it. Did I tell you about the Lord of Sparkles? She just brought him earlier today, he’s a contender. I’ll have to introduce you. Well uh, if he lives after his match with the Hulk. If he’s not too injured he can attend the wedding and I’ll introduce you then!”

Darcy nodded and allowed Grandmaster to lead her further into the throng of people. There were many more guests in attendance than were at the last party. Which is probably why she didn’t see Tony and Loki until she and Grandmaster were in the thick of the crowd.

When she saw them she let out a strangled noise and broke away from Grandmaster’s possessive hold. She pushed people out of her way carelessly until she reached them. Loki looked shocked and Tony looked relieved when she all but tackled them into the wall. One arm around each man.

She let out a choked sob, but pressed her mouth into Tony’s shoulder to stop any sound from being released. Tony and Loki both folded her into their embrace, creating a huddle of warmth around her. She didn’t cry beyond the initial sob, but it was a close thing. Seeing them, it was hard to keep her emotions in check. “You’re here, you’re real.” Darcy gasped.

“Thank god it wore off.” Tony whispered in her ear as Loki simultaneously whispered, “We’ll get you out of this.”

She didn’t have a chance to respond before Grandmaster came up from behind her commenting, “Well, isn’t this a heart warming reunion.”

Loki stiffened and reluctantly pulled away from her. Tony followed suit a few seconds later. Darcy bit her lower lip stifling the urge to scream. After being separated for so long, she just wanted to be left alone with the people who really loved her.

With a smile on her face she turned and returned to her place by Grandmaster’s side.

He bent his head and kissed her on the lips almost territorially, once again slipping his abnormally long tongue into her mouth causing her to squeak in distress. This kiss lasted longer than the one at the door and she started to feel lightheaded. To end the act Darcy put her hands on Grandmaster’s chest and shoved him away, before justifying the action by darting forward and kissing him on the
neck and then cheek. The smile on her face hurt but she kept it there.

Grandmaster looked down at her knowingly, not fooled by her attempt to cover up her rejection of his intimate kiss. He cupped her cheek and then bent his head, bringing their faces close together so he could rub their noses together as he cooed, “Oh my little Love Princess, I can’t wait until our wedding night when I can fully reveal to you the breath of my talented tongue. You will uh, come, to love it more than you love me I suspect.”

Darcy let out a false sounding laugh and turned to look at Tony to gauge his reaction. He looked murderous, luckily Loki had a tight hand on his elbow.

“Well,” Grandmaster smiled wolfishly, “Now that my love is no longer under the influence and once again recognizes you for the kin you claimed to be, I’ll leave you three to get reacquainted.” With a subtle butt grope, Grandmaster disappeared into the crowd, leaving her alone with Tony and Loki.

Darcy’s hands sweat as she kept tight hold of Tony’s. She led the way through the crowd, pushing people out of her way. Loki presumably was holding Tony’s hand or following closely, but Darcy couldn’t look back yet. She couldn’t look at them and not fall apart, especially not with Grandmaster’s ‘loyal friends’ around to overhear every fucking word that was said.

She led them through the doorways that lead to the modern side of the room. She made a beeline for the little purple lighted napping nook. When she saw a couple having sex in it she unrepentantly grabbed the guys leg and pulled him halfway out of the sheltered chair/couch/pod thing. The man looked disgruntled and the girl looked pissed but she just stared back and stone facedly ordered, “Get out.”

The couple said nothing as they rushed to right their clothes and stow their genitals. Quickly they complied and left. Without looking back Darcy climbed inside and kicked off her shoes. Only then did she look back. Loki looked a little disgusted at the prospect of sitting in a place where two aliens were just getting it on, but Tony was already climbing in to be beside her.

She began quietly crying as he got close enough to kiss her. Desperately she brought their lips together as her arms wound around his neck. In between kisses he said, “Are you okay?” “How could you be okay?” “I love you. I’m sorry.”

“Keep your voice down.” Loki advised as he climbed into the napping nook with them. He cuddled up to Darcy’s other side. She moved onto her back so she could look at him. Seeing Loki’s pinched, concerned expression had her letting out a quiet sob.

“I missed you.” She gasped and Loki just melted against her. He slid his arm under her neck subtly pulling her away from Tony, and into his own embrace. Tony adapted, pressing his body against her back as she curled into Loki and cried against his chest in earnest.

Surrounded by their warmth and love, Darcy broke down. She dissolved into body wracking sobs and snotty tears that got wiped onto Loki’s chest. Tony rubbed her back and hugged her from behind. Neither said more than shushing noises and cooing words of comfort. But both men made her feel safe enough to unload all she had been feeling until her head hurt and she felt empty.

The three of them stayed like that for a while, after her tears had finally finished falling, they spoke in hushed tones.
“What happened?” Loki asked first, breaking the silence. Darcy shifted off of his chest lightly, until she was more on her back in between the men than clinging to Loki’s front while Tony clutched at her back.

She ran a hand over her face, frowning at how puffy it felt. “After falling out of the Bifrost, I fell out of a portal and landed here.”

“Us too.” Tony ran his hand over her face, moving hair off of her wet skin. He kept his hand on her cheek as he stared down at her adoringly.

“I found Hulk. He got Grandmaster to heal me from Hela’s stabbing. I—he, Grandmaster drugs the food and water at his parties. Like, as a rule, just for funzies. The first night—” Darcy pressed her lips together; she wasn’t sure how much to tell them, what fact might make them irrational and unstable. She needed them on the ball and logical, not motivated from a place of revenge.

“He’ll die before I ever let him defile you.” Loki asserted. “You have my word.”

Darcy frowned and fixed him with a suspicious look, “You arranged my marriage.”

Loki’s face hardened, “It was the only way to slow his pursuit of you, sexually speaking.”

To her surprise Tony came to Loki’s defense, “You were like a robot Darce, everything he told you to do, you did. He made you…he made you do things—do you remember what you did? What he made you do while you were on the drugs?”

“No.” Darcy responded quietly, “Only flashes, even then—”

“Good.” Tony answered. He bent his head down and buried it in her shoulder, his voice was barely a whisper as he promised, “Don’t think about it. Don’t use magic to recover the memories. I promise, no good will come from knowing. Just let it go.”

“What did I do?” Darcy couldn’t help but ask.

“Just let it go.” Tony repeated. It was then that she felt the wet hot tears hit the skin on her shoulder alerting her to the fact that Tony was crying. It broke her heart. She brought her arms up around him and held him to her chest as he stifled his tears with her body.

“It was hard to watch.” Loki conceded, “You were not yourself. You did not recognize us at first, but then…he hurt Tony and you reacted. Violently. After that, I had to use all of my silver tongued skills to keep him from killing Tony right then and there.”

“What did I—” She began to ask, but the look in Loki’s eyes stopped her. Tony clutched her body to his tighter and she ran her hand through his hair comfortingly. Loki shook his head.

“Stark’s right. Don’t ask, just let it go.” Loki advised with a haunted look, “It wasn’t you.”

“I can’t just let it go Lok—”

“Is this a private party or can e’vryone whose wants ta have sex with Darcy join?” Valkryie slurred as she appeared at the entrance of the napping pod. She smiled drunkenly and started undoing her belts.

“Val, not now.” Darcy called out. Tony sniffed and wiped at his eyes as he pulled away from her shoulder, visibly pulling himself back together.
“Aw,” Val pouted as she rid herself of her outer leather vest letting the garment fall to the floor leaving her in a sexy strapless bra/bustier thing made of soft looking brown material. “Whoops, there goes my shirt.”

“Get out.” Loki ordered, but Val ignored him as she clumsily climbed onto the napping pod. With three people inside already it was a tight squeeze, but she managed to climb her way up Darcy’s body until they were face to face.

“Hi there.” She greeted Darcy with a broad grin, Darcy couldn’t help but return. “Hi Val.” Val turned her head to Tony and she nodded to him, “Nice to see you again.”

“When did you--?” Her question got cut off by Val dropping down on top of her, lips first. Darcy pushed the woman off by the shoulders, but Val knocked her arm away, allowing her to sloppily kiss Darcy once again.

Together, Tony and she pushed her off once again and Val whined, “C’mon. It’ll be better this time without Grandmaster creepily directing us around. You’re brother can just watch--”

“Shut up!” Loki yelled, shoving at Val.

Val scowled at him, “You’re just jealous you’re the only one who didn’t--”

Tony punched her causing Darcy to call his name out in surprise, “Tony!”

Val turned her head slowly in his direction, her voice was dangerous as she asked, “Did you just hit me?”

“No.” Tony lied, before changing tactics and saying, “I’m sorry.”

“What’s going on?” Darcy asked, “What don’t you want Val telling me?”

“Everything.” Loki answered; he grabbed Val by the shoulder and with his other hand made the woman look him in the eyes, “We don’t want Darcy remembering what was done to her while she was under the Grandmaster’s influence.”

“Not if she doesn’t have to.” Tony added.

Val blinked rapidly at Loki before swallowing thickly and nodding. “Alright. I can respect that.” She then elbowed Tony in the gut, causing him to wheeze out, “That’s fair.”

Darcy scowled at Val and slipped her arm around Tony’s neck, staking her claim on the man as she kissed his cheek because she couldn’t move her other arm to rub his injured area. Tony brushed off her concern, “I’m fine.”

“I’m tired.” Val said warningly, and then she passed out. Her face pillowed on Darcy’s breasts.

After sharing more details concerning her missing infinity bag and the arena match with the Hulk, Loki claimed he had to make the rounds to maintain his ‘status’. He took the unconscious Val with him when he left, promising to deposit her somewhere where she’d be safe.

The second Tony and Darcy were alone, she kissed him. Really, truly, unleashed on him. She poured all her fear and sorrow out into the kiss, showing him with her lips how much she had missed
him and how much she loved him. Tony kissed her back just as if not more passionately. He clawed desperately at her body, his hands running up and down her sides, and arms, as if he needed to confirm physically that she was whole and she was there.

Unwilling to take the physical affection any further while a party raged on just outside their little privacy nook, they ended up just wrapped up in each other’s arms. Staring into each other’s eyes, nearly nose to nose, with their legs entwined.

Unable to accept the advice of ‘let it go’ Darcy ruined the moment by asking, “What did I do?”

Tony pulled away, “Don’t.”

She grabbed him by his jacket and shook him gently, “Tell me.”

“I can’t.” Tony winced, “Don’t make me. Don’t ask this of me.”

Darcy wrapped her arms around Tony’s waist and put her head on his chest. His arms came up around her and held her body to his tightly. “Tell me everything.”

“Okay.”

“Loki and I arrived together.” Tony began, “We made our way to civilization. Loki used magic to get us clothes and for a day, we blended in and gathered intel. There were rumblings in the streets about Princess Darcy and the Grandmasters love affair, so we headed to the palace. Loki somehow talked his way inside.”

He paused and Darcy kissed his stomach encouraging, “Keep going.”

“Grandmaster was holding court, dressing down some of his subjects. They were embezzling or something. One of the men broke rank, drew a gun and tried to kill the Grandmaster. You erected your shield and protected him. Then you broke the man’s arm. Stomped on the gun. And then Grandmaster ordered you to stop.”

Darcy had no recollection of this at all. It was so weird to hear she did things she couldn’t remember, she knew it was an experience that black out drunks were familiar with, but she had never been that bad of a drinker. And so the whole scenario seemed implausible in a way. “I don’t remember this.”

“I wanted to run to you, but Loki held me back. He wanted to observe first, I almost knocked him out. But I—I’m glad we waited to reveal ourselves.”

“Why?”

“Grandmaster questioned the attempted assassin. When the answers he got displeased him, Grandmaster ordered ‘kill him’. Both you and a guard behind him reacted to the command. But you were quicker. You erected your shield inside the man. Cutting him in half. It was…messy.”

Darcy’s first instinct was denial. “I—I would never do that.”

“I saw you do it.” Tony confessed. He stroked his hand down her hair, “Do you want me to stop?”

“No. Keep going.” Darcy said numbly.

“Loki inserted himself into the party scene. He caught Grandmaster’s eyes and somehow endeared himself. Then he revealed that he was your brother. I—Loki told me to hang back, wait for a signal,
but he never signaled me. Apparently you didn’t recognize Loki and Grandmaster took Loki to be a charlatan. But then Loki surprised everyone, he took out a knife and cut his own throat. You started screaming bloody murder. You ran forward to—I don’t know try to save him, but you just ran through the illusion that Loki had created. By getting such a visceral reaction from you, Loki proved to Grandmaster that you two were family.”

Darcy chuckled. Tony questioned her, “What?”

“It’s just,” Darcy sighed, “That sounds like Loki, especially because he basically stole what I did to make Stephen reverse time for me.”

Tony snorted, “I never thought about it like that.”

Tony’s tone changed on a dime as he plead, “Let me stop. I don’t want to tell you anymore.”

“Please.”

Tony sighed. “It doesn’t get better. It just gets worse.”

“I don’t care. I have to know.” Darcy pled.

“Okay.”

“Loki made me wait three days before he introduced me to you and the Grandmaster. He said he needed the time to gain favor, but I think he just wanted to save you by himself. He failed. Couldn’t magically detox you, though he tried. Anyway, when he brought me to court to formally meet you and the Grandmaster, you sort of, jerked in my direction? I don’t know. But there was something, a tell, that alerted the Grandmaster to our connection.”

“How did he react?” Darcy asked knowing the answer wasn’t going to be pretty.

“Jealously.” Tony said tensely. He turned his head the other way and tapped on his neck, “That’s when I was outfitted with this baby.”

Darcy sat up on her elbow and looked down at Tony, he had an obedience disk embedded in his neck. “I can’t hack it. Can’t cut it off. It’s wired into the neural network, the only way I can get it off without the remote would be to overload the thing, but that would also fry my brain so…”

“Oh my god. I knew he would you guys wired.” Darcy lamented.

Tony frowned, “Oh no. Loki doesn’t have one. Just me, because I’m special.”

“Why just you?” Darcy asked.

Tony looked up at her and his face softened, “Because you killed for me.”

“What?”

“You were mute. You were zombie like. And yet, when you saw me, you moved. And as I got closer to you, you got out of your seat and walked towards me. Grandmaster ordered you to stop, but you didn’t. You came to me and you looked at me with cloudy eyes, it was like you weren’t even in your body, but you knew me. And you kissed me.”

She leant down and kissed him just then. It was a soft kiss, meant to comfort him as he told her the
truth he wished so desperately to hide. He softly stroked her cheek with one finger and when she pulled away he smiled at her. “Yeah. Just like that.”

“I love you.” She said because she knew something bad was coming up in the story next. The smile melted off his face as he replied, “I love you.”

“What happened next?” She prompted.

“He tried to have me killed.” Tony admitted, he gave her a wry grin as he said, “You didn’t take it well.”

“No shit?”

Tony laughed, “You threw two guards out a window and broke the back of a third before Loki stopped you and restrained you.”

Darcy frowned, “Why?”

Tony shrugged, “To gain favor, to stop you from being sentenced to death alongside me despite the Grandmaster’s creepy crush on you.”

“Yeah but--”

“It doesn’t matter,” Tony waved her off, “It worked. Grandmaster said I could live, he took you and Loki aside to his room so you could ‘recover’ and I was sent to a holding cell. I was there for a day and half before I was summoned….you don’t want to know the rest.”

“I do.”

“You don’t.”

“Tell me.”

“You were naked and that woman, Val, was..orally pleasuring you. Grandmaster was in a chair next to the bed, Loki was next to him. They were both naked. And they were just watching. Grandmaster had me stripped, zapped with the obedience disk, and ordered to join you on the bed. He made me--”

“Stop.” Darcy wiped away a tear, “I don’t want to hear the rest.”

“I fought it. I fought for you, but the disk, I couldn’t resist forever.” Tony rushed to explain but Darcy didn’t want to hear it.

“Stop.” She turned to Tony and cupped his face in her hands. He was crying, “You don’t need to say anything else. He hurt us. He made me hurt you. He made you hurt me. Right?”

“Yeah.” Tony had the most heart breaking expression on his face as he confirmed her theory. “There was some other stuff, violent stuff that he made you do—he, Grandmaster really likes watching you hurt people Darce.”

“I don’t need to know any more.” He looked so relieved that Darcy felt compelled to comfort him, she felt bad for making him relieve something so painful that she would never have a memory of. She pet his chest and put a quick chaste kiss on his lips, “It’s okay. It’s okay Tony. I’m here. I’m back with you.”

They spent the rest of the party wrapped up together in the napping nook. She didn’t see Loki again for the rest of the night.

Grandmaster eventually came looking for her and pulled her away. He had two very beautiful aliens on each of his arms, but he dismissed the pink skinned one so she could lock arms with him once again. He told her they were taking the ‘party favors’ back to their room for a late night snack. Tony followed her as far as he dared, but ultimately had to let her go when Grandmaster lead her out of the room and back to their ‘bedroom’.

Grandmaster chattered all the way back and when they arrived the woman and man got naked without being told to do so. Grandmaster looked at her expectedly but said nothing when she went to the chaise lounge and laid down on it with her eyes closed.

She listened to Grandmaster have sex for at least two hours. He seemed to be trying really hard to make them scream his name because they were both very enthusiastic about praising him. She used that time to plot how to get them all safely off Sakaar and free of Grandmasters wrath. However, eventually she did fall asleep.

She dreamt of Asgard’s destruction once again and woke up in an unfamiliar place next to an unexpected someone.

Val stretched her arms overhead as slowly became aware of Darcy’s presence. Darcy turned on her side and looked down at the warrior woman with a critical eye. Obviously Val had some deep seeded PTSD or alcoholic/emotional problems, but physically she was still perfection. Val seemed loyal to no one but herself, but Darcy knew the woman had a heart. She had warned Darcy after all. And she was Asgardian. One of the Valkyries. And thus one of the subjects Darcy was bound to serve and save, if she could.

If she could convince Val to fight with them, they might actually have a shot at enacting the hair brained scheme she’d come up with last night. When Val opened her eyes and spied Darcy, the woman’s lips twitched smiling before she groaned and put a hand over her eyes.

“Shit.” Val cursed.

“Val.” Darcy said, she put a hand on the woman’s bare stomach, this prompted Val to crack one eye open and train it in her direction. Darcy smiled toothily, “Wanna help me get out of marrying Grandmaster?”

Val smiled and closed her eye, “Yeah, okay.”

Darcy grinned, “Are you sure? It will involve violence and duplicity and probably teamwork.”

Val smirked, “Are you trying to talk me out of helping you?”

“Just making sure you know what you’re getting into.” Darcy explained.

Val chuckled and pulled her close, cuddling up to Darcy’s chest, she mumbled, “Only if I can sleep for another fifteen minutes.”

Darcy’s Disco Boobs and Thong

Darcy’s Bedazzled Back
Grandmaster, Loki, Valkyrie Costume reminder

Darcy’s Party Look
Tony Party Look
So, I kept hearing that Grandmaster was this guy who likes pleasure, but who's life work and ultimate goal in life, is making people fight to the death in this arena. Extrapolating from this info, I've concluded, violence turns Grandmaster on. And he's a bit of a masochist to boot. Hope you liked the chapter. Let me know what you think in the comments.
Chapter 52 – hela

Val had been gone for twenty minutes and Darcy was having a hard time keeping her mind busy and off the thousand and one scenarios that might have befallen the warrior woman whilst out doing Darcy’s bidding. The plan was for Val to go to the palace and get Tony and Loki, bring them back to where Darcy was hiding out so the four of them could plan a way to overthrow the Grandmaster.

And so, alone, she began to snoop around the ship that also served as Val’s home. It was very utilitarian; the woman had literally no knick knacks the most exciting thing she found was an Asgardian looking uniform. She was examining some of Val’s various weapons when the sound of the door opening made her jump and knock over a bunch of knives that had been hung on the wall.

“Crap.” Darcy exclaimed as heavy footfalls approached her quickly.

“Thor’s here.” Loki informed her as soon as he was within reach.

“What?” Darcy gasped and dropped the knives she had been picking up. Val was right behind him, but Tony was nowhere in sight.

“He’s set to fight in tonight’s arena match.” Val added as she closed the hatch on her ship, giving them privacy. Darcy instinctively reached out for Loki but tensed in anticipation of more bad news as he wrapped his arms around her in a firm embrace.

“Who are they making Thor fight?” Darcy asked. When neither Loki nor Val rushed to answer her she pulled herself out of Loki’s arms. “Don’t tell me he’s pit Thor and Hulk against each other….They wouldn’t—he can’t--”

Loki turned on Val with a murderous look, “Someone sold Thor to the Grandmaster, billing him as a contender. He’s hooked up to the same shock collar as the rest of the slaves. Now we’ll have to rescue him as well I suppose.”

Val glared back at Loki but said nothing. Darcy read between the lines and sought out Val with her eyes. A pleading look clearly on her face as she asked in a disappointed tone, “You didn’t, did you?”
Val’s hard look softened. She averted her eyes to the floor and almost sounded ashamed as she weakly defended herself, “I didn’t know the big blonde meant anything to you, it’s just my job. I’m a Scrapper. I scavenge to make a living.”

“You mean to buy more drugs and liquor so you can numb yourself inside out.” Loki accused with real heat in his voice.

Val scowled, “I don’t need to defend myself to you.”

“I am your prince!” Loki shouted, “And you enslave people for that lunatic, drinking and hiding here on this shit world--”

Val ran forward and jumped on Loki, tackling him to the ground. Loki did a somersault thing that reversed their positions, leaving him on top of Val looking down on her with a smirk. Val did a leg scissor move that put Loki off kilter enough for her to throat punch him, throw him off of her and then roll to her feet. Darcy raced forward as Loki conjured a dagger into his hand and Val grabbed two knives form the floor where Darcy had spilled them.

“Fucking stop!” Darcy yelled, she put herself in between the pair as she ranted, “What the fuck, I thought we were on the same side. Stop fucking fighting like a pair of snippy school girls. Put the weapons away!”

Loki got to his feet and pointed to Val with his dagger, “We can’t trust her. She’s going to betray you and sell you back to the Grandmaster.”

Val copied his stance, “He told the Grandmaster he’d have you back in his clutches within the hour!”

“What?” Darcy squawked.

“Only because she said she could do it in two!” Loki shouted.

Darcy rubbed at her temple, she felt like she was developing a stress headache. With a heavy sigh Darcy sat down on the floor and crossed her legs. She looked up at her two angry faced allies with an expectant and exasperated face, “Sit down and tell me everything, and start with why Tony isn’t with you.”

With only minimal bickering about blame, Loki and Val told her what happened. Apparently her absence was noted and the Grandmaster had sounded the alarm. He had all of Sakaar on high alert looking for her. When Darcy sleep teleported away, Grandmaster thought she escaped and thus he was all in a tizzy about where Darcy had gotten too. And who might have helped her get away. The worst part however was his reaction in regards to Loki and Tony.

Loki ran a frustrated hand over his hair as he relayed the end of the story, “So, Grandmaster had Tony and I brought to him. Dragged us really, we ran into her on the way.” He thumbed at Val whilst frowning.

Val took over saying, “I was just doing what you asked. Getting your brother and lover, I didn’t mean for--”

Loki interrupted her rudely, taking back control of the conversation with a glare, “Grandmaster mused about holding a public execution to teach you a lesson for leaving. With Tony as the first one on the chopping block and he not so subtly implied that if his death didn’t draw you back into Grandmaster’s clutches, I would be next.” Loki sighed, “I was trying to be persuasive, buy us time, I
asked for twelve hours to find and return you. I figured with twelve hours on our side we could come up with a solid plan.”

Loki stared pointedly at Val. The woman looked away; clearly uncomfortable with whatever came next. Loki continued but with an added edge in his voice, “Your little friend offered to find and return you in two hours. I had no choice but to offer to do it in one.”

Loki turned on her and stared intensely into her eyes. “We don’t need her. I know you like her, but I don’t think we should trust her.”

The look Loki gave her clearly conveyed that the decision to involve Val further into their escape/destroy Grandmaster plans, was up to her. Darcy let her eyes shift over to Val. She looked at her. Really looked. Val met her gaze steadily.

Darcy knew Val didn’t mean her any harm, and she could see it in the woman’s expression that she felt bad about upping the timeline in an effort to be competitive with Loki…for whatever reason. Still, Darcy didn’t know Val all that well and she felt a flicker of doubt in herself for being so trusting of the woman.

“Val?” Darcy said in a soft questioning tone, “Is Loki right? Are you gonna sell me out?”

“No.” Val said quickly.

Darcy pressed, keeping her tone soft but steeling herself internally for something malevolent to be revealed about Val’s true intentions. “Have you been playing me this whole time? Softening me up for the Grandmaster’s manipulation by giving me a ‘buddy’ to hang out with. Grow close to? Someone for me to confide in and—all the while report everything I say back to him?”

“No--”

“I imagine being the Grandmasters pet spy would be very lucrative.” Loki inserted.

Darcy continued in a brittle voice, “Were you a set up from the start? It would make sense, it would—I wouldn’t put it past Grandmaster to insert someone in my life to act as his--”

“I would never do that to you.” Val said in a gravelly voice. “I would never do that to anybody.”

“Yes you would.” Loki said in quiet voice. Darcy imagined him as the devil on Val’s shoulder, giving voice to the thoughts she’d rather pretend she didn’t have. “You’d do his bidding if the price was right. You’d sell her out if the price was your head. And you’d use your honest attraction and Darcy’s inebriated state to your advantage to get her to trust you. And touch you. And--”

“Stop.” Darcy ordered. She gave Loki a look that said ‘enough’ and then she turned back to observe the effect Loki’s words had on Val.

Her face was like stone, hard and unreadable, but her eyes. Her eyes showed the depths of the other woman’s pain and despair, but there was something else there too. Darcy saw self-loathing in Val’s eyes and it took her aback. Val seemed so confident and self-assured, Darcy didn’t expect to see such emotion from the woman she knew to be one of the fabled Valkyries of Asgard.

In a tight voice Val spoke with conviction, “I said I’d help you break your engagement and I will.”

It was in that moment that Darcy realized Val didn’t like herself very much. She probably hated what she had become to survive. Who she had become. Darcy didn’t know the why or the how of Val settling on Sakaar, but she knew that being Scrapper 142 was a far cry from being one of the elite
Valkyries from the stories of old.

“I can break the engagement on my own.” Darcy replied coolly. She lowered her tone and leaned forward enticing Val to copy her body language. “What I really need help with is saving my boyfriend and brother from being electrocuted to death, killing the Grandmaster if necessary, and finding a way off of Sakaar and home to Asgard so we can get back to the real fight that matters.”

The corners of Val’s eyes crinkled as she narrowed her eyes asking, “What fight on Asgard?”

“Ragnarok.” Loki answered.

“No. Hela.” Darcy clarified. “Odin’s dead and she’s back.” The look on Val’s face was one of recognition. “You’ve heard of her?”

“You could say that.” Val answered.

Darcy balled up the fabric of her red skirt into fists. She needed to give her hands something to do other than tear out her hair, which was what she really wanted to do. Questioning Val’s loyalty wasn’t something she had been planning on doing and the whole situation had her on edge.

“Changing topics real quick, where is Tony, exactly?”

“He’s with the Grandmaster.” Loki said with a wince. “When he sent the two of us off on our competition to fetch you, he said he’d be keeping Stark very close, as insurance.”

“What’s with the face?” She questioned. Loki and Val exchanged a look and Darcy felt a chill go up her spine.

“What?” She demanded with a knowing look. “What aren’t you telling me?”

“He’s drugged Stark. And…” Loki seemed reluctant to finish his sentence. Luckily for Darcy’s nerves sake, Val took over finishing relating the gory details. “He altered the obedience disks purpose on your man Stark.”

“Altered it how?”

“If shocked he now experiences pleasure, not pain.” Val said.

Darcy gulped, “And why aren’t we happy about this?”

Loki took her hand and sandwiched it in between his own. “Because Grandmaster is perceptive and greedy. He knows how much you care for Stark, and he’s jealous.”

“Loki.” She said her brother’s name with such desperation. She wished he could just say spell or wave a wand and make this all better, she wanted him to fix it so badly. “Loki.”

“I don’t want you to know or remember what was done while you were under Grandmaster’s control, but—he enjoyed watching Stark scream. He enjoyed it when you were the cause.” Loki’s voice was as kind as she’d ever heard it and it kind of broke her heart. “Stark is human. And his body wasn’t made to withstand constant erections and ejaculations. If Grandmaster continues to torture him in this manner, eventually he will dehydrate or his heart will give out.”

“His heart?” Darcy felt tears well up in her eyes. Her voice was hoarse as she whispered, “Tony’s being sexually tortured by a fucking maniac. Because of me?”

“We’ll stop him.” Val said. The look in her eye was one of confidence and Darcy derived strength
from the sight. Val put her hand out and put her hand on Loki’s which still held Darcy’s own. “Together. We’ll take down Grandmaster and save your men.”

With that look and those words, Darcy got the sense that she represented something of a second chance for Val. The chance for Val to become a version of herself that was less Scraper 142 and more akin to Brunnhilde, Valkyrie of Asgard. And god help her, Darcy saw opportunity in Val’s vulnerability.

Adopting a slightly fearful expression and a soft tone she looked into Val’s eyes and asked, “Valkyrie. Can I trust you?”

Val swallowed thickly before answering, “I’ve spent years, in a haze, trying to forget my past. Sakaar seemed like the best place to drink, and to forget, and to die. One day.”

“Well, I was thinking that you drink too much and indulge in far too many drug orgies to not end up dead and alone, sooner or later.” Loki remarked snippily.

Val lifted her chin as she declared, “I don’t plan to stop drinking. But…I don’t wanna forget. Watching you,” She turned and fixed Darcy with a sincere look, “Watching you be mauled and manipulated by that man, dulled by drink and drugs into being his puppet—I’m sorry. I’m sorry for watching it happen and not doing anything to stop it.”

“For enjoying it.” Loki added with a curl of derision to his lips, “She may not remember but I do. And I know you benefitted from Darcy’s lack of free will. I watched you enjoy it several times.”

Darcy had an idea about what he was referring to, but not knowing exactly what happened made it easier to let it go and forgive Val for whatever liberties she might have taken while Darcy wasn’t herself. And she needed to forgive Val, because at this point, should Val turn on them, all hope would be lost.

Val removed her hand from the pile and looked down at her lap as she admitted, “He’s right. I took advantage of you Darcy. And, I’m sorry.”

Darcy shifted away from Loki and closer to Val. “It’s okay. I forgive you. Forget about it.”

“I don’t want to forget. Forgetting isn’t better, it’s—it happened. I have to acknowledge that in order to move on. And, I can’t turn away anymore.” The look on Val’s face made her unsure that they were talking about the same thing. Or if Val was coming to some realization about her own baggage laden past, pre-Sakaar. There was a long moment as Val stared blankly at the wall. She looked at Loki and he shrugged, apparently not knowing what was up either.

Val shook herself out of her daze. She turned on Darcy with a fiercely determined expression. “I can’t turn a blind eye to my mistakes or things I’ve done here on Sakaar to contribute to the suffering of others. So, if I’m gonna die, it might as well be helping you.”

“For the record, I’d rather you not die.” Darcy said. Val gave her a half smile.

“I wouldn’t mind it.” Loki interjected causing her to roll her eyes at her brother’s antagonistic nature.

“Same.” Val replied with a smirk.

With that declaration, Darcy was satisfied that Val was on their side. For real. She turned to Loki and stated boldly, “I trust her.”

Loki rolled his eyes and pouted, “You would.”
“I believe her.” Darcy declared. “And we need her.”

“We don’t need her.” Loki refuted petulantly. “We can plot murder just as good without her.”

“And escape? And saving Tony and Thor and Hulk? Will that be easier or harder without her?” Darcy asked.

Loki’s eyes widened, “You plan on taking that green monstrosity with us as well?”

Darcy gave him a flat look, “We’re planning on returning home to fight the Goddess of Death. Fuck yeah we’re taking Hulk with us.”

In the end she, Val, and Loki only had ten minutes to plot before time ran out for hostage Tony. So, with a rough idea of what they were going to do Darcy was walked back into the palace escorted by Loki on one side and Val on the other.

The hardest part of the plan, right off the bat, was to ignore Tony. The idea was to get the Grandmaster to no longer see Tony as a threat/important bargaining chip. Darcy doubted her ignoring him would really change Grandmasters mind at this point, but there was little else they could do to try to ease Tony’s suffering as Val and Loki put the pieces of their plan into place.

Grandmaster was elated to have her back, but frowned when she declared them both winners in the ‘where’s Darcy’ contest. Having been on the receiving end of her random sleep teleportation, it wasn’t hard to convince him she didn’t intentionally escape but was at the mercy of her wack ass powers. And when she showed an interest in the plans for their upcoming wedding, all suspicion was immediately forgotten. Or at least, Grandmaster pretended he forgave her. Just like she pretended not to see Tony sitting on the floor at his feet. With a fucking leash around his neck.

Tony who’s breathing seemed heavy as if he was winded. Tony who was shirtless with bruises on his chest as if he was beaten with a baton. Tony who had a cut on the bridge of his nose and a split lip. Tony who wore loose dark gold pants with a prominent wet stain on the front and a fucking dramatic cape around his shoulders, seemingly just for the hell of it.

Grandmaster called him her ‘pet human’ was all Darcy could think when she saw the leash.

It took everything Darcy had not to scream and rip Grandmaster apart when she noticed that Tony eyes were dilated and how his vision was blank and unfocused. Except for when she walked into the room.

When she entered, Tony smiled crookedly at her and sort of slumped over in her direction. Grandmaster yanked him back into place by the chain around his neck and Darcy bit her tongue so hard blood filled her mouth and she had to swallow it down so she could respond to the Grandmaster’s questions.

She was allowed/ordered to return to ‘their’ bedroom to shower and change as she was still wearing the gown from the previous night’s festivities. Loki was invited to sit by Grandmaster’s side to keep him entertained while he waited for Darcy’s return. As she was leaving she heard Grandmaster order Topaz to pay Val her units before dismissing her all together.

When Angora and Gamilla followed her out of the grand hall and back to Grandmaster’s bedroom she was tempted to knock their heads together out of sheer annoyance, but she restrained herself. She
allowed the women to silently flutter around her as they drew her hot bath, put scented flower petals
in the water, and lined up a few bottles on the baths edge. The bath was strangely designed for two
people; it had two interlocking almost tear drop shaped baths in the one large rectangle. One half of
the bath glowed blue, the other pink. Darcy stared at the water as it filled the tub, almost hypnotized
by the sight and sound of water flowing out of the taps.

Once full the women shut off the valves and Darcy shook herself out of her daze. With the bath
preparations finalized, she expected the pair of women to disappear but they remained. When
Angora went to unzip her dress Darcy finally spoke.

“What the hell are you doing?” She demanded as she turned in place, dislodging the attendant’s
hands from her dress.

“We’re to attend to your needs Princess.” Angora replied with downcast eyes. “We are to help you
out of your gown and into the water.”

“What?”

“Grandmaster wishes us to bath you in preparation of your wedding night.” Gamilla added, “You
won’t get a chance to clean yourself before the wedding after tonight’s arena match. The wedding is
to take place right after the Hulk defeats the Lord of Sparkles.”

“I don’t need help laying in hot water.” Darcy practically growled. Gamilla and Angora exchanged
fearful looks. But Darcy had no sympathy left after seeing how Tony had suffered because of
Grandmaster’s madness and ego….and her.

“Get out.” She raised her voice as she commanded the pair forcefully.

Angora met her eyes for the first time that night, “We are to remain by your side until you are
reunited with Grandmaster.”

“We cannot leave.” Gamilla said with her head still bowed. Darcy’s nostril’s flared and she opened
her mouth to argue when a disembodied voice just outside the bathroom’s doors interrupted.

“Oh come on girls. If the princess wants some privacy…” The attendants looked up at
Grandmaster’s arrival with twin expressions of relief. He waved his hands dismissively at them,
commanding them with an easy smile on his face, “Go.”

The women scurried to obey, quickly leaving the room. Leaving Darcy alone with Grandmaster.
And Tony. Tony who was still bound by the leash around his neck as he followed a few paces
behind the taller man.

Grandmaster grinned at her, “I’m not a fan of having simpering sycophants underfoot either. This is
better. More intimate.”

He tugged Tony along as he approached her. Darcy found the strength to somehow appear happy by
the turn of events. In a cheerful tone she asked, “I thought you were going to wait for me with
Loki?”

“Your brother isn’t as charming as he thinks he is.” As a pair, Grandmaster and Tony circled her
slowly. Grandmaster stopped behind her, leaving the tethered Tony who was a few paces behind
Grandmaster, right in front of her face. He smiled dopily at her and she fought to keep her expression
blank.

She let out a squeak as Grandmaster unceremoniously unzipped the back of her dress, she only held
her tongue because he didn’t move to pull it off of her. Darcy brought her hands up to the bodice, making sure the dress would remain in place.

He leaned in close and spoke directly into her ear, “I think we need to have a conversation before tonight’s ceremony.”

“Okay.” Darcy said shakily, “Are you sure now’s the best time though?”

Tony opened his mouth, his eyes flickered back into focus as he stared at her. He began to mouth something, she thought it was her name, but it seemed like he didn’t have control over his lips or maybe his tongue. Seeing Tony reduced to this diminished state broke her heart and made her truly afraid of the Grandmaster for the first time.

Out of nowhere she felt a tear slip free and slide down her cheek. Grandmaster caught it on his finger as he came around to her front. He put the finger in his mouth, tasting the salty liquid with a noise of pleasure, “Mmm.”

Darcy swallowed thickly, unsure of how to recover after the display of emotion.

“Sit.” Grandmaster ordered Tony; with a heavy hand on Tony’s shoulder he forced him to his knees next to the bath. Grandmaster extended the handle of the leash to her, cheekily asking, “Hold this for a minute?”

Robotically, Darcy took the leather strap from him, unable to look away from his eyes as Grandmaster proceeded to strip off his own clothes. From the floor Tony made a noise of wordless distress. Another tear rolled down her cheek and Darcy cursed herself for reacting.

“I want you.” Grandmaster declared as he walked past the both of them. “And I aim to have you. One way or another.”

He climbed the little steps that lead up to the tub; and with a hiss he climbed into the tub and sunk below the blue colored water submerging his body up to his nipples. Nodding his head at the pink colored water on the other side of him, he ordered her, “Get in.”

“I--” Darcy started to protest, but Grandmaster interrupted her saying, “I’ll kill him.”

He held up a small device in his left hand and waved it at her. She hadn’t noticed it before, but she should have. He repeated himself as he pressed the button, “I’ll kill him and I’ll make you watch.”

The affect was instantaneous. Tony let out a howl and his pants tented visibly. His abs contracted and he shook his head back and forth, his hands clawing at his thighs. Grandmaster put his hand on Tony’s shoulder restraining him or reminding him of his presence, Darcy didn’t know which.

To Tony Grandmaster quietly scolded, “Remember, no touching or it gets worse.”

His eyes flickered up to hers then. He smiled genially, like he wasn’t torturing her boyfriend right in front of her, and in a friendly cajoling tone said, “C’mon, get in here. The water’s great.”

Tony was still contorting in pain, Grandmaster’s thumb still on the button. Darcy scrabbled around to the other side of the tub. Bypassing the little steps Darcy threw herself into the water. Dress and all.

Grandmaster shot her an amused look and released the button on the remote. Tony let out a long guttural moan, with his head tilted back and his eyes closed, Darcy easily recognized his orgasm face. Grandmaster pet Tony’s hair as he deflated against the tub, his back slamming into the porcelain hard enough to jostle the water.
“Good boy. Yeah,” Grandmaster said in a patronizing tone one would use on a dog, “Good boy, you liked that? Huh fella? Did you like that?” Grandmaster turned to look at her with a mischievous expression, “Wanna see him do it again?”

With a raised voice, Darcy responded quickly, “No!”

Tony looked like he’d run a 10K and barely survived. He was sweating and his breathing was coming in gasps. There were lines around his eyes because he was wincing. He moved a hand to his stomach and hunched over whimpering. This whole pleasure as pain thing clearly was an effective means of torture and Darcy did not want to watch the man she loved suffer.

“Okay.” Grandmaster acknowledged. He set the remote down on the edge of the tub then gave her a pointed look, “I woke up this morning thinking about our upcoming nuptials. I was excited and full of energy and then I discover you’d fled. You hurt my feelings.”

“I didn’t flee.” Darcy argued, “I can’t control my power.”

“I believe you.” Grandmaster said with a nod, “But now I want you to believe me.”

His tone lost its teasing friendly tone. The smile fell from his face. He stared at her silently in an unsettling way. And just when she was ready to say something to break the awkward silence, he began to speak. “I see you. I know you. You’re not fooling anyone least of all me.”

“I’m not--”

He leered at her, his eyes traveling the length of her body. “Why so chipper about our marriage all of a sudden? Hmm?”

He dipped his hand into her side of the tub and he used one finger to trace up her leg, from ankle to knee. As he aimed to take his touching higher, the high slit all but giving him access to her vagina, she couldn’t help but cringe and press herself as far away from him as possible. His hand stilled. “I’m not stupid. I know you don’t want me,”

Grandmaster pouted and withdrew his hand back into his own tub. “Yet.”

“I don’t believe in marriage.” Darcy said for lack of a more honest excuse.

“Neither did I until I met you.” Grandmaster responded, his eyes flashing. “You think you know me. You think you’ve got everything figured out, all the angles, all the players…we could be great together. I don’t think you fully appreciate what I’m offering you, what an alliance between us could mean.”

“Maybe you’re right. But still, I don’t want marry you.” Darcy said quietly. Despite how cruel he was being, despite everything he’d done and how scared she was, she wanted to give him the chance to take it all back. To walk away from this while he still could.

“Yet.” Grandmaster gave her look she couldn’t quite decipher, but she was disappointed by his response all the same.

“I’ll kill you.” Darcy warned, she was afraid of tipping her hand but, she was more afraid of letting him go on thinking he was in charge and she was nothing but his little puppet, even without all the drugs.

With a shark like grin Grandmaster responded, “I’ll kill your family. You’re brother Loki is being outfitted with an obedience disk as we speak.”
Darcy paled.

“While we’re being honest with each other, and really I am glad you’ve decided to stop trying to lie, it was really getting embarrassing. I was embarrassed for you. Your inability to appear neutral when loved ones are in pain is actually adorable. But seriously,” Grandmaster reclined, leaning his head back and making a show of spreading out his arms, “You might as well admit you’re planning on trying to ruin the wedding; perhaps you even have grander designs like trying to escape the planet.”

He said it like he knew it to be a fact and his certainty was disquieting. “But let me tell you, Princess Darcy of Assgard. I am inevitable, we are inevitable. Sakaar is inescapable. You’re trapped here, but it doesn’t have to feel like it.”

Dipping his hand into her tub he splashed her lightly with the tips of his fingers. “You’ve concocted a little plan and gotten your allies on board, and you think that your power will save you, but it won’t.”

Darcy tried to deny it, “I didn’t-wouldn’t-”

But Grandmaster leaned forward and put a finger to her lips stopping any more lies she might have tried to tell. “Shhhhh.” He shushed as he removed his finger and leant back in the tub, reclining once more.

He took her hand and pet it in the same way he had pet Tony’s head. With a honeyed tone he said, “You have power, old power, and it is as intimidating as it is enticing.” His tone changed then, into something darker and more malevolent. The grip on her hand tightened until he was squeezing it with a strength she never would have suspected him being capable of.

“But you are young. Inexperienced. And weak. You’ll fail. Your loved ones will die. And I will still have you in the end. And when you try, I’ll have to punish you. So take my advice. Don’t.” He released her hand and she swallowed thickly, sinking further under the pink water.

Grandmaster’s voice was so serious, so unlike anything she’d heard from him so far, it was eerie. And the way he switched back and forth so effortlessly into his flirtatious charming persona was so jarring and disturbing.

Coldly Grandmaster demanded. “Nod if you understand.”

Mechanically she nodded.

“Good. Now enough of this doom and gloom and threatening to kill people. Back to the fun stuff.” He reached his hand up and grabbed a purple loofa looking thing and held it out to her with a smile, “Hows about you use this to help me get at those hard to reach places?”

She washed the Grandmaster’s back but, she refused to wash him anywhere else and he seemed put out but didn’t press the issue. He just maintained a creepy level of eye contact as he ran the sudsy purple sponge over his chest and…lower regions. He also had her wash his hair, an act that was weirdly intimate and made her feel really uncomfortable, but by keeping her eyes on Tony’s still hunched over form she was able to get through it.

He offered to return the favor, but she declined as politely as she could. Thankfully he didn’t insist. When he got out of the tub and told her that he’d lay out some clothes for her to wear for that evening’s fight, it was lock something got unknotted inside of her and she could finally breathe freely again. He encouraged her to enjoy her solitude whilst getting dressed, called it his ‘wedding present’.
When he went to take Tony’s leash to tug him out of the room, she stopped him.

“Leave him.” She demanded, “He’s my pet, not yours.”

“If your affection for this drooling mongrel--” Grandmaster seemed frustrated but Darcy couldn’t let him take Tony with him.

“He’s mine.” She interrupted. “And if you can’t respect that, might as well kill me now. Because I’m willing to die for him. The question is are you?” They stared at each other silently. She’d laid bare her biggest vulnerability but also drew a line in the proverbial sand. With bated breath she awaited his response.

With a smirk Grandmaster dropped Tony’s leash. “I’ll lay out some clothes for him as well then.”

And with that, he left.

Darcy remained in her tub, frozen with her ears perked. She listened as he rummaged around the room. Only when the sound of him closing the door and leaving the bedroom completely reached her ears, did she allow herself to sink below the water and scream.

She got out of the tub; the sopping wet gown weighed her down but she paid it little mind as she padded around to the other side where Tony remained bent over.

“Tony.” She whispered his name as she cupped his face and lifted him up so she could see him properly. He was wordlessly whispering to himself. His eyes were dilated to the extreme; barely a hint of brown was to be found surrounding the large black irises. With a brittle voice on the cusp of losing it she said his name again, “Tony.”

He didn’t respond verbally.

But when she wrapped her arms around him, he hugged her back. And that was enough to keep the spark of hope alive.

She helped Tony to his feet with an arm around his waist and her Asgardian strength; she helped him out of his pants and cape and into the bathtub. He was like a doll, quiet and pose-able, but not really there mentally. He relaxed into the water at her urging.

“I’ll be right back. Don’t drown.” She whispered to him as she went to the sink and got a washcloth. She didn’t want to use the same loofa on Tony she’d used on the Grandmaster. When she returned to his side, his head was tilted in her direction, his eyes blinking at her as she knelt down by his side once again.

She dipped the cloth in the water and then gently used it to clean the blood from his lip and nose. Gently she ran the cloth over the rest of his body, scrubbing him clean of the sweat and grime. When she reached his inner thigh she had to scrub a little harder to cleanse him of the dried substance that caked together and clung to his leg hair.

When she was done with his body she grabbed the bottles of shampoo and conditioner she’d used on the Grandmaster, because they were the only ones available.

“Close your eyes.” Darcy said as she cupped her hands and poured the pink water over his head to
wet his hair. He let out a pleased noise and the sound of it broke her. She let out a brief guttural sob, but managed to keep from falling apart completely. As she lathered the shampoo into his hair she began apologizing, “I’m sorry. I’m so sorry Tony. I’m sorry.”

When she rinsed the shampoo from his hair, Tony made the pleased noise again.

After finishing up with Tony in the bathroom, Darcy felt exhausted emotionally and physically. She guided Tony into the Grandmaster’s bedroom and found the clothes he’d laid out for them to wear. She swept them off the bed and onto the floor. She made Tony sit and then lay down on top of the blanket. He was so compliant with her every whim she imagined he was in a similar state as she was when she was under the Grandmasters control.

She stared down at him and felt like shit for being the cause that led him to be in the fucked up condition he was. She hated herself, her power, every choice she’d made, and basically everything and everyone.

“I’m sorry.” She whispered again.

She felt the pull of sleep at her mind and couldn’t help but answer the call. She climbed onto the bed next to Tony and curled her body around his. His arm twitched to be closer to her as she took the extra towel she’d brought for her hair and threw it over them like a blanket. And then she closed her eyes and willed them both to sleep.

She astral projected aboard an alien ship and found herself wearing a short metallic dress. She was surprised to find herself in the presence of a familiar looking alien and a missing, now, found old friend.

“Y’all think we don’t know nothing about Ah’sgardians? That we’ll swallow any damn lie ya tell us? Pretty little Ah’sgardian saved mah life once. It’s by her good grace we even letch ya ont. the ship in the first place! Now you spinnin’ tales of untold riches like we’re a bunch of uneducated yokles who’ll eat any horse shit you shovel our way?” The blue skinned alien with bad teeth and a fin on his head stared down the beautiful raven haired warrior with a confident swagger she’d come to associate with the man after only two meetings.

“I speak the truth sir.” Lady Sif argued as she glared at Yondu with a determined gleam in her eye, “I assure you, Princess Darcy is a close and personal friend of mine.” Kraglin, ever present by his captain’s side, raised his eyebrows at the mention of her name and Yondu’s mouth lost the upward turn at the corner of his lips, as if he didn’t find all of this so funny anymore.

Sif continued making her case, “You will be handsomely rewarded if you aid me in my quest home to Asgard. You heard the call to arms same as I, same as every civilized world. Asgard means to warn us all, Thanos is coming and I don’t aim to miss the fight.”

Yondu exchanged a look with Kraglin. The first mate shrugged and Yondu subtly nodded in response before turning to address Sif. “A’right little missy. You got yourself a ride home.”

Lady Sif looked relieved, but a second later her face hardened. She drew her sword and pointed it at Yondu’s throat threateningly, “Don’t call me little missy. I am a capable warrior of Asgard and I--”

Yondu interrupted with a loud whistle, his fin glowing red as his flying arrow heeding his command and came flying out nowhere taking aim at Sif’s own throat. Sif appeared surprised but she didn’t
lower her sword an inch. Yondu held out his hand and caught the arrow as he released it from obeying his will. He diffused the situation further by mocking Sif, comically saying, “Blah, blah, blah.”

Darcy caught the way Sif’s lips were quirked with the hint of a smile. Yondu carried on, “Are we go’n stand around jabbering and threatening to kill each other all day or we gonna get a move on, so I can get paid?”

Yondu smirked; his crooked teeth on full display, the sight made Sif pull her head back slightly and grimace. She then affected a thoughtful look before she nodded and removed her sword from Yondu’s throat, sheathing it in one smooth motion.

“Well met Captain Yondu. Forgive me; ever since my space craft was stolen and my mission of retrieval derailed, I’ve faced many a rogue and challenges. Demeaning commentary notwithstanding, I’m afraid I’ve grown a quick of temper as of late.”

“Forgiven,” Yondu said dismissively, as he patted Sif on the back hard enough to make her stumble. “Now tell me about this treasure beyond my wildest dreams again? Cuz’ I gotta tell ya, my dreams get pretty damn wild.”

Sif gave the man a small smile and the two began walking down a long hallway. Darcy disappeared soon after.

She reappeared in astral form on Asgard. Looking down she found herself wearing a gown that reminded her of one of Frigga’s nightdresses. Looking up she let out a scream no one could hear as a hoard of masked men charged at her. Of course, being in her astral form, they passed right through her, but still. It was scary.

She whipped her head around to see the helmed and armored men close in on a pair of familiar faces defending a family huddled together behind the Earth men. Steve and Bucky were dressed in Asgardian attire and fighting fiercely. Behind them she spied Heimdall shepherding the family away from the fighting.

Seeing Bucky wearing what looked like a medieval version of his Winter Soldier outfit made her feel uncomfortable. It made her question everything she had done, just like when she saw Tony suffering at the Grandmasters hands. Who was she to rope these two centurions into a fight that was not their own, not even on their own planet. And then abandon them to fight it without her, she was shit. There was no getting around it.

“I’m the worst.” Darcy lamented as she watched Steve deftly dispatch opponent after opponent. Using his sword and a triangular shield to beat back the large group of adversaries that beset them, Steve was quick on his feet and faster than Bucky, but only she guessed because he wore no armor and was instead outfitted much like Fandral, if not a little less gauchely.

Bucky on the other hand, was a powerhouse using modern and medieval weapon in tandem. His heavily armored body made him less wary of getting up close and personal, nor of taking a hit or two. In one hand he had a fancy machete and in the other a gun. She wasn’t sure what kind of gun but it was long and firing multiple rounds so she was guessing it was a machine gun? But she wasn’t sure.

It was odd though, the bullets seemed to be having little effect stopping their attackers, at best each head shot only served to slow them down momentarily. It was Bucky’s skillful hacking and
dismembering with the machete which was proving more efficient.

And when one of the attackers was punched so hard by Steve that his helmet came off, she found out why the bullets were so ineffective. And she let out a gasp of surprise at the sight.

The man under the armor was a rotting corpse, its eyes glowing faintly with the green magic that must be the source of its reanimation. It was then that she realized she recognized the insignias and armor designs the undead wore. She’d seen them in Asgardian history books and similar but altered versions on every guard in Asgard; these were fallen Asgardian soldiers brought back to life. Probably by Hela.

Just thinking of the woman who would be her sister made her appear by her side. She was almost shoulder to shoulder with Hela and now wearing a long sleeved white dress with silver overlay that reminded her of armor. Darcy stumbled back at the sudden close proximity she found herself in with the intimidating Goddess of Death.

She backed up blindly, inadvertently walking through Skurge who shivered as she passed through him. She spared him a glance, it seemed odd that he’d be so closely aligned with the other woman and not be the subject of her ire or violence.

Hela was standing before what looked like the whole of the Asgardian army. And she didn’t look happy. In a shrill voice she called out, “This is your last chance! Kneel and serve me or die and sever me.”

It was Hogun who responded, flanked by Volstagg and Fandral were at the head of the army, weapons drawn and looking battle ready he called out to Hela and spoke with that grim calm he had, “Whoever you are, whatever you’ve done. Surrender now or we will show you no mercy.”

“I am the Goddess of Death and rightful ruler of Asgard! YOU CANNOT ESCAPE ME!” She was distracted by what Hela was saying by the sight of Fandral and Volstagg. Seeing them alive and in a different setting facing off against Hela made her heart jump in her chest and she couldn’t contain herself she quickly descended the steps screaming out, “Guys, you’re alive!”

“You.” Hela called out, “I thought I killed you already.”

Darcy froze.

Slowly she turned and found Hela staring right at her. “Shit.”

“You’re not really here.” Hela said with dawning realization, “But you live.”

“No.” Darcy denied quickly, affecting a ‘spooky’ tone of voice, “I’m a ghooosssst.” She waved her hands and tried to appear ghostly, “Oooooooo.”

Hela gave her a dry look, “I’m the Goddess of Death, are you really trying to pretend to be a ghost right now?”

“Um, excuse me? Who are you talking to?” Fandral called out. Volstagg answered him, “She’s mad, obviously.” Darcy turned her head and couldn’t help but smile again at the sight of her friends, alive.

“I did change it.” Darcy whispered breathlessly to herself.
From the middle of the amassed Asgardian soldiers, a spectral figure much like her own rose into the air, his fluttering cape flapping in the non-existent wind behind him.

“Darcy!” Stephen called out to her.

“Stephen!” Darcy yelled out excitedly. “Volstagg and Fandral aren’t dead!”

“Oh, it’s the wizard.” Hela commented with an edge in her voice. “I’ve been meaning to kill him.” Hela then produced one of her Necroswords and flung it at Stephen’s astral form. Stephen flew evasively and dodged the weapon.

“Darcy, come to me. NOW!” Stephen shouted with urgency.

“What?” Darcy took a step forward, moving just in time to avoid being skewered by the Necrosword Hela threw at her head. The blade did graze her cheek though. Darcy called out in surprise, as the blade actually managed to cut her.

Her eyes widened as she put a hand to her cheek as if to confirm she really had been harmed. Pulling her hand away, she stared at the blood on her fingers in wonder. Looked up at Hela she couldn’t disguise her horror.

Hela smirked, “I’m the Goddess of Death, did you really think you could hide from me in the astral dimension?”

Darcy turned and ran at the same time the Asgardian army heeded Hogun’s rallying war cry and they advanced forward, charging at Hela.

She passed through so many people and it felt so weird but she kept running, somehow knowing that Hela was no longer looking to destroy the opposing army there to defeat her, but rather the woman would do her best to barrel through them to get to her.


When she reached the middle of the pack she found him and he spared a moment to smile down at her. Then he floated down from his astral self and joined back with his body. When he opened his eyes they didn’t focus on her face as he spoke to her suggesting he could no longer see her now that he was back in his body, “Darcy, you need to get back in your body now! She’s the Goddess of Death, her weapons can hurt you and if you die outside of your body…just don’t do that.”

Darcy reached out with one of her ghostly hands and caressed Stephen’s cheek, communicating with him in the only way she could at the moment. He shivered in response and closed his eyes as if savoring her non-existent touch.

“Go.” He whispered. And then he shot up into the air.

Darcy blinked away the need to cry, the thought of leaving while Stephen and her friends and her people fought and possibly died…it felt cowardly. She didn’t want to leave them.

Up ahead she could see Hela’s huge headdress as she cut through soldiers like butter. However her easy assault was stopped when Stephen joined the fight, he conjured a ball of energy much like their shields, but formed it into a whip and lassoed one of the horns on Hela’s headdress. Yanking, he threw her off balance, and with another tug, she fell to her knees. Leaving her open for Volstagg to tackle her and Fandral and Hogun to attack.
As if knowing she wouldn’t obey him the first time, Stephen looked back over the crowd and shouted in her direction, “Darcy go back! We’ve got this! Whu-oh.”

Hela used the whip of energy to pull Stephen down out of the sky and back to the ground. Fandral was thrown flying into the crowd. She didn’t see what happened to Volstagg and Hogun, as the Asgardian soldiers were converging on the spot obscuring her view.

The urge to run forward and make sure Stephen was alright called to her. To make sure the Warriors Three didn’t meet their end by Hela’s hands, as she’d foreseen in her visions. To fight with her people and defend her home. She took a few steps towards them, nearly giving in to her instinct and damning the consequences.

But then a figure flew overhead powered by red glowing hands.

“Wanda.” Darcy sighed in relief. With the chaos witch joining the fray it was much easier for Darcy to heed Stephen’s advice and will herself back into her body.

She stayed long enough to watch Wanda deliver one magically powered punch to Hela’s face before smiling gleefully and leaving.

She woke up back in her body, with a grin on her face. She had saved the Warriors Three. Bucky and Steve were helping protect her citizens and get them to safety. Stephen and Wanda and the army were giving Hela hell. Lady Sif was no longer MIA, but headed home aided by another person she had saved through precognitive intervention.

And just like that, she had hope.

She felt confident.

And ready to kick ass.

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Grandmaster Tub
Tony’s ‘human pet’ look
Astral Darcy *Lady Sif and Yondu look
Asgard warrior Bucky look
Asgard warrior Steve look

Astral Darcy *Steve/Bucky look
Chapter End Notes

I was hoping to wrap up Asgard/Hela and Grandmaster all in this chapter, but that didn't end up happening. Next chapter though...we are running full steam ahead into the Asgardian Apocalypse and I'm so excited.

Please remember to leave a comment if you like the chapter, feedback is needed as I'm kind of reworking a lot of the story in a major way right now. Liked and dislikes are welcome, just let me know what you think!!!!
Awaking from her nap, she felt reinvigorated. Turning to the still sleeping Tony she quietly commanded him sternly, “Wake up.”

His eyes snapped open and to her great relief the dilated pupils had reduced some. “Tony? Are you…you?”

His eyes slowly drifted to her face and locked on to her. The cloudy disassociated look faded from his gaze and a slow sloppy smile drew across his face. His sluggish movement told her that he was still suffering the effects of the drugs but the fact that he was able to focus on her proved they were also wearing off.

“Hi there.” Her fingertips ghosted across his lower lip before she kissed him. It was a brief kiss, just a reminder really. He didn’t respond but to make a noise that was little more than a squeak. When she pulled away from him his eyes tracked her movement. “I love you Tony. And I don’t want you to worry. Everything’s going to be okay.”

“Ungh.” Darcy smiled beatifically. The sound, little more than a grunt, gave her so much hope. She leant down and kissed him again.

After making Tony drink some water, she helped him dress in the clothes Grandmaster had left for him.

Tony looked very handsome in his blue velvet suit the effect was only ruined by the lack of smirk or calculated expression on his face, the dazed look clashed with the formal-ish outfit. And while the clothes suited him perfectly, the style was very different from the fashion most wore on Sakaar. She wondered if the differing attire was meant to single Tony out as ‘less than’, but she didn’t give a shit. He looked super hot and fancy.

While dressing he was able to lift his limbs some as she helped him into the clothing, but the movements were clumsy and lacked precision. She absently worried about brain damage and how
long the effects would last, but if Loki couldn’t magically detox her she doubted there was a solution for Tony. Still, his little signs of improvement helped steel her resolve. She was going to put an end to this Sakaarian nightmare, one way or another.

Quickly she put on the outfit that had been set out for her; it was ridiculous and therefore perfect for the preamble to her ‘wedding’ with the Grandmaster. She still didn’t know how exactly to retake control of the situation but she knew that Grandmaster’s perception of her was the key to doing so.

When Grandmaster looked at her, she wanted him to see a compliant beaten down little girl. So, she colored her hair outlandishly and created a soft look with a braid around the crown of her head whilst leaving the bulk of her hair down and flowing around her shoulder. She did her makeup, using the Grandmasters own aesthetic as her inspiration. She found the jewelry and a bag laid out for her as well and donned every piece.

Looking at her reflection in the mirror she couldn’t help but feel she looked like a cast member of the movie ‘Clueless’ but if it were set in space.

Getting the Grandmaster to see her as whipped woman willing to fall in line with his deluded intentions was step one of her plan. She didn’t know exactly what her plan was, but she knew she didn’t want the cloud of suspicion hanging over her when the time came to strike.

Walking over to Tony who was seated on the bed waiting for her, she pulled him to his feet. His eyes once again focused on her face and she felt herself melt a little. She stroked his chin as spoke, “I’m going to save you.”

She moved to hug him. The velvet blue of his suit was soft and she snuggled against it, seeking comfort where she could considering his arms hung limply by his sides unresponsively. “Whatever it takes Tony. I promise.”

She and Tony were escorted to the Grandmaster by a group of seven armed guards, apparently the destruction of the melting stick and her title as ‘Queen of the Arena’ warranted her a difficult reputation amongst the guards. Grandmaster met her outside the door to the VIP viewing room with a smile.

“Bride.” He greeted.

“Grandmaster.” Darcy answered as she unlocked her arm from Tony’s, freeing her to move forward and grab Grandmaster’s arm. “I need to talk to you.”

Grandmaster frowned. “Talk?” His eyes flickered to Tony, “We’ll have time to talk later, now we have--”

“I’m going to marry you.” Darcy stated. This seemed to catch Grandmaster off guard and amuse him.

“You are.” Grandmaster confirmed in a wary tone, “After the match which is actually starting soo--”

“I’ll marry you.” She repeated, “And I’ll have sex with you. With enthusiasm.”

Grandmaster perked up at that. He encouraged her saying, “I’m listening.”

“I’ll rule by your side,” Darcy said, “or just support you as you do it on your own. I’ll greet you with a smile in the morning and kiss goodnight. And never plot against you. I’ll be your wife and your
partner, your most trusted and powerful body guard. I’ll be with you in all the ways that you want me to be.”

“I’m glad to hear you’ve come around to my way of thinking.” Grandmaster complimented. “We’ll make excellent lovers and be the most amazing power couple, you’ll see.” He moved to return to the door but she held him in place.

“We can move past the ugliness and threats.” Darcy prompted her tone leading. “If…”

“If?” Grandmaster echoed.

“If you promise to never hurt Tony again.”

“Tony..?” He said like he didn’t know who she was talking about.

Darcy reached back and pulled Tony forward. “This is Tony. And I love him.”

Grandmaster frowned at her, “Why?”

She had the urge to say, ‘fuck you that’s why’ but she didn’t. She ignored his question and repeated herself, “I love Tony. I love him and I’d die for him. And more importantly, I’d kill for him—hell, I have killed for him.”

Grandmaster’s eyes narrowed, “I thought you said no more ugliness and threats?”

“I’m not threatening you.” Darcy said calmly, “I’m asking you to give me something. To make me a promise.”

“Fine.” Grandmaster shrugged dismissively, “I promise I’ll never hurt him again unless he deserves it.”

“Not good enough. C’mon. Give a little get a little. You know how the world works.” Darcy argued.

Grandmaster frowned at her, “I can’t promise never to hurt someone ever. Ever is a very long time. Besides, you heel very nicely when this one is threatened. And as much as I’d like to believe your commitment and change in attitude is authentic, uh…I have my doubts.”

“Take the obedience disk off him.” Darcy demanded softly, “Prove you won’t hurt him and I’ll be loyal to you. I promi-- ”

Grandmaster interrupted her making a tisking sound. “Ah, I see what you--”

“Tony’s mortal.” Darcy interrupted, her voice raising a few octaves as she argued passionately, “Humans only live to be about 100 years old and that’s if their super lucky and healthy and—and you’ll still have Loki and Thor and Hulk to keep me ‘in line’ or whatever but…”

She looked at Tony and he stared back at her. She searched his eyes for any sense of recognition or awareness, but he still seemed out of it. Tony was the smartest person she knew, to see him so vacant really got to her. Her voice was tight as she explained, “Tony used have a drinking problem, so his liver’s probably shit. He got shrapnel embedded in his heart and had to built this tiny magnet and insert it in his chest so he wouldn’t die, then he got the shrapnel and magnet removed but that’s probably left the organ scarred and weakened. He’s also had palladium poising, multiple concussions, other stuff. And he’s human, which means physically he’s weak and I…”

“And you love him.” He offered, his tone holding the barest hint of understanding.
She nodded then turned her teary eyes on the Grandmaster; she tried to appear as honest and vulnerable as she could. “Grandmaster I’m immortal like you, but Tony’s only got another fifty to sixty years left. Don’t hurt him to get to me. It won’t work. Not long term.”

He lost the unaffected expression, his eyes flickering over to Tony in an assessing manner as he looked him up and down.

“And that’s what you want right?” She lowered her voice into something more, seductive. “Me. You. Us. You want there to be an, us? You want me to care? I can do that. Given this one small concession, I can become who you want me to be.”

She felt like Grandmaster was actually listening to her and she decided to go in for the kill. If she couldn’t convince him to take off Tony’s obedience disk, there was no point in moving forward with any ‘plans’ because they would mean Tony’s death. She and Loki and Thor and Hulk could all withstand the pain of being tortured and drugged, but with Tony there really was no guarantee that he’d survive, which made him her number one priority.

She grabbed up Grandmaster’s hands and held them in her own gently. With an earnest voice she made her case, “He can’t take the torture. His heart will give out and he’ll die prematurely. I love him and I could love you too…but not if you’re the one who takes Tony away from me.”

Grandmaster stared into her eyes as she pled, “Take off his obedience disk and don’t ever drug him again.” After a moment of intense eye contact she added, “Please.”

Grandmaster’s eyes drifted to their joined hands, then over to Tony, then back to her. In an observational tone he said, “You’ve got a lot of passion in you.”

She swallowed thickly and remained silent, allowing Grandmaster to contemplate her request. After a full minute, he answered with a shrug, “Okay.”

He dropped her hands and pulled the little remote out of one of the pockets in his robe, with a push of a button, the metal disk fell off Tony’s neck and clattered to the floor. Darcy stared at Tony with wide eyes, a little shocked her emotional gambit had worked. Sadly Tony, still under the influence of the drugs, didn’t even notice his liberation from bondage. He just smiled at her with that dopey, high, look on his face.

She hugged Tony and kissed his cheek, patting his shoulders lightly she quickly realized that this was the perfect moment to garner more affection/trust from her Grandmaster. She turned back to him and threw herself at him. Obviously surprised by her action, he still caught her.

She hugged him around the shoulders tightly, she forced out a few tears making sure the drops landed on the tan skin as she buried her face in his neck. “Thank you, thank you. You won’t regret this.”

Grandmaster seemed caught off guard by her voluntary display of affection, but quickly reciprocated the gesture hugging body to his tightly. “Well aren’t you welcome.”

When she pulled back, Grandmaster took his opportunity to go in for a kiss and Darcy responded enthusiastically, as promised. She kissed him with as much skill and fever as she could muster. When they pulled away from each other the broad grin on Grandmaster’s face told she was at least semi successful. She beamed back at him, equally as happy to have won this small victory against him.

He offered her his arm chivalrously, “Shall we?”

In a split second she contemplated throwing caution to the wind and punching him so hard in the
chest that her fist emerged out the other side of his body. She could snap his neck. Or bash his head into the wall. She could kill him with her bare hands, of that she had no doubt. But killing him wasn’t the smart move. Instead, she took his arm and entwined hers with his as she agreed, “Let’s do this.”

Grandmaster and she entered the VIP viewing room to applause. He seemed to bask in the attention, but she caught him looking down at her every couple of minutes as if checking to see if the happy expression had faded from her face. Every time she grinned up at him his chest puffed out and he held his head a little higher.

He led her around the room checking in with all of his guests, fishing for compliments, and basically showing her off. Darcy added little to the conversations other than her excitement about the upcoming arena fight and her impending nuptials.

When they had entered the room, her eyes of course, had gone straight to Loki. He was sitting on the long white couch but he had stood when they entered like everyone else. He looked disgruntled as he clapped for them along with the rest, she spied the tell tale glint of metal coming from a spot on his neck. Loki, perhaps sensing where her eyes lay, adjusted the high color on his shirt hiding the obedience disk from view.

She was impressed by her brother’s ability to maintain social standing whilst simultaneously being branded as a slave. His ability to lie, charm, and disarm were the kind of skills she needed to utilize if they were to get out of this place with all of their people intact. Her win with freeing Tony of his own torture device had her smiling broadly at her brother, he gave her a confused look in return, but then Grandmaster was whisking her away and her attention had to focus elsewhere.

Tony trailed behind them like a shadow, along with the ever present Topaz and a few other guards as they toured the room. In between greeting the guests she caught Loki’s eyes every now and then. They blazed with rage as he stared at her and Grandmaster. However when they finally approached Loki, the look on his face was one of pride and joy.

Grandmaster opened his arms expectantly as he got closer to Loki. Her brother shot her a questioning look before willingly walking into Grandmaster’s arms and greeting the man with a hearty hug. Darcy couldn’t stop her nose from crinkling as Grandmaster sniffed Loki’s hair as they embraced.

“Lo-Lo, good news, your little sister has finally seen the light that is me, and has soberly expressed her enthusiasm about our upcoming marriage.”

“Has she now.” Loki remarked as the two men disengaged.

“Yep! So, are you excited to see your baby sister finally married off?” Grandmaster asked animatedly.

“Overjoyed.” Loki replied in a sarcastic tone. Darcy’s eyebrows rose at the sound of honest sentiment in his tone. He quickly recovered when he added jokingly, “She’s such a burden. It will be nice to not have to be the only one keeping her out of trouble anymore.”

“Ha, ha,” Grandmaster laughed falsely, “Don’t worry Lo-Lo, with me around, you’ll never have to worry about her again.”

“A miracle.” Loki agreed with a head nod. When he looked up his eyes were on her. She smiled and gave him a little wave. He held his arms out expectantly much in the same manner Grandmaster had
done to him. He addressed her for the first time directly by saying, “Sister.”

With just that one word Darcy felt a quick stab of emotion, she made a strangled sound and lurched forward into Loki’s arm. She wrapped herself around him tightly, hugging him fiercely. She wanted to apologize for having to be fitted with the obedience disk. She wanted to apologize for catching the Grandmaster’s eye in the first place, putting them all in this position. But most of all she wanted to brag about how she had awesomely manipulated Grandmaster in freeing Tony from his painful and deviant torture device.

Instead she buried her face in his shoulder and just breathed out his name, “Loki.”

Loki patted her back gently with one hand, but the other squeezed her hip lightly before moving to hand. He slipped something into the tiny rainbow Saturn-esque purse that Grandmaster had provided her. Or at least, that’s what she thought he did. She’d bet dollars to donuts he was slipping her infinity pouch into her purse, returning to her, her ability to conjure clothes, ammunition, and giant inflatable rafts as needed.

The urge to squee and jump up and down was strong, but she restrained herself from reacting.

Loki, acting like she was perhaps emotional or even crying, spoke in a comforting tone. “Fear not sister, our brother will escape unscathed from the arena. I know it.”

“Thor?” Darcy said, her words muffled as she tried to school her features into something appropriately dour.

Reassuringly Loki said, “You know he has an annoying way of blundering his way to victory. Through brute strength or dumb luck, fate smiles upon our dear brother. You know this to be true, don’t despair.”

“Aw,” Grandmaster said as he pulled her away from Loki’s embrace and tucked her under his own arm. “Is that what’s got you down?”

Darcy allowed her arm to slip around Grandmaster’s waist. She put a hand on his chest as she looked up at him and spoke honestly, “Am I worried about Thor? Yes. Am I worried about Hulk? Yes. Am I annoyed you pit them against each other? Yes.”

Grandmaster breathed out through his nose amusedly. “You don’t really pull punches, do you?”

“Not really my style.” Darcy answered. Sensing his intentions just from the look in his eye, she went up on her tip toes to meet Grandmaster’s lips halfway as he bent his head to kiss her. She was rewarded when he kept the kiss gentle and brief.

His eyes were shining as he smirked down at her, “Woman of your word though.”

“Always.” Darcy promised. Grandmaster’s hands moved to her hips as he pulled her body more securely to his own, his lips sought out hers in another more intimate kiss. When he used his abnormally long tongue to overwhelm her, she fisted her hands in his robes pulling him closer rather than pushing him away as she truly wanted to.

Grandmaster broke away from her laughing, “Woo.” He bent down and rubbed his nose against hers exclaiming, “I knew it! I knew you’d succumb to my charms eventually.”

Disgusted by the probing kiss, Grandmaster’s close proximity, and the entire situation as a whole, Darcy projected a smitten expression as she replied, “Well when you give a little, it goes a long way with someone like me.”
“I can be giving.” Grandmaster’s eyes flickered over to Tony who stood behind the couch then back to her, “Who knew being magnanimous was a turn on?”

Darcy put a hand on Grandmaster’s cheek and caressed his face, “Powerful man with a generous heart? Yes. Turn on.”

Grandmaster smirked down at her and she steeled herself as he pulled her close for another kiss.

As she allowed Grandmaster to make out with her in front of her brother, she kept her thoughts on Thor and Hulk. She’d gotten Grandmaster to free Tony but she doubted she could use the same tactics to rid the others of their torture/escape deterrent/obedience disk devices. Idly she wondered where Val had gotten too.

When Grandmaster pulled away from her mouth finally, it was with a gasp. His eyes were bright and the smile on his face was triumphant. Darcy kept her expression soft as if dazed by the power of the kisses.

“Sir.” Topaz prompted, taking advantage of the break. “Shall we have another lower tier match or move on to the main event?”

“Oh yes.” Grandmaster responded, his eyes still on Darcy. His gaze drifted down her body. “Lower tier. Undercard competitors. Use the rock guy, he’s fun.”

Topaz nodded and disappeared for a minute.

Grandmaster frowned, “You know, now that I see this on you…” He lifted the flap of her sheer over coat, “No. No. This won’t do. The outfit is all wrong.”

Darcy looked down at her space-ditz attire and shifted on her feet. “All wrong for what?”

“The announcement.” Grandmaster said as if she should already know.

“What announcement?” Darcy asked. She allowed Grandmaster to pull the coat from her body leaving her in a shiny green halter top and little mini skirt. He circled her body with a pinched look on his face as muttered to himself.

“Grandmaster?” She prompted bringing him out of his contemplation. He looked back up at her then over to Loki before smiling, but the small had an edge to it and she felt herself tense up in anticipation. He got very close to her and gripped the hand that held her purse in place. He then lifted her arm perpendicular to her body at 90 degree angle ordering, “Keep that hand there.”

He eyed the colorful ball as it swung lightly as she did what he had asked.

“You should change into your wedding dress for the announcement. Give them a sneak preview when we start the match. I’m picturing your hair in a similar style but in darker tones. Drama around the eyes, and the lips,” He ran the pad of his thumb over her lower lip, “Something dark. And kissable but still full of that ethereal charm you do so well.”

Darcy’s brows knit together in confusion, “What?”

Grandmaster snapped his fingers and Gamilla and Angora shuffled forward. One held a white gown. The other, accessories. With a sweeping gesture he motioned to the women. “I picked it out for you. You love it.”
Darcy stared at her arm, which Grandmaster still held aloft she was very confused but answered him all the same, “I…do?”

Grandmaster tracked her gaze to the circular purse, “I imagine you have thousands of gowns inside that thing.” Darcy felt her stomach drop. “Gowns and guns and knives and swords…bombs.”

“Crap.” Loki muttered lowly. Darcy worked hard at maintaining a puzzled expression.

Grandmaster’s gaze slid over to Loki as he roughly grabbed the purse from her hand. He held it up to his face by the tiny gold chain, then flicked open the clasp and peered inside. He showed it to her as if she didn’t know it would appear empty. He then closed it and hung it off one finger. “Such a clever little charm uh, it was so nice of your brother to steal your little magical armory and give it back to you…just when we were starting to get along too.”

“I didn’t--”
“Grandmaster--”

He cut them both off by retrieving a remote from his pocket and pressing the button. Loki let out a strangled noise as he began shaking. His limbs stiffened as he fell over and began convulsing on the floor. He looked like he was being electrocuted. Darcy gaped at the sight, she had been cautious about bringing the infinity purse with her when she was in Grandmaster’s company, apparently that had been a wise decision.

“Huh.” Grandmaster remarked, “These things usually render people unconscious.”

It was true Loki remained awake as he gurgled and shook, it looked painful and Darcy hoped he would pass out from pain soon, but she doubted it would happen. She swallowed thickly before replying, “Ice is a poor conductor of electricity.”

Grandmaster narrowed his eyes at her, “Ice?”

“He’s Asgardian, but adopted, like me. He’s actually a frost giant.” Darcy answered distractedly. Her mind was racing, having Loki at her side when dealing with Grandmaster had been a godsend, but now that he was on the receiving end of his ire she didn’t know if Loki could recover from this, socially speaking.

“Ice giant?” Grandmaster repeated his tone indicating interest. She looked over at him and nodded.

“Don’t kill him?” Darcy asked softly, “Please.”

Grandmaster let go of the button releasing Loki from the painful electroshocks. “Kill him? No! No, no, no, no.” He pulled her close and put his arm around her waist. She wrapped her arms around his in return.

He smiled at her encouragingly and put a finger under her chin tilting her head up so she would meet his eyes, “Killing him would only hurt you. And I don’t want to hurt you. I mean, I will, but I don’t want to…Did you know that he planned to give you weapons?”

“I didn’t.” Darcy answered honestly.

He stared at her for a long minute then darted forward and kissed her on the nose, “Of course you didn’t.” He gave her a cold look, “You wouldn’t dare.”

He pulled his finger away from her chin but she grabbed it keeping his attention, “No I wouldn’t. I wouldn’t betray someone who has shown me kindness. Who has been generous and fair.”
Grandmaster’s eyes lost their surety and subtly softened. He sounded shocked as he mumbled, “You’re telling the truth.”

“I am.” Darcy confirmed. She looked back at Loki who lay on the floor, though he was in the process of sitting up. She then turned back to Grandmaster and telegraphed her movements so he wouldn’t stop her. She took the remote out of his hand and turned, fully facing Loki.

“Darcy don’t—” Loki began to plead but his words became choked as she pressed the button, electrocuting him.

She held the button down for a long time. And she watched Loki’s face and body contorting in pain the whole time. Unable to look away from what she was doing to him, she stood still as a statue and hurt him.

Grandmaster eventually took the remote out of her hand declaring, “Okay, that’s enough. I believe you and I appreciate the show of loyalty but this is getting boring. Topaz, have Loki thrown in the holding cell with the other fighters. If his brother survives the Hulk, we can pit the Tiny Giant against the Lord of Sparkles and really play up the whole blood feud thing.”

She watched silently as Loki was dragged away. When he was gone, Grandmaster whistled. When she turned to him, he threw the infinity purse at her. She wasn’t quick enough to catch it and it bounced off her chest down to the floor. Slowly she retrieved it looking up at Grandmaster with a question on her face.

“Keep it.” He said, “Consider it a gesture of good faith.”

“Okay.” Darcy agreed. Once again she felt victorious but this time that feeling was tempered by the knowledge that she had lost Loki as her partner in crime in order to regain this powerful tool.

Grandmaster gestured over to the attendants who still stood holding her ‘wedding’ dress. “About that announcement…”

She stood by Grandmaster’s side as the holo-projectors cast their images in the center of the arena. She imagined she looked beautiful in the gauzy long white gown.

She did her best to keep a serene look on her face as Grandmaster addressed the crowds of screaming and cheering Sakaarians.

“Ah ha, thank you. Thank you. Yes it is a most exhilarating day isn’t it? First I’ve promised you the match of the year, our beloved Princess’s dear brother, the Lord of Thunder, verses our champion. Oops, forgot to specify that, our male champion.” He gave Darcy a look and she smiled brightly as if she was proud to have ‘bested’ Hulk in the arena. “Speaking of our Queen of the Arena, doesn’t she look beautiful?”

The crowd went crazy, cheering and jumping up on their feet, hooting and hollering.

“After this match, there will be an event like no other before….wait for it…Our wedding!” Where once there was a sea of green Hulk fans and memorabilia, she now saw spots of color. The crowd cheered and she could see fans waving banners with her face on it. Many of the people in the crowd even had brightly dyed hair or signs declaring their love of the ‘Queen of the Arena’. It occurred to her then, that she was a fan favorite. Idly, she wondered if some of the Grandmasters interest in her wasn’t solely based on her appearance and ‘power’ but, the love of the people she had garnered in
such a short amount of time. Or perhaps it was because she was the first female champion?

“Yes, it is a most joyous occasion and I’m speaking for myself and my bride to be when I say, Sakaar, we couldn’t be more excited to share it with you!” He paused for more cheering before concluding, “But first, our main event!”

Topaz pulled her back, out of the way of the holo projectors, giving Grandmaster the space to shine as the MC. “Making his first appearance, though he looks quite promising, got a couple of tricks up his sleeve. I’ll say no more, see what you think. Ladies and gentlemen…I give to you…Lord of Thunder!”

Thor entered the area, his head shaved and beard trimmed. He wore minimalist armor and two swords on his back. Darcy in a voice more shocked than angry gasped, “You cut his hair?!”

Laughter rang out through the crowd. Thor looked searching at the sea of people probably looking for the viewing box where she was stationed. Grandmaster smirked as he added, “Watch out for his fingers. They sparkle.”

Thor’s eyes found her then. He said nothing but the look on his face spoke volumes. She gave him a pathetic wave and then a thumbs up of encouragement. Thor glared at Grandmaster who stood by her side. He gave her a nod and then put his helmet on. It reminded her of his winged helmet, and she wondered if he’d ever don his red cape and iconic magical armor again, or if they too were lost now that his hammer was no more. His expression was grim and determined. He kind of looked badass and ready to rumble….and not aware of who was about to enter the arena and stomp him into the ground.

“Does he not know who he’s fighting?!” Darcy screeched. Topaz shoved her shoulder hissing, “Shut up.”

Grandmaster ignored her as he continued to do his demented Vince McMahon schtick. “Okay, this is it. Let’s get ready to welcome this guy. Here he comes. He is a creature. What can we say about him? Well, he’s unique. I feel a special connection with him. He’s mostly undefeated. HE’S THE REIGNING…HE’S THE DEFENDING…Ladies and gentlemen…I give you…"

The champion door exploded. Hulk roared and swung his war hammer around then pounded on his chest, further energizing an already frenzied crowd.

“…INCREDIBLE HULK!”

Thor looked shocked but then he smiled and laughed out, “YES!”

Darcy slapped a hand over her yes and slowly wiped it down her face. “Gods, but he is slow on the uptake.”

Grandmaster moved off the little platform and the holo-projectors were turned off. He settled on the couch and had her do the same.

“This is gonna be a shit show.” Darcy grumbled. Turning she ordered Tony, “Come here.”

Tony’s glazed eyes blinked and he focused on her face but didn’t move, she patted the seat next to her and repeated her command, “Tony. Come here.”

Tony sluggishly moved to comply as Thor captured her attention once again. He joyfully yelled in the direction of the VIP viewing box, “Hey! We know each other. He’s a friend from work.”
“So, he’s the brawn to Loki’s brains I assume?” Grandmaster mused. “He’s cute.” Darcy just rolled her eyes at him and shifted her focus to her brother who was trying to have a heart to heart with Hulk. Like an idiot.

She didn’t catch what Thor said to Hulk, but she heard the green guy’s response.

“NO BANNER! ONLY HULK!” Hulk then charged Thor, moving quicker than she’d thought him capable of.

“Idiot.” Darcy scolded under her breath. Thor should know better than to bring up Bruce to Hulk. That would only serve to piss him off. A fact which Hulk illustrated as he shattered Thor’s shield and sent him flying with one punch.

“Banner, we’re friends. This is crazy. I don’t want to hurt you!” Thor tried to reason. Hulk kicked Thor sending him slamming into the wall.

Darcy jumped up onto her feet and screamed, “STOP TRYING TO TALK TO HIM!”

“Here we go.” Grandmaster remarked as he tugged her back down onto the couch.

Thor jumped down from his crater in the wall just in time to avoid Hulk’s war hammer, which hit the wall so hard it got stuck there. Hulk then charged at Thor again holding an axe threateningly, but Thor managed to retrieve the hammer just in time to hit Hulk with it. This sent Hulk crashing alongside the arena.

“What?” Grandmaster commented sounding confused.

Darcy snorted, “You said it yourself, he’s the brawn. And Asgardians are a very brawny people.” He glared at her but she just smiled cheekily.

“So, you’re rooting against the Hulk then?” He challenged.

“I’m rooting for the both.”

“These matches are to the death.” Grandmaster pressed, “You’ll have to watch one of them die.”

She met his gaze, “Hulk didn’t die when I beat him.”

“Yes but that’s because I—because you—that was different.” Grandmaster sputtered.

She put her hand on his and gave it a squeeze, “Maybe this will end differently too.”

“Doubtful.” Topaz dryly interjected.

Thor advanced on Hulk with swagger the war hammer in his hand. He extended his hand out to Hulk and pet his palm making a soothing gesture. When Darcy realized what he was trying to do she began to shake her head, “No, no, no, no.”

Thor called out to Hulk, “Hey, big guy. The sun’s getting real low.”

Hulk took off his helmet and scowled at Thor. Thor took this as a sign of encouragement. “That’s it. The sun’s going down. I won’t hurt you anymore. No one will.”

“Oh, Thor.” Darcy winced as Hulk grabbed Thor by the leg and started whipping him against the arena floor. Over and over and over again.
Grandmaster gloated, “Or maybe this will end exactly how I think it will.”

Thor was smashed into the floor face first one more time before Hulk tossed him across the arena into the wall. Grandmaster chuckled with a wide smile on his face.

Thor got to his feet and picked up the hammer, the two went at each other and Thor began actually fighting offensively. He dodged the swing of Hulks axe and hit Hulk in the knee with his hammer then when Hulks leg buckled, he smashed the hammer in his face. Twice. Then he broke the handle to Hulks axe.

Darcy cheered and jumped to her feet as Thor hit Hulk in the gut, but when Hulk got up and started making growling aggressive animal noises the smile left her face. Hulk slapped the hammer out of Thor’s hand and Thor responded by punching Hulk in the face. She remained standing, as close to the edge of the box as possible, a pit of dread rapidly developing in her stomach.

Thor yelled at Hulk, “What’s the matter with you? You’re embarrassing me! I told them we were friends!”

Growling the two began wailing on each other. Thor used his strength and speed to his advantage, seemingly getting the upper hand when he climbed on Hulk’s back and wrapped his hands around his throat. However, Hulk just jumped in the air and landed on his back, squishing Thor.

The two rolled away to grab weapons once again, but when Thor went to smash Hulk with the hammer, Hulk caught it in his hand. Just like Hela.

“Fuck.” Tony grunted. Darcy spun around and squealed, “TONY!”

But Tony’s eyes were on the arena match down below. Darcy turned just in time to see Thor go flying across the arena floor, Hulk was on him in a second. Hulk was just smashing Thor’s face with his fist over and over, it was brutal to watch. Behind her Grandmaster cackled in delight.

When Hulk knocked Thor’s helmet off Darcy screamed, “Stop!”

Hulk kept hitting him.

“Stop the fight!” She turned to the Grandmaster and pleaded, “PLEASE! He’s going to die!”

Grandmaster didn’t even look in her direction, his eyes trained on the action, as he responded gaily, “I know, isn’t it glorious?”

“Look.” Tony grunted. Darcy whipped her head around to see Thor’s eyes and body glowing with light. Then he punched Hulk and it looked as if lightening shot out of his hand as his fist connected with Hulk’s face.

The green goliath went sailing into the air and then crashing down to the ground. Thor staggered to his feet, small charges of lightning crackling through his veins.

“Impossible.” Grandmaster gasped as he got to his feet.

“THOR!” Darcy cheered at the same time the crowd began to chant, ‘Thunder, Thunder, Thunder’.

The newly powered Thor approached a dazed looking Hulk and Darcy bit her lower lip unsure of how she wanted the fight to end. However the Grandmaster obviously felt the same, as he took out a remote and electrocuted Thor, prematurely ending the fight by taking Thor down himself.
“Hey!” Darcy chastised. Grandmaster gave her a stern look but said nothing. Hulk then planted his feet and jumped, zooming high up into the sky, rocketing out of the arena. At the apex of his jump Hulk formed a fist and began a missile like descent.

“No fair! You interfered.” Darcy accused.


Thor groggily turned over, but Hulk was heading straight at him like an atom bomb. With no time to avoid it, impact was imminent. Darcy quickly extended her arms and formed a shield right above Thor.

Hulk hit the shield like a meteor and her arms trembled from the impact. The crowd cheered like crazy.

“Hey!” Grandmaster scolded, “No cheating.”

“You started it.” Darcy grumbled as she allowed the shield to dissolve. Hulk, obviously recognizing the magic, looked around searchingly. When he found the VIP box their eyes met. She gave him a wave.

Hulk stumbled back, shrinking and de-green-ifying.

“Bruce.” Tony said quietly as the mild mannered scientist once again took control over his and Hulk’s shared body.

Grandmaster got up and moved to her side, “I guess the match will end unexpectedly after all.”

She could sense he was disappointed with her interference and angry. She bumped her hip into his and tried to appear comforting, “Yeah, but at least now no one needs to miss the wedding.”

Grandmaster’s head slowly swung in her direction. He stared at her for a long minute before breaking out in a big smile, “Well, when you’re right. You’re right.”

He grabbed her face in his hands and kissed her. When he pulled back he mumbled, “On with the show.”

Darcy formed her shield on the ground in front of them and stepped aboard. She gestured to the Grandmaster with her head, “How would you like a dramatic entrance?”

Without hesitation Grandmaster joined her on the shield. It was Topaz who grabbed Grandmaster’s robe, showing caution. “Sir.”

Darcy ignored the woman and turned to look at Tony. He looked more ‘with it’ and in the moment than before, further bolstering her good mood. “Come here Tony.”

Slowly he shambled over, joining them on the shield stationing himself right behind her. Accessing the tight squeeze given her intentions, she made the shield a little bigger and ordered, “You too Topaz.”

“I don’t--” Grandmaster cut off Topaz’s complaint with a swift order. “Get on.”

Topaz climbed aboard, positioning herself right behind Grandmaster. Darcy spared her a glance, but
then the four of them were rising into the air. She felt Tony grab at the back of her dress, fisting the material, holding on as if to maintain his balance. She slowed the pace a little to accommodate him.

They circled the arena once, the sound of the screaming crowd was deafening. When they went past the tailgating space ship people, she caught sight of Val and gave the woman a nod. Grandmaster looked like he was having the time of his life, smiling and waving at the adoring crowd. When she brought them down to the arena floor, he almost looked disappointed.

Darcy immediately ran to Thor and jumped into his arms. He caught her easily and whispered in her ear, “Are you alright?” When she nodded against him he sighed and sniffed, “Thank you for the assist.”

“No problem.” She whispered back. He released her and she turned to take in the sight of the blushing, half naked, and very confused Bruce Banner.

“Bruce!” She greeted cheerfully. He swallowed thickly, taking in her ensemble.

“Hey Darcy.” Bruce responded nervously, “Uh, what’s going on?”

“Too much to explain right now.” Darcy answered; she looked over his shoulder to the crowd and found a random man to focus on. She then summoned the clothes off the man’s back and into her hands. She held out the human sized robe and pants to Bruce as a consolation for not explaining.

“Thank you.” Bruce accepted the items sounding relieved.

Tony drifted over to them and Thor thumped him on the back loudly greeting him, “Man of Iron! You would of course be at my dear sister’s side. Good man.”

Tony stumbled forward into her, and she glared at Thor scolding her overly enthusiastic brother. “Be careful, Tony’s not himself.”

“He looks high.” Bruce commented as he stepped into his pants.

“He was. Is? He’s coming down.” Darcy explained as she worriedly pressed her palm to Tony’s cheek. “You okay?”

Sluggishly Tony nodded making her lips tick upward.

It was then that Grandmaster must have gotten frustrated with being ignored because; he literally inserted himself in between Darcy and the group of men. “Bride.”

He held his out as if showing her to her seat. Darcy looked away from her family reluctantly, but forced herself to smile up at the Grandmaster. “Time to get married?”

“Yes.” He answered with a lecherous grin.

“What?”

“Married!?”

“Ugh.”

Bruce, Thor, and Tony loudly reacted to the news but she had to ignore them. She allowed Grandmaster to take her arm and lead her away from the others a bit until they stood before Topaz. Darcy shot the woman a withering look, “You’re going to marry us?”

“Don’t be silly.” Grandmaster scoffed, “I’m going to marry us.”
Darcy chose to say nothing as Topaz handed Grandmaster what looked like one of those Britney Spears ear attaching microphones and he put it on. He gestured to the crowd, “Are we having a good time tonight!?”

The crowd cheered.

“Are we ready for the wedding of the century?” He asked much in the same way he riled up the crowd when introducing Thor and Hulk as competitors in the arena.

“Well, then. Let’s do this!”

Grandmaster took her hands and positioned her so they were facing each other, with Topaz in front of the pair like she was to play the priest rather than body guard. Thor, Tony, and Bruce drew closer, with various expressions of shock, confusion, and anger on their faces. The crowd grew hushed and the ceremony began.

“Princess Darcy of Asgard.” Grandmaster started, his voice growing serious and losing the ‘showman’ quality he often used when addressing the crowd. “I choose you to be my wife. You will serve me. Obey me. Pleasure me. Love me. And I suspect, from time to time, frustrate me.” He paused allowing the crowd to laugh.

“You will be my partner in all things, closer to being my equal than any being before you. An honor. You will be an extension of my will, acting with all of my power and authority, subject to no influence but my own.” Darcy inhaled deeply. Grandmaster seemed so sincere and his eyes were filled with real emotion. It was a little vomit inducing how self deluded he was in thinking this was something she could ever stomach if not under duress.

However, it was in that moment she realized that he really did like her. He didn’t respect her, or love her, but he believed his own bullshit. He really believed that given time, she’d fall in love with him and become his right hand, acting with an unwavering loyalty and deference to him.

He looked at her expectantly and she kind of froze, her eyes widening. “Should I..do you want me to say something similar or--I didn’t—I didn’t write any vows…”

Grandmaster rolled his eyes and the crowd chuckled at her flustered demeanor. Darcy looked around blushing.

“Do you agree to be my wife?” Grandmaster prompted.

“Sister, I don’t understand.” Thor lamented. “I thought you didn’t believe in this custom?”

Darcy felt the urge to turn around and assure Tony more so than Thor that this was all fake. She wanted to yell it was lie, a means to an end. She wanted to explain that once married, she’d be given alone time with the Grandmaster. At which point she would incapacitate him, steal the remote, free everyone and use her clout as ‘Queen’ to steal them a spaceship which they would then use to return to Asgard. She had it all planned. And she desperately wanted to somehow convey all this but was constrained by the circumstances.

She was tempted to try to relay it all with just a look, but she knew in turning around and away from Grandmaster, she would only anger him. So she maintained eye contact and answered, “I do.”

Grandmaster smiled looking a little relieved, “Of course you do. Who wouldn’t?” Again he paused allowing the crowd to laugh.
Then, from inside his robes, Grandmaster produced a ring. It was beautiful and a more understated choice she would have expected from him. He took her hand and gently put the ring on her finger. “By the power invested in me, by me, and for the good of Sakaar, I now proclaim us, Grandmaster and Queen Darcy, man and wife.”

The crowd went crazy.

Grandmaster pulled her in for a deep kiss but it was interrupted by the doors to the arena bursting open. Loki, giant gun in hand, led a handful of big gruff looking aliens towards them as he shouted, “STOP THIS FARCE AT ONCE!”

She quickly realized that he was leading the other gladiators just as he raised the gun and with expert precision aimed it right in between her and Grandmaster. Then he pulled the trigger and she let out a little squeak of surprise. But she needn’t have worried.

The blast knocked Topaz off her feet and onto the floor. The woman looked stunned and like the wind had gotten knocked out of her, but she was still alive.

“Brother!” Thor cheered, but then he was seizing up. Actually, everyone was. Everyone but her, Grandmaster, and Tony.

Looking back at her ‘husband’ she found him, remote in hand, finger angrily hitting the zap button. Darcy knew this was her moment; she should act quickly knock the remote out of his hand and reveal this whole scene as the sham it was, but she couldn’t help but gape at the suffering around her. The pain on display of every face was like a stab to her heart.

Thor, Loki, and the other gladiators were all on the floor convulsing as they were shocked. Many passed out losing consciousness quickly like Thor, but it looked like Loki and the rock guy remained awake and aware. And then there was Bruce. Poor, poor, Bruce.

“ROOOOOOOOOAAAAAAAAARRRRRR.” She could see the glint of the metal obedience disks shining from critical positions on Bruce’s neck, wrists, and ankles. He screamed and thrashed on the ground as his body grew and transformed back into the Hulks.

The robe and pants she’d given his smaller self for modesty’s sake ripped and tore as he outgrew them. And yet, even in tatters the scraps of fabric somehow remained on his larger frame covering his most important bits.

Once fully transformed Hulk remained immobilized, withering in pain on the dirt floor just like the others.


Disgusted by the crowds response Darcy let her eyes rove over the masses. A few in the crowd were pantomiming being shocked, mocking her loved ones expressions of anguish and pain. The sight of such callousness coming from the common people snapped something inside her.

“What’s wrong with you!” She shouted at the crowd of fans. She turned on Grandmaster and ordered, “Stop! Enough!”

“This is hard for you, I get that, their your brothers, but uh, darling, Loki’s trying to start a coo.” Grandmaster patronized.

Darcy snarled, “That’s not at a coo, that’s shitty attempt at rescuing me!”
“Either way,” Grandmaster smiled as he turned to look at men still convulsing in anguish, “Lessons must be learned.”

In her mind she relived every kiss he’d forced on her, every threat, and every unwelcomed touch. She remembered every detail she’d managed to squeeze out of Tony regarding her blackout/drugged time spent on Sakaar. And she remembered Loki’s vehement refusal to divulge any more details. She pictured Hulk punching Thor in the face almost killing him, and then looked over at Hulk who was still screaming on the floor as five obedience disks shocked him.

Without a thought as to what she was doing, Darcy conjured a new dress onto her body, one that was the exact opposite of the flowing ethereal gown of her ‘wedding dress’. She felt herself grow taller by several inches as boots magic-ed onto her feet. Hela’s face flashed in her mind and let the urge to appear as dark and as intimidating as the Goddess of Death guide her actions. Her hair darkened and re-braided itself down the center part of her head. And she felt the waxy texture of thick layer of makeup coat her lips and eyes.

“Uh…” Grandmaster unintelligently said, his eyes drawn to her dramatic transformation. “Honey?”

“I agree.” Darcy said in a cold voice, “Lessons must be learned.”

She punched him in the middle of his chest with all her strength and he went flying impacting hard with the destroyed wall of the arena. She heard Loki and Hulk gasp in relief as the remote dislodged from his grip but she had no time to celebrate. She turned on Topaz, just in time to watch as the woman shot her in the gut.

Darcy stumbled back a step but ignored the pain so she could launch herself at the lady guard. She tackled Topaz to the ground and knocked the gun out of the woman’s hands. Then she punched her in the face several times until Topaz’s face was bloody and her body unmoving. Still, the woman stubbornly remained awake with eyes that glared daggers at her.

“Traitor.” She hissed before spitting blood at Darcy’s face.

“Sleep.” Darcy commanded. Topaz immediately shut her eyes and her body relaxed underneath Darcy’s. Snidely she added, “And dream about something nice so you won’t be such a bitch when you wake up.”

She got to her feet as quickly as she could, one hand on her stomach, the pain now too great to completely ignore. Tony was walking towards Grandmaster with his slowed gait; she smiled at the sight of his clenched jaw, but knew Tony was no match for anyone in his current state. She walked quickly overtaking him, stalking towards the Grandmaster herself. With clenched fists she grit her teeth as the older man managed to get hold of the remote once again.

“Stop!” He yelled, his eyes were wild and he looked desperate as he shouted, “I’ll kill them! Take another step and I’ll up the voltage and kill them all!”

She turned. Everyone was on the floor again. Her eyes were drawn to the Hulk who’s pain filled voice boomed out above the others, “AHHHH---GGGGGRRRRRRRR---ROOOAAAAARRR”.

“Darcy.” Tony said as he finally caught up to them. He was staring at her fists. Which were glowing?
Gold wispy flecks of light hovered around her hands like grains of sand caught up in a gentle wind. Darcy stared at them in wonder.

A vision of Odin back on the Cliffside flashed in her mind. She tried to blink the image away, but it
persisted. Odin’s lips were moving, but she couldn’t hear him. The crowd around them was divided, half of them cheering at the unexpected display of violence, the other half gaped at them all in shock or whispered to their neighbors in hushed tones.

Through the same door Loki had used, a contingent of armed guards entered establishing a perimeter around the disabled fighters. Wisely they gave her, Tony, and Grandmaster a wide berth, coming no closer than 100 feet. Obviously they trusted Grandmaster and his ability to ‘handle’ her.

The crowd grew even louder at the prospect of more violence.

Grandmaster began to berate her, “You stupid little girl. How dare you, how dare you! In all my time, a millennia of experience, I have never met a more-”

Everything was so loud. Grandmaster’s words were getting drowned out by the screaming crowd. Some seemed to be booing and others screamed ‘mercy’. Some let out bloodthirsty whoops of delight, other’s let out piercing whistles. And through it all, Hulk was still roaring.

“Quiet.” Darcy pled.

It was so loud.

“Everyone shut up.” Darcy mumbled.

She couldn’t think.

Tony called her name sounding alarmed, “Darcy.”

Grandmaster ranted causing another cheer to rise up amongst the vicious half of the crowd, “You’ll regret this. You’ll pay, for eons you will suffer for this! You will atone for this day until your last day! Forget mercy, forget love. You are thing which I own. And you have betrayed me. For that you suffer like never before! Don’t even think about pleading for the lives of your loved ones. Your pet is dead. Your brothers are dead. I hope your hissy fit was worth it because you’ve killed them all!”

She put her still glowing hands over her ears trying to block everyone out long enough to come up with her next move now that her emotional reaction had torpedoed her very clever plan. “AHHHH---GGGGGRRRRRRRRRR---ROOOAAAARRRR!" “KILL HER!” “NO! LONG LIVE THE QUEEN!” “KILL THEM ALL!” “MERCY!” “Darcy.” “Bitch!” “TRAITOR!” “YAS, QUEEN!”

She couldn’t take it anymore.

“SLEEP!” Darcy’s voice boomed. She threw her hands out in front of her and light shot out. The light flew up in a high arc above her head exploding like a firework with tendrils that stretched out until the glimmering light filled the space above the entire arena.

Like sand shook free of a blanket at the beach, flecks of golden light descended upon the crowd, covering everyone in the dust. The effect wasn’t instantaneous but it was quick enough to stun her. In fact it was like a scene out of Disney’s Sleeping Beauty. Specifically the scene after Aurora had pricked her finger and the good fairies went around the kingdom putting everyone to sleep to wait for someone to come and kiss Aurora awake and break the spell.

Watching the thousands in the crowd fall asleep at her command was kind of daunting. Some slumped over, others tilted their heads back and began snoring, some remained standing, but everyone fell asleep.

Well, almost everyone.
“Whoa. That was impressively unexpected.” An accented voice sounded from behind her. Darcy turned and found the rock guy getting to his feet and staring around at all the sleeping bodies in wonder.

“You’re not asleep.” Darcy confusedly observed.

The man lumbered over to her whilst brushing himself off, a tiny piece of rock fell off and toppled to the floor. Darcy tracked the movement but the rock man seemed unconcerned.

“Yeah well, I’m Kronan. I’m made of rocks, as you can see, but don’t let that intimidate you. You don’t need to be afraid unless you’re made of scissors! Ha, just a little rock, paper, scissors joke for you. Ease the tension a bit.” The man sounded like the most easy-going guy ever. Being intimidated wasn’t going to be a problem. Still, she stared at him expectantly.

“My people don’t sleep.” He explained with a shrug. As he grew close enough to extend his hand and offer it to her he said, “I’m Korg.”

Robotically she shook his hand responding, “Darcy.”

“Leaving off a few titles aren’t you?” Korg said teasingly, “Darcy, Queen of the Arena. Darcy, Princess of Asgard. Darcy, Queen of Sakaar, though the state of your marriage, yeh—we can just put a pin in that one for right now.”

Darcy looked back at Grandmaster and rage flooded her. With a flat tone she declared, “Sakaar sucks.”

“Not gonna argue with you there, majesty.”

Looking down at the wound in her stomach she let out a sigh, it wasn’t gushing blood only because it looked burnt, the fancy space gun had probably cauterized the wound when Topaz shot her.

She cast her eyes back over to where Thor and Hulk were. On the ground was her infinity purse, conjuring from inside it she produced a large bandage and some Neosporian. She coated the bandage liberally then slapped the thing over her wound. That was good enough first aid for the moment.

It was weird how having access to her infinity bag had made her feel so vulnerable before. Knowing where it was, being able to reach the millions of items she’d inserted in case of every kind of emergency made her feel so much more competent.

Annoyed by her ruined dress, she changed her outfit with a wave of her hand. Ridding herself of the slinky black dress she replaced it with a bright blue and silver jumpsuit. She replaced the belt with her scabbard and felt better for having Dragonfang in the sheath on her hip. She called to the infinity bag and conjured it into her hands, transforming it in the blink of an eye; she slid the longer strap over her head and adjusted it so it lay flat across her chest. Keeping the bag close somehow made her feel less naked, and more armed than a weapon ever could.

That taken care of, she moved forward and snatched the obedience disk remote from her ‘husband’s’ limp hand. Analyzing the controls quickly, she found the ‘release all’ button and pressed it. The sound of metal bumping along rocks drew her eyes up to Korg who stared at the fallen disk as it landed on the floor. He looked up at her and gave her a wide smile.

“You know, I tried to start a revolution but didn’t print enough pamphlets so hardly anyone turned up. Except for my mum and her boyfriend, who I hate. As punishment, Grandmaster imprisoned me here and forced me to become a gladiator.” Darcy blinked at him and he added, “How do you feel about becoming the face of a movement?”
“I’m kind of filled with an all encompassing fury right now, sooo no? Grandmaster really mind fucked with me. Also literally fucked with me. Becoming the Space Princess version of Che Guevara isn’t really on the agenda right now.” Darcy answered honestly.

“I get it.” Korg held up his hands, “I get it, you’ve got a lot on your plate right now.”

Darcy nodded as she moved over to Tony, he was sleeping soundly but in an awkward position, she adjusted his limbs as Korg continued to speak his voice weirdly soothing in the silent area. “Seeing as we’re the only two people conscious right now, I think this is my moment to ask. So, here it goes, would you consider my request to leave. Not take leave, as in a vacation, leave as in never come back.”

Looking up she found Korg with an uncertain expression on his face, his face screwed up like he expected her to lash out and hurt him for even suggesting such a thing was possible. Easily she answered,

“Sure.”

“Not just me, mind you, all of us. All the other gladiators.”

“Alright.”

“We’ll need to take a space ship.”

“Dude, it’s fine.” She answered as she pet Tony’s hair, “Whatever you need, just, don’t take the biggest one. I don’t know if I’ll be traveling with Hulk or his more travel sized persona when me and my family make our grand escape.”

“You want to escape as well?”

Darcy gave him a pointed look, “Yeah. Like I said, Sakaar sucks.”

Korg tilted his head, “But you married Grandmaster. Willingly.”


Darcy stood, content with how Tony was now laying comfortably on his back as he slept.

“Oh.” Korg said sounding surprised, “I guess the stories we’ve been hearing about you and the great love triangle with Grandmaster and the Hulk were all fabricated propaganda?”

“Yuh.” Darcy responded. She moved over and kicked Grandmaster in the leg, “He’s a megalomaniac egotistical dickhead face butt!”

“Face butt?”

Darcy didn’t respond. She stared down at Grandmasters unconscious body and thought about her next course of action. Looking over at Korg thoughtfully she asked, “Korg. Can I ask you a question?”

“Shoot.”

“Do you think I should kill him? The Grandmaster, I mean. Should I kill him? I want to kill him. Badly, I—I desperately want to kill him, with my bare hands if possible. Or maybe with a fork or something so the process will be slow and tortuous, but…”

“But?” Korg prompted.
She wanted to ask if causing and enjoying Grandmaster’s suffering would make her a monster, but instead she said, “Do you think killing Grandmaster will destabilize the Sakaarian society too much? I’m not staying to rule in his place and I can’t stay long enough to instate a new government, hell I shouldn’t even waste my time worrying about these bloodthirsty animals,” She made a sweeping gesture to the crowd, her eyes lingering on a mother cradling her sleeping daughter as she herself rested her sleeping head on a man’s shoulder next to her. “And yet…”

“You’ve got a good heart.” Korg said observationally, “Asgard must be a lucky place to have you as their Princess.”

“Thanks. But what do you think?” Idly she stepped on Grandmaster’s hands, toying with the idea of stomping down really hard and breaking all the bones. “To kill, or not to kill? That is the question.”

Korg moved over to the Grandmaster’s side and crouched down. He poked the man’s cheek with one of his rocky fingers, then slapped him with an open palm, chuckling to himself. On Grandmaster’s cheek a cut seeped out red blood, no doubt the tender skin being cut from the sharp edges on Korg’s rocky hand.

Rising back to his feet Korg puffed out his chest inhaling deeply before slowly exhaling. “I’d say kill him but, kind of seems like it’s too good for him eh? I mean, quick or slow, death will bring his misery to an end and…he’s been doing this for a long time.”

Her mind flashbacked to the wall of photographs of former champions. She thought of the faces on the outside of the palace, the details about the fallen warriors that Val had told her. Quickly she came to the same conclusion as Korg. “Yeah, no sweet release of death for him. He’s caused too much pain and hurt for too many people.”

Especially her people.

Korg looked at her for direction, “So what’d we do with him, then?”

“I don’t know.” Darcy answered in a soft voice, “I’ve got a few ideas, but first I’ve got to wake everyone up.”

“Alright!” Korg cheered sounding excited by the prospect of her doing more magic. “Should I back up? Do you need more room?”

“Your fine.” She said reassuringly, but in all honestly she didn’t know. She didn’t know what she was doing, how these new powers worked, or basically anything. She felt rudderless, but surprisingly not lost.

Relying on past experience she closed her eyes and called out commandingly, “WAKE UP.”

She kept her eyes closed tightly; expecting to hear movement of some kind, but no sound reached her ears. She opened one eye experimentally, then the other. She frowned at her lack of results. Usually when she wanted to wake up Stephen or Tony, all she had to say was wake up and they did.

Korg unhelpfully commented, “Didn’t do anything.”

“I know.” Darcy sharply responded. “Shut up. Let me think.”

She clenched her fists tightly and tried to focus inwardly like Frigga and Wong had taught her, find that quiet place in her mind where supposedly her abilities would come to her easily.

“Still nothing.” Korg interrupted breaking her concentration.
Darcy popped open her eyes and glared at the man. She didn’t have to say anything; he looked down chastised by her angry expression.

“Sorry.”

Darcy huffed. Closing her eyes again, this time, she didn’t think. She remembered.

She remembered the tingling sensation her glowing hands had caused, she imagined the glittering embers that had fallen on everybody as tiny seeds that grew sleepy tendrils into their minds, consuming them and making them bend to her will.

And then she imagined all the glowing embers seeping out of people’s minds, into their skin, then back our into the air. And then back into herself.

“Uhhhhh.” A groan on the ground beside her prompted her to open her eyes. All around them, people were waking up.

She grinned proudly at Korg and he clapped in a congratulatory way. Her eyes moved over to Tony, who sat up and found her with his eyes very quickly. He let out a yawn stretching up with one arm. He then ran a hand through his hair before shaking his head as if to fully awaken himself. Beyond him she saw Hulk sitting up with frown and an angry crease in between his eyebrows. Thor next to him smiled gratefully at her and gave her a thumbs up causing her to snort.

Loki, immediately noticing he was free of the obedience disk, set about using magic to take advantage of the sleepy guards. Deftly he collected weapons while the other gladiators, following his lead, pounced on the vulnerable guards.

“What just happened?” Grandmaster’s voice broke her happy perusal. “Where’s my remote?”

Darcy turned and held up the remote she still had in her hands. As if to demonstrate the shift in power, she crushed the device and then brushed the pieces off her skin letting them drop to the floor.

“You’re in trouble.” Tony taunted as he came to stand next to her. Darcy turned and twittered a half-suppressed laugh. Tony’s eyes weren’t dilated anymore. He looked alert and aware and back to normal. His movements were sure and quick as he darted forward kissing her cheek. Putting one hand on her back and one on her injuries stomach he nuzzled her neck whispering, “You got this?”

Darcy turned and brought her hands up to cup his face; she stoked his beard with her fingertips as she let out a breathy laugh, “You feel better?”

“Think so.”

She brought her lips to his in a soft kiss and when he pressed back against her it was the best feeling ever. She breathed a sigh into his mouth as he tilted his head and took the kiss deeper. She fist her hands in the shoulders of his jacket as he whispered against her lips, “You did it. You saved me.”

When she pulled back, she knew she was crying but did nothing to hide it. “I love you.”

“I love you.” Tony responded, placing a last chaste kiss on her lips.

“Well, I love being disrespected by my wife in front of my face. But wait—NO I DON’T!” Grandmaster angrily yelled.

When he made a move to get up Korg went to his side and put his heavy hand on the man’s shoulder keeping him in place remarking, “Not so fast.”
“Why isn’t he dead yet?” Loki snapped as he and the others approached.

“Death’s too good for him.” Darcy answered, a coldness seeping into her voice. “He toys with people and enjoys it. He raped me. And Tony. And Val. He made me hurt Hulk and you and I--no death for him. Not yet and definitely not a quick one.”

Tony slipped his arm around her waist as Thor moved forward to stand on her other side, his hand splaying flat on her back in silent support.

“I understand what you’re saying but Darcy…” Loki’s eyes darted to the arena’s entrance and she followed his gaze. Guards were trying to flood in, but the other now freed gladiators were keeping them at bay. She could see that Loki wanted to yell at her about being stupid but he kept his words polite as he tried to persuade her, “Perhaps in this instance satisfaction must be surrendered for practicalities sake?”

“We do have other matters to attend to back on Asgard, greater threats---” Thor added but she cut him off with a sharp, “No.”

“Darcy--”

“Be reasonable--”

“Honey, maybe--”

Hulk cut them all of with a loud “ROAAAAR”. He moved to stand on the other side of the Grandmaster, opposite Korg. Hulk crossed his arms over his chest and glared at the rest of them, “Darcy say he live. Then he live.”

“Excellent decision. Hulk you were always my favorite. You know, there’s a reason why I married her and I--” Grandmaster’s babbling was cut off when Hulk backhanded him in the face, bashing his head back into the rubble, effectively knocking him unconscious once again.

“He lives, for now.” Darcy clarified “Just until we get back home. After we deal with Hela, we’ll have enough time to think up a good enough punishment.”

“You want to take him with us?” Loki blanched.

She didn’t have time to respond because just then the guards broke through the barricade of gladiators. Thinking quickly, Darcy erected her shield, blocking off the entrance and once again stemming the tide of soldiers trying to reach them.

“Now what?” Thor asked with a frown, his eyes going to her. Darcy looked around at the huddled group; everyone was looking at her expectantly.

“Darcy?” Loki prompted in a tense voice.

Darcy blinked back at him, “What are you all looking at me for?” She scolded them shrilly, “This is a group effort. Start thinking up ways to get to a spaceship so we can escape this hellhole without getting shot to smithereens!”

“Oh look, rescue.” Korg said in that casual manner of his, he pointed up and they all looked. A small ship was descending on the arena. Darcy spied Val at the controls before she spun the ship allowing her to lower the gangplank for them to climb aboard.
“Get in!” Darcy crowed. She’d have to be the last to board since she was still keeping the guards at bay with her shield.

Everyone hurried to obey her, however with the additional gladiators and Hulk it was clear that they all weren’t going to fit on the tiny ship. She turned to Tony and yelled at him, “Get on! I’ll be right behind you! We’ll have to swing by the space garage and steal a bigger ship.”

“You’re not coming?” Tony looked ready to argue.

She cast her gaze over to Thor and nodded at Tony, “Pick him up and carry him.”

“Darcy!” Tony squawked as Thor did as she instructed and threw Tony over his massive shoulder. He hurried onto Val’s ship.

Loki gave her a look and drew close to her right side, “I’ll stay with you.”

The gangplank retracted and the door on Val’s ship closed as the ship ascended upwards. She glanced behind her eyeing Korg and Hulk, “You’re too big. We’ll have to follow behind.”

“Alright.” Korg said gamely. Hulk didn’t respond verbally he just reached down and grabbed the unconscious Grandmaster, throwing the man over his shoulder, he gave her a nod.

Despite the situation and dire straits, she had to take a moment to ask him, “Hulk? You know I didn’t mean to hurt you, right? That I’m really, really sorry and that it wasn’t me—I mean it was, but I wasn’t in control and I would never--”

Hulk tugged on the end of her long pony tail, stopping her from further apologizing. He gave her a soft look, “Darcy hurt. Hulk should have known. Not mad. Darcy is Hulk’s friend. Always.”

“Wonderful,” Loki sarcastically interjected, “Now can we get a move on!”

“Oy, don’t get snippy.” Korg chastised, “That was a beautiful moment and the reaffirming of a friendship on the rocks is very important in times of emotional upheaval.”

“Yeah.” Hulk added, nudging Loki with a finger causing her brother to stumble forward. Darcy snorted when Loki whipped his head around and pointed his finger as if about to rant and reprimand the Hulk before reconsidering and closing his mouth.

“Okay, so, if I let the shield down, the guards will start firing as they flood the arena. We will probably get shot.” Darcy summarized.

“That’s bad.” Korg commented.

“But, if I don’t get shot in the head or somewhere vital, I can summon my shield and we can all hop on board and fly out of here, the shield once we’re high enough will protect the four of us from being shot anymore. Sound good?”

Loki eyed Hulk and Korg before grabbing her shoulders and directing her to move behind the two giant men. “Let’s get behind the expendables then reduce the chances of someone vital sustaining damage?”

“Who are you calling expendable?” Korg remarked sounding offended.

Darcy ignored them as she started to countdown. “One, two, THREE!”

She lowered the shield.
With Hulk and Korg taking the brunt of the oncoming fire, Darcy was able to enact her plan. They flew out of the arena mostly unscathed. Once airborne and out of the range of the guards weapons, Loki directed her to where the Grandmaster kept his spaceships. Once there, they reconnected with Val and the others who had used brute force to break into the ships hanger.

Tony went up to her and poked her injured stomach with one finger. “Ow!” Darcy groused.

He shook his finger at her angrily, chiding her succiently, “Not cool.”

“But effective.” Loki remarked as he intentionally bumped into Tony’s shoulder as he walked past.

Val was already at the ship they were going to steal and signaling them over. “This is the biggest one.” She eyed their motley crew with a narrowed gaze, “We should all fit.”

“But are we all going to the same place?” One of the other gladiators posited.

“That’s a good question.” Korg acknowledged, he fixed her with an easy smile, “So, where you all headed?”

“Asgard. To defeat my sister.” Thor answered with heat in his voice. Tony kissed her shoulder, mouthing ‘sorry’ at her.

“I thought she was your sister.” Korg pointed to her as she was mouthing ‘I’m sorry too’ to Tony.


Loki gave him an annoyed look, “Why would you tell them that? We could have used them!”

“What?” Thor said shrugging his shoulders, and making a ‘what do you want from me’ geture.

Loki looked over at Korg, “Do you want to come and help us overthrow our evil sister so we can reclaim the throne from her and put a stop to her insane pursuit to rule the galaxy?”

“Not really.”

Loki pointed at Korg as he looked pointedly at Thor, “See! He doesn’t want to help because of you! No one wants to go up against someone called the Goddess of Death! Why would you even mention that!”?

“I was being honest!” Thor yelled back, annoyance written in the tension on his face.

Loki shoved at Thor’s chest hissing ‘idiot’. Thor shoved him back. She and Tony exchanged a flat look as the pair began to childishly swat at each other.

Hulk put an end to the argument as he pushed past the pair intent on boarding the larger ship. He shoved Loki to the floor with one hand as he punched Thor in the face with the other. Thor sailed into the air and landed with a thud. Both men looked thoroughly embarrassed.

As soon as he made it to past the gangplank, Hulk dropped Grandmaster onto the floor…head first.

Val came up behind her other shoulder making her jump slightly as she announced, “I’m coming with you to Asgard.”

“Ah!” Darcy gasped, before putting a hand to her heart and sighing, “Oh, awesome, I mean I didn’t
want to assume but, yay. We could use another gown up. Thank you.”

Val gave her an unreadable look. She then shook her head and shifted her eyes to the floor muttering, “God don’t—don’t thank me.”

Thor and Loki both slunk on board shooting each other annoyed looks. Val followed after them without saying another word, idly Darcy wondered what that was about but she didn’t dwell on it. Unlike Thor and Loki who ignored his limp body, Val walked past Grandmaster and casually kicked him in the balls before continuing on her way. Presumably to the pilot’s chair.

“Thank you.” Korg said, catching her attention once again, “We would have been forced to fight to the death if it wasn’t for you. So, uh, thanks for saving our lives.”

“I’m glad I could help.” Darcy replied happily.

Korg then pointed to a smaller ship next to the one they intended to steal, “I suppose we could take that ship and go somewhere else.”

Darcy grabbed for Korg’s hand and squeezed his wrist meaningfully, “Thank you for…your help?”

“I didn’t really help.” Korg said humbly.

Darcy shrugged, “Yeah, but you were nice to me. Sometimes that means more than one would think.”

“I suppose…. Hey, we could do more. To thank you.” Korg offered looking a little uncomfortable speaking for the others, “We could go with you, to Asgard and help you---”

“No. That’s not necessary.” Darcy refused.

“Oh thank goodness. I really don’t want to fight anymore.” Korg revealed. “I’ve had my fill of tearing people apart and bashing in skulls. That kind of stuff hurts your soul after a while.”

Darcy smiled awkwardly, “Well, if you ever find yourself near Asgard or Earth, look me up and I’l lllllll buy you a beer or something.”

Korg sort of huffed before giving her a half hearted bow, “Your majesty.”

He then led the other freed gladiators to the other ship. Many of them waved or bowed to her as they went past. Darcy barely acknowledged the deference being paid to her as her attention was drawn back to Tony who was running his hands up and down her body, as if checking for battle damage.

“I’m fine.” Darcy reassured him.

“You were shot.” Tony countered.

“Yeah, but besides that. I’m fine.” He gave her a look that said ‘you’re not fooling me’, but tactfully remained silent on the issue.

Instead, Tony linked their hands together and she allowed him to guide her towards the ship. With the extreme amount of energy she’d been using, she felt a little lightheaded and sleepy. She leant her head on Tony’s shoulder as he pressed a button next to the wall and they closed up the ship.

They arrived in the cockpit just as Val was explaining, “Sakaar and Asgard are about as far apart as
any two known systems.” Tony left her side to slide into the co-pilots chair and immediately began tapping on buttons and examining readouts and stuff. “Our best bet is a wormhole just outside the city limits. A nice clean wormhole outside the city.”

Val pointed at the sky, as if to illustrate the safe choice, Korg’s ship sailed into the wormhole and blinked out of sight.

“We can refuel on Xandar and be back in Asgard in around 18 months.” Val concluded. Darcy reached out for Hulk’s arm to steady herself as her vision blurred for a second.

Hulk gave her a look and then wordlessly picked her up, holding her in his arms as if she were a small child. She said nothing, but rested her head on his massive chest comforted by his solid bulk and steady heartbeat.

“Nope.” Thor said pointing at a nightmarish looking tornado wormhole over the ocean, “We’re going through that one.”

“The Devil’s Anus?” Val questioned.

“Say what now?” Tony quipped.

“Whose anus are we going through?” Loki asked with a resigned look on his face.

“For the record,” Thor defended, “I didn’t know it was called that when I picked it.”

Tony squinted at the wormhole saying, “That looks like a collapsing neutron star inside of an Einstein-Rosen Bridge.”

Darcy perked up lifting her head to chime in, “I recognize one of those science terms.” Tony gave her an amused grin over his shoulder, but when he saw her position his face got this pinched look.

“Will this ship withstand the geodetic strain from the singularity?” Thor asked.

Darcy shot him a quizzical look. Thor shrugged at her, “Uncharted metagalactic travel through a volatile cosmic gateway. Sounds like an adventure don’t you think sister?”

“Sounds like we’re gonna die.” Loki lamented with a sigh as he slid into one of the chairs.

“Drinks!” Val exclaimed, “We need drinks!”

Hulk let out a frustrated growl and set her down on her feet. She stumbled back into Loki’s lap as Hulk barked out, “Too much talking. WE GO! NOW!”

Without anymore preamble Darcy and the others strapped in and they took off for the Devil’s Anus. However even as the bumpy ride demanded attention and vigilance, Darcy couldn’t help but fall asleep before they’d even reached the portal.

She woke up inside of someone’s dream. And that someone was dreaming about the Hulk having unrealistic sex with a smaller someone.

“Oh yeah, give it to my champ—ION!” Grandmaster’s familiar voice raised several notches as he reached his zenith. As Hulk disengaged from his body he sighed panting, “Oh how I love watching my champion put in the work.”
With little effort Darcy clothed Grandmaster and made Hulk disappear. Grandmaster in turn sat up and looked around with a confused expression, “What?”

Darcy materialized draped in a dark blue dress that reached her from neck to toes. Grandmaster perked up at the sight of her, “Darling!”

He then frowned, “Why are you so covered up?” He looked down at himself and picked at his robe, “Come to think of it, why am I so covered up?”

He began shedding his clothes as he smiled at her cajolingly, “C’mon. Take it off and stay a while. The sex is great.”

With every layer of clothing he tried to remove, Darcy added two more to his body until he finally seemed to get the hint that his efforts were useless. He pouted down at his now bulging torso; the seven robes making it bunch comically. “What’s going on here?”

“We’re in a dream.” Darcy informed him. “Your dream.”

Grandmaster looked at her with suspicion in his eyes, “And yet we’re not naked.”

Darcy crossed the room; they were in his bedroom back on Sakaar. She didn’t like being reminded of the space so she changed the setting to the Cliffside where she had last seen Odin alive. The scene filled her with a sense of…confidence, it was strange because she didn’t feel wiser or more in control of her abilities, but somehow she knew that whatever she wanted was possible.

At least here, in the dream realm.

She took a seat on the log; Grandmaster looked around for a seat for himself, finding none he remained standing at the cliff’s edge. “You once asked me who I was. What I was…ask me again.”

Grandmaster stared at her for a long minute before speaking, “I’m not a bad guy you know. I’m not the most evil man in the universe. You could do a lot worse being married—”

She held up a hand and cut him off, “We’re not married.”

Grandmaster clenched his jaw, “I beg to disagree.”

“Your opinion doesn’t matter.” Darcy said dismissively.

Grandmaster nearly went purple in the face, “I AM THE RULER OF SAKAAR. Do you know how many of the galaxies strongest beings I’ve bent to my will? MY WILL! Me. I AM THE GRANDMASTER!”

“You are En Dwi Gast,” The name just came to her, “And you are my prisoner.” She said responded coolly. “And you will remain so, until I see fit to allow to find release in death’s cold embrace.”

Grandmaster’s shoulder drooped. The air of superiority that he wore like armor, dissipated even as he futilely denied her. “I’m not a prisoner.”

“You are.” Darcy calmly corrected. “Now, ask me. Ask me who I am.”

With a fearful expression Grandmaster asked, “Who are you?”

“I’m the Goddess of Sleep. And this,” The cloudy sky above them grew dark and angry. Lighting flashed in the sky and the wind picked up whipping Grandmaster’s robes around his body. “This is my world and your prison.”
She disappeared from her physical form and once again became a disembodied presence. Grandmaster looked around searchingly but then stilled. There was quake in the ground, the only clue before the cliff under his feet crumbled and he fell into the ocean, his body becoming battered on the rocks below.

She sped up time so she could watch him suffer in multiple ways. She reveled when the panic set in as he flailed about in the water and drowned.

Next she had a passing sea creature revive him and save him. The creature deposited him in the shallows, allowing him time to stagger back to land before it grew legs and sharp teeth and a lust for blood.

The creature was a grotesque and frightening beast made purely out of her imagination. It pursued him on land, hunting him down. She had the sun set, bathing the world in darkness, the light of the moon Grandmaster’s only source of light. She watched as he whimpered and cowered and fled the pursing beast. She let him escape the hunt several times, each time only sustaining a scratch or a nibble at its terrible jaws. She let him fill with hope that he could evade the creature forever; escape this prison she had created just for him.

First hand she knew how unsettling it was to face down another being as it tried to devour you. Drawing on her own experience with the Lurking Unknown back on Asgard, she had the beast eat him whole.

She imagined the creature had acid lining its stomach so Grandmaster screamed as the thing tried to digest him, but he was too stringy and she had the creature excrete him out instead. The process was claustrophobic and smelly and Grandmaster emerged from it more traumatized and humbled than he had looked when he’d drowned.

Once again on the beach and relatively free, she imagined a storm swirling in the sky. A tornado landed and picked him up, spinning him and discarding him far off in a jungle that appeared just for the purpose of him getting lost in. The storm followed him; rain pelted down on his skin freezing him. The wind chilled him to the core as it blew with gale force strength.

And then it calmed, only for a second. Then lightning flashed threateningly in the sky. She made lightning bolts rain down on him, striking closer and closer until finally, he was struck. And then again. And again and again and again.

When she was bored of how he screamed and convulsed she had him catch on fire. She let him burn for a while until she could no longer stand his howling or the smell of his burning flesh. She let the flames be washed away by the tide, the salty water stinging painfully as it made contact with his every open wound.

When all that was done, she felt…avenged. Or perhaps revenged would have been a more appropriate word?

Either way, she withdrew all her influence from the scene and allowed Grandmaster to lie un-accosted on the beach. She had the sun come out and beam down on his body, warming his hurricane cooled skin. She allowed his body to heal his wounds rapidly and the skin to grow back just as if it never been burnt away.

He lay panting soaking up the moment’s respite as she gave herself form again. She walked along the beach approaching him leisurely as the waves lapped gently at her bare feet. This time she wore a cocktail length dress that’s off the shoulder bustier top reminded her of Asgard, but who’s long fluttering train reminded her strangely of Stephen. When she stood over him, she cast a dark shadow
over his face. Grandmaster was brave enough to open his eyes and meet her gaze.

“I’m sorry.” He apologized in a broken sounding voice.

Darcy nodded numbly, “I’m sure you are.”

“Please let me go.” He begged.

“No.”

He sat up and got on his knees, clasping his hands together in front of him, “Please! I’m sorry I made you marry me. I’m sorry I drugged you. I’m sorry I ever started the contest of Champions. I’ll reform. Take up charity work. Feed hungry kids. Pet lonely dogs. Whatever! I’m sorry! I should never have wronged you. I take it all back. I’m sorry, I’m sorry, I’m sorry!”

“All?” Darcy questioned, “You take it all back? Even the things you did to me that I can’t remember?”

The detached tone she had been using disappeared as she became more incensed, “You take back every time you shoved your disgusting tongue into my mouth? Every touch of your hand on my body that was unwanted? You take back all the things that were so horrible that those who participated are reluctant to even tell me all that transpired, just to save me from the suffering of knowing what was done to me with my body without my consent?!”

Grandmaster slumped backward; curling into the fetal position he started chanting, “I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m sorry.”

She had no pity for him. “Sorry isn’t good enough. Promises to change aren’t good enough…but rejoice Grandmaster, I will not remain in your mind tormenting you forever. In fact I’m already bored of it. I’ve made you endure the worst my mind can come up with. Now….it’s your turn.”

She disappeared again. She wanted to leave his dream and his mind to return to the real world, but she couldn’t just let him wake up. He wasn’t broken enough.

She brought to mind every fact she knew about hibernating animals and forced Grandmasters body into inaction. She imagined his heart rate slowing, his body temperature dropping, all of his normal bodily functions slowing down until he was in a coma like state.

Then she delved into his mind. She cycled through his reoccurring dreams before discarding the bulk of the sex related ones. She found his greatest fears and memories of his past experiences with pain and sorrow and despair. She pulled at the memories and willed them into construct weaving them together in dream scenarios. She forced Grandmaster to play the part, relieve and reenact all his personal traumas. She imagined him forever cycling though the events as he remained asleep for as long as his lifespan would allow.

And then she woke up on the floor next to his body.

She put a hand to his forehead and found his skin cool to the touch. She put her ear to his chest and found his heart beat slowed down to an incredible rate. Pulling back she stared at his face.

Grandmaster looked so peaceful as he slept.

In that moment she second guessed herself.

Had she been too cruel? Was living in an eternal nightmarish torment really better than death? Should she just kill him and end it all, or let him endure her wrath.
“Oh!” Loki shouted as he came around the corner. “Darcy, thank the gods you didn’t go far. We’ve nearly arrived on Asgard.”

Loki moved to her side and she felt tears stab at her eyes, “What’s wrong?”

She felt ashamed for not regretting what she’d done. She felt like a monster for treasuring the sight of Grandmaster in agony by her own design. He had hurt her in the most intimate of ways. He’d hurt her and her family and Tony and his whole fucking planet had suffered under his terrible reign and she…

“I tortured him in his dreams.” She confessed. If anyone would understand her need for revenge, it would be Loki, so she held nothing back as the tears started to fall from her eyes. “I did horrible things to him, the most evil shit I could think of and—and in a world I completely control, Loki, it was some seriously heinous shit.”

“He deserves it.” Loki stroked a hand down her back and pulled her to his chest hugging her. “Whatever you did, he deserves it. He’s a wicked man. If you need to watch him suffer in order to heal what he broke…I won’t judge you for it. I would never.”

Darcy made a sobbing choking sound, as Loki revealed, “He forced himself on me too you know. I convinced him that you should remain chaste before the wedding, spun lies about traditions and the like. So, he turned his attention on me. Said I would have to hold his interest, least his eye wander back to you. And—”

“No more.” Darcy cried, “I can’t handle anymore right now.”

“Alright.” Loki nodded and hugged her closer to his chest. “Just know, I love you Darcy. You could never do anything too evil to make me stop.”

They stayed like that for a long while.

When the ship lurched sending them skidding across the floor, Loki grabbed hold of the wall, stopping them from slamming into the wall, unlike the Grandmaster’s body which connected with a loud ‘clang’.

She wiped at her eyes and mentally pulled herself back together as Loki announced, “We’re home.”

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Tony’s outfit
Darcy ‘space clueless’ outfit
Darcy wedding look
Dark Darcy
‘Just got Shot’ Darcy Outfit Wearing at the end of the chapter
First Darcy Dream Walking Look
Second Darcy Dream Walking Look on the Beach
So, that's it. We're done with Sakaar for the most part. Hope you like Grandmaster's comeuppance.
Next up, we deal with Hela.
Chapter 54 – queen of hel

Loki and she remained in the hanger waiting for the others in the ships hanger. When they saw her most looked surprised, which she could totally understand. Usually when she sleep teleported, she was gone for a while.

“Hey.” She greeted them with a tiny wave.

“Sister!” Thor boomed joyfully. Tony ran forward first though, he wordlessly hugged her tightly as Thor continued to speak, “We thought you gone on another perilous journey. What good fortune that you remain with us.”

Darcy squeezed Tony back as she blinked back the urge to cry. She didn’t feel emotional about what she had done to the Grandmaster or about the prospect of revealing her judgment to Tony or worried how the others would take the news. What really got to her was the sheer look of devastated relief on Tony’s face when he saw her. It was like a punch in the gut.

“I thought you’d left me again.” Tony confessed quietly.

Darcy swallowed thickly before answering, “Nope.” She thought about adding, ‘not yet’ to her comment, but decided to press a gentle kiss to Tony’s lips instead. As they separated, Val opened the hanger door and lowered the gangplank.

Thor took the lead calling out to them over his shoulder as they exited the ship, “Onwards! We go to battle for the fate of Asgard!”

“Is he always this enthusiastic?” Val casually asked Loki.

Her brother rolled his eyes replying, “You have no idea.”

“What about him?” Hulk grunted as he kicked the Grandmaster with his foot.

“Leave him.” Darcy didn’t even look back as she entwined her hand with Tony’s. “He’s not important anymore.”

She and Tony hurried to catch up with Thor who hadn’t stopped to wait for them. Soon enough,
Loki sidled up on her opposite side, walking in time with her and Tony. Which left Val and Hulk to bring up the rear.

They’d parked the ship near the palace, crushing some of the west gardens in their haste to get to Hela as quickly as possible. When they weren’t immediately beset by their enemies…or their allies, Loki became worried that their evacuation plans might have failed. Darcy used her sling ring to check to see if the Bifrost was open. She found the observatory unmanned and the sword/key, Hofund, gone. It was discouraging to say the least.

They next set upon searching the palace for clues as to what had happened. But there was no one, the palace was a ghost town. It was empty and eerie, nothing like the shining home she’d come to cherish that was always seemed to be bustling with life and vitality.

It almost seemed like the whole of Asgard had a cloud hanging overhead, literally and figuratively, casting the realm in a gray dreariness that permeated its very essence.

“What do you think happened?” Tony asked as the navigated a hallway.

“Fight.” Hulk answered pithily.

“I’m not so sure.” Loki mused as they found their way to the throne room. The doors creaked as Thor opened them and led them inside.

Their footsteps echoed throughout the empty space. There were items from Odin’s vault scattered around the room, which was alarming, but what really caught her eye was the plaster and rubble covering the floor. Remains from the dismantled fresco littered the ground caking everything in rubble and dust. Thor stopped and picked up a piece of debris and Darcy moved next to him to see what he’d found.

It was a piece of the fresco that had his own face on it. Darcy traced a finger over the line that ran through the pictures eye.

“It’s true then.” Thor quietly brooded. She glanced at his face and found his eyes pointing upward. She followed his gaze to find a completely intact fresco that must have been hidden just underneath the old one.

It depicted Odin and Hela conquering the nine realms. The most striking of the scenes showed the father daughter pair surrounded by Hela’s creepy undead soldiers, granted probably at the time of painting they were not so undead but still. They looked like a stout legion of loyal countrymen surrounding the King and his daughter. His true heir…There was even a golden light drawn behind the pair making them appear ‘godly’. They looked so victorious and in sync with their matching body language; Odin held his spear, Gungnir, up as Hela held Mjolnir aloft. It was a tableau dedicated to triumph. And in a way, it was magnificent.

“I never thought I’d be back here.” Val said as she kicked idly at some rubble on the ground.

“Not to ruin the moment of conveniently illustrated revelatory disturbing family secrets, but, where is everybody?” Tony asked, “I mean, according to Darcy, last time she checked in the people and the Asgardian soldiers were alive and kicking. Do you think Hela already…?”

“Killed everyone and moved on to conquer another realm?” Darcy added finishing his sentence for him. Tony shrugged.
“No.” Thor thundered sternly, “It cannot be.”

“I agree.” Darcy said consolingly. She put a hand on Thor’s stone face and urged him to lower it back to the floor, only she used more force than she had meant to and all but slapped it out of his hands and down onto the floor. Where it shattered into a million pieces.

“Whoopsie daisy.” Darcy apologized quickly, “Sorry.”

Annoyed, Thor pursed his lips at her and glared at her. Val snorted and the others chuckled. Shaking off her minor act of embarrassment, Darcy turned and focused on Thor. Grabbing his bicep she tried to assure him, “Our people are alive. We checked the Bifrost. The sword remains missing which means Hela’s still here on Asgard. Our people are still here…or they’ve been evacuated using the alternative routes. Or moved to a different dimension using magic. Or maybe they’re using the shelter in place designated areas we established before we left when we were making our preparations for Ragnarok.”

Thor looked crestfallen and ashamed, like he believed they had already failed. Darcy hurried to comfort him, “Just--listen Thor don’t lose hope now. I...I don’t know where they are, but I know our people are alive. I just know it.”

Thor’s expression was sad as he responded, “You.”

She looked at him quizzically. “Me?”

He opened his mouth to elaborate while running a hand over his head. He froze midway through the action only to frown, he seemingly realizing the action would feel different now that he had short hair and found the reminder unwelcome.

“You.” He sighed heavily, “If our people live, it was not because of us, or our efforts. It was you.”

“Thor I didn’t--” She tried to argue that it wasn’t just her, but Thor continued to speak raising his voice over hers.

“Escape routes, you established. Plans, you made. Preparations, you foresaw would be needed. You. And Loki.” His eyes flickered over her shoulder. She turned to see Loki with a poignant look on his face. Almost sentimental.

Thor put heavy hands on her shoulders as he addressed her, “You’re right. I too believe our people live. But it was through now effort of mine. ..you were the catalyst of change for my brother. You helped him see the good in the world and made him want to be a part of it instead of jealously trying to destroy it.”

“I didn’t--” She tried to protest. Loki came forward and interrupted her this time, “You did.”

“But--”

Thor removed his hands and moved to stand side by side with Loki as the pair looked at her with twin expressions of love and reverence.

“You saved us from Grandmaster.” Loki stated.

“You humbled me in a way that man forcing me to fight in the arena..and cutting my hair ever could have.”
Loki sniggered.

“I like the new hair.” She said as her own lips began to curl in amusement.

Thor reached a hand to his head hesitantly, “Are you sure? The man was a butcher to be sure; I’ve not had it this short since I was a boy.”

“Don’t worry Thundershock, you’re still the prettiest in the room.” Tony quipped re-entering the conversation and making Thor beam at him.

“Speaking of the room,” Tony continued, “and how it’s empty. Can we interrupt this moment of emotional catharsis to get back to the topic at hand? If the people have escaped using the proverbial magical underground railroad, great. Awesome. But if not, where do we think Stephen and the rest would hide them? Because if they are still here and Hela does want to rule the galaxy, you can bet your ass she won’t allow her home world’s population to spurn her tyrannical glow. She’ll want them to kneel before she moves on to conquering the next world.”

“He’s right.” Val scowled, “She’ll be where they are. Her need for respect and obedience would lead her to seek veneration over escape.”

Thor gestured to the ceiling above where Hela’s smiling visage seemingly mocked them. “She obviously knows Asgard as well or perhaps even better than we do.” His brow furrowed as his voice took on a ponderous tone, “So, where would our friends go to seek protection for our people that Hela would not think to look for them or if she did find them, wouldn’t be able to reach them?”

After a moment’s thought, she and Loki turned to each other and simultaneously exclaimed. “The mountain stronghold!”

With the prospect of battle looming, it was decided worthy enough to spend a minute getting properly armed for the occasion. Thus, before leaving the palace Thor and Loki disappeared momentarily for a trip to the armory and returned with weapons and a gift for Val. The woman now wore the traditional Valkyrie armor, a badass white and gold ensemble that was both functional and pretty. Loki passed a hand over her head and transformed the woman warriors braided Mohawk look for a looser straight haired look. Val allowed this for some reason. They also gifted Hulk a shield large enough to fit his frame and an axe that was sharp and deadly looking. Tony was offered weapons but he declined citing he preferring his own.

Thor tucked and secured his one shouldered red cape thing to his waist and replaced his Sakaarian swords with larger, sturdier, Asgardian forged swords. Loki changed his own outfit with a wave of his hand. He altered the inner lining of his cape from yellow to green and donned the stupidly ostentatious horned helmet he was known for. Following their lead, Darcy changed her own outfit into a gold and silver metallic look. It was more functional for the cold they would face in their flight to the mountain and it would hopefully provide protection seeing as how it was made of metal and chainmail.

It was decided that they would fly to the mountain rather than use the sling ring to get there instantaneously because it would provide them with an overview of Asgard, possibly providing answers for their many questions along the way.

They assembled outside on a balcony that overlooked the city. Everyone was to stand on her shield except Tony who opted to don his suit and fly alongside them. The wind was brisk as it hit her full force in the face, luckily Darcy’s hair was now contained in a metal spiral-ed pony tail so she
wouldn’t have the windswept look Loki and Val would soon be sporting due to their loose locks.

As they were flying she realized that Val had gone from touching her arm, to clutching it tightly. Darcy was a little offended by the woman’s apprehension flying on top of the shield, after all she was an excellent driver...flyer? Whatever the case may be, everyone else seemed unwary about zooming on top of the magical energy construct.

“Afraid of heights Valkyrie?” Darcy asked with a hint of cheek.

“Of course not.” Val answered quickly, her grip on Darcy’s arm tightening ever so slightly as the woman chanced a look down to the ground.

“Could have fooled me.” Darcy teased in a singsong voice.

“I’m not afraid.” She stated with conviction as she let go of Darcy’s arm. After a few seconds she was gripping it tightly once more. Her voice grew quiet as she revealed, “I’m just used to having something to hold on to.”

“Ah yes, the famed Valkyries Steeds.” Loki marveled, “You didn’t manage to save any the last time you battled the Goddess of Death?”

Val glared at him. “All the Valkyrie and their Steeds perished when we confronted Hela.”

“All but you.” Darcy reminded her.

Animatedly Thor chimed in, “I wish I could have seen one in person. When I was a boy I would play pretend I was a Valkyrie. I used to make Loki pretend to be my Steed, he would shapeshift into the most magnificent winged horse, all black no matter how many times I asked him to be white.” Thor let out a nostalgic sigh, “Oh, I would ride and fly with him for hours...even though those games usually ended with him trying to trample me to death it was totally worth it.”

Darcy let out a little laugh as she turned her head slightly in Loki’s direction, “Aw. Were you a pretty pretty pony for your big brothers make believe games? That’s so cute!”

“I hate you.” Loki dryly accused.

“No you don’t.” Thor denied with a broad grin.

“Hey Loki,” Tony said flying dangerously close, “Speaking of horsey hanky panky. Did you really give birth to Sleipni--”

Loki pointed angrily up at Tony. “Don’t you even finish that question.”

Thor boomed with laughter making Loki look even more annoyed. If she had a hand free she would have tried to comfort him.

“I can’t believe that rumor still persists, thousands of year later! My that was a good joke, was it not brother?” Loki’s deadpan expression must have tickled Thor’s funny bone, because her big brother began laughing heartily again.

“I hate you.”

“No you don’t.”
The Mountain now in sight, Loki began to explain how they discovered it. “We stumbled across the mountain stronghold when we were researching naturally occurring anomalies that might act as gateways to get large masses of people off Asgard. The mountain wasn’t one we could exploit in this manner—”

“But it was really, really big.” Darcy interrupted.

Loki nodded with a smirk, “So we designated it as a possible shelter to house the entire population in case of natural disaster or the like.”

“Like a bomb shelter, but for everybody.” Darcy added.

“Heimdall.” Thor said the name with deference.

Loki nodded, “As soon as I found it, I knew he would know about it. With us gone, he would have brought our people there to hide from Hela and her forces.”

“You mean those forces!” Val shouted pointing down to the ground.

As they flew over the forest that surrounded the mountain they saw formations of Hela’s undead soldiers. They were standing at the bottom of the mountain, unmoving. Darcy had seen them on her previous astral projected visit to Asgard but she hadn’t realized how many there were until now. There had to be at least…10,000? Maybe less, maybe more.

They stood armored and ready for battle, no apparent debilitating injuries impeding them. And yet they remained frozen in place. Like toy soldiers or statues waiting to be activated. The soldiers were intimidating but it was the sight of the giant, apparently dead but now resurrected wolf, that truly scared her. Hela’s army was grand and a sight to behold indeed.

Hulk scoffed calling out, “Puppy.”

“No. Fenir.” Loki corrected. “He is one of the most powerful and fearsome beings in the Nine Realms.”

“Looks like a direwolf to me, maybe it will obey me because I’m a Stark?” Tony joked making her snort.

“Is it wrong that I wanna ride that giant wolf more than anything?” Darcy asked. “Even though I’m peeing my pants a little at the sight of it?”

“Fenir is not a pet to be trifled with.” Thor advised, “Though he too seems rendered docile at the moment. It’s curious. Do you think Hela defeated already?” The big lug almost sounded disappointed.

As they made their approach Darcy let out a squeal of delight. There was a familiar pair of blonde heads down on the ground.

“Fandral! Steve!”

The blondes were standing just outside a set of doors that were carved into the mountain side. It looked like Fandral and Steve were having a heated discussion with a lot of gesticulation happening on Steve’s end. At the sound of her voice both men looked up.
Fandral reacted first calling out to her with a laugh, “Princess! Thank Odin you’ve returned to us!”

Fandral’s bright smile filled her with a sense of exuberance. Darcy set them down on the ground next to the men as quickly as possible. As a result of her haste, the shield dissolved under everyone else’s feet sooner than expected, dropping them unceremoniously about five feet. Val shot her look that conveyed the sentiment ‘seriously?’ without a word being spoken.

She couldn’t dwell on her blemished flying record though, because the second she touched down she was being double teamed by Fandral and Steve who wrapped her up in a fierce group hug.

“You made it.” Steve said sounding relieved. At the same time Fandral cheered, “Finally! Everyone’s so grumpy when you leave!”

“I’m back too you know.” Tony sniped. Steve released her and turned on his former teammate with a affectionate grin.

“Glad you made it back too Shell-head.” Steve offered as he pulled Tony in for a hug that was equally as fierce. Tony looked surprised, but he mechanically patted Steve’s back. Fandral moved on to clasp hands with Thor, greeting his old friend in the manly way so many Asgardians favored.

“What’s happened?” Thor questioned Fandral even as he greeted his friend with a clap on the shoulder.

“Everything’s fine.” Fandral said soothingly, he didn’t sound very convincing.

“Goddess of Death on the loose, and everything’s fine?” Darcy questioned haughtily.

Thor didn’t look convinced either. Fandral argued, “There’s no reason to worry, honestly, you leave for a few weeks and expect everything to fall apart without you? Have I ever failed you Princess?” He then turned to Thor. “Do you really think we would allow Asgard to fall into that madwoman’s clutches?”

“Hela, where is she?” Thor demanded.


Thor wasn’t waiting. He maneuvered around Fandral and pushed past Steve as he made his way inside the double doors.

Once again the rest of them had no choice but to fall into line behind him, following his lead.

“Seriously Rogers.” Tony poked Steve in the cheek, “What’s the skinny? Where is everyone? What happened to the demented Goddess?”

“Not now Tony.” Steve dismissed. He then jogged ahead to be by Thor’s side. “Thor! Wait, just—hey! Stop. Let me get—we’re supposed to wait for Heimdall. He sent us out here to greet you, said we should wait for him so he could expl—hey! Listen to me!”

Thor was having none of it. He brushed Steve aside again, not allowing any words to stop him from venturing forward.

“No more delays.” Thor said darkly, “We end this nightmare, now.”

When Steve physically moved into Thor’s path, the rest of them stopped to watch. Steve planted his hands on the god’s chest and gave a shove pushing him backwards. Thor stumbled only due to being
caught momentarily off guard. Darcy was surprised as well.

“Captain, you would raise your hands against me?” Thor asked sounding betrayed.

Just behind her she heard Loki snort, muttering, “This should be entertaining.”

She tuned out the bickering men as Fandral sauntered over to her side. He slung his arm around her waist and drew his face close to her ear asking, “Who is the delightfully dangerous woman you’ve brought back with you? And is she unattached?” He was eyeing Val with a lusty gleam in his eyes and Darcy couldn’t help but chuckle.

Fandral pouted at her, “What? You think her out of my league?”

Darcy put a comforting hand on his chest. “No. I’m just so glad that you’re still alive and as horny as ever.”

“Well, I told you--” Fandral began but Hulk interrupted him as he asserted, “Loki horny.”

Hulk pointing to Loki’s helmet adding, “Loki horniest of all.”

Val laughed out loud as she and Tony stared at him with open mouths. With a delighted grin Tony asked, “Was that a joke big guy?”

Hulk’s answering smile was toothy and wide. “Hulk funny now.”

“Well.” Tony grunted thoughtfully. He then turned to her and asked, “Did you teach him to be funny or is he evolving all on his own?”

“Darcy teach.” Hulk answered for her, “Teach Hulk how to joke, play games, have fun. Be happy being Hulk.”

He then tilted his head down so he could meet her eyes as he professed, “Hulk won’t fail again. Hulk protect Darcy. Not scared of puppy or soldiers or puny gods. Hulk fight for you. Always.”

Darcy skipped over to the Hulk. Hugging him around the waist tightly she looked up into his big green eyes and claimed, “I’m not sure I need that kind protection, but I appreciate the gesture all the same big guy.”

As Hulk pet her head she added, “That goes both ways you know? I’ll protect you too.”

“Huh.” Hulk chimed.

Darcy balked disentangling herself from his hug, “Hey, don’t laugh. I’m badass now. You would be lucky to have my protection!”

Hulk laid a heavy hand on her shoulder and shook her softly, “Not funny because Darcy weak. Funny because Darcy protects everyone. Hulk not special.”

“You are to me.” Darcy promised.

Hulk’s eyes widened and he honestly looked a little misty eyed as he insisted, “Hulk still smash Darcy’s enemies if she need help.”

The moment was ruined by Fandral failing to whisper to Loki as he asked, “Has she added that green behemoth to the list of her paramours? Before me?! Because if so, I think I’m offended.”
Hulk’s chest rumbled as he growled in Fandral’s direction. In a dry tone Loki taunted, “I think he heard you.”

“You really have a talent for inspiring devotion, don’t you?” A disembodied voice called out from the entrance behind them making them all whip around to see Heimdall who looked slightly out of breath.

“She does.” Val answered, a jeering smile on her lips as her eyes soaked in the sight of Hulk still glaring at Fandral as the man casually moved to hide behind Thor.

“I saw you coming.” Heimdall bragged, “You made good time, I didn’t.”

“Heimdall.” Thor said the man’s name with reverence, he spared a glare at Steve as he sassed, “Finally, someone who will aid me in my quest to save Asgard and not impede me further.”

Steve just looked tired. “I stalled him as long as I could.”

Heimdall nodded as he passed them and made his way to Thor. “Well done Captain.” Heimdall and Thor clapsed arms in greeting. “It’s good to see you in the flesh my Prince.”

“What’s happened?” Loki inquired as he too ventured closer to Thor’s side, “Where is our sister?”

“Inside with the others.” Heimdall gestured with his head to a tunnel that shot off from the main cavern.

“You left her with all the civilians?” Darcy asked shrilly.

When Heimdall looked at her with his golden eyes it felt like they were piercing her soul and she took a step back. He looked her up and down before responding. “You’ve changed Princess.”

She maintained eye contact with the dark skinned man even though the feeling was unnerving and her body was all tensed in response.

“You’re almost fully realized.” Heimdall said cryptically as he continued to stare at her. She allowed her shoulders to sag as Tony moved to her side and wordlessly entwined their fingers once again. He somehow made her feel better just by nearer.

“Heimdall.” Thor said sternly, refocusing the man’s attention back on himself, “Our people?”

“Oh.” Heimdall said casually, “Their fine.”

“Define fine.” Loki demanded.

“Escaped via the Bifrost after the Princess’s forces subdued Hela.” Heimdall answered.

“Subdued?” Loki echoed at the same time Thor repeated, “The Princess’s forces?”

“You’ll see.” Heimdall said evasively, “In fact I think it would be better to see the method in action than hear about it I’d wager.”

Darcy turned to Steve for answers, “Steve? Wanna un-vague all this up for us? Cause I’m starting to get pissed.”

Steve looked over at Heimdall; the man in question shrugged and Steve nodded as if he’d been
granted some kind of permission. His expression was grim as he began to disclose the details of what had transpired in their absence, “We got the people out of Asgard using the Bifrost after we neutralized Hela, but just as a precaution. They could have stayed in the city, but we all agreed it was better not to chance it if she somehow managed to get loose. Especially considering she was intent on hunting the civilians down at the time of her capture.”

Loki turned a narrowed eyed gaze on Heimdall, “If all is well, why evacuate? Why take the sword from its place and wear it on your back?”

“Precaution.” Heimdall said with an unsettling frown.

“You keep using words like subdue and neutralize when you talk about Hela.” Val observed, “Why?”

“Because they haven’t killed her.” Darcy guessed, “Or they can’t…”

Heimdall gestured to her with his hand, “Very astute Princess. It’s true. Hela lives because her life force is tied to Asgard itself. In killing her, we would destroy Asgard, or weaken its place in the cosmos so thoroughly that our continued existence would remain in jeopardy regardless.”

“What that mean?” Hulk snarled as he advanced on Heimdall, “Why you talk in riddles? SPEAK NORMAL!”

“She’s the Goddess of Death.” Heimdall explained calmly, “Did you really think getting rid of her would be easy?”

“I was kind of hoping.” Tony muttered making the corners of her lips lift.

“Why did you instruct the Captain to stop us from venturing further into the caves until your arrival?” Thor asked Heimdall, “What are you keeping from us old friend?”

Heimdall’s face hardened and Fandral moved to his side laying a hand on his friends shoulder. “Heimdall just wanted us here to be here so we could…soften the blow so to speak.”

“Explain.” Darcy demanded in a serious tone. The way they were talking and evading elaborating on the specifics had her worried. She felt the cold hand of dread creeping up her spine.

“I just wanted to warn you,” Heimdall said, his eyes once again focused intensely on her. “Before you saw what has become of your lover and his young charge.”

Darcy looked over at Steve. She knew the expression on her face demanded answers. With a air of determination, Steve translated. “Strange and Wanda used magic to take Hela down.”

“At what cost?” Val said, asking the million dollar question.

Steve averted his eyes and Darcy knew that whatever the cost, it had to be bad.

“Show me.” She commanded.

“This way.” Heimdall said grimly as he turned and lead them deeper into the a tunnel that shot off from the main cave.

They came upon a scene that looked straight out of one of Wonder Woman’s early bondage heavy comic book pages. Hela was bound on her knees by Stephen’s glowing rope; she struggled
ineffectually as they approached. Her eyes promised murder and revenge as she made loud angry noises at them.

Stephen stood behind her with a strong wide stance but Darcy could his knees were trembling. His eyes were open but unfocused, and bloodshot. Multiple hands emerged from his body to hold the multiple ropes that wrapped around Hela’s form binding her arms to her sides and rendering her motionless and prone on her back. The ropes even covered her mouth muffling her rage, but not extinguishing it.

Behind him stood Wanda with her eyes closed. The chaos witch rested her glowing hands lightly on Stephen’s shoulders, but there was a strained expression on her face belying the gentle touch.

Both magic wielders looked like crap.

Stephen was far paler than usual, there were heavy purple circles under his eyes, and his hair looked flat and unkempt. There seemed to be more fine lines on his face than normal and there was a hunch to his back that telegraphed his fatigue. His clothes also appeared to fit looser on his frame than she remembered.

Wanda was much worse. Her skin appeared dull and lifeless. Her under eye area was swollen, her cheekbones more pronounced due to the gauntness that had taken over her face. And there was a droopiness at the corners of her mouth, along with some fine lines that Darcy knew for a fact hadn’t been there the last time she’d seen the twenty year old. Also alarmingly, Wanda was thinner than usual and considering how small the woman was to begin with, it was a worrying sight.

All in all, they looked like shit about to keel over. She quickly surmised that the glowing healing crystals surrounding the pair were meant to help counteract their deterioration, but it didn’t look like they were helping nearly enough.

She spied Lady Eir in the corner soaking a compress in some cool water. Hogun and Bucky were hissing at each other near the far wall. Both men, seeing their group arrive, stood and approached them silently.

“What’s wrong with them?” Tony asked Heimdall in a tight voice. His gaze was locked on Stephen’s haggard face.

“How long have they been like this?” Darcy added, her eyes taking in the shuddering that was now more pronounced in Stephen’s scarred hands.

Heimdall appeared drawn as he answered, “Nine or ten days.”

“What’s wrong with them?!” Tony repeated anger coloring his tone as he pointed at Stephen, “What did that idiot do?!”

Steve stepped closer to Tony. His voice was soft as he answered, “He did what he had to, to contain the threat.”

Tony glared at Steve. She could tell he was more than happy to have someone to rage at, redirecting all of his worry and concern for Stephen and Wanda, into a more manageable emotion like anger. And with a target like Steve…

“Why didn’t you contain the threat by lopping her fucking head off? Or opening a portal to another dimension and shoving her ass through it? Or---”

“Tony, stop.” She put a hand on Tony’s arm quieting him. He sagged, deflating abruptly. Darcy was
just as freaked out and scared for Stephen as Tony was, but she knew better than to lash out at their friends.

“The wizard has ensnared the Goddess of Death so completely that she is as harmless as new born babe right now.” Heimdall explained. Said Goddess let out a muffled noise at that.

“Are you certain?” Loki questioned as he approached the bound woman. Hela struggled in her bonds anew, her eyes aflame with hatred as Loki got as close as he dared to her face. “She doesn’t seem very docile if you ask me.”

Thor yanked him away from Hela just as she reared back intent on head butting Loki. Loki gave Thor a grateful look which Thor silently acknowledged with a dismissive hand wave. Loki pointed to Hela with an arrogant look on his face as he addressed Heimdall, citing, “My point.”

Heimdall rolled his eyes, “It was a metaphor.”

Darcy drew closer to Stephen and Wanda. The grey at Stephen’s temples had gotten whiter. Her eyes drifted to Wanda whose lips were moving but were making no sound. The woman looked as if a stiff wind could knock her over. Shifting her eyes back to Stephen she felt her brow crinkle as she tried to contain herself. He just looked so weak.

She reached out to pet Stephen’s cheek; she wanted to offer him just an ounce of comfort. Let him know she was there and so grateful for what he had done, but a shout behind her stilled her movements.

“Stop!”

She heeded Hogun’s command but didn’t turn to look at him as he explained, “You’ll break their concentration. Whenever we interfere to make them sip some water, the bonds holding her in place weaken.”

She looked at the woman bound on the floor. Hela looked so incensed. Her eyes were wild and crazed. She was like a mad dog on a leash just waiting to be let off it so she could attack. Her mind flashed back to the proud and triumphant expression Hela wore in the fresco. Darcy couldn’t help but pity her now.

She stared at Hela’s face and tried to imagine her without all the dark makeup and skintight battle regalia. It was hard for her to picture Hela as anything other than what she was right now. But she was a child once.

Once upon a time, she was the princess of Asgard and Odin’s pride and joy. Looking at her now, all she saw was a tragedy.

“This isn’t her fault…” She mused, “Not entirely. This—she is Odin’s mistake.” Hela let out a muffled scream at that. “If he hadn’t turned on her…maybe she wouldn’t have turned on the world. Maybe things could have ended differently.”

Hela’s gagged outcry stopped. She stared at Darcy with a wide eyed expression.

“What would have happened if Odin had married Frigga earlier, giving Hela a real mother? What if Thor had been born sooner or Loki adopted before him? Would she still have devolved into this pitiful creature? Or would a loving family have made a difference?”

“Does it matter?” Loki posed at the same time Val snarled, “Do not pity her.”
Val marched forward and physically turned Darcy away from the sight of Hela on her knees looking up at Darcy with the barest hints of hope. “She murdered my lover. And my kin. She wiped out the Valkyries and will do the same to all of us if she is ever set free.”

“We can’t keep her like this forever.” Darcy argued.

Val looked over her shoulder at Hela. “Then we find a way to kill her without destroying Asgard in the process.

“We’ve been trying.” Fandral offered, “But she’s older than most of the text in the library and, you know, Odin tried to wiped out all mention of her so…it’s been slow going.”

“Besides,” Bucky added with a self deprecating grin, “Research isn’t really any of our fortes.”

“Speak for yourself.” Hogun added with the barest hint of a smile on his lips.

As the others devolved into talking about the specific challenges they faced separating Hela’s fate from Asgard’s, she turned back to stare mournfully at Stephen and Wanda.

And that’s when Stephen’s knees buckled.

When he hit the ground Wanda’s hand dislodged from his shoulders, severing their connection. The two sets of extra arms Stephen had conjured disappeared into thin air causing four of the six ropes keeping Hela bound vanish as well. Wanda’s eyes darted around wildly and she gasped her name, “Darcy!”

Hela, now not so tightly bound anymore, managed to rise to her feet and summon a necrodagger. Darcy who was focused on catching Wanda as she wilted didn’t have time to obey the warning that someone shouted out to her.

“Look out!”

Before she or Hela could react, Hulk came in like a line backer and tackled Hela to the ground pinning the woman flat on her back under his heavy oppressive weight of his bulk.

“Or we could do that.” Tony quipped.

Hulk grabbed the hand which held the dagger and squeezed until the Goddess had no choice but to release it or suffer the destruction of her bones. He remained on top of her with a dangerous and determined expression on his face as he growled in her face, “Bad Dead Lady.”

“Wanda?” Steve called out. Darcy looked down at the woman who appeared to have fainted in her arms. She was so light.

“I think she’s okay,” Darcy related. She shook the woman gently trying to jostle her awake, “Wanda? Are you okay?” Her eyelids fluttered as she tried to remain or regain conscious, Darcy wasn’t sure which.

She felt a swell of regret for essentially trapping Wanda here on Asgard as she stared down at the depleted witch. Wanda had fought for Asgard with everything she had, of this Darcy had no doubt.

“It’s okay.” She comforted as she lowered Wanda to the floor, “It’s okay Wanda. You don’t have to fight anymore. You did really good.”

She pressed a kiss to the younger woman’s forehead before whispering in her ear, “Sleep now. Rest.
Recharge. And dream of something nice.”

She remained crouched at Wanda’s side for a few seconds, just staring at the physical toll which had been taken in Wanda’s efforts to help keep Hela contained. When she moved to stand, Tony was there with an outstretched hand to help her up. “Is she..?”

“Asleep.” Confirmed.

Tony nodded. “So what now?”

She cast her gaze over to Hela. She was now surrounded by everyone. Thor was closest standing near her head, Fandral on his right, Hogun on his left. Val was closest to Hulk’s shoulder and Hogun. With Steve and Bucky opposite her, positioned in front of Stephen but with eyes focused on Hela, as if prepared to defend the weakened wizard with their dying breaths.

All of the warriors had their weapons drawn and at the ready. Only Lady Eir and Heimdall remained apart from the scene. Heimdall looked ready to pick up the healer and run, they stood at the mouth of the cave observing the rest of them.

“I don’t know how much help I can be to the wizard now.” Lady Eir lamented, “We could make the girl more comfortable, but rest is what they need.”

Darcy’s eyes flickered back over to Stephen. Loki was looking at him with a thoughtful expression and an air of nervousness. She wondered if Loki was thinking about taking Wanda’s place. Idly she speculated if he even had enough ‘magic juice’ to be helpful in the same way the chaos witch had obviously been.

“You got any ideas?” Tony whispered in her ear. “Because now’s the time to share.”

The others were bickering amongst themselves.

“We should run her through and make a break for the ship, if we’re lucky we can escape before Asgard crumbles. With the people gone, what does it matter if Asgard survives? Trap her here to rule the ashes.” Val argued, “This place is just a place. Everything of value has already been saved or lost.”

“We cannot abandon our home!” Thor roared. “Although I get why that doesn’t matter to someone like you.”

“We will not yield.” Fandral steadfastly agreed with Thor.

“Hulk smash. Save Darcy home.” Hulk added. When Hela smirked up at him he growled at her she laughed. Her happiness was worrisome.

“I will not lose another home while I still live to defend it.” Hogun vowed.

“Her army approaches.” Heimdall announced from his place near the entrance. He now held the elder woman in his arms. “I must get Lady Eir somewhere safe. I will return shortly.”

And then he left.

“What?” Tony exclaimed, “Did he just fucking abandon us?”

“He would never!” Thor thundered, “Heimdall is a warrior of Asgard. He shall return.”

“Probably.” Loki jeered.
Thor snarled, “This is no time for jests brother!”

“You’re right.” Val agreed. There was a wily gleam in her eyes that made her feel nervous. Knowing now that Val’s fight with Hela was more personal than she’d realized, her next words had Darcy tensing up in anticipation of something bad about to happen.

“Now is the time for action.” Val declared. She then kicked the Hulk hard enough that he lifted off Hela momentarily, giving Val the opportunity to bear down with her sword. However, this also freed the Goddess’s arm allowing her to summon a necrodagger with which to defend herself.

Hela evaded Val’s blade by squirming and dodging with speed, simultaneously she used the necrodagger to strike at Hulk, stabbing him in the gut multiple times before Hulk collapsed back down on her. But even with his heavy weight, Darcy could see Hela’s hand moving as she continued to wound Hulk.

“NO!” Thor yelled as he used his own sword to stab at Hela’s hand, but she was too quick for him to disarm her.

“Can’t.” Stephen grunted distracting her briefly. She lurched toward him as she noticed sweat was beading at his hair line and his expression had grown pained. Tony rushed to his side but Darcy remained frozen. Tony and Loki exchanged worried glances, but she couldn’t focus on them because Val was raising her sword high above her head preparing to strike again.

“Stop her!” Thor ordered, sparking Hogun into action. He darted forward tackling Val to the ground, the two began to fight with an impressive amount of skill and ferocity but she didn’t linger to watch. Too much was happening all at once.

Hela only had one hand free but that was seemingly all she needed to cause all hell to break loose.

A few shots rang out as Bucky, the only one in the room with a good old fashioned gun, began firing at Hela’s squirming form. He connected more than a few times but the bullets weren’t enough to stop Hela from repeatedly stabbing at Hulk’s chest with her dagger. Hulk brought an angry fist down on her chest causing her to wheeze, but it only seemed to make her more determined. She kept stabbing at him.

Steve stood motionless as did Thor and Fandral, all three seemingly frozen with impotence as they couldn’t attack Hela without going through Hulk first. And if they pulled him off of her, she would be free to turn her attack onto them.

“STOP IT!” Darcy screamed as she rushed forward.

Hela dropped her dagger so she could punch Hulk off of her. He flew then flopped to the floor, his hands clutching his bloody stomach with a pained groan. Steve took a knee at Hulk’s side doing what he could, which wasn’t much. Hulk was bleeding profusely from multiple wounds caused by magical necro-weaponry she didn’t know if Hela’s weapons were poisoned or what, but the fact that they actually managed to pierce Hulk’s thick hide was worrying all on its own. Darcy felt her heart stop at the thought that he might die, because of her. For her.

Tony, now encased in armor approached Hela just as she threw a necrodagger towards Thor and Fandral, who were moving in to strike now that Hulk was no longer blocking them. Fandral dodged out of the way just in time to avoid being hit.

Thor didn’t.

“AAAAAHHHHHH.” Thor screamed. There was a dagger in his face. Lodged in his right eye.
“Holy fuck.” Darcy gasped, it was a grisly sight and knowing that he would have to pull the dagger out at some point, kind of made her want to throw up.

Thor lashed out kicking Hela in the head, she grunted but did not let the opportunity to grab hold of Thor’s foot pass her by. She yanked him closer then bit down causing Thor to cry out in pain once more. Luckily, Tony shot her with a repulor blast, freeing Thor.

From inside his suit Tony taunted, “Biting? Low blow Lady Death. Why don’t you try that crazy dagger shit on someone who’s actually dressed for a fight?”

And that’s when the giant wolf entered the fray.

And then the undead army.

“Fuck.” Tony cursed.

“Shit.” Loki agreed.

Things were crazy. Val and Hogun had stopped fighting each other and now fought back to back against the horde of undead soldiers that had flooded the cave to assist their mistress. Hulk was down for the count, but Steve, had managed to pull him and the unconscious Wanda, closer to Stephen who was still somehow keeping Hela mostly bound…except for the one arm.

Stephen, Wanda, and Hulk were being protected by herself, Bucky, Loki, and Fandral. They’d formed a circle around the pair but it was obvious to her that Stephen was close to cracking and she was distracted and sustaining minor blows because of it.

Stephen’s whole body was shaking under the strain of maintaining the magic ropes without Wanda’s assistance. And under the stain of going without food and water and rest for the past ten days.

Darcy couldn’t help but mentally berate herself for taking so long to return. She shouldn’t have stopped to torture Grandmaster; she should have cut his head off and be done with it, she shouldn’t have played along with the ruse of the wedding, she should have beaten him to death with her bare hands and escaped in the dead of night...of course that meant she wouldn't have freed Korg and the other gladiators....the point was, there were so many things she could have done to have escaped from Sakaar earlier but she didn’t. Her people had needed her while she was fucking around and she was heartbroken about it.

Luckily she didn’t have time to dwell on her feelings, as fighting back the undead was taking up the bulk of her energy, skill, and focus. Darcy had initially been using her shield to stop the incoming wave of undead Berserker soldiers, but too many had initially entered the cave with Fenris. She’d had to lower her shield several times to defend herself or narrowly avoid being stabbed. As a result she’d abandoned the shield and was now exclusively relying on her sword and shaky combat skills just like everyone else.

Thor half blinded, was taking on the giant wolf, while Steve protected him from the undead and assisted with the wolf when he could. Tony, still encased in his suit, was flying about the cave taking out more of the undead than the rest of them combined; he was mostly focused on stopping the unending flood of soldiers into the cave, killing loads of them all at once as they funneled in. His weapons were very effective and his flight made him hard to reach, which was good for her because it made her worry about him just a little bit less. Although, when he flew too close to the wolf he almost got eaten.
But she couldn’t think about that because, the undead army was trying to stab them to death so they could reach Stephen and stab him to death, thus freeing Hela. As Darcy cut off another head she grimaced. The whole scene was a lot more horror movie than she had anticipated.

“Your shield!”

“What?” Darcy yelled as she dodged a sword and blocked another with her own. She ducked as Loki moved closer and used his daggers to disarm the undead, allowing her to neatly decapitate the pair of attackers with one chop.

“Use your shield!” Loki repeated, “Push them back!”

With her attention split, one of the soldiers managed to cut her deeply on the thigh. Darcy let out a hiss before punching the soldier so hard that his head popped off and his body crumbled to the ground with the others. She was getting better at fighting, but talking and fighting was still hard for her to do without slipping up.

She did as Loki requested, creating her shield she pushed the dead back and up against the wall. She’d almost crushed them all when a necro-dagger went whizzing past her face. A hand jerked her back just in time, but it also caused her to lower her shield. The soldiers ran forward ready to attack.

She spared a glance to glare at Hela who smiled viciously at her before she randomly threw out another necro-dagger in Val’s direction. She’d been doing so the entire fight, occasionally stabbing Val or Thor or Hogun or Steve or Darcy. All of whom who were within her reach.

“Darcy!”

She ducked her head as Bucky’s hand swung at her. He shot the undead attacker who was grabbing for her face. The shot didn’t stop him but stalled him long enough for her to lash out with her sword and end him.

“Stay focused!” Bucky chastized as he jumped forward attacking an undead soldier with a dagger and handgun at the same time.

A cry from her left had her turning to see Fandral run through with a sword in his shoulder. Badly injured, he continued to fight and even felled the soldier who stabbed him. Across the cave Thor roared as he grabbed hold of Fenris’s tail, it looked like he was trying to spin the beast around by it, but when the wolf’s jaws caught Steve’s leg Thor had to let go and run to Steve’s aid, but Tony was right there blasting Fenris in the face making him release Steve’s now mangled leg. Thor tackled the wolf from the side slamming it’s large furry body into the wall of the cave so hard that the whole cavern shook.

“Ahh!” Darcy screamed as a sword hit on the back. It wasn’t able to breach her metal top but it managed to scrape painfully along the back of her neck as her attacker retracted his weapon and prepared to strike again. She snarled as she struck out, grabbing the undead soldier’s arm ser brought her elbow down hard its forearm snapping the appendage off. She then grabbed the Berserkers neck with one hand and brought her other around its head, she cupped it under its chin…and then she yanked its head off.

For a second after she just stood frozen with shock at her own ferocity. “That was so violent.”

Bucky was being overwhelmed; she jumped on the pile of bodies and started throwing the undead off. When she reached him he was panting and there was a cold look in his eyes as he said nothing
and got to his feet and started attacking like he just hadn’t almost been crushed to death.

Across the cave Hogun screamed in pain. From the amount of blood spraying out of his hand it looked like one of the undead soldiers had cut something off of him, Darcy prayed it wasn’t his whole hand and merely a finger or two. Val whirled around and dispatched the dead who had hurt Hogun, then maneuvered him closer to the cave wall as she positioned herself in front of him.

Looking to the entrance, she saw more dead soldiers pouring in. Tony was helping with the wolf now. There was nothing stopping the endless flow of their enemies into the cave. They were going to be overrun.

“Oh god.” Darcy whispered. Looking around she saw her friends, family, and allies all in various amounts of pain and she was shocked by the gore and guts of it all. It was her first real, all out, monster battle and it was scary as shit. She was overwhelmed and in pain and tired and sad and afraid. She didn’t want to die like this. She didn’t want her people to die like this.

She stepped backwards and bumped into Hulk’s prone form. Looking down she felt tears well up in her eyes.

“We’re losing.” She confessed, giving voice to her worse fear as she stared down at her injured friend, “We’re going to lose.”

Loki glanced at her over his shoulder, but he couldn’t do more than that as he fended off attack after attack. A hand on her leg made her jump. Looking down she watched as Hulk grit his teeth and used her leg for leverage as he pulled himself up into a sitting position. He grunted one at her, “Help.”

Hulk extended his hand up to her and she grabbed it reflexively. Somehow, she helped Hulk back up to his feet. Darcy couldn’t help but stare at his wounds as they oozed with fresh blood.

With a heavy hand on her shoulder Hulk steadied himself then moved forward taking her place while wordlessly pushing her back into the protective circle where he had just been stationed. And then he started smashing the undead to pieces.

Shaking and feeling like a coward and a wimp and not badass at all, Darcy began to cry. She wasn’t prepared for a fight like this and she didn’t know what to do. She knew she was freaking out and just needed to pull it together, but she couldn’t.

She turned to Stephen. More of his hair had turned white, streaks of it peppered throughout his dark locks. His face had grown thinner. It looked like his life was being sucked out of his body, minute by minute. That’s when she realized, that even if she couldn’t help herself or everyone else…she could help him; she reached out and touched his cheek with her fingertips calling his name, “Stephen?”

His skin was like ice.

“Stephen?” She cupped his jaw and turned his head towards her. His eyes, still creepily open and unfocused, were cloudy now. Like someone poured milk over them. Panicked she yelled his name more urgently, “Stephen!”

He didn’t respond.

He was dying.

“Darcy.” Loki said warningly. The tingling in her fingers told her that she must be glowing again.

“I can save him.” She said in a brittle voice, “I—I can save him.”
“Princess, we can’t release Hela now! You don’t know what we had to do to trap her in the first place. The wizard’s bindings are the only thing giving us a fighting chance!” Fandral cautioned as he sliced through another Berserker.

“Darcy.” Tony called down to her. He was hovering above her head and she felt a watery smile stretch across her face at the sight him whole and untouched by the bloody battle. He retracted the faceplate and she drank in the look of his uninjured face as he spoke. “Don’t listen to them. Do it. Save Stephen.”

“Shut up Stark!” Loki yelled as he dodged yet another attack and jumped over one soldier to avoid another.

She gave Tony a nod and then put her glowing hands on Stephen’s face, she kissed his lips and breathed out the word, “Sleep.”

Stephen’s body went slack instantly, she helped him drop gently to the floor.

Looking up she saw the consequences of her actions as the last glowing ropes disappeared and Hela was set free. The woman let out a malevolent cackle as she summoned her ridiculous headress.

Overhead Tony put his faceplate down and started blasting Hela with his repulors, concentrating all of his firepower on her. The light from his attack was almost blinding, but then a well aimed necro-dagger flew out of the light and hit one of Tony’s hands causing the light coming from him to dim.

“DAMMIT SISTER!” Loki cried as he left their protection circle and moved to join Tony in fighting Hela.

She ignored everything as she used her sling ring to create a portal underneath her, Stephen and Wanda. They all fell, landing with a bounce onto the feather soft bed that was in her room in the palace.

“You are not a coward.”

Darcy screamed in surprise at the unexpected voice. Heimdall smiled wanly from where he was casually leaning against the door frame.

“Where’s Lady Eir?” Darcy questioned as she climbed off the bed.

“Earth.”

Darcy stopped short in front of him. “What?”

“I used the Bifrost to send her to Earth.” Heimdall nodded to the unconscious Stephen and Wanda. “I will do the same for them. And when I am finished with that task, I shall join you.”

“You can’t open the Bifrost. Hela’s loose now—”

Heimdall held up a hand stopping her. “I can see everything. Right now, everywhere, and everything. Should Hela break through our allies and make her way to the Bifrost, I will destroy Hofund and myself if necessary. Without the sword to unlock the Bifrost she and her armies will be trapped here.”

“But—” Darcy started to protest.
“Listen.” Heimdall held a finger to her lips. “You are the Goddess of Sleep. You were anointed by our Queen Frigga herself and gifted part of the Odin force by our fallen king.”

Darcy wasn’t so sure about that, she kind of felt like she’d become a ‘goddess’ on accident. Or through some weird failing upwards promotional scenario.

Seeing something in her expression, Heimdall dipped his head to meet her eyes as he spoke in a confident manner, “You were chosen because you are worthy of the task set before you. You will not fail. You will not doubt yourself. You will be brave. You will be smart. And you will save us, Asgard, and the nine realms from Hela’s wrath.”

“Can you see the future too?”

Heimdall shrugged, “That was more of a self-actualizing affirmation…thing. But the bit about you being chosen to wield the immense power you now posses, that part was true.”

“This is a shitty pep talk.” Darcy lamented.

“No, it’s not.” Heimdall refuted. “This is exactly what you need to hear, exactly when you needed to hear it.”

“Says you.” Darcy argued petulantly.

“Indeed.” Heimdall confirmed. “So say I. Now go. Thor is about to get eaten by Fenris.”

Heimdall gave her a little shove, but she was already forming a portal with the sling ring. As she was walking through it she heard Heimdall call out, “Play to your strengths Princess. If you try to fight the Goddess of Death on the battle field, you will fail and all will be lost.”

She opened a portal in the air right above Fenris. She landed on the wolf’s back just as he was about to bite Thor in half as Heimdall had warned. She yanked on the wolf’s ears harshly, pulling him away from eating her brother. He turned his head and snapped his jaws at her, but she was already sliding down his body on the other side, running away as fast as she could.

Slipping in between the undead soldiers she jumped over bodies, dodged blows, and avoided being stabbed as she ran full speed towards the Goddess of Death.

“YOU.” Hela thundered before lowering her voice into a dangerous growl, “You should have run while you had the chance little girl.”

“I’m not going to run away from you.” She stated boldly. She could feel her tingling fingers signaling her hands were once again glowing.

“What’s that?” Hela asked her voice laced with sarcasm, “A new party trick? It won’t save you.”

Darcy didn’t waste time thinking up a snappy comeback. She extended her hands and shot out all the glowing gold glitter dust she could while screaming at the top of her lungs, “SLEEP!”

And then everything stopped.

All around the room Hela’s undead soldiers fell to the floor like puppets whose strings had been cut. Turning quickly she watched as Fenris let out a yawn before settling his head down on his paws and seemingly dying.
All of her people were still standing. Even the Hulk who looked alarmingly less green than usual, he had four swords embedded in his back, but there was a victorious grin on his face as he looked at her with pride in his eyes.

“Darcy save Hulk. Again.” He declared. Darcy frankly was too tired to argue and she gave the man a shaky thumbs up.

“And why didn’t we do that when we first arrived?” Tony quipped as he descended to the ground next to her. Flipping the face plate up he asked her more quietly, “Stephen okay?”

“He’s with Heimdall being evacuated back to Earth as we speak.” Tony raised a brow at that, but said nothing.

“You’ve done it sister!” Thor boomed joyously, despite the hand he had to keep over his bloody eye. “You’ve bested the Goddess of Death. Personally, I thought I would be more instrumental in her defeat, but certainly this is a welcome outcome.”

Hulk sat down on the floor with a thump, his hand once again clutching his slashed to ribbons stomach. Bucky helped a heavily limping Steve towards them, his leg was mangled and coated in red, and she thought his ankle was dragging lifelessly, bent at an odd angle. As Hogun got closer to their group she realized why he was cradling his bloody arm close to his chest when she saw Val holding his dismembered hand loosely at her side. Loki was helping pull the sword out of Fandral’s shoulder, the man letting out a yell before collapsing tiredly against the cave wall behind him. Loki appeared a little bloody and disheveled but mostly unharmed, which Darcy counted as a blessing.

Eyeing Thor, whose smile was fading as he took in the grievous injuries his friends and allies had sustained had her jeering, “Thor, I wouldn’t exactly call this winning.”

“Oh yeah, big guy.” Tony agreed, “We got our butts kicked big time..”

“I think my butt is the only thing not in pain at the moment.” Val remarked as she helped Hogun sit down on a pile of Berserker bodies, using their fallen enemy as a makeshift stool.

“What will we do with her?” Loki questioned as he grew nearer to the unconscious Hela.

“Nothing.” Darcy answered.

“Nothing?” Loki pressed.

“Nothing yet.” Darcy added as she stared down at Hela’s peaceful face. Turning away from the sight she closed her eyes and inhaled deeply and then exhaling slowly. Opening her eyes she looked around at everyone making eye contact with each and every person, she smiled as brightly as she could stand given the circumstances.

Letting her gaze rest on Tony, she declared in a clear voice, “I love you,” She looked over at Thor and Loki as she added, “All of you.”


“I’m not done.” She stated quietly, “And I just wanted to say it, in case…just in case.”

She sank to her knees beside Hela keeping her eyes focused on the woman because she knew if she looked up and saw the worried expressions of her family she might lose her nerve.

She could hear her name being called by several people all at once, but she was already pitching
forward to lie down next to Hela. And as soon as her head hit the dirt, she was asleep and beyond the reach of the people who loved her most.

She woke up on a battlefield. The sky was dark and angry. There were dead Valkyries and Asgardian littered everywhere. Hela was riding on Fenris as she faced off with Hulk and Thor. Their battle was epic and violently beautiful. Darcy was tempted to watch and just let it play out, but she wasn’t there to be a disembodied observer.

With a thought her body formed and was clothed in a burgundy top and patterned pants. She strode forward on low heeled boots towards the embroiled warriors. With a wave of her hand Thor and Hulk disappeared, as did all of the bodies. Hela turned her gaze locking on Darcy quickly.

“You.” She snarled.

“Me.” Darcy confirmed with a bit of cheekiness.

“You’ve come to face me yourself? Bold.” Hela trotted forward on Fenris, the huge wolf just as intimidating in the dream world as he was in the real one. “I could almost respect you for meeting your doom face on.”

Darcy smiled secretly as she replied, “No one here is doomed. Not even you.”

“Are you quite sure about that?” Hela mocked. And then Fenris leapt forward its sharp teeth snapping at Darcy’s body trying to eat her or cut her in half.

It didn’t matter though, seeing the attack coming a mile away, Darcy made herself intangible. The beast’s jaws closed around her several times, but no harm came to her. The wolf looked adorably confused as it ceased its attack and tilted his head to look at her.

“What witchcraft have you pinned your hopes on now?” Hela asked sounding annoyed and bored all at once.

“You know I had a dog growing up.” Darcy smiled at the fearsome beast. She pictured a smaller version of the large wolf. And with that thought, Fenris shrank down into a tiny adorable baby wolf. Hela fell from the height with an undignified scream, yet still managed to land on her feet.

She glared at Darcy as the baby wolf cub ran to her barking happily. When she scooped up the deliciously cute cub and nuzzled its face with her own only to receive delightful licks of appreciation in return, Hela let out a growl demanding, “WHAT IS GOING ON?”

Darcy pet the wolf cub comfortingly as it shrank away from the angry noise.

“I’ve already beaten you.” She informed the Goddess. “This is just a bit of house keeping.”

“What are you talking about?”

Darcy narrowed her eyes at the other woman. “Somehow I thought you’d know and I wouldn’t have to explain.” With a shrug she remarked blithely, “Oh well.”

She waved her hand and the battlefield disappeared. The scene morphed until they found themselves in the middle of quiet lake. Hela was sat in a row boat while Darcy walked on top of the water a couple feet away.
The boat wobbled dangerously as Hela shot to her feet angrily screeching, “What sorcery is this?!”

“Careful now,” Darcy warned, “You’re going to fall over if you don’t calm down.”

“I’ll show you calm!” Hela produced a necro-dagger and threw it at Darcy’s face. Fenris barked at the oncoming weapon but Darcy just allowed it to sail threw them. Unable to accept her powerlessness Hela produced dagger after dagger, firing them at Darcy’s body with rapid precision.

Darcy allowed this, for a time. However after five minutes of that nonsense, she grew bored. “Okay, enough.”

With a though Darcy stripped Hela of the ability to produce her necro-weapons. When Hela went to produce another dagger and nothing came to her hand, she stared at the appendage as if it had offended her. “No.”

Hela kept trying to summon her weapons she grew more frantic as nothing happened. “No, no, no!”

She let out a loud scream of frustrated rage and then leapt forward towards Darcy.

Darcy hid her smile of amusement in Fenris’s fur as Hela did an epic belly flop into the water.

When Hela resurfaced with a yell she began swimming hysterically in her direction. Darcy made it so she made no progress moving forward no matter how hard she kicked or paddled. When Hela realized she wasn’t going anywhere she let out a mournful howl. Fenris joined her, howling up towards the sky.

Walking along the water’s surface, Darcy approached the woman cautiously asking, “Are you finished?”

“Where am I?” Hela demanded.

“Why don’t you get back into the boat and we’ll talk?” Darcy held out Fenris like he was a peace offering, “I’ll even let you cuddle with the baby wolf.”

“This is the dream realm.” Darcy explained.

After a fair amount of pouting and bellyaching and threats, the damp Goddess of Death, sat grumpily in the row boat petting baby Fenris as the wolf snuggled and slept in her lap.

She met Hela’s gaze steadily but didn’t gloat as she spoke softly, “Here, I control everything. The world, you, time…I am the Goddess of Sleep and you are my prisoner.”

“You intend to torture me?”

“No.” Darcy corrected, “I intend to rehabilitate you.”

“I don’t need saving child.” Hela harshly balked, “This is just another trick, like your wizard and his rope. You are insane if you think you hold any power over me.”

Darcy turned the water pink and the sky purple, and then just for kicks she had a happy pink piglet with wings fly overhead oink-ing as it lowered itself to lap at the water before being on its way. She smirked at Hela as the woman’s eyes widened, “Am I insane? Or is the world that’s gone crazy?”

Hela’s lips drew into a grim line. She stared down at Fenris. The tiny cub’s legs were twitching as he
chased something in his dream.

“Leave me.” Hela demanded. “If this is my prison and you are my jailer, then leave me to wallow and allow me to suffer my torment in solitude.”

“I’m not going to leave you here to rot. I’m not going to torment you or punish you. That’s not what this is.”

Hela looked up and glared, “I have killed millions. I am death. And you are toying with me and will have vengeance.”

“I’m not fucking with you.” Darcy declared honestly, “This really is about helping you.”

“You don’t want to help me.” Hela whispered, “You want to break me.”

She maintained eye contact as she picked Fenris up by the scruff of his neck. Slowly Hela moved her arm past the edge of the boat, she dangled the now squirming cub threateningly over the water.

“Hela..”

The woman plunged the helpless cub into the water below, holding him under as he began to thrash and struggle for breath.

“Stop!” Darcy cried. “He’s—don’t do this!”

“I am this.”

“What the hell is wrong with you!??!” Darcy screeched, she conjured the cub out of Hela’s hand and into her own. She cuddled the cub to her chest protectively as she glared at Hela angrily shouting, “Seriously what the fuck! It’s a baby wolf! YOUR BABY WOLF! Why would you do that?”

“I am death.” Hela shrugged, “And in this smaller incarnation Fenris is of no use to me. Except to be used against me, by you.”

“You’re an asshole.” Darcy accused. She patted the baby cub as it spit up water and shook in her arms. “Animal cruelty is really messed up, even for you.”

“Are you willing to admit your true intentions yet?” Hela pressed, “Draw back the façade and show me your true face?”

With a thought she allowed the wolf cub to disappear from her arms. Beyond Hela’s shoulder she manifested it on the forest shore that surrounded the lake in a neat circle. She grew Fenris up to his adult size and allowed him to disappear into the woods.

“I will break free eventually.” Hela announced, drawing Darcy’s attention back to her. “The allfather himself couldn’t contain me past his own demise, you’ll grow old and weak, and your prison shall fade from existence. And when that happens I will emerge from this ridiculous world and take my rightful place a ruler of all!”

She was right of course. If Darcy only intended to keep Hela locked up here in the dream world, eventually the woman would break free. That’s why Darcy knew she had to do better than that.

With a thought, she reduced Hela’s age to that of a new born babe, mentally and physically. She had the tiny screaming pink creature wrapped in a soft yellow blanket and had her appear in her arms. She cradled the baby girl as she cried, softly rocking her and calming her as she walked along the
water towards the boat.

Carefully stepping inside she sat on the wooden bench and called the oars to come to life, paddling them around the lake autonomously. She padded the baby’s butt softly as she began to sing a soft lullaby.

“Somewhere over the rainbow
Way up high
And the dreams that you dream of
Once in a lullaby

Someday, I wish upon a star
Wake up where the clouds are far behind me
Where trouble melts like lemon drops
High above the chimney top
That’s where you’ll find me”

Baby Hela’s cries began to die down. Darcy produced a bottle and began feeding her as she hummed the rest of the song. When the bottle was empty she tossed it into the lake and put Hela flat against her chest, letting her little head rest on her shoulder.

In a soothing voice she explained her plans to the baby, even though there was little to no chance the young child would understand she felt like making the effort was important. “I’m going to rehabilitate you Hela. I’m going to keep you trapped here, in a world of my design, but it won’t be the hellish agony you expect. I am going to give you a new life, and hopefully inspire in you a new way of thinking.”

She brought Hela down from off her shoulder and cradled the fragile creature in her arms holding her body against her stomach. Hela’s eyes were blinking slowly, a tell tale sign of a sleepy baby. Darcy reached into Hela’s mind, searching the woman’s memories she confirmed what she already knew in her heart to be true.

From a young age Hela was groomed by Odin to be his harbinger of Death, his right hand, and his executioner. She was not abused but her childhood was not exactly a happy one. The additional time spent in Hel had also warped her mind and drove her mad, with a lust for power and conquering.

It all led back to Odin and how he raised her, treated her, and dealt with her when she rebelled.

“I don’t want to hurt you the way Odin did, but I can’t let you go free either.” Darcy explained, “This is my compromise. This is my hail Mary pass, trying to change who you are so maybe one day, I can wake you up and let you out into the real world again.”

She rocked the tiny bundle in her arms. She was so small and trusting and she was such an attractive baby. Tiny Hela was kind of melting her heart

“You’ll be loved.” Darcy promised. “Cherished. I’ll give you parents and a home, perhaps a lakeside cottage? This place is nice and peaceful…I think I saw it in a postcard once.”

Her eyes flickered to the scene around them; she shifted the sky back to blue and the water back to its murky green color.

“You’ll be taken care of like a child should be. You won’t be trained to fight someone else’s wars, or made to master every weapon known to man. You’ll go to school and learn grammar and--math I guess? Whatever, you’ll learn stuff, normal stuff. You’ll be free to make friends. Develop crushes.
Join clubs. Go to the park. Eat ice cream. Ride a bike. Watch movies. Spend your summers at the beach or taking trips to water parks…”

She brought her face close to baby Hela’s and nuzzled her nose against the babes. She pulled back and gently ran her fingers over the wispy baby hair that coated the girls head. “I’m going to share my happy memories with you. Let you experience the best parts of my childhood…and perhaps select episodes of Full House, like the one where they win a trip to Disney land. Or maybe some funny magical fueled high jinks a la Sabrina the Teenage Witch. Definitely, some life lesson episodes from Boy Meets World. That’s a must.”

After looking down at the now sleeping child for a long couple of minutes, she looked away from Hela to stare at the woods across the water. “I hope this crazy plan works. I hope you can change and can be made to see reason, open you heart if possible. …But if it doesn’t work, at least I can live knowing I’ve trapped you in the nicest prison possible.”

She stood up and had the boat begin to shrink and transform into a baby sized floating bassinet. She stepped out carefully onto the water’s surface again and waited until it was the perfect size. When she gently placed baby Hela inside, she pressed a kiss to the girls head transforming her hair from pitch black to golden blonde.

She smiled at the cherubic effect the mini makeover had. “Good luck Hela.”

She gave the boat a gentle shove. It glided along the water towards a dock, where a couple of older people waited. The woman was a mixture of her own mother and Queen Frigga. The father however, was modeled after a mix of her own father and Mr. Rogers from the PBS show. The couple gushed and cooed over the baby as they pulled Hela from her tiny boat and into their arms.

In farewell she waved to the couple, but they couldn’t see her as she became a disembodied observer once again.

“Hopefully the next time we meet in the real world, you’ll no longer fit the moniker Queen of Hel. But be worthy of the title ‘Queen of Asgard’ and, dare to dream, maybe even ‘big sister’?”

And with that dream design in place in Hela’s mind, Darcy left and re-entered the waking world.

---------------------------------------------------------------
Darcy’s battle outfit
Our Returning ‘Revengers’ Line Up Minus Darcy
Moutain Stronghold
Darcy’s Hela Dream Walk Look
And so we conclude the Ragnarok chapter of this saga. I can't help but feel like I've lost some readers due to the Grandmaster storyline. So, I
appreciate you all who have stuck around.
Let me know how you liked the Hela conclusion in the comments!
AND
thanks for reading.

End Notes

Have you left a KUDOS yet?
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