The Were and the Mage (Thorki Ver.)

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The Were and the Mage (Thorki Ver.)

by Keitmeg

Summary

Loki learns about fur balls that howl at the moon, telepathic Dragonairs, magic that exudes from a rune and his big crush on the snarky Alpha.
Chapter 1

Loki moved over to the town of Dragsa a few years ago. He was born to a father who worked for the armed forces and a mother who had taken pride in their long family history of military service before they died when he turned eighteen. Their patriotic passion must have ran out of fuel when Loki reached the age where he could actually use a parental advice on how to operate from then on; nice going, Mom and Dad, pretty convenient.

He’s lived in Dragsa’s lands for the longest of times. Grew accustomed to its nooks and hooks until ‘strange’ became the definition of normal in his dictionary. Loki doesn’t remember the last time he found something strange, utterly strange, or slightly strange. Everything is normal, everything has always been normal. He doesn’t find it strange when people ask about his parents and soon apologize when they find out they stumbled into a buzz saw, which, according to him, they didn’t. He doesn’t find it strange when his old neighbor Martha keeps requesting he goes to marriage interviews that she keeps arranging. And this one is pretty infuriatingly strange by human standards. Not to besmirch, she might be trying to play the mother figure here, Loki understands that as well, but since when do neighbors invade their other neighbors’ privacy? But he doesn’t find it strange. He only smiles to her when she lines a few photo frames of some ridiculously pretty ladies on his kitchen counter and tells him to choose the one he likes most. He smiles more when she gets upset after he turns her down, and then he hugs her to make it up for her, because he knows, he knows well that she won’t give up and she’ll come back the next day with more photos for him to pick. He doesn't find it strange when someone sees the spiral birthmark on his left forearm and asks about its meaning, and then they crinkle their faces when he just shakes his head and smiles, because he, too, doesn't really know its meaning. He doesn't find it strange when *strange*–emphases on strange here– things happen in
Dragsa at night.

He doesn't find the strange things, strange. He doesn't find a lot of things strange, and doesn't complain about it either. Everything is as ordinary as the prevalent parochialism some of this town’s inhabitants comport.

Except for the dreams he keeps having.

Not a day goes by without him waking up clammy with sweat that his persistent sudoriferous glands keep secreting, along with a debilitating and equally dull pain around his birthmark. His vision becomes blurry and his head always throbs as if being hammered against an anvil, on a repeated basis, too. That proved troublesome as well as worrisome at some point – try waking up to daily migraines, not so much fun I bet; but even the little trips he makes occasionally to the doctor's proved useless, because after all the drills of getting CT scans and blood tests, and more blood tests, they couldn't find anything wrong with him.

It's August 2nd, 2015 in Dragsa. It's a beautiful, sunny evening outside. Loki has finally finished washing the plates from his lunch meal, and is now donning on his blue Henley, his favorite. He’s relaxed in flare jeans, and the sneakers, of course. Now, he is all set to go. His job isn't something that makes prodigals sons crawl back in a repentant return, there isn’t much money on his paycheck to waste, but he still does it because he likes it. It's the tranquility of this antique shop and the mere knowledge that he doesn't have to deal with unsatisfied clients who keep complaining and snorting like a swine of pigs cluttering for food when they haggle and you just smile and force your anger, that mere consolation is what keeps him here. He doesn't have to deal with curious coworkers who keep prying into very intimate details of his private life and he just grins awkwardly and tries to literally wiggle his way out of it. Well, he just doesn't have to do a lot of uncomfortable things.

Inside this store, clients of different ages queue up by the counter after they’d picked out anything that was somehow to their liking, and they paid in cash, that's it and it's wonderful.

You still don't end up with a headache, but Loki’s case is different. He still couldn’t figure out what caused his morning headaches.

The store owner, Alfred Pennyworth, comes regularly on Mondays, Thursdays and on the first day of every weekend to keep an eye out on the store and on his new assistant. It's not the sort of watchful supervision, that's obnoxiously overbearing. He does it because having to finally retire and leave the place that brought so much joy to other people and himself and then handing it to someone else is probably a lot like giving his bride daughter away, and he still misses her.

Thankfully, Loki had proved himself to be adequate enough to run the store on his own while the owner was away. This job was only supposed to be a temporary thing until Mr. Pennyworth’s business overseas had been done, but after he noticed how loyal Loki was to this ‘boring’ job – as he called it, he decided to make his position permanent, and hasn’t once doubted that decision.

While Loki is glad to have his company, he just couldn't put two and two together about the situation here. Today isn't even Monday or Thursday, nor is it the beginning of the weekend either, so what is Mr. Pennyworth doing at the shop on this lovely Sunday?
"Running errands." The older man suddenly replies to the unasked question over his shoulder. It’s concise but Loki understands it perfectly fine since the man is busy relining the seven sets of vintage bottles on a shelf, and he wipes the last one before he finally puts it down next to its sisters.

"Want any help?" Loki offers, drumming his fingers over the oak-made counter he’s been propping his elbows on.

"Actually, yes. I’d use some." He finally turns around and crosses his arms over his chest, "this is a little embarrassing but I'm actually trying to find something to give an old friend of mine for his birthday."

Loki’s lips widen into a grin, "gladly," he chirps, now rolling up the sleeves of the Henley to his elbows.

Although Mr. Pennyworth has never dived into a lengthy chat with the young man, because sometimes the latter tends to get self-assertive in an overbearing way, he knows for a fact that Loki always has the best of intentions and puts the welfare of others before his own. But so long as he keeps that up, narrow-minded people will continue to condemn him, say he’d always be brash, which has and will never be true.

After rummaging through old stacked up cardboard boxes and going through some items, Loki found some pretty unique items –some actually truly unique items if the miniature skeletal dragon is enough to credit that assumption– Loki finally settled on a collection of three carved wood panels. He proposes his idea to the owner and it is met with excited agreement. The owner leaves the shop then, and Loki grabs the book he’d happened to find while frisking about the shelves. He can't tell how many hours have passed him by already as new clients came by and left. He is about to give up waiting on another one, seeing how almost dark it’s gotten outside when another client comes in, and this particular client here –who is a regular by the way, is Loki’s favorite. They’d already exchanged a few words in the past three months he started working here, though the young client seemed reluctant to have any other conversation with him, there were still those special moments when he smiled back and asked about the weirdest things, maybe because Loki couldn't define what strange is that made the young client feel at ease to linger around more than usual clients.

"So, Robin," Loki started, now leaning his cheek on his left hand and lazily spinning on the stool he's sitting on, "What' you buying today?"

Robin narrows his eyes behind those round frame glasses like he’s trying telekinesis and tugs at the hems of his yellow T-shirt with a text that reads (Bite me). "A Xiezhi sculpture," he replies, “do you have it here?"

Loki purses his lips and shrugs slightly, "depends on what Xiezhi means."

Robin looks around, as if trying to locate it himself without having to explain what it is to Loki, "A Haetae; the legendary creature that is shaped like a lion and has a horn on its forehead, a bell on its neck?" He clears his throat, a little enraged for some reason, "it has scales on its body?"

Loki beams suddenly, "I know what a Haetae is, Robin." He grins now, "It’s Xiezhi that I don't."

"So, you have a sculpture or a figurine of it?"

"Well, now that I know Xiezhi is another word for Haetae," Loki leaves the stool and walks up towards the shorter male and then past him, knowing the other will follow suit as he saunters between the shelves. "I remember seeing it somewhere around here, and it's painted too." He looks over his shoulder and sends the other a wink, "trying to be a hero and protect the town from
disasters?"

Robin blushes hard and shakes his head after a moment of what obviously seemed like reluctance, "n-no, nothing like that," he swallows again, looking elsewhere, "maybe" he mumbles but Loki hears it.

"What' you mean?" His eyebrows meet in a crease now.

"Strange things are happening in this town, it's really obvious but people overlook it just like that," he grouses with a tone of someone who’s debated this in their head for too long until it became unbearable. "I don't understand why, it makes me furious."

Loki studies him for a second, and then rests his hands over the kid's shoulder, now bowing down to meet his shy eyes, "I know about that –I mean what with the things that happen every now and then in town and go unnoticed by the people here, well I wouldn't say unnoticed but I guess you get the point here."

The other shakes his head.

Loki makes a small eye-roll and tightens his grip on the other's shoulder, "I mean, if we worry about everything that happens occasionally we won't be able to work and survive the day, being scared all the time doesn't help either, except it keeps you guarded, and careful, which is good." He bites his bottom lip for a second, and then adds, "And I'm sure the police is working on it. I advise you against doing anything stupid until this whole case is over."

"The police can't do anything, have you even checked the number of the unsolved cases they have? They're breaking an international record."

"Well, give them a chance to," he smiles more, but soon furrows when perspiration starts running down Robin’s Caucasian forehead, "hey buddy, you okay?"

"Sir," his tone is warranting, "I know I'm not making any sense" Loki squints up and gives him the 'you-sure-about-the-wording' look. "Okay. I never make sense." He admits, finally looking the taller in the eyes, "but I want you to be careful. We're facing off a new threat and I absolutely have no idea how to deal with it, even though the pack is trying hard and like I'm--" he cuts himself off and slaps a hand over his mouth, it’s reckless and haphazard if Loki is being fair. "I... I mean, I need the sculpture, now."

Loki finally lets him go and wheels around, "here, found it!" He snatches it from top of the shelf – since he's taller, and he hands it back to Robin.

Robin storms out of the shop soon after he pays for the sculpture, leaving Loki bewildered and befuddlement-bound. Clicking the cash register’s buttons to open it, he is tries to replay their conversation while tucking the bills into the drawer when, so out of the blue, his birthmark throbs. Agonizing ticks travel up his arm and his fist unclenches, sending the money to the ground. Loki chews on his bottom lip while pressing a hand on the birthmark, it's hurting and the pain is almost unbearable.

Darn..., 

He still needs to bring the sign of the shop in... 

He has to close up... 

He has to buy dinner....
But the chain of thoughts is somehow cut in a half when he hits the ground. Wheezing and gasping as the pain goes to his head now, he feels the burning; it’s a sickening feeling that makes him nauseous. He doesn’t care anymore. He takes a nosedive to the frayed rug at his feet and forces his eyes shut, praying the pain would quell on its own as he breathes through it.

It isn’t, and his head is officially doling out threats to split open.

This kind of pain happened only once in the past, doctors, as usual, couldn’t find any triggers whatsoever. It’s not like he really needed a bundle of freaking hospital lingo to know that it was bad, and now without any warnings, it's happening again, and he’s not happy to meet his old friend again.

His vision tunnels in on the floor, he slowly and peacefully closes his eyes, hoping for painless oblivion.

Is this a Déjà-vu, the Baader-Meinhof Phenomenon? Why is he seeing this the moment he thinks about it? Why is he seeing this dream again?

The things he sees in his dream are what he's afraid to call strange. He's petrified that he just keeps watching as things progress from bad to worse in his dream. One moment, he is seeing a happy family around the dinner table. Up on the ceiling is the same symbol of his birthmark, a spiral. It still doesn’t make any sense because he has never seen any of those faces. He doesn't recognize any of them. He is still trying to think back on where he had seen them when suddenly the table goes aflame, and the faces get caught in fire and are gradually melting down like waxed puppet show. Loki is trying to tell them to move –the people, and to make for a run, but his words stay locked down his throat, and the inability leaves him bustling with anger like a raving maniac. His hand darts forward to open a window in hopes for the flames to be sucked out but it gets caught between huge fangs of a furry creature. Its red eyes glow at Loki. He hears himself panting but is unable to move his hand away, he's watching as the brocaded drapes catch fire beside everything else. It all happens so fast. Then, the creature presses the fangs on the bone as though chewing on a knuckle and his arm gets chopped off just like that. The blood spurts around and it’s downright ugly, oh and it hurts, Loki whimpers, it hurts, hurts...

"...right? Are you alright?"

Loki feels a hand on his shoulder shaking him, and he groans in protest.

"He smells funny." Such a modulated voice. It’s a girl’s. And, lady, that’s rude.

Loki pries his eyes open, it’s only a blur at first but nothing a few more blinks won’t fix. He tries to make out the hazy forms before him, finding five people hovering, peering at him with wary eyes. He recoils to the back with a little yelp, sight refocusing at last.

There’s a blond, rectangle-faced with a skin of a God, well-built man in a black ensemble of black sleeved shirt, jeans and shoes in front of him who looks roughly in his late twenties. He is slightly taller than Loki and the latter isn’t sheering. The golden color of the man’s hair would fuses with the sun he is sure, his eyes sharp and deep. Behind the man there’s another, short, brown-eyed, pale-skinned teenager with a cleft chin dressed in a plain beige tee and black pants. Loki glances over at the red-haired at his left, can’t help it when his eyes travel to her cleavage but her daunting smirk makes him look away at the tallest guy among them, at his wide-eyed and his buzz-cut. There’s
another male standing at the rear, keeping a little distance between him and the rest.

"W-who are you?" Loki manages after a large gulp, and for some reason it comes out hoarse, and he is slightly embarrassed.

"The owners of this place?"

Loki looks around to assess his whereabouts. All he can see in the darkness around is the trees clapping and staring intently back at him, and the street lights a few miles away looking like spilled pearls. "And where is exactly this place?" Loki asks, shoulders slowly going up. "I think I'm lost." And quickly scratches his nape with a small hint of a smile.

"Lost?" The guy at the rear echoes, "as in walked around, climbed up that hill to see the town in the middle of the night under the little stars, and lost your track there and got lost, kind of lost?" He adds. Yea figures, because long-faced people always have saucy as well as snide remarks ready up their sleeves.

"What can I say, I'm poetic." Loki replies in monotone.

"Well, nothing really poetic about getting lost in the woods." The cleft-chinned huffs and his friend chortles, obviously liking the comeback.

"Could say the same about your little group date going on here." Loki ushers towards them with a flailing arm, "maybe we can light up a little bonfire, and do a voodoo dance too, y'know, spice things up?"

"Do your little dance at home." The guy with the buzz cut berates, seemingly annoyed, "don't you know this is private property?"

Loki looks minutely around and wraps his arms around his chest, it escaped him earlier but it seems the woods drop cold after sunsets. "How did I even get here?" He mumbles to himself and scans the ground now, "has anyone seen my phone? I promise I'll leave. I just need my phone."

"How did you get here anyway?" A new voice, a female’s, asks.

Loki looks up and finds a round-faced, caramel-haired girl in twin tails approaching him. He doesn't acquiesce to answer, just crouches down and dusts off the parts where he thinks he's just seen something flash and glitter.

"There's a wire wall just a few miles away, how did you get past it?" She asks again and crouches down as well to look with him for the phone.

Loki looks up, bottom lip snaking between two rows of teeth, but he goes back to searching again, averting eye-contact, "to tell you the truth, I have no idea, and no don't look at me like that," he tells her after she presses her lips and gives him her don't-bull-me-young-man face, "I'm the same as you, I swear. One second I'm at the shop and later I'm in the middle of the woods squabbling over pretty much nothing with a bunch of weirdoes who like to role-play."

"What' you mean over nothing?" The red-head squints her eyes down at him pensively, "you're on a land that is protected with a wire wall, in the middle of the woods, in the middle of the night, and you're only giving us bull on a silver platter," she is finding her manicured nails more interesting now as she stares at them, "you gotta give us more than that, or we'll call it trespassing and have the cops deal with you."

"I have no interest in your little garden here.” He says on a smile that doesn’t reach his eyes, “I'd like
to retrieve my phone and go back to the shop –since I most likely left it open and close it. Then I’d like to go home and sleep and forget this night ever happened, thank you, very much."

"Who is Bucky?" The man in black, and probably the least childish one of them asks.

Loki’s knees give out now and he props on his haunches to look up at the man. He narrows his eyes up at him, “I literally just met you, a complete stranger,” he almost smiles in amusement, “wouldn’t you normally ask for my name first?”

The other furrows in response.

Loki sighs bitterly, "How do you know him?"

"You weren't responding when we tried to rouse you, but you kept mumbling the name, figured it'd mean something.” He shrugs his left shoulder a little, hair fluttering as a small chilly wind passes by.

"No, it doesn't." Loki looks away for a second and then stands up and tries to approach the blond, but he is surprised that the others are scowling at him and moving to stand between him and the other. "Okay. First of all, I wasn't going to eat him –that would make perfect sense since he's the only one trying to actually be civilized here and wait a MO, you guys knew I was out of it when I came here? Why the hell were you making it sound like I was a thief?"

"You were already fainted on the ground when we got here." The shorter girl reports to him.

Loki rubs his eyes with the heels of his hands, "yea," he nods slowly, now propping down on his haunches again, "I blacked out back at the shop, figured I'd still be there when I woke up, didn't know I was sleepwalking, or whatever this is.” Should he add sleepwalking to the tally?

“Yeah, you need to leave.” The man suddenly blurs out, voice deep.

Wow and here Loki thought he was the least childish, forgot the part about a guy in his late – probably mid twenties hanging out with a group of teenagers past their curfew, “Does tact mean anything in your dictionary or is the term a little foreign to you?” Loki goads, bemused, “poise, savoir faire? Ring any bells? Want me to continue? ‘cause I can.” The man’s furrow deepens so Loki lets go of another weary sigh, “Fine, I’m getting off your property.” He lifts up and his knee cracks, “I’ll walk back, no need to worry about me walking back by myself, in the woods, in the middle of the night with possible mountain lions lurking by.”

The man flares his nostrils, “Wait.” He orders.

“Hey, I don’t work for your father,” Loki finally berates, “make up your god damn mind.”

"You can stay.” The man suddenly says, droning, he draws nearer to Loki, making the others step rearward, "I'll send someone to check on your shop."

Loki wanted, really wanted to take those two steps towards the back, but ever heard of the expression ‘rooted to the spot’? Well, it isn't just an expression anymore.

"No, it's fine really. I can walk back to the town or grab a taxi or something."

The others snort, and the long-faced guy sneers at him, "there are no taxis in the woods smartass, and the town is a few miles down north, who are you kidding."

"Like, if you say one more word, I'm seriously going to do something about that nasty mouth of yours." Loki aims his pointing finger at the other, who chuckles back playfully.
"Let's head back. It's late." The apparently-bipolar man says as he walks up the hill, the others follow suit but are throwing grumblings about specifics, which Loki figures out, the little shits don't want him around. "It's only for tonight, and he doesn't look dangerous."

Loki scoffs, "really, look who's talking, Mr. Black Ensemble." He mumbles to himself in a low whisper but he is stupefied to see the others come to a halt and turn around to glare at him. "What? I mean look at his clothes? He's practically dressed like a killer."

They shake their heads ruefully and go back to complaining, but louder this time, "Does he really need to stay?" and "Can we just leave him here or something?" That's got to be the long-faced. That little shit!

"Guys, I can hear you, y'know."

"That's the point!" They tell him off in unison.

At least be a little discreet about it—" his mouth opens in a muted gasp as soon as he sees the house (read: mansion) ahead. That's where they were heading to? That's where they live? "This is where you live?" Yea he's got to say it out loud too, because he isn't making a fool out of himself enough to feel bad about it.

Loki is standing like a lost little lamb in the middle of the hall when suddenly a hand nudges his arm, so he whips his head around only to meet Mr. Black Ensemble’s igniting eyes motioning towards the west side of the hall.

"You can sit on the sofa over there until I come back." He says and climbs up the stairs in complete silence.

Loki does as recommended, and, again, can only stare in amazement with his lips gaping in a wide 'o'. He hears a snicker from the side and cranes his head a bit to see what is happening. That must be the kitchen. Man, does everything here shine? The kids are grabbing shrimp chips, Chocopie and cocoa covered puffed rice, and, ah, would you look at that, biscuit sticks and candy kits —vanilla flavored, too! *How can they even survive on that junk?* They come back to the living room and each takes a seat over the couch. Actually only the girls take the couch, the other three guys sprawl on the floor. Loki is again, left standing with his mouth hung open.

The TV is on and the kids sit still, just starring ahead and watching, and nope, he isn't going to do the same. He isn't going to watch late night general news, and if they weren't to touch him with a ten-feet pole, he could just make himself useful and cook something to eat until their father, guardian —or whatever because it's getting weird as he thinks about it— comes back.

He's in the kitchen now, and he can't stop the drool from pouring out of his mouth once he opens the refrigerator’s doors. Every ingredient he needs is there. Good, then he won't need to make quick trips to any markets while slightly thinking with worry that there aren't any open at this late hour. He adds another point to the tally of awesomeness that is this house just for that. He's fast after that as he makes lasagna and pork stir fry with rice noodles, some side dishes. It's around midnight when he takes the dishes inside and puts them down on the table between the TV and the sofa. He's glad that they're sighing happily and scenting the food with dreamy eyes, throwing 'you can cook!' and 'smells so good' every now and then. Yep, he's satisfied, actually never been happier. Martha doesn't count because she's still weird when she says Loki is the apple of her eyes, but that sort of makes her
a doting mother figure instead.

"I've made a lot, make sure you eat all of it."

Then the frowning ‘for-no-reason-man’ –jeez he's got to give him a name or something, Loki can't keep relying on his imagination– he walks down the stairs, barefooted, relaxed in his grey sweatpants and a white T shirt.

"Just in time, please sit down." Loki motions at the table, "did you expect me to eat crunchy chips and energy drinks on an empty stomach?" He says as he sits at the table, cross-legged.

The shorter girl –again damn it, it's starting to sound just so wrong, she brings her chopsticks forward to pick a spoonful of lasagna but Loki slaps her hand (gently) and points at the tall man –again, jeez– "we'll start after he does."

Loki then is slightly embarrassed at the stares he receives suddenly, but they soon nod, all of them, and wait for the man to sit and give them the go. "Thanks for the food" he says, the others echo after him and several arms start moving over the table, albeit uncomfortably.

"This is not crap after all, kinda doesn't smell like you do."

"Hey I don't smell, you–" Loki cuts himself short, and then trails a little sheepishly, "Laufey." And again several eyes are scanning him. That's rude by the way. He sighs exasperatedly and says again "it's Loki, my name is Loki Laufey. now I'd like to learn yours because I seriously can't keep distinguishing you by your height only."

"The stuck-up looking redhead on your left is Natasha." The blond male says calmly. Glad we have a grown-up here, and check this out, she isn't even denying it! "The other girl is Kate, short for Katherine." Loki looks at her and she grins cutely at him and then dumps more food in her small mouth. "The guy over there is Steve, next to him is Peter." They lift their jaws towards him with their mouths full. "Lastly is Wade."

Oh, the little who won't quit talking back at him!

"And what's yours?" Loki asks while looking right into the other's sharp eyes.

"I'm Thor."

Loki actually smiles at him even though he doesn't receive one back.

"What do you do for a living?" Kate asks out of the blue. Well, he's glad he got their names now and isn't forced to categorize them according to their height measurement; however, he's kind of really starting to regret it.

"Do you have a girlfriend?" Peter is taking that verbal swing at him now.

"She's probably butt-ugly." And here we go again, Wade! But hey, at least the kids are having a laugh. That's a sweet thing, isn't it?

"So you still live with your parents or something?" Kate asks again now, but she's so darn cute Loki can't bring himself to get mad at her.

"I don't." He replies, curtly.

"You live by yourself, cool!" She gushes, "Kinda lonely though, families are great."
"Well, that's true." Loki can't help but agree with a patient smile. But the uneven pulsation of his heart is telling a different story.

"So why don't you live with them?" Now the stuck-up looking girl is interested, oh just great, "you know it's not really embarrassing to live with your parents nowadays," she added, and Loki’s heart is high rocketing at the tirade because he can't ignore the vision he sees every night in his dream: those happy faces and warm smiles, those honest giggles caught aflame--

"Enough." Thor orders calmly, and it's all it takes to shut everyone up. "Let him eat."

His heart starts to slow down. He is grateful, but again, he doesn't get a smile back. The kids take care of the dishes and cleaning up the table, while Thor and Loki walk up to the porch of the front door. Loki sits down on the stairs and gazes up, but the stars blazing the sky catch his eyes, and he stares, with doleful eyes, blown away.

Thor leans against the door frame with his shoulder.

"Thanks for dinner." He says from behind, "we don't usually cook so it was a different experience."

"You're welcome." Loki chirps.

He could hear shuffling and then Thor is walking to sit beside him, "and they were being quite rude to you, I apologize."

"I didn't expect an apology, but hey" he looks at him now, "they're just kids, bumped with sugar and a little dash of hormones. You just need to be on guard when you're in that kind of situation."

"But you looked like you were ready to run out of your skin." Thor smirks and it makes the butterflies inside Loki’s stomach jump. Now, he isn’t pugnacious in nature, would never go out of his way to get into troubles, but he isn’t quite sure whether the lurch of his stomach just now was him being hostile, or dumbfounded. He switches to look at the other’s lips, but quickly realizes that he is staring back and it won't be so polite of him to just keep staring at his lips.

"Yea, I don't usually ask people about a lot of stuff so I'm not sure how to react when I'm asked stuff like that." He shrugs and looks up at the sky again. "It's embarrassing, too."

"So you do live with your parents." Thor teases.

"No I don't, really." Loki rubs his nape and he can feel it slightly growing hot, "my parents are dead so" he shrugs again, "you can't exactly have that one big happy family kind of atmosphere when you're by yourself. I mean it's cool, well somehow, but still" now he is just a babbling mess, better make this not about him, then. It's always a good strategy. "So are you guys like family or just camping or what, exactly?" Now Loki prompts, inwardly expecting the other to lash out, verbally and/or physically.

"Family." Thor simply corrects, and, damn, why does it sting so bad beneath his ribcage?

"It must feel nice." Loki nods, his elbows propped on his knees, "must be nice" he corrects himself.

"It is." Thor agrees so bluntly,

The few minutes that follow go under complete silence, and Loki doesn't have the heart to ruin the moment by asking a 'stranger' because he doesn't even know what the word means. He is contemplating it more when suddenly a large hand rests on his shoulder.
"I'm going back inside, try not to stay up." Thor says, and adds, "I've already called someone to check on the shop, you closed it." He said about that and returns back inside.

Loki nods but isn't yet ready to go back. He is smoothing his ruffled feathers and is feeling slightly happy about it, he is happier now that he is maybe able to define what 'strange' is because Thor didn't mutter sorry with his head ducked after he learned his parents were dead.

Wait, how did he know which shop it was when Loki had told him nothing?

Oh no, what are those glowing things behind the tree lines?

Loki isn’t going to sit there to find out. He quickly scrambles back into the house and shuts the door with a loud thud.

*What in the ever-loving hell was that?*

The house falls silent all of a sudden, and he doesn't linger by the front door. He walks back to the couch and sees that it's empty and available for him tonight. Lucky! He flops down on it, his head slowly leaning on the armrest and his legs somehow fit on it, though he's leaning a little askew, but he’s a survivor. He doesn't complain when people are being hospitable. Now all he thinks about is the tattoo, why did it start throbbing, and how did he walk up into the woods and get himself lost? What if he wasn't found by these people? Would his fate have been completely different? No, he's too tired to think of 'what ifs', they don't work anyway. Tomorrow, he's going to wake up and make them breakfast. He'll leave before they're even up, and he'll forget about this night and go back to his life.

The sun sneaks through the slits in the curtains and lands harshly on his face. Loki’s eyes flutter and then he's up. He's a little taken aback when he sees the blanket on him. He tries to remember and he does vaguely remember Thor hushing him and flinging the blanket over him. Loki thought it was a dream, and speaking of dreams... he didn't have one tonight. This calls for a celebration. He's going to make a wonderful, almost royal breakfast all for himself. Well, he will leave some to the others of course, it’s not like he’s the one who paid for the groceries.

He sets the plan on motion and makes a fancy breakfast. He's quick and fast and all together masterful as he slices the vegetables with such accuracy it should win him Chief of the Year. And he's humming, he's genuinely, happily humming, which hasn't happened in a long time. Actually it never did, until now it seems. But those days are over; this is a new era, Loki.

He doesn't know what to write now that he's done making the food. He already took his share and now he is wondering what to write on the note because leaving just like that makes it feel like the morning after a one-night stand, where the girls are usually the ones to flee. "Thanks for last night?" no it just sounds unfitting, "thanks, and here's the address to my shop, feel free to come by? Well that might work, so" he checks his watch and it's showing half past six. He'll just go back to his house and get some more sleep.

He climbs down the hill and after walking a pretty good few kilometers, he finally sees the wire wall they talked about.
What was that about trespassing again? There's a gap the size of a freaking satellite plate, even animals can walk through that thing, and they even made him feel bad about it. He soon forgets about it when he reaches his house, Martha is knocking on his door just after he takes off the Henley, he puts it back on again and opens the door for her.

"Honey, I know it's a little early but I was worried you didn't come back last night."

"Oh, sorry, but I promise it's nothing to worry about."

"I made some chocolate cookies just now if you want some?"

"That'd be lovely. You know I love the food you make, so I'll come back for them later?" He leans down to plant a kiss on her forehead, "I jogged this morning and I must smell. I'm going to shower, okay?"

"Alright honey, just don't forget to come by for the cookies, you know Law likes them a lot, and he might eat them all if you don't hurry." She says that with a serene smile and retreats to her house, but Loki is not smiling anymore. He closes the door and bangs his forehead against it. He doesn't do it very loud, but he does it until it's painful enough to retreat to his shower too.

He's hugging his knees to his chest inside the bathtub while the water flushes down on his tired body. He doesn't want to move, he doesn't want to lift even a finger because it'd hurt. The way Martha smiles as she talks about her grandchild, that smile is too bright it's twisting his heart. Right now, it makes Loki feel so guilty, he's guilty because even though she talks about Bucky and smiles while doing it, Loki knows that Bucky is buried at Dragsa cemetery. Something burrs loudly, something like a whistle is noisily burring in his ears and he just doesn't know how to deal with pain anymore. Everything hurts, his whole life hurts. Bucky isn't around anymore, and he has to deal with Martha every morning when she brings him up in her daily chitchats. Sometimes, Loki wonders if she knows he's dead and she just plays with his mind, tries to twist his heart harder each day to make him relive the pain of loss and make him feel guilty about his death. He's not sure anymore.

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--no town the police says that the victim this time is an eighteen-year-old boy. Evidence shows no signs of struggle so they're suspecting the culprit and the victim knew each other. But the fact remains that his heart and kidney were gone. Authorities are also relating this to human trafficking--" the newscaster's voice suddenly goes off when Loki mutes down the volume with a grimace and flings the remote on the sofa.

He's walking down the footpath to the store now and is feeling a lot better after napping for a couple of hours. The last of Martha's cookies taste heavenly just like the rest he's eaten while sauntering down the road. He's going to make sure to thank her again for the cookies because, man, chocolate chip cookies aren't supposed to taste this great.

Maybe he should take some to the victim's family because they live just a few blocks away, but then, he didn't take any cookies to the other three victims' families in the last three months. It's been really frustrating to keep having dead bodies dropping around. This town is really peaceful, quiet and doesn't hurt people --well nothing actually like those freaky towns where everyone waves at you and everyone knows what you had for dinner. So why would anyone kill anything here? And to make matters worse, all the three victims who'd been heartlessly killed in the last three months were all women, pregnant women whose fetuses were somehow taken out of them without any surgery marks left behind. He sighs as he shoves his hands into the side pockets of his jeans. Now, it's a boy with a missing kidney and heart?
He is about to take the left turn when a cyclist screeches and shifts his bike off the road, there's a scream which echoes off nearby. Of course it's a woman who screams, they do that a lot by the way. He is flabbergasted and again, rooted to the spot. He has only a few seconds to… he doesn't know, to do something? Before the driver loses control over his car and actually hit someone. The mark on his hand is acting up again and, seriously, Loki doesn't have time for that now. Just as he snatches a motorcycle from its owner who’s also been watching, the car almost hits a couple of young girls who were about to cross the road and Loki darts his marked hand towards the car’s direction. It's nothing like they show you in a freaking slow motioned action scene, because real things move fast and you don’t hear anything as the disaster transpires. You feel helpless. You are helpless... until the car stops. The car actually stops when a few seconds ago, it couldn’t.

Loki doesn't stay there to give his statement to the police, they'll figure it out –except police never figures it out. The poor guys are always the last to come. Yet, he can't figure it out himself. Why did it stop all of a sudden, considering the force with which it stopped was anything but ordinary? What if the car didn't stop at all?

The shop is still closed, and Loki is glad to find his phone inside on the ground when he enters. He's doing the usual: getting back to e-mails left by some online buyers, dusting off the front items and rearranging them to fit the scene so that, once clients come in, that way they'd be able to see what used to be unseen.

Loki, then, receives an unexpected client and is surprised to see Kate in the shop.

"You really came!" He exclaims while spinning on the stool side to side, his fingers still on the keyboard, trying to reply back to some purchase orders from their regular online buyers.

Kate walks around and eyes the items. She pokes a ceramic owl sculpture and grins when the owl ululates, or howls –he doesn’t know what the frigging owl does. "'Wanted to thank you for this morning’s breakfast."

Loki purses his lips and shrugs, "that's sweet of you."

"It’s not just me, the pa– I mean they all think the same." She looks up at her reflection on the large mirror hooked to the ceiling.

"The fauna of mirrors," Loki drones. He suddenly stops typing on the keyboard and looks at the girl, who looks back at him and arches up an eyebrow. "The idea was to make all the items you see down here reflect up on the mirror above, it sort of gives the shop another feeling. If you look at the mirror, you're going to think there's an entirely different dimension behind it." He shrugs then, "it's an ancient Chinese myth actually."

She looks at the mirror again and nods with a wide grin, "it's really true. Creative."

He presses his lips together and nods slightly to the side, "so" he stretches the last vowel, "about the wire wall."

She nods and walks up to the counter like she's doing business.

"I saw this huge hole in there, bet someone used a rope cutter or a hacksaw to get it loose, but then the edges were actually not cut, they were torn? They definitely were plucked off the ground." He whirls more on the stool, and rolls his eyes when she gives him another skeptical stare. "Look, I felt really bad last night for 'trespassing'." He quotes in the air, "and then I couldn't just do nothing about
it, it's not like I wanted to go into the woods in the middle of the night. I mean who does that?" His shoulders arch up.

"Tell me about it." She widens her eyes and shakes her head, as if he’s just asked the stupidest question in history.

"That's why I'm making sure you get this, because the hole in the wall wasn't my doing. I know I don't remember how I got there, but I know I didn't do that." He uses his hands now to assert his point, "I couldn't possibly pluck off a wire wall 2-3 feet beneath the ground. I'm not that strong."

He smiles at her, and she sighs in relief after a few moments, "I know you're telling the truth, I'm not worried about the wire anymore. Thor can just rush out and spend a few bucks on some cable guy to fix it, personality-wise." She shrugs. Yea and here he is, worrying his ass off about his kitchen sink that's been leaking for weeks even after the one off-job repair he's done.

"Speaking of him, how did he know about this shop?" But she doesn't seem like she got the point, so he elaborates, "last night he said he was going to make sure I closed the shop, but I did not give him the address. He just assured me I closed it."

She pales for a second and fumbles with the lock in the shape of a wolf on the counter, "not sure, maybe you told him and forgot? Well, you did forget how you got lost in the woods." Does she have a remarkable aptitude for turning tables and making it look like it's entirely his fault for being a complete idiot.

He can't help but agree, "Yeah, must be that." He scratches his forehead now.

"And, Loki?" She starts shyly, "sorry about how we bombarded you with questions last night, totally immature of us."

"Yea, 'cause trolling me was too much fun on its own." He looks elsewhere now.

She grins wickedly, "It was. Sorry." She grins cutely now and, dam, Loki forgives her just like that. "And if it's any consolation, we seriously got an earful from Thor last night. I used to think the guy never actually cared about anything beside smiting evil and keeping everyone a hundred yards from his bedroom, but he growled at us, like literally!"

Loki furrows his brows, "can't really picture it" Pffsh… kids and their imagination!

They look at each other for a second and suddenly burst out laughing.

Another client comes in, the door chirps, and their laughter slowly dies away as they wait for them to appear. It turns out to be Robin in a different T-shirt today; a lime green sweater with a text that reads (Go, Green Party!)

"Robin."

Loki and Kate call out at the same time, and the three look at each other a little taken aback, "you guys know each other?" She asks.

"Well, he's a regular here so yea." Loki said, "What about you?"

"We go to the same school." She juts up her jaw towards the spectacled boy, and the latter nods at her and walks up toward them, "actually same class, too."

Loki remembers that it's a vacation and doesn't dwell on it. "Did the Haetae work?" Robin nods and
smiles for what seems like the first time in forever, and Loki’s heart beats with relief, "you can smile, that's cute Robin."

"Do you think these things work?" Kate rests her hands on her hips now.

"It depends on what you believe. They really work if you believe them to." He tells her.

"But what are you using them for, I mean what’ you think is happening in town?" She asks more seriously now.

"Evil spirits, monstrous creatures that kill people?" Robin replies, and soon follows Loki as the latter lifts off the stool and aims the shelves. "I just use protector sculptures, so if it's a bad spirit that's causing these murders then a Kkoktu can lead them and protect them."

"If I follow your theory – which I'm really not, just trying to have a conversation here, " Loki tells him as he looks around at the items? “I’d say spirits can’t really cause such horrific injuries to people, no matter how bad they are, also” – he turns around once he grabs the Kkoktu, and watches their puppy-eyes glittering at him – “bad spirits cause only minimal damage when it comes to physical injuries. They’re spirits, they can move and elevate objects, cause a few injuries here and there. They cannot, however, take out a fetus from a mother’s womb. Besides, bad spirits aren’t interested in hurting people as much as they’re interested in possessing, y’know, like they want a second chance in life and stuff? But I’m still theoretically speaking so no funny ideas.” Wait, did he just say bad spirits are harmless? Forget about the part where he said harmless, did he just admit that evil spirits exist? He physically shakes his head out of the awkward thoughts he’s having and is surprised to see the other two looking at him with a thoughtful silence. You know it’s never a good sign when kids do that.

"That makes a lot of sense actually." Robin says, resignedly. "So if that’s the case the Kkoktu is useless."

Kate gives him a sympathetic pat to his drooped shoulder, “I guess it’s not.”

“You guys aren’t seriously buying what I’ve just said.” Loki’s lips part into a wide grin, but more in a surprised way as if someone’s unable to believe some news about something big and they’re just shaking their head in denial.

“Then who do you suggest is killing these people?” Robin requires, almost desperately. The poor kid is scared senseless.

“Don’t you guys watch the news?” Loki shakes his head again and walks back to the counter to scan the damn Kkoktu. “The murders are obviously related to human trafficking, or else how do you explain the missing organs?"

“What if it’s something other than bad spirits?” Kate offers. Thank you, it wasn’t getting terrible enough for the poor kid who’s about to wet his pants!

Loki breathes out through his nose and scans the sculpture again when the first try didn’t work, “monsters, spirits… they’re all in myths only, a superstition, nothing more.”

"Well, saying it doesn't change the fact that people are dying in pretty mysterious ways." Kate shrugs slightly, and Robin is paling more next to her. "Sorry Robin."

"Yes, I'm touched," he huffs at her, "I'm screwed."
Loki smiles to himself at their antics, finally wraps the sculpture and puts it into a bag, “it’s on me.” He hands it to Robin, who gracefully takes it and grins. “Thank you, Loki.” He waves and wishes them good night.

“Don’t let the monsters eat you!” Kate shouts just before he gets out, and she is not surprised to see Robin’s middle fingers waving at her when he finally leaves the door.

It’s seven in the evening and Loki has no idea how it got late that very quick, maybe because someone is keeping him company that he wasn’t careful enough about closing time. Not that he’s saying it’s a bad thing. Kate helps him close up the shop and they are taken aback by the dark night veil that has, stealthily, caught up to them. She waves bye and just as she turns around, a red Porsche pulls over and the window of the passenger’s seat rolls down, unveiling a humbly handsome face Loki’s never seen in his entire dull life. The girl seems to know him and she is not happy about it. Loki’s brows knit in confusion and worry, and he watches how the guy is telling her something that soon makes her huff with annoyance. That’s when he decides to step in.

“Is there a problem here?”

“No, he was leaving!” She grouch and drags Loki along from his sleeve as she stomps away. “If that guy ever talks to you, don’t give him time, OK?” she says “promise me!”

“Alright, jeez. Calm down first.” He tells her after he looks around and sees the car driving off, “who’s he anyway?”

She finally slows down and tags at the edges of her brown skirt, “his name’s Tony. He used to be pa–I mean a member of family.” She pushes her fringes away from her eyes, “anyways, he did some bad things and he’s got a new family now, so he’s history.”

“OK,” he nods, understandingly, “so what was he doing harassing you like that?”

“No, he was just asking about how everyone is doing, and stuff.” She shrugs a shoulder, obviously uncomfortable with the whole exchange.

Loki walks towards opposite direction of his house, knowing the girl will follow.

“Hey, where are you going?”

“Walking you home?”

“Hey I’m a Were– I mean I’m not a kid, I can protect myself!”

“I’m walking you back because A) it’s very late and you should be home by now, B) girls shouldn’t be walking by themselves at night and C) A teenage boy was killed yesterday, eviscerated, actually” Which he doesn’t want to think about now, or ever, for that matter.

She doesn’t add anything else and just walks silently beside him, “I want to eat beef.”

This gets Loki off balance and he almost trips over the next pebble, “I’m not going back to that house!”

“B-but you said you were going to walk me home! That’s technically up the hill and to the house.” She stops walking, too.

“First, I’m only walking you to the wire wall, and second, did you see how they look at me?” Loki flails a hand towards the woods that are just a few feet away, “besides, I can’t invite myself over to
“Why do you care how they look at you?” She crunches her face, confused, “and it’s not like they own the house or anything. Thor said you could come back any time any day.”

“That’s what society calls being tactfully polite.”

“They like you.”

“They hate me!”

“OK, I have to agree with that one.” She admits with a tilt of head, and he rolls his eyes as if to say exactly my point, the incongruity disheartening him, but then she adds hurriedly and almost apologetically “but they like the food you make…”

“I’m walking you up the hill and leaving, and that’s it.” He tells her as he brings his hands to his pockets again. Who lives in a freaking forest anyway?

“Maybe you don’t have to after all.” She informs from behind, and when he turns around, he sees another car, a classy, white Mercedes parking aside for them. “Come!” She grabs him from the elbow and takes him to the passenger’s side, “get in!” She gushes as she goes to open the door of the back seat, and ushers him in before she gets in herself. Loki tries to peer through the window but he can’t since it’s darkened. Well, it is night time and he shouldn’t have had that expectation. He finally opens the door with a sigh, an irritated one, and he gets in.
Do you know the blow you get to your stomach when your teacher suddenly gives you a pop quiz and you’ve prepared absolutely nothing, because, hello? It’s a pop freaking quiz, how the hell are you supposed to know about it? This is how Loki is feeling—not like taking a test or fearing a quiz; it’s more about that blow to the stomach that you can’t prevent, because you’ve just seen someone whom you thought you’d never see again for a second time. His ears and neck are growing hotter—sweltering hot. If sweat spills down his forehead it’d probably sizzle. He has no idea what to do with his fingers as they fidget. He never thought he’d think this but Mr. Dinson is really intimidating.

“He can take us home.” Kate finally saves him from the awkwardness. You amazing human being, thank you.

“It’s really fine. I wasn’t planning to go anyway,” Loki looks at the seats. Nice leather, by the way, is it Nappa? He has no idea the kind of expression is adorning his face right now but he is certainly hoping he isn’t looking like a gaping fish.

“You can come over!” She gushes, and Loki is slowly regretting calling her amazing. She’s earned it, but her getting talkative is kind of tossing that out of the window. “Right, Mr. Dinson? He can come with us?”

The said man glances over at Loki for a fervent once-over, “We can’t push him.” He says curtly, in a voice so deep, on any other day, it’d make Loki’s body melt away like an ice cube under the summer heat. Fuck… that sounded so gay.

Thor’s left hand is on the steering wheel, and the other is loosely draped over his lap. His white, long-sleeved shirt is framing his bulky arms; it must border on ridiculous at how much the guy must train to look like that—like a walking menhir.

Loki is both relieved, and disappointed. He’s relieved because Thor has finally talked and it’s great to have someone around his age understand when people are being pushy and making him do things he’s uncomfortable with. However, he’s disappointed because Thor didn’t even try once to convince him otherwise, and to put it bluntly, it sucks. He shifts to sit more comfortably on his seat as he looks out the window, his fingers drumming over his thigh nervously. Should he open the door and just leave? Should he say something before he opens the door or should he just leave the damn car and–?

“But it’ll be great if you come.” Thor says out of the blue.

Loki looks at him, finding him already looking at him, blue eyes piercing and novel, almost making him come undone.

“Loki?” He asks, gently.

“Y-yea.” Said male mumbles and squirms more on the smooth leather, “I can do that.”

“Great, we’re having beef tonight!” Kate effuses from the backseat and takes out her phone. “Going to tell the others.”
“I’m not sure it’s a good idea.” Loki winces, face twisting with unease.

“They don’t hate you.” Thor corrects as he pushes the start button and the car roars to life, “They’re just not used to you.” He drives off now.

Loki can’t help but wonder if Thor was able to hear them because they were that loud, or if there’s something Loki gave away during his rant and he hopes he didn’t. “I can’t really read the difference.”

He looks through the window now and watches as the scenery changes into endless silhouettes of thickets and deciduous trees as the car slowly goes into the woods.

“I don’t speak obfuscations.” Thor chuckles, “Just think of it like—” he cuts himself off and glances fervently at the rear mirror, and that’s when Kate prompts up, alerted. “What were you going to say?” She demands.

Loki looks towards them. OK, this is interesting. “More like what?”

“Like taming pets,” Thor offers, a trace of a playful smirk threatening to make its way to his lips, so he looks out the window to force it in.

“That’s rude!” Kate grouses, “We’re not pets.”

Loki laughs contently, “I can definitely do that.” He says, “I mean did you see how they curl up around the sofa? It’s almost like they’re some cute little pups in some desperate need of warm bonding.”

The atmosphere suddenly goes silent and Loki internally kicks himself in the ass for being awkward. He can’t help it, alright? It’s been forever since he interacted with people outside his line of work. Kate is being a hero today as she tells Thor about Tony and he, by any dictionary of any language in the world, is not looking pleased about the disclosure.

“…Loki chased him away and offered to walk me home.”

“I didn’t like… chase him away. It’s more like we kind of fled the coop.” Loki restates, and neither is interested.

“Did he do anything?” Thor furrows and spins the steering wheel to the left.

“No, he just asked me about you.” She shakes her head in reassurance. “Also, asked me about the pa— I mean the guys.”

Thor nods firmly, eyes on the road.

“But he knows where Loki works now.” She sighs, jadedly. “I just went there to thank him, didn’t mean to start anything.”

That’s his name right there! “Hey, now, easy.” He faces her. “You didn’t start anything and he’s not going to do anything, I don’t even know the guy.” He tells her, “I’m glad you came to see me today, so don’t worry about whatever that dude has tried to plant into your head, alright?” He is just about to get a nod of confirmation when, suddenly, the tiers bump onto some rocks and Loki’s head lashes right onto Thor’s shoulder. The pungent cologne hits his nostrils like the burn of whiskey down his gullet, firm muscles tense against the touch of his forehead and the heat permeating is just so dizzying in the confined space.
“Bad road.” Thor comments sardonically, and the other male flourishes and shifts quickly back to his seat.

“Or you’re just a lousy driver?” Loki teases on a small smirk, because only a bad carpenter would blame his tools.

“You do not want to test my driving, trust me.” Thor warns, bemused.

Loki snakes his tongue out just tiny bit, and flicks it under his upper teeth, “Depends,” he says, now straightening in his seat, “You want to prove something?”

“To you?” Thor goads.

“You tell me.” Loki counters.

“I’m tempted,” Thor admits, “But since I’m the one behind the wheel with kids in the back seat” – Kate glares at him for that– “safety comes first.”

“Oh, you’re such a considerate driver.” Loki coos, playfully. “Is that your G code for every challenge you turn down?”

“Oh, I’m sorry,” Thor says in mock concern, “Was that a challenge?”

Loki rolls his eyes on a lopsided smirk, now facing the windshield. Thor mirrors his action.

Just moments later, the car comes to a smooth stop. Kate opens the door and hops out. ““Going to spread the news!” She says and ducks to the window at the passenger’s seat. “Thanks for the ride, Mr. Dinson!” She jogs towards the front door with her skirt bouncing from the corners. So lively, isn’t she?

Loki is glued to the seat, vacillating between going in or not. Just as he opens the door a little, a large hand, yet gentle, lands on his shoulder so he pauses and turns around, the door left ajar.

“It’s fine.” Loki says and he doesn’t know if it’s to assure the other or himself. The hand encloses on his shoulder and Loki nods, “I’m confident about it. It’s going to be fine.” He smiles warmly.

*Well it does gratify him to some extent…..*

Thor’s eyes are directly on his, and Loki doesn’t know how to deal with the intensity of this man’s stare. His hand that’s on the door’s handle is tightening nervously.

“I know.” Thor tells him as he pulls his hand away.

Loki takes that as his cue to vacate the vehicle and wait outside for the owner while examining the house a second time. The owner locks the doors of the car and walks up ahead. The other follows just a few steps behind, his heart pounding beneath his ribs as they near the stairs of the porch. Thor opens the door and walks in, and Loki is, of course, expected to follow suit, but he lingers outside, mustering his courage to finally walk in and greet everyone. “Sorry for intruding!”

The three guys are sprawled on the floor, and the two girls are sitting on the couch, all eyes on the TV screen. Kate is the only one who grins up at him and quickly turns to watch the TV. Loki is glad that the TV is more interesting than he is at the moment. It makes things a lot less awkward, he thinks.
Thor is standing at the stairs when Loki whips his head to look at him, and he lifts his shoulder as if to ask how I did. Thor purses the edges of his mouth, impressed, but more as in it ‘could have been worse’ kind of gesture, and then he bounds up the stairs.

Loki loiters there just for a beat before making his way to the kitchen. He takes his short-sleeved cardigan off and flings it on the counter. He guesses this makes him the new maid, he tells himself. And, darn, he knows he should be minding his own but he just doesn’t get them, are they all students? Are they, like, cousins or something? –He’s surprised to find sesame oil there, this family didn’t look like the type to gather up in the kitchen and help out with dinner preparations. They’d probably set the house on fire if they did. He’s almost done but he could really use some garlic, where do they keep them? They’re not in the fridge, that’s wise. “I don’t think they even know what garlic bulbs are.” He whispers to himself, eyes roaming around.

“’In the mesh over there.’” Steve says as he ambles along the kitchen counter, and Loki’s shoulders jolt, a little startled. He’s more worried about whether he’s been heard or not. Loki looks where Steve pointed at and, oh, there you are you little garlic bulbs! Of course they’re beside the window, these guys aren’t completely ignorant. He goes to grab some and stops dead in his tracks. He must be hallucinating because he’s definitely not seeing yellow eyes glowing at him behind the tree lines outside the window.

“What’s wrong?” Steve asks before opening the door of the fridge.

“Err...” Loki turns his head around, “What?”

“You smell –I mean you look panicked.” He says as he grabs a soda.

Loki looks out the window again and finds no eyes glowing, “No, just thought I saw something.” He shakes his head and quickly snatches the soda from Steve’s hand. The younger grumbles but Loki tells him no soda and no snacks before dinner.

Wade is sitting with his back to the sofa, legs straightened and one over the other. Peter is practically sitting down like a new born Kangaroo with his knees touching his chest and arms wrapping them protectively. Steve is sitting almost like Wade, except he isn’t leaning his back on anything, just bracing his arms on the floor to support his weight. The two girls are sitting on the couch like a couple of empresses owning the world. Loki puts the last of the dishes down on the table and rests on the floor as well. The others surround the table but they don’t touch anything, and when Loki gives them a pointed look which seems to say ‘I think it’s time someone explains’.

Natasha sighs and says, “Aren’t we supposed to wait for Mr. Dinson?”

Loki is quickly reminded of the night before when he instructed them about how people eat only after the master of the house does, and he is thrilled. He feels a little like a parent to have his word followed. Actually, like an owner taming fluffy pups. It’s hilarious. “Is he taking a shower?”

“No, he’s on the phone with his fiancée.” Peter offers, scenting the food on the table, eagerly.

“Fiancée?” Loki echoes, “News to me.” He comments, distractedly.

The guy is handsome, has a nice house (again read: mansion) and a pretty cool car. His family must be loaded so of course he has a fiancée, and she must be pretty damn gorgeous, too.

It’s not like Loki owes the man anything, and they haven’t known each for that long. Actually, Loki can count the times they’ve talked on the fingers of one hand, so he can’t explain this numbness slowly taking over his mind.
Someone walks down the stairs, and he doesn’t have to look up to know that it’s Thor.

“Where are you going?” Natasha cranes her head to see him.

This gets to Loki and he also turns around, finding Thor all dressed up again and ready to take off somewhere, which, judging by the way he’s dressed, must be important.

“I have things to do. You can go ahead and eat without me.” He tells them, and then his eyes travel to Loki’s direction. The latter fumbles with his chopsticks over his crossed legs and doesn’t have the heart to look elsewhere, so he nods. The other returns the nod and walks out of the front door.

“What the,” Wade frets, “You!” He addresses Loki, but said male is too lost in his own thoughts to really care. Wade, then, kicks the leg of the table and makes everyone flinch. “Do you know anything?”

“Like what?” He asks as he picks his plate and starts filling it, so the others follow suit – except for Wade, obviously.

“I don’t know,” he sighs, annoyed. “Where he’s going for example?”

Loki shakes his head and dumps more meat in his mouth. “No.”

“Don’t joke with me or else why was he looking at you?”

Loki knows what Wade means, he really understands where he’s coming from, but he can’t give him the answer he wants. Maybe he can, but it’s nothing mysterious to begin with. “It’s something about pets.” He offers, and Kate chokes on her food when she tries to laugh, so Loki laughs along. “Eat your food, Wade.”

“Are we allowed to ask?” Natasha starts when they were done cleaning the table and chucking dishes into the dish-washer. Now, they’re watching some classical rerun, and all the guys are on the floor, just lazing around. “Or do you still mind?”

Loki is sitting far away, cross-legged. He looks at her and at the others who are watching him keenly. “I don’t mind, except if it’s very personal.”

“Then forget about it.” She shakes her head.

“Can I ask you something now, though?” He requests. And the reaction he receives for his trouble dampens his spirits. “It’s nothing personal, but why the hell do the guys sit on the floor and you two always take the couch?”

Wide eyes look around, and then facial countenances lighten up and soon everyone is chuckling.

“Man, if you sit there you’re going to get ripped into pieces.” Peter answers.

“Natasha doesn’t like people sitting on the couch. No one can sit there except for those two, not even her boyfriend Steve.” Wade nods at the two said girls.

So those two are dating, which eliminates the option of cousins...

“But this house is pretty vast,” according to anyone’s standards, really. “Why don’t you use some of the spare rooms, or buy more couches?” Loki suggests on a nonchalant shrug.
“I don’t know, it kind of started off that way and now we don’t mind sitting on the floor anymore.” Steve explains more, with a vague smile.

“But she let me sit there last night.”

“You were a new guest.”

“I see,” he grins to himself, “So old guests have to make do with the floor.”

Kate and Natasha smirk wickedly at him, these two little devils!

“What about Thor?” He asks, offhandedly.

“He doesn’t really stay around too much.” Peter offers on a childish shrug. “He never needed to use the couch anyway.”

Loki shakes his head sadly. Acting like a damn rebellious recluse, isn’t he?

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It’s a little past ten when everyone decides to call it night and head back to their own respectful rooms. Loki is not sleepy, a little tired, but no sleepy or drowsy feelings whatsoever. He opens the front door and sits at the stairs, watching the sky getting swallowed completely in darkness. A starless sky is never a good sign, but that’s just another superstition too, and he isn’t here to give scientific reasons or to justify anything. He’s here to let out that sigh of relief because one, his dinner went by just fine, a little awkward but he can live with that. And two, they didn’t ask anything about his personal life or anything about his past, which is highly appreciated right now. He doesn’t want to open any doors of his memories and risk having a shock that’d probably take him forever to heal from. And Thor has a fiancée? He nods to himself. Ha, you learn a new thing every day.

Suddenly, something presses on his thoughts and discombobulates him, making him feel like his entire body is being divested, and his space being invaded. He wanted to turn around and see for himself if someone is standing behind him, but now he is far more concerned with the yellow eyes glowing at him again from the same distance, their malevolence thickening. Loki’s heartbeats pick up pace. There is something hovering behind his neck, he can feel it brushing over the skin, and it’s terrifying.

The sky is darkening more, is that even possible? Maybe whatever it is, it’s blackening his vision. Long locks of hair… It’s someone’s hair, someone who’s standing right behind him. The pair of yellow eyes glow more at him from the distance but its owner is only watching, beholding his predicament as he is being held helpless.

Loki’s body is starting to get numb. It doesn’t compare to the numbness from earlier, but he still doesn’t like it, not one bit. This new presence behind him is sickening him, and suffocating him. Finally, by some miraculous force, he pulls himself up and decides to scoot without waking up the kids sleeping soundly on their beds, but his body can’t move, it’s as if tons of weights have been placed on his ankles. He wants to ask whoever that is to be gone, but the comprehension downs on him about what being helpless really feels like when his voice fails to utter any words.

God, he’s going to be taken, swallowed in complete darkness…
Strong headlights gleam, and the screeching of wheels echo all of a sudden, a noise that Loki has never been happier to hear. All the off-putting feelings are leaving him and every muscle in his body relaxes. Thor parks the car aside and gets off, a hand turning the keys to lock the doors, and the other scrolling down his phone screen. Loki inspects the air around him and no one seems to be lurking in his vicinity, or behind him, and no one is standing behind the tree lines either. He’s safe, for now. Thor stands up at the stairs and spins his head around, looking a little puzzled, and then he walks into the house and closes the door behind him.

This whole imposing deal was stupid, Loki doesn’t belong here and he’s an idiot for having any little hopes, for mistaking their kindness with any wishful thinking on his side. He should just get his ass up and walk back to his house. He manages to walk farther by a couple of feet when someone talks.

“You don’t really have to go.”

Loki reels around to see Thor holding a bottle of red wine and two glasses. He juts them up suggestively as he sits down. Loki smirks to himself when the other is not watching... if happiness had a smell, he’d be reeking by now.

He sits down on the lower step so that his left shoulder is touching Thor’s right leg. What follows is a completely comfortable silence that resembles the stillness of nature at night, though nature at night is actually more dangerous wherein their silence is reassuring and safe.

“Come on, let’s get inside.” Thor suggests after a while, and doesn’t wait for the other to turn it down. Loki on the other hand is not going to linger outside because it’s creepy, and there are creepy things outside, too. He lifts himself up and takes the almost empty bottle and the two wine glasses with him.

“All the rooms here are taken. You’ll have to do with the couch again.” Thor says before he steps up the stairs, and Loki shakes his head, “The couch is fine, besides, I’ll get to tease Natasha about it later.” He chuckles faintly, not to be noisy when everyone is asleep.

Thor doesn’t return the smile and only nods, “Good night then.” He says curtly and walks up the stairs.

Loki takes what he has in hands to the kitchen, and then comes back to flop on the couch. There’s a small part in him that attempts to coax him into propping his head up and looking out the window. He fights it a little at first, but then the clock tickles with a dreary echo as if urging him more in the deafening quiet. He can’t take it and the curiosity is taking the best of him, so he lifts his head and slowly glances up at the window. His eyes catch sight of a darkened silhouette of a narrow face and long hair on the white blinds, and just beyond, there’s a woman looking at him, but she’s… beautiful, Loki admits as he tries to calm his heart down. She’s really beautiful: long eyelashes which he can see from this far, and red, big lips that are slowly turning up into a wicked smirk. She’s smirking at him before slowly lifting a hand, slim and long fingers, like a skeleton, slowly elongating sharp nails. They palm out just enough to wave lazily at him. He curses under his breath and buries his face under the pillow. Tomorrow, he’s so going to see someone about these hallucinations.

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“He’s got a pretty mole under his right eye!” this is Kate being a morning person.
“It’s sexy.” Natasha chimes in, but a yawn soon muffles her words.

“Wake up, you lazy ass!” Wade, his dear Wade is ready to take down a bull so early in the morning if he had to.

Loki has no choice but to wake up and stretch, and that’s when he notices the blanket on him. He was out so soon, he doesn’t remember someone flinging this over him, but it must have been Thor, because he does have a blurry memory of him doing so. “What time is it?” He mumbles sleepily.

“It’s almost nine.” Steve replies, oh you’re also up, makes him wonder what they’re up to.

“Aren’t you supposed to be making us breakfast by now?” Peter flails a hand towards the kitchen.

“No?” Loki stretches more under the blanket. “Not your maid.” He wiggles to the other side to continue his sleep. “Lemme sleep some more.”

“What are you dreaming about anyway?” Natasha sighs as she hoists him up, “Some nasty dream where you’re getting off on some voluptuous lady?”

Loki’s heart races as he remembers the cold smirk which unjustly belonged to that uncanny woman. Looking around, he clambers up with flapping arms clutching at the armrest and the backrest. He ignores the confused glares he’s receiving and sighs with relief only when he finds no one watching him from the windows to assuage his fears. It’s still too early for jump scares, woman. “I need to wash my face first.”

"Bathroom is upstairs, first door on your left." Peter points at the ceiling with a hand holding a large ketchup bottle, and then he flops down on the ground. Loki doesn’t even want to know what Peter is planning to do with that bottle so he just nods. “There’s also an extra toothbrush, use it.” Peter is being quite nice this morning; maybe Loki should reward him with a nice breakfast, but “no breakfast for those who eat anything before.” He announces and ignores the grumblings being thrown at his back.

Coltish legs hop up the stairs, and, darn, there’s a labyrinth of doors he doesn’t know if it’s a mirror illusion. "The first door,” he reminds himself, and just as he is about to open a large, wooden door, someone else does it from the inside. Loki’s jaw drops with alarm when Thor walks out of the bathroom half naked, a white towel wrapped around his waist, and his hair dripping wet.

"S-sorry, I didn't." Loki wets his dry lips, and Thor only stares at him, a brow slowly going up. "I didn't think someone would be here." Loki rubs his nape with a hand and shoves the other into his pocket, and Thor only lets his brows meet his hairline. Loki’s heart is about to burst, spare him the glares already! "I wanted” He starts, “I wanted to take a shower, too. It's kind of gross when your sweat dries on you.”

"Towels are at the bottom drawer." Thor says about that and shoots past him.

Loki doesn't mean it when he looks at the other’s tight ass, and he doesn't mean it when he licks and bites down his bottom lip... and he doesn't mean it when he leans back inside the bathtub and lets his fingers wander across his chest, over his nipples and down and above his waist. He hasn't been keeping free time to love himself lately. He's been neglecting the little pressure building up inside and now it all comes back clashing at once. He lets the water flush hard so that the moans he utters are lost with the resonance of the splashing around him. His hands sloppily, yet tenderly massage the soft flesh of his cock. It's wonderful, it's intense and he's on the verge. He's holding the moans in until his restraints finally break loose and this "nngh!" little erotically sweet and somehow slut-y moan escapes like honey from his lips.
A floral, musky smell surges inside the shower now that he is done. As he delves into the drawers for clothes to replace the towel around his waist, a knock puts his motions on hold.

“Why’ you using this bathroom, I specifically told you the first door on the left.”

“It was my left.” Loki retorted, and, soon, he hears the male on the other side of the door sigh.

“Just” –he gives up– “I brought you some clothes, open up.”

He does, and he finds Peter willing his eyes to look elsewhere but Loki’s, a blush flourishing his cheeks. He hands him a grey T-shirt and dark blue sweatpants, and –ahem, a pair of tight boxers. “Wear them until your clothes dry, or you can use some of ours if you want.”

“It’s fine. Peter.” He takes the offered clothes with a smile. “I can wait until my clothes dry.”

Loki walks down the stairs, clothed, and goes straight to the kitchen. He makes breakfast and sets the table with the help of Natasha and Kate. The excessiveness of teenagers’ testosterone makes him wonder loudly where Thor is, but Steve shakes his head. “He’s really not much of a morning person. Let him be, he’ll come down when he’s all up.”

Loki’s small lips part into a sheepish smile, listening to this guy makes it sound like he’s trying to grow out of the adolescence phase soon. He nods at them anyway to start eating. Thor, just as predicted, doesn’t come down, at all. It’s a little past ten when Loki changes and tells them he has to leave for his job.

“Loki, wait up!” Kate opens the door and scuttles towards him when he’s at the porch.

His eyes narrow confusingly and then he takes his hands out of his pockets. “What is it?”

“Remember the guy from last night?” She reminds, and adds “If you see him again, call us, okay?”

“I’m” –he eyes the trees and then her– “You really don’t have to worry about that.” He beams and ruffles her caramel brown hair. “See you around.”

She’s about to say something to that but he turns around quickly and skids away. He’s sincerely grateful to her worrying for his sake, but he can’t afford to look like a puny good-for-nothing in front of a teenager, and he doesn’t even know the guy, if they’re in bad terms or had a falling-out, then what’s that got to do with him? He’s just a hired clerk who so happens to know how to cook, and who’s obviously seeing hallucinations again because the frigging creepy woman in the white dress is standing between the trees. If he has to weigh her malevolent vibe, he can basically say she isn’t there to chat, and the glare is something to go by. He hastens his gait a little, feet scuffing against the dry leaves. That’s it. That is it. He is going to see a doctor now. And why are women always the
ones to play little scary ghosts? That’s just not fair.

He makes it a little farther when a honk suddenly blares off, and he spins around, ignoring the little heart attack he’s almost just had. The light bulbs of the familiar Mercedes flash red when Thor pulls over. Loki doesn’t even get second thoughts about getting in. He opens the door of the passenger’s seat and greets a visibly infuriated Thor.

“Not a morning person, guessed as much.”

Thor drives off. He looks at Loki only when the road is clear and straight. “Good morning to you, too.”

Loki rolls his eyes, bemused, “Okay, you can’t hold that against me.” He smirks because he can’t help it, “Besides, it’s almost eleven.”

“Almost being the operative word.” Thor lifts his jaw up towards the windshield’s direction, good-humoredly.

“Jeez, alright.” Loki concedes, can’t fault him for trying though. “Good morning.” He glances over stealthily at the other and he’d swear he saw him biting down his bottom lip to suppress a smirk of his own.

“See?” Thor teases more, “That wasn’t hard, was it now?”

“Going to work this late?” Loki asks after a pause, relaxing more in his seat.

“‘Something like that.” The other offers.

“‘Had no idea jobs were just something like that.” Loki shakes his head on an endearing smile, “and you skipped a meal.”

“I’ll survive.”

“Kate is worried, you should talk to her.” Loki looks out the window now.

“I know.” The other says curtly, “I’ll take care of it.”

Loki’s brow goes up, accusingly.

The other glares when he picks up on it, “What?”

Loki looks elsewhere again. “Nothing, I just thought you looked serious for second there.”

“That’s because I am.” He tells him, “I’ve been busy a lot lately but I’ll deal with this later.”

“Mm.” He nods. “That’s assuring.”

Thor turns the wheels and then looks at Loki. “Need me to drop you off somewhere?”

Yes, he wants to say, but refrains. “It’s fine, just stop here.”

Thor goes ‘don’t push people’ mood on full operation. He doesn’t bother Loki with any questions when he stops the car. The other wets his lips and turns to thank him, but Thor has something to offer, “Look, if something happens call me. I know Kate is going to come back to your shop and cause troubles, she does that a lot.” He sighs, “Just call me if something’s up.”
“She doesn’t do that.” Loki shakes his head. “And she’s going to be fine with me if that’s what you’re worried about.”

“Give me your number.” The other interjected.

However, Loki has no desire whatsoever to do as the other says. For some novel reason, he finds it overwhelming making Thor upset on his expense—shift his attention on Loki, it but raises fire in him and that’s wrong, so wrong he is aware, but can’t bring himself to stop at this rate. “I don’t think so—” he suddenly holds his breath when Thor uses his hands to search him up, and Loki feels them on his chest, probing their way down to his pockets. “What’ you doing, seriously, personal space? You’re unfamiliar with a lot of terms it seems.”

Thor takes the phone out of Loki’s left pocket with a furrow.

“Dude. That was rude.” He complains, “You can’t just grope me like that.”

Thor shoves the phone back onto his chest. “My number is saved, call me if anything happens, you get that?” Thor gives him the silent brow arch, and Loki finds himself nodding slowly against his will. “Good, now get out. I have a meeting to attend to.” He orders, and faces the windshield.

Loki mumbles something about snarky, chest-groping assholes and opens the door, “Have a nice day, impudent bastard.” He slams the door behind him with force. He is thankful for the ride, believe him he is, but he isn’t ready to get reminded of that with a haughty attitude.

Thor delays the take-off a few moments for some reason before driving off totally.

The first thing Loki does after Thor’s car completely vanishes from his sight is hail a taxi to drive him to the town’s local hospital. He’s not sure why he couldn’t just ask Thor, maybe it has something to do with being uncomfortable with people finding out that he’s having scary hallucinations. Alright, for some reason his dreams didn’t reappear for a couple of nights in a row, which, hands down, he will celebrate. But the dull pain in his head is not something he could be imagining. He knows it will evolve to a blistering migraine so better safe than sorry.

Because he knows the doctors there thanks to his unfinished record of bustling in and out, he’s allowed to have an appointment the same day. When he tells his doctor about his—surprise! Hallucinations, he gets another CT scan. An hour later, he’s advised to see a therapist, and with a honed expression, the doctor reasons “this is not the first case I’ve seen.” He said, “Some of my patients used to spot strange sightings around the town, and of course after the scans, nothing was proven.” He puts down the pen he’s been fumbling with for a while and intertwines his fingers together on the desk. “We also recommended them to magnificent psychologists who were able to help them out, and their problem stopped.”

“Then what about the pain in my head? Is that also an illusion?” Loki asks on an annoyed sigh.

“In most cases of depression, physical pain is highly active.”

“OK, so, let me get this straight, according to your logic I’m not only crazy and seeing things, I’m crazy and seeing weird things, and depressed.” He shakes his head, leaving himself unencumbered for the current contention.

“Loki,” the doctor softens his voice, “Most of the symptoms you are showing are related to depression. We can associate it to something entirely different but I’m not sure how it can help.”

“It can because I’m not a depressed person, depressed people are suicidal, and I still want to live, thank you, very much.”
“Just give this doctor a chance,” he relents after a suppressed groan, “See if they can help.”

“What if they can’t?”

“We’ll do more tests then.”

Loki rolls his eyes, because even if he turns the offer down, it still won’t fix his problems. “I guess I’ll go after all.”

The doctor smiles, “Great, I’ll give them a call beforehand.” He waves when Loki bows his head and leaves.

Maybe he is depressed.

Lack of time and spirit finds him at a restaurant. He takes the table next to the window and orders a hamburger and a can of Cola. He’s going through the stacked Mountain Climbing brochures when someone sits at the seat across his. “Robin, what’ you doing here?” He eyes quickly fleck to his clothes. “Why’ you dressed like that? You work here?”

“Yeah, I’m helping dad.” Robin points at the back of the counter with his thump, and Loki grins because the dad looks exactly like his son; the glasses and the hair cut, even their furled lips and shy smiles are the same. And also there are a lot of items lined on the counter too. Those were definitely from the shop.

“That’s wonderful.” He comments, “Just don’t slack in school, do your homework.”

“Done that last week.” Robin looks proud, “Wanted to spend more time with dad so I finished all the homework last week.”

Loki is impressed and silent for a second.

“By the way,” Robin frowns, “I saw you leaving the hospital, is everything OK?”

The other gives him a reassuring nod. “I went for a regular checkup, nothing serious.”

The other nods, albeit tentatively, and tells him his burger is ready as he brings it to him along with a Cola. When he’s done, Loki pays the bill and insists to when the dad tells him it’s on the house. Then, he leaves to open the shop, but he’s surprised to find the sign already out.

“Owner?” he calls out as soon as he enters, “How long have you been here?”

“A few minutes.” The owner answers behind a large, sculptured statue of an old warrior, “Had a carriage bring this here, pretty impressive, isn’t it?” He finally shows up all covered in dust, admiring his new treasure.

“You didn’t steal it from someone, did you?” Loki jokes as he eyes the statue.

The owner lets out a loud laugh and the frames of his shoulders jolt with it. “Don’t tell anyone!”

They laugh jointly.

It’s around two in the evening now. Loki is playing some online game when his phone vibrates, and it’s his doctor telling him he has set up a rendezvous for him tomorrow at five in the evening. He’s not happy about it, but he’s thankful. It’s half past three when his mark itches. He scratches it, but it
continues to itch, and when he checks it, he is surprised to see that mark is no longer just a plain
deformed circle. He also notices that its shape has changed, becoming clearer, but he has no idea
what it resembles. He resumes the online game again because he’s winning. It’s four now when he
hears some noises coming from the far side of the shop, and he ignores it because it’s all in his head,
or so what he tries to convince himself with. It’s almost five and he decides to just close down since
there aren’t many clients coming today anyway. He gives the lock a shove to see if they open but
they don’t, he’s relieved. But he’s not anymore when he turns around and sees the Porsche parked
behind. The window of the passenger’s seat slides down very slowly, and the same face from last
night is greeting him with a curt wave of the hand.

Tony gushes, “Evening, sir.” and it’s weird, because he doesn’t look like someone who is in bad
terms with anyone.

Loki nods and nears the car in careful, calculated steps after the other offers him a ride. “Was told
not to speak to you.” Loki says with one eye narrowed, as if to sound and look apologetic. “Sorry.”

“Don’t be. I was, too, just passing by.” He grins, “Thought I’d drive you on the way.”

“That’s very kind of you, thank you.” Loki says, now looking around, “Be careful on the road,
OK?”

The man nods, “you too.” He tells him and drives off almost dramatically with tires screeching on the
tar. All the eyes of the passersby fall on them.

Loki spots Natasha going towards the local library across the road, and he wonders if she and her
gang are have a thing for nocturnal activities, because, wow, do they only move when the sun is
about to set!

“Natasha.” He calls before she goes in. She grinds into a stop and faces him, looking her usual bored
self. “You know this library closes up at six, don’t you?”

She looks at him for a second and switches to look at the library’s entrance, and there’s a sign above
which states exactly what Loki has just said. “I didn’t know.”

“Not much of a bookworm, I assume.” He smiled, “If you want to borrow a book, you can use my
card.” He takes out his wallet and tries to find the card when she suddenly walks past him and
pushes him by the shoulder on the way. He’s more than surprised, to be a little frank, and he doesn’t
feel comfortable leaving things at that so he goes after her. “Hey, are you sure you’re okay? Didn’t
you want a book?”

“I didn’t. Stop following me.” She says, haughtily, and Loki is starting to think that maybe it’s
hereditary because it’s not a coincidence that all the people at the Dinson household are sort of
cdescending dicks, except for Kate; she must be an angel amongst little devils with red horns and
pointy tails.

“Not until you stop walking away from me.” He challenges. She lets out a loud sigh, and stops.
“Well, now mind explaining what’s going on? You are looking more irritated than usual.” And he
hopes she’s not PMS-ing because that could be really awkward. Her eyes widen a little more and
she’s looking at him quizzically. He smiles. He’s figured it out, banzai for him, “Thought I didn’t
notice?” And then he’s sure she’s trying not to look impressed. It gives him a whole new sense of
feeling, a sense of wanting to comfort someone, “You in for a cup of coffee?” He offers and doesn’t
even wait for her answer. He holds her by the wrist and guides her towards the nearest coffee shop,
and he sits her down opposite his seat when they’re inside. He orders black coffee for himself and
she takes hot chocolate. “So, what book did you want?”
“I just wanted to check something, didn’t want any book.” She sighs, large eyes averting his.

“Is it something that I can help you with?”

She shakes her head. “It’s fine. I can deal with it.” She wraps her fingers around the cup as soon as the waiter puts it down.

“I’m not some know-it-all, but there’s something I want to say about you.” He starts, and repositions himself for it, “So don’t get me wrong.” She furrows her sharp brows at him and nods in cue, and Loki thinks this is the first she’s made direct eye contact with him. “You seem like a person who pretends they don’t care, but you’re actually carrying a lot more weight than others think you can handle.”

She’s silent for a second, and, then, she looks down at the table and hides her face behind her hands. “I just want to be useful. Everyone thinks I’m smart and I’m being treated differently because of it. But school and study is not my number one interest, there are other things that I want to do but they keep pestering me, I mean my family, because all of them went to college so I cannot fail them. And there’s also this little thing that I can’t tell anyone about and it’s weighing me down a lot. I just want to do what I like but I’m so scared of letting my family down, and mother won’t stop nagging when I skip school and it’s tiring, I swear…” there’s a sob right there but it’s almost inaudible.

“Hey,” Loki rests his hands on hers in a rare show of gentleness. “It’s okay.” He promises, “Calm down.” He tells her, on a whisper. “Here,” he hands her some tissues and smiles when she snorts on them. “You’ve calmed some?”

She nods and refuses to look him in the eyes again, already back to her old self. “I don’t want to drink this anymore,” she sniffs, “I want Avocado juice.”

Loki chuckles happily and nods. “So be it.” He orders another and looks at her, “anything else?” She shakes her head, and after the juice arrives, she drinks it comfortably. “Natasha, there’s a reason you’re you, a reason why your soul has chosen this body.” He tells her, “What you want to do with your future is for you to decide, because neither your father nor your mother has a say over that. Their job is to secure the best for your own choices, as long as they’re reasonable of course.” He pauses to check if she’s listening, and she is. “And it’s good to complain, keeping things piled up is bad for your health. You are still young and you have the privilege of complaining when there’s something you don’t want, just voice it out.” He looks around, unaware of the glimmer in his eyes. “School is good because it will provide you with a job in the future, but it’s not a reason to stop you from following your dreams which is one of the essential reasons to why we exist. You only get to live once, so make best of it.”

She gives him a pointed look like she’s understood everything and has decided something in her mind. She gulps what’s left in the glass and stands up. “I’m going back.” She says, looking more determined now.

Loki nods understandingly at her, “there you have it, now go.” He urges, and watches her nod slightly and trot out of the shop. He sips the last drops of the coffee in his cup, more calmly. “Kids…” he murmurs happily to himself.

_Are noisy…_

He hears a voice continues for him, chilling him to the bone. He swivels around, more alerted, he finds a waitress telling him it’s time to close up. He looks at clock on his phone and it’s almost six. He pays for the orders and leaves. There’s still a little light outside and the sun has not yet sunken behind the horizon.
Who does he need to contact for this? Doctors are no use, so psychologists will definitely be of no use too. His head is ringing and his mark is itching. He’s tired and scared of raising his gaze only to meet with the woman’s wicked eyes.

That’s when he remembers Thor’s number and he clicks on it to dial it, but he shakes his head and returns the phone back to his pocket. So what if he calls? What would he say? “Oh hey there, just wanted to ask if you happen to know something about people having hallucinations and hearing voices, and seeing nightmares every single night?” Loki decides he can’t call Thor, but he can call his doctor and pursue him to prescribe some sleeping pills for him.

He opens the door to his apartment. There are no lights at Martha’s so he guesses she’s spending the weekend at her daughter’s on the other side of town. He goes straight to his room and flops down, downs the pill and waits. It’s grueling because there are noises outside his door – noises like someone scratching the panels and he tries to convince himself it’s only in his head. Very soon, he surrenders to a dreamless sleep.

Maybe a psychologist isn’t needed anymore, those pills worked wonders. Except when he goes to the shower in the next morning and tries to look at himself in the mirror, he sees the woman again, and when he scrambles out back to his bedroom, he spots scratching marks on his door.

Nope, definitely going to the psychologist’s today.

Clients come and go and some big shot is here to snap up the statue. Loki isn’t making assumptions because, dude, the wheel his chauffeur is manning is no joke. He doesn’t negotiate but only calls the owner to deal with this man. The purchase deal is done and over with and the man pays in cash, and it’s a lot of money. He might buy beef this month. The statue stays there until later that day when a mini trunk stops by and carries the warrior away, goodbye brave warrior.

It’s almost five and Loki closes up to go see his psychologist. How enthralling.

“So if my doctor has already explained the situation, why do you want me to repeat it again?” Loki is lying down on a Chesterfield that gives him neck cramps as much as he twitches. The psychologist is sitting over an armchair – which looks way more comfortable by the way, with a waxed leg over the other. “And he didn’t say anything about you being a woman.” She’s pretty stunning because, of course she is, now that Loki wanted to rip into someone for making him do most of the work.

“I assume me being a woman should not be the focus of your worry.” She says, and those big eyes of hers half stare with an incessant lure. “And I want you to explain the situation to me again because I’d like to hear it in details from you.”

“Look, Ms. Diana, the situation is…” with a barely stifled groan, he tells her about his dreams and the things he’s started to see and hear recently, but he tells her nothing about the mark, because right now, it seems irrelevant.

He doesn’t know how much time go by when she finally releases him from the discomfort of the sofa, and the feeling of nakedness. She scribbles something down and hands him the paper. “Your problem isn’t the first I’ve seen. I promise you’re going to be fine after a few more sessions.”
“Your promise isn’t the first I hear either.” He mumbles as he reads off the scribbles: some description of a new medicine with her reasons being ‘unjustified and constant headaches, image and voice hallucinations, hypochondriac tendencies with leveled depression symptoms, hyperventilation episodes, possible sleepwalking…’ and some more other writing Loki doesn’t have the heart to keep reading so he just shoves it into his pocket. “Thanks anyway.”

He goes back home after buying the meds she prescribed for him. The entire building is cold, and he doesn’t like it. Maybe he should just go to some music venue with artificial disco lights spinning around, and have fun, bring home some hot babe and have even double fun. It is half past seven and Paradise must be open by now. The idea isn’t very appealing all of a sudden. He lets out a sigh and walks in to his apartment, his eyes land directly on the scratching marks on his bedroom door. He just have to survive this night, too.

He’s making something fancy to reward himself for surviving a lot of things actually, but now that he’s done setting the table, he realizes he can’t eat all that food by himself. And there aren’t any beggars in Dragsa to whom he can give half of the food –thank God for that. He dons his cardigan and carries all the food in bags after stuffing it into plastic boxes. Just outside the entrance, his old neighbor, who lives in the apartment under his, is parking his bicycle, and Loki seizes the chance to ask him if he could use it.

“Of course you can.” He said, “Tomorrow I can use my wife’s, she doesn’t have work anyway.”

A sense of gratefulness fills him because, climbing up hills, he seriously is in no mood for that. He hooks the bags to the handlebars and heads to The House in the Woods. He’s there after a few minutes, glad he made it in one piece since he kept hallucinating all the way there. There are still some lights on, and he’s suddenly having second thoughts whether to walk in or just go back home. He could always store the food in the refrigerator anyway. But he’s here so he might as well greet the people of the house. He knocks and waits, and when no answer arrives at the fourth knock, he pushes the door and it opens for him so he walks in. “Hello? Is anybody home?” Only the creaking sounds of the front door replies back as it closes up. No drama queens hogging the couch, no scalawags sprawling on the floor either. The kitchen is empty too, and he doesn’t see it his place to go upstairs and search the rooms.

“What’ you doing here?” Someone asks, and when Loki reels around, his bags turn with him. He smiles when he sees Thor. “My man!” He gushes, he almost made feces in his drawers. “Thought you guys were gone or something.”

“We were training.” He reports with a final tone.

“Training, oh, that’s good, and healthy.” Loki eyes the other’s sweaty sportswear, and he realizes that Thor’s just walked in too. “Sorry I came in without consent, but I knocked for, like, four times and got no answer, didn’t want my little trip here to go to waste so I decided to place the food in the fridge”. He flails the bag forward to clear himself from any assumptions the man of the house must be thinking because damn straight it looked like he was snooping around.

Thor eyes the bags for a second, “sure” he nods and bounces up the stairs.

The house is so silent that Loki can hear the water splashing in the bathroom upstairs. He naturally guesses that Thor is showering. He’s taking out the food from the bags when, suddenly, pain comes uninvited and collides with his head, unrelenting with its force. He leans on the counter with shaky
hands palmed out, and clutches at it. Damn, he wasn’t ready. It aches more and all he wants to do is lie down, curl up into a ball and sleep eternally. He wobbles up to the couch and rests his head on its arm. The pain is not letting up, but unlike the chesterfield at the therapist’s, this sofa is comfortable. He hears laughter coming from some far off distance and the trees rustle outside with what he has to guess is gentle breeze. Living in the woods is not that bad after all…

Someone is talking, but it’s embodied and he can’t make out what they’re saying. He forces his eyes open, but they flutter lazily and yet he’s still not fully awake. He’s tired and in pain and he blames it on his meds. He’s still on the couch, that’s for sure, if the feel of leather beneath him is any testimony to certify that. The sounds he’s been hearing were coming from the TV. His pupils wander around and spot Thor on the floor, leaning his back on the couch. Loki can see the large nape despite the man being veiled by the TV’s statics like a silhouette, it makes him look funny especially that he has got large shoulders. He looks like the Mothman. Ah, Laura Linney looked so hot in that 2002 piece of a crappy movie. Thor turns around at the small giggle Loki managed to let out.

“Finally up?” He asks while sitting up properly, “Feeling better?”

Loki’s mouth is dry – Sahara dry; but he nods lazily anyway.

Thor fills a cup with water from the bottle on the coffee table, and brings it to him. “Drink.”

Loki tries to hold the cup but there’s no strength in his hands and the cup almost drops down but Thor is faster and he saves the day, congratulation hero of the year. “Sorry,” he says drowsily, “No strength in me.”

“Headaches.” Loki sighs, wearily. “Pretty annoying too, they used to happen in mornings only.”

“Did you do a checkup?” Thor asks, and doesn’t unhook his arm from where it’s heating up under the other’s slightly feverish skin.

Loki is getting drowsier, “Done that,” he mutters, “Couldn’t find anything though.” The pain is slowly tapering off to a light ache and, God damn, why is he feeling sleepy again when he’s only starting to get better.

“Rest up.”

He hears Thor say but everything goes dark, and he is fading into a comfortable, painless sleep.

He wakes up again, and instinctively looks where Thor had been sitting before he woke up the previous time, and he’s still sitting there, a book in hand.

“Still not home, aren’t they?”
Thor doesn’t turn around, but he does reply, “They’re actually here,” he says, “The girls are taking a shower, separately” he tilts his head and pauses when Loki chuckles, “Wade is in his room, changing, and the other two are in the kitchen.”

“They’d better not touch the food I brought.” Loki tries to sit up, and Thor turns around to give a little hand, damn the couch is soft and he could sleep on it for decades if he had to. “Speaking of which, never seen you sit here.” Here being the couch.

Thor shrugs and he is about to turn to his book when Loki grabs his arms and pulls him closer so that Thor can sit next to him, except it ends up a little awkward with Thor holding himself atop him, a hand braced on the armrest and the other on its backrest. Loki looks up into the other’s eyes, his own trembling at how easily his plan got jinxed up and now he’s locked between Thor’s arms. Their eyes meet as Thor slowly looks down at him, faces only inches apart and Loki’s naturally-sparkly-eyes go ablaze. Thor’s dark, seductive pupils land on Loki’s, bewitching in the silence.

Crap.

Holy crap…

“Sorry,” Loki finally manages through a haggard breath, “Actually I wanted you to sit down on it, not…” He trails off to find something that can justify this, but Thor sighs and shifts to sit down on the sofa. “I Hope you’re happy that you got your wish.”

“Not mine.” Loki shakes his head, eyes on the other’s profile, beholding the long, sharp jaw and pointy-tipped nose. “The kids would be happy if you commingle with them sometime instead of going straight to your room like you’re evading the plague.”

Thor doesn’t look at him, but he props his elbow on the armrest of the sofa and leans his cheek on the knuckles. “It’s annoying when people tell you what to do.” Deep voice fuses into the silent air.

“I’m not.”

“It’s exactly what you’re doing.”

“OK, fine.” Loki admits, “But I’m not doing it for me so you don’t have to be annoyed.”

“But I am.”

“Dude, just chill.” Loki sighs.

“Calling me dude isn’t going to make me chill, you know.” Thor snorts, now looking at Loki.

“Noted,” Loki confirms, “Now we’re talking about the kids, you can’t just dismiss that, you said you’re family, right?”

“That’s unrelated, no matter how you think of it.”

“Wrong.” Loki points his index at the other and repudiates the horrors of having his index pointed at the owner of the house, “Everything is related. I’m not telling you what to do by the way so will you please ignore that part?”

“You’re practically barking orders even now, is that a hobby of yours?” Thor seems to relax more in his position.

“I’m sort of in the process of developing the hobby of punching you in the gut if you don’t stop”
looking at me like that.”

Thor shifts to sit up properly as he keeps staring at the other. “like what?”

“Like that,” Loki flails a hand in the air to direct Thor’s attention on something other than him. He can feel the beats of his heart deepening against his rib cage, and it’s the sort of feeling that sends butterflies to your stomach. “Like I’ve stolen a few bucks from your precious jar or something.”

“You mean like you’ve been giving orders to the owner of the house?”

Oh, that one, Loki foresaw it. He breathes through his nose, annoyed; at least he believes he is. “You’re not going to any meetings tonight, are you?” He asks, and adds hurriedly “and if you say I’m giving orders, I’ll freaking punch you in the balls.”

“I’m not.” The other shakes his head, small lips twisting into an asymmetrical smile. “Was it so important you had to ask?”

“Actually, yea.” Loki gets up, “Because you’re going to help me set the table and you’re going to sit on the couch like how the others want you to, and you’re going to enjoy it.”

Thor gives some sort of ‘you must be joking’ kind of glare, and Loki wiggles his eyebrows at him playfully. “And that, mister, is what I call giving orders!”

Loki enters the kitchen followed by a visibly upset Thor. Peter and Steve are fumbling with their phones, acumen reporting the nervous strikes oozing in the space, so Loki arches up an eyebrow. “You guys look uncomfortable.”

And that is an unfair understatement to the statement itself.

Thor actually laughs, a squeaky, lively laugh, before he quickly opens the door of the fridge to hide his face. Loki watches as Steve sits up, “We’re in the living room if you need us.” He turns around and motions to Peter to follow.

“What’s their deal?” He mumbles as he, absentmindedly, opens the bags be brought with him.

“Embarrassed.” Thor replies, and nears him, “They’re a little embarrassed.”

“Why is that?” Loki cocks his head. “I didn’t do anything to upset them, did I?”

“Quite the contrary, it seems.” Thor shakes his head.

The food needs to be reheated and then it’s all set and ready. Thor is being quite useless as he attempts to set the table. Kate and Natasha join in and they both sit on the floor. And when Loki and Thor return with the rest of the plates, they’re surprised to see the couch empty.

Loki looks around for a second, still standing with the plates in his hands, “Wrong house?”

Natasha rolls her large eyes and settles to look at Thor. “Please sit down.”

Said male nods and sits down on the sofa. Loki smirks to himself and puts the dishes down, and crouches to sit on the floor when Natasha claps, stopping him. “You too, on the couch.”

“What!” All the guys exclaim disbelievingly, “You’re letting him use it?” Wade gasps, and when she nods at him, Steve and Peter shake their heads. “This calls for a celebration, man!” Peter says, and
Steve adds, “Congratulations, Loki, it officially means you’re her favorite.”

Loki smiles warmly, cheeks jutting, and he walks up to sit down next to Thor, finding him glaring but Loki shrugs happily.

Thor sighs, “Bastard.”

Loki nibbles on his lower lip and whispers “Shove it”.

But for some reason, everyone hears it and they choke on their first bite of the food.

“Dare or truth” Kate prompts when they’re done with the cleaning. Everyone seems excited about the game, the two sitting one on each side of the couch with their knees touching, are too.

“I’ll go first.” She informs them, and looks at Loki, mischief in her eyes and he can read it loud and clear. “Dare or truth? And if you give up you have to strip a layer.”

“Truth.” He shrugs, relaxingly moving his other leg and hiding his jaw behind his fingers since he’s leaning on them.

“First time you smoked?”

“Sixth grade.” He shrugs again, “ Barely a whiff, really, but got busted and grounded for two months so I never smoked after that again.” She grins, and he looks at Steve. “Dare or truth?” The other chooses the latter, and Loki looks around to think of one, “first kiss.”

There are whistles teasing Steve as he blushes and scratches his cheek. “Actually it was last summer, we’d been dating for a few months, sort of platonic until we kissed, but we broke up soon later.”

“She must have hated the way you kiss.” Natasha flips her hair off her shoulder.

“You kiss like a fish trying to breathe, I know ‘cause I saw you two, disturbing I swear.” Wade shakes his head, a laugh making his shoulders tremble and so everyone laughs too, and when Loki glances over his shoulder, he finds that even Thor is smiling.

“OK, Wade, dare or truth?” Peter asks firmly, and when the other chooses dare, Peter’s shoulders slump, “Damn it, I thought you were going for truth.”

Wade laughs, “You’re just so easy to read, dude. So what’s it going to be?” He asks, and Peter smirks to himself, “take a quick and cold shower then get back and sit on the sofa between them.” Wade glares at him and takes off his hoodie. “You’re so going to pay for this!” The others laugh and Peter is having a bliss, don’t mess with the silent type.

“Stevie, dare or truth?” The other chooses truth because he’s so not going into the shower, “OK, so I know we’re buddies and all, but, man, forgive me, I have to get some brownie points here; your man is losing.” He sighs, “Ever had alcohol?” The other pales and shakes his head, “no.”

“He’s lying.” Thor interjects with his deep voice.

“Are you stupid?” Natasha tilts her head, bored as usual. “You know you can’t lie to us, it’s enough you had alcohol when you’re underage. Now take off a layer.”

“Your turn is next” you bitch hangs unspoken in the air between them as he takes his T-shirt off and dares her by jabbing his foot at her face. “Smell my toes!” Everyone bursts out laughing, even Thor,
but she gently takes one of her socks off and gives her boyfriend the middle finger.

“Dare or truth?” She addresses Loki, who is surprised no one has asked the guy next to him. Kate mumbles angrily about how she wanted to pick Loki, too. “Dare.” He decides, and she rolls her eyes. “Been dying to ask you something, I didn’t expect you to pick dare.” She adds when he presses his lips and smiles benignly at her. She’s trying to plan something evil for payback when Kate gasps flamboyantly and props up to whisper something in her ear, everyone flinches and Loki has no idea what is going on, even Thor next to him is fidgeting. Natasha grins for what seems like the first time, and, frankly speaking, Loki isn’t happy to see it. “I’m going to make it less harsh for you. Hold his hand for three minutes with your fingers intertwined.”

How is that less harsh?

Wade falls to the back laughing because the look on Loki’s face is priceless. Loki glances up at Thor, who shrugs at him and relaxes his hand on his thigh, but Loki is having a lot of doubts about this so he decides to just take a layer. “I can win the next one.” He mumbles and tugs at the hems of his shirt to pull it up, it reaches his chest when Wade teases him, “That’s not even a challenge, loser.” And Loki pauses, the shirt is still above the first lines of his ribs, revealing his pale skin and fairly muscled chest —half of it. “It’s just holding hands, it can’t be that hard.” Peter adds with his hand waving lazily in the air.

Loki looks around for a moment, and then he blows a sigh from his nose, defeated. He shakes his head dramatically and lets the shirt roll down on its own. “Fine” he takes Thor’s hand with force and intertwines their fingers together. “Why is this guy not getting any challenges, not fair.”

Natasha is counting the time on her phone when she syas, “He’d practically do it, whatever it is.”

The hand that’s in Loki’s hand is warm and very still, and, gosh, this is not the time to focus his attention on that. A section of his body is slowly reacting and Loki wants to hit head against a wall. “Fine then, I’m so choosing you next.”

“Tough, it’s not my fault that we’re holding hands, idiot.” Thor shakes his head, and flails their hands that are held embarrassingly together for emphasis.

“He has a point.” Steve shrugs. “You picked dare.”

“Shut up,” Loki berates and switches to look at Thor. “They’d have picked you instead if you weren’t putting off this don’t-touch-me-don’t-talk-to-me aura.”

“What the hell is that supposed to–?”

“Two minutes left!” Kate gushes on as she cranes her head to look at Natasha’s phone.

“You can survive this!” Peter shouts suddenly and shifts to look at the phone too. Steve joins them as well.

Loki’s hand is sweating, or maybe Thor’s, he has no idea. “I mean you need to unbend, man, and, no, I swear that’s not an order.”

“I am unbent.” Thor grouches. “This is ridiculous.” It is spoken with a sliver of exasperation, and Loki has the inkling that Thor abhors this to hell and back, and his throat constricts. He leans his jaw back on his hand and faces away. Thor is already leaning on his hand and looking the other way, and only their fingers are intertwined together over the sofa fabric.

“Just a few seconds now, guys!” Wade reports with his eyes wide and expectant. All of them are
eying the countdown going on on Natasha’s phone but none of them notices how Thor squeezes
Loki’s hand, making him freeze for a second, but soon blush and squeeze the other’s hand, too.

“And time’s up!” Kate claps once and loud.

They let go at once and Loki rubs his hands conspiringly together. “My turn, pick something.” He
isn’t disappointed that Thor chose truth. He’d be stupid if he didn’t see it coming. There are just so
many things he wants to ask, but the kids are waiting with bare anticipation so he might as well give
them a little reward for not being wholeheartedly impudent tonight. “Be honest with me, how do you
feel about this?” He pivots his two hands clockwise in the air, motioning at the sofa and the kids. The
other man lifts puckered brows at him and Loki rolls his eyes miserably; his eyes might seriously get
forever lost under his upper lids someday, but, damn it, sometimes they’re annoyingly stupid. “You
know!” he breathes out, accusingly.

“Ordinary.” Thor gives a slight shrug of shoulders, hugging a pillow. Loki doesn’t even turn his
head around to see how the guys’ postures are slouching disappointingly. “You’re lying.” He
deadpans.

“How did you kno–” Peter shakes his head and corrects himself. “I mean, how’ you know that?”

“I don’t need to be an expert to know.” Loki tells him, eyes on Thor who’s glaring at him as he
makes to pry it out of him without a moment’s notice, “Your eyes looked elsewhere when you
answered. Now, how about you play fair?”

Thor is embarrassed and it’s evident when he scratches his forehead and brings the pillow higher,
you only do that instinctively when you’re trying to protect yourself from giving away your true
feelings, and that’s how Thor is acting right now. “I–” he starts slowly, “am kind of happy.”

Loki’s lips part into a really wide grin, “That wasn’t hard, was it now?” He teases the other and is
enjoying it.

The rest of the company gets overwhelmed over the head and all of them bounce on Thor while he
pushes them off and threatens to rip them apart. Loki is laughing when he leaves the couch and
heads to find his phone since it’s started ringing. It’s Martha’s number glowing on the screen. He
turns around and sees the gang bouncing back from the couch when Thor shoves them off, so he
retreats to the front door and walks outside, meeting the night breeze.

“Martha, it’s nice of you to call.”

“Oh, Loki.” She coos, “You know I’m staying with my daughter now, I’d have made you some
cookies otherwise.”

“You don’t need to worry yourself about anything, just spend time with your daughter. I’m sure
she’s missed you gobs.” He says, “You can cook her cookies too, they were so delicious by the
way.”

“But she makes me sad. I keep telling her to call Bucky and tell him to come back for meals, and she
says no.”

Loki’s heart sinks down in his guts, and he almost crumbles to his knees. “Maybe she’s right,
Martha.”

“How could you say that!” She exclaims, “I thought you were his best friend.”

“I’m sorry,” he soothes hurriedly, “I can call him myself if it makes you happy.” He rubs his
for his forehead now.

“I’m sure he’s sleeping by now, call him tomorrow, okay?” She chuckles gently. “You’re a good boy Loki, our Bucky is so lucky to have a friend like you. I’ll make sure to remind him when he comes back.”

“Good night.”

As soon as the call ends, his whole body plummets down to the floor. This is worse than all of his nightmares, this is worse than all of the scary illusions his head offers when it’s playing games on him. He grabs two fistfuls of his hair and ponders on the ground for a long time.

“Thought you said the name Bucky didn’t mean anything.” Thor steps out of the door and sits beside him so that his right arm and leg are touching Loki’s left limbs.

Loki doesn’t even look around, “Eavesdropping now?” He snorts, “You’re too old for that, don’t you think?”

“Overhearing.” He corrects, “You okay?”

Loki lifts his head and looks heavenward; man, he could really get used to this: the sky is dazzling with an endless veil of stars, and there is the half-moon, shining down at him, unfazed. “Peachy, you?”

“Aside from embarrassing me in front of everyone,” He tilts his head to look Loki in the eyes. “Pretty fine.” He sighs and grabs his car keys from his pocket. “Come on,” he announces and descends the few stairs in his way. Loki slides his phone into his pocket and follows suit without questions.

They’re in the car as it slides on gravel, but neither one talks. Loki is drumming his fingers on his thigh while looking out the window when Thor suddenly brings the car to a smooth halt, and undoes his seatbelt. “We’re here,” he announces as he opens the door, and naturally, Loki does the same.

“Thought you’d take us clubbing or something, seeing how both of us are a little down.” Loki walks up to the cliff with his hand in his pockets.
Unlike all days of August, this night is a little chilly; but the view down the hill makes it bearable. The half-moon is shining even without its other half, and it’s hypnotizing to say the least: how nostalgia-igniting it is. A few gray clouds are synchronizing to veil the shy stars that appear and disappear every now and then. The town looks so small from up there, and Loki holds up his two indexes and thump fingers to capture an imaginary photo of the entire picturesque scenery.

“I’m not feeling down, and I didn’t bring us here for that.” Thor said, nonchalantly spinning his car keys on his taut finger, “and clubbing, you say? That’s way to give my family the perfect example of how to work out their little issues.”

Loki reels his head to the left to have a better look at the man. “I’m a single grown-up. If clubbing is what I do to ignore or fight my problems away, then that’s no one’s business but mine.” He jokes.

“That’s strange coming from a laid-back like you.”

“Hey, now.” Loki furrows his brows and trembles at the sudden blow of wind, “I’ve got my own pile of shit to work through too, alright?”

Thor raises his brows humorously and looks up at the moon with vague eyes.

There’s silence for a few moments, and Loki suddenly decides that he wants to fill it with what’s been heaving on him for so long.

“My family moved in to this town when I was eight. At first, I didn’t have a lot of friends, you know, changed schools and was the strange kid.” He chuckles to himself at the memory playing in his head with his eyes wandering about nervously, “Bucky Barns was the only kid who approached me and ever since then, we’d hang out and play games together. We did all kind of foolish, we became inseparable.” He crouches down, “but then my mother got sick, doctors couldn’t save her and a few months later, she died.” He sighs, “When she was still alive, she treated Bucky like her own. His grandmother also treated me like I was her own, still does. So you can say that he and I were somehow brothers. The shock of losing mom was very strong on both of us, and we started drifting apart somehow because I had now more duties to carry –we both did.” He looks around when the ground suddenly darkens, and he sees that the clouds are hiding the moon again. “Father was a good man, too. He worked pretty hard for me but he was soon hospitalized when I was eighteen, and that’s when my contact with Bucky came to life again. He came to see my father one day and I had to ask because he looked like he had been hiding something from me. He wouldn’t tell me, said it was a secret thing and the people he’d been working for would be unhappy if he said anything.” A small rock on the ground becomes an interesting topic of debate as Loki keeps staring at it. “Weeks later and father passed away too. Bucky came to his funeral and vanished again a few days later.” He decides the small rock is annoying and he grabs it and throws it into the far distance, “Martha, the woman whom I’d been talking to when you were eavesdropping –”

“-Overhearing.” Thor corrects hurriedly, eyes still glued to the moon.
“She’s his grandmother. He and his mother were never on good terms so he lived with her instead. His father also had long since died so we somehow become more alike. When Bucky kept going missing for a few years, she contacted the police but it was too late since she went there when he was already eighteen, and to them, that’s old enough for a guy to decide on his own to go missing.” He shakes his head. “Anyway, she wasn’t happy with that so she asked me to give her a hand. I can’t say I did, but I tried. It was breaking me to see her like that. Bucky didn’t reply to any of our calls and he soon changed his number and we were no longer able to get a hold of him. She would always call me, whatever time, to ask me to call and ask him home and I’d always tell her the same thing, yes Martha, I’m going to call him. It made her happy.” He lets out a sigh that somehow weighed more than it should on his chest. “A few months later, I got a call from the local hospital asking me to come to identify a body, and it was like a blow to my stomach. What I’d feared was finally happening and I kept praying ‘please not him, please not him’ but my prayers were never answered, and Bucky lay there lifeless with a gash across his chest.” He rubs his face with his two hands. “I couldn’t call Martha. I knew she wouldn’t be able to take it, so I called his mother, and she freaking brought Martha along with her. I had expected it to be disastrous. You know, the wailing and screaming, but Martha was really calm about it. I didn’t understand why, I still don’t. A few days after the funeral, she came to my place and told me to call Bucky. I freaked out.” He points at his chest with both his hands. “It went on like that for a few more months when her daughter finally called and told me her mother was under a long-term shock, and was probably going to develop Alzheimer soon. It was what her doctor had said.” He stands up now and returns his hands to his pockets because it’s more than chilly now, it’s cold. “Apparently, there was a letter with Bucky addressed to me when they’d found him dead in the woods. Said a mountain lion had killed him, but dude, there are no freaking lions in this country.”

Thor doesn’t add anything. He doesn’t comment and doesn’t say any comforting words either. He only keeps his eyes on the sky, and Loki has never been grateful to have silence as his only reply.

It’s a little late when Thor finally walks back to the car, and Loki follows suit again, somehow relieved as if a heavy weight has been lifted off of his shoulders. Silence is still in control until they reach the house. Loki goes first and then an order from Thor halts him, “Wait.”

Loki stands by the front door, a hand on the handle, “What is it?”

The other shrugs and hops up the stairs in two large steps, and he approaches Loki until his face is just a few inches away from his. Loki thinks he’s going to be kissed, but Thor only —yet strangely and gently— rubs his forehead along the other’s shoulder.

“Trying to comfort me?” Loki smirks to himself because Thor is looking like a dog trying to comfort him without words like that.

“Be quiet.” The snarky man orders again, and after a few beats, he’s done. “Go to sleep, you look wrecked.”

“Oh, really, and whose fault do you think it is?” He crunches up his face, annoyed.

Thor walks past him and into the house, takes the stairs after flinging a lazy ‘good night’ which Loki says nothing back to because what the hell just happened? He doesn’t know what to do with his heartbeats anymore. They wouldn’t stop slamming against his chest and it’s not distracting, not really. He can still feel the phantom of a touch on his shoulder, warm, and heavy.

He can’t say much about the black-haired woman staring at him from the window, though.
There’s a blanket over him again when he wakes up at the noise of his phone vibrating. It’s his shrink calling in to postpone their meeting until two more days from now, and he doesn’t mind because he has his medicines on him. The clock on his phone is showing 10:13 and he guesses that nobody is home because they aren’t poking his nose or stretching his cheeks. It’s a good sign, too. He goes up the stairs to use the bathroom, but, again, Thor opens it from the other side, and, thank God, this time he’s wearing actual clothes.

“’Morning.” Loki mumbles and messes his bed hair more.

Thor is only staring, like there’s a spider on Loki’s head and he’s too scared to swipe at it. Then, something unusual happens, he leans in, and once more, Loki thinks he’s going to be kissed, but Thor leans into his neck and sniffs.

“Heck, man, if I smell just say so.” He gasps nervously, and Thor sighs haughtily, “It won’t kill you if you keep quiet.” He states, and this time, he inhales along the other’s neck and Loki feels himself gradually relaxing. And, goodness, no if you do any more, Loki’s going to melt like butter… Thor has no plans of stopping now though as he lets the tip of his nose touch Loki’s neck, hot breaths hitting the skin as Thor brushes along his neck with a pair of wet lips, and Loki sighs quietly. “Jesus, Thor…” his eyes are fluttering shut as though he’s being drugged, the feeling is unbelievable. His hands slowly come up to clutch at the other’s chest, and his head is tilting more to feel those lips gliding up and down his skin.

“Get dressed.” Thor suddenly demands when he pulls away, “I’ll give you a ride on my way.”

“No need.” Loki is still blushing, “brought a bike with me last night.”

"Hey, you watch your mouth.” Loki threatens, but it's good-humored, "that's someone's treasure, and now it's mine, that's priceless, wouldn't trade it for anything."

Thor doesn’t say anything else and he just walks past him and back to his own room. Maybe, trying to look like a bad-ass every morning is his reason to live, or maybe giving off hormones after his shower minutes are over is just a habit –a bad one at that. Maybe the time he spends in his bedroom is actually the perfect time for him to do some body fitness muscle show in front of his mirror. Man, Loki doesn’t know, but how is he supposed to deal with it if Thor arouses him and just go about his business?

He’s brushing his teeth now, vigorously, swishing and spitting, lost in thoughts. There’s a bulge down his crotch, and it’s making everything in his head race randomly in a turmoil.

He’s pedaling down the road with a lot of ease when a white Mercedes drives past him and his eyes are locked on its windows. He’s trying to locate Thor’s shape behind the wheel but he fails. The car’s rear lights flash red before stopping, and Loki stops too, anticipating. Thor turns the ignition on again and the car slides on the road very smoothly, until it vanishes from sight. Loki shrugs slightly and moves again toward the shop.

He’s scrolling down some random website page about mythologies when a familiar client comes in, and he props up with a grin, “Tessa! Lovely Tess.”
I’m not here to buy anything.” She lets out an irritable breath, but there’s a faint trace of a smile on her lips when she hears the old nickname. She must love it.

“Moody as ever.” He shakes his head with a small smile. “So what gives, and don’t tell me you’re here to see me because that’d look totally awkward coming from—” he zips up his mouth when she gives him a sharp glare.

“Do you see the guy outside?” She whispers, now looking a little nervous.

Loki looks through the glass and sees Wade poorly hiding himself behind a newspaper. And just for your information, big guy, teenagers don’t read papers, especially not on a vacation. Though there was the news about a new male victim. “What about him?”

“He confessed to me last week, and I turned him down, but he’s been following me ever since.”

No, no Wade. What are you doing, you’re supposed to impress her, not scare her away.

Loki props his elbows on the table like he wants to discuss business, “Are you seeing someone, Tess?” She shakes her head, and he shrugs, “Then give him a chance.”

“No way.” Well, that didn’t take long. “He looks dangerous, even at school he’s always getting in trouble, always picking fights with everyone.” She’s looking determined, and Loki glances at the window to find Wade no longer there.

Loki sighs after a long pause, and adds, “There’s a little something you need yet to learn about guys like him.” He gets off of his stool and saunters up to her, “When a guy likes some girl, he likes to show off in front of her, to prove how strong and deserving he is of her.” He says, “It’s instinctual actually, and Wade is very caring once you get to know him, not dangerous whatsoever.” Though, he has a nasty mouth. “It’s not like he gets in trouble for fun, he’s trying to win your attention.”

She’s looking at him with narrowed eyes, as though still in doubt.

He pushes for it, “give him a chance, and you might become his millstone. His fights will stop and he’ll no longer get in trouble,” maybe even stop being such a condescending dick, though he can’t promise the latter. “But the point is, I know the guy, and he’s a really great guy. He’ll make you happy if you give him a chance.”

She buys something to reward him for being such a sweet talker, and leaves with a smile of her own. Loki goes back to reading whatever he’s been reading when, suddenly, and like a maniac, he starts laughing merrily.

Wade is going down.

He closes the shop around five thirty. There comes a text from Natasha telling him to come over. He hesitates whether to use the bike or not, but its owner meets him on the road when he goes out to take out trash, and tells him to keep it as a gift. Loki is so excited he doesn’t even go to his own apartment to shower or change first. He rides the new-owned bike straight to Thor’s house. He leans the vehicle askew on the side of the stairs and jogs up to open the door.

“Sorry for intruding.”

No reply comes in greeting. He walks in a little more, finding everyone sprawled over the floor, while the couch is being left completely unused.
“You’re faster than usual.” Peter comments, offhandedly.

“Wearing same clothes from last night, too.” Natasha adds, and Loki is about to give these evil little shits an explanation when, suddenly, the door behind him creaks open and Thor steps in.

“Mr. Dinson!” Kate gushes.

“You’re finally home.” Peter added.

“Welcome home.” Natasha and Wade say in unison, even Steve bows his head.

“Now why can’t I get a welcome party like that?” Loki shakes his head dramatically.

“Because you stink, go take a shower.” Natasha orders while playing with a lock of her hair.

Loki blushes slightly as he looks up at Thor.

“She’s right.” He tells him and goes upstairs without even intending to listen to Loki’s explanation.

The latter sighs dejectedly and goes to the bathroom. He’s taking off his clothes when a knock holds off his motions, “yea?”

“Here are some clothes for you.”

He opens the door just a little to see Thor handing him a change of clothes while fixating his eyes on his phone. Loki takes them and shuts the door, and then he’s reminded of the ‘comforting’ Thor’s done for him a couple of times now. His body gets ignited all of a sudden with a searing heat.

He’s not desperate, he can’t be. He’s handsome and can get any girl if he wanted to, so why the hell is he feeling these things towards someone who’s already engaged, and not to mention a man, too? Although the latter shouldn’t worry him as much, he’s always struggled with his identity.

Inside the tub, nape on the edge, hands resting over his chest and his legs not completely straightened. It feels nice. If he could just hold still and continue like this until he’s clean, and calm. But no, his body won’t have it. It’s already on fire and he needs to put it out somehow. Damn, why is he being reminded of the ‘comforting’? It’s not like they kissed, he and Thor. It was a gesture of comfort, nothing more, and nothing less.

But what if they did, indeed, kiss?

How would Thor’s lips feel on his…?

He can no longer hold in his moans as he rubs his shaft so hard, the water is making it ticklish and it’s not helping at all. Thor is engaged, Loki reminds himself, and he’s been nice to him, how could he repay the man like this…but oh fuck! It feels so good he can’t bring himself to stop. The intensity is building up and he’s almost there, the ticklish feeling is growing and, oh yes! He’s coming. He props on his feet to push his waist skyward, his cock finally spurting cum on to the wall.

“I’m...” he pants “I’m sorry...” he whispers through parted lips, “what am I doing?” rueful all of a sudden, he whimpers. “I’m so sorry.” He repeats in almost a cry as he curls in on himself inside the tub in a fetal position.
After what feels like a century of self-reprimanding monologues, he finally leaves the shower and goes downstairs. Thor is already sitting on the couch. Loki feels naked with the guilt again and he tries to escape to the kitchen in an attempt to escape what he’s just done in a stranger’s bathroom.

“We brought pizza,” Thor notes out, eyes locked on the TV screen.

Loki looks around as everyone busies themselves with something: Natasha is writing down something on her notebook, Peter is showing Wade something on his phone, Wade is probably playing some badass game on his phone while leaning back on the side of Sofa, and Kate is watching the TV with her teeth scraping her fingernail, cheeks flushing.

But wait a second, is it just Loki or is everyone blushing?

“Pizza.” Loki echoes, patronizing tone tainting his voice, “already fed up with my cooking?”

“Sit your butt down and be quiet for a sec.” Thor rebukes as he nods at the empty space beside him, and it’s all it needs to be said to make Loki silent. He makes his way between them and finally flops down onto the sofa. He hasn’t realized it until this moment, but he’s tired. He is not even sure ‘wrecked’ could cover it. “There’s been another murder,” he mumbles as he lays his head on the backrest, “A second male victim with missing organs, and third female victim with a missing fetus.”

“We couldn’t… I mean they couldn’t find the killer.” Steve said, looking apologetic like it was his duty to save those victims instead of going to school.

“They will find the killer, and they will rip him apart.” Natasha tells him with a scary glare.

“They won’t.” Loki mumbles, lazily.

“What the hell do you mean?” She switches to look at him now, visibly aggravated.

“I mean they won’t find the killer, and they certainly won’t rip him apart.” He sneers at her.

“Why are you saying such things, Loki? Why are you being cynical?” Kate’s eyes water; Loki wishes if he could tell her otherwise.

He leans his head back again and closes his eyes, “when you get a series of murders, of course it’s a serial killer doing his magic, but let’s think about it for a moment. The police is relating the murders to human trafficking –which I’d have agreed with if I actually ignored the other victims. Of course I can relate the two last murders to human trafficking because we have missing organs, but have you checked the bodies? Well, neither have I, but I’ve seen pictures. Someone flagged them. There were no surgery wounds. Taking out organs from someone has to be performed with some accuracy, but it’s impossible to leave absolutely no surgery marks.” He sighs, chest heaving. “Now, let’s talk about the three female victims, who in the world is capable of taking out a fetus from a woman’s body without leaving any traces of any type of surgical marks? That is, of course, taking into count the fact that the fetuses were three months old. I checked the pictures of the three bodies, it can’t be a coincidence.”

“So what are you trying to say?” Peter cuts him off.

“What if the cops are wrong, what if there’s more than just one killer.” He states, “It makes sense, doesn’t it?” He asks, almost as if addressing himself instead, “There’s a killer going after pregnant women, and another going after teenage boys.”

“So what’s your theory about all this? Who’s killing who?” Wade asks with drooped shoulders.
“I’ve been reading this amazing book about different creatures, so to speak; and then I started to assume something.” He shakes his head, “but of course I’m still theoretically speaking, it’s fun.” He justifies and then he continues, “Ever heard of the Aswang?” The others shake their heads, and so he resumes, “It’s an old vampire creature that has similar features to the bat, it appears as a normal woman by day, but it turns into an Aswang at night. Legend has it that these Aswangs have a hollow and pointed tongue which they use to suck blood from their male victims, but there’s actually another tale to this, it’s quite disturbing too.” He snorts, “It says that the Aswangs can suck out a fetus that’s 3 month old or less from their mother’s mouth.”

“I thought you didn’t believe in myths and superstitions.” Kate screws up hers eyes, confused.

Loki chuckles, “I don’t, but it helps explain what I can’t.” He sighs, jadedly. “Ironic, isn’t it?”

There’s silence for a while, as if everyone is seriously contemplating this theory.

“But,” Steve gives him a pensive look, “if it’s the Aswang killing those women, who is killing the teenage boys?”

Loki’s breath hitches down his throat, and he can feel his heart starting to slam vigorously against his rbs. He opens his eyes now, and that things existence is just in the corner of his vision, looming up on him, dark and deadly. “Question: who disguises themselves as a beautiful woman and seduces young boys, only to feed off their heart and kidney?” He asks, and turns his head towards the windows, towards that thing. “easy, it’s the” –he smirks at the black-haired woman who’s staring at him from outside– “Gu” –She smirks– “Mi” –her smirk deepens– “Ho.”

The Gumiho’s face outside is no longer beautiful. Her eyes open more and her skin turns a hue of blue and gray. Her mouth stretches wider to reveal only blackness inside of it.

“Your turn is next, I swear on it!”

Like the process before getting your wisdom teeth removed, Loki’s body slowly gets drugged with fear, he feels as though he can’t move a muscle. Thank you for the gentle reminder that his life is a never ending nightmare of pain. But only now does his head decide to act up again, and pain is hammering against his cerebellum to whip up ache all over his body. He shifts with a whine of anguish.

“Loki?”

He hears Kate’s worried tone, but he can’t reply back even if he wants to. His eyes are on the window, watching helplessly as the Gumiho’s hair whips around her skeleton body; that daunting presence promising to screw him over, drive his life to a ward reserved only for him at the town’s mental house.

“Hey, you okay?” Thor rests his hand on the other’s shoulder, and someone gasps, “He’s hurting!”

Loki’s heart is slamming so hard he can barely hear the commotion going on beyond the continuous thuds, “…somewhere.” Loki hears Thor’s disembodied voice, “does it hurt somewhere?” He hears him ask.

“Damn headaches.” Loki mumbles and flicks his eyes away from the window and to Thor’s. He’s bunched the fabric of his sweatpants with his hands, and he realizes that he’s been wheezing. “Sorry” He mumbles. He watches through slanted eyes how some of them are looking at the window and some of them are looking at him restlessly, “guess I should head back home.” He announces, and tries to stand up despite Thor’s large hand on his shoulder pressing him down to the couch, but it all goes dark when his head meets the ground.
“I passed out, didn’t I?” inquires Loki as soon as his eyes part open, travelling instinctively to where he’d seen Thor sit the other hour, and like a déjà-vu, he finds the man there, slowly turning around and nodding his head.

“ Took a nosedive to the floor and hit your head pretty hard too.” He comments.

Loki tries to sit up but there’s a hand on his chest pushing him back gently on the sofa, “Rest more.” Thor offers, and Loki does as told without a protest.

“Sorry, I stopped taking my meds and it kind of backfired.” He explains, mouth too dry to add anything else, but Thor is being a hero again when he pours him water. Let’s just give the man a badge or something. The other drinks it gracefully. “That hit the spot.” He sighs, and soon asks again, “where’s everyone?” His eyes roam about the interior of the empty house.

“They’re going to be here soon.” Thor reports while lifting himself up. He’s already spruced up formally and is probably going somewhere. Loki doesn’t want to be left alone in the house with all the creeps outside preying on him. He hates it…

“If you want me to stay just say so.” Thor suddenly scoffs, teasingly.

Loki presses his furled lips together, annoyed, “Who does, you idiot.” He re-positions himself on the sofa. “I want to rest, go away.”

After Thor gets out of the front door, Loki hears the wheels of his car shrieking on the dirt and driving away, then the headlights flash across the large windows and vanish.

It’s still nine in the evening but he’s already a wreck.

About the things he’s told them before he fainted, he must have sounded as mad as a March hare, telling them that the murderers aren’t humans but an Aswang, and a Gumiho, too? He’s hoping they’d relate his crazy talk to his fever, because he won’t stand it if people started pointing fingers at his straitjacket, or glaring at him vigilantly. He won’t stand it if Alfred came one Monday evening and told him to leave and go work in some far off hellhole away from his shop. He won’t stand it if Thor told him to stay away from his house and never come back ever again. The house which has become a second home to him … he can’t stand the idea of being told to stay away from it.

That aside, didn’t the Gumiho promise to get him next?
He’s going back on the books he has read to see if they mentioned anything about how to take down a freaking Gumiho; those books could really help now. But his eyelids are not helping as they slowly flutter close, and he’s down for the count so quickly.

Something is nudging against his neck and he wakes up startled.

“It’s just me.” Thor soothes, nudging his hand more against the other’s neck.

“What time is it now?” Loki asks with his sleepy voice, steering his mind off the other’s hand.

“Eleven.” Thor informs and slowly pulls his hand away.

What's he been doing to his neck anyway? Loki sits up abruptly, “Don’t tell me the kids are still outside!” there blatant worry in his voice.

Thor doesn’t push him back on the sofa, and instead, he levers up and sits beside him. “Each went to their house, it’s a school night.”

Loki nods, the vacation must be over now. It somehow takes him back to when he was a student himself and– “wait a minute, they don’t live here with you?” He glances up at the man who’s still in his beige sleeved shirt.

“They just spent the vacation here, what gave you that idea.” He sighs, head leaning on the headrest of the sofa.

“The fact that they’ve been here every single time I came over, the fact that Natasha and Kate have been taking over the couch, or how about the fact that every each one of them has a room in this house?” He flails a hand, disappointedly, “I don’t know man, take your pick.” He also leans to the back.

There’s silence for a moment and soon Thor looks up at him, “your head doesn’t hurt anymore?”

Loki lolls his head to look back at him, and shakes his head with a wan smile, “Sorry for troubling you.” He says, hands resting on his lap, all sagged. He suddenly locks eyes with Thor and it is getting embarrassing by the second because the man is not looking away. Loki’s fingers twitch and he quickly looks elsewhere. “I’m starving,” he announces, hand rubbing his belly as he stands up, “want me to get you something on the way?”

Thor shakes his head and soon he’s also standing up, “I’ll be in my room if you need anything.” He turns around, but pauses suddenly, “by the way, you’re still not allowed in any of the rooms.” He smirks and bounces up the stairs.

“This definitely makes me the new maid of the house.”

Loki is in the kitchen. He’s not in the full spirit to make anything fancy; maybe something from the snacks they store might do the trick. He tries one of the onion rings bag, and the first bite is good, except, nope, he can’t eat that garbage. He’s settling for this nice fried rice with sliced green onions dish. He takes it to the coffee table and turns the TV on, watching some late talk show until someone knocks on the front door. He opens it and finds a beautiful lady with hazel eyes and shoulder-length, light brown hair with her hand fisted in the air –she was probably about to go for another loud episode of pounding, good thing Loki answered the door quicker than he is used to. She eyes him for
a moment with a visible scowl, “it’s you.” She huffs.

“Excuse me?” His brows arch up very slowly.

She bumps into his shoulder vigorously when she walks past him, “Thor!” She calls out.

“Hey, you can’t just barge in here like that.” Loki reprimands with his voice and face composed.

“What the hell?” She whips her head towards him, “Do you have any idea who I am! I’m Thor’s fiancée!”

“Oh,” Loki chucks his head to the back just a little in understanding. “Still, it doesn’t mean you can barge in and shout in the hall in the middle of the night, with your shoes still on.”

“This is my fiancé’s house. I’m allowed to do anything I want.” She flips her hair to the back, “Besides, you don’t live here either, so who are you to tell me what I can’t do.”

“Guess being the maid of the house does have its perks.” He mumbles to himself, smirking playfully at a secret memory and maybe it’s not the smartest thing to do because she gets offended and she huffs through her nose. “Alright, how about you wait here while I go and get him for you, there’s no need for the commotion, right?” He smiles to her as she finally presses her lips together, exasperated, but she also takes her high heels off. Congratulations Loki, your score.

He jogs up the flight of stairs right to Thor’s bedroom, knocks a few times on its door while calling the other’s name. He’s still thinking it’s a bad idea in the sense he had been warned not to near this part of the house, but seeing no reply from Thor has made its way out of the walls, he opens the door and tiptoes in. It’s a little dark, but his eyes soon adapt to the dimness. He makes out the black blinds on the window that reach the ceiling in length, a white armoire at the far left side of the room with black circular shapes on it. There’s a fluffy black carpet covering almost every side around the white bedding. The white mattress cover and blankets match elegantly with the gloss black bedside drawers and the white modern lamps. All in all, it’s an astonishing blend of white and black, and Loki is tolerating the thought that Thor’s room is actually double-size his. Speaking of him, Loki can see some parts of his naked back under the duvet. He skulks very slowly while whispering out his name, and that’s not how it works if you’re trying to rouse someone. Loki’s quivering hand stretches to rest on the other’s marble shoulder, “Thor, your fiancée is here to see you.”

“I know,” the other deadpans, and it’s not a mumble coming from someone who’s just been awaken in the middle of the night.

“Tell her to go home,” he requests, struggling a little with the duvet but soon managing to get it over his ears. “I’m tired.”

“Not cool.” Loki comments, tugging at the quilt, “you can’t send her off when she came all the way here to see you. I got to tell you, she’s pissed so you’d better get your ass up.”

“Take the keys to my car and drive her off for me.” He offers in a mumble.

“I’m not your henchman.” Loki berates, “and she’s your fiancée, not mine.”

Thor sighs infuriatingly, and Loki finally manages to steal the duvet away from him. All praise to the Lord for Thor is wearing his black sweatpants. “She’s a colossal pain in my ass.” Thor admits as he walks to the foot of the bed to pick up his white Tee, and dons it.
“Come on now, have a little touch of a suave man in you, see what she wants. It must be serious seeing that she came at this late hour.” Loki coaxes.

Thor is adjusting his shirt and soon stomps out of the room, locking the door behind him. Loki is confused. Maybe Thor thinking about his fiancée and what kind of trouble she’s brought with her made him forget about Loki being in the room with him, and locked the door, or maybe… he didn’t want him downstairs interrupting anything. Loki sighs; he’s too surprised to think too hard on it. He sits down on the bed, the duvet is wrapped around his arms and now he takes his time to look around. This wonderful mix of black and white is getting at him, but not more than how Thor’s scent is filling up his nose. The room smells exactly like him, especially the bed. Speaking of which, he can lie back on it and try to see how it feels, and the result isn’t the least bit disappointing. He flings the blanket over him and rests on the left side of the bed. His head dips on the smooth pillow, and the covers feel so nice on his arms. It’s comfortable he’d sleep there two weeks in a row, give or take. He’d sleep until the Gumiho finds another chew toy to play with.

*Man, he even forgot the TV on, too…*

The sun always finds a way to sneak up and land right on that mug of yours when you least expect it. Loki mumbles something but it’s nothing that particularly makes sense. Nothing does lately anyway. Also, nothing has changed from his position from last night. He’s still on his right side, facing the windows, and then he switches to sleep on his back. There’s someone else sleeping beside him he can make out their shape through his blurry vision. His eyes snap open at the realization that he wormed his way into another man’s bed. He finds Thor sleeping like a log next to him, with a scowl on his forehead. He tells himself he needs to calm down first before or without jumping to any conclusions, and he can just take this chance to take a close-up look at the other man, which, okay, sounds weird when he thinks of it so loud like this, but his curiosity can’t be sated otherwise.

Thor looks peaceful and safe to approach, as though a hissing cat has finally taken a nap, and that half tanned skin, the strange yet adorable angle of his upper eyelids, those red lips slightly parted. Loki’s fighting the urge to brush his fingers over them and see if they’re just as soft as they look to be, o God he’s fighting it with a passion.

Thor’s eyes are starting to twitch and he’s also waking up, and soon, beautiful blue orbs land on Loki’s, captivating in the morning.

“‘morning” he mumbles, sleepily.

*The defenselessness of the usually unapproachable man underlines the proximity of their body heats.*

Loki, very quickly, turns his head away to look for a watch or anything that can show him the time. There’s a clock on the bedside drawer at his side showing 8:26. “Aren’t you late for work?”

“Work can wait.” Thor mumbles more as he shifts to sleep on his back, too.

“People like you are a waste of Oxygen.” Loki comments as he sits up, “what do you do anyway?”

“Banking.” The other replies curtly, his eyes shutting down. Is he planning to go back to sleep?

“That explains a lot.” He nods to himself. Indeed, the banking job explains a lot. “When did you get back last night?”

“Around two in the morning.” Thor’s also sitting up now, golden hair sticking up funnily to some edges.
“Did you” –Loki quickly decides against going with what he wanted to ask– “I’m going to prepare breakfast and you’d better be dressed up and ready in ten, that's my final deal.” He removes the blanket off of his legs and he’s about to swing them to the floor when Thor speaks.

“Rona brought her own car, it’s not like I gave her a ride.” He says, and quickly adds, “the reason I was late is because something came up and I–”

“Why are you telling me this?” Loki interjects with a frown.

Thor shrugs, “You looked like you wanted to know.”

Loki rolls his eyes and leaves the bed completely, “I just want to know if it was worth it seeing how you locked me in.”

“I didn’t lock you in. I was outside, so technically, I locked myself out.”

“IT’s good to be all laughs and humors at ass o’clock in the morning but, man, please leave me out of it” –that can include the literal meaning. He sighs as he turns away.

“If that’s an order, I swear–” he’s about to promise something –not anything good– when Loki whips around on his heels, lips parted comically. “Don’t you think this little no-orders deal is getting old? I’m not sure about you but it’s really starting to work on my nerves. I’m also not going to be the only one feeling bad about it, so, here” He says, a hand on the handle of the door, “it was an order. It’s no-brainer, so shove it, you idiot.” He bites out and quickly slams the door shut behind him when he gets out. “Doesn’t even understand what he’s saying, bastard.” He mumbles to himself, fretfully, and soon makes his way to the bathroom.

The smell of fresh coffee fills up the house and it’s sending his sleep buzzes away. Thor comes down dressed up in his pine-green sleeved shirt. White pants and a Daffodil yellow belt. He sits at the counter and waits as Loki pours him some coffee. Seconds later and someone’s phone vibrates outside the kitchen, Loki’s. “Who could be calling now?” He goes back to the living room to find the answer, and it’s the shop owner. “What gives?” He quickly cuts to the chase

“I’m making new changes in the shop, and I’ve already called up the guys to start the reparations.” He reports, a little excited judging by his tone, “so you don’t need to come, wait till I call you back.”

“I can help?” He offers.

“Oh,” Alfred gushes, “no need, think of it as a late vacation and go have fun.”

“Well, just call me when you’re done. There’s hardly anything to do in town beside the job.”

“Don’t worry, I will. I’m going to make you work doubles too, so take the gift and make best of it.”

The call ends with some recommendations from Loki’s part to the shop owner about the reparations, and soon, he goes back to the kitchen to find that Thor’s already finished his coffee. Loki sits on one of the stools, fingers wrapping around his cup containing the lukewarm coffee now. “Thor…” he starts, sheepish and all.

“I won’t bend the rules if scrounging up a few bucks from me is what you want.” Thor says on a small simper.

“I’m not a leech.” Loki berates, “it’s just that the shop owner’s just called, said he was making some
changes in the shop so I needn’t come for a few days. I was wondering if I’d stay here a bit more. I mean I’m not going to glue myself to this place, I just want to stay with you guys until I’m allowed back, and there’s really not much to do in town, except for the library.” He’s ending his request with a shy mumble.

“Make yourself useful.” Thor says, he’s at the door with just a few strides. “Clean the house,” he demands and quickly storms out of the kitchen.

“I’m not your maid either!” Loki shouts loud enough for the other to hear.

His lips start to part and widen, and then he’s grinning to himself like a complete idiot.

Even if he says he isn’t their maid or he isn’t going to do any cleaning because he already cooks their meals, he still ends up cleaning the first floor of the house. He goes to clean Thor’s room since he isn’t allowed into the others’. He makes the bed, opens the windows and takes Thor’s clothes to the washing machine. He lifts a t-shirt like some apple-pie live-in housewife and beholds the three diagonal claw marks on it, outlined with fading traces of blood. He’s not going to speculate on it for now because this morning, Thor didn’t have any injuries whatsoever.

Ignorance is bliss.

There’s hardly anything else to do in the house without a laptop or something that can connect him to the outside world, so he picks a book from the wall bookshelf behind the couch that used to belong to the two black widows. He doesn’t even know why he never paid attention to it before because the lined books are exactly the type of books he enjoys reading: folktales, myths and fictitious novels about legendary creatures and tales passed down from generation to generation. He’s sitting on the couch now and suddenly hears tapping noises coming from the ceiling, but this time, he knows it’s not just in his head. He ignores it though because the sun’s golden bright and it can fight all the freaks away. He turns the page and continues reading this interesting book?

He wakes up to find himself asleep on the armrest of the sofa with the book open on his face, and judging from the angle of the sunlight now, it must be near sunset. The front door opens and Thor saunters in, spinning the keys to his car in his index.

“I was just getting used to the silence of the house.”

“I can see that.” Thor comments, eying the books scattered on the coffee table. Loki scrunches up his nose to look apologetic and stumbles to his feet, taking the books back to the shelf. “I’m going to take a walk outside, wanna come?”

“Are you inviting me out?” Loki turns around, amused.

“You cleaned the house.” Thor reasons on a shrug, “That’s your reward?”

“And it couldn’t be anything fancy?”

“Thought you said you weren’t a leech.” Thor is giving him a shit-eating grin, his hands now digging into his pockets.

“I’d totally use some fancy food giving how I’m working my ass off for you guys.”
“I can do that.” Thor presses his lips together with a nod, considering the suggestion like it’s a death or life situation, which is, in all honesty, endearing.

Loki chuckles, “I’m kidding. Using forks and knives to eat Braised Cabbage isn’t my style.” He winks, “I’ll take you up of your offer.”

They’ve been climbing up the hill behind the house for a good few minutes and Thor hasn’t received the inspiration to stop yet. Loki is already out of breath. “Oh, Kate’s just texted me. She says hi.” He scrolls down his phone screen and returns it to his pocket when he texts her back. “So I’m guessing you live by yourself.”

“My family lives overseas, they’re only here on occasions.” Thor explains with his voice calm and his form stoic despite the effortful walk up the hill. Where does he get stamina from, Magic land? He’s a little farther from Loki who is panting like a dog as though he’s finished a marathon. “Any sisters or brothers?” he asks.

“An older sister.” The raven-haired replies, and stops in his tracks at the edge.

Loki is still a few seconds behind, but he manages to catch up just in time to feel that sudden surge of wind emerging from the bottom of the steep slope. The sun is painting the clouds with a mix of crimson and Sakura-pink shades, a few birds are flying in a V towards the sun, the Dandelions around them are blowing away with the wind to say goodbye.

“Amazing.” Loki gasps, admirably

Thor’s standing like a beech tree facing off a storm, eyes locked on the sky and glittering as if they were on fire, hair ruffling in sync with the gentle breeze and his shiny lips are slightly parted. He is dazzling. Loki knows all this because he’s watching him with keen eyes. “Feral children,” he mutters and the other man turns around fully to face him. “There are stories about children who had been lost or abandoned in the woods, they grow up tracking and hunting just as if they were animals, and soon they’re found and taken back to the society, and taught how to act more civilized.”

“Why are you telling me this?” Thor asks with an apparent crease above his brows.

Loki crouches down with a heavy sigh, “Most of those kids who were captured couldn’t survive, or simply fled back to the woods because they could not cope with the so called social life; and I don’t blame them. I mean I’m looking at this” –he whirls a hand to point at the green mountains surrounding them– “and I think how I wouldn’t mind wandering around –if it meant people would stay the hell out of my life. I don’t see any point in taking a feral back to a place like that” –he points now at the town glaring at him from the far distance– “and teach them how to walk on two, how to talk or how to catch a ball like some dumb Chihuahua.” He sighs more, “those ferals lived most of their childhood in the woods, and they’ve survived just fine away from this worldly place, so why take them back and ruin it for them?”

“Are you angling for something with this?” Thor narrows his eyes in suspicion, and Loki simply shrugs.

“I’m not” he says, and adds hurriedly “I mean, do you mind ferals?”

Thor turns to look at what’s left of the sun and there’s strangely a vague smile on his lips, “I don’t. I trust nature.”

“As in more than you trust people.” Loki guesses, almost fervently. The other only shrugs a broad
“Maybe I’m asking too much, I mean I know what you mean, nature is loyal and gives you that sense of self-fulfillment and security that nothing else can, somehow. But you can depend on people, too.”

“Preaching me now?”

“I’m not.” He shakes his head and lifts up to his feet. “I just want you to trust me more.”

“More?” Thor is looking puzzled for a beat moment.

“I know you trust me, or else why would you let me in your house, or in your bedroom.” He blushes at the mere memory of waking up to Thor’s body heat encroaching his, “though it sounds awkward, not sure of its function in this context really.”

“OK, that’s ten seconds of my life that I won’t get back, what’s your point?”

“You have serious trusting issues, dude, and all that I’m trying to say is that people can be trusted too.” He says, doggedly, and confidently enough for it not to come out croaked.

Thor gives a small eye roll and makes to walk back towards his house, “if you add anything, I’ll personally shove you down the hill.”

Loki follows in a hasty jog just to catch up, “hey, told you guys I’m poetic, but I’m actually more than that.”

“Yea.” Thor agrees, “A nosy bastard is what you are.”

Loki is muttering a colorful string of expletives behind him when Thor suddenly grinds to an abrupt halt that Loki bumps into his back.

“Why did you stop?”

Thor quickly cups the other’s mouth, eyes examining the greenish landscape around them, “do you ever shut up?” He inquires, begrudgingly.

Loki isn’t worried about it, or about how Thor is looking alerted all of a sudden as though he’s a danger-radar going off. He’s more worried about the salty hand on his mouth. It’s doing things to his stomach, weird things, things that shouldn’t be done.

“It’s getting darker.” Thor announces, retracting his hand. “Let’s go back.”

Chapter End Notes

Shoutout to T: answered your question in previous chap, you’re welcome :D
Chapter 5

Star Guest: Diana Prince as herself

He’s eating egg rolls and Japchae, a Korean dish consisting of stir-fried noodles and vegetables, it’s so sweet and savory that he can’t help but go for another serving. It’s almost ten and it’s been a couple of hours on end since Thor locked himself in his room like some emo chick. The opening credits of ‘I Saw The Devil’ are about to roll up when Thor walks down the stairs, making his way to the kitchen like a man with a purpose. Loki is looking smug because he knew something like that would happen when, in fact, Thor himself said he wasn’t hungry. So he made two shares just in case. The other joins him on the sofa and they watch the thrilling movie attentively.

“That’s retarded, he should just clock his prized enemy with a wrench or a hammer and get this whole revenge deal over with, but what does he do? He lets him live!”

“Only to beat him again” Thor explains.

“That’s twisted.” Loki is looking disgusted, “maybe his fiancée was indeed better off dead.”

Thor only twists the corner of his lips in a barely evident smile.

The clock finally hits eleven. Thor stretches his back a little with a small yawn. So he calls it night and retreats back to his room, leaving Loki to explore the gory ending of the movie by himself. It is not cool, by the way. Ghosts and lost souls are OK, but serial killers are much worse. Also, he is yet to figure out why the house owner is so fucking attached to his bedroom. If there’s a little chest under Thor’s bed with gold in it, Loki would like to be included because he cooks their meals now. He needs a different source of money and gold seems like a good wage. Ah. He turns the TV off once the movie ends –he’s postponed the post-night horrors enough as it is– and he flops back on the sofa.

Of course he’s slept enough through the day in his little nap, but he’d really use some sleep now, because, hello? He climbed a freaking hill?

A few minutes into the night, interrupted by him kicking off the throw and then flinging it back on him, and his huffing every time something scary pops up when he closes his eyes, he finally bolts up to a sitting position. He drops his face on his hands and groans. He’s always hated insomniac symptoms; and having his thoughts running a few miles an hour when his body is tired and craving some much needed sleep is a huge fucking sign of insomnia.

He checks the clock on his phone and it’s showing two in the morning.

Damn it…
He lifts himself off the sofa and walks up the stairs, right to Thor’s room which door has been left open when usually it’s not. The blond is sleeping soundly on the right side of the bed, hugging the covers, afraid someone like Loki would steal them away. There’s a smile growing along Loki’s thin lips. He doesn’t understand why he was so nervous about this, he’s just going to sleep on the left side of the bed and try not to dream.

Yet all the way, he’s never even once looked up at the windows…

Loki has developed the habit of waking up once the sun is up and shining like Jennifer Aniston with a new engagement ring. He stretches with a relented sigh at the end, and when he sits up, it’s just him in the ridiculously large bed for one person. He’s checking the clock on his phone that’s showing him 8:20 when Thor opens the door and walks in with just a small towel around his waist. Loki is *not* blushing, he’s apathetically nonchalant about this and he’s *not* feigning it either, really.

“Thought you weren’t a morning person.” Loki decides to direct his attention to something *other* than steaming body heat and irregular heartbeats, tactfulness has its perks.

“That kind of habit hits the wall when there’s someone grinding his teeth the whole night.” Thor heads to the door of the armoire and opens it to pick something to wear for work.

“I don’t do that.” Loki chides, a little bit embarrassed, “maybe because I was a little stressed out last night, but I don’t grind my teeth so don’t kick me out.” He requests, bashfully, as though Thor has made threats before. He quickly glances up at the man, finding a trace of a smirk still tugging at his lips. *This jerk is totally enjoying this!*

“You’re staying here today?” Thor asks as he takes out his denim shirt and dark jeans.

The other shakes his head on a faint sigh, “I have to meet up with someone.” He reports, leaving the bed now, “but if it’s not too much trouble, I’d like to come back here when I’m done.”

The taller man is done putting his jeans on, he’s zipping it up when Loki shortens the distance between them and stands *right* in his face. “You can call one of the kids if it’s boring all by yourself.” Saying so, He puts the denim shirt on his white top tank and buttons it up.

“If they’re busy with school then I won’t bother anyone.” Loki gives a synchronized smile, his hands dart forward to rest on the other’s and Thor unconsciously pulls them away, letting Loki undo the upper buttons. The latter pauses when he notices that Thor has fallen quiet and is not saying anything, only fixating on his face. He pulls away too. “You know, for more street cred.” He shrugs, a hint of flushed cheeks showing on his face.

“Tasha stays at Steve’s most of the time.” Thor tells him colloquially as he skids his deep-set eyes away now, “Kate stays at her boyfriend’s too when they’re studying, Wade is busy with love ploys, so Peter is the only one available.” He closes the door of the armoire now –slams it, strictly speaking.

“Kate has a boyfriend?” Loki wraps his arms over his chest at the news.

“Someone called Bob.” He notes out, sidestepping his bed to grab the keys to his car from the nightstand.

“Bob, what kind of name is that?” He follows the other as he walks out of the room, his hasty movement ungraceful and sporadic. “Wait, does this mean you haven’t even bothered to run a little background check on the guy?”
"I don’t have time for that,” he snapped, voice still steady. “Kate can take care of herself.”

“She’s seventeen!” Loki gasps in a tone latent with anger and disbelief, “and what the hell do you mean she can take care of herself, didn’t you say you were family?”

“And families don’t spy on each other.” Thor is walking down the stairs now.

“We’re talking about Katie, our cupid Kate? What if the guy is mean to her?”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” He opens the door of his car and gets in, but Loki blocks his way when he holds the door with his both hands. “Look, I don’t have time for this child’s play, if you want to check on the guy then do it yourself.”

“Bastard, you’re only talks after all,” Loki sighs, disheartened.

Thor takes the other’s hands off of the door like he’s some bug stuck on the window, and slams it close, waits until the window rolls down to speak, “there’s a duplicate key in my room, use it when you get back.” He instructs and soon flings an irritated ‘have a good day’ before driving off, leaving only a cloud of dust behind as it wafts in the space.

Loki feels his cheeks red with fury as he bites down his bottom lip. He only goes back into the house when it strikes him that he hasn’t had any breakfast yet. He cooks a nice meal and don’t expect him to stay angry with an empty stomach, and obviously, getting decked by Dinson Thor is more prone to happen than winning lottery. He turns the TV on the general news, and it doesn’t mention anything about any new victims; thank God for small mercies. He only needs to retrieve the keys from Thor’s room now and then hop on his bike for work.

Loki delves into the drawers, finding the keys sooner than he estimated. He finds a photo tucked inside as well. He takes it out and eyes the smiling girl, her doleful eyes glittering as she grins widely, her arms wrapped around Thor’s belly and it’s obvious he’s the one who took the photo. He’s also smiling, a cheerful and worry-free smile, it’s genuine.

Loki takes the keys and returns the photo back to the drawer because it feels like he’s imposing on someone else’s privacy, and he doesn’t do that. He closes the door of the room once he’s out. His beat-up bike is leaning on the side of the stairs at the porch, askew, he uses it to get down town because there’s an appointment, a therapy session actually that he needs to attend to.

But no matter what he tells himself, what he tries to busy his mind with, he still can’t ignore the strange feelings swirling inside his stomach about that photo he’s found….

He’s sitting on the couch in this novel room that just keeps giving him the crawly feeling, especially with the fake Walter Keane’s Big Eyes over the desk, which, dear scopophobic peeps, talk about facing your fears. Ms. Prince kept writing down on her memo even after the session was over. He’s decided to confront her once and for all, and not even the dark orbs can stop him. “I don’t think I’ll be coming again.”

She looks taken aback for a split second and then puzzled as she asks, “Why?”

He’s not going to keep quiet about his reasons, he’s fucking had it. “Well, for starters, this damn couch is uncomfortable.” He pats its fabric to stress his point. Actually, he’s come in contact with sofas a lot lately, and maybe he’s becoming an expert on how comfortable sofas should be. “Second, you ask ‘why’ a lot and it’s not like I have an answer for that every single time you ask.” He shakes his head, as if that’s such a matter-of-factly that she’s just failed to realize, and she’s the one with a
PhD. “And third, I really don’t need this therapy session. I’m not a depressed person and no, you’re not going to tell me all depressed patients say that because if anything, I’m happy with how things are now, my life is stable at the moment and I don’t want to waste both our time in vain.” Those are pretty good reasons if you ask him.

Ms. Prince chews on her bottom lip and soon nods hesitantly, “I understand. I’m not going to force you.” She says, tapping the pen on her palm, “but I’d like you to contact me from time to time.”

“You’re a wonderful therapist, but I don’t want to have anything to do with you anymore.” He says, standing up now, “thank you for everything.”

The therapy deal is done and over with, it’s only history now, thankfully, hopefully. It’s almost one in the afternoon and, to be fair, Loki is getting pretty hungry by the second and there’s no harm in going to the Grayson’s. He doesn’t find Robin, and the dad tells him his son’s still at school. Loki orders the same and when he’s done eating, he tells the dad to say hi to his kid. He goes to the town’s library now, on a mission to look up Gumihos. He reads one article after another and grabs books and reads one page after another. Then he pauses and drops everything. _He can’t believe he’s looking up Gumihos when people are being productive reading about the Joseon dynasty and Galileo Galilei’s role in the scientific revolution during the Renaissance._ He’s not making it up alright, there’s a nerdy boy next to him doing research on some Galileo articles, and a girl on the table across from his going through a book about the Joseon dynasty –that’s vast by the way, just saying. And here he is, reading about creepy creatures that people of town and pretty much every other living being on this planet believes exist in books only. He’s grateful that no one seems interested in what he’s looking at so he turns the page and keeps on reading. The girl leaves, and after some time, the glasses boy leaves too. It’s almost six when a spectacle, skinny woman in her late thirties taps the edge of his table and tells him it’s almost closing time. He gets out and undoes the chain on the wheel of his bike, and then someone unexpected calls.

“I’m not sure how you got my number, but I’m ready to bet Kate had something to do with it.”

“She called her phone with yours and got the number when you weren’t looking.” Wade explained, curtly.

“Witty.” Loki comments, looking impressed.

“So I walked by the shop where your work and there was a sign outside that said under reparations,” Wade informs, and soon asks, “Where are you?”

“Right now I’m outside the local library.” He turns around to read the sign; it’s exactly like how you take your headphones off when you smell something funny, _people_, it’s irrelevant!

“What do you mean ‘now’?” Wade asks, “Where are you usually at?”

“Thor’s?” He shrugs, but really, it’s not like Wade can see it.

“You mean you’re still staying there?” He gushes on, and for some reason, it sounds like he can’t even wrap his head around the revelation, “This is huge news. Wait, don’t go anywhere. I’ll be there in a few.”

Wade is there in no time actually, dressed casually. Loki is getting the impression that Wade has been standing behind the door of the library or something, people don’t just materialize from thin air. “Tell me you weren’t joking.”
“I’m fine, thanks, how about you?” Loki shakes his head, scoffing. Wade is giving a sheepish grin, “Sorry, I was just surprised.” Loki saves him out of his misery and provides him with a concise and clear explanation, “I told him about the reparations going on in the shop, and asked him if I’d stay until you guys come back from school. He didn’t say anything really because he likes to give people something to ponder about, so I tried to be smart about it and took it as a yes and stayed.”

Wade is eying him as if he’s grown a second head, a rotten fish head, “hey, my homeroom teacher is coming in late tomorrow.” He hooks his thump over his shoulder, pointing at somewhere, Loki guesses that's the direction to his school, “can I tag along?”

That’s coming from the little punk who wouldn’t stop giving him shit over the course of two weeks. That’s saying something.

“Dude, that’d be great.” Loki exclaims jovially, “Thor is usually home late and it’s so boring to have the house all to myself.” He could dig up that chest of gold to kill time.

Wade slides his hands into his pockets as Loki gets the bike moving between them, “this is still unbelievable, Mr. Dinson got a real hate on strangers. He can’t trust them if he isn’t comfortable around them, but he’s made you an exception since day one, remember, when you got lost in the woods?”

When you gave him empty ammunition instead of a steaming mug of hot chocolate? Yea, he remembers.

“That memory is kind of filtered under the ‘most ass out moments of my life’ so unfortunately I cannot forget even if I wanted to.” Loki says on a disappointed sigh, “and it’s more like he’s just being hospitable, way too hospitable, if you ask me. And I –the imprudent ignoramus that I’ve recently become, exploited it.”

Loki decides he can’t keep borrowing their clothes whenever he comes over, so he tells Wade that they sort of have to make a quick stop at his place so he’d pick some clothes, his laptop and some personal stuff. His apartment is silent as always, it’s not an eerie silence, but it makes him a little sad. If Wade wasn’t downstairs waiting to take him to a house full of life, he’d be lounging on his bed with nothing to do but sleep. Maybe some changes have been secretly sought out, even if he himself doesn’t want to realize it. He quickly picks up what he came here for in a small backpack and returns to where Wade has been waiting. During the walk to Thor’s house, Loki couldn’t help but notice how the punk next to him had been off, acting wary, eyes flashing around and back every now and then. So maybe he’s just uncomfortable.

Loki isn’t stupid. He knows what kind of guy Wade is, and he knows he wouldn’t have volunteered to see him off work if Thor didn’t request it. While that is a little heartwarming, Loki is afraid he and Wade wouldn’t have a near chance by a whisker to have a go at it once and for all.

He uses the keys to open the door, and the way with which he carries on this small action punches a gasp from Wade’s lungs. “He even gave you a double key!”

“It’s more like I forced it out of him, stop misinterpreting everything.” He ree}s his head and pierces through the door, followed by an astonished Wade. Really, was it that unusual… that strange?

Loki ushers the younger one to the sofa, but Wade shakes his head and sprawls over the floor at the
foot of the sofa instead, “this is the most comfortable place in the world” immature yet genuine.

Ha, Wade was still a child after all.

“And it’s all yours for today, make best of the chance.” He tells him the good news, goes to grab two cans of soda. He comes back and flings one to the kid who catches it with some deadly accuracy. Loki flops on the sofa and sighs relaxingly. “You said you and Steve go to the same class?”

“Yea, but he’s kind of busy now.” There’s a blush making its way to his cheeks, this guy is like an open book, and it sort of makes Loki want to deride him shamelessly for it.

Hey, maybe they got off on the wrong foot but Loki can handle this.

“A girl?” He’s looking smug at the hint.

“What?”

Loki rolls his eyes. Must he spell everything for them? “Is it about a girl?”

Wade almost spills the soda over his mouth, he actually does and he wipes it with his sleeve. He spins his head so hard Loki is surprised he didn’t snap a pipe. “H-how do you know about that?” He’s looking like a flabbergasted lemur.

Loki juts a shoulder and takes another sip, “something happened a few days back at the shop when Tessa came by, that’s how I found out.”

“Yea.” he says, breathily, “that’s why he couldn’t make it tonight.” He's looking at the TV screen even though it’s off.

“Could it be,” Loki leans in now, “he likes her, too?” Wade falls speechless, Loki can guess this much, “you and peter are good friends, first I thought you liked him, but then you guys always like the same things so I assumed he liked her, too.”

“You’re pretty sharp.” Wade admits and Loki smiles proudly at the compliment. “And Peter is my best friend.”

Loki ignores that bit. Try to find faults all you want, he still got it right. “So is this some triangle love story?”

Wade presses his lips together and slumps to the back, looking like a man who has lost his job and got kicked out of his house all in the same day. “It’s complicated.”

“Is he still trying to win her over?”

“That was like a couple of days ago, now they’re totally going out and she obviously likes him.”

They’re both silent for a while. Loki’s knees are swinging relaxingly as he relishes the silence. “So how do you feel about it?”

“Acting like my shrink now?” Wade scoffs with a smirk. And Loki has to agree because Ms. Prince’s reciting of Totem and Taboo was obviously rubbing off.

“Alright, let’s just get the chick-fleck train out of the station already–”

“I’m a little upset.” Wade cuts him off. “But he’s my man, I’m happy if he is.” He gives a rueful grin.
Wade didn’t grin ruefully, he mocked with scornful jeers and treated anything that didn’t humor him with contempt, but he didn’t grin ruefully. He never grins ruefully.

And, honestly, Loki kind of wants that version of Wade back.

“Once upon a time, a king went hunting in the forest and lost his way,” he starts, and ignores the confused look Wade is giving him, “A man named Rajdeep helped him back to his palace, so the king made him his guard. One day, Rajdeep met a beautiful girl named Deepti and asked her to marry him. Deepti agreed and so Rajdeep took her to the king. On meeting the king, Deepti asked him to marry her.” Loki sighs. This Deepti bitch gets on his nerves every time he remembers the story. “On hearing this, Rajdeep was hurt but he agreed. The king asked her ‘why do you want to marry me instead of Rajdeep’? And Deepti replied ‘because I want to live in a palace’. The king gave Rajdeep a palace and asked Deepti to marry him.”

“I’m definitely the king.”

“Depends on your sacrifice, though I wouldn’t want you to be neither of them, they’re both stupid for still letting her in when obviously all she wanted was the palace.” Loki goes for another sip but the can is empty, so he places it over the coffee table.

“Man, how come you don’t have a girlfriend, or a boyfriend?” Wade is sitting cross-legged now, looking up at Loki who shrugs and adds, “Not my biggest concern.” It really isn’t. He is a grownup who sees hallucinations on the mirror when he’s freaking brushing his teeth, he doesn’t want any commitments to a difficult relationship which he knows he wouldn’t commit to. “But you guys are still teenagers, and stories of love should flourish around this particular time of your life since you don’t have to worry about mouths to be fed.”

Wade’s making some wise-old-man jokes about it when the front door suddenly shots opens, and Thor storms in, followed by a cheered-up Steve. Wade greets Thor but Loki fumbles over the couch for the remote. Steve sits beside his friend, and Thor hops up the stairs to his room without a single word, which is what he always does.

“You two are fighting?” Wade asks, and Steve nods next to him, crunching his nose up as if Loki shoved his ass full of rotten seaweed. “You guys didn’t even look at each other.”

Loki brings a pillow and hits their heads, “stop saying nonsense. I’m up for a movie, you guys in?” He can’t bring himself to smell his armpits but if two people have looked at him like he’s rotting from the inside then he’s noting it in his head to take a shower later.

“Die Hard is legit, but I can settle for something funny.” Steve leans his back on the slip covered cushions of the seat deck –perfect, so that Loki can hit his head, “you’ve just come in and you’re already telling us what to watch?”

“Rush Hour.” Wade suggests after a small chuckle, “It’s pretty funny.”

They settle for the first part of the movie, but Loki decides they can’t die starving because none of them wants to miss one of Jackie Chan’s crazy moves. How awkward it’d be for Thor to come down and find three dead bodies in front of the TV as the movie’s ending credits roll up because they were too caught up to eat. He gets up to prepare some dinner for the four of them. Yes, he’s going to make Thor’s share too, even though right now, he hates that bastard so much.
He makes stir-fried macaroni with sausage, and takes the plates back inside. The second part has already started but he’s in no mood to bash them for not waiting until he was done. It’s around midnight when Wade calls it quits, Steve agrees and each retreats to his room upstairs. Loki relaxes more now on the sofa as he continues watching, he wouldn’t need to hide himself in the pillows like an ostrich every time people kiss. Half an hour later, Thor then walks down the stairs, panels thumping under his bare foot, and of course Loki is going to ignore him as he takes the plates off the table and to the kitchen. When he gets back, he finds the other man hogging the sofa, “get up, I’m sleeping here.”

“This is my house.”

“I can leave if that’s what you’re angling for.”

“You know I didn’t mean it like that.” Thor heaves a sigh as he gets up. He walks up to the shorter male who feels a sudden urge to turn around and flee back to the kitchen, but there’s a hand on his wrist to stop him.

“I’m still not talking to you, remember?”

“Come on, are we kids?”

This gets to Loki, so he spins around but the hand on his wrist is not budging, “you’re the bastard who’s been acting like a total ass since the crack of dawn.”

“What part of family business don’t you understand?” Thor demands, vehemently. His voice deep and his form composed. His hand still wrapped around the other’s wrist, but almost gingerly, as if Loki’s wrist is only a twig that could crack under too much force.

“You’re practically leaving me out of everything. I just want to feel like I belong, I want you to trust me more. Why can’t you understand that?”

“Do you have any idea what you’re saying?” Thor flails his other hand, “you’re asking for too much, Loki.”

“It’s not. I’m a man of my word.”

“Why does it bother you anyway?” Thor narrows his eyes, shrugging slightly, “I don’t get it.”

Loki is looking elsewhere now, “why does it bother you if it’s bothering me?”

“You’re nosy.” Thor concludes his reasons, and it’s not making Loki any bit proud.

“Let go.” He demands, visibly annoyed. The pressure on his wrist is not tapering off, “let go of me!” He repeated. His free hand darts to take the other’s off, but it’s only tightening more and Loki winces, “you’re hurting me.” He whispers on a small whine in the back of his throat.

Thor’s eyes widen like he’s just realized what his hand has been doing to the other man’s wrist, so he releases him and Loki pulls his hand to his chest, checking on the finger marks scarred on his wrist. There’s a shadow looming closer, when he looks up, he sees Thor leaning in to rest his forehead on his shoulder. And why is he looking like a kicked puppy? Loki is the victim here. He’s nuzzling more against Loki’s neck now, his nose scrubbing against the stubble. “You can’t just wiggle your way out of a conversation whenever you like.”

“You’re strange.” Thor breathes out, and now he uses the tip of his nose to brush along the pale skin of Loki’s neckline.
“Hate to break it to you, buddy, but you’re not the first one to say that to me.” He smiles broadly to himself, as though he’s secretly keeping a tally of how many times everyone around say that to him; and Thor doesn’t look like he’s paying attention, he’s exhal...
It’s almost one in the morning when Thor levers up and tells him not to stay up, and then he returns to his room. Loki is being a genius today because he decides he’s not going to stay outside with all the creeps taking turns on making his life miserable. But a late shower isn’t going to hurt anyone, and there’s one particular side of his body—not his armpits— that’d really use some cold water.

This is more than just a quickie, he’s doing a dry… run through. Bad pun aside, the guy is totally in the mood. Water keeps pouring down on him, on the wall and on the floor. It’s a fucking backstage for porno stars. He’s kneeling inside the tub, forehead on the damp wall. He’s tolling his cock between his hands, moving them up and down his shaft in a teasing stroke, and damn it he can’t do anything about his voice; his moans, they’re just growing louder. What if Thor didn’t stop, what if his lips touched more… Loki knows he can’t be thinking of this, of Thor like this, but it’s not like he can out flatly put a stop to it. It feels so good, and screw antics. He’s just going to rub his dick vigorously without a care for the world. “God…” he’s almost whining at how good it feels. Every muscle in him is tensing and every blood vein in him is beating in tandem with his heart as he finally releases his cum all over the wall with a loud moan bragging just how tremendously great his ejaculating session was. He collapses down into the tub’s rim, suddenly washed by consuming regret.

“I’m…” he folds his arms over his knees and hugs them to his chest, “straight up losing my mind, Bucky.” He brings his hand up to his head and cards his fingers through his wet hair. “I don’t know what I’m doing anymore, give me strength.” His tears fall without his consent. He’s kept in for too long. He knows even men are allowed to cry when they feel they can’t keep their emotions in check anymore, so he allows it, “I miss you, Bucky, please.” He sobs into the nook of his arm, “Just guide me through.”

He doesn’t know how much time has passed, but he’s sure it’s somehow near two in the morning. The door to Thor’s room has, yet again, been left open. Loki walks in as if dragging heavy loads along, but that’s his guilt he’s dragging. He flops on his pillow with a grunt, eyes gazing thoughtfully at the ceiling. Now here he is, sleeping next to the same man he enjoyed getting off to just half an hour ago. He’s eying the sleeping face of Thor. The trace of a crease on his forehead is just so darn adorable, and the fringes of his hair slightly reclining onto the pillow and the pair of red lips slightly opened… yes, the same man.

“I’m sorry.” He says about that, it sounds indignant, and he turns to his right side to sleep.

“Try to get some sleep.” Thor advises, his hand wrapping more around Loki’s waist and his body is pressing a little bit closer.

Loki is amazed he doesn’t mind their close proximity, or the hand on his hip. He closes his eyes and falls asleep almost immediately, because under Thor’s arm, it feels almost like the safest place in the world.
He rolls off the bed, slipping from the bundle of sheets and falling to the plank with a thud. He blames it on the sudden pounding on the front door, reverberating across the house like an earthquake. He erects up and looks around like a Hoopoe craning its neck to locate danger, and Loki finds that there’s just him in the room, and judging by the intermittent silence between each episode of knocking, it must be just him in the house, too. He opens the front door expecting to see Thor’s fiancée, again; he would knock her off her feet if she stormed in again with high heels on. He’s happy to find Natasha and Kate instead at the threshold of the door, at nine freaking a.m. He is lost. Shouldn’t they be at school? “Shouldn’t you be at school?” Yeah, because it’s always better to ask out flatly. Besides, he already said piling stress is unhealthy.

The girls eye his dark off-shoulder sweatshirt and black knee-length sweatpants. His bed hair all ruffled and messy, but he’s still looking disgustingly dreamy. Natasha makes a dramatic entrance after knocking her shoes off, bumps to Loki when she walks in. Kate throws him an excited grin and quickly follows after the other girl.

“wonder if I’m already getting used to their attitude.” Loki addresses himself as he closes the door, and then he walks up to the living room, eyes on the two girls sauntering towards the coffee table. “So, mind explaining what you guys are doing here instead of school?”

it’s fucking strange; he had a slumber party in someone else’s house, slept in someone else’s bed and was now arching an authoritative brow at someone else’s sister or daughter. it became clearly strange suddenly that he should be finding faults, but he isn’t.

“Relax, it’s not rocket science. They just teach us same things from last year’s curriculum.” Kate shrugs, sitting down beside the sofa.

“More elaborate though.” Natasha adds as an afterthought. “We’re pretty smart. Our absence record isn’t going to affect anything.” She lives to her name as the boastful bragger. She’d win a blower contest if she wanted to, or if there is one because he doesn’t suppose there is.

Loki nibbles at his bottom lip and nods, arms wrapping over his chest, “I see, but if it’s Thor you want to see, then I’m afraid your hike was for naught.”

“We came to see you.” Kate props her elbows over the table and smiles jovially at him, the kind of smile you make after you’ve caught someone lying through their teeth.

“Why can’t I buy it?” He narrows his eyes and nears their vicinity to sit on the sofa.

“Actually,” Natasha starts, a hint of a denigrating hum in her voice, “We heard some news from the other guys this morning and we just wanted to see if it’s true.”

“News?” He echoes.

“Guess Steve isn’t the imbecilic Devon I’d always thought he’d turn out to be hanging out with Wade,” she sighs, “so Miss. Foster dropped by?”

“Jane, Mr. Dinson’s fiancée.” Kate explains when Loki mouths the same name.
“Oh,” he drawls in a disinterred tone of voice, “Yea, she did. I guess a couple of nights ago, but who told Steve?”

“Long story.” Natasha shrugs, “I don’t understand, why does she come over anyway, she knows nobody likes her.”

“She’s noisy, selfish and complains a lot.” Kate is counting with her fingers; she still looks cute doing it with rutted brows.

“I hate how his family arranged this whole engagement.” Natasha is being quite angry today, angrier than she usually gets anyway, “expanding their influence my ass.”

“Girls, she’s still Thor’s fiancée.” Loki smiles amiably, “and soon to-be wife, so maybe you just need to give her time and see how she thinks things through, get to know her better?”

“No thanks. I don’t want to have anything to do with her.” Natasha huffs, “though that’s somehow impossible.”

Loki is listening intently. The girls are finally opening up and who is he to tell them to suck it up when he’s asked for this all along. But he suddenly feels his left forearm acting up and getting slightly itchy, he scraps over the fabric of his sweatshirt while listening more to their talk, but it’s generally all complaints about how much they dislike Jane which he, deep down, didn’t ponder. He’s met her and, wow, first impressions do matter. “So I take it from your talk that she’s pretty much always pissed?”

“There’s always something or someone she has to pick on. You’re all happy and good-spirited until she takes her inconsiderate self and ruins it for you. She lives for that reason alone.” Natasha has a lot of hatred in her this morning, might as well let her get it off her chest. “I don’t give a rat’s ass what his family is thinking, that girl annoys the hell out of me!”

Loki really wants to mark the ending of this talk and switch to Kate’s boyfriend –the dude could still be an asshole for all he knows, but he can’t bring himself to stop them. He relaxes on the couch and stares at the floor after biting firmly at the inside of his cheek, “despite what you guys have to say, it’s not like Thor is complaining” –he’d have noticed otherwise– “if anything, he really cares for her.” He says, and he is reminded of the way Thor picked his keys to drive her home at two in the morning. You don’t do that to someone you can’t stand. Okay, so maybe because she’s a girl, but Loki has this kind of inkling that Thor isn’t a charitable person in nature.

He can see them from his peripheral vision gawking at him, pairs of eyes scrutinizing him, but there’s something else invading his vision. He can see it from the corner of his eyes. He whips his head around so fast that the girls get startled; he guesses they can’t see what he’s seeing, but the Gumiho is standing behind the girls, inside the house. Loki hears some sort of noise like a whistle or a siren going off in his ears. He gives himself a second to think, paying no heed to his escalating pulse threatening to give him a heart attack. Alright, he wouldn’t ignore a heart attack, but, hello, there’s a gumi-frigging-ho(e) lounging at Dinson’s accommodation. Wait a minute, it’s not like his hallucinations from before hurt him even after they proved to be real… right?

“What the hell!” Kate screeches and quickly crouches in a defensive stance. Natasha is also on her feet now and they’re both looking at what’s supposed to be a hallucination within the privacy of his daytime terrors.

“You can see her too?” Loki seethes as he also jerks up, legs shaking a bit and mouth running dry by the second.
"A gaunt, scary-looking lady in our living room" Natasha says, “sure, why wouldn’t we see her?”

“This whole time?” he demands.

“What’ you mean this whole t=” Kate cuts her own sentence off, a dreary realization downing on her. “Wait, so you mean to tell me you’ve been seeing this hag all this time?” She is looking pretty serious, which, considering his own impressions of her, is kind of highly unexpected.

“Y-yea,” Loki can’t bring himself to take his eyes off the Gumiho who is wickedly smirking at them with a pair of malevolent eyes. He shivers.

“And you couldn’t, I don’t know, mention it to us?” Natasha is fidgeting, glancing up at him and back at the Gumiho.

“Yea, probably open with ‘hey guys, I’ve been seeing hallucinations for a while now, and one of them happens to be a goggle-eyed Gumiho so I was wondering if you guys know how to take one down’ you mean something like that?” he scoffs, a little short of breath, “yea, I’m sure that’d have gone down beautifully.”

“He has a point.” The Gumiho comments, voice sending that chill back from the café shop down Loki’s spine. This cold bitch…

“I’m calling the cops.” He gushes, head shaking in disbelief.

“Call Mr. Dinson!” Natasha orders, firmly. “Call him instead, the cops are useless, they can’t kill a fox that’s lived for nearly 100 years.”

“And Thor can?” Loki snorts but he’s too shocked for it to be funny, “Wait, how do you even know stuff like that?”

The girls are looking hesitant, eyes darting back and forward.

“The dogs have kept a lot of things from you, vessel.” The Gumiho’s looking smug now, feigning a pout, which, lady, have you even looked at a mirror lately?

“Dogs, vessel?” he echoes in reproach, “What the hell are you talking about? I don’t have any pets.”

“This might knock your socks off, but you see, vessel” the Gumiho starts, showing a vague smile, “you have been associating with a pack of dogs–”

“Wolves.” Kate and Natasha berate in unison.

“Doesn’t make much difference, really.” The intruding entity sighs, “what matters to me now is you, vessel.” She points at him with her long, bony and downright scary index, “come.”

“This is the second time you call me vessel, my name’s Loki!” He jaws, eyes surreptitiously looking around in hopes to locate his phone. Dang he’d left it in the pocket of his pants the previous night, he only remembers now. And did he just yell at a life-like hallucination?

“What do you want from him?” Kate bellows, forging ahead to stand in front of the only man in the room.

The Gumiho lets out a shrilling laugh, like one of those maniacal laughs you see a villain make when they’ve gone completely bonkers. But he wonders if she realizes it’s still nine in the morning, a bit early for this mad show. The other three wrinkle their nose in disgust, and when the Gumiho’s laugh
starts to crescendo, she talks again. “Apparently, your dog nose is good at nothing.” She addresses the girls, a satisfied grin about her lips, “he’s been with you for a week and so, and you still have no idea what he is?”

The duo in front of Loki exchange hasty glances with each other, and Natasha turns toward the Gumiho again, “What do you mean ‘what he is’?”

“I have no intention whatsoever of sharing that piece of information with you,” she determines, “Unless, of course, the vessel wants me to.”

Natasha dips her head in acquiescence for a moment, but soon she looks up, her eyebrows contorted, adamant. “In that case,” she starts, “Leave this territory immediately, and believe me, I’m not as generous as to give you a second warning.”

“You do not expect me to leave without the vessel, do you?” The Gumiho is sounding confused more than threatening, her eyes keen as if to say ‘are you stupid or what?’ as she moves lightly forward and Kate is crouching more to –Loki has no idea what she’s about to do, really. He is reeling. “Without your Alpha, it is impossible for you to win over me, or are you going to coax me to lose?” She sounds amused for a second, “you know that is a fox’ specialty.”

“Aren’t you underestimating us too much?” Kate asks, squinting her eyes, “we’re Betas, it’s not like your little threats will do the trick.”

“No,” the Gumiho admits, “but my wit can.”

Loki and the two girls are in the process of calculating just what her words mean when a hand snakes on his neck. He’s so taken aback he doesn’t even notice his breathing hitching inside his throat. The other two spin around and there’s another Gumiho which looks exactly the same as their old fox friend, standing right behind Loki with her long, bony and downright scary hand on his neck. Not able to believe, the three look where the Gumiho’s been standing, throwing threats at them, but she’s not there.

“How’s that for a start?” She sneers, tightening her hand more on his throat.

“Seriously, personal space?” Loki huffs and rolls his eyes. “In what reality are you if you think you can just stroll up my personal space to grope me? I’m so sueing your ass for the sexual harassment!”

He’s worried about his personal space being invaded instead of worrying his brains out about the ice-cold, creepy hand on his neck? Wow.

“H-how…” Kate gasps, she’s impressed?

Sweetheart, focus, The Gumiho is an enemy.

“Speed.” the Gumiho is in the mood to brag, this is what a person like the textbook definition of narcissism looks like? Someone’s just beat Natasha in her game, damn. “Even Betas can’t compare to the speed of their Alpha, and because I am a Fox, it is only natural that I am faster. You can guess now why I said it is impossible without your Alpha, which is actually why I chose to make my appearance this morning.”

He’s being ignored, now how’s that for impudence.

“The two female Betas out of the pack and you decide it’s the perfect time to make a hit.” Kate is nodding to herself for some reason, her lips pursed as if she’s fascinated.
Sweetheart, again, she’s an enemy.

“Foxes, Betas and Alphas,” Loki lifts his lips in distaste. He’s finally had enough. “Just what are you guys talking about? And how come you can see her today? And by the way, you still haven’t answered my question, Ms. Gumiho, why are you calling me vessel?” Great, he’s being sarcastic. It’s almost comical, except the situation is a little too dire to find anything about it funny.

“Do you wish to know?” She whispers in his ear, she must have missed on that part about sexual harassment, “About the constant pain in your arm and head, about the dogs, your dead friend, too?”

Loki’s eyes go wide at that and glue on the duo in front of him, who are furrowing and knitting their eyebrows, ostensibly asking him to not be bewitched by her bribe. His eyes flit down quickly, apologetically. He’s unable to fight the urge to know everything. Someone—or in this case, something is offering him answers, that’s like finding cheat-sheets under his table, why would he turn them down?

“I’ll give you all the answers you want, vessel.” She offers, “in return, I want something.”

“What you want?” He asks hurriedly, he could have fucking said just order and I’ll comply instead.

“Don’t listen to her.” Kate pleads, her eyebrows trembling. “Foxes are cunning, tricksters, and it’s not like she’s really going to give you any answers. She’s probably going to take what she wants from you and kill you when you’re of no use to her.”

“Then who will?” Loki grits out, “I’m tired of trying my best to ignore these things when they keep constantly happening to me, and I really want to know about Bucky’s death, can you help with that?” He throws a hand to show just how exasperated he is, “She says she will give me answers, then why should I not listen to her?”

“How does knowing help with anything anyway?” Natasha rebukes, “do you honestly think she’s doing this to help you?”

“Loki.” Kate is developing a deeper crease across her forehead, “I have no idea why she keeps calling you vessel, but we also know a thing or two that you might be interested in knowing. Mr. Dinson knows about Bucky, too.”

“And tell you what, exactly?” Natasha is not sounding any bit happier, “as far as I know, Bucky was involved in something bigger than he could handle, he ended up killed for it, and only Mr. Dinson knows the details.”

The Gumiho scoffs loudly, “this useless talk is only wasting my time.” She announces, “and like you, I don’t feel like being generous today either, so I’m borrowing him for now.” She motions with slim fingers, and the girls flare up, about to jump at them but the Gumiho takes out a fan from somewhere—not anywhere Loki wants to know—and waves it in the air, a strong wind rocks everything and numerous shining blades spurt out and launch back on the girls, penetrating every apparent part of their body. Loki’s heart sinks at the sight of blood and before he can even call out their names, his vision goes completely dark.
blood, the whines of pain the two girls let out as the metal blades cut through them. He’s praying it was all just a dream, and maybe he’s going to wake up, still in bed, in the comfort of his new home, while the sun shines through the blinds…

But none of it was a dream, he finally realizes.

He’s waking up to the tender breeze stroking his cheeks, his eyes land on the starless sky first after a battle with consciousness. The pain in his head goes ignored for now because there are a few urging matters now that need to be pondered. How he’s sprawled on dirt inside some forsaken old cowshed still in the same clothes from that morning, he can see the sky from a gap in the ceiling –which, by the way, looks like it’s going to crumble down at any moment, allowing the faint moonlight in. How it’s night all of a sudden. This could most likely mean he’d had a brown out at some point. He examines the location he’s been taken to and it’s nothing extravagantly luxurious. The unhinged doors moan ominously in the silence of the night, the shuddered windows, the paint peeling off, the worn-out walls, the creaking floorboards tell him just how deserted this house is. He tries to sit up but something is restraining him. He checks himself to be assured, but there’s really nothing restraining him, nothing tangible that is.

“It’s unlike the usual way of tying someone down.” A female’s voice resonates.

Loki whirls around, sees the silhouette of the Gumiho, still in the white dress, perching comfortably atop a couple of old crates. Her feet bare, and her jaw leaning on her palms. She's watching him with interest.

“What ‘you mean? Why did you bring me here?”

She looks harmless when she lets out a full-bodied sigh, “heavens!” she shakes her head and lifts herself up to walk towards him, who is slowly wiggling backward. “I cannot hurt you.”

His mouth drops open at the startling announcement, but he remembers that foxes are cunning, so nope, not going to buy it Ms. Gumiho. “So you’ve tied me down just so we’d play Monapoly inside this hair-raising, deserted garbage dump. Kinda makes a guy feel stupid, getting belittled like this?”

“I need to have both your arms tied.” She squats beside him, well worn dress fans on the dirt, Lord it needs one hell of a detergent to get rid of the stench. She eyes him for a second and then approaches the right side of his ear to whisper, “like I said, I am not here to hurt you, if that was really my intention I could have done so the first time your vessel was awakened, if anything, I am more in danger that I am with you.” She lets her left shoulder shrug slightly.

“Well” Loki gulps, “there goes my self-esteem.”

A Kyoko look-alike has just booked him a lifetime of therapy, well done.

The Gumiho actually chuckles, and it’s friendly, he concludes. This is probably creepier than how usually her black hair whooshes around her while she lets off her malicious aura. But he genuinely likes it, “you actually have a pretty nice smile.” He admits but she averts his eyes and forces whatever traces of her smile away. “But seriously, this is too much to process” he presses his lips together, “just what is it that you want from me?”

“You are going to find out soon.” She practically chirps.

“Why” he starts, hesitantly at first, “why did you hurt Natasha and Kate?”

“Hurt?” she repeats, scoffing. “I barely scratched them.”
Loki opens his mouth, ready to protest, but she cuts him off when she shoots up to her feet, “It is time” she announces, and her head lolls around towards him. “Today is a full moon, and since you are already up, I believe your little dog pets are already heading here.”

Loki is silent.

The Gumiho talks too much, and it’s nothing that makes sense.

A strange, tingling sensation is starting to course up his tattooed arm, like a narcotic shot in the shoulder. He turns around to ask the Gumiho, she might hold the answers, but the lady’s busy murmuring nonsensical words with her arms outstretched skyward, precisely towards the moon that’s now hanging low in the sky. You’d lose your mind watching a Gumiho probably formulating some sort of incantation for some evil purpose—of course it’s evil, she’s not exactly doing this for world peace— but Loki doesn’t bat an eye. He’s busier with the strange feeling that’s surging up and down his arm and it’s making him whine faintly until all the angry veins in his neck jut.

“You look comfortable” A male’s voice comments.

The other two snap their heads around and Loki doesn't deign to answer, he only watches as Wade smirks impishly at him, walking in through the front door to stand behind Thor, who’s rooted to the floor, dressed in black (obviously) and giving the Gumiho a perturbed look. Steve, Peter and Kate are standing at Thor’s left, Wade and Natasha at his right.

“You guys decided on outside classes now?” Loki is shaking his head on the scoff… hold on a damn second! “Tasha, K…” he rasps, almost in a mumble, “you girls are fine?”

“Fit as a fiddle.” Natasha warbles, flipping her hair to the back. Yes, it’s never too late to still try and look all darn fabulous. “What you saw was just one of her illusions.”

“I see that it did not take you long to find him,” the Gumiho addresses Thor, who is repaying her effort to initiate a conversation with silence. “My fox nose couldn’t detect it well, but he probably reeks of you. You did a wonderful job rubbing—” her sentence is interrupted by a thump, all eyes land on her, flabbergasted. They watch as Thor hovers over her with his hand on her throat. He probably lifted her from her neck by his hand and slammed her against the ground like a sack of bricks. But how couldn’t Loki see it when it happened?

“Awesome.” Steve exclaims, admiringly.

Kate and Natasha scurry toward Loki, they try to undo whatever that’s tying him down but they’re puzzled to as how they can undo what they can’t even see.

“How did you find me?” He asks, hurriedly.

The other two girls are fumbling with his clothes, groping him despite the lawsuit case of sexual harassment he mentioned earlier, but he’s a little too preoccupied with what Thor is planning to do to the Gumiho to tell them off.

“Long story, we’ll tell you everything later.” Kate assures him, and he agrees.

“Easy now, Alpha.” The Gumiho darts her hands heavenwards in a placating gesture, “I promise it isn’t in my intention to hurt him.”

“That’s why you kidnapped him?” Thor gives her a small shove, but it’s powerful enough to make her wince.
“It’s true, though.” Loki croaks, knitting his brows. He’s aware of everyone’s eyes on him, but he’s kind of growing used to the attention. Then he adds, “She’d have hurt me before if she wanted to, there must be a reason why she brought me to this place today. Let’s give her the benefit of the doubt, see what she’s planned.” He looks around at the blackness and primarily the eerie walls around them, “I just hope it wasn’t your definition of a date, because that’d suck.”

“You can let go now, Alpha.”

The green veins in Thor’s hand and forearm jut up when he squeezes his hand more around her neck. He’s still undecided whether to let go or not when Loki suddenly berates, “you’re hurting her!”

“She kidnapped you.” Wade reminds him exactly why he had hated her before.

“I know, but it’s not like I’m hurt or anything.” He turns his head towards Thor now and adds in a much calmer voice, “I’m fine, really.”

Thor lets go almost immediately and watches as the Gumiho slowly sits up.

“Did you have to go and play with the dogs of all the supernatural creatures out there?” she complains, addressing Loki –who is still oblivious by the way, but it gains her several hostile scowls back.

“Undo his ties.” Kate demands, fervently.

“Not until I get what I want.” She says, an insufferable smirk tainting her lips, “I’ve waited a hundred years for this moment and now that the vessel has awakened, I can finally use it to my purpose.”

“I’ve already restrained his arms and the full moon is high in the sky,” the Gumiho reports, amused by the attention she’s getting while standing in the center, “Do you really think you can stop me?”

“I thought you said you didn’t want to hurt him.” Peter reminds her.

“She didn’t.” Loki assures, eyes flecking from the floor to Thor, “She’s not going to either.”

“Don’t be so sure,” the Gumiho shakes her index threateningly, “they tried to warn you kid, we, foxes, are sly creatures.”

Loki chews on his bottom lip for a moment while the others charge into battle stances. He bites down on the edges of his tongue at the reveal with regret. That’s when Natasha dashes forward in a rush and the Gumiho’s head rears toward her, her hand coming up to stop her as the rest watches, taken by the brazen attack. Natasha charges at the Gumiho when she pounces like a cat does on its prey, and they both move their hands so quickly Loki is hardly keeping up to root for her. He sees how she draws her claws out, opens her jaw and four fangs are starting to germinate, they look so sharp they’d cut through metal. Natasha is using her claws exactly how a nocturnal skunk does to dig up food, but she’s using them a little more frantically as she grazes and scratches the Gumiho’s chest. Blood is soon rushing out, a total mess of scarlet. Loki is cursing the day he was born if what he’s just witnessed is anyhow real, but there’s a clutch of pain around his body that he has no idea about
Its source. He drops and weeps with his forehead against the ground. Kate is quickly on her knees, calling his name with a hand resting on his shoulder, “Are you OK, Loki?”

“H-hurts...a lot.” he wheezes out, aware of how red his face must have become from forcing himself to not let out any cries of pain. His violet veins poke out across his neck and forehead, he’s sweating as if he’s just ended a marathon. He hears her calling Thor, and next there’s a slamming sound, so he guesses that Natasha is turning the tables on the creepy ghost –or is she a monster? Whatever is happening is not very much his concern right now because he’s definitely feeling something liquid seeping through his arms. His heart is beating so fast he’s barely making it out of his miserable state of being unable to breathe by gasping, but every pant he makes feels like a dagger piercing through his chest. Whatever that’s restraining him is turning up like a bad penny, figuratively speaking.

“You kill me, he dies.” The Gumiho suddenly announces. It’s actually more of a threat than an announcement of some customer appreciation sales; Loki is too worn out to care.

Silence seeps in momentarily and his pain is slowly being reduced when Natasha stops attacking the Gumiho, who’s looking terribly pitiful now with all the gashes and the cuts over her chest. “I told you before” she adds, panting like a regular human does as she nears Loki despite his agitated eyes, despite how Kate is scowling at her. “I’ve restrained his arms, but it is nothing ordinary, nor is it an illusion. Those are actually magical cords which I made using my fox power.”

“That’s deep.” Loki huffs with a bite of derogatoriness. “How do I take them off?”

“You can’t.” She replies curtly, with a slight shrug that Loki does not fail to notice.

“Great.” He rolls his eyes, shoulders drooping in disappointment.

Everyone is speechless for a beat, heady confusion tensing in the air, but Thor is different. His countenance and his features are relaxed with a slight touch of boredom, too. “You know that I’m still going to kill you, right?”

All eyes land hastily on him as the bodies swivel around, questioning.

“Mr. Dinson!” Kate and Natasha rampage, hands flailing.

“Works for me.” Wade expresses as he nears the center of the hall, eyes entertained.

“Thank you, bastards.” Loki gives an asymmetrical smile, “your douchbagness has doubled ten folds just now.”

Wade returns the smile but it’s even more evil than the look in his eyes. Peter and Steve finally decide to take part in the argument. “If we kill her it might kill him.” Steve offers, and soon Peter nods to his friend and adds, “we don’t know if she’s telling the truth or not, but by the scent he’s giving off, I can tell the magic is really hurting him.”

The Gumiho turns around to face the addressed man, and now, the moonlight is pouring on the two of them alone. “Alpha, why did you come here?”

Yea, why, anyone else would have called the police and hoped for the best, but not Thor, not his family. They came to his rescue. He doesn’t know how they made it here or what happened for him to end up in an abandoned barn –looks like a barn, unless he’s watched too many remakes of The Texas Chainsaw Massacre that it’s now affecting his judgment. But they are here, for him. And he wants to know why.

“You trespass my territory, threaten my betas inside my house, kidnap a helpless human and now
you’re using magic to keep him tied down.” Thor purses his lips downward, “It’s not that hard to figure out.”

“Fair enough.” Loki comments and he fleetingly receives a hit to his head for being stupid.

“You’re such a moron.” Kate chides, “If he kills her, you die.” She’s pointing at their direction.

Loki stares back at her, moments fleeing without him saying anything in return, but he eventually looks around and addresses Thor, “this whole thing is working on my nerves,” he does this slow twist of his lips and nose flare, and adds, “I don’t know how kidnapping me is going help you,” he swallows, addressing the Gumiho, “but I seriously have no idea how to turn you back to normal, that’s beyond my ability as a mere clerk at Alfred’s Antiques.”

“What’ you talking about?” Peter asks for everyone else, even for the Gumiho who is looking stupefied.

“You said you’ve been waiting for a hundred years, today is a full moon night, and you were probably casting some sort of a spell just before you got interrupted.” He’s shrugging in between sentences. He can’t believe his own talk; he’s probably been cooped up with her longer than necessary. He is also trying to undo whatever that’s wrapped around the upper half of his body. “Foxes don’t go through that kind of trouble unless they’re involved in some deep shit,” that’s is, he’ll humor her enough to buy him time “so I simply guessed as much, that you actually want to be human again, besides, I’ve read about it somewhere.”

Wade snorts, but he stifles it in when the Gumiho doesn’t deny any of it. “Wait a sec, you mean what the clown’s just said is true?”

He’s already back to being a dick? Well, Loki did say he missed that version of him. Good times.

The Gumiho’s legs give out and she collapses to the ground, face dazed. “When the fox spirit takes over, it does terrible things to people, it murders young boys and I hate it.” She hiccups, tears forming in her eyes. “I have only tonight to turn back or else I’m going to be stuck forever in the nine-tailed fox form and spend the rest of my life feeding off internal organs.”

All eyes are plastered on the Gumiho that they don’t notice how Loki shuffles and indeed manages to release his arms, “oh for crap’s sake, that took forever.” He huffs and stands up, now all heads reel toward him as he dusts off his clothes. “I don’t get you people; you’ve got your heads far up your asses.” He’s flailing his hands as though bringing in a jet for landing, “sometimes, it’s enough if you just ask for whatever that is you want and people won’t hesitate to give it to you.”

“Are you high on something?” Wade nods his head to the Gumiho now, “did she give you something nasty to smoke?”

The other rolls his eyes and ushers to the two girls to move out of his way, “I won’t do anything stupid, I promise.” He tells them when they refuse to move out of his way.

“It’s not you we’re worried about.” Natasha explains.

But, thank God, they finally allow him to pass through. He walks up to the Gumiho who is still on the ground, gazing vacantly at some spot on the walls behind just where Thor is standing. “Ms. Gumiho?” he calls, acidly. “I’ve probably slept through the whole day and I’m kind of starving right now,” he crouches down to meet her teary eyes. He can see Thor from the corner of his eyes, wrapping his arms over his broad chest. “Now, how about we get this over with so everyone can go home?”
“Aren’t you way too nonchalant about this?” Thor bites out, annoyed.

“I’m trying to wrap things up as fast as I can, so technically I’m doing you a favor.” Loki points out, and receives a blistering glare for his trouble. He doesn’t roll his eyes, but he does flit his gaze from the other man’s. “I really want to help you get back to normal, human, whatever.” Loki says, ending a lot less adamently than he began. He's still really not sure how his life turned out this way, having this little chat with a Gumiho. He’s too old to be having imaginary friends. “But I probably can’t do that if you don’t tell me what I exactly have to do.” He wrinkles his nose in sympathy, “and seeing how you’ve brought me here and tied me down,” he looks at his wrists at this and sees the traces of a few drops of blood on his skin that emerged when he shuffled against whatever that’d been tying him down, “I bet it’s something to do with my body.”

“Blood,” she corrects, and repeats when he props an eyebrow upward, “it’s your blood that I need.”

“OK, great, you could have said so from the start.” He claps, “so!” He breathes out, “want me to draw you a pentagram with my blood on the dirt so you can do your Mojo thing?”

“Are you mocking me?” She berates, eyes locking with his.

“I’m not.” He deadpans, “but your crap has bugged me since day one, if this could get rid of you then I’m gladly doing it, and it would do the public good to ‘supposedly’ stop a Gumiho from going on a killing spree.”

Everyone is silent.

“Alpha,” She addresses Thor now when she flings her gaze at him, “can you use your claws and make just a slight cut on his tattooed arm?”

“You dream big.” Thor’s nostrils flare as he unfolds his arms.

“Just do it, Thor.” Loki lifts himself up and sighs, and soon grumbles “And don’t expect me to overlook this.” He makes a motion at Thor’s claws with his own hand, “you and I are going to have a very long talk later, but right now, just make the damn cut.” He darts his tattooed arm forward for the other, who sighs and walks closer, brings his index which has a seemingly pointy claw, and draws a slight cut on Loki’s forearm just as requested. Blood flowers out of the cut.

“Now what?” Peter shrugs, hands slipping into his pockets.

The Gumiho rises up to her feet and Thor erupts on his heels, alerted. The others, who were watching keenly, do the same.

“Since you were able to break my spell, I assume you are indeed the vessel.” She smiles to Loki, who’s minutely glaring at her with pressed lips. “Give me your hand.”

The other does so and waits, the rest wait as well.

She begins murmuring those nonsensical words again while holding Loki’s tattooed arm in her long, bony and downright scary hands, a strike of wind howls uninvited and their hair flutter. Moments later, he’s feeling the same strange tingling sensation coursing up his arm, it makes him swallow. His eyes look around furtively at the others. He sees Kate frowning cutely as she watches, Natasha is clenching her fists at either side of her thighs, Wade is slowly sending his brows heavenwards and the duo Steve and Peter are both keeping their hands warm inside their pockets. Thor, however, is crossing his arms over his chest again, momentarily shifts, thumbing his bottom lip nervously. Loki smirks openly to himself but apparently Thor sees it.
“If you turn into some tufted deer, I’m killing you on the spot.” Thor threatens, and his facial expression serious.

“That’s mean.” Loki wrinkles his nose and pouts, “If I turn into something, then it’s got to be a cute Dumbo octopus,” he’s grinning but everyone, including the Gumiho, roll their eyes, “W-what? Dumbos are too darn cute–” he pauses when the Gumiho leans in and sucks the blood coming from the cut on his arm, “w-what…” he blushes, “Whoa, OK, I get that I’m quite the catch, but sorry, pancake, you’re not my type.”

She pulls away and smirks with lips framed with blood, “I won’t go for you even if I was; you’re already taken.”

Loki is narrowing his eyes in confusion, attempting to fathom the meaning, when, suddenly, a strong gust of wind whooshes. The moon shines more on the Gumiho after she pushes Loki away, but gently. Her hair and dress are fluttering and dancing around her. Loki’s mouth falls open and Kate mirrors it as they all watch, dazed. A bolt of lightning hits her and she lets out a loud shriek, the bright bolt of lightning almost shades everything and forces eyes into the nook of elbows. When everything calms down, abating to a distant current of air, Loki peeks around and sees the Gumiho on the ground with smoke coming out of her, literally.

“Is she dead?”

“We need to get out of here.” Wade notifies, worriedly, his eyes scanning the plaster falling down from the ceiling

“We can’t just leave her!” Loki objects, his legs already on motion to dash toward the body. But a hand holds his arm to stop him, he whips around angrily but soon his anger fades, “K? What’ you doing?”

“You get out, leave her to us,” Kate offers, they both get interrupted by large, wooden pieces falling from the joists above, “get out now!” she demands, voice rising to a roar.

Loki isn’t going to run off and let a teenage girl inside a crumbling house save another woman. He’s a scaredy cat, on occasions, screams like a girl if startled, but not a coward. “Sorry K, but spoiling me today is off-market.” He pushes her towards the front door and hurries to the body of the Gumiho, except she’s not there. He looks around skeptically, did she survive after all? Did he miss something? Oh yes, Thor walking towards him, carrying the Gumiho in his arms like a princess while the falling pieces dodge them, and it all looks like some clichéd scene from some fairy tale adopted into a drama. It’s vexing, alright!

Everyone gets out in time and they watch as the entire building crumbles down. Loki and Kate breathe out a sigh of relief, “that was some high voltage rundown show.” He comments, hands on his hips.

“Unfortunately, she’s still alive.” Steve groans.

“Did the whole ritual thing go right? Is she human now?” Loki asks, his eyes locked with Thor’s.

“I can hear sirens,” Thor notes out.

What, from this far?

“For now, let’s go back home.” The man recommends, already turning around towards the direction of his house, torched Gumiho in his arms.
The others follow obediently but only Loki follows with a few complains of his own that he’s ready to lay out now that the adrenaline has worn off. “Is that it? I was kidnapped and bled to death for a little firework show?”

“You didn’t bleed to death, otherwise you’d be dead” Wade replies, lazily. “That’s why it’s called bleeding to death.”

“Asshole, I won’t forget how you wanted me dead meat –no, bag that, how you actually wanted him to kill her, which means killing me.”

Steve shakes his head disappointingly at their tireless banter and hurries a little forward to wrap his arm around Natasha’s neck, who, in return, links her arm around his back.

The walk back home is accompanied by no more noise but silence, and everyone scatters inside the house like a pack of lost lambs once the front door opens, as though it’s a habitual thing to come back home after coming across a mythical creature that has undergone a billion volt of electricity…
Chapter 7

“I’m going to dampen a cloth or something for her head, make sure she’s comfortable on the couch.”
Loki instructs and quickly turns wheels to the kitchen. Doesn’t take him long before he is back with
a bottle of water and a dishcloth; glancing up at the rest of them, he chuckles at the way they –sans
Thor– surround the sleeping Gumiho as if she’s a UFO that’s fallen down the sky, “Out of my way.”

He’s done placing the dishcloth over her forehead so he sits down cross-legged like a stern parent
ready to lecture his five-year-old, his eyes scanning the faces belonging to the teenagers sitting on the
floor and facing him. “Let’s start with you” –he addresses Kate– “you said you knew a thing or two;
well, here’s your time to shine.” Kate wets her lips and sends Natasha a fervent glance; he interprets
it as a cry for help so he tries to take her out of her misery, “tell me only what I need to know.”

“How about you start with the wounds he’s supposed to have on his arm.” The Gumiho mumbles in
her recumbence, but it’s audible. She sits up and cracks the fatigue in her neck –the kind of fatigue
that comes after getting hit by a bolt of lightning.

"What?" Wade asks, disbelievingly.

"It healed! How awesome is that!” Loki grins and feels his shoulders gingerly.

“That’s weird, humans aren’t supposed to heal on their own, what is he?” Natasha addresses the
Gumiho.

“Hey, that sounded racist just now” –Loki scowls but quickly goes back to grinning to himself when
he sees the wounds have really healed.

“aren’t you way too calm about this?” Peter props his shoulders up and lets them stiff near his ears
for a while.

"What,” Loki sneers, "expected me to cry and slap myself on the chest?” He chuckles.

"Actually, yeah." Kate chuckles back, "I kind of expected you to lose it, which would be the only
reasonable thing to do than this, and we haven’t even told you the worst part yet.” She motions at his
direction.

He grabs his shirt and forces himself to sit up properly, "believe it or not" –he wears the shirt–
"reasonable' kind of goes outta the window when you see a Gumiho walk through one billion volts
of electricity, or when you see Thor and a bunch of teenage kids flicking claws out and flashing
yellow eyes.”

That breaks the tension somehow and everyone is symbiotically laughing, but the laughs echo and
eventually vanish when Thor walks down the stairs and sits on the couch beside the blushing
Gumiho.

“So what’s the worst part?” Loki addresses Kate again.
“There are actually other creatures, supernatural creatures that exist,” she starts, “for example, this one here is a hundred year old Gumiho.”

“Used to be.” the used-to-be Gumiho corrects.

“Right, it still doesn’t change the fact that whenever I look at you, it gives me the heebie-jeebies.”

“And what about you?” Loki cuts to the chase, “why do you have claws, fangs and yellow eyes?”

“I’m sure you’ve watched many movies about vampires, I mean they made so many, well I can’t say they’re accurate, and most of them are pretty crappy really–”

“So you guys are vampires?” He concludes, eyes not daring to glance up at Thor who’s eying him with such piercing attention; Loki can see him from the corner of his eyes.

“What, No!” Steve jaws, ticked off.

“We’re werewolves.” Thor ends the game of guess-what-I-am with a bored expression.

Loki is slowly raising his gaze to look at the other man who’s already looking directly at him. It feels as though there’s something pulling him against his will, as though Thor’s eyes hold knowledge to every query he might have if he’d just let himself drown. It’s somehow pleasantly embarrassing, but at the same time unnerving. “Werewolves?” he echoes, “as in you turning into a walking fur ball with fangs and claws in every full moon?”

“Why is everything a joke to you?” Peter reproves, shaking his head frustratingly.

“I beg you a pardon?” Loki squints his eyes, accusingly, “You’re basically telling me that a bunch of teenagers are actually werewolves in disguise? OK, I’ve come to terms with myself and admitted that the Gumiho is actually just a ghost lead astray and needs to be guided to the light. Follow the light, Ms. Gumiho, chop-chop.” He shoos with a hand and adds, “Supernatural my ass.”

Wade’s nose flares and he’s soon on his feet, his eyes land on Loki’s as the latter wait for what he’s prepared to perform. Wade lolls his head and he’s soon developing a bulge between his brows as the latter vanish, fangs emerge inside his mouth. He jolts his hands and claws spring up, his eyes a beautiful shade of yellow.

“Satisfied?” Wade jeers.

Loki is apparently stunned, if only literally. "Your upswept locks look so” –he eyes the other's form from head to toe– “ugly."

"Not as much as the look you have on your face." Wade fires back.

“And all of you look like him when you’re, y’know, wolfed-out?” It still sounds foreign on his tongue.

“Mostly, but Mr. Dinson has red eyes since he’s the Alpha.” Kate nods her head toward the said man.

“I heard the creepy ghost over there–”

“Gumiho.” She corrects with a small rumble.

“Wait, I thought you said you’re a human now.” Loki points a finger at her, eyes narrowing.
“Used-to-be.” she reminds and Loki doesn’t even bother to question her logic anymore.

“Anyways, she called him Alpha a couple of times, what does it mean?”

“You see, since we’re werewolves, there’s an elaborate hierarchy in our pack. Mr. Dinson is the leader, which means he’s the Alpha; we’re the Betas in the pack.”

“But I don’t understand, you guys said you weren’t blood related, and what I know about wolves is that their pack is made of members related to each other by blood or family ties.”

“Incorrect, in the case of werewolves, one can become pack if they’re either given the bite or born from werewolf parents.” Natasha explains more.

“Which are you?” He addresses Kate now.

“We were all given the bite by the Alpha,” she answers, “Of course it was a choice we made by our own free will.”

Loki sighs and bites down his lips, there’s a slight ache building up in his head and he feels tired of it. “So” he says a little louder and stretches the last vowel –you only do that when you’re about to bring up something either embarrassing or inappropriate. "Werewolves, huh, got any superpowers or anything remotely similar?"

“Duh!” Natasha charges the batteries of her bragging machine.

"We're werewolves, we have ridiculous powers." Kate gushes with a grin lining her small lips.

"We have speed." Steve explains,

"We have healing and pain draining powers." Peter adds.

"Our hearing and smelling senses are heightened; we can hear heartbeats and tell a lie from truth. We can smell all the chemical signals that humans produce, emotions or feelings like disgust, anger or arousal..." Wade provides now with a deep smirk which rings some bells for Loki.

“You can smell what?”

“Every time you’re angry, happy or sad, we know.” Wade clarifies, counting with his fingers and then dropping his hand over his lap. “Even your arousal scent is registered now because dude, last night was a lot.”

Loki’s face is soon being painted red. Even his heart is revving so fast he’s barely hearing anything beyond.

“Hearing another man moan inside a shower was never my dream.” Peter groans, sorry for himself, and he’s rather surprised to hear Thor chuckle.

“You must be joking,” Natasha points out, "that sultry moan was the sexiest thing I’ve ever heard in my entire life." She spurts out of the blue, and Kate grins like an idiot and gives Loki a thumbs-up sign.

"Oh. My. God" Loki props his elbows over the coffee table, cups his cheeks to hide the blush that's starting to spread on his face and down to his neck, "why do I feel so violated all of a sudden?"

"We heard it, buddy." Wade sing-songs, "Loud and clear"
"Will you knock it off already?" He rebukes behind his palms, "my privacy's been invaded, that's like walking down the town's roads, naked, with a sign that reads 'Available at Alfred's, that's like – oh my God" he breathes out calmly now while shaking his head, as if he’s in denial.

"It was sexy, with such splendid virility." Natasha reassures, like he didn't hear her clear the first time. "And the scent of arousal is still slowly wearing off, too."

"You mean you still smell the damn thing?" He’s looking at her now with his nose wrinkled.

"It's faint though," she shrugs, "but earlier, I mean when we came early this morning? Whew." her eyes widen. "I wonder who you were jerking off to."

"Are you seriously asking a dude about the kind of things he jerks off to?" He finally flails his hands, disbelievingly, and somehow confused.

"Well, the guys here don't use the house for that, they use theirs, so it's not like I always get to hear those v--" 

"Stop." Loki shakes his head dramatically as he holds a hand up, "I'm not having this kind of conversation with a high school teenage girl, and I don't even want to hear the rest of your sentence either." He shakes his head, “Jesus!"

“So are we done with all the werewolf-y talk?” the used-to-be Gumiho asks, impatiently, “because there are definitely more pressing things to talk about.”

“Like how you aren’t packing your things and leaving my territory?” Thor gives her a lethal glare that manages to silence her for a minute.

“Actually, if I know any more than this something tormenting to my self-esteem is bound to happen.” Loki comments when he’s done wetting his lips, “and I still have many questions about this, it’s not like we’re done here.”

“Loki, you aren’t compelled to know everything by now. We can tell you the rest later.” Wade, who usually pours scorn on him, is kindly smiling at him to convince him and it does wonders when Loki nods agreeing.

He tries to stealthily look at Thor, but finds the man already looking at him, their eyes are lock on each other for a little but then Loki ends the eye contact, drumming his fingers over his other palm, “I’m…” he starts, momentary scratching behind his right ear, “Thor?”

The other man does not reply, only leans with his elbow on the armrest.

“I’d like to have a few words with you.” Loki requests.

“Later.” Thor says, curtly.

“Bastard, I’m this close to kicking your furry balls because I’m so pissed right now you don’t even know.” He vents out. “And yes, I’m just getting started with the dog jokes, so wait for the punch line.” Blowing his stack during a bizarre talk wasn’t highly expected, but he’s just learned that six of them are actually werewolves, and the other is –was a Gumiho, and they’re telling him there are other creatures as well. Of course he’s known about the strange things happening in town, but not even once did he relate them to this family –pack, excuse him.

Speaking of strange, now that the Gumiho is no longer a Gumiho, shouldn’t it be safe outside?
There shouldn’t be any more creeps outside, she was the one controversially rubbing it how much of a spineless little shit he is, though he can’t disagree, but he does think there’s no more need to stay in this house.

“What are you worried about?” Steve breaks the silence.

Loki’s eyes tremble as he looks up and he shrugs when he sees their eyes on him, “I’m not worried.”

“That’s a lie.” Natasha declares, “We’ve just told you we have super hearing powers, that slight lurch of your heartbeat gave you away.”

“Can you really hear my heartbeats? –wait a minute, do I smell worried?”

“It appears you haven’t been listening at all. The six of us can smell anything you feel, we know when you tell the truth or lie, but the five betas here, we are bad at masking our scentering skills, unlike our Alpha. We’re still training for that.” Kate admits, eyes slowly looking down.

His eyes tremble more as he goes back with his memory to the first day he met them, how they’d talked about his smell. They must have heard his little chit-chats with their Alpha. And the day he gave him and Kate a ride, he must have heard their conversation; of course, it wasn’t a coincidence how he knew exactly what they were talking about. When Steve said ‘you smell’ but soon corrected himself and the same thing happened again with most of them. How they’d blunder but quickly correct themselves, and that night when he thought he wasn’t welcomed home but Thor proved him otherwise, and he even thought ‘if happiness had a smell, I’d be reeking by now’ so Thor must have smelled it. And when they played that game the other night, the kids knew instantly who’d lied and who hadn’t; Oh my God! They must have smelled how aroused he’d been whenever Thor was around.

Suddenly, he wants to dig up a hole and shove his head in it; no one’s ever suffered this humiliation!

“I should get going.” He finally announces, eyes never leaving the floor.


“It’s dark outside, perfect for night creatures to come out.” Wade teases, but it comes out as a warning; the brat can’t be worried for Loki, can he?

“Loki,” Kate calls, voice a rasp, “you don’t like us anymore, do you?”

Loki’s heart plops down to his stomach and he quickly regrets his decision, “No, it’s not like that!”

“But now that you know the truth, you don’t want to associate yourself with us anymore.” Peter coils into himself as his eyes flicker.

Loki opens his mouth to say something but he realizes he has no right to, it looks exactly as they said; he’s just running away. His eyes look down again, fidgety fingers nervously drumming over each other.

“It’s getting late, you guys should go back home.” Thor speaks with his deep, velvety voice, and it does weird things to Loki’s stomach that’s still healing from an earlier jolt. “You, stop causing us more trouble than it’s worth, wait until tomorrow then leave” which makes Loki feel like the one being lectured “and you” –he addresses the Gumiho– “better pack your things and leave my territory, I’m giving you until tomorrow.”

“I’m not leaving anywhere as long as the vessel is active.” She shakes her head no.
“You’re the least welcomed here, everything about you is trouble.” Natasha sighs.

“You even kidnapped and tied down a human for your own selfish purpose.” Kate crinkles her nose, as if detesting what the other woman had done; not that Loki is complaining.

“If I didn’t and let his arms loose, not just me, but all of us would have been in a great danger.” She informs them, eyes determined. This gains her inquisitive stares instead, and she lifts herself up. “I guess only creatures with magic can see it, but” –she addresses Loki now– “what do you know about your mark?”

“Nothing special, I’ve had it on my arm since forever.” He shrugs slightly, “why, what’s your point?”

“You may not believe it but the mark is magical.” She says, “Apparently, the magic is locked around the area of his forearms only, and the mark is like a key that keeps this magic sealed.”

Everyone seems to do a mental double-take at that. Eyes are furtively casting glances at Loki, wondering.

Loki’s lips twitch in a snort. “Come again?”

“You’ve been calling him vessel all this time; I’d definitely like some explanation.” Kate informs, repositioning herself for the story.

“You know how many creatures out there live for a long time until their bodies weaken, in my case I was born human before I got possessed by the Gumiho. My name’s Sif, by the way. I’m not really considered a vessel because what possessed me was the soul of the Gumiho, and thanks to Loki’s power, I was able to beat the real Gumiho and get my human form back.” She sighs at the memory, “my point is, Loki is different, and the reason why I call him vessel is, first, a habit because it was the Gumiho who used to call him that, not me. And second, because his body is actually a vessel.”

“Explain.” Thor orders, elbows propping on his knees as he intertwines his fingers together.

“Vessels like Loki are born, not created. My best guess is that some rituals were performed by his parents, months before he was born.”

“My parents?” Loki gives another disdainful snort.

“Yes, because the creature’s power embodied inside you can’t be forcibly summoned by necromancy, basically, like I said, it’s not a spirit. The vessel that’s going to host its power has to do it with their own free will, so I’m theorizing that your parents were the ones who performed the rituals.” She pauses and quickly adds when she notices all ears listening to her, “what lies sealed inside your Mark is actually an Imugi.”

“Imugi, as in dragons and folklore tales stuff?” Wade props up, interested.

“Apparently, it’s not a tale anymore, and the Imugi is actually a premature dragon. In order for the Imugi to transform into a full-fledged dragon it has to undergo some training for a thousand years.”

“A thousand years!” The rest, sans Loki and Thor, exclaim, and Sif nods. “But Loki’s case is a little bit different. The Imugi’s been sealed before Loki was even born, but for whatever reason, the seal was deactivated. It’s how the Gumiho was able to sniff him and probably other creatures will soon and get attracted to where he is.”

“That’s why you used his blood?” Peter asks, his thumb pointing at Loki.
“Yes.” Sif nods, “he didn’t smell human at first, the Imugi’s power is running in his blood and it attracted me somehow, but that’s not really what you need to worry about.”

“What” Loki heckles derisively, “I just turned into Naruto and you’re telling me that other creatures might come after me as well. I guess that’s pretty worrisome, thank you very much.”

“Not all creatures, the Alpha and his pack did not harm you, did they?” She urges, and without waiting for his answer, she adds, “Though I bet they were attracted to the smell of the power surging in your bloodstream but they aren’t hostile. Other creatures who are looking for a vessel might be, so you’re absolutely not allowed anywhere without one of us accompanying you.”

Loki looks errantly at the windows, and he looks like he’s ready to toss himself from it, that coffee table might buy the farm; but, very slowly, he turns his head to look at Sif, thin lips parting into a smile. “I bet everyone’s tired, why don’t you guys stay here, and tomorrow, let’s celebrate her coming back to normal.”

Sif smiles tentatively at him,

“You must be joking.” Natasha shuffles and sits up, “she’s not allowed in here.”

“Is it up to you to make that decision?” Steve asks acidly, brows furrowed.

“You evil couple, just give her a break, she’s had it tough.” Loki sighs, swats a carefree hand before his face, “she doesn’t have a house, let alone a place to stay.”

Suddenly, there are arms wrapping around Loki’s middle and he makes a low-pitched gasp.

“Loki,” Sif’s voice is small, “I’m sorry, I really am. I didn’t mean to hurt you before but after being possessed for nearly a hundred years it was becoming difficult to control her.” she sobs now, “I can’t believe how kind you are, after all the things I’ve made you go through.”

Loki’s lips break into another fascinatingly warm smile and he brings a hand to ruffle her hair, the demeanor gentle like a mother’s.

The rest seems to sympathize with her story and they soon agree that she stays, but only temporary; and none votes against, because not just her, even Loki has to leave that house whether he likes it or not.

He goes into the kitchen with a much eased mind to make a fancy dinner to welcome the new guest, and the latter is taken to the bathroom by Natasha and Kate. Soon, they all gather and surround the coffee table, Loki gets out of the kitchen at last with the last side dish in his hand, when he and the rest of the pack look up at the stairs, Natasha and Kate are leading the other one down and the boys finally see Sif’s makeover: her hair wrapped in a high ponytail, the moustache printed pajamas and dotted lounge shorts.

Sif looks shyly at the boys and bows slightly when they near the table, “Natasha cut my hair and Kate gave me her pajamas.”

“You look pretty.” Loki compliments with a genuine smile.

“She’s finally a complete human.” Natasha announces, flicking her own red hair to the back.

“You look so beautiful, honest!” Steve shouts and it makes the girl shy even more as she bows her
head slightly to thank him.

Thor nods his head and she smiles in return, but Wade is looking at the table, bashfully. Sif sits beside him and he only blushes brightly that airplanes could use him for landing, the rest of the pack is teasing him about it and are obviously enjoying it. Loki joins Thor on the couch when everyone sits down, and they eat in a much calmer atmosphere now.

Sif is telling them about her life before being possessed by the Gumiho, and everyone is listening and commenting when they feel it’s only right to, but Loki’s phone decides to interrupt from somewhere; the absolute wrong timing. He excuses himself and fetches the device, and he isn’t the least surprised to see that the caller is Martha, his prying neighbor. He only connects the call when he’s completely outside.

“Loki,” a burst of happy coos, “how are you!”

“It’s been a while, how’ve you been?” Loki leans on the deck railing, eyes roaming aimlessly over the silhouettes of tall pine trees.

“I’ve been good, and I’m even happier to hear from you and from Bucky, too.”

Loki’s heart skips a beat and he readies himself for the inevitable. Also, he’s making a mental note to ask Thor later what he knows about his dead friend. “From Bucky…?”

“Yes, he called me last night,” she gushes, “told me he missed you.”

She continues to talk more about the things Bucky told her, and Loki listens patiently and even chuckles when she does, though it’s nothing funny. Loki thinks that since Martha is imagining that Bucky called, which is impossible because Loki was there when Bucky lied inside the morgue with a bloody gush across his chest, she must be going into the apex of the Alzheimer. He doesn’t know for how many minutes more she talks before she finally bids him goodnight.

He’s scrolling down his messages while walking back inside when he suddenly picks Sif’s voice, and it doesn’t require him super hearing powers to grasp the words he’s managed to catch up on.

“…And the Imugi’s power might transform and break free, so he has to get rid of the seal, aka the mark.”

He comes in, feigning unawareness, “I’m taking a shower.” He tells them, a hand on the banister.

“Don’t jerk off.” Wade shouts, “The smell takes a while to completely wear off and I’m going next.”

Loki widens his almond-like eyes at the other threateningly, but eventually ends up shying when he sees the back of Thor’s head. Somehow, he’s thankful he never called out his name whenever he ejaculated, because that’d have ended like an awkward disaster by now.

When he finally comes down, he sees Sif sleeping on the couch. He guesses all the maiming and mangling she’s been forced to do have caught up to her; culprits sleep in interrogation rooms after the truth leaks out. Steve and Peter are watching the TV, Natasha is reading some book and Kate yawns as she nears the stairs, “I’m going to my room to sleep, good night.” She says, lazily, and she stomps over the stairs. Loki asks the two boys what they are watching because it looks interesting but he doesn’t linger there to find out, and the two look too absorbed to give him an answer, “just don’t stay up, you know it’s a school night.” He warns them just like how a parent would and saunters towards the front door.

As soon as he opens it, there’s a gentle breeze welcoming him. He sees that Thor is sitting, relaxed,
his knees leisurely swinging right and left. Loki nears the spot and sits down beside the other man, and he’s surprised and happy to see that Thor’s already got two glasses ready and the wine bottle is still full. It sounds wrong to thank him for waiting, so he only nods avowedly and turns to open the bottle.

Each is drinking from his own glass, their eyes enjoying the sight of the full moon in the sky.

“You look like you’re taking it well,” Thor suddenly cuts the silence, “you OK there?”

“Ha,” Loki yelps and it comes out like a croaked cry, “Peachy!” Really? After everything he’s seen and learnt tonight, Thor still asks him if he’s OK?

“We couldn’t have told you, there was just no way. And I was confident we wouldn’t have anything to do with you if we bore with you for one day, but that changed, and then you’d always find a way to come back here. As the days went on, I knew it was only a matter of time before you found out everything.”

“I don’t impugn your judgments in making decisions, but you lied to me about Bucky.” Loki looks down. He has no idea what kind of expressions is coating his face but there’s a voice in him that points out the fact that’s the most he’s heard Thor say since crossing paths with him.

“You didn’t even doubt I knew him, so technically, I didn’t lie.”

“So basically, it’s like your rocket of spilling answers won’t launch until your ass is on enough fire, and I’m not a fan of being technical by the way, now start talking.”

Thor says nothing in reply, and Loki has to turn around and make sure the man hasn’t fallen asleep or anything because he’s taking too long, and he wants his damn answers. But Thor is looking at him in something akin to concern for a beat longer.

“What’s wrong?”

“Bucky’s story will unfold eventually,” he says, “but there’s something I’m actually worried about.” He deadpans with a blank face.

This guy’s worried about something? Thor doesn’t do worry.

“What?” Loki enjoins, almost in a whisper, afraid that if he adds even one more word, the other would spring up to his feet, refusing to tell him. His eyes are quivering curiously, anticipating the answer.

Thor shakes his head anyway and rises up to full length, “I’m going inside, don’t stay up.” He quickly wiggles his way out of the questions and goes back inside.

Loki’s jaw drops and he stares at the front door as it creaks closed. Now, he has all the time in the world to replay the events of the day, the strange things he’d heard about them being werewolves, about him being a vessel.

There’s an Imugi sealed inside him. Is there really an Imugi sealed inside him?

What did Sif mean when she said more creatures are going to be attracted by the smell of his blood?

That’s absurd!

Attracted by the scent of his blood…
That’s just absurd!

Thor was worried about something. By any chance, could it be he was worried about this, too? OK, scratch that, because it wouldn’t happen even in his dreams. Thor is a supernatural creature, the scowliest one, but definitely the least hostile one out there. And he wasn’t attracted to the scent of Loki’s blood, he couldn’t.

He couldn’t, could he?

Hold on a second, so every time Thor was comforting him by nuzzling his neck, was it actually just him being attracted to the scent of Loki’s blood?

Is that what he’s worried about?

The ache in Loki’s heart grows intense by the second, and slowly, he finds himself frowning, “Damn.” He hugs his knees to his chest and props his jaw on them, “damn it.”
His eyes trail up to the surface of the drawer, trying to locate the clock which has been turned slightly toward the windows making it a little difficult for him to see from his angle. Loki props up on his right elbow on the pillow, his other hand rubbing his eye. He doesn’t have the heart to curse the sun for waking him a little earlier than usual, since he’s used to waking up early. He rubs his face when a yawn tags along uninvited.

“Loki!” a voice nears the room, a female’s, shouting with earnest exuberance.

Said male snaps his head toward the door, as it flies open vigorously, he jolts upright. Sif and Kate, still in their pajamas, gape at him.

“S-sorry, we’ll tell you when you’re downstairs.” Sif lets him know with a blush flourishing across her cheeks

“Yeah.” Kate nods, fervently. “It’s not anything serious anyway.” She gives him an awkward grin as she closes the door firmly after nudging Sif and herself outside the room.

Loki is left in a daze, did that just happen? Scratching the skin behind his ear, he realizes something that might actually answer the hasty and awkward glances the two girls exchanged before vanishing. There’s a heavy, bulky arm wrapped around his waist; Thor’s arm.

Thor’s obviously sleeping like a log again, his eyes fluttering under his lids at the slightest movements and his fingers intermittently twitching to the slightest sounds. All that can be ignored, Loki can ignore all of it, but it’s a shirtless Thor that he can’t forgive! The girls must have thought – they must have made the wrong assumption! Well, Loki isn’t uncomfortable with that hand whatsoever, so he doesn’t really need or have to remove it seeing how it’s wrapped securely around him in a more of a protective manner, but if the girls misunderstand what’s going on here then it’s going to turn out bad later; one way or another. It always does.

Loki shakes his head in a failed attempt to shake the thoughts away.

He takes in Thor’s peaceful face, his own hand hesitating whether to rest on the one around his waist or not. He wants to do it, stroke the skin until Thor is more comfortable, or embarrassed. He wants to know what his reaction would be. Loki is eying the man’s features with eyes filled with unfathomable yearning, and then it hits him, like an unstoppable train, the realization that he has magic running through his veins that supernatural creatures are attracted to, creatures like werewolves, like Thor…

This realization pushes him to finally remove Thor’s hand and rest it back next to its owner, he leaves the bed and also leaves the room after he’s done setting the alarm at 8. Downstairs, he finds all of them circling Sif, and all of them, sans Wade, look excited about something that quickly makes even Loki interested, too. “What’s going on?” he asks.

All heads swivel around, and Kate is the loudest of them all. “Loki, it looks like Sif hasn’t completely lost all the Gumiho’s power!”

Loki’s brows knit, nearing said female, “don’t tell me I have to get kidnapped and bleed to death
Wade rolls his eyes and sighs; he even went out of his way to explain what bleeding to death means but this moron is incorrigible. “No, it seems what she has is just like the aftereffect of the Gumiho’s real powers.”

“Like how you magnetize things?” Loki asks and receives an affirmative to his theory. He soon checks the proof with his own eyes when Sif manages to manifest a rabbit from smoke that she was able to loom up from thin air. Loki gasps so loud it makes several eyes stare at him alone as they gush in unison “unbelievable, isn’t it!” but he nods and swallows, “Yeah! It looks so much like Wade it’s almost unbelievable!” The latter is so righteously vexed that he uses his light kicks to punish Loki for what he’s said, who in return, laughs along with everyone and escapes to the kitchen.

“You guys need to have breakfast before you go to school.” He tells them, musing with a vague smile.

Sif comes in, followed by a nonchalant Natasha, who is now dressed in her black. Thor is really setting the wrong example for these kids.

“Let us help you.” She offers, and is thrilled to see Loki beaming at her. At one hand, she can’t forgive herself for making Loki live through that fearful experience, making him think he was going crazy, but at the other, she’s glad he’s forgiven her and allowed her near.

“By the way, Sif,” He starts, mixing the eggs in a large bowl. Maybe he wants to make omelets. “There’s something I’ve been thinking about since last night, when the Gumiho was still around, she couldn’t come into this house, why is that?”

“I remember bits of that.” She hums, nearing the kitchen counter with a thoughtful expression about her face, “I think she was a little worried about the male betas finding out about her. You also remember how she attacked only when the two female betas in the pack stayed behind, but that’s just a theory of my own.” She shrugs, “it’d be something entirely different. I mean I only remember bits of everything, not the whole thing.”

Loki nods, “She also said she’d tell me the reason I have constant pain in my head and my arm.”

“You shouldn’t have trusted her,” she scowls at him in reproach, and quickly sighs when Loki peers at her, “like I said last night, you have magic inside of you, and since it’s sealed around your arm, the pressure is too heavy on your body because you weren’t told or instructed on how to train the Imugi, or its powers; consequently, the pain rushes to your head because our veins are connected to our brains.” Her hands come up, “I’m only explaining it from the Gumiho’s point of view, it’s not like I know the answer for sure.”

“No, it explains a lot actually. So when you say the seal has been deactivated…” he’s motioning to her to explain more.

“I mean it’s been deactivated, by magic or something chiefly supernatural.” She elaborates, “something must have happened that caused the seal to not function but not completely break, this could be very dangerous, Loki.”

He pauses, and he’s gradually chewing on his bottom lip in silence, “there’s something else…” he starts, complacently; but he quickly notices the worried glances the two girls are giving him so he smiles, shaking his head. “Never mind, it’s nothing serious really.” He beams some more but it doesn’t reach his eyes. “By the way, I’m going back to my apartment this afternoon. If by any
chance—well that’s a definite you’re going to be kicked out of here— but you should know that there’s always a space for you at my place.”

“You’re moving out?” Steve shouts from outside the kitchen, and Loki jerks up to the abruptness; he then remembers the ‘werewolf-y’ talk just eight or nine hours ago and is reminded that now all of them are supernatural creatures. Darn, he’d wished it was all just a dream when he woke up.

“Well yea, you see, I only stayed here because Sif was stalking me around,” he shrugs, offhandedly. “I’m not planning to shack up here, y’know.”

Everyone seems to be doing a double mental check on that, but Loki is indifferent when he lifts the oil bottle to the light to see its depletion. Just then, Thor walks in, heading straight to the sink.

“Hey,” Loki’s blue eyes have caught the action but he isn’t planning on letting the man do as he pleases. “Don’t drink from the tap.” He warns and leisurely snatch the cup from the other’s hand, “there’s a bottle in the fridge, drink from that.”

Natasha then grabs Sif by the forearm and takes her out of the kitchen, when Loki’s eyes are done following the two girls, he looks back at Thor who rolls his eyes at him, and drinks from the tap using his mouth instead.

“Fine, die from germs, it’d serve you right.” He huffs as he pours the mix into a pan and it sizzles.

“You’re really stupid.” Thor comments, “I’ve never seen a werewolf die from germs before, you know that we heal, don’t you?”

Loki quirks up and turns around to face the man, “don’t we all?”

“Yea, but our case is different.” He says, and just for the heck of it, he grabs a knife from the block, “for example” he drawls, “how much damage do you think this kitchen knife can do to me?”

Loki intones, “Enough to make your guts spill.”

“Want to test it out?” Thor ushers, but in a vague tone it makes the whole act suspicious.

Loki is quick on his heels, taking large steps to reach that hand that recklessly brandishes the knife about. “Don’t say stupid things in the early morning, it gives bad luck to people.” He struggles to take the knife away, and Thor continues to be a playful prick as he swings the appliance around. And despite his warning to the raven-haired that he might craze himself if he isn’t too careful, Loki doesn’t exactly appreciate the piece of advice. He ends up pressed against the sink with Thor’s waist on his, fucking grinding. Loki taps his flailing hands on the man’s marble chest and lowers his head, face aglow with a flush.

He feels Thor’s piercing eyes drinking in the sight of his bare collar, and his hot breath approaching his ear, like he is undecided whether to scent him or not. Loki’s chest starts heaving and he can almost hear his own breaths, wet and slow. His hands clench on the man’s tunic, reigning himself from doing something so foolish like grabbing Thor by the mane to make him mouth his neck.

Thor tosses the knife somewhere over the kitchen counter, and then Loki pinpoints Thor’s heavy silence. “You should go back to your place,” Said male states out of the blue.

Loki’s jaw tenses, and wide, listless eyes look up; oh yeah, supernatural hearing powers, he remembers now. But something about the meaning behind Thor’s words makes the trembling of his fingers prolonging like the onset of a natural calamity, “I know.” He tells him, pulling away from Thor’s space to pluck three apples from a bowl full of them. He puts them under the water tap and
shrugs.

“‘It’s safer that way.’” Thor adds in his usual tone of untroubled serenity.

“I said I know, okay?” Loki huffs and lifts an admonitory hand to halt the other’s sorry-excuses of reasoning.

The two are silent for a long moment, Thor finally shakes himself out of his little daze and breaks the nil of the complete absence of any sounds with his deep voice, “okay.” He nods slightly, and walks out of the kitchen.

Loki clenches his fists on the edge of the counter as he leans on it. He’s irked, he’s vexed and enormously disappointed; it’s not like he was going to pack up and come crashing to the house. In fact, he was only dragged here by the forces of nature, or whatever power upstairs was just so angry with him threw him to the wolves, literally. How is Loki supposed to know?

But what if he never comes back, what if he never sees Thor or any of them ever again?

Before he knows it, he’s fast on his feet, running after Thor. In the hall, only the pack stands by the front door.

“He left.” Steve informs with a scowl on his forehead.

“You shouldn’t have raised your voice like that if you regret it now.” Peter berates, a wave of yellow swivels inside his eyes.

“I didn’t.” Loki denies, and before any of them could raise an argument, he adds hurriedly, “are you guys already leaving, what about breakfast?”

There are several head-shakes, and only Kate is up enough to reply, “It’d feel like the last breakfast we’re having together, and personally, I hate that.”

“You can always find me at the store?” Loki smiles cordially.

“You don’t understand, it won’t feel the same.” Natasha groans, her goggle-round eyes rolling.

“It feels like our pack mom is going to leave the den.” Wade shrugs, a hint of disappointment shading his slumped body.

Loki smacks the boy’s head and quickly charms up a grin, “don’t forget to pass by the store when it’s finally repaired, besides, Sif is here now—”

“Eh?” said female screeches, “I’m going wherever you go.” Her jaw juts towards Loki. “I don’t want to stay with them if they’re not there to protect you, and since I’ve got a few tricks of my own now, then I believe I’m alone okay for that.”

“It’s not like we don’t want to,” Kate’s eyes dart downwards, “it seems like our Alpha doesn’t want to have anything to do with you anymore, so we follow.”

Which makes him feel like a streetwalker after a one night stand; Kate couldn’t put it any better.

“It’s exactly like I said.” Sif taunts, one brow already going up, “if fact, I’m glad Thor won’t have anything to do with him anymore, because from now on, I’ll devote my life to him. So go tell your Alpha his protection isn’t needed.”

“Sif.” Loki wrinkles his brows at her to mollify her anger. “It’s okay. And they’ve been greatly
Sif rolls her eyes with an annoyed ‘whatever’.

“Loki, we’re really sorry.” Steve says, looking like he’s having appendix pain.

“Hey, it’s getting late and school is still very far,” Loki notifies, concern in his voice, “how are you going to get there on time?”

Natasha flips her hair to the back and smirks, “we run.”

Loki is quickly reminded of their werewolf powers, so he ooh’s, “Werewolves. Right. I forgot.”

“We’ll get to school in less than five if we go now guys.” Wade reports, eyes peeking at his grey watch.

Everyone agrees with him and they bow slightly to Loki, luck wishes and ‘stay safe’ is flung in the air for him, and they soon leave and vanish between the bushes and trees after they leap in unison.

“Wow,” Loki exclaims as he watches them from the porch with Sif next to him, “now why can’t I get one of those powers on sales?”

“You’re too soft hearted.” Sif gripes, “They’re practically tossing you, and you’re so happy about it.”

Loki presses his lips together to give her a sort of a playful yet assuring smile, “you’re exaggerating things,” He nudges her shoulder with his, “come on, let’s eat and then pack up for your new home.”

All the way back to the kitchen, Sif wouldn’t leave it rest how much of a softy he is, which he agrees with when he sees how easily he’s forgotten to ask Thor more about Bucky. But the way he acts upon it leaves Sif skeptical about his true feelings.

They’re both at the sink doing the dishes while telling jokes and laughing when a massive tide of grief hits Loki, wanting to engulf him alive. His stomach aches, and soon he is on his knees, on the ground, with Sif dropping beside him and calling his name.

“Is it the mark?” she demands, but the only reply she gets back is a tear that shamefully rolls down Loki’s cheek.

“Didn’t know it’d hurt this much.” He wheezes and sniffs, even the hug she gives him takes time to get him back on his feet, emotionally drained. He guesses it was too arrogant to think that the fast-arriving farewell wouldn’t be too consuming.

He bags his belongings and promises Sif to buy her clothing when they get back. They both ride the beat up bike and he pedals down to the town, and to his apartment.

“Oh, I remember bits of being here,” Sif bobs her head, nodding to some memory her head is playing.

“Of course,” Loki smacks her forehead, but gently, “you kept scaring me and appearing on the mirrors, it was really freaky.” He wants to cry. He freaking hates ghosts.

“You know that wasn’t me,” Sif pouts, “I’d never scare a softy like you, though teasing you must be a lot of fun.” She grins sheepishly at him, her brows wriggle conspiratorially.
He ruffles her hair like an older brother would and suggests heading to the mall, which is accepted and excitedly agreed on by his new guest.

She’s looking around the apartment as he changes into a white T inside his room.

“What’s with the claw marks on your door?”

“Those” he says, “um, it was you –I mean the Gumiho,” the shirt finally goes past his head and his eyes land on his meds over the bedside table, and speaking of meds, why has head started hurting the moment he went into the room? Maybe he should take a pill. Falling back into old habits, isn’t he?

“Huh,” she hums, “that can’t be possible because the Gumiho appeared on mirrors only.”

Loki finally opens the door and appears in a plain T shirt, “what ‘you mean?’”

Sif rests her hands on her hips, and sighs, “For some reason, the Gumiho was unable to cross over your front door. I bet it has something to do with a barrier. You lived here all your life so your parents must have made a barrier, a magical one, to protect the seal. And don’t give me that look young man” —She shakes her head negative when he narrows his eyes at her— “I’ve been possessed for a long time and although I have no idea what I’m talking about, I still know what I’m telling you is true.” She says, and her voice darknes, “whatever made those claw marks on your door, it wasn’t the Gumiho.”

“Maybe a cat did that,” Loki shrugs a shoulder after he eyes the said door for a moment, “cats can’t be magical. Or are you going to tell me they are.”

“Depends on what kind of cats you mean,” She grins, and quickly laughs when Loki’s body stiffens with fear. She was right about how fun teasing him would be. “They aren’t, don’t worry.”

“Okay,” he lets out a heavy sigh of relief, “so if it wasn’t her, then who, or what?” because, magical creatures and whatnot.

Sif follows him as he walks out of the apartment, “I told you other creatures are going to be attracted to the scent of your blood, so something else must have gotten into your house.”

“Great,” he huffs, “so my place has become a fun destination for magical creatures, that’s comforting,” He shakes his head.

They’re now sauntering down the walking path under the morning sun, side by side.

“But you don’t look surprised,” Sif sends him a suspicious glance, “scared or even taken aback.”

“Actually I think I’m still dreaming, having a nightmare.” He tells her as he walks into a shop for women clothing. “I wouldn’t even be surprised if zombies were at the cash register –wait, there is no such thing as zombies is there?” he pauses at the entrance, peering in suspicion.

“Don’t be ridiculous,” she slaps his shoulder, and he inwardly sighs in relief, but then she adds while looking all kinds of smug “of course there is.” and his eyes widen.
down when she expresses her desire for tasting human food again. Robin’s father welcomes the two diners and motions to one of the waiters to take their orders; Sif orders a cheeseburger and cola, while he settles for cold beer, nodding and allowing his leg to shake nervously. He waits with her for the orders at a table next to the window.

“Loki,” Sif croaks out, and quickly clears her throat when said male turns his attention back to her, “what did the Alpha say to you this morning?”

He shrugs and doesn’t deign to answer, but her stare is piercing and again, he can’t refuse her request, “nothing major, really, he said my place would be safer to stay at.”

“Although I can’t help but agree with him, I know a big part of you wanted to stay, and I still can’t forgive him for not taking my warning about you seriously.” She crosses her arms over the table and looks him straight in the eyes, her own dark and deep.

He props his elbows over the table and looks back at her, “now that’s messed up, I thought I already made it clear that I wasn’t going to shack up there. I only hid myself because you wouldn’t stop haunting me.”

She shakes her head slowly, the same kind of shake a know-it-all would make and it only boils your insides more because you know that what’s they’re about to say is either going to be true, or completely true, “tell me honestly, aren’t you a little into him?”

Loki’s heart skips a beat but he minutely recovers, “That’s absurd.” He looks outside the window to avoid direct eye contact with her.

“Is it?” she dares, but relents just as fast, “Look, it’s fine.” She says, “I think love is such a beautiful thing, and I don’t think it was one-sided either.”

He looks at her again, fidgeting to ask, but she seems to see how tight his skin feels on him so she does him the honor. “Alphas don’t allow direct contact with people without being extra careful around them. And most of the time, strangers, or in your case ‘outsiders’, are highly detested, but the way you smelled of him meant he let you near or neared you on purpose.” She breaks off her sentence for a second, but he doesn’t seem convinced enough so she pushes, “also, Alphas never allow outsiders into their den, and you two were practically soaking in each other this morning.”

Loki blushes so hard like he’s been slapped with a fish fin a good few times. He messes with her hair to silence her, and good thing for him, the waiter brings Sif’s order and the attention is now on the sandwich instead.

Later, he considers Sif’s request to go sightseeing. “It doesn’t look like the shop owner is going to call me any time soon anyway.”

They’re waiting at the bus stop when Loki remembers something to tell Sif, he tilts his head and squints at her, “remember that day you appeared at Thor’s porch, when I was sitting there alone?”

“Oh, maybe.” She replies back instantly, but it doesn’t look like she’s paying any attention to him right now, because hello? She’s been possessed for almost a hundred years and she’s finally seeing the world through actual human lenses? This realization quickly puts Loki on standby as he shakes
his head, and ushers her to follow when the bus finally arrives. They walk around to see the temples and none of them seems to be getting tired of it, she’s just as fascinated by history as he is, and it’s a rare thing to find someone with that in common. Soon they go into an Emart and Sif totters over the escalators and gushes at everything she deems interesting. Loki is overly glad that she’s having a thrill; he couldn’t imagine having lived the life she had. She must have had seen some terrible things too while the Gumiho fed off on young boys. Besides, anyone who doesn’t know the true value of PDP has never lived before.

It’s around two in the afternoon when Loki gets a call from the shop owner, telling him to drop by when he has time. The other doesn’t waste time as he brings Sif along to the shop to see what’s going on, keeping his hope to get back to work confidential. The shop is redone but not completely; the mirror on the ceiling is still there. But the place looks a lot more spacious than it used to, and all the items are beautifully lined on vertical shelves that they can actually see the wooden floor now. Not only Sif, but Loki too is mesmerized. The shop owner crosses his arms over his chest and strokes his stubble, his smile proud for his new made treasure.

“This place looks fabulous!” Sif scoots to the shelves, her hands ghosting over the items with gleam in her dark-blue eyes as though the gates to Narnia have opened.

“So I can come back to work now, right?” Loki saunters to the middle, examining the entire repair work that took place within with his fingers shaking nervously.

“I was thinking after the weekend.” Alfred faces him, “Monday will be a perfect head start because even the announcement of the shop repair I asked you to post on the website is invalid after Monday. Besides, I still need to make the final touches,” He explains, a faint smile coloring his narrow lips, “Also, we’re going to be very busy next week, so just spend time with your girlfriend here until I call you back.”

“I’m not his girlfriend!” Sif admonishes, walking back to where the two men are standing and gaping at her quick response, “I’m his guardian” she says, huffing.

Scared she might add unnecessary details because that’s the kind of crap she’s been spouting ever since the lightning bolt, which might have messed up her brain cells, Loki tries to save them out of the awkward situation, “Kids” he chuckles, awkwardly, “she’s still at school and they teach them the strangest things, ha-ha.” He chuckles more, “Of course she’s not my girlfriend, dear heaven!”

“Very well then,” The old man swivels around to the counter and chuckles along, “I’ll have you start at one in the afternoon on Monday.”

Loki is nodding absentmindedly as he keeps an eye out on Sif, who perks up, apprehension etched into her pretty face.

“Is it okay if I come help out too?” her hands come up to offer an avouching promise, “I just want to be here when Loki is working, I need to keep an eye on him before a super–” her sentence is cut off by Loki’s awkward laughter, and he speaks loudly to her, “Of course! I don’t think owner is going to mind as long as he doesn’t have to pay you.”

He shares and affirmative with the owner and quickly drags Sif out of there, “are you out of your mind? Were you trying to put us on blast or what?”

“W-what, what did I do?” Sif stutters, worry waving inside her concerned eyes.
“You can’t go around telling people about those things!” he chastises, “if you do that again I won’t forgive you.” He sends her a look of reproach now, his fingers still shaking, edgy.

“That’s absurd, I’ve seen so many unexplainable things and you’re telling me people don’t know about them?” she crosses her arms over her chest, dismissively.

“Look,” he tries to calm down first, “if you want to stay with me then just follow my guidebook. I know a lot of things we do are just absurd, but that’s how it’s always been, okay?”

When she finally seems to accept his agreement, they go back home in a more silent atmosphere. While Loki should look a little mad for screaming at Sif for the wrong she’d said, he doesn’t. He looks rather absent-minded. He’s fumbling with the keys to his apartment when Martha opens the door and plunks herself on the doorframe, “Loki!” she gushes as though her soldier son was home from years of military service, and she opens her arms, “I’ve missed you!”

He beams and walks right into her space to give her a hug, “how’ve you been?”

Her hands are clutching at his both arms so he wouldn’t wiggle out, “Well.” She nods, looking him in the eyes, “I have great news, but” she pauses to look at Sif, “oh, are you his girlfriend?”

Sif doesn’t reply because obviously she’s still mad at Loki, who in return, opens his mouth to deny but Martha is quicker, “I see, then I won’t ask you to any marriage interviews anymore, and I’m really happy now because Bucky has contacted me and said he’d come the day after tomorrow to see me!”

“Of course, of course,” She nods again, “now go, I’ll cook some stew for you and bring it over later.”

“Marriage interviews?” Sif echoes once they walk into the house, and soon she drops on the sofa.

“Yea,” he mumbles, “she used to bring me candidates photos all the time. I guess it’s good that she thinks we’re dating; I won’t have to turn her down every time she asks now,” he says, and heads straight to his room soon afterwards.

“Wait, why didn’t you just tell her you’re gay?”

“Because I’m not?” he props his head out of his door and leans his forearm on the door handle.

“Excuse me?” Sif marvels, accusingly, “so what do you call that little spark between you and the Alpha? And don’t tell me friends because friends don’t soak into each other’s in bed.”

Loki’s mouth falls open to protest, but really, he doesn’t have anything to say back to that, “Guess I’m Bi then?” he goes back into his room like he didn’t just crack the puzzle of years of sexual identity crises.

“It is strange, though,” she swoops her tongue on her lips and scowls, “he isn’t mated with anyone but he’s been treating you, um…” she tackles her mind for the right word and doesn’t fail to notice Loki’s eyes squinting at her, “well” which in her vocabulary sounds pretty decent, considering. “I
mean you smelled of him a few times, which tells me he imprinted on you. That could be two-sided actually, but more instinctive on your side. He still hasn’t pinned you to the floor either because he is betrothed or because he prioritizes your wishes more; any other werewolf wouldn’t have cared. I guess he is what you call a gentleman.”

“Okay,” he juts his head rearward with his mouth parted like Totoro, “you’ve just wasted over five minutes of my life, what’s your point?”

“Why didn’t you just confess? An Alpha’s protection is a lot better than a newbie like me. I’m sure becoming Thor’s mate can’t be that bad. He’s kind of good looking, I mean did you see how strong he is.” They both remember that floor slam “He must be strong in bed, too.”

“He has a fiancée.” Loki deadpans, finally emerging in his grey sweatpants and shirt, and then he drops next to her on the couch. His knee bounces.

She studies him with her wide eyes for a second and doesn’t speak until he gets uncomfortable with her intense gaze, “do you miss him?”

He rolls his eyes, “you’re still on with that.”

“I’m being serious.” She follows his eyes to pin them. “I’ve been stalking you for days now, Loki, I know how ugly cheerful you usually are. But today, you were cross.”

He scratches an itch in his nape, and his fingers soon glide to the side of his neck –the side that Thor always mouthed, like this morning. God, it’s not like he wanted him to nuzzle his neck, honest. He means it. “You’re imagining things.” He ruffles her hair to forestall any oncoming revelations, “we should get your ass back to school though” he groans. “Can you even read?”

“Of course I can,” Sif tucks loose black locks behind her ear, “Gumihos are very sophisticated creatures that live long enough to know a lot more than you give them credit for.”

“Good. I don’t want to take you there only to receive a call later to get you back home because you wouldn’t stop barking to lure male students to you for mating.”

He receives a blow to his head for his joke but they soon laugh jointly at the thought.

At eight, Martha brings the stew over as she promised, and bids them goodnight.

Around nine, Sif calls it night and goes to crash on the sofa because beds ‘make her uncomfortable’ and because, according to her, she was on bed when she got possessed in the past so she’ll avoid any triggers. Also, she has to guard the front door for any unwanted guests.

Loki plucks a cold beer from the freezer and makes his way to his room after turning all the lights off.

The furl of his lips softens as he looks out the window while his fingers drum over the sill; the full moon is still shining and illuminating the half lit neighborhood. There’s a tempestuous desire to open his phone and call Thor, but he quickly blames it on Sif’s stupid talk about love, which, again, has put a stop to his sexual identity crisis actually; admitting to being bi out loud sort of assessed a few doubts he’d been having a lot lately, make that since high school.
It hits midnight and even after guzzling up to four beers so far, he’s still sober. His head starts feeling heavy over his neck, so he drags himself over to his bed to sleep. He doesn’t look like he will, because something is missing, something isn’t right. His glazed orbs travel to the ceiling and he stares at it, his mind gifting him memories of him and Thor sitting at the porch, just hanging around, or sleeping together. Nothing sexual. Nothing too sexual. But that’s inconsistent and Loki can argue if his inebriated brain so much wants to.

Maybe this is what’s missing; Thor’s arm isn’t hooked around his waist protectively anymore.
He’d climb the highest skyscraper in the country and will still be left with some energy to dive a hundred feet below sea and stay up another two nights on end. He’s been looking out of the window with droopy eyes since the crack of dawn. He’s witnessed life breathing into earth’s inhabitants, and he’s watched the townspeople milling around like ants in suits.

The door to his room creaks open and he lazily swivels to face her.

“Too keyed up to sleep, lover boy?” Sif teases, but she quickly gives him a remorseful look when he smiles tentatively at her.

Today is also another déjà vu with Sif being excited about shopping and sightseeing; only, this time Loki, is more heedful of his money. They stop at a beautiful spot in the park with fenced roses and daisies at each side, and Sif skids to a nearby green-camouflaged bench and flops on it with her bags on her lap.

“I’m dead tired. There probably are blisters in my feet.”

Loki lifts incredulous brows at her without sitting down. “You bet.”

She taps at the purchased items with loving palms, “Thanks for buying me these, Lo. I’ll make sure to use them wisely.”

Loki squints at their surrounding as a sharp pang starts gradually tinging in the back of his head. “You’d better,” he huffs, and winces.

Her smile drops as she notices him wincing and kneading at his forehead. “What is it?”

He shakes his head but she pulls him to the bench, seating him next to her. “Sorry,” he rasps, now reaching for his arm and cradling it closer to his chest. “I’ll be fine in a minute.”

“Shut up” she bites out, “I should’ve been more careful. Let’s go back home for now, you need rest.”

A middle-aged, squared-faced and pale man in a marine-blue pea coat approaches them, a frown across his forehead, “are you alright, young man?” he asks, but the beret over his head makes seeing his eyes impossible unless you duck.

“Yeah,” Loki utters, almost in a mumble. Great, just what he needed; curious onlookers swarming over him. “I’m fine, thanks,” he offers and quickly stands up. He gently nudges Sif away from the man. “Let’s go.”

The man’s hand shoots to grip Loki’s by the wrist, tightening its fist around the bone. “But you look awfully pale,” as if he’s one to talk, “why don’t you get into my car and I’ll give you a ride to the hospital.”

Um, no, creep.
Loki’s vision suddenly hazes for a moment as the throb in both his head and arm intensifies, but there’s enough strength left in him to grab that man’s hand and shove it away. “Now, now, old man, stop being a pesky little thing.” He wraps an arm around Sif’s neck and stumbles away.

“What’s his deal?” Sif berates in distaste, flinging ugly glances at the man who’s still watching them.

Loki’s taken by a wave of vertigo and he wobbles a little, Sif holds him upright by the upper arms just as his knees give out.

“I suddenly feel drained.” He clasps a hand over his sweaty face, “I need to lie down.” He pants, features pinched with pain.

A yellow Porsche pulls over and they almost bump into it. “Get in.” Its owner hooks a thump over his shoulder, motioning at the back seat.

Because the pain has doubled by a hell lot of notches by now, Loki finds a little relief in keeping his eyes shut. His limbs are trembling all over. His forehead and neck are sweating like a contemptible milksop post-The Grudge, and so Sif has no other choice but to lay him down in the backseat.

Loki can only hear the conversation going on with the blissful feeling of the air conditioner on blast.

“What’s wrong with him?” a male’s voice asks, a little fanatically.

“His head hurts, guess it’s a heatstroke.” She replies, a little worried judging by the vibration in her voice.

“Should we take him to the hospital?” the same man asks, and Loki doesn’t have the strength to open his eyes and tell him his insurance isn’t going to cover it.

“No, just take us home.” She pleads, and Loki is very grateful to her for being such a wonderful guardian. At least he won’t end up paying any hospital bills for stupid sunstroke; but this sunstroke feels ridiculously painful—a strained groan escapes his lips. “Please hurry!” Sif practically wails.

Something soft, yet marble slightly leans against his face, or is it his face leaning on something. He can’t tell, but he feels like he’s floating. This he is sure of. Humans don’t float, the logical side of his brain provides. So maybe he is being carried, but Sif is half his size and he doesn’t know anyone who would go out of their way to carry him bridal style.

“Thor…”

There’s something lurking behind that door left ajar, and he, for the life of him, doesn’t want to open it; but a force of sort is shoving him nearer, urging him to. He has to open it. There’s something snaking behind that door; an ominous chorus of jingling reverberates, what could it be?

Everything goes aflame all of a sudden and he feels unable to breathe. Now he has to run away, he has to find a way out…

Loki sits up abruptly, and groans at the residue of pain in his head. “Damn dreams.” He finally inspects the room he’s in, it’s his. Last he checked, his legs were becoming spaghetti back at the
park, how did Sif manage to get him here. “Sif!” he calls out, and he *low key* ignores how he sounds like an evil stepmother.

She comes rushing into the room. “Are you okay, do you still feel dizzy?”

“Who brought me here?” is his only concern for now.

“What a fine gentleman he is! Even left me his phone number.” She’s trying to make Loki jealous; he intends to show how little he is by rolling his eyes. “He said he’d call again to check on you.”

“He called,” He echoes, not sounding very pleased about it.

“Yeah, I gave him your number since I don’t have one, these things are quite handy.” The thing being the cell-phone, but her brows arch up suddenly as though Loki has just done a double back flip, “why, was I not supposed to? I’m sorry.”

He sighs, sadly, “as long as you know it was wrong enough to say sorry.” He flails a hand in the direction of the window and quickly returns it to his lap, “How could you trust him so easily!”

“You were swooning out on me. I didn’t know what to do!” she spits out.

He remembers that she’s only a child, a thousand-year-old child, nonetheless a child, and quickly reflects on his words, “let’s order pizza.”

Ten in the evening has them lounging on the sofa with empty take-out bags and soda cans strewn on the table. The Simpsons is on and only a few minutes to go until it’s over. Sif laughs so hard at something Loki isn’t really interested in, but a familiar sound –a buzzing– interrupts her laughter and his daydream, and they both reel their heads towards Loki’s phone.

“Call,” He echoes, not sounding very pleased about it.

Don’t say ridiculous things” –he pushes up to stand– “and go to sleep already.” He tells her and reaches full height, picks up the call and heads straight to his room. He closes the door and leans on the window sill. “Hey, I missed you, man.”

“You win.” Sif notes out with a deep smirk taunting her face.

“I’m okay.” Loki assures, and he’s in the way to adding something else but the other cuts him off, “That’s a lie”, and Loki frowns, “How do you know that?”

“I heard that flutter in your heartbeat that is not in place, is everything okay?”

“You don’t sound too good.” The other male at the end of the line points out. He’s deft.

“Me neither, I sent them out to scout the borders two nights ago.” He reports, brusquely.

“Did something happen?” Loki’s eyes tremble with a novel sparkle.

“Nothing, we’re just being on guard.” The man states, the serenity of his voice making Loki’s stupid
heart flutter more and he isn’t sure whether Thor thinks he’s lying throughout the entire conversation because he simply isn’t aware of the real reason. “Loki…”

“Yes?”

“What did we tell you about Tony?” He asks out of the blue, and for a second, Loki has no idea what the man is talking about until the Porsche, same one that stopped by his shop the other day and same one he’s been carried in recently, pops up in his head. “I made a mistake, but it’s not like he hurt us or anything.”

“That’s not the point.” Thor berates, almost gravely.

“So this is why you called?” Loki questions while demurring a little as though the answer might frighten him.

“Yes” is Thor’s honest, yet thoughtless answer; Loki had all the right to be afraid then.

“Don’t worry, we won’t speak to him again, and say hi to the kids for me.” He huffs, “good night.” He quickly hangs up.

Thor doesn’t call again, but after a few minutes of ireful silence as Loki just flings the phone over the bed and goes to the shower, Thor sends a text message which Loki reads thirty minutes after his shower. The message simply reads ‘I miss you, too’.

This man is unfair.

It is a beautiful Saturday morning. Sif rolls out of the futon and greets the day with a satisfying stretch. She recalls the phone call from last night and before she knows it, her feet are already dragging her to Loki’s bedroom, finding the latter in his sweats, sitting cross-legged over his bed and typing away on the keyboard of his laptop with eyes filled with distinct red dots that appear under the large frames of his glasses.

“Don’t tell me you didn’t catch any sleep last night too?” she marvels, a bit louder than certifiable at ass o’clock in the morning.

“I had to get back to some old purchase orders,” he replies, and he tries to add the rest with the utmost care he can show, “Also, I need to find another job soon.”

She takes another step closer to his bed, eyes narrowing intently, “That’s no reason to stay up. Did something happen, did he say something to you again?”

“It seems like our guy from yesterday rubs Thor the wrong way,” Loki is flailing a hand and shuffling the papers over his bed with the other. “He called to give me an earful.”

“What did you tell him?” she requires, hands over her hips in a very interrogating manner.

“What did I tell him? I told him okay.” He is skimming through some article on the screen, small font text reflected on his glasses. “I couldn’t say anything back to that because I was a little down, but he’s right, I guess.”

“Love makes you blind.” She rolls her eyes. “Well then, let me tell you a little something” –she sits next to him on the bed, grinning from ear to ear like The Wench who stole Christmas– “our guy from yesterday said he’d meet us today at the Paradise’s.”
“Huh!” he gasps, slipping his glasses off.

“I didn’t tell you last night because you already looked pissed, and although I don’t know what Paradise is, I still want to go.”

“Look,” Loki sighs exasperatedly, “we can’t have anything to do with this guy, he’s rumored to be dangerous, and he certainly has something to do with the Dinsons and personally? I don’t want to get involved with them anymore.” He adds as an afterthought “And Paradise is not for minors.”

“But he helped you out, how could you say that about him!” she shoots up to her feet, countenance drawing into a scowl.

“I’ll make sure to thank him later, and that’s it, end of story.” He puts his glasses back on, and goes back to reading whatever he’s been reading off his computer screen.

“I can’t believe you trust the wolves so much after they abandoned you, did the guy even do anything bad to us? Maybe you don’t know but he was so insistent on taking you to the hospital and he even said he would pay the bill.” She screeches with a pout about her lips, and quickly storms out of the room.

Loki manages to hold himself only a moment before he throws himself over the pillows and lets out another deep sigh, “this sucks.”

Loki stands by the bathroom’s door, all dressed up. “I’m going to walk Mrs. May’s poodle, be back later. And don’t go anywhere,” not to Paradise, not to any shit-hole. “Got it?”

Sif, as though to remind him of her stand on the matter, throws something at the door which he takes as his cue. He nods to himself, and finally leaves.

Loki’s already well-informed about the ins and outs of these neighborhoods even if he wasn’t born in the town. He moved in at a young age and he knows it like the back of his hand, but it’s the faces around that you get skeptical about. A lot of people immigrate to the city for work, and only very few move in.

So far, he’s handling the white poodle quite well in spite of its aggressiveness towards other dogs they meet on their way, but he doesn’t care because he’s getting charged per hour. The longer it lasts, the better. He could care less about the pestering glares they give him and the dog, though the dog deserves it. Who told Mrs. May to spoil him rotten; being rich doesn’t mean you can give your pet obesity. That’s animal abuse, according to Dr. Hankins.

It’s around six in the afternoon when he returns the dog to its owner and is paid a good deal of money, pretty great money actually (apparently, she had an appointment to attend to and Loki did her a huge favor).

The sun is sinking beyond the vast horizon, which reminds him it’s still late August and he’s suddenly sorry. He is sorry for himself, and for Sif, too.

All he gets worried about now is money in his pockets, food on his table and not attracting supernatural creatures, and he realizes he is not comfortable with that. Although he’s happy that he’s
not working for anyone, as free as a bird, he’s still regretful about not going to college. He should have at least gotten a degree.

He looks around, there’s an electronic store ahead. The purchase deal is done and over with and they fling him ‘congrats’ and ‘please come back again’ on his way out. He rocks the small bag in his hand a little. Sif is going to piss herself with happiness.

We are armored with something no other creature can even dream of, and that is our sense of danger. The little hunch which sends alarms whenever something, or someone, is creeping up on you like an old critter that looks like he’s just moved out of a shack to stalk Loki. Loki’s had a moment to confirm this detection, but that’s all he needed: a moment, to tell that a man with a beret is trailing him down like an amateur. He knows his body and he knows he can take the other down if mugging him is what he wants, but he also knows that scurrying into an empty, dark alley after he’s spent over forty minutes getting educated about the latest phone collections until he lost sunlight is a very, very terrible idea.

He stands there gaping up at the wall indicating the dead end of the alleyway. An hour ago, He thought of himself as an expert about the ins and outs of this wretched town. Awkward. Then he hears footsteps dashing towards him, accompanied by prodding pain inside his head and across his arm. But you sort of disregard the small details when there’s a spooky man breathing down your neck.

“I’m not here to harm you.” He tells Loki.

“You should come up with a new pick-up line,” Loki swivels around but finds only darkness. His eyes quiver with worry. “They’ve already used that on me, branch out, dude” But something suddenly doesn’t feel right as pressure builds up around his mark, it’s unusual, novel and unlikable. His motions are more inert now, and so is his body. He’s feeling it again, the insecurity and the presence of another alien being, or soul or whatever, glaring at him from the darkness. The nausea it brings to him is unbearable… “Stay away from me.”

“I cannot do that.” The other hums, “you have something very special which I need,” he explains in a chilly voice, and Loki knows this is nothing like being followed by the Gumiho. It is different, and probably even more dangerous, “give that to me, and I will go away.”

“What’ you want?” He slurs, his eyes searching around for the source of the voice he’s hearing.

“Will you give it to me if I tell you what it is?” The man amuses, his shape finally emerging from the darkness. It’s nothing Loki wants to see ever again –if this is only another hallucination that is, because it’s scary. His black eyes are scary, his ivory-white skin almost like a dead corpse’, his teeth pointy at the bottom reminds Loki of the sharks from Deep Blue, and he hates those, so it’s also scary. But he’s wearing a long gown with dragon patterns; he even dressed up for the occasion, how thoughtful! “Will you, now?”

Loki’s mark throbs more, and there’s a tingling sound in his head making him stand still. “Bite me.” He huffs in vigorous denial.

The other chuckles, critter’s teeth making him look maniacal, “gladly.” He beams and launches forward with such speed Loki’s never seen before and is unable to catch up with until the man’s nose brushes along Loki’s nape. “I see, you have been scent-marked. How wise.” He comments, and
Loki is quaking with fear like a newly hatched chick, even paling more, anymore and he’d look like a mango. A pair of strong hands then lift his body and flings it to the ground like a Frisbee. As he recovers from the winder, slower than a sloth, Monsieur spooky straddles his lap to immobilize him.

Loki looks up through slanted eyes, that one fall is going to bruise. “Already stage three, we haven’t even kissed yet.”

The other chuckles through teeth-crammed mouth, “so, am I allowed to have a taste, too?”

“You’ve been blabbering nonsense since you popped out, so let me help you understand the situation here buddy.” Loki wets his lips, “first, go get a tan because, man, you look like a corpse that’s recently been dug out of the graveyard. Eat some vegetables, too. I heard fish is good for—” he’s interrupted with the other’s razor-sharp nails as they graze his marked arm.

“I am a dead body, and you cannot guess what a Jiangshi’s food is.”

*Serious, so it’s a vampire this time?*

*Is there some sort of a sewer from which these things pop out?*

Loki shrugs against himself, “Dead squirrels?”

“Wrong.” The Jiangshi presses on the mark until blood spurts out.

Rain falls on his face—brought on by this late summer storm—rolling down his cheeks as he only gawks vacantly at the starless sky. His energy is slowly fading away from him as the seconds pass by.

He had something to deliver, he still remembers, he had bought a present for Sif before he was attacked by this unsightly thing. And now the Jiangshi is atop him, sucking away his blood and repaying him with pain in return. Nice going pal, that’s magical blood you’re gurgling away. Stupid gargoyle.

*Sif is going to be so mad, he thinks, she won’t forgive him even if he bribes her with the phone, and he doesn’t really know her that well and he isn’t a good judge of character so she’s probably already left by now. He shouldn’t take in kids when he can’t even take care of himself.*

He whimpers because the Jiangshi is now sinking his fangs in the fair skin of Loki’s neck.

*So this is it? He’s going to die, here? He wonders, contritely, he wonders who’ll come to his funeral. Martha and Alfred will, no doubt about it. Will his doctor and shrink come too? But he already fired the shrink and the doctor knows Loki doesn’t like him, so they probably won’t come. What about Robin and his dad, they’re probably going to be busy with their restaurant so he shouldn’t count on it. His neighbors will be sad too, but that’s about it. Maybe Kate and Natasha will come and pay their respect, Wade will most likely have a blast because Loki’s finally out of the picture—he gasps—he was never in the picture to begin with; and even if the kids decide that, it’s fine if he’s around, that blond man won’t. For some reason, he doesn’t want Loki around. Wait, is he that much*
He has all the right to protect his family, werewolves or not. Loki can’t rely on him too. He needs to do something himself and stand strong like everyone else. It’s time that he shows them that he’s not the pure definition of a fucking burden, that he actually can take care of himself, and is more than capable of taking care of others…

Loki hears a faint voice, deep yet unfathomable, it comes from somewhere near and that’s his head which decided to act like radio static. He sighs as he stretches his neck, something glows over his chest and the Jiangshi perks up apprehensively, blood dripping down his jaw.

“Are you full yet?” Loki taunts. “My turn,” He informs, and launches forward, sending the Jiangshi slamming against the wall. Loki straddles him quickly and brings his marked arm up to the other’s forehead. “Call me stingy, but you need to give me back my blood.” He grins, his arm glowing more, making the Jiangshi’s body jolt and jerk at the sudden flow of energy. He struggles but Loki’s grip on his forehead is tightening; revenge is so bittersweet. Crystal-white energy lines travel up Loki’s arm, and he doesn’t feel tired anymore, unlike the Jiangshi who is slowly withering away.

“P-please, don’t finish me…” the Jiangshi pleads, weakly, and Loki quirks a brow at him, “I need to meet someone before my life energy evaporates. I might have been hostile towards you but my reasons are valid.”

“It’s funny how you guys always have a reason to try to kill and maim me,” Loki bemuses, accusingly. “So what are your reasons, guess I have the right to know since my life force was almost stolen away from me.”

“You must already know that Jiangshis are creatures that have no will power,” he sits more comfortably now that Loki has lifted off of him, somehow still hunched.

Loki nods gingerly. “Everyone knows that.”

“But many years ago, a woman took pity on me and tore the mystical tag that was supposed to stay onto my forehead, but by doing so, I couldn’t rest in peace and I’ve been wandering God’s earth ever since.”

“So what will drying me out of blood do to help you?” he asks in monotone.

“A few months ago, I met someone who offered me help, but they said I needed more life force in order for her to perform the rituals that will make me rest.”

And not any Jiangshi, a suicidal Jiangshi!

“No, I smelled your blood a few weeks ago. I only decided on ambushing you today because your guardian wasn’t around.”

Loki tsks, “Guardian.” He echoes on a curt chortle, “You don’t need any rituals, if you want to rest
back in your coffin, I can do it for you.”

The Jiangshi looks into Loki’s eyes, his own wide and questioning, “Can you?”

The other shrugs, “I have no idea how I know all of this, maybe it’s the same with Sif.” He mumbles this to himself as an afterthought, and quickly adds, “But anyways, I know that I can do it.”

The Jiangshi smiles, and for a moment, Loki wonders if all Jiangshis smile warmly like that, despite the fangs and the pasty pallor.

“If I’m ever reborn, I want to be able to meet you again.” He tells him.

Loki’s arm glows more, “Thanks,” he says, “but no thanks.” He grins and shares an affirmative with the Jiangshi, soon, he puts his hand on the top of the other’s head and the Jiangshi lets out a loud roar that somehow gets lost with the bolt of lightning that strikes him down out of nowhere. He slowly shutters to glittering fragments just after sending one final smile to his savior.

It’s quiet again, only the sound of rain drumming the concrete making him aware that this is indeed reality.

He figures out something after glancing up at the sky, something about the constant pain in his arm and in his head as well, and he’s grateful to the Jiangshi for clarifying things for him, or for at least being part of it without intentionally meaning to.

Loki collects his things and adjusts his clothes, they’re all wet, but who cares, he’s just sent a Jiangshi back to his grave! Although he has no idea whatsoever how he pulled it off but he did, and he’s going to add it to his diary. He’s joking, he doesn’t have a diary. He walks through the empty streets, heading to his apartment, thinking that maybe Sif is already sound asleep. However, that soon proves wrong when he fumbles with the keys, opens the door and walks in to find more than just one guest.

“Loki!” Kate gushes, worriedly.

The three male betas fan out behind the girl, crossing their hands behind their back in a military way.

Loki has to agree; he just came back from a battle, and so he deserves a welcoming of a hero.

“Where have you been?” Sif jaws, “do you have any idea what time it is!”

Loki eyes their faces for a split moment, he slips out of his wet shoes and walks past them, ignoring their perturbed look.

“It’s two in the morning!” Sif rebukes, “I got so worried I had to call them for help.”

“Who are you, my mom?” Loki jokes, but a bit in a cynical mood, “and speaking of that, are you going to call them every time I stay out late?”

She promises with a brisk nod, “If it’ll keep you safe, then yes.”

“I feel good hearing that, thank you.” He rolls his eyes, wearily.

“We all got so worried,” Natasha takes her share of the nagging, “and because of the storm, we
couldn’t track you by scent or by heartbeat, it was nerve-wracking!”

Wade then says just after spotting the bag in Loki’s hand, “I wonder what kind of stores open this late.”

Loki flings the bag to Sif who catches it just as quickly, “I’m bribing you, I guess.”

A mask of remorse covers her face as she takes out the phone from the bag; maybe she understands that Loki remembered she didn’t have a phone when she gave Tonny his number. Amidst the silence, the front door opens with an ominous creak, and as all eyes watch it slide slowly, Thor comes into view, drenched through his black coat.

“Mr. Dinson,” Peter gushes in a disgruntled and worried tone at the same time, “Did you find him?”

Said male shakes his head, negative, and walks right into Loki’s space.

They all stand more alerted now.

“Asshole, don’t come in with your shoes on!” Loki bellows, his nose flaring.

“I wouldn’t worry too much about that if I were you,” Steve warns, jutting his jaw towards the Alpha, and that’s when Loki quiets down and meets Thor’s eyes head on. The other stands in front of him, motionless and somehow detached. “Your stare won’t scare me; get your shoes off of my floor.” He bellows, “I can spell it for you if you want.”

Thor slants his head closer to Loki’s neck, and it’s a movement Loki has become so accustomed to that he felt emptied having it not done to him in the past few days. His eyes follow Thor’s blank ones as the latter brushes the tip of his nose along his neck.

“Ah…” Loki relents with a sigh, but really, it came out without his consent.

As though stirred, Thor presses closer, cold fangs and hot breath sending a shudder across Loki’s body.

“God, Thor…” He moans, eyes slowly fluttering shut.

A shuffle and tapping sounds make him conscious of the others’ presence, and he quickly tries to push the other man off him, but Thor is ridiculously stronger that he doesn’t even budge. He nudges him more but the nose on his neck throws his attempts out of the window as he sighs deeper this time at their skin contact. Apparently, Thor has started using his lips instead.

The feeling is fucking unbelievable.

“Oh, God…” Loki whimpers wantonly, his hands trembling by his sides.

“It’s no joke.” Wade comments, admiringly.

This is where Loki’s self-restraint regains control and he reels his head to Thor’s direction, “knock it off.”

Thor’s eyes shine red, his canines elongate, and Steve perks up alarmed, “Mr. Dinson?” he says, faintly, as if afraid to speak the words aloud.

Aware of their nature now as werewolves and of Steve’s solemn and thoughtful character, he quickly figures that something is wrong with Thor since it’s managed to draw that expression on his face, so a furrow slowly grows between Loki’s brows.
“Are you in there, fur ball?” Loki calls out while snapping his fingers before the other’s face, but Thor reacts viciously instead as he catches Loki’s hand from the wrist and slams him against the wall, only to bite on the fair skin of his neck. Loki lets out a pained cry, and in no time, his mind goes completely blank.
Chapter 10

Frost or fire? Your feedback was fiiire! Thank you so much for you super lovely words,a and here's a chapter dedicated to you ^^

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Thor takes his fangs out of Loki’s neck –the area between the shoulder and the neck– and whips his head towards his betas with a jaw dripping with blood. Loki slides to the floor with his eyes closed.

Sif gasps, hands covering her mouth, “Oh my God. Loki, are you okay!”

The betas usher her to hide as they stand stiff, eyes flashing yellow and claws flicking out.

“Easy now” –Natasha brings her hands up to dispel his doubts– “we just want you to calm down.”

He snarls, and hunches in front of an unconscious Loki in a defensive stance.

“My, he thinks we’re after Loki.” Wade points out for the other members, forehead glistening with sweat and fists balling nervously beside his thighs. “He’s gone feral. Don’t let your guard down.”

The others share a nod with him and look back at Thor as he growls at them, deep, threatening growls.

“What if he doesn’t change back soon?” Sif shoots from somewhere, “we need to treat Loki’s wounds before he bleeds to death.”

It’d be insensitive to bring that bit about bleeding to death, so Wade keeps his comment to himself.

“He’ll rip us apart before we even get to him!” Natasha grits out, no trace of her coolly eyes is found.

“What, the five of you can’t take him down?” Sif exclaims, disbelievingly.

At this, they look at Loki’s body lying on the floor, lax and almost lifeless.

“He’s the Alpha. He can read our moves because he’s the one who trained us.” Steve explains, “He knows all our weaknesses.”

Hopelessness creeps up to them and even Sif is giving them a sympathizing look.

“It’s not certain, but I have a plan.” Kate tells them with determined eyes, “The four of us will keep him busy, and you and Natasha take Loki away, deal with his wounds.”

“So we’re the decoys now.” Peter raises his bottom lip in distaste, “great.”

“We’re the betas, when our Alpha is in need we do our best to meet his expectations.” Steve
preaches, “And right now, we need to have them both safe and sound. So get your head back in the game and let’s finish this.”

Their human faces change completely and they growl back at their Alpha.

After moments of terrifying silence, they all clash at once and Thor sends them crashing against the furniture with a couple of strikes, but Wade launches back at him and the two engage in a bloody hand-to-hand that looks one-sided, as though the Alpha is playing with him. Soon Wade gets grazed across the upper arm and blood gushes and spurts to the floor. The other three send the cue to Sif and Natasha to take Loki out of there as they attack Thor in unison, but they’re quickly cut down with a few lethal blows again. Thor switches his attention back to Loki, and he snarls at the two girls attempting to drag him away.

Steve shrieks “Tasha, get away from there!”

Said beta jolts violently and quickly grabs Sif along to hop over to the other side, but alas, Thor’s hand reaches hers first and he seizes it only to toss her away like a knuckle. With a deep whine, she lands on a mystical net which Sif managed to summon just in time, “Thanks Sif” she says hastily.

“This is not going to work,” said girl announces, “We need to think of something else.”

“Use your fox tricks,” Natasha reminds, “You made the net, make something to restrict his movements.”

“I’ll try.” She deadpans.

Sif mumbles a few incantations and something glowing darts forward from her opened hands and toward Thor, wrapping around his upper body. For a moment, everyone’s faces lightens up when Thor’s movement get restricted and he wobbles oddly, but moments later, he vibrates silently with rage for a beat before tilting his head to the back and letting out a reverberating roar. Everyone gapes fearfully at the Alpha as he tears the twines wrapping around him, and snorts with his red eyes flashing at them.

“We’re screwed.” Peter comments, tersely.

“Thor…” a voice croaks when all their hopes seem to shutter to pieces, and all heads snap towards it only to find Loki slowly sitting up with his face pale and grimaced.

“Loki!”

Loki inspects their anxious faces, and most importantly, their werewolf form. “You guys look awful,” he wheezes, chuckling, “well, I have to say, I’m no different.” He mumbles while trying to straighten up. He checks every one of them carefully, their wounds, the blood on their clothes and over their faces. The broken pieces of his furniture, the broken TV and the blood on the floor… Ah, that’s the worst; do you have any idea how hard it is to remove the stains?

“Loki!” Kate shouts for his attention, “Try to stay still, he looks like he’s been taken over by his wolf. At times like these, it’s best if we wear him out until he passes out, or else, he will continue to attack and even hurt someone.”

He guesses that’s already been established.

Loki lets out a very deep sigh, as though his alarm clock just went off but he doesn’t want to wake up yet. He scratches the back of his neck and, finally, his eyes land on Thor’s red ones, “Seriously, all you do is confuse the hell out of me.” He says, and attempts to head to him.
“No!” Sif squawks, “He’ll hurt you! What part of he doesn’t recognize anyone don’t you understand!”

“Quiet!” Loki hushes and everyone does as order, “Do you honestly expect me to just stay still like a startled rabbit and watch as he sabotages my apartment and tears apart your skin with his shoes still on?”

“This is serious!” Steve berates on a helpless groan.

“So am I!” Loki counters, now facing the feral Alpha. “Thor, get your furry ass over here.” He pats the unoccupied space beside him, but Thor snarls at him instead.

“Forget about it,” Wade winces, “Somehow, he’s stronger and I have no idea how that happened.”

“He attacked you because of me.” Loki informs the stray faces that gawk at him, “That’s why it’s my job to get him back to his senses.”

They watch as Loki sits up properly while grunting, and slowly makes his way towards a growling Thor. “Shut up.” He orders again, coyly this time, “Don’t make it sound like I’m trying to skin you for a stupid rug.” He says, his hand already stretching toward Thor’s forehead. The latter lets out another vigorous growl and Loki winces when the new wound on his neck throbs.

“Shit, is this what you were so worried about that you sent me away?” Loki exclaims, “Why didn’t you say anything then? I already know that you turn into this so why hide it?” he allows his lips to twitch, “am I that fragile to you? Is that how you see me?” he wonders aloud, “Answer me!” He bellows when the other remains silent.

Thor snarls at him in return, but it’s not hostile.

“If it’s my blood that’s causing this barrier, I’ll let you have it, but if your worry is something different then how am I supposed to help you if you don’t reach out to me? I need you, but say you need me too. I’m not that useless, I fucking confronted a Jiangshi but the damn thing was awfully sweet!” He sobs, “He smiled to me in a manner you never have! He said he wanted to meet me again and that’s something you took away from me when you sent me away!” instead of touching his forehead, Loki punches him right on the nose and it gains him several aggressive snarls from the rest of the pack. He ignores them and straddles Thor after the latter tottered to the ground. “I don’t care how it ends, just let me at your side, Thor…” he nears said man’s ear, “Let me be your anchor.”

“You blood,” Thor says after some unbearable seconds of complete silence, longest seconds of Loki’s life, and he perks up to look at the man beneath in his graceful human form. “At first, I thought me being drawn to you was something chiefly based on how purely human you are. I know, it sounds stupid, but after I heard the story about you having magic in your veins, I started to think that maybe that’s why I was drawn to you, just like the Gumiho.” Thor hides his eyes with his forearms, “I can’t bear it. I smelled a foreign scent on you earlier and I lost it. I wasn’t actually trying to have your blood–”

“You stupid fur ball–” Loki cuts him off, “losing control over something so stupid like that, you deserve a punch from everyone in this room.”

Thor sits up with Loki’s help, and eyes his pack members and the damage he’s caused, “yea, I guess I do.”

Kate wipes away her tears and hunches over to hug her Alpha, “Mr. Dinson!” she cries, “Don’t scare us like that again!”
“I won’t.” He mollifies her, but it’s no empty promise, “I have my anchor now.” He hints, and peeks at Loki at that. The latter blushes and quickly breaks their eye-contact.

The rest of the pack nears their Alpha and they all snuggle in one big warm hug, even Sif joins in despite her Alpha werewolf allergy. Loki looks at them with an amiable smile, and just then, Thor glances up at him, and offers his hand to him, Loki takes that hand and joins the hug, assured that Thor’s arm is around his back, securing, until a thud sound is heard.

“What, he’s fallen asleep?” Natasha wonders, and the rest either smiles or chuckles at the sight of Thor’s tired face leaning on Loki’s chest.

“He’s fought us all, he must be tired.” Peter theorizes.

“Don’t forget he’s been outside for hours looking for Loki.” Kate winks at said man, and this information does wonders to Loki’s stomach. He blushes when their eyes land on his.

“Thank you, everyone, I’ve troubled you.” He bows his head slightly, inadvertently running his hand through Thor’s hair.

“Silly.” Natasha gently hits his head, “you’re part of the pack.”

“What’d we do without our pack mom?” Steve offers his smile.

“Prepare yourself, from now on” Wade starts, and Peter continues for him, “He is never going to let you out of his sight.”

..The Were and the Mage:..

If Dracula bit you, you’d either become a vampire or simply die.

Thor isn’t a vampire, but the Jiangshi is –or was– and a Jiangshi –or Gangshi– isn’t just a wandering zombie with a tag glued onto their forehead, a Jiangshi is, sadly, a (hopping) vampire, and Loki was bitten pretty badly by his old shark-teeth friend. So, shouldn’t he turn into one, or die?

But, unfortunately, it doesn’t stop here. If you were bitten by a werewolf too, you either become a werewolf, or die (yea dying is just part of the deal whether you like it or not)... (Because freaking supernatural powers are reserved that's why). And Thor is a werewolf, and he even gave Loki a brazen bite while going berserk on a full moon night, so doesn’t it mean anything?

*Loki* didn’t just get bitten by one creature at a time. No, he went out and got bitten by two mythicals –not so mythical anymore– at the same night. So if he was going to turn into something, what could it possibly be?

Loki decides to put Thor on his bed, and after the grueling exercise of trying to walk up to his room
with the weight he’s dragging at his side getting heavier, he notices that he can’t enter the room. As
the questions arise, he calls Wade and tells him to hold Thor up so he’d figure out just what is wrong
with his room embarrassing him now of all times, and when he enters, he does it freely. He tells
Wade to get Thor now inside but when he tries, a spark of light, or electricity, cracks, and Wade
groans.

“I can’t get in,” he says, begrudgingly.

“That’s…” Loki starts but he quickly reels his head to look at Sif, “is this the barrier you were talking
about?”

Said girl crosses her arms proudly over her chest. “Indeed.”

They seat themselves on the floor of the living room –or what’s left of it anyway. Loki isn’t as
ungrateful and insensitive as to let Thor sleep on the floor, even though the real ungrateful bastard is
Thor for sabotaging his apartment. So he puts the man over one of the slightly damaged sofas and
lifts his head just a little so he can sit, and soon places Thor’s head on his lap.

They exchange hasty glances with each other under an atmosphere heavy with silence.

“You start.” Steve says decisively in undertone, his eyes glued on Loki’s.

“I don’t see how telling you what happened would change or fix anything” he concludes, “It’s not
going to fix my house that’s for sure.” He says indignantly, and gives his house a commiserating
look.

“I’m going to explain why it is important for you to tell us everything, and I’m going to be very
honest about it.” Steve offers despite the fervent sideways glances he receives from his pack mates,
“There had been intruders, many of them, and just to be clear this started once your seal was
deactivated. But it’s strange because that has never happened before, and if there was an intruder, we
took care of them in the blink of an eye and usually they didn’t stand a chance. I mean the Dinsons
have always protected these lands and everyone is familiar with their territory, and thus we never
enhanced our trainings except for what the Alpha has taught us. I’m ashamed to say, but I promised
to be completely honest so…”

“Just get to the point.” Loki says for him, his brows furrowing slightly.

“With all the threats and the impending risks, we decided our trainings weren’t sufficient, so we
started developing new skills and techniques. Seeing that we’re werewolves, it wasn’t much of a
problem, really.” Steve finds his clenched hands very interesting so he keeps on looking at them,
“We, no. I never realized recently that the one attracting those threats was actually you.”

The gleam in Loki’s eyes wanes and he ponders, staring slightly before him. But the bomb Steve, the
guy Loki admires, threw has just delivered the punch, the aftereffect is still to linger and reveal
painfully slowly.

“So even if we trained a lot, the problem was still there. As long as you have that Imugi’s power
running through your veins, troubles will never end and creatures that are aiming at your blood will
continue to come one after the other. It’s only a matter of time before they decide to strike at once, so
how are we supposed to prevent that?”

“So you sent me away” Loki guesses the rest, “and while it looked like you were doing it for my
sake, you were actually just replacing a decoy where your eyes can see.”
"We did send you away but it really was for your sake." Natasha intervenes, "It’s true that making you a decoy to kill the intruders wasn’t much of a bright plan but—" She is trying to explain their reasons when Sif instantaneously cuts her off.

"Disgusting," she utters, "You people are disgusting!"

"We were just trying to protect this town, and it’s not like we only kept him where our eyes could see. We were always following you to make sure you guys weren’t hurt!" Peter protests, "So be grateful."

"Grateful?" Sif barks. "For what, for getting him so badly hurt? Your super noses lost his scent at the first drop of rain, and your decoy got half of his neck gnawed at by a Jiangshi and I didn’t see you flashing your yellow eyes or beating the crap out of it. Not much of a bright plan?" she scoffs, "believe me, your perception of the term is flawed."

"It was actually my plan and I’m sorry." Steve looks down, his shoulders sagging apologetically, "I thought that instead of trying to locate every intruder, we’d had better just deal with the source. I never thought Loki would get hurt."

"Well, he did!" Sif fires back, "and here you are preaching us about how ungrateful we are. Well, screw you!"

"Sif." Loki peers up at her, a look of reproach flashes for a second. "It’s fine. I kind of understand."

"But Loki why aren’t you saying anything about this?" she relents with the same look of amicable reproach, "They’re the reason you were attacked and God knows what that Jiangshi did to you! I mean I saw how Thor lost his head there because of your scent so I can’t help but worry."

"That’s Mr. Dinson to you!" Wade berates.

"It still doesn’t change how much of a dandy asshole he is." Sif snorts back.

"Watch your mouth!" Peter takes part of the quarrel because it’s fun to pick on someone who stands up to you.

"Oh! I’m scared." Sif vibrates in mock horror. "Are you going to wag your doggy tails at me? Or perhaps scare me with your flashy eyes?" she shakes her head with a scoff.

"No, but I can rip off your throat with my fangs," Wade says, looking attentively at the girl.

"Oh my god, I’m terrified." She says in monotone, "So why didn’t you try to scare the Jiangshi with that, huh?"

So, what, did Thor lie to him?

No, that can't be the case because he never said the opposite either. He did say it was safer if Loki went home though. He doesn't know what to think anymore, but he knows that he’s causing people a lot of inconvenience. Is he being naive? Is he really useful as just a decoy and that's all there is?

Loki rubs the back of his neck while a sigh decides to leave his lungs. He’s not sure whether what he has to say would change anything or not, but massaging his neck definitely feels good, and for a moment, he can’t hear their quarrels anymore as he closes his eyes and the restful feeling washes over him. His hand is slowly cupping the bite marks and a haze of white looms before his closed
eyes, images of the Jiangshi flash, launching on him and gnawing at his neck, and then a werewolf too. He can only hear that scream he let out, he must have sounded like a scared girl. But the throb in his neck turns into a full blown pounding, even tightening his hand over the bite marks can’t conceal these feelings anymore. He’s had enough of them. He just wants to open his eyes and join their quarrel. Heck, it doesn’t sound like a bad idea now. What was that, he was used? He can work with that. His eyes shut close and he can even hear his heartbeat frisking with every fleeting second.

Oh.

Is he turning now?

“Ah...” he pants, slumping more against the cushions.

“Look at me,” someone says, gently. His voice is familiar. “Loki, look at me.”

He’s trying, god damn it!

Loki’s head slides to the armrest, and he feels like he can breathe more freely now.

“Shit, what if he’s turning…” a female’s voice, probably Natasha’s, and the rest of what she said next gets mumbled as Loki’s body goes slack.

He parts his eyes open and blown irises catch sight of a door, the same door from his last nightmare. Something swirls behind it, something like a shadow of a giant snake.

Why is all the creepy things happen to him only, it's unfair!

“Why do you not open this door?” a deep voice rumbles.

“Who’s there?” Loki rotates around like a curious cat. “Who are you?”

But of course the mysterious owner of that voice doesn’t reply, typical creeper behavior. Is there some sort of Creeper’s Guide from which these things pick their norms, it’s not funny! You hear that, you giant worm? The dark shape behind the door swirls more like a serpent, alluring Loki to walk closer, which he does because, shit, where else is he supposed to go seeing that there’s darkness everywhere he looks.

“You know, this is just a nightmare. I’d probably wake up sweating and all but that’s it, that’s why I don’t mind if you’re going to spook me once I open that door.”

The other lets out a reverberating laugh. “What an amusing lad.”

Loki grits his teeth in hesitation. “So, no funny business, we clear?” he says aloud. He doesn’t want any jump scares, thank you. “I’m opening the door now, alright?”

He pushes the door very gently, careful if something shows up, something like a deformed face. You’ll know what he means if you watch too much horror movies. Loki is gaping, astonished by what he’s just seen.

“A-are you the Imugi?” he wonders while goggling at the impressively long and hornless creature before him. He switches to look at its scaled arms and legs now, jaw slack with shock. “Awesome!” He half expects to see Hiccup riding Toothless and flying through the room.

“Are you not afraid?” The Imugi asks, and the darkened room vibrates, which is more interesting
because Loki can still see the creature.

“Afraid?” he echoes, flippantly, “Well, if you were a ghost.”

The Imugi laughs some more, but it’s not like his head is tilting to the back or his jaw moving when he talks, it’s something similar to telepathy in its nature. This actually reminds him of the voice he heard right before he turned the table on that vampire. It’s getting weirder.

“Aren’t you a brave one?”

Loki scratches his cheek and blushes, “oh, stop it you.”

“Come, sit.”

And Loki does.

He surveys his surroundings, tries his best to peer through the darkness but in vain. “So where is this?” he prompts, “A cave?” Ha, a cave and a half-fledged dragon, get it?

“This” –the Imugi snakes, now shining and golden chains appear wrapped around his serpent-like body– “is your dream.”

“So what are you doing in my dream?” Loki shrugs nonchalantly. He’ll just humor the reptile; everything sounds like a bad episode of Doctor Who thrown in with some Merlin. “And by the way, what are those chains for?”

The Imugi laughs again and Loki rolls his eyes, “you pry, kid.”

Loki nods his head, apparently agreeing with this creature, and Thor already asserted that, “I’ll zip it.”

“Many years ago, when bravery was the sole pride of warriors, I served a great king. He was a good man who loved his people and his people loved him, but he didn’t like being a king. He was fonder of searching for adventures and going on self-discovery journeys. A brave man he truly was.” The Imugi recounts, “He assigned me to a heavy but honorable duty, to protect his town, and Imugis are benevolent in nature. That is why I didn’t refuse him a request.”

Loki’s never seen a meal gushing ‘I’m delicious, eat me’ but, again, butchered rendition of Doctor Who.

“That’s pretty cool. I mean he must have trusted you a lot.” Loki comments, avidly.

“He did, and I protected that town with all I had in might. But I was a growing Imugi back then, not fully grown yet.” The Imugi’s voice goes even deeper, “one day, there was an enemy attack and we fended them off brazenly. I can never forget their fearless faces as we fought the enemy.”

“So what happened? Did you guys win?” Loki arches his eyebrow up, eyes expectant.

“Sadly, we did not.”

“Come on, now!” Loki whines, flailing a hand, “So why did you make me sit through that story in the first place?”

“But there was a man, a sorcerer. He wasn’t evil or an enemy. He was part of the town I tried to protect.” He adds, sedulously.
Loki lifts a brow.

“Why don’t I show you?”

A white light flashes, swallowing the darkness, Loki covers his eyes as a gust of wind strikes uninvited. A slosh is heard, and Loki slowly opens his eyes, finding that his foot has landed in a small pond of blood, which explains the wet slosh. Looking up now, he finds himself in an urban area that is not completely vacant. A scream echoes around, sending Loki after its sources. He comes upon a place that is in havoc, old cottages gone aflame, shipwrecks afloat along the stretch of the beach, that are too on fire, lifeless bodies lying on the ground and swords, spears, bows and arrows scattered all over the ground. He sees the giant Imugi sending white balls tangled with a tinge of bluish fire from his mouth, and once those balls touch the ground, they explode and the enemies are sent flying like fireworks in New Year eves. He hears their screams evaporate into the wind. Just then, he sees a man in a black, torn cloak and leaning on a wooden crook, followed by a middle-aged woman in a gown which hems has been eaten by mud. A rumbling sound like thunder is heard: an explosion. And suddenly the Imugi lets out a loud roar and slowly fans to the ground, the man and the woman dash to him. Loki follows suit.

“The royal swordsmen have been defeated, there is no hope for this town, let us flee.” The woman beseeches, her hands ghosting over the Imugi’s burnt scales agilely.

“Flee to where?” the man shakes his head, and sags, panting, “We cannot abandon the town.”

“You saw it, too!” She looks at him, imploring eyes on his. “They have weapons that can fly and explode. The Imugi will not last long if they hit him again.”

The Imugi’s body swirls and he slowly jerks up, “I have a duty to fulfill” he tells them, “Your concern is misplaced, help the injured.”

They both look at the Imugi with furrowed brows, and then the man holds the woman from her shoulders, rocks them firmly and looks directly into her eyes. “Take our daughter and leave town. Go through the forest and towards the mountain pass so the enemy won’t see you. I will stay here and help.”

“You can’t mean—” she gasps.

He looks down for a second, “It is the inevitable. I cannot hide anymore, they have to know.” He tells her, wrinkles rounding his small eyes. “Also, I am not using magic for evil so rest assured. Now off you go.”

She shares an affirmative with him and scurries away. The man lets out a sigh and rushes to an injured warrior thrashing at the side, he turns the body and asks the man where the pain is coming from, but the warrior coughs blood and it clogs his airway. The other places a hand over his chest and closes his eyes, and light glows from his hand. The warrior slowly wakes up able to speak and unharmed. The warrior fetches his bow and his quiver and bows in gratitude for the man, and the sorcerer goes off to help as many as he can.

Another explosion quakes the earth as it hits the giant reptile. It brings smoke out of the Imugi’s scales and head, and again, he slowly slides onto the ground.

The sorcerer scurries towards him.

“Let me be of help to you,” the man says, “let me honor your duty.”

“I am in no need of a sorcerer’s aid.” the Imugi spurns, feebly.
“Nonsense,” the man disagrees, “I’ll lend you my magic, and you’ll become stronger.”

“Yes!” the sorcerer exclaims, “then you can fulfill your promise to the king. However, it is a bit risky in your state. Your body might not be able to compass the energy flow, and you might die.”

“I do not care about risks.” The Imugi jerks up again, “lend me your strength, sorcerer.”

Once the sorcerer touches the scales of the soon-to-become dragon, a golden light glows from the man’s hand, the Imugi lets out a louder, hair-raising and spine-chilling roar. He parts his jaws and a blue beam of focused energy strikes like a horizontal waterfall, and his grey scales heal as new.

Loki’s body starts moving forward, as though gliding on imaginary inline skates, and then he’s on the deck of a ship, an enemy’s. He inspects around some more and sees barrels, lots of them. He opens one, this acrid and sour scent, like spent cordite reminds him of something.

Gunpowder! He gasps, that’s what they’ve been hitting the Imugi with. There must be some primitive explosives around here. He decides to throw the barrels to the waters.

Don’t! The Imugi’s voice speaks in Loki’s head, this is the past, what’s done can’t be undone.

Loki watches as the shipmates take a couple of barrels and poor their contents into a small container, set it on fire and send it flying by a cannon.

No wonder you guys didn’t win the war, they’re practically screwing you over!

The Imugi crawls closer to the shore and sends his energy concentrated balls followed by the waterfall of the strange light, and all the ships explode. Loki rolls his eyes because he’s being sent flying again when the barrels next to him exploded. He opens his eyes and sees the Imugi’s body lying on the ground, and the sorcerer hovering by his side.

“Rover!” A girl’s voice calls, “Rover!”

The girl pounces on the Imugi’s supposed-to-be neck (though he doesn’t suppose reptiles have a neck) and cries, “Ro, you can’t die!”

“What is a girl your age doing on a battlefield?” The Imugi asks, faintly.

“It’s unsafe here, and I can’t go anywhere.” His eyelids close for a moment, but reopen when the girl sobs.

“We need to leave, too.” the man hollers, his voice low but vehement.

The parents glance up at each other and the sorcerer nods to his child. “She’s right, and it’s partly my fault so please let me take responsibility for it.”

“How?” the other two inquire in unison.
“My magic is now blended with his blood, so all I need to do now is transform it to a new vessel so that he won’t die.” He explains, and then looks at his feet despairingly, “Only, where can I possibly find a vessel.”

“Do you need a container? I can look for one.”

“No, I need a human vessel.”

The three fall silent, and the Imugi decides he doesn’t have time for that, “it does not matter whether I live or die, the king has already left the palace and help is coming from our neighbor emperor. So, sorcerer, take your woman and child and seek safety.”

“Ro,” the girl pulls back to look into Rover’s eyes, “I have been blessed by the most glorious gift, meeting you has undoubtedly changed my life to the better and I shall never regret being your friend. I wish now that you do not die but live.” The tears blur her vision and she wipes them away with her sleeve. “If you die, the king will be sad, that’s why you can’t die, because the king still needs you, the people of the town still need you, I still need you!”

The mother’s tone falls tender, “Rove is badly injured and we cannot save him.”

“Father said he can transform whatever that is into a human vessel, right?” she addresses her father, “I can be that vessel.”

The mother’s knees buckle under her and she collapses to the ground, another explosion is heard from afar but it doesn’t seem like the girl nor her father are affected.

“Let’s be a part of the change, father,” she urges, “let them know that sorcerers are not evil, let us win the battle!”

The sorcerer’s zealous eyes are the last thing Loki sees as his body gets pulled to the back and he wakes up in his sabotaged living room. He takes a fervent look around him and sees the pack huddled with each other on the floor and Thor’s head still over his lap. Sif must have slept in her bedroom –formerly his parents’.

He checks his phone, 8:02 A.M. He must have dozed off because he seriously can’t remember what transpired after the neck massage. He stands up very slowly and rests Thor’s head back on the sofa, and aims the bathroom.

“Hey, stupid gecko, can you hear me?” he asks the mirror, “Why didn’t you let me see the rest? What happened after that?”

Dead silence. He vaguely wonders if this is how Queen Grimhilde felt asking an object: Mirror Mirror on the wall, what happened to the girl in the war.

“Rover, answer the god damn questions.”

In the kitchen, Loki grabs eggs and bacon from the fridge after turning the toaster on.

Thor is the first to depart from the realm of dreams. He goes into the bathroom and gets out minutes
later, and the smell of bacon allures him into the kitchen.

“Oh, good morning, fur ball” Loki gushes over the loud sizzling noise. “Did you sleep well?”

“Like a baby.” The other nods, and takes a bite from the toasted bread.

“Of course” Loki presses his lips tight and grins from ear to ear? “You must have been awfully tired. I mean going on a rampage and turning into a bigger red-eyed fur ball that chews on people must have been very tiring.” He scoffs, turning around, and at the sight of the latter’s body stiffening under the brunt of the accusation, Loki regrets his words.

“Let me see,” Thor says gently, taking a step towards the other.

“I was just kidding,” Loki waves a lackadaisical hand and faces the oven again. “It’s not that bad.”

“Let me see, Loki.” The other demands, deep voice making Loki weak at the knees.

Loki gnaws at his bottom lip and turns towards the man who is now standing right before him. “If it makes you happy,” he breathes out on an irritated sigh.

Thor scowls and fixates his eyes on the bite marks, only “There’s nothing.”

Loki’s eyes widen. “What you mean there’s nothing?”

“I mean there are no bite marks whatsoever.” The other repeats, accusingly.

Loki rushes towards the bathroom again and after a moment, a shout ricochets off the tiled walls. “Man, this is super awesome!” He walks out with a look of astonishment that makes him look comical. “Can you believe this!” He rubs at his neck gingerly while making his way back to the kitchen.

“It’s the same as the other night,” Thor points out, the furrow still deep across his forehead, “Your wound disappeared back then, too.”

“Yea, I remember now.” Loki gushes more. “I heal, too.”

“What the hell are you?” Thor says, offhandedly, “A freak or something” he says, making an expressive ‘whatever’ with his brows.

“Well, at least I don’t turn into an ugly hairball.” Loki jeers.

Thor curves a brow at him, sauntering right into his space and his fingers clasping Loki’s sweatpants by the loops. “You didn’t.”

Loki bites his lower lip again, and it’s against his consent that the action is very suggestive, as though he’s waited for Thor to do something so daring like this. “Believe it.” He drawls.

Thor rests his hands on either side of Loki’s hip, his lips curling into a mischievous smirk.

Loki melts under the intimate touch. Anymore and he’ll turn jelly. He slides his hands up to the man’s broad shoulders and locks them behind his neck. “What, are you going to bite me again?”

“I can do a lot worse than that,” Thor threatens, but his tone is playful.

“I’m scared.” Loki purrs, on cue. “So, what’ you gonna do to me, then?”
Something indistinct flashes across Thor’s face, Loki fails to capture it, and he leans in closer to Loki’s neck and breathes in. The latter tilts his head a little and closes his eyes as Thor rubs the tip of his nose along his neck, very slowly, teasingly. Loki clutches at the other’s hair, Thor’s smirk deepens. He places his lips under Loki’s earlobe now, deliberately making his lips twitch to cause pleasurable frictions.

“You’re aroused,” he whispers into Loki’s ear, and his voice sounds so sensual that Loki feels spirals at his feet. “I can smell it.”

Loki shuts his eyes and bows his head because the delirium is dangerous, he might drown. “Yeah?” Thor slides his tongue on Loki’s earlobe, making the black-haired shudder, and then he thrusts that tongue inside the ear.

“Don’t stir me up.” Loki winces in a low groan.

“That’s asking the impossible,” Thor chuckles gently and the resultant vibration does wonders to Loki’s body.

“Fuck…” he lets out a lengthy, voluptuous moan, like a wanton cry which Loki’s embarrassed to the roof and back for letting out. “Bastard, told you not to stir me up.”

As though goaded on, Thor grabs a fistful of Loki’s hair and pulls his head rearward, rough in his treatment. His eyes flash red, and for that fraction of a second where their eyes meet, Loki’s heart almost stops. “I want to bite you so bad.”

“I’m not really happy to hear that” someone says from the back, in monotone.

“Thank you for stopping those two!” Sif appears from her bedroom in floral PJs which Loki paid 24 dollars for. “I was afraid it was too late to show myself.”

Loki, more focused now, looks over Thor’s shoulder and sees Wade scratching his backside.

“I –” he starts, “we weren’t…” he mutters, and recoils from their embrace altogether, shoving Thor’s face away with a light slap. “It’s not like that, really!”

“Have you already forgotten about our super hearing?” Kate reminds him, backcombing her hair with her claws to make a messy Quiff.

“And now I can smell that again!” Peter groans, “You guys have no self-awareness? There are people sleeping in here, too.”


“You guys need a room, alone.” Natasha comments, her finger pointing at said two males.

As the kids clean and put in order the place where they’re going to eat, Loki seizes the chance to peek at Thor, and the other smiles to him, a painfully empty smile.

“So like I said,” Wade recounts on a mouthful, “Your heart was beating like crazy, we thought you
were turning or something, and then you didn’t move and Mr. Dinson tried to awake you several times. Then he told us you fell asleep, just like that.”

“But why didn’t you turn?” Kate asks, curious eyes sparkling.

Loki shrugs a shoulder and drinks his shake. They should be happy he didn’t turn; no one was ready to look after a Dumbo octopus, no matter how cute it’d be.

“The Imugi probably has something to do with this,” Sif speculates, “Just like how your wounds disappear.”

“So who’s Rover?” Steve asks out of the blue, and Loki chokes on his milk. Which, God, looks ugly.

“Mm,” he starts, and glances over at Thor after placing his glass on the table and wiping the splatters off his jaw with the back of his hand. “I’ve been meaning to talk to you about something, it’s kind of important.”

Thor looks at him and then goes back to eating. “I’m listening.”

“You see, I’m starting work tomorrow, and I can’t leave Sif alone.” He scratches his temple. “I was wondering if you could help me get her into school, I mean she can at least attend half of the semester.”

“Don’t decide things for me!” Sif stands up to protest.

“Sure,” Thor blurs, and drinks from the cup.

“Hey now, don’t decide to act all caring only when it’s convenient. You’ve done enough.” She rebukes, “We don’t need you. I alone can protect Loki.”

“Sure.” Thor shrugs again.

“Hey!” she berates, her tone recriminatory, “Drop the act and just admit it, you failed to protect him.”

Thor doesn’t say anything back, and Loki puts a hand on her shoulder to conciliate her. “Now now, you shouldn’t talk to people like that. None of it matters now, we’re safe now and that’s all I care about.”

“I’m not going to school,” she insists, “or else how can I protect you–”

“Knock it off, Sif!”

Silence veils the room for a moment, Thor lifts his eyes, scans the stupidly shocked faces gaping at Sif and Loki. He looks at Sif’s red cheeks and her confused eyes, and finally, he looks at Loki’s sorrowful countenance.

“I’m seriously fed up with you going on and on about protecting me, who said I needed your help? I don’t want kids protecting me and I certainly don’t need your protection, okay? In fact, I don’t need protecting. I can take care of myself.” He huffs. Why was nobody there when his chest glowed last night! He also cringes at his spat words. The long days of stifling what he’d really felt has frayed his patience too thinly and now he is hitting out at a damn kid. “Not going to school is enough of a problem,” he returns his hand over her shoulder and smiles coyly to her. “You’ve missed out a lot, so don’t make your life about me and just live how you want to live. Go to school, meet new friends and learn new things, it can be fun.”
“But” she nibbles at the inside of her cheek, “You…”

Loki relents with a smile and ruffles her hair. “I’ll be fine. I made it this far, didn’t I?”

“I heard that school sucks.”

“It does, but not always.” He chuckles, “And who knows, you might even meet someone.”

She blushes at the indication because the thought has never crossed her mind but the rest look at Wade instead.

“No way!” they tease him, “You like her!” Natasha gushes in a bold statement.

Amongst the lively ruckus, Thor places his empty dish and glass into the kitchen sink and goes to pick up his coat from the hat stand. Loki follows him and waits with his arms crossed over his chest as the other wears his loafers.

“Are you coming over tonight?” Thor asks, now adjusting his coat from the lapses.

“Mr. Dinson,” someone calls from the living room, and by the mumbled voice, it must be Wade talking with his mouth full again. The little punk, being a werewolf doesn’t mean you can act like you’ve been raised in a barn. “It’s a school night today and we’re not going to come over to yours, so it’s best if he doesn’t go either.”

Thor and Loki look at each other, and they can perfectly read the warning behind those words.

“I don’t know, maybe.” Loki wets his lips, “I have work to do, so.”

“Alright then,” Thor says, “Sorry for devastating your house.”

“Yea, I’m still sending you the bill.” Loki threatens, almost sarcastically.

“You do that.” Thor nods, “Later.” He waves a nonchalant hand and finally leaves and closes the door behind him.

Loki stands rooted to the spot, uncertain of what to think or what to ignore, what to put in mind or what to overlook. The talk about him being a decoy, and Thor’s confession the night before (or was he reading too much into it), and Loki himself being indifferent, or rather being demanding and wanting something more from Thor is just too much work, and he’s lost.

“Shit…” he curses in a small mumble.

Chapter End Notes

That soft enough for ya x'D
“Don’t get too cozy just because it’s Sunday, you still need to clean up the mess you made.” Loki announces once he’s back inside, sneers when they groan and complain that it was Thor’s fault so he should be the one doing the fitting, which Loki agrees with. That walking fur ball got right under his nose, so sneaky.

Steve comes into the kitchen moments later and paces behind Loki who’s washing the dishes at the sink.

“Say, Loki” –he makes an aborted movement, as if he wants to scratch his forehead but decides not to-- “It’s bright outside which got me wondering if you want to hang out, I mean, you don’t have work today, do you?”

Loki smiles to himself and closes the tap, his work is done here. He turns around with a beam. “Alright, where ‘you wanna go?”

Steve’s face brightens up and he wets his lips fervently, “Been thinking the–”

A muffled knock interrupts him and Loki excuses himself to go see who’s at his front door, and he isn’t surprised to see his old neighbor, hand clenched midair.

“Good morning, Mrs. Martha.”

“Oh dear,” her smile falls, “You’re becoming paler each day, do you eat at all?”

He narrows his eyes at her in response.

She chuckles. “Oh well, I came to see if everything is fine. I heard loud noises last night coming from your apartment.”

“Oh.” Loki clears his throat. “It was just me fixing the wall, sorry for being loud. I must have disturbed you.”

“Not at all.” She shakes her head. “But then again, I have a complaint to make.”

Loki props his brows at her.

“Why didn’t you pick my calls last night, Bucky was here and I wanted you to meet him.” –Loki sighs and looks away for a second, nose flaring. He is so not ready for this--“You also think I’m lying, don’t you?” –He shakes his head and parts his lips to say something but she beats him to it– “It’s fine,” She mumbles, “Maybe I am becoming senile, but I know my grandchild was here last night, because I touched him and he felt warm, his smile was alive.” –Loki looks at her with a look of dread and confusion. Did she just say ‘alive’? Oh, the irony!–“He’ll come back to see me again, he promised, and when that time comes, I want you to be here too. I want you to see how much he’s changed; he’s become a real man, Loki.” She sighs, wistfully.

Said man is glad that she finally decided to go back to her own apartment since she’d left food in the oven to be cooked. “My life is strange, I swear.” He tells himself as he walks inside, where he finds all the kids readying themselves to leave, “You guys are leaving?”

“Change of plans” Natasha informs, steadily.
Loki looks over at Steve now, and the guy averts his eyes.

“We need to meet our Alpha, there’s something he must know.” Peter explains, and Kate finishes for him “We’re still going out to hang out so don’t forget to get ready around four.” Kate reminds.

“Seems you’ve set your mind, just be careful,” he tells them, and he receives a nod from everyone.

Loki and Sif have decided to go grocery shopping and the former brought wall panels and planks along because Thor crafted holes in his apartment that people could trip on. They’re back around midday with a lot of bags and a few wood boards, and Sif offers to make lunch which grants her a questioning stare from Loki.

“You bought me the phone, and today you bought me that cute dress, at least let me repay you with a meal. Even if I can’t surpass your cooking skills, I can still cook, you know.” She justifies.

“Just don’t burn my kitchen,” He jokes, good-naturedly.

“Maybe I’ll poison your food.” She jokes back, grinning like a mania.

None of them notices Loki’s phone vibrating in the other room.

After three and a half, Loki walks out of the bathroom looking like an eggplant smothered in musky-flavored aroma, sawdust and sweat down the drain. Cock pleased.

He goes into his room and puts on his denim jacket over a red flannel, dons his jeans and finally sprays some cologne all over his chest and face. He looks at his hair in the mirror, ruffles it a little to the side, and *voila!* He’s all set to go.

“I’m not sure if this is good for Wade’s heart.” He comments once Sif walks out of her room, wearing the floral dress he brought for her.

She shies away from his comment and swivels towards the front door. “Shut up and let’s go,” she huffs, “they’re waiting at the gate outside.”

Surprisingly, Wade doesn’t get a nosebleed when Sif gets out and a sudden wind flutters her dress. He does look a little upset, however, and the new person standing beside Peter might explain why.

“Tess!” Loki smiles widely at her. “So you two are really going out?”

Said girl blushes and Peter wraps his arm around her back. “I know how dear you are to her so you and I are basically rivals.”

“Are you going to fight again?” Tessa slaps him on the head, and yanks him closer by the collar.

Loki smiles at their antics and leaves them be, there’s finally someone to put Peter in place whom the guy won’t dare raise a hand at. Loki finds a new target to annoy. “Who’s this?” he points at the new guy with the green highlights.

“Bobby Drake, my boyfriend.” Kate gushes and winds her hands around the boy’s arm.
The young man bows his head and opens his hand to shake Loki’s “I’m Bob,” he says, “I’ve heard a lot about you from my Kate, she admires you a lot.”

*My Kate, my?*

Loki doesn’t care about what Kate has said about him, the guy is pushing his luck here talking as though Kate is his thing. He is tempted to leave that outstretched hand hanging in the air, but Kate’s brow-arch leaves him with little defiance. He only shakes that hand firmly, on cue. “You better work on making her happy or else I’ll make it so that you won’t hear anything for the rest of your life.”

The kid wrenches his hand from Loki’s with a look of dread, which soon wins him several sardonic comments from the rest.

There’s a red minivan parked by the curb of the sidewalk, Loki spots it and spins his head around to give them his best imitation of *explain* glare.

“Alright,” Natasha capitulates. “It’s Wade’s father’s car, he can’t drive it so it’s best if you do.”

“That’s why I was invited out?” He rolls his eyes dramatically, and snatches the keys from Wade’s hand, “Devils, you guys are a pack of devils!”

Someone laughs from behind and he reels his head and glares at them. “In the car, *now*.” He opens the door to the driver’s seat and Steve takes the seat next to his, and for a second, the two of them exchange a look that can wage wars and spread famine.

“Play some music!” Peter woos.

“Yea, make this a fun ride!” Kate sheers from the side.

Loki switches the ignition on and the car roars to life, the radio bursts with joyous melodies on blast. He even turns up the volume for good measures. By orders from her majesty the queen, Natasha, they stop next to a karaoke building and soon get a room. Loki orders energy drinks and some snacks to go with, and they all have fun testing their singing abilities, except for Wade, the guy doesn’t know how to have fun. When they get tired of singing and dancing, they decide to steer the wheel to the amusement park.

“Wait” Kate’s eyes are on the window on her side, “*wait*” she prompts, fervently, “there’s an ice-cream parlor, how about we buy some?”

“They have ice-cream stands in the park too, wait until we get there.” Steve tells here, absentmindedly kneading at his thighs.

Just to spite him, Loki pulls over and undoes his seatbelt. “Wait here,” he tells them and extricates himself outside. He comes back later with seven servings of gelato, and everyone takes their share except for Steve.

“An angel,” Sif gasps, happily, “Loki, you’re an angel!” She insists, now taking the head of the ice-cream between her lips.

“If you guys dirty the seats, I’ll throw you out.” Wade threatens.

Loki buckles his seatbelt again and veers off to the main road.
The minivan finally stops at the parking lot of the amusement park, and they fan out from the cramped vehicle, stretching and freshening up.

“Look at that Ferris wheel!” Bob exclaims, innocent eyes radiant with happiness and excitement.

“What, never seen one before?” Loki teases, closing the door of the driver’s side. “Don’t think I’ll let you two on that alone.”

After getting ditched at the entrance by everyone else, even Sif, Loki, much to his surprise, realizes he is the chauffeur in this outing. He comes across a milk can toss stand, though he knows that most of the games here that look easy to win, are not, but he’s by himself and when you’re by yourself, there’s no one to stop you from doing something foolish like losing your money on a stupid game that you’re bound to fail. An once-over at his empty sides portrays his reality. He shrugs it off and tries his luck. He aims, shoots and fails to hit the mark. These games are definitely a losing proposition but darn why are they so addictive? He tries again, and fails, but he tries the third time and rebukes himself that if he doesn’t win this then he should just go throw himself off of a bridge or something. This time he aims, shoots but still fails to hit the mark.

He's not going to throw himself off a bridge, what are you, a suicidal?

“Screw this.” He tosses the toy gun to the seller and trudges away.

“Loki!” Sif runs up to him. “I want to ride that one!” her hand motions at the Ferris wheel.

“Where’s that idiot Wade, did he ditch you or something? I’ll break his claws!” He looks around at the crowded space, apprehensively.

“I’m right here,” said male announces right behind Loki’s back.

“Oh my G–” Loki claps a hand to his chest, now looks up with reproach. “Give a guy a warning before you decide to scare the life out of him!”

“Don’t faint.” Sif casts him an unimpressed stare.

He presses his lips at them and rolls his eyes. “Okay, fine.” He breathes out. “Here’s money, now go away”

“You’re coming with,” she tells him, “I want to go up there with you.”

“Are you having fun?” He asks when they finally seat themselves inside and the large wheel rolls.

She props up appropriately and nods, “I should be the one asking you that.”

He looks out the window, braces his elbow on its sill and leans on his clenched hand. “To be honest, I’ve always been a lone wolf. Interacting with people, going out on dates or having fun at karaoke’s, I’m not used to doing that.” He heaves a sigh. “When you’re a lonely child to two doting parents, there are a lot of things that get sieved out, but now that I’ve taken a taste of this, I’m afraid I’m getting too used to it.” He smiles, the expression so gentle.

Sif lifts up and sits next to him. “Tell me.” She urges.

“Company,” he tells her and clenches his fists, “Yours, and theirs, it’s now irreplaceable, but I can’t
help but think that one day you guys are going to leave and I’ll go back to my lonely island. I get clingy when I’m comfortable around someone, and I just keep thinking that maybe they’re going to abandon me when they get fed up with me, and I can’t handle it, so I pull back first.”

“I can’t believe I’m going to say this, but” – She twines her fingers over her lap and furrows at him– “Thor isn’t like that.” She says, “Doesn’t mean I like him, but I know that he cares for you. Whatever the kids do, they’re still kids.”

“You’re a kid yourself.” He juts his jaw towards her.

“Yes, but Thor is an adult and being the way he is, maybe he’s the only one who knows what being lonely really feels like. I think that it’s okay to get clingy with him, maybe he’s the same as you but he’s a bit different about showing it, or maybe he’s just gotten too used to it that it doesn’t show on him, which is pretty depressing when you think of it.” She mumbles in an afterthought. “Not the point, what I’m trying to say here is that maybe you two won’t even need to get clingy with each other.”

“You’re still on about that, I told you he has a fiancée.”

“You really are an idiot, aren’t you?” She shakes her head, sadly. “Do you remember the bite he gave you last night?”

“Yeah, what of it?” And you don’t just forget getting chewed on overnight.

“You might think it’s just a bite and has no significance, but he actually marked you.” She points at his neck. “I can’t say ‘claimed’ because I just hate that guy and I don’t want to give him that privilege just yet.” And because she isn’t sure yet.

“What do you mean marked?” He looks at her, eyes expectant.

“Well, he’s a werewolf, and an Alpha at that, and the alpha of a pack needs a mate. So when they – their inner wolf, decides that that person is perfect for taking up the role, they give them the bite. Though it’s exchangeable, and I’m not that familiar with how the story goes, and even if I compare wolves to werewolves, it’s not like it’ll be the same.”

He stares blankly at her.

She starts, slowly as though couching a five year old. “I’m saying Thor chose you by instinct, and whether or not he has a fiancée doesn’t change the fact that he wants you as his mate.” She tells him, her gaze meeting his head on.

“Mate!” he chuck himself to the back.

“Yea, mate, you think you calmed him down last night with pure talent or something, talking about being his anchor and cheesy dreams when it was just the bite doing its magic.” She rolls her eyes now.

“Wait,” he covers his face for a second. “So does it mean I’m his mate now?” He blushes at the thought. He’s read about those several times during his researches on Werewolves, and now she’s saying he might be one.

“I can’t say for sure because the bite has already vanished, not even the marks are there so maybe even the effect is gone as well.”

“So he didn’t really bite me because he was attracted to the scent of my blood, did he?”
“God, do you ever listen when people talk!” She breathes through her nose now. “Listen here, and I’m not going to say this again. Thor had already started working on scent-marking you way before the seal was even deactivated, so it wasn’t really your blood attracting him. He said so himself last night, it was his” –she keens for a word– “jealousy, I guess.” She flicks her wrist, making a ‘whatever’ gesture with her hand. “You got bitten by the Jiangshi just before you came home which ticked off his inner wolf and he lost it, because his to-be-claimed-mate had been bitten by another entity, but then the magic in your blood must have wanted to protect you so he went berserk after giving you the bite. He couldn’t even recognize his own pack which is really weird because alphas don’t become alphas on a whim. They’re born or sometimes chosen. So yea, it actually explains a lot why he said he had been afraid that your blood was the thing attracting him to you, I can totally relate. And maybe he sent you away because he was afraid of himself losing control, not because he wanted you safe at home, though it’d mean the same.”

“Wait, Steve and the others said they sent me to be the decoy.” He skims slender fingers through his hair, agilely.

“The bait” She corrects, head slanting in consolation. “You were sent to be the bait, Loki. But...” she raises her gaze now. “Like I said, you never listen.”

“What’ you mean?”

“You must be thinking Thor is a liar.”

Loki avoids her eyes, his shoulders slumping in defeat.

“Well, you need to listen well. Steve never said it was their Alpha’s plan. He didn’t even mention Thor, but he clearly said it was his own plan, which means the pack acted up behind their Alpha’s back.”

Loki’s eyes widen.

“I can totally hold that against him, it’d scatter his hopes and zero would be the amount of fucks I give,” she shrugs. “But, because you’re too kind and too forgiving, I can’t stand seeing you torturing yourself like this so I’ll just come out and say it.” She admits, “Wade is the one who takes over when Thor is away on business, work, pack wars or whatnot. But just before, they said they smelled the Jiangshi when it crossed the borders of their territory so instead of tracking it down, they tracked you down, by Steve’s orders. He also admitted that Thor still has no idea about any of this, that’s why he didn’t say anything to you. Steve is a bit skeptical and to make matters worse, he’s scared out of his wits that now that the Alpha has finally marked you as his mate, he’d fight him in a battle to death.”

Loki keeps on gazing, thoughtful countenance facing her.

“That’s why everything that’s happened so far is just one big, terrible misunderstanding.” She pinches his cheek to make him chin up, “So don’t dwell on it too hard, you’ll get bald.”

“Can I trust you on this?” He asks, but his question clearly suggests something else, more personal.

“Yes,” she nods gingerly, “Thor has really been thinking only for your good, the lot cares about you... agh!” she retches, “I just can’t like him!”

He chuckles and ruffles her hair. “No matter what comes outta that mouth of yours, you still are indulgent towards him.”

“Well, since he cares for you that much,” she mumbles, on a pout. “I guess he’s alright.”
He smiles amiably at her, chews on his bottom lip when something crosses his mind, “I want you to keep something a secret.” He says out of the blue.

“Yea, sure.” She nods, “Anything.”

He rubs the back of his neck. “I still have an obligation towards Tony and thank him for yesterday, but if Thor finds out, he won’t forgive me, maybe won’t even meet with me again.”

“Wait.” she cuts him off, “We still don’t know if the effect of the bite is completely gone, and with the Alpha’s strong sense of scent, he’ll immediately know. I suggest you don’t rush anything. It’s not like I’m against you going out to see this guy, that’s the least we can do, but I also don’t want to risk it. What if Thor goes berserk again, what if this time, you can’t calm him down and he ends up hurting his pack again, or worse, hurting you?”

They both demur.

“I think you just need to call and thank him without meeting him in person.”

“Somehow that’s disrespectful,” he groans, “I’m kind of starting to feel what you felt the other day.”

She presses her lips together in a manner that clearly says told you so.

They fall into silence as the wheel rolls more and their cart nearly reaches the ground.

“You know, Loki,” Sif starts, “This might be uncomfortable to you but I’ve liked you a lot.”

Loki’s heart stops for a fraction of a second, but he quickly relents with a gentle smile, “I like you, too.”

“Thank you.” She sniffs and lowers her head, her hair covering most of her face. “I’d have never known that life was this fun if it wasn’t for you, but I’ll get over you. Wade is not bad either. Actually, he’s pretty handsome and gentle, and he’s totally cool when he gets mad and I like this type, too.” She laugh-cries.

Loki looks at her covered face and her trembling shoulders, and he brings a hand to her head and pets her head, “Thank you.” He tells her in a soft whisper.

The Ferris wheel finally comes to a slightly shaky stop.

“Wade, why don’t you get in, it’s on me,” Loki offers, head nodding to the cart they just walked out of.

Sif, though, doesn’t have any intention of letting him wander like a beggar alone, “Give me your driving license.”

“What’ you want it for?” He protests but still takes it out of his wallet for her.

“You’re not our driver, and to tell you the truth, I won’t have a good time here knowing you’re still waiting for us to come back, and we’re a lot. I’ll do a little trick here so that you can go home.” She tells him and the two men watch attentively as she changes the photo on the card to Wade’s face instead. “He can drive too.” She smirks, oh the hints lading her line.

Loki can’t help but feel proud, because judging by what’s happened so far with her, Sif, although a teenager, she is actually a woman inside. “Stop acting like an adult,” he pokes her forehead. “Now go back into the cart, it’s about to move.”
At the seat next to the window in the bus, Loki closes his eyes for a quick nap, the whir of the vehicle’s structure coaxing him to the land of dreams.

“So we meet again.” The Imugi states, rumbling voice shaking the entire room.

“Yeah, meeting you for the second time isn’t much of an achievement I’m afraid to say.” Loki flops onto the ground, blowing out a heavy sigh.

“We have met more than twice, lad.” Rover points out.

“What?”

“To put it simply for you,” the Imugi starts, “whenever your consciousness slips away, you manifest here.”

“That’s a joke, right?” The other hacks out a derisive laugh.

“I’m afraid not.” Rover denies, “or else, how do you explain the open door?”

Loki scrutinizes at said door, “So why can’t I remember, huh?”

“That door is the barrier, the seal that kept me locked in here.” The Imugi swirls and his scales shine. “You came here once, defeated, and you opened the door which unlocked the barrier.”

Loki’s lips gape and close like a fish.

“Yes,” Rover insists, “It’s the reason why you’re a source of trouble now. Many others will want you as their vessel, because you opened that door.”

“It can’t be!” Loki gasps as terror seizes his heart. “So what about my headaches, and my dreams?” he swallows fervently, “I figured that the pain is sort of a danger detector but I can’t be sure, maybe it warns me when a supernatural creature is around. I’ve come to this conclusion but I couldn’t tell anyone because I was afraid that it might not be the case.”

“But it is” the Imugi confirms, sliding forward. “Your dreams are only fragments, images of your ancestors’ past.”

“So they aren’t predictions.”

“Don’t flatter yourself.” The Imugi drones, “but the past is also part of the present; it won’t harm you to learn about it.”

“I remember now,” Loki gets up and paces to and fro, “that Jiangshi! I remember I did something to that Jiangshi that –” the rest gets unarticulated as his body pulls backward. He hears someone calling him awake with a barely patient, “this is your stop, please get off”.

Loki walks along the sidewalk, going back on what the Jiangshi has said to him before he was jerked back to reality. And there it is by the building’s entrance, the beat-up bike waiting on him in spite of being neglected. A memory suddenly flashes of him riding the blue bicycle to Thor’s, their little exploration trip in the kitchen this morning –he blushes so hard he’s lucky no one is in his close
vicinity to see it…

He drags a hand over its handlebars and sighs, “Let’s hope I don’t get rejected.”

He pedals over the hill road with ease, pleasant breeze caressing his sides and darkened leaves rustling in a slow, bewitching chant. Up the hill, among the towering pine crowns, Loki catches sight of Dinson’s residency, veiled by the starry sky safe for the dim light coming from a room upstairs like a lonely lighthouse, he guesses it Thor’s.

As he approaches the house, he spots a figure by the porch, sky-gazing.

“I missed that spot.” Loki admits once the wheels finally grind to a halt by the porch. Thor, dressed in black sweats, looks up at him and pats the empty space beside him. Loki smiles and parks the bike away, askew, and hops up the stairs to sit next to Thor who offers him a can of beer.

“I thought you were a spoiled kid who couldn’t hold his resentment against drinking cheap beer.” To his surprise, Thor grabs a bottle of fine red wine from his other side and swirls it in his hand before Loki’s eyes, a playful smirk crossing his lips. “Rich people,” Loki huffs and turns his head to gaze up at the sky.

“Did you have fun with the kids?” Thor asks out of the blue.

At the feeling of eyes on his profile, Loki wills himself not to veer his eyes away from the sky. Besides, it’ll be easier to talk like this. “Wade and Sif are together now. I think they’re going to start dating soon.”

“Kids are fast,” Thor comments and sips a bit from the bottle. “Well, good for them.”

Loki supports his weight on his arms so that he can watch the sky without having to crane his neck, but after a moment, Thor mirrors his posture and their hands are only a few inches away. Loki is admiring a shooting star and if he makes a wish, that’s nobody’s business but his. He suddenly feels Thor’s fingers intertwining with his. His heart hops under his ribs, beating so fast like a cat’s.

Thor chuckles at the reaction. “Calm down.” He says, his judicious words well picked.

“Shut up,” Loki retorts, trying to get over his embarrassment, “I know.”

Minutes flee until Thor finally untwines their fingers, takes the bottle with him and stands up. “Don’t stay up too late,” he instructs, “good night.”

“Good night.” Loki says without turning around.

The light Loki’s seen in Thor’s room goes out so he calls it night as well.

He walks up to the usual sofa where he finds a quilt and a pillow, waiting to cuddle with him. Thor must have placed them there, he theorizes, now slipping off his jacket and his blue jeans, scattering them over the armrest. So, what, is he not welcomed to Thor’s room anymore…?

“Oh my god, I can’t believe I just thought that!” He messes his hair and dips down with the fabric of the sofa when he finally sits.
In the morning, he wakes up to the glaring sun that’s managed to sneak up on him from the blinds of
the large windows. He checks his phone for the clock, but only then does he see the three missed
calls from the same number. It’s around seven thirty when Thor comes down appareled in a beige
dress shirt tucked in black trousers, saunters into the kitchen where the other is making breakfast.

“Good morning.” He greets drowsily and sits himself over a stool.

“Did you sleep well, fur ball?” Loki asks, replacing a cup of hot coffee in front of him, a plate of
pancakes, a bottle of honey and chocolate spread.

“Stop calling me that,” the other gnaws, sleepily, “How do you think I slept?”

“Not too good, I assume.” Loki shakes his head and sits across the other at the counter to eat. “What
got you so worked up?”

Thor stares up, scowling at the other’s cheerful approach. “The coffee is a bit bitter than usual.”

“Well, I’m sorry.” Loki bites out, “I don’t know how it usually is.”

“You used to make it a little bitter and a little sweet, I liked it that way.”

Loki’s heart starts jogging again.

“Calm down.” The other sighs, as though he’s said it too many times it became a habit.

“Shut up!” Loki grits out, “here” –he takes the honey bottle and pours some of it into Thor’s cup–
“bet it’s sweeter now.”

“You’re extreme.” Thor berates, trying to take the honey out by the spoon before it melts, dedication
in his cautious action, and for some reason, Loki can’t get enough of watching that.

Are you sure you don’t want a ride?” Thor asks for the second time now that they’re standing
outside.

Loki rides his bike and nods. “Besides, have to work out all the meat I’ve been eating.” He fumbles
with the bell and halts from time to time to gaze off into the distance.

“You’re fine the way you are.” Thor blurts out and an awkward silence ensues.

“I should get going,” Loki informs, his hand clasping at the handlebars. “I need to open the store.”

The other nods, but not moving from his spot so Loki quickly pecks a kiss to his cheek like it’s the
most natural fucking thing on the planet. He settles on his seat, foot spinning the pedals until the bike
starts moving. A part of him isn’t willing yet to look behind at Thor’s reaction to that sudden kiss.

He’s on the hill road when the white Mercedes passes him by, smooth and majestic.
“I missed you guys so much” he tells the items lined on the shelves. “I’m sorry for taking too long but I’m back now, and I promise I’ll take care of you.”

“It’s good to see you excited.”

Someone says from behind and Loki whips around, finding the store owner flashing a serene smile with a few features of fatigue crossing his eyes and cheeks.

“I hate sitting around doing nothing; besides, I like it here.” He reasons, giving the interior of the shop another fond once over.

“I’m glad to hear that,” Alfred nods in genuine agreement. “Kids these days give up too soon if the work is hard.”

“That’s actually a fact, sadly.” Loki nods his head to his own statement, before prompting up, “but is everything alright, you don’t look too bright.” Hmm, that rhymed!

“A bit tired I’m afraid.” The old man flails a hand shakily before he hooks it with the other behind his back. “However, since you’re taking over for now, I should take it easy.”

“Please do that,” Loki pleads. “I’m really excited about work, and I think if I just follow the usual routine, I can manage everything else by myself. Please take good care of your health.”

Alfred’s smile thins out, giving his shop an examination from his sharp eyes. Patting a hand on Loki’s shoulder, the man nods. “You’re doing well, son.”

His phone rings over the counter, showing Sif’s new number on his screen.

“Sif, what’s u–”

“I can’t believe you ignored our warnings about going to his place!” Sif hollers through the phone.

The words leave his mind, and he gives her deafening silence as a response.

“So, how’s he doing?” she asks, and he wonders for a second if she’s still possessed. “You two spent the night soaking in love?”

“What, no!” He exclaims, “What about you and Wade?”

“We kissed. Sloppily.” Sif coos, “Inside the Ferris wheel.”

“That’s romantic, and fast.” He twirls his lips, straining to figure out the nature of the noise in her background. “So you two are officially an item?”
“Yes, I think we are.” She mutters, “Listen, don’t forget to eat; I can’t have you fainting somewhere I don’t know of.”

“Where are you now by the way?”

She gives him a cheeky chuckle, “School?”

He meeps, “Would you look at that, do you like it there?”

“I’ll tell you everything later.” She practically chirps, “Sorry but I have to go now, see ya later sweetheart!”

Men shouldn’t dwell on things from the past, and Thor is a reliable man. These are the two things Loki comes out with today.

It’s closing time and the sun is melting behind the hills, Loki shuts down the iMac and grabs his keys, his phone, and his grey cardigan. He closes the store and walks back to his apartment.

“I’m home!” He announces once he slips out of his shoes.

“Oh,” Sif peeks out of the bathroom door. “Welcome home. So hey, listen, I’m sorry but I need to go out now.”

“A date?” he guesses.

“Yea.” she replies, “School was great, the subjects are just so easy and my classmates want to befriend me. I can’t believe it; everything is working out just fine.” She finally leaves the bathroom and scurries around for her things. “I’m having so much fun, Lo.” She says on a sort of a wistful sigh, “I wouldn’t change it for anything. So, food is over the table and you just need to reheat it.”

He narrows his eyes at her, “That’s irrelevant.”

“I’m staying at Wade’s.” She tells him when she’s finally at the front door.

He reals his head at that and glowers. “Like hell you are, you’re not staying with him and that’s final.”

“He lives with his mother,” she insinuates, “So I’m going to meet his family, isn’t it great?”

“Wait,” he shakes his hands, tentatively. “Aren’t you guys taking it a little too fast?”

“Let’s hope we aren’t.” She winks and leaves.

He gives his apartment a rueful smile, “think you’re staying alone today as well, sorry buddy.”

He leaves too.
The last hues of sun shade his path to Dinson’s, and the ease with which he’s pedaling the bike gifts him with balance that diffuses the stress he’s been feeling lately. Although he eyes everything around, he doesn’t lose control over the handlebars.

Suddenly, his arm with the mark throbs, like he’s just been hit there by a hammer, and the balance he’s managed to create comes crashing down as he loses control over the aforementioned handlebars and the bike totters as though shaken by an earthquake. They both fall down violently and roll together that he almost gets thrown off the edge of a steep slope. He recovers from the fall soon after and inspects his surroundings, trying to locate any possible threats in spite of the pain.

Is he ever going to get a fucking break!

He grabs hold of the bike and wobbles away with it in his side, and slowly the pain fades away, which he thinks must mean the threat is gone by now. He finally reaches the house, places the bike at the usual spot and plods inside. It’s good that he held on to that key; although that decision has almost been flawed by his anger a couple of times before, but what matters is now.

“Who’s there?” He demands, slowly getting out of the bathroom, only to get grabbed by the collar, “what the hell are you doing!” he bellows when he sees Thor, “You scared the shit out of me!”

“Shut up.” Thor barks, but he doesn’t let go of the other’s shirt. He opens it to check for something.

Loki hisses, “What’ you think you’re doing?”

“Wounds,” Thor grinds out, “Do you have any wounds other than the ones on your face? Were you attacked?”

Loki gives himself a private moment to let the realization sink in: Thor is shaking, and it terrifies him to no end. He slowly holds the other’s hands in his, dismayed to see his own shaking as well. “I’m fine,” he looks him right in the eyes. “Thor, I’m fine, stop panicking.”

Said man almost collapses after he exhales aloud, his fingers rake through his golden hair.

“Here, sit down, I’ll bring you some water.” Loki offers.

Thor grabs him by the wrist and seats them both on the sofa.

“Thor?” he croaks, this is really starting to scare him. “What exactly happened?”

Thor, with a scowl, keeps on gazing at the poorly-stocked first aid kit Loki must have replaced over the coffee table before, and he finally blinks when Loki snaps his fingers for his attention. “Let me clean your wounds,” he says, and Loki doesn’t understand this sudden need to play doctor but he lets the man open the box and grab some cotton to cover it in a sterilizer. He holds Loki’s face by the jaw and rubs the cotton over the wounds very gently.

Loki hisses anyway, “So, are you going to talk?”

“I was on my way here when I sensed something wrong. I know you attract trouble but that felt different, whatever that was, I just had an intuition that it wasn’t anything good. So instead of driving here, I actually ran.”
“You ran?” the other exclaims, flabbergasted.

“It seems the bite’s effect didn’t vanish with the marks,” Thor announces, “That’s why I sensed you were in danger.” He ends it with a pensive look in his eyes, and his hand pauses for a moment. “Loki, whatever that thing that tried to attack you, it gave a seriously bad aura. I believe it’s not after your blood, it simply wants to kill you.”

The two look into each other’s eyes.

“We don’t know that.” Loki finally pulls away and gazes at the coffee table.

“True, but I’m no ordinary creature.” Thor shakes his head, his voice so deep, indicating just how serious Loki’s crisis is. “That thing wanted you dead.”

Loki swallows –here goes his life. It wasn’t long ago when an accidentally deleted purchase order was the crisis of his life, now he gets a visit from blood-sucking monsters almost daily and Thor has to make it sound so bad by giving him a death sentence– He slowly glances up at Thor. “I’ll be fine” he determines after prolonged reflection, and gets up to his feet, Thor does the same. “I don’t care if it wants to kill me or not, I’m not scared.” –He’s terrified– “I’ll go fix us something to eat.”

Thor grabs him from the forearm before he pulls him into a hug, dips his head into Loki’s shoulder.

Loki smiles wryly. He’s an idiot for running away from this, an idiot for thinking of rejecting this. He lifts his arms and wraps them around Thor’s neck. “It’s going to be fine,” he assures into Thor’s ear, “I promise.” He pulls away and holds Thor’s face to make him look up. “Go wash up, I’ll make dinner.”

Loki is lying on the sofa and looking out the large windows, playing the scenarios again in his head.

It –whatever it is– wants to kill him, so what? Wasn’t it the same with the Gumiho and the Jiangshi?

It should be the same with this thing too, but last time murders happened, there were two creatures going on a killing spree: the Gumiho and the Aswang. However, the Aswang was never caught and he’s pretty sure he’d seen it. Wait a goddamn minute –he sits up– what if it’s the Aswang that’s trying to get him now, it’d explain the claw marks back in his apartment –he flops back on the pillow with a groan– it’s useless if he doesn’t have proof, and these are just baseless theories.

An owl hoots from some far off distance, and Loki’s body shudders.

And just what’s up with Thor anyway, he hasn’t said a word after the two of them hugged –Loki grunts, irritably– Whatever, not his problem, Thor can go sulk for eternity for all he cares.

“I’m giving you a ride and that’s final.” Thor blurts out in the next morning after chugging down the little-sweet-little-bitter coffee Loki made for him in two large satisfying gulps.

“Don’t waste your breath,” Loki waves a hand offhandedly, he grabs his keys and phone from the coffee table and heads to the front door. “See you tonight.”

Thor resorts to his super speed and catches up to Loki before the latter’s hand could even touch the handle, he shoves him up against the wall and gets all at his face. “I can lock you up here and close all the exits, or you can shut your mug and come with me, your call.”
Loki gets lost in the redness waving inside Thor’s eyes, then he gulps, he knows he’s almost knocked off his feet, “Fine.”

The white Mercedes drives off with the bike sitting on its hood like a king in a carriage.

“You’re so stubborn.” Loki mutters, biting the tip of his thumb meditatively.

The other gives him the ‘look who’s talking’ glare and turns the steering wheel with so much force.

“So are you going to do this every time I’m not working?”

“If it keeps you out of trouble.” the other determines with a curt nod.

“Unbelievable!” Loki throws his hands in the air, “You sound exactly like Sif now.”

“That’s two people” –Thor makes a V with his fingers– “proves how much we care about you.”

“It only proves how much you trust me,” the other defies, “and that’s twice less than you ought to.”

“Stop whining.” Thor groans, wearily.

“Stop underestimating me. If that thing wanted to kill me, I’d already be dead. It’s not your place to tell me I’ll get killed when I’m nowhere near as good as you. I know you’re by far the best, stop rubbing it in my face, asshole. It’s not like I came to you asking for your protection either. I can take care of myself just fine you big, stupid fur ball, what an eyesore!” He punches the dashboard to vent his anger and look cool but winces inwardly because it hurt a lot and he's never doing it again.

Thor hits the brakes suddenly which makes their bodies jerk forward ferociously. After moments of complete silence, Thor returns the dash of admonishment, “I never underestimated you. I never said I’d protect you either. You’re pretty good at it if you ask me. But I’m doing this for us. You think I’d let them get to you, my mate?” he hits Loki’s shoulder until the other grimaces again, “Stop forcing your assumptions on me already, you and I are different, and so is everyone else. You can’t just accuse me of things that exist in your head only, you know I trust you.”

“But–” Loki wants to protest more.

“Stop, just stop, okay?” Thor closes his eyes for a moment, “Noisy,” He mumbles, “You’re so fucking noisy it gives me a headache.” Is this the first time Thor swears?

“Good.” the other seethes.

“I’ll come to get you later, now get out.” He shoos with a hand and rubs the point of his nose between his eyes with the other.

Loki looks out the window and finds that they’re next to his workplace, then he seizes the chance when nobody is looking, even Thor, and he smacks a kiss on the man’s cheek. “See ya.” He chirps cheerfully like they didn’t just exchange heavy admonishments, and he gets out, pulls the bike from over the hood and waves bye to Thor, who doesn’t wave in return and just nods brusquely, and then faces away altogether.

“I just called to tell you I’m staying over at Kate’s.”
Really, Sif, really, he just dealt with a life threatening choice two hours ago and now she calls to tell him this?

“What’s your deal, honestly?” He marvels, “you’ve been staying out a lot lately.”

“You see, after Steve cleared the misunderstanding, I realized I was prejudiced towards the pack and I also decided to get to know them more,” she says, “and Kate invited me over to hers, so it shouldn’t be a problem, right? I mean, it’s Kate.”

She has a point.

He sighs, “Just don’t get used too used to it though, I’ll ruin it for you one day.”

Sif chuckles and asks, “So what’s up?”

“Just working,” he says, shrugging to himself.

“Come on,” she drones, teasingly, “You know what I mean.”

“Well,” he sighs, “we’re doing well, I mean it’s not like we’re seeing each other but, yeah, I call that progress. Also, it seems like I’m really his mate now.”

“Are you serious?” she gushes, “How ‘you figure?”

That’s going to be a bit difficult to explain.

“Let’s just say things happened and we figured out that the bite is still in effect.” He sums it up with a plea that he sounded subtle enough for her not to ask any more questions.

“I’m so happy for you, I really am.” She says, “Oh, the bell is ringing, I should get going. I have history next, my favorite!”

“Say hi to the rest for me, and have fun!” Except he doesn’t know if people have fun during history classes, for one, he never did.

Soon after, his phone rings again and it’s the same number that had called him three times before.

“Who is it?”

“I’d be your savior” the other says, a man, “I’m Tony, you’ve probably already heard of me, not that it’s anything good.”

“Um, hi,” Loki greets back, “I’m sorry for not calling you earlier to thank you.”

“Don’t sweat it,” the other hums. “I’m just worried, and I wanted to check up on you, you almost died on us the other day.”

“I’m perfectly fine now. I can’t thank you enough.” Loki reassures, “Please let me make up for your trouble the other day.”

“If you insist.”

“Great!” He exclaims, “how about a cup of coffee tomorrow?”
“Very well,” the other man agrees, “until then.”

Whatever Thor says about this man, an obligation is still an obligation.

As he dusts off the books on a shelf, his hand brushes against a fat tome which sends a sock of something magical, he can tell, but without the charge. He plucks it out and furrows his dark brows because he’s never seen it here before.

“Spells of Old Magic?”

He takes it to the counter and opens it on the first page, table of contents, he assumes. “Incantations and Readings, Love Spells, Specialty Spells and Fortune Spells?” he scoffs, “what the heck is this?” He keeps on reading nonetheless, “Protection Barrier Spells?” he gulps, that really catches his interest. “Maybe it’s not bad after all.”

To create a protection barrier, you will need a special object, amulets or lucky charms that you usually keep close, rub it in your hands and chant the following words: By the power of the holy spirit, I beg of thee shield me from the threat. The barrier will eventually be activated effectively and it will keep all evil away.

“This is complete nonsense, whoever wrote this is insane.” He chucks the book away and gets ready to close the store; except, much to his surprise, he ends up buying the book. “I must be insane too for purchasing it.” He releases a sigh as he waits by the half buried store sign outside just like Thor told him to.

He is skimming through the pages, pupils drawn to the flamboyant colors scribbled on the thick pages when his arm suddenly throbs, but the only thing that drags from him is a wince. It gradually grows more excruciating, the dull beats of pain travel up to his head and it has Loki closing the book and cradling his arm and head interchangeably; the scale of pain must mean the threat is lurking by close, very close. He leans back on the corrugated door of the store and slowly slides to the ground, panting.

A woman and a child hover over him, peering down at him like he is a restored painting, but he’s in too much pain to shoo them away like Thor did to him, that bastard. Then another woman, middle-aged and short, joins the crowd, a man too now, and Loki’s slowly becoming the town’s freak show.

“Look,” someone gasps as though a sacred meal has been descended upon them. “It’s Mr. Dinson!”

The murmurs rise and hushed whispers soon get recognizable. “What’s he doing here?” “Oh dear, it really is him. I wonder what he came down here for.”

“Good day, Mr. Dinson.” the mother of the kid greets, coyly.

Another bout of piercing pain ricochets across Loki’s body until he mews; he considers giving up on his consciousness, it really sounds like a good plan now—a marble hand grabs his.

“Get up.”

Loki peeks through blurry vision which can’t mask the strong presence of the Alpha, and he grins up at him drowsily. “Took your sweet time, huh?” he croaks, body racked by painful tremors as Thor hoists him up to his feet and drags him to the car parked by the sidewalk.
“Get in the car,” Thor orders once he opens the door of the passenger seat, shoving Loki inside.

Loki slides in. He shirks down in the seat and kneads at his forehead, barely taking in the sight of a crowd of townspeople gawking at them.

Thor makes his way around to the driver’s side, sits in and chances a searching look at the other. Loki has turned to his side, facing Thor, his features pinched and sickly pale with pain.

“Are you alright?”

“Oh, just peachy!” Loki rolls his eyes, tiredly. And then adds, gesticulating to his legs, “Do you see me river-dancing?”

“I’m taking you to the hospital.” Thor determines, a tone of worry vibrating down his throat.

Loki grunts and hugs his arm to his chest, “No. Can we go now?” he slurs and he sounds agitated.

Thor places a hand on Loki’s knee and squeezes. “This has been going on and on,” he reminds, “we should get you checked out.”

“No.” Loki manages a firm utter. It’s useless, no CT scans or blood tests are going to rule out the problem, not now, and certainly not any time soon. “It’s just like you said” –he grimaces and groans, clutching at his head now– “it seems that thing wants me dead for real.”

Thor retracts his touch and scrubs a hand over his jaw, remaining silent.

“What ever,” Loki sighs, feeling beats of cold sweat running down his face and his back. “I’m so tired, I don’t care, just take me home.”

“Sleep.” Thor commands, now resting his hand over Loki’s forehead until he hears his heartbeats settling down and the man in pain slumps in his seat, unconscious.

“…tomorrow, he’s asleep now.”

The steadily spoken words catch up on Loki’s surfacing consciousness.

“You should let him rest for now. I’ll call you when he’s feeling better.”

“Is it serious? Did he get hurt?” a girl argues, it’s a voice with a high pitch, must be Kate’s.

Loki examines the familiar ceiling of Thor’s bedroom with bleary eyes.

“He’s running a fever, but it’s not serious.” Thor tells her, calmly.

“Did you see them? The one who tried to attack him.” drawling yet accommodating, it’s definitely Natasha’s.

“I didn’t.” Thor states out flatly, “but so far, nothing attacked him, luckily; it’s just the seal acting up.”

“I can’t believe you let this happen!” the owner of this blaming accusation must be Sif, she’s overprotective.
Loki attempts to sit up for the third time, but his head keeps falling back on the fluffy pillows. His eyes roll drowsily; the sheets feel heavenly against his naked skin. Wait, naked?

“It’s not like I can prevent his mark from acting up.” Thor protests, voice falling dangerously in warning.

“You at least leached his pain away, didn’t you?” Calm and reasonable, that’s Steve talking.

“Of course.” Thor replies, curtly.

“We should let the princess get some rest, he must be tired,” spiteful on the outside but caring on the inside, that is Wade. “He kept getting paler and paler each day, dude needs a few days off.”

“We’ll do a few strolls around the area, if we see or hear anything, you’ll get the signal.” Peter speaks at last.

Loki’s throat itches, it’s parched like a dried lake and vouching for water. He flashes out a hand to the bedside table, feeling its surface for a glass of water. His fingers brush against plastic, realizing it’s a bottle, his shaky hand tries to reach it but it knocks it off instead, it drops to the floor and rolls away.

“He’s awake.” The kids say, jointly.

“Steve, give them a lift, and Wade, keep an eye on Sif and make sure she’s safe.” Thor instructs, “I’ll be up for any possible signals so make sure you two do a thorough patrol, switch rounds at dawn, got it?”

Loki finds himself battling to lift the bottle from the floor, the faint light coming from the lamps is pretty useless and, owner or not, if he had enough strength in him he’d throw them out of the window, when, long and behold, a hand beats him to the bottle and brings it up to him. Loki takes the offered object and sits up, tries to, but the other soon sees him thrashing about.

Thor replaces the tray over the nightstand and lends a hand, literally, hooking it behind Loki’s trunk and winching him up. A part of the bed on Loki’s side dips when Thor sits down. “How’re you feeling now?” He asks, landing a hand over Loki’s sweaty forehead and forestalling his retort by the other as he suspends it in the air, “I’m just trying to be nice here, no being a smartass now.”

Loki hacks out a low scoff, shaking his head on a lopsided smile, then he nods and meets Thor’s eyes. “I’m better.” He assures, “sore all over, but better.”

“I call that an improvement,” Thor grins playfully, and Loki wants to yell ‘so is your attitude!’ but maybe it’s wise to leave it unsaid. “I never needed medicine and I didn’t know what to give you. Your fever went up really high so I called Steve, wrong move, I know, but the rest would make a fuss about it.”

“But how did it end up with all of them here?” Loki asks after a nippy sip of the water.

“It seems that he was with Tasha, and because he can’t lie to her, he told her what was going on, and she shared with the rest.”

“Guess that makes them a pack.” Loki comments, sneering to himself at his in-joke.

“So what happened back there?” Thor cuts to the chase, eyes serious.

Loki puts the bottle back over the nightstand and squares his shoulders. “It seems that whenever my
head hurts it means an entity is around, a non human entity, and don’t ask me about the source of that info because I’m so not ready to share. Also, to be quite honest with you, it never happened like this. I mean I get pain every now and then but this” –he touches his mark– “the pain this time was unbearable I wanted to throw up. I just hope that whatever that’s lurking to kill me is not that strong.”

Thor keeps on looking at him with vague silence hanging above them, heavy even, until he brings a hand to close it on Loki’s nape, pulling gently to bring him closer. “Your idiocy is beyond repair, I swear.”

“I heard it’s contagious.” Loki berates, snidely.

Thor rests his forehead on Loki’s, eyelids fluttering shut as though he’s finally found peace. “Don’t scare me like that again.” Voice so deep Loki is amazed he isn’t drowning yet.

Loki holds the wrist of the hand wrapped around his neck, and slowly slides it to the firm forearm. “You too,” he whispers, but also closes his eyes and nods curtly, “Don’t keep me waiting like that again.”

Liking the intimacy, none of them takes the initiative to pull away, but when they realize they need to, the action is tantalizingly slow during the embarrassing silence.

Thor’s eyes catch the hues of the twin lamps, a tiny sliver of red swivels deep inside those pupils when they flash on Loki’s lips, aflame with hunger. It honors Loki to no end, but he is man enough to admit his hatred towards the hesitation lingering, hindering the passion aimed at him. He decides he can’t stand waiting anymore, and he leans forward to press his lips on Thor’s. For a moment, it’s perfect. Thor’s lips warm and soft against his, just like he dreamed, but then a hand on his chest pushes him away.

Raw confusion cloaks over Loki’s features, until, with distinct horror, realizes he’s just been rejected.

Mortified, he shoots forward to leave the bed with the knot in his stomach clenching, but a hand catches his and he’s suddenly pulled back to the bed. He lands onto the sheets with a deep groan. He slowly opens his eyes and sees Thor mounting him.

“I told you, don’t judge me.” The Alpha reminds, his brows knitted.

“Then prove me wrong.” Loki dares him, meeting the other’s gaze with his unfazed.

Thor leans down, removing the space between them, and finally takes Loki’s lips in his, it’s languid at first as Thor adjust himself on top of the other, but then the angle is just so right as the kiss happens.

The press of lips becomes more forceful and Loki fucking loves the weight of Thor on him. He parts his lips because, God yes, he wants this man so much! Thor quickly seizes the chance bestowed to him and sweeps his tongue inside, like he wants to eat him up. Loki can’t keep his hands to himself anymore so he places them each on Thor’s hips, bringing him impossibly closer. The heat of a body surrounding his, and the sounds of wet lips smacking against one another make him dizzy.

Thor pulls from the kiss to tongue his way down to Loki’s neck, fixating on the hollowness there, lapping the tip of his tongue over the heated skin. Loki jolts under every lick, sighing and panting beneath the man and clutching at the fabric under his palms. That’s it. There. He’s been teasing him for weeks, for fuck’s sake, it’s time he do something about it. Thor glides a hand to the expanse of Loki’s naked abdomen, kneading his way lower each time.
Loki’s never felt another man’s hand on his body and he’s never allowed another man’s hand on him. But to have Thor, the man he’s been pinning for and even masturbating to for the longest of times, touch him in places where the sun doesn’t shine, well, it just does things to Loki’s cock.

Thor’s hand clutches the other’s crotch, fisting the bulge growing in size between Loki’s legs, the latter chews on his bottom lip and keens pleasantly, pupils sinking under his lids.

Apparently, not the smartest thing to do.

The sweet voice incites Thor, the way his eyes shine crimson proves it, and instead of fisting, he grinds against Loki’s hard-on with his own, causing more friction.

Loki moans more into Thor’s ear, loving the little grunts the man makes in response. “Yes! Oh, God, Thor, do it more.” He lets out a gasp that is somewhere between a whimper and a lewd moan when Thor obliges. “I want to feel you more.”

As though in a daze, Thor parts his lips wide open, fangs elongate, sharp and long. “I’m biting.” Saying so, he grabs a fistful of the other’s hair and yanks his head backward.

Loki winces audibly, “Yeah…” He pants, hands gripping at Thor’s sides desperately, wanting the feeling to last. “I want you to.” He looks lustfully into Thor’s beautiful red eyes as they peer down at him. But to his surprise, Thor falls into an indecipherable pause that quickly worries him. “What’s wrong?” he asks, chest going up and down and cheeks blushing with lust.

Thor recoils altogether and sits up, forehead scowling. “I still need to break off my engagement to Jane.”

Oh, it’s that.

“What’s stopping you?” Loki goads. And when Thor glowers at him with reproach for the thing he’s just said, he is too stupefied by Thor’s cold eyes that he soon faces away again. “I’m kidding,” Loki quickly adds as he worms out of the bed, “it doesn’t concern me so do whatever you want.”

“What ‘you mean?” Thor demands.

Loki picks up his folded jeans from a settee at the side of the bed, and starts wearing it. “I’ll tell you what I mean, once I get the Imugi’s power out of me, your interest in me will stop and you’re going to find out you’ve made the biggest mistake in your life by giving me the bite, though the first bite doesn’t count because my body refused it” –he’s zipping up his jeans now– “I know it’s not my blood that draws you to me but it’s mistaking excitement with love that does, and I’m not ready to get blamed for anything, so ask yourself” –he says when he turns around to face Thor– “are you?”

“You’re not making any sense.” Thor also leaves the bed and walks up to him, “What is it that you really want?”

So what if the two of them become something… more? Loki knows he’d be happier than the rest of the world, but would it make Thor happy? Loki simply can’t give him what Jane can. He’s not a woman, and their happiness would be only temporary if Thor gives his life to him…

Loki manages to scrounge up a grin. “I want to be friends.” He concludes.

“Do you even know what you’re asking?” Thor bellows, his nose faring.
“I’m pretty aware of all of this, thank you very much.” He jokes, going to pick his shirt now when he suddenly feels his body getting manhandled, swiveled and slammed against the wall. “What now? I’m still feverish, goddamn it!”

Thor’s eyes turn red with anger, and he growls at Loki, fucking *growls*. “You’re my mate, so don’t think I’ll let you off just like that.” Red pupils whisk to Loki’s lips and then back at his doleful eyes.

As he lets go of the man, Loki slides down to the floor, hands on knees, head hanging low. “Don’t be a fucking eyesore, don’t break off the engagement!”

The shrewd sacrifice in Loki’s words finally reveals itself to Thor, so he gets down as well and seats himself between Loki’s legs. He places a hand on his collar, thumb soaring up to lift the man’s chin, teary and sparkling eyes on his.

“You’re so stupid” Thor comments, it’s unexpected and it certainly surprises even himself, “and your stupidity is bound to make me go bald soon.” He sighs, wryly. “I can smell it on you, you love me. You’re crazy about me. You’re head over heels for me, so whatever reason that’s making you say those words I won’t accept it. My engagement to Jane is only beneficial to my family, it’s not like I like her. I want you, I chose you. Don’t my choices mean anything to you at all?”

“But you’re making it hard for me.” Loki reasons, his eyes trembling because the look in Thor’s is absolutely mesmerizing, “I can’t give you what she can!” he complains, breathing uneven.

“What’s that?” Thor prompts, angry veins popping along his temples, “social status, power, money?”

“Happiness!” Loki corrects and his voice cracks with all the emotions clogging his throat.

“But I’m pretty happy with you.” Thor says it so simply, without thinking it over, without even knowing what it’d do to Loki because the latter’s heart hops up to his clogged throat and he doesn’t know if he can swallow it back to its place. “I’m happy when you’re around. You cook delicious food for me, you worry about me and about the pack and you’re very caring and gentle. You’re also stubborn and I hate you for that, but I just can’t seem to say no to it, and you make me laugh—”

“You never laugh.” Loki mumbles cutely as he sniffs,

“True, but if it’s any consolation to you, I laugh in my head.” Thor tells him, seriously, and Loki can’t help but make a small chuckle. “Seriously, stop thinking about unnecessary things alone. I hate it when you do that. Also, you hurt people when you’re thinking wrongly of them.”

“Thor, I…” Loki cups his face and cries into his palms, “what about a year from now, what about ten, I bet you won’t say the same things you are now.”

Thor doesn’t say anything in response, but he wraps his arms and legs around Loki and hugs him tight, “You’re an idiot.”

“I’m realistic.” Loki protests, but his voice is muffled by Thor’s shirt, and he can’t help but inhale his scent.

“Alright, I’ll be real, too.” Thor says in his deep voice, “I told you I want you and no one else, so make up your mind because, even if I have the power to, I just can’t force you to anything. Have some faith.” He licks his lips, “we’re both grownups now and too old for this kind of stunt.”

“I’m dangerous.” Loki reasons, on a pout.

“Danger is part of my daily life.” Thor replies, rubbing Loki’s back in circular motions.
“I can’t give birth.” Loki, although ashamed by the disclosure, manages to utter the words.

“I have my pack, and it’s enough of a headache.” Thor responds, nipping at Loki’s fluffy mop of hair with his lips.

“Sif said you went berserk after giving me the bite so what if history repeats itself?” Loki mumbles closer to Thor’s ear now.

“I went berserk because you went out and got yourself bitten by a Jiangshi, it hurt my pride as a werewolf, and as a man.” Thor hums, playing with Loki’s smooth strands with his hand, “any other worries or complaints to make?”

“I might lose my way again, it’s not that I don’t trust you, but I don’t trust myself enough to stay, so if that ever happens, make sure you beat me back to my senses.” Loki pulls away to look at the other in the eyes, loving the gentleness he sees.

“Noted.” Thor nods. “So are we cool now?”

“You slammed a sick person against the wall, no we’re not cool, mister!” Loki taunts.

“I’m sorry.” Thor apologizes, pecking at Loki’s feverish forehead, “forgive me.” he utters, kissing Loki’s eyelids now, then his cheeks and then his lips. They pause, and then dive for another deep, meaningful kiss, clasped in each other warmly, none of them wanting to let go.
Chapter 13

I played around with the founding legend, but it does exist:
You can read about Bak Hyeokgeose here:

Loki hears a rustle of fabric that soon hauls him off of his dreams, he sighs and rolls over onto his back; he’s seen that ceiling many times by now…

“Did I wake you?”

Loki turns his head to the source of this rich, deep voice and sees Thor sitting beside him under the sheets, reading a book, with his back on the headboard.

“What time is it?” he asks but it’s mumbled as he stretches, trying to stifle a yawn.

The other answers, “Almost two in the morning. How’s the head?” he asks, but still replaces a hand over Loki’s forehead to check for a fever himself.

“I’m fine.” The latter mutters, not sure whether the blush on his cheeks is from the fever or the vivid flashes of Thor’s tongue invading his mouth.

“Still a little feverish, want some water?” Thor offers, closing his book by now, “Right, even though you ate the soup I made, are you by any chance still hungry?”

“What’s the deal with you, being all nice to me?” Loki furrows his brows at the other who chuckles and shakes his head, “only today, since you’re sick.”

Truth is, Thor’s always been kind to him, but he won’t say it just yet. The guy has ego issues. He might get cocky, even overexcited about it, and he’s a werewolf. Who knows what rattling his emotions could result in. Yikes! Just thinking about it makes Loki’s stomach churn.

“That’s just out of character so knock it off. It’s leaving me with horrible aftertaste.” Loki sits up a little forward to wedge his pillow against the headboard so that he can lean on it. “Actually, I didn’t forget to mention it, I just got kind of distracted with everything going on” –he inwardly enjoys the little gestures Thor displays like helping him stuff the pillow behind his back– “so I should say it now before I really forget, about getting Sif into school, thank you.” He meets Thor’s eyes, “You’ve done us a great favor and I can’t thank you enough. She seems happier now.”

“It’s nothing.” Thor simply shrugs, “I have connections so it wasn’t a big deal.”

“Yeah, they came in handy” –he finally slumps on the makeshift nest– “I was really worried how to get her into school since I don’t have any of her certificates.”
“I was going to come to that eventually.” Thor perks up a little, “You see, we kind of fabricated the
date and place of her birth.”

“And they allow that—wait, what do you mean ‘we’?” he shuffles his legs under the sheets, aiming to
sit more comfortably to look Thor straight in the eyes,

“I should probably tell you what’s going on.” Thor starts with a face of doom, as though the walls
sheltering his life secrets are finally crumbling down. “The history of the Dinson clan goes back to
the era of the gods of Norse. The founding legend tells us that in the forest, at a well at Asgard, a
strange light shone from the sky, and a white horse was bowed down. Bestla and Borr discovered a
large egg there. A boy came out of the egg, and when bathed, his body radiated light and birds and
beasts danced. They raised him, and the six chieftains revered him. The chieftains made him king
when he became thirteen. Upon becoming king, he married Lady Embla, who is said to have been
born from the ribs of a dragon*. This is the ordinary legend we’ve come to hear every now and then,
also it is said that the legend itself is a symbolic tale that merely describes the historical chain of
events to him becoming king. However, many don’t know that the tale isn’t necessary just a tale.
Amongst his noble descendants, the blood of the king and his wife, who was born from the ribs of a
dragon, was carried through to the next generations. Years later, one of the descendants was sent
overseas in a self-discovery journey. But it is said that he was bitten by a hideous beast in foreign
lands and was doomed to die. Strangely enough, the bite didn’t kill him but cured his alleged limp.
When he came back, he told the wise leader who soon attributed the cause to his royal blood, but
later, his own descendants began to show more symptoms; like the power to heal oneself, or the
ability to withstand pain and hear what normal people can’t” –he looks up at Loki who is gaping at
him—“it’s becoming clear what bit him. It seems that that man’s royal blood was the reason why the
bite didn’t kill nor turn him, and somehow, all his descendants’ bodies with the same blood learned
how to coexist with the infection of the bite. So all the descendants with king’s and the queen’s
blood can’t die or turn if bitten by any supernatural creatures” –he looks down and puts his hand
over his chest—“I don’t dwell on it too much lately so back to my point. The Dinson clan founded many regions and later invested in many projects, they funded new institutions and establishments and they signed partnership contracts with Western companies to expand their wealth and their control over many other fields, and soon, they became one of the richest clans in the country. The Dinson clan helped protect these lands and so it’s only natural that the people working under us are familiar with the authority we have, which brings me right to Sif’s case. Since I’m an Alpha in my family, I have authority in hand to attain what any other
ordinary civilian can’t, but it doesn’t stop here” –he scowls at Loki and the latter’s eyes tremble
under their intensity—“since most of the descendants of the Dinson clan are werewolves, only very
few know about this. We hide under the mask of one of the richest families in the world to protect
this secret, but those who do know, are people you’ll find in the most unexpected places. They can
be vendors in markets, freelancers doing all kinds of odd jobs you can think of, or even students;
however, that’s also just one of the many covers we take for ourselves. Some of those are
descendants of the Royal Guards who have sworn to protect and serve the Dinson clan” –he pauses
for a second, his eyes scanning Loki’s face, the dim light of the lamps making his eyes glitter with an
unspeakable mystery—“Bucky was one of the descendants of the Royal Guards of our clan.”

“What…” it comes out like a croaked whisper. That’s mother fucking news to him!

Thor takes Loki’s hand in his, nibbles at his bottom lip for a second to make up his mind. “Look,
even though I told you the other day that I’d tell you about Bucky’s past, I still can’t see any
obligation to why I should.”
“Don’t give me that.” Loki wrenches his hand from the man’s, and glares, “You know Bucky was my best friend, I already told you the whole story.”

“I know, but what I understood from your story is that he isolated himself from you on purpose.”

“What’s with the half baked answers” or not. Come to think of it, it does seem that way when Loki ponders it from a different angle. Truth is, he’d thought of this before but it hurt a lot so he ignored it, and right now he has no right to force Thor into saying anything if it served the object of hiding their clan’s secret. It doesn’t mean Loki can’t be trusted, but circumstances change every god damn day. “I get it. It just it hurts more when you say it out loud like that. I mean Bucky and I used to be so close but to have him suddenly keep his distance from me, I just don’t know anymore” –he hugs his knees to his chest and brushes both hands through his hair, ruffles it and lets out a harsh sigh– “it sucks to be the only one being left out, and Bucky didn’t even once complain to me about anything but it’s not like I can simply blame it on him. I also didn’t approach him out of consideration when I saw the changes he was going through, until it was too late, so I’m at fault too” –he tightens his hold on his knees–

Thor puts his hand over Loki’s hair, hating to see him wallowing in raw dejection. “Don’t be harsh on yourself.”

Loki glances up at him with flushed cheeks, “You too.”

The other looks taken aback, paying no mind to his hand that’s still ruffling Loki’s hair, “What ‘you mean?’

Loki looks like he wants to say something; he lifts his head slightly, dithers to contemplate the other’s reaction but eventually speaks his mind, voice reduced down to a mumble, “maybe it all happens for a reason, like the red string connecting us, you know, fate and all that crap. Maybe you’re what you are for a reason; perhaps if you were human you still wouldn’t like it. I mean being human fucking sucks, look at me, all weak and groggy because of a damn fever.”

To his surprise, Thor chortles, “Want me to turn you?” he teases, conversationally playful.

“Don’t spout nonsense, moron.” He says, doggedly “even if it sucks being human, one cheeky fur ball is enough of a freak show.”

The hand on his head pauses its motions and he gets the impression Thor felt offended, though it’s also out of character, but his assumption is soon proven wrong when Thor exclaims, “I already bit you once!”

Loki looks up at him, bewildered,

“Come on, now” Thor sighs, “Me and the Jiangshi both bit you, you didn’t turn, but you didn’t die either.”

“Oh that,” Loki’s shoulders droop in relief, “it seems the Imugi’s power prevented it so I’m safe, for now.”

“I see.” Thor breathes out and rests his hand back over his lap, “did the Imugi help you take out the vamp?”

“That’s” –Loki scratches an itch behind his left ear– “yea, he did.”

“Loki,” Thor calls with his deep voice, and it makes the other’s body vibrate and his stomach do that stupid somersault again, like he’s too deep in love his feet are wet. Like he’s a goner and there’s no
one to bring him back. He can go on forever. Like he’s melting and can’t be iced… “Usually, in cases like these, vessels can communicate with their lodger, sort of an internal monologue—”

“Yeah, I know.” Loki, nods curtly and to the point, not even caring about the fact that he’s just interrupted the man. He shuffles his legs a little to straighten them. “I already do that sometimes.”

“You do?” the excitement over Thor’s face is exactly like a kid’s with the blown eyes and the gaping mouth, and Loki can’t help but drown a little deeper.

“His name’s Rover, a very nonchalant Imugi with an odd penchant for calling me lad like some rogue of the Highlands. I think if he was to take a human form he’d look exactly like my sixty year old neighbor who gets shitfaced at midday.” He points out, but he soon enjoys the sound of Thor’s laugh.

“‘Seems like you two will get along just fine.’

“What’s with the old man joke, dumb-shit!” Loki’s face goes crimson, eyes fluttering to his lap. “Don’t say ridiculous things, he’ll believe it.” He protests, indignantly, but he secretly loves it to the sky and back.

Thor chuckles some more and he can’t bring himself to cut the other off because he’s so enjoying the gentle rumble of his deep chuckle, if only it’d last longer.

“So, was he the one who told you about the cause of your headaches?”

“Mm,” Loki nods, and bats at his long fringes, “sort of” he mumbles, “anyways, thanks to that, I can figure if something wants a go at my ass, though it’s still a pain to feel like my head is about to split in two when that happens.”

“Loki,” he calls out again, his hand lands on Loki’s, “to be honest, I’m not good with words, and even what I’m about to say is going to sound so cheesy, you might get pissed off too so I’m-damned-if-I-talk-damned-if-I-didn’t, but at least I feel like I should tell you.”

“Oh man, not another story,” he whines, “I get it, kinda being left out, the usual, also tired of people rubbing it in my face as it is, you of all should understand that—”

Thor’s lips press on his, kissing him with a neediness that Loki never thought he could inspire in someone one day. He twists, never once breaking contact where their skins are conjoined until he is half straddling Thor’s lap. Persistent fingers dug through smooth mane, tugging and clutching, bodies aflame with hunger.

Just when Loki starts to grind against the other’s groin, Thor pulls back, contour of his lips red and swollen, and his hair sticking to all edges. “No matter what happens, I’ll protect you. If I’m not there, just call out to me, I’ll come to you wherever I am. Don’t forget that.”

Loki looks back at the pair of the glittering eyes staring into his, his own tremble at the bare passion harbored for him. He snorts, sneeringly, “it’s not like I’ll be happy hearing you say that, I’m a guy you know.” He tilts his head a little and his lips break into a grin, “I may not look it but I’m pretty tough, so don’t weigh it up.”

“You’re cute.” Thor comments suddenly after a pregnant pause.

“You –” Loki starts, and quickly frames his cheeks with sweaty palms, “you moronic fur ball, saying embarrassing things so out of the blue with a straight face, what the hell are you thinking!”
Thor’s arms wrap around Loki, bringing him closer into a hug. “Loki, remember what I told you. It has nothing to do with you being unable to protect yourself, I know you can, but as your mate, I can’t allow anyone near you. It might become unbearable sometimes, but I still won’t let you off that easily. You belong with me.”

He said with me, he didn’t say to me which is a pretty big fucking deal to Loki. Thor is talking to him like they’re equal in everything, and that makes a speck of pride bloom in Loki to no end.

Loki could really get used to this it’s scary.

He links his own arms around Thor’s back, hugging him tightly; the feeling of firm muscles wrapping him submerges him with safety.

“You’re such a goof, I swear.” He complains, but a smile still sneaks up onto his plump lips.

Thor chuckles, “You’re one to talk.”

“So the hero is finally here.” Says Loki, and he gives the Spells of Old Magic book in his hand a sturdy shove as he tucks it back into its box on the counter.

The teen in front of the counter shrugs both shoulders unsympathetically and lets it linger to probably rub it in Loki’s face how much he’s down on luck, a smirk about his cat-like lips, signifying how much fun teasing Loki can be.

Loki inhales and breathes out an immense sigh, ostentatiously flustered. A memory from his and Thor’s little lambasting this morning quickly flashes before his eyes.

“Bonjour,” Loki’s ringing voice fended off the sleepiness over Thor’s features as he reeled around – with obviously no wounds covering his face or hands, just when the other was walking down the stairs. “Breakfast is ready, I made you coffee too, mm” – he ran a hand through his hair slightly and pressed his lips together, as if double checking his words before saying them, then he added hurriedly– “I need to open the shop now, if you learn anything just give me a call.” He carried a tote bag which he’d found somewhere in the kitchen, and walked backwards towards the front door.

“Hold it right there,” the other said in a gruff and final tone, his eyes glittered in the meanwhile, managing to be altogether scary as he came at Loki in light step, “I’m sending Wade to your shop later, just to make sure nothing happens to you. Also, we need to wait and see if anything tries to attack you again.”

“You guys are incorrigible.” Loki fought the urge to let out any sighs. “This is exactly why I wanted to leave before you woke up.” He stifled in his irritation by some miracle, “don’t send anyone to the
The other stared at him for a prolonged pause.

“Do you remember the second day after we met? I came back home late and you were sitting at the porch.” Thor said out of the blue that Loki resisted making fun of with such a passion, “once I neared you, I smelt something strong, a scent of fear and something else.”

Loki remembered that, he then remembered how scared he had felt back then when the Gumiho’s hair touched his face, dark and smooth, as if a live whirlpool had been apt to swallow him inside and ridicule him for choking to death. He tossed this thought behind his head as another memory from the same day played on the cassette player...

“I smelt fear coming from you, I also smelt the Gumiho but that I didn’t know until you pointed it out, but the other thing, it smelt different.”

“Yes.” Loki finally agreed with a shaky voice.

Thor arched up his brows, demanding an explanation.

“That night, I saw something else beside the Gumiho, it had goggy yellow eyes.” He shook his head, “actually it wasn’t the first time I’d seen it.” He corrected himself, “I had seen it before when I first came to your house, it’d appear behind the tree lines and keep its distance, but I don’t assume it’s anything strong since I don’t get strong headaches when it’s around, so I don’t have to worry about it, and neither should you.” At that, he pressed his index between Thor’s marble dips.

Said man’s face was unreadable, a haze of something swiveled within his deep eyes, but he remained silent.

Loki couldn’t get out of that door knowing he’d left Thor with that look on his face, he liked to tease, but he wasn’t a fan of beaming if people point hands at him and inform others of how much of a jerk Thor’s boyfriend is—and he didn’t just call himself Thor’s boyfriend!

Thor narrowed his eyes at him, who bit down on his bottom lip and arched up a brow, “Come on, I’ll be fine” he relented, the tote bag over his tense shoulder thumping over his clothes when he slanted into Thor’s space.

“I’ll give you a lift.” The other said, and judging by his tone, it wasn’t a suggestion.

“Mm,” Loki shook his head, declining the offer, “Also, I’m not coming over tonight. I need to meet with Sif.” He palmed Thor’s cheek by his habitually cold hand and flashed the other a serene smile, “I’m going to miss you,” he really meant it, and to cover up the embarrassment, he added “don’t cheat on me while I’m gone.”

He remembers the hesitate on Thor’s face as his brows twitched momentarily, but he soon recovered from whatever state of doubt he’d been in and nodded brusquely, with that, allowing Loki to leave by himself. It was no joke when the kids told him to get ready for Thor wouldn’t let him out of his sight.

Wade pulls out the brochure Loki has just tucked into the holder to read.
Suddenly wobbly, Loki doesn’t raise another argument; he’s come to learn how inherently stubborn the Dinsons tend to be. He just leans over the counter, drumming his fingers over its wooden surface. Silence is good, too.

“I also don’t want to be here,” Wade folds the brochure and puts it back into its holder, “but it’s better than being at school.”

“You’re a disgrace to your race.” Loki comments, offhandedly,

“We don’t all fit in school,” the other beseeches, “For one, I prefer combats and fighting, books don’t get to me.”

Slowly, it seeps into Loki how Wade is desperately trying to keep this conversation steady and going, and at last, he acknowledges the young man’s efforts.

“I bet you’re someone who likes to test his own limits,” Wade offers, scowling but no wrinkles mar his forehead. “Will you enlist in the army after graduating?”

Wade’s inscrutable countenance give little away, “I want to do that,” he points out, but his frown returns and whatever emotion he’s shown get concealed. He speaks again after a while, “Also, you don’t seem like it but you really understand us,” but then adds as an afterthought, “that’s probably why I don’t like you.”

Now, Loki can’t help but arch up his eyebrows in surprise, did he hear him right? Did he just get praised by this intractable werewolf?

“Don’t look so happy about it.” The teen soon rebukes.

Loki presses his lips together. “Figured, little shit,” he mumbles the last since you can’t curse in front of kids.

“I hate to say this, but I gotta admit” Wade is now looking uncomfortable praising someone like Loki, “if it wasn’t for you, we would have already killed Sif when she was still possessed by that Gumiho. More than that, I always feel thankful to you for helping me with Tessa, you probably weren’t aware of it back then but I overheard your conversation in the shop, although in the end she ended up having a thing for Peter.” He glances up, “and more importantly, you brought Mr. Dinson from his own world to us. At last, it feels like I have an Alpha whom I can depend on and trust with my life.”

A moment of silence is about to take over the atmosphere, but Loki slowly starts chuckling, “A true man is that who admits another’s strength.” He quotes, something his departed father used to say. He props on his knuckles now, beaming. “You’re a good Beta –that’s what they’re called, right? You care about the pack and you cherish that Alpha-beta relationship with Thor, it’s really admirable.”

Wade looks flustered for a fraction of a second, but Loki learns that that is just him being embarrassed.

His phone suddenly rings inside that tote bag and he takes it out after excusing himself. He checks the phone screen and peeks up at Wade who is now checking the items with curious eyes. “I’m taking this outside, keep an eye on the place, you hear.” He instructs, but isn’t Wade already doing that –keeping his eyes on the items?

Loki goes out and finally connects the call, “Oh, Mr. Stark, I’m glad you called.”

The other vibrates with a chuckle, “What, were you thinking of ways to turn me down properly?”
“Nonsense,” Loki denies, “I was just worried since things came up and I didn’t know how to tell you beforehand.”

“Isn’t it the same thing?”

Loki winces, “Not necessarily?”

The other chuckles again, “It’s all fine, I also called to postpone our meeting. It seems we’re not fated to meet yet.”

“I feel a lot better that you’ve said that, but, of course, we still need to meet.”

“That’s a matter of course,” he intones in response, “well then Loki, until we meet again, take care.”

Loki breathes out a sigh of relief because he doesn’t have to meet this man since Wade is most likely going to stick his ass to him for the rest of the afternoon. That is, of course, assuming he will tire of the company as soon as the sun sets. He turns around to ask Wade directly about a possible slumber party, but oh boy, he wishes he didn’t. It’s quite the shock he gets when he finds Wade already outside the shop, pinning him with a scathing glare.

“It’s not what you think,” Loki manages to say before the other utters a reproaching word that would throw his attempt to sugarcoat this act of his down the drain by the sidewalk.

Wade remains silent; his silence is both apprehensive and frightening.

Loki feels a sudden clutch of fear. He swallows, unaware of how his eyes are trembling and looking around; not even averting his eyes could fight that fear away. He fists his hands, finds squeezing the phone in them a lot more comforting than the unfathomable look in the younger man’s eyes.

“Answer me for one thing,” said younger male suddenly blurs, “Did you just take the call outside so I wouldn’t hear?”

“No?” Loki shrugs, but it’s in a slow motion, as if one hasty movement would snap his joints.

The other arches up his brows, accusingly. A certain snarky Alpha is already rubbing off on this certain pack member, Loki assumes, they’re not very fond of words, so their eyebrows do the talking for them.

“I thought it’d be insensible of me to speak to him in front of you, I heard you guys don’t exactly share the warmest of memories.”

“Don’t fob me off!” Wade berates in an octave higher than usual.

“Don’t raise your voice at me!” Loki chides back, and he is abruptly surprised at how Wade flinches. He actually flinches! “Look, let’s get inside, people are staring.”

“A few days ago, Sif and I were outside when I suddenly fell ill –”

“I know.” Wade interjects, “we told you we were keeping an eye on you back then, we saw everything.”

“Oh,” that makes things easy then. “I was only planning to thank him in person and get things over with.”
“Does Mr. Dinson know about this?” is his worry, which is only understandable. Thor called Loki once and didn’t care about suave as he ripped into him for coming in contact with Tony which, excuse you, had been totally coincidental.

Loki scratches his temple. “He actually doesn’t, and before you look at me like that, just hear me out,” he says after the other sends him a nasty glare, “There’s no need for him to know that I’m meeting up with the guy, I mean I’m not going to flee with him like Bonnie and Clyde in the remake. I don’t see why Thor has to know.”

Wade shakes his head vigorously Loki is surprised he didn’t get a whiplash, “No, no!” he lifts up to his feet, still shaking his head, absolute dismissal of the idea alone. “I can’t hide this from my Alpha. You don’t understand, there’s a past that links our Alpha and Tony Stark, and even though they announced ceasefire, one little misunderstanding can tear that peace proxy apart.” He whips his head around, “I won’t allow it, I won’t let you meet him and risk breaking loose another bloody war for your own entertainment.”

“Okay,” Loki brings up his hands. “I take back what I said, the way you cherish that Alpha-Beta relationship of yours is not admirable at all, if anything, it’s a real hindrance.”

Wade wets his lips without adding anything.

Loki sighs, “Then how about you come with me when he calls to meet up?” he gestures at all of him with a lazy hand, “still not feasible?”

“I guess if I’m there,” Wade mumbles after another pause, “I’ll think about it.”

Loki studies the other for a moment, and then he drones, “Also, what kind of past links those two together?”

Wade flinches for the second time today, displays less charm than R2-D2.

“Can’t say?” Loki conjectures, attempting to make it less bearable for the other. “It’s fine. I’ll straight up ask Thor then, though I doubt he’ll tell me anything new.”

“We don’t usually talk about stuff from the past, and it’s best if you don’t.”

“Preaching me now, you punk?”

“You don’t understand, you don’t know anything about Mr. Dinson so stop acting all carefree about it you’d hurt people doing so.” Wade’s shoulders slump and he dabs his chin, rather sullenly.

It comes to him like a sack of rocks smacking him across his cheek: Loki doesn’t understand, he says, Loki doesn’t know anything about Thor, he says.

Well, for starters, dimwit, it’s not like Loki himself can help it since his mate keeps to himself most of the time, and he thinks it was some sort of a miracle he got more than a handful of words from the usually tight-lipped Alpha the previous night. Thor is a succinct moron, heck laconic even! He talks only when he absolutely has to, and when he does, it’s brief and to the point. Loki doesn’t dislike that man’s taciturnity, he doesn’t question the relationship blooming up with him either, but it’s his urgent thoughts that he can’t fight back; what if Thor can’t trust him enough to tell him, does he even trust Loki?”

These dark thoughts send him spiraling and finally crushing to the ground in agony.

They both fall into an uncomfortable silence, but Loki is used to the quietness of his dear
surrounding items, their soundlessness does somehow sound so pleasant. Wade, on the other hand, is a growing teenager who can’t stay put; he’d take out his phone and play a loud game, and then roam around to eye the items, and then watch some videos on his phone again. Even Loki finds his twitchiness more interesting than the book he’s reading about magic.

Lunch break is around the corner so Loki picks up his phone and asks Wade, “I’m ordering, what ‘you wanna eat?”

“Stir-Fried Sweet Potato Noodles” he offers, dryly.

“Dude,” Loki makes a face, “you’re a werewolf, honor the species.”

Wade glances up at him; he sighs exasperatedly and goes back to playing that game.

Minutes flee by when a motorcycle honks just outside the shop, Loki yelps and goes outside to bring in the food. He comes back with two plastic bowels in his hand, he puts them down on the counter and inspects his pockets for change, he rummages more until Wade scowls at him.

“Don’t tell me you ain’t got change, and here I went out of my way to pick the cheapest.”

“How thoughtful of you,” Loki scoffs, his nose crunching up with distaste. He finally finds the money and leaps towards the front door since the delivery-guy is waiting. A few more moments until he comes back inside, a little pale and sweating, it even gets to Wade who’s usually oblivious about details like these.

“Are you okay?” he asks, nodding his head towards the other’s face.

Loki wobbles and he finds the counter his sole savior at the moment as he tumbles on it with a loud thud.

Wade finally perks up alerted, the game on his phone going ignored for the meanwhile. “Hey, what’s wrong?”

“I felt it again,” Loki mumbles in a hesitant whisper, “it’s lurking somewhere near.”

“What is?” Wade demands, terror on his face.

There’s no point in explaining his new ranger-powers to Wade, also, his headache is easing up gradually so he can just dismisses it for now, despite Wade being awfully insistent.

Hours pass by, and then Loki declares trading hours are done and it’s closing time, for which Wade makes a ‘yes’ punch in the air to celebrate.

“Finally, I can leave here! God, sitting around doing nothing is so boring!”

“But sitting around watching late general news isn’t?” shaking his head on a scoff, Loki adds, “Makes perfect sense.”

“Hey now,” Wade protests, tottering in Loki’s heel as the latter slides the shutter door down and watches its slats glint. “You know damn well why we watch the news.”

Loki finally locks the padlock and stands up, adjusting the straps of the tote bag over his shoulder. He inspects their surroundings, unmindful of Wade’s mitigating circumstances. The last rays of sun shy away and recede from view, sinking behind the mountains and leaving only traces of crimson
shades in the sky.

“…not even many clients came so you’re not any better.”

It’s chilly, chillier than any other late August days, but it’s bearable, only if it wasn’t for Wade’s sudden outburst of complaints.

“Wade,” he calls, “I’m going to my apartment now to rest, how about you go home too?”

The other shakes his head, “I’m supposed to switch with Peter in” –He looks at his watch– “two hours from now.”

“I can’t believe this.” He rolls his eyes in response, blowing out a frustrated breath. “Do you honestly think I’m the kind of man who’d go along with it just because your Alpha said so? No. Peter has a family that will worry about him and I’m in no dire need for kids watching over me. Also, if Thor tells you off then just let him be, the world doesn’t revolve around him.”

“You don’t have to worry about that,” Wade reassures, “Peter has a very understanding family.”

“Well, I’m not.” The other deadpans, “and where the hell is Sif, I haven’t seen her in ages–” his phone starts vibrating. He takes it out and eyes its screen, he mouths perfect just before he puts it on his ear. “Are you out of your God damn mind?”

“Give the phone to Wade.” The other demands, it’s deep yet somehow dangerous.

“Call his phone if it’s him you want.”

“It doesn’t connect.”

At this, Wade takes out his own phone, “ah, it’s out of battery, guess it’s because I kept playing games nonstop.”

Loki gives him a look, like he’s so done with everyone, and hands him the phone. He walks ahead to undo the chains rounding his bike’s wheels, hearing Wade say “I understand, we’ll be heading there in a few.”

“Loki, it seems you’re going to postpone that nap. Sif is with Mr. Dinson and the pack.” He tells him while handing him his phone back.

“What is she doing there?”

“Beats me.”

Loki looks troubled for a moment judging by the frown over his forehead.

“Let’s go there and find out.” Wade shrugs, unflappably.

Their trek in the woods is again veiled with silence, but this silence Loki can describe as wary as he can only hear the tires of his bike crunching the dry leaves beneath. The teen looked like this before, cautious and careful about the slightest whizzes and rustles, so it’s funny how Loki didn’t know then the things he does now.

They finally reach the house and Wade walks in first, because Loki still has to park his bike. Loki walks in to the house once he’s done, and he sees all his new friends, with Sif, sitting on the couch
beside Peter –the couch that nobody should sit on but Natasha and Kate. “What’s going on here?”

“Oh, Loki,” Sif gushes rosily, “Are you feeling better now?”

He nods, “what brought you here,” he steps closer, “I thought we’d meet back in my apartment.”

She doesn’t deign to answer but only bows her head down.

Loki looks around at Steve, who looks comfortable sitting on the ground as usual, and then at Natasha, who decided leaning on the wall is more befitting of the sophisticated image she’s so desperately trying to maintain; he almost shudders at how she stands up to her title as the stuck-up red-haired. He looks at Kate, sitting cross-legged and propping her elbows over her thighs for support. Lastly, he eyes Thor, who decided not the floor, nor the wall was comfortable more than the coffee table. He’s also still wearing his clothes from this morning, so it must mean something, right?

Loki watches how Peter scrubs his hand over Sif’s back, and he suddenly comes to a bizarre conclusion. “Are you pregnant?”

All of them –sans Thor– gasp in unison and Kate’s head trips off her hands.

“Where the hell did that come from?” She asks in disbelief.

Loki lets out a long sigh of relief, tugs at his bag and slides it off his shoulder, “Then I guess all is good.”

“She wants the bite.” Natasha corrects.

“The what?” he barks. He looks at Natasha, who grinds her teeth together for emphasis, which is really not necessary, and he switches to look at Sif, and then at Thor. “Would someone please explain what’s going on here? I feel like a complete idiot.”

“What else is new?” Wade jokes, shrugging a shoulder.

“I’ll get back to you for that, long-chinned.” Loki promises as he points a finger at Wade, and then he quickly switches to stand beside Sif. “What do you want the bite for?”

“I came back from school but I was attacked, I couldn’t see who attacked me either.”

Loki’s heart gives a vigorous beat, “Were you hurt?” He asks, hands twitching to search her and inspect or any wounds, and he does find some cuts over her shaking hands after a fast inspection.

“No, no.” She shakes her head, “it didn’t.” She says, “But, Lo, I felt so helpless back then, even my tricks don’t work anymore. I wanted to talk to you about this before but we just didn’t have time to sit and talk properly.” She looks up at him with a face stung with wet traces of tears down her cheeks. “I’ve lost all the Gumiho’s powers, I’m absolutely powerless now.”

Loki suddenly feels as if he’s standing on nothing or something chiefly jelly, he can’t feel the floor in spite it being hard and wooden. Okay, he’s aware of the fact that he is the one who asked to know what’s going on, but oh boy, was he right in doing just that.

“That’s why I called Thor and asked him to bring me here, and then I told him to give me the bite since he’s the Alpha anyway.”

Loki brings up a hand, maybe to stop her for a second, “So you’re telling me you want to turn into one of those furry creatures knowing that the bite might even kill you?”
She nods.

He snorts, “What did you tell her?” he addresses Thor, who simply shrugs at him.

“Come on, get your things.” He addresses Sif now, “We’re leaving.”

“But Loki!” she protests, quickly levering up to meet his eyes.

“No buts,” he warns with a sharp look, “I can’t believe you didn’t even consult me about this. Why is nobody telling me anything in this house? I’m not too involved? Or am I convenient only when I’m playing your little bait.”

Thor rises up to his feet too, a look of anger about his face. “You need to calm down.”

“No, Thor, I can’t calm down.” He retaliates, shutting him up while flailing a hand wrathfully; “I can’t believe how little thought you give about this, keeping oblivious and playing this little werewolf drama of yours, turning teenagers into low IQ monsters for your own entertainment!”

“Loki!” Sif calls in an urgent tone, “it’s my decision whether I want the bite or not, Thor has nothing to do with it.”

“I am your guardian!” He shouts, “Doesn’t that count for anything? Do I mean so little to you too?

“You’re not making any sense.” She says defiantly, almost in a sob.

“No, I am the only one making sense here. In fact, I dare you prove me otherwise.” He throws a hand towards her direction, “you want the bite because you’re powerless? Well, hello? In case you haven’t noticed, that’s what being human feels like, powerless!” he grouches, “You wanted to be a human again, did you not?”

“Calm yourself!” Thor demands again, prissily this time until Loki shudders at the resonance of his voice. “I understand your wrath but it does not justify the way you disparage my pack.” He motions at them with a pair of dark eyes, and wait, why is he being so formal all of a sudden? “I can’t tolerate everything you say just because you’re my mate, and to be honest, my patience is running very thin tonight so I suggest you take your time and reflect on it. As for the bite, I give you my word that I have no interest whatsoever in turning her. I’m not her guardian.”

Loki watches his mate carefully through scrutinizing eyes, the way he disparages his pack? So amidst his tantrum, he’s said something off line again, and if he’s being honest with himself, thinking is the last resort he wants to succumb to; but the forlorn faces of the pack looking away from him urge him to.

Monsters, he has called them, Monsters.

He bites his bottom lip and breathes out through his nose, “Thor, you know I didn’t mean it like that.” He can’t even look the man in the eyes.

“I’m sure you didn’t.” Steve scoffs from behind, “you were just angry, we should forgive you, right?” he says, now wrapping his arm around his girlfriend’s neck.

“This is another reason why I don’t like you.” Wade reminds, “It’s always someone else’s fault but yours.”

“Let’s wrap it up and call it night.” Thor announces, heading towards the flight of stairs that lead to the second floor. “You can decide whether you want to stay or leave, the pack won’t intervene.” He
He walks outside, and the blackness of the night wraps around him, instantaneous in its approach. He doesn’t care anymore. He doesn’t want to be here anymore. He just wants to grab his bike, go back home and sleep the day off. But there he is, Peter, following him and apparently deciding being affable to someone older than he is can go to hell for all he cares.

“What do you want?” Loki shoos the other away. “Go back inside.”

“I have instructions to keep an eye on you.”

“Well, unfortunately for you, I don’t care.” Loki huffs, “so if you’ll excuse me,” saying so, he walks ahead but he notices Peter still distinctly following behind. “Seriously, now!”

“Look, I’m just doing what I was told, it’s not like I’m dying to be with you!” he blares, watching the other with the most sedulous rage.

Loki is now truthful with himself, and he’s come to a conclusion that it’d have been better if he kept his anger under his lock and key. And the way Peter is behaving and talking serves Loki right for derisively treating their ethereal differentiation with contempt. Who knows what these kids suffered in the past, who knows what Thor’s reasons to give them the bite were. Loki practically knows nothing, nothing with capital N.

“Do you know what you smell like now?” the other asks suddenly.

“Stop smelling me,” Loki mutters, “besides, how would I know such a thing.”

“You smell like jealousy.” The other points out.

Loki doesn’t know why, but he’s certain he’s blushing. He should smell like rage, he should smell like anger! Heck, he should smell like God’s wrath! Not… jealousy.

“You’ve been giving off this scent since you and Wade walked into that house,” he says, shoving his hands into his pockets at a leisureed pace. “Normally, and seeing what happened back there, you should give off anger,” he shrugs, “that’s why I can’t leave it alone, the way you sound and act is different from how you smell, it must mean something, wouldn’t you agree?”

The other can’t afford to answer the question, so silence is his only alternative.

“I think that you’re not being honest with your own feelings, Loki.” He finally admits, and isn’t just great, getting psycho-therapy by a freaking kid! “Maybe you were indeed enraged by what Sif’s done, I mean I get it, you took her in and gave her a place she can call home. Heck if it were me I’d have ripped her throat out the day she appeared as a Gumiho, but you were against it. You treated her like a normal human, which, to be quite frank with you, made me have a change of feelings about this whole superiority and inferiority issue, so I understand.” He says, and he scratches the tip
of his left eyebrow now, “Also, it’d be better if you start being honest with your own feelings, then
even your relationship with the rest of the pack might, you know, get better.”

“Oprah?” Loki jokes, “Oh, I know, Dr. Phil?”

The other rolls his eyes.

Loki’s eyes drop to the ground, shoulders slouching and teeth working the bottom lip over. “They
must hate me now,” He mumbles, and he looks small and vulnerable.

“They don’t.” Peter assures, “I’m a werewolf and I can tell a lie from the truth, okay maybe Wade’s
case is a little bit different, he doesn’t like a lot of people, but that’s only because you’re not honest
with yourself.”

“Why are you telling me this?” Loki peers up at the other with a blush across his cheeks.

“Because, even when you were angry, not a thing you said about us was the truth, I mean according
to your heartbeats that is.” Peter replies, “The pack knows this, our Alpha knows this, but you don’t,
and because you can’t face your own feelings they’re going to make it a little bit hard on you from
now on until you start speaking what you honestly feel.”

Loki protests, “I always speak what I honestly feel.”

Peter gives him a wry smile, “No, you don’t.”

Loki tsks and looks away again, “would it be insensitive of me now to quote a pop song?”

The other arches up a brow at him.

“How can it be you’re asking me to feel the things you never show?” he quotes, “I know it requires
time and patience, but damn it –” He crouches down and the bike slumps on the wall again with a
loud thump after he lets go of it. “I feel like the only thing that connects me to this place, and to all of
you, is the bite Thor gave me. You can’t possibly understand that. That’s why I don’t want to open
up just yet. Yes, I’m afraid of getting my heart broken, what if this happiness is only temporary, what
if you guys get fed up with my meddling. I get uneasy and unsettled just thinking about it. To me,
you guys are irreplaceable, you’ve become part of my life now but I can’t help but think you don’t
necessary feel the same way.” He hugs his knees to his chest, “this is so unmanly of me” He
complains, “and Thor went out of his way to explain things to me to clear my doubts. I feel like I’m
being ungrateful.”

“Guys!” Peter suddenly shouts, “There you have it! Can I go in now? I’m starving!”

Loki looks up, bewildered, but then he sees the teens looking out the door with wide smiles across
their faces. Peter then bows down to meet Loki’s eyes, “Wan I quote a song too?” he asks, “today is
where your book begins, the rest is still unwritten.” He sings, he really knows how to belt out a song.

Loki walks inside with his cheeks still flushed, and he almost tears up at the sight of everyone –
without Thor, surrounding the table and leaving his spot on the couch untouched.

“Let’s eat before it gets cold.” Kate offers with a gummy grin.

“We thought we’d give it a try and cook for a change, you always cook delicious food for us so we
can’t promise the quality of this.” Natasha confesses with a wide smile, and it downs on him that
maybe this is the second time he’s seen her smile like that.

“Stop gaping at us like an utter imbecile,” Wade ushers him to the table. “I’m sacrificing a lot by eating something that is nothing but appetizing.” He makes this snide remark and narrows his eyes at Loki, like there’s a connotation he needs to dig out.

“Come on, we’re all hungry.” Steve instructs, guiding him to the table.

Sif taps the couch when he comes closer, “sit down.”

Later, he learns that Thor has already had a meal outside at a dinner meeting, that’s why he didn’t join them. Now, Loki is flicking the lights of the bathroom off on his way out when Sif comes in his way.

“Loki,” she starts, and she doesn’t feel disappointed when said male looks away. “I’m sorry about before.”

“No, you have nothing to–”

“Shut up.” She cuts him off, “I admit that what I did was wrong, I should have consulted you first. I’ll never do anything without your permission again.” She promises, “Also, you thought I was suddenly a fair-weather? Well, even I’m not that much of a superficial. I just suddenly felt really scared when I was attacked, now I completely understand how hard it must be on you.” She smiles joyfully, “being a human is kind of scary, but if you can do it, I can too.”

He looks at her with proud eyes.

“This is all I wanted to say, for now.” She points out, “and since the misunderstanding is cleared out, there’s still one person whom you need to talk to, and I don’t suppose he didn’t join us for dinner merely because he wasn’t hungry.” She hints, on cue. “Well then, good night, sweetheart.” She shines up with a beam, and quietly retreats to her and Wade’s room.

All the lights are turned off and he’s the only one left standing in the corridor. He looks ahead, the door of Thor’s bedroom is closed, oh man, the Alpha’s den is a scary place to be at.

He knocks a couple of times, and finally enters. Thor is obviously sound asleep. Loki clicks his lips again for his running luck, but he decides to leave his hesitations at the door as he walks towards the bed, and pauses for a moment. No, he’s decided to abandon his hesitations, has he not? He raises the quilt and slips stealthily under it. He’s quite grateful to Steve for lending him one of their sweatpants and shirts, he can at least sleep more comfortably now.

Thor is sleeping beside him, though all he can see of him is his broad back and his wide shoulders rising with every breath he takes; werewolves are such a… reminiscent of every earthly miracle.

A sudden feeling washes over him; it’s novel and yet sweet. He doesn’t hate it.

He skids closer to Thor’s back, resting his forehead between the other’s shoulder blades to feel the warmth radiating and filling him up. “Thor…” he croaks out, afraid even one wrong octave would fight this new feeling off.

“Did you think well about it?” Thor asks, but it’s somehow not sudden, it’s reassuring.
Loki nods.

“Did you reflect?” He asks again, his voice so deep, he’s really here.

“Yes, Thor, I reflected on it.” Loki nods fervently, face nuzzling against the other’s back.

Thor shuffles and finally turns around to face him, “Hope you learned your lesson now.”

“Yes, I did.” Loki links his arms around Thor’s middle, slanting right into his space. “I’ve learned my lesson so stop giving me the cold shoulder, I even cried. I can’t stand it anymore.”

“There,” Thor embraces him, “Sorry for making you cry.”

Loki nuzzles the other’s chest, clasping and pressing more against him as though if he let go the man would vanish. “Told you before to beat me back to my senses if I lost it, I hate it when I’m emotional.”

“Noted, this time for real.” Thor chuckles, sweetly. Now he leans in to the other’s ear, “I missed you.” He whispers.

Loki’s heart has never given such a joyful leap in his entire shabby life. Even though Loki can’t hide his embarrassment, he stills attempts to act differently, “Dude, we just saw each other this morning.” God! That was the sweetest thing he’s heard in years.

Thor Leans in into Loki’s neck, “what did they tell you about being true to your feelings?” he reminds, “You’re quite a handful, Loki.”

Loki winces when teeth nib his earlobe, but it doesn’t hurt, if anything, it’s quite arousing. He lists his head up with a sigh when Thor moves his hand along his back, and up to his shoulder blades, kneading very slowly, sensually. “You’re quite a handful yourself, didn’t you say we’d better sit tight until you break off the engagement–”

Thor cuts him off when he plunders those lips of his, his own dainty hands go up to Thor’s hair to grab it.

“Wait…” he mutters, attempting to pull away from the kiss despite the fact that pulling away from the kiss is the last thing is on his mind. Kissing Thor is a fucking bliss. “I don’t want–” His lips are seized by Thor’s again, urging him to part more, which Loki fails to avoid as he slowly gets swept with the anesthetizing kiss. He moans into it and rides the rhythm of their simultaneous movements. He can feel Thor’s lips capturing his bottom one, so he snakes out his tongue and Thor smirks, bringing his own tongue to touch the other’s, and Loki can’t believe the sounds they’re making, sticky and wet, and he can even feel how his own saliva is dripping down his jaw. He’s literally being kissed drunk. He pulls away when his lungs finally itch, pleading for some air. “I wish you’d stop doing this all of a sudden.” he huffs.

“Come on, I’m not a miracle worker here.” Thor jokes, and even Loki can’t stop the twitching of his lips and he finds himself laughing, at last. “At last,” Thor points it out. “You smiled.”

He chides, “Damn it, now what should I do with Loki Jr.?”

“No, thank you.” Loki cuts him off, rolling his eyes; god, he doesn’t even want to listen to the rest of it. “Damn it, don’t make me hard knowing it’d end like this for me!” He almost sobs.
“Here,” Thor tries to pull Loki’s sweatpants down when the latter squeaks, ‘not a damn chance!’.

His threat – was it a threat? Goes ignored when Thor adjusts his position under the bedspread and over Loki. “I’m leaving town tomorrow, so make do with this until I get back.”

Loki lies on his pillows, head tilting a little forward just enough to see what Thor is doing, “you are? Well, safe trip.”

“What, aren’t you going to ask why I’m leaving?” he questions, his hands working on taking off the other’s sweatpants.

Loki peers up at the ceiling, “Figured you’d turn me down anyway, I mean would it make a difference if I actually asked… nng!” a moan escapes his lips when Thor suddenly grazes his cock with his teeth through the fabric of his boxers. “Told you to wa—” he cuts himself off when he feels Thor’s lips pressing against it, knowing it’s slowly hardening and standing erect under the palpable ministration. He can’t see what Thor is doing since the man’s under the quilt, he can only feel him. Thor is frigging touching his cock with his mouth! And his senses are strangely heightened for it. He feels it more when Thor furls the waistband of his boxers downwards and his cock springs free.

But so out of the frigging blue, Thor chuckles.

“That’s weird.” Loki comments, brows crunching together as he ignores how Thor’s hot breaths fan on the tip of his cock. There isn’t a dancing monkey on his shaft, is there?

“It’s just” –Thor clears his mouth– “this is the first time I’m seeing it.”

Loki falls silent now, contemplating something about Thor’s lower body, how he also has never seen beyond the fabric, beyond the bulge, and how he anticipates it every god damn time Thor’s name is mentioned.

Something warm, soft and wet touches the tip of Loki’s cock, and he knows Thor’s lips are initiating their thing. Loki brings all his motions to a dead standstill, waiting with a face awash by ecstasy and embarrassment fused together.

Thor wraps his lips on the head and takes it in bit by bit, slowly, and teasingly.

Loki’s head falls back, dark strands spilling on the pillow. His hazel-blue eyes flutter shut as he savors the feeling of Thor’s mouth sucking his cock and his stubble adding in friction, something he’s never even dreamed of. He pants helplessly, deep sighs getting drawn out as he momentarily loses himself in the sensation, the best sensation in the world. Eventually, it only lasts until his eyes snap open after he is reminded of the pack, “Thor, shit, they can hear me…”

Thor responds by giving the other’s cock a vigorous suck that soon forces Loki’s hesitant moan out, loud and clear to the ear. He clutches at the sheets beneath with a hand, covers his mouth with the other. “This is… the best” he breathes out, “Thor, fuck” he begs between urgent gasps and moans, “let me see,” he grousches, “wanna see.”

Thor doesn’t grant his wish; if he wants to see then he can help himself.

Which Loki does moments later, and the sight of Thor sucking him eagerly fills him with astonishment and genuine want.

Loki’s hand makes a slow gesture to touch Thor’s head but is rewarded by a hefty shove.

“God you talk too much, and stop moving.” Thor demands, an acute demand that Loki complies to.
Thor presses more and this time he only flaps his tongue at the tip of his mate’s cock, determined to make him come just from that.

“Oh God, Thor!” Loki’s heavy-blushed cheeks and half-lidded eyes are alluring like blended eaux-de-vie under the moonlight, “I’m ’nna, gonna, oh *fuck*, let go already!” He is finally a mess, gasping and begging for mercy, but that Thor is not ready to offer yet. “Oh *God!*” he shouts, unable to keep his appreciation to himself anymore, “Thor, let go I’m begging you!” tears now slide down his cheeks, but it might take more than just tears to put a stop to Thor’s apparently skillful mouth.

Loki’s never felt like this, he’s never felt this *good*! He can even hear his own heartbeats high rocketing with every bullet of pleasure that pierces through his veins and settles across his abdomen. He finds salvation at last when Thor slurps the precum from the head of his cock and a sudden spurt of cum gushes out. Loki arches his back with a restrained yet ridiculously sultry whimper.

Thor has just sucked him off, and he fucking enjoyed it the whole time it lasted.

Thor’s face hovering above his and the sounds of rain drumming on the window pane are the last thing Loki sees before finally drifting off to sleep.

He wakes up to a different sound, it’s aggravating, insistent.

Someone is interrupting his sleep by being awfully loud pounding on the front door. He wakes up to a different feeling, it’s painful, and it’s familiar. It’s his headache stepping up its game and deciding the usual dose of crippling pain is not satisfying anymore. Loki’s eyes part open at the sudden realization that pain in his mark only hits when something skulks him.

Loki sits up abruptly, examines the room, the morning light surging in from the windows and then the bed, there’s just him. He slips off of the bed and goes to answer the door. He’s concluded that no one is home since no one has answered it before him. Maybe they felt awkward after what happened last night inside the Alpha’s den, embarrassed even, and he doesn’t blame them, even he doesn’t know with what face he ought to look at Thor when they meet.

He opens the door with a preoccupied mind and there are five claws slicing through his skin once the door is open. He falls back, wheezing in agony, blood gushes out of his chest in a beautiful crimson.

“What no one ever taught you that bigamy is illegal?”

He looks up at his attacker, and his own eyes widen in disbelief; if his memory isn’t playing damn tricks on him, that’s Thor’s fiancée, Jane, standing atop him like impending doom, giving no damn care to the world after slicing open his chest.
Chapter 14

Kate's name been changed to Kitty. I'll go back to changing in the previous chapters soon. Hope you enjoy, and, don't fret, Thor and Loki might not sleep quietly on the bed next chapter ;)

The accusation literally throws him off; Loki quickly jerks up, his heart racing beneath his ribs. “Um,” he starts after eying her floral mini-dress that doesn’t suit her malevolent eyes, “no one has really imparted that into my ear before, first time for everything.”

“I had a feeling you’d be nothing but trouble the first day I saw you,” Jane says, her tone haughty as she slants dangerously towards him and grabs him by the collar, only to lift him off the floor and look into his eyes with her hazel ones, hostility swirling deep within. “Since you’ve been informed about their true nature, I shall ask you this,” she says, uninterested in Loki’s little gasps for air, “Do you know what happens when you decide to steal someone else’s fiancé, and not just anyone, an Alpha werewolf?”

“You’re an Alpha, too?” he wheezes out. She smirks and sends him airborne to the wall behind until the windows rattle from the impact. “So you thought you’d slip through the net without knowing that both, Thor and myself, are Alphas?” she tilts her head, even looking refreshed after the exertion.

“I certainly can’t deny your power that pertains to supernaturalism,” he scoffs, unimpressed, “but do you think you can lower the dose a little?” he says after suddenly coughing up the blood that’s suddenly heaped down his throat. “This is the second time I get thrown off to a wall, damn it.”

“You can act blasé about the danger you’re in now all you want” –she’s making a threat but Loki can’t help but cut in to joke with a ‘That’s some riveting news’ while dusting off his clothes and rising up to his feet. She glowers at him and continues, “But you’re going to regret it when I’m done with you.”

“Trust me, sweetheart” he frowns sympathetically. “You’re not the first to threaten me with that.”

“Well, let me have the honor of being the last.” She brightens up spookily with a Cheshire grin that is superfluously beyond Loki’s perception of evil. He narrows his eyes, planning to be as careful as he can dealing with the walking case of psychopathic vibes who decided to drop by uninvited, but miracles aside, what can a powerless human do against an Alpha werewolf that is twice as fast, accurate and deadly than he is? Not that he’s saying he’s deadly. Wait, is he deadly?

Focus, Loki.

He eyes the room for a weapon, but all he finds are some half-empty cereal bowls and orange juice
cups strewn over the coffee table. He absently notes it in his head to deal with the pack’s messy habits. There are some books beside the TV, and he wonders if it’d work if he smacked her upside the head by one thick, fat book, maybe even break some cups on her face, too.

Amidst his distraction, Jane launches forward with such a speed as though The Road Runner made it out of the aforementioned TV because he wanted his own reality show; besides, everyone is doing it nowadays. Her claws flick out and it’s a second late until Loki sees it and uses both his arms to cover his face. She slices through the skin of his forearms, and he can soon feel warm liquid running down his elbows; this metallic tang, he’s come accustomed to it by now. It’s the scent of his blood.

It slowly sinks in: she’s holding sway over this whole ‘one-sided’ fight with two Edward Scissorhands fists. He’s powerless against her speed, claws and oh my God what is she elongating her fangs for?

The pack never mentioned anything about alpha Werewolves dinning on scrawny humans; well, there’s Thor with yesterday’s blowjob. Not the point!

Maybe it’s time to run away, at least until he thinks up something a little effective if not smart to hold her down, if not to completely stop her. He hears her shriek with a loud laugh when he hides behind the couch where he usually sits with Thor.

There’s an alpha werewolf in the living room that is not only adamant to kill him, but she’d do so painfully. This is his life now, brimming with redundant threats from supernatural creatures to tear his body limbs apart that he’s starting to feel like it’s literally already happening with all the blood gushing out from one of his forearms and his chest. Okay, he’s decided that if he gets out of this alive, he’s done with this werewolfic crap; he’s going to leave all this behind and take a long vacation to Never Never Land.

And then he sees it, the tote bag which contains The Spells of Old Magic book he found back in the shop the other day.

He might be desperate to resort to this, but it’s his only hope, he determines. Get out of this alive or die trying.

He skims through its pages, looking only for any powerful spells to use against her.

There, he finds a good one, **How to cast a fire bolt spell:**

> A fire bolt belongs to the element of fire, flame…blah blah. He seriously doesn’t have time to read a fucking introduction, just get on with it. If he wants to cast a fire bolt spell, what does he need?

**To cast a fire bolt, you are required to have:**

- A pentagram, “shit, I don’t have a damn pentagram; this is the damn 21st century!”
- Blood, “OK, that I have” –he checks the blood that is still spilling out of the claw cuts on his porcelain skin– “plenty of it”
- Voice, “Perfect, I also have this, now what do I need to do?”

Before he even gets his answer, a hand fists his hair and pulls him backward; he winces and almost jumps half out of his skin, yet keeping a promise to himself to never let go of that book. “I can’t believe it, you’re so persistent!” he chides, worming his way out of her grip. “No wonder Thor can’t
She pauses, “What is that supposed to mean?”

Great, reverse psychology rocks! This can buy him some time until he reads the rest of the page. “Thor doesn’t like psychotically annoying people, and you, Miss, are psychotically annoying.” He gives away just this much while quickly skimming through the witchery addendum.

*To activate the pentagram* (which he doesn’t even have) *place a drop of blood in all empty areas that do not make the star…* (Okay, so this is useless if he doesn’t have the pentagram... or maybe he should make one).

“Don’t feed me lies!” She retorts.

“He told me so himself.” He tells her, fervently. Yeah right, as if Thor speaks more than a handful of words to begin with; but nobody likes a psychotic girlfriend, Loki is basically doing Thor a favor here.

She crouches a little just to talk near his ear. “Let me be completely frank, I never thought that Thor would get involved with someone while already having a fiancée, not to mention a human; so the other day when we met, he had this strange scent over him, it wasn’t his, and I’m a jealous person” –a vast fucking understatement, pancake– “so to find out what that scent had been I came here and I found you in this place, already acting like you own it.” She sighs, “But then Thor got upset and told me to leave you alone. Next time, he called in and requested we meet with our families, and he suddenly said he wanted to break off our engagement.” She flushes with anger for a beat, but then arches her brows as if she’s just realized something. “He smelled a little different, he smelled stronger of you. It’s your scent that he’s been soaking in while already having me as his fiancée!” She’s slowly beginning to shout, not realizing that Loki has half finished drawing the pentagram on the floor with his own blood. “So I started watching you, it was so disgusting watching you two like that. I had so many chances to finish you off, but his annoying pack kept getting in the way by always sticking close to you.”

“So you were the one stalking me this whole time?” He marvels, disbelievingly.

“Yes.” She sing-songs, “Well, they couldn’t smell me, because I’m an Alpha and I know how to mask my scent. I called Thor last night and told him to come over because thank God I live out of this miserable town, and I told him that I agreed with breaking off the engagement so he said he’d come the next day.” She heaves out a happy sigh, “but you see, that was a lie. When I called him I was already here in town, my plan was to send him away from you, hoping the pack would do the same.”

For a moment, Loki feels a strange shudder going down his spine.

“Now, it’s just the two of us here. Thor is going to find that I’m not there, and when he comes back, he’s going to find a bloody surprise waiting for him on the forefront of Draga’s Welcome signboard.”

Loki’s stomach turns a few loops at that as he grits his teeth.

“Do you know how much I waited for Dinson’s family to finally come and ask for my hand? I was finally able to get near his family’s wealth. My family is also rich but it’s more about title since our history goes way back to some old boring battles, and the Dinsons own most of the country, so it’s keyed to my expectations, but here you are, landing me with the hassle of going after all this trouble just to get rid of you.”
Loki suddenly chants:

“By the moon
The stars and the sun,
By the Gods
The Goddesses and the Ancient Ones,
Blessed be my blood
Fulfill my wish and send the holy light.”

The two of them become silent until a gushing light starts glowing from Loki’s chest, its hues slowly turning bluish.

Jane’s eyes bug out when she sees it, having finally come to place the pieces together, “a witch!” she exclaims.

Okay, first, lady, rude! And second, he doesn’t have an old, dusty broomstick under his clothes; though that’d be really convenient, riding it to and fro work.

Before she could even pull back to safety, the light turns into a fire bolt in the size of a hand ball and darts towards her in a clashing manner. She lets out a loud squeak and gets repelled backwards, falling on the book shelves and groaning with agony.

Loki is in a moment of disbelief, shock even; he didn’t just cast a spell and summon a freaking fire bolt! Okay, there’s a word for a skill like that: ‘beginner’s luck’ pretty covers it. Damn, he can gasp and cheep all he wants but only after he gets out of here, as soon as possible too because Jane is slowly recovering from the impact of the hit, the shock, too.

Tottery, he grabs the bag and scurries towards the front door, finally meeting with the sun that is always abundantly warm. He looks around, aimlessly for a second until he decides to take his bike and go downtown.

He’s never pedaled this fast in his life. Should he represent his country in the Olympics, then?

He needs to cut down on sweets, though, if he wants to participate. His tummy is getting fat and his legs are no longer in shape.

He reminds himself, hurriedly, that he has no frigging idea why he’s decided to give himself a checkup now of all times, in case he hasn’t noticed, there’s a Kali lookalike chasing his bike –minus two arms. His tummy is suddenly not his first concern anymore and nor is the femwere after him as this new thought takes over his mind and his whole being: Thor really told them he wanted to break off the engagement...

Somehow, Loki feels special.

Like a fart which you can’t stop, the suddenness of the next attack knocks him out of his senses as he crashes to the ground with his bike, groaning in pain.
“That’s supposed to be a fire bolt? Cute.” Jane fleers, sending him a derisory glance.

He winces as soon as he tries to sit up; mother trucker, dude, something along his ribs hurts like a butt-cheek on a stick!

"I think that throwing-people move is kinda cool but I don't get the point of doing it repeatedly, ruins that portion of the supposedly ‘sudden attack’ and it's a little too 'in your bones' painful." Sarcasm, yes, your best weapon when you're practically out of options.

“Humans,” she lets out a full bodied sigh, “so weak, so fragile” she comments with a look of disgust about her face, “So selfish, greedy by all the entirety of the word. Mortals like you don’t deserve to be with Thor.” She concludes, now giving him a spiteful glare.

"'Says the girl who's dying to score some bankrolls." He scoffs.

He’s known this on a repetitive basis: She. Wants. Him. Dead. So the smartest thing to do is call up for backup. He can’t take care of her by himself, and he can’t rely on his magic alone, if he keeps this up, he’s a dead man walking.

The phone is in his bag, and the bag was somehow flung a few feet away. He peeks at it but she tilts her head in acknowledgment, catching on his motives and deterring them.

“Are you thinking of calling up the pack?”

Loki swallows, and it feels like a knife is slowly and corrosively being thrust into his chest as pains flare up across his body now. There isn’t a lot of blood coming out of his arms, but things aren’t looking good for his chest. At this rate, he could really die.

Jane leans to pick up the bag, heaving another huff in the process. “I can’t let you do that,” she taunts, “I don’t want anyone interrupting us. Besides, kids should stay at school and let grownups be.” Saying so, she slopes into his space again and grabs him by the neck, yanking his shirt and lifting him up, and Loki rolls his eyes because he know what’s coming next and he braces for it as she throws him against the trunk of a large tree.

He whimpers when his body slams against it, and then he flops onto the dirt and the dry leaves, the pain in his chest intensifies that he actually sees stars. He’d bear with it, without a doubt, he’s only disappointed that the bag is far from his reach now.

He slumps against the tree, his hand palming his chest, his breathing ragged.

The fear he’s felt fleetingly has last come to an end. He can’t die like this; he won’t die like this, not by the hand of a werewolf, and certainly not by the hand of Thor’s fiancée.

Loki rages at himself to concentrate. There was a spell for How to Summon the Power of Storms, but the weather won’t work for his advantage, assuming that this factors in this whole magic-using gibberish. Heck, he might not even be able to summon it even if it was cloudy, that fire bolt was pure luck. So, what else, there wasn’t a How to Get a Better Life but there certainly was a How to Create a Portal for Escape spell, it might be exactly what he needs to buy him a little time–

His thoughts get interrupted by her claws as they swipe across his face, but this time he doesn’t dodge. If he remembers the incantation right –which goes like

“Powers of the angels rise,

Bring your blessings as the fear dies.
Send me into your heavenly dive,
Take me to where my loves revive.”

–then the magical portal should open in any second now.

Sensing the danger, Jane suddenly recoils and jumps swiftly rearward, watching Loki getting up to his feet only to face the tree trunk. He steps –tumbles– towards it, hoping it won’t be just wood. He removes his hand from where it has been clutching at and he slowly stretches it towards the bole, and it gets sucked into the wood and slowly turns into a circular waving blackness. He brightens up in spite of all that blood covering his face. And then, he closes his eyes after taking a deep breath, and he walks into it.

When he parts his eyes open, Loki finds himself standing at the same cliff he and Thor stood at before and talked about feral children. He inspects his surroundings: the greenish lands, and the fields of dandelions blowing in the wind, the crimson sky and the gentle breeze. This is where the incantation has taken him to; this is where his love revives.

“Using such a dangerous spell, are you a genius or plain stupid?” Someone jeers from behind.

Loki’s shoulders give a shaky jerk. He whips around and sees Jane simpering contemptuously at him. “How –wait, don’t tell me you can fly too!”

She snorts, “I guess you’re just plain stupid then.” She taps her nose with a delicate yet bloody finger. “My nose, I followed the scent of your blood. I also assume you haven’t realized that you’ve moved us further in time, have you?”

His eyes widen, “Come again?”

“When we were in the woods, it was morning, and now it’s nearly five o’clock, in the afternoon.” She explains on a nonchalant shrug.

He monitors the background as a sudden gust of wind ruffles his silky hair, he then looks up at the sky, and he now understands what those crimson shades mean.

“Only supernatural creatures are going to notice this slip in time, or the time leap, if you will, so I’m guessing the pack must be already on their way here,” she’s looking absentmindedly somewhere in her left side. “Your scent is very special, even while fighting you I feel a great rush starting to take over me. You’re no ordinary witch, I give you that, but I assume your powers have just awakened, so you’re weak. You didn’t even know that after casting a spell such as this you give up something in return. But rest assured, I’ll make sure to take you out of your misery soon.”

His face darkens for a moment, and then he wets his lips, “You need to leave me alone,” he warns, fuck, even The Brides of Dracula knew when to step back when told to, and the bitches were even more vicious. “I still have a few tricks on me so you’d better watch out.”

“Oh, yea?” She juts her chin at him, “your wits? If that’s the extent of your power then I’m perfectly safe, thank you very much.”

“You have a point.” He nods, agreeing, “Okay, let me try one last trick then.”

She shrugs at him.
He tries another spell, he doesn’t know for what it is used, but if he still remembers the spell then he can just cast it and see what it does. But when he’s done, nothing really happens. She can’t help but let out a ridiculing laugh and he doesn’t blame her for it, really.

“You’ve had your chance,” she crouches, looking at him with intent eyes, “now I’ll have mine.”

He looks at her harrowingly, he doesn’t even know what to expect at this point.

Jane slants a little and charges at him again, disappearing for a fragment of a second and reappearing right in front of his face. It’s just a fleeting second, but he can see her beautiful hazel eyes looking right into his, and being the stupid head that he is, he convinces himself that if this young woman wasn’t this much of a clingy psycho, then Thor would have gotten himself a beautiful wife with beautiful hazel eyes. He wants to tell her that himself, but all he can do is smile to her ruefully, which doesn’t bode well with her being a painfully honest account of what the term psycho holds in horridness, a psycho whose werewolf-y claws are digging clean through his chest. He coughs up and blood comes gushing out of his mouth and splashing onto her forearm, tainting the one place of her forearm’s skin where it hasn’t gotten any red.

“Jane!” Someone growls from behind, this fear-provoking voice is familiar…

“Oh, you’ve finally come.” Said woman chants, “It was starting to get quite boring, but since you’re already here, why don’t you have a look?”

She rocks Loki, who groans in return.

“We had a one-on-one; he lost, I won.” She shrugs, pursing her lips. “His powers aren’t much to speak of either, so this will teach him to never go after someone else’s fiancé.”

Slowly, her claws dig out of his chest and he lets out a doleful whimper.

When her hand lets go of him so she can turn around and look upfront, Loki slumps to the ground with the absence of anything immobile to hold him on his feet. He clutches at his chest to stop the blood from leaving him only a colorless corpse.

Someone gasps, horrified, it’s a female’s gasp, “Jane, What have you done!”

The curiosity takes over Loki so he peeks up to see who’s come tardy to his rescue, finding the pack fanning across from him. But instead of frowning, he smiles at their presence. Then, his eyes meet Thor’s red ones, and he fears it, he fears the fact that there’s a ninety nine percent chance for Thor to let the anger of his inner wolf take control of him; however, said male surprises him when he displays steady interaction skills.

“We were engaged merely for the sake of family titles,” Thor seethes, “but now that I’ve already broken off the engagement, I have the right to kill you right here and now for hurting him.”

“You can’t be serious!” She protests “You can’t be serious about this mortal!”

“Nothing connects me to you anymore, so that is none of your business.” He tells her, offhandedly.

“Ha!” she puffs, “wait until I tell everybody that your mate is not only a mortal, but a witch too!”

The rest of them scowl, doing a double mental check on that one.

“You know that marking a witch is taboo for werewolves,” she reminds him, smirk deepening manically. “If the clan elders hear about this, they’re going to exile you and annihilate him.”
“Not gonna happen.” Thor deadpans.

“But oh wait,” her eyes do an uncanny glint, “it’s already too late, he has a few minutes only before his heart stops. I guess that’s what you get for marking an unskillful witch.”

“Take care of his wounds,” Thor instructs a few of his pack, “Leave her to me.”

A few scurrying steps come closer to his direction, and Loki opens his eyes, the sky meets him first, and then Sif’s face comes into view.

“Loki” she lifts his head very slowly to rest it on her lap, “Loki, oh God, look at all this blood!” Her hands ghost over his face, not sure where to touch.

He closes his eyes in gratitude, the smile not wanting to leave his lips.

“Loki,” Natasha calls out, scared and beautiful, “This injury, we need to do something about it.”

“She’s an alpha! What if his wound doesn’t heal?” Sif complains, terror slowly seizing her.

“I don’t think it’s that bad, she didn’t bite him so he’s safe.”

“Thor…” Loki mutters once his eyes open and meet their worried ones again, “what is he…?”

They both look to their Alpha’s direction, and so does Loki.

Thor is standing before his fiancée, shirtless. Taut muscles shift and jut when he rolls his shoulders, whole body tense with anger. Steve and Peter in his left and right, at the far side of the dandelion field, Kitty and Wade are slanting over a boulder.

“It’s a fight between two Alphas,” Natasha comments, “it’s going to be ugly.”

“I can’t even look.” Sif yelps, “What happens when –if he wins.”

“If Mr. Dinson wins, he can kill her and keep his current mate, but if she wins” –she snakes out her tongue to her dry lips– “she can kill the current mate and keep the Alpha as her official fiancé.”

They fall into a scary silence, watching the two alphas glare at each other’s red eyes, challenging, and their forms upright yet graceful to the human eyes, to anything with taste, really. And Loki is a guy with taste; he got off on thoughts of Thor not long ago. A haze of divine light sheds on just the two of them after the sun angles sideways, and just like the rest, Loki also props up a little with the help of Sif to watch as moments flee by without anyone saying anything.

“This is a fight to the death.” Jane tells her ex-fiancé, defiantly.

“Let’s not belabor the obvious,” he replies back, begrudgingly, “My mate is waiting for me, so” –he ushers her to attack with a hand– “bring it on.”

She crouches like a predator aiming its located prey, growling at him.

He ducks downward just a little, snarling in return, a snarl so deep and vibrating; it sends cold sweat to Loki’s already shivering body.

The two finally clash in a violent collision, claws flicking and grazing every side of the skin. Thor receives a few scratch marks to his chest but he doubles the bout by giving her wounds to her neck and chest. She punches his stomach and he grasps her arm and flips her over his shoulder and onto the ground that she lands with a buffed breath of air. He makes a fist and sends it to her face but she
claws at his knees, he totters momentarily but quickly regains his balance, so she wraps her arm around his neck after doing a backward flip but he grabs her hair and throws her against the boulder the other two have just been leaning on, Jane lands on it with a loud thump, and she slowly slides to the ground. Thor then uses his supernatural speed to catch up to her but she’s not a fool to fall for that, she quickly scrambles to her feet and kicks the other away by a side turn, all the while, lashing on him again and straddling his back when he falls on his stomach, but Thor can’t allow himself to get restrained like that, so he uses his leg and knocks her head with a back kick, she jolts forward and he uses this chance to plant his claws into her neck, but she quickly slants to her left and rolls away.

This might go on forever.

Loki’s eyes flutter, he can’t watch them fight. He doesn’t want to see them fight. He wants to shout it out, he wants to bonk their heads together and tell them it’s freaking idiotic to fight over this, werewolves’ rules be damned! But he’s too weak to do any of that, and if it wasn’t for Sif’s shaky hands that are forcibly pressing his wound, he’d have long since been drained out of it. Also, if he uses his head just a little, he can easily see how intent Jane is on killing him since he’s stolen her fiancé, so, when amongst werewolves do what werewolves do.

He needs to do something, he has to do something!

He finds it when he wills the gears of his brain to wheel; a little thinking can do wonders.

“Bag.” he says in a feeble undertone.

The two girls hovering above him reel their heads to him, “what is it, Loki?”

“Bring me the bag.” He motions to them with a weak wave.

“What bag?” Sif wonders, avidly.

“We brought his bag with us, remember?” Natasha reminds, touching gently that hand he’s just tiredly waved, “what do you need it for?”

To strangle himself with the straps, what do you think, Natasha!

To strangle himself with the straps, what do you think, Natasha!

Loki’s pupils slide under his lids, succumbing to fight the sweet temptation of falling into a painless sleep; but Sif doesn’t make it easy for him as she presses his stinging wound and he jerks up, groaning.

“His heartbeats are getting weaker, they almost stopped just now!” Natasha comments, if he ever needed a commentary.

Thor suddenly pauses in the middle of the fight, alarmed; he looks towards Loki and suddenly shouts, “Can’t you even hold on for a few damn minutes?”

Loki rolls his eyes, annoyed. “Stupid fur ball,” he croaks, “You don’t have a freaking hole the size of a satellite in your chest.”

Thor recommences the fight again.

Kitty scurries towards them with the bag in a hand, “I overheard your conversation, I don’t know what you need it for though.”

Loki sits up with their help, and he takes the book out of the bag. “Spell” he starts, “I casted a spell earlier.”
“You did? You can manipulate magic!” Sif practically hollers.

“Mm,” he nods, tiredly. He’s too drained to demonstrate his awesomeness for her. “Last one, I need to” –he coughs up more blood now and ignores the worried looks they’re boring into him– “I need to find it, damn it…”

“So you really are a witch.” Natasha mutters with this crestfallen look in her eyes like the damn apocalypse has been started.

He turns the pages, messily; “that’s supposed to be my fight, I can’t allow him to kill her. I don’t want him to feel responsible about it afterwards.” He turns more pages but the dried blood over his digits makes fun of him. Think again, jerk. "Damn, damn it!"

“Just tell us what you need.” the girls beg, sounding despaired.

Loki doesn’t have time to explain, he can feel his consciousness slipping through the cracks to fail him soon. He has to find the last spell he casted and see just what exactly went wrong since he’s sure now it was a spell to summon a fire wall for protection. There, he finds it, it’s the spell he’s casted; except it’s not a spell to summon a fire wall, it’s a spell to repel, counterattack, backfire and copy any attack. But the instructions say that even after you cast the spell, it still won’t be activated until you sacrifice something in return, and that thing has to be of equal value.

He frowns, a shriek cuts off his train of thoughts when Thor breaks Janen’s back, but she’s a werewolf so she heals from it, and all this is not a dream. Makes him wonder why he isn’t already heading right for the nutty farm with a straitjacket on.

What can he sacrifice, what is this thing of equal value?

He moistens his lips with his saliva. “Okay, so not every valuable object is merely an object, I mean relatively speaking, valuables can be spiritual elements too, or sources of concentrated energy, right?” he babbles, awestricken eyes on the book.

The girls look at him, baffled.

“I mean since I’m a vessel and I have the Imugi’s power inside me, well it’s only logical. That sorcerer was the one who said he had used his own powers to remove Rover’s and place it in a vessel, except none of this now seems logical” –he mumbles the rest and the girls look even more confused, Gosh, they’ve never been this useless– “no,” his eyes widen as realization strikes him harder than Thor’s punches. “Wait a damn second, if the sorcerer had to use his powers to transform Rover’s and place it into a vessel, then it’s only natural that those powers of his were transformed in the process too, and since I was able to cast two spells now I think that was not just a beginner’s luck, it was, in fact, the sorcerer’s powers combined with Rover’s. This might explain why the fire bolt worked since I used my own blood to draw the pentagram–”

“You drew a pentagram with your blood!” Kitty gasps. That’s probably the only thing she comprehended from his murmured speech.

“Yeah, couldn’t find any weapons around so drastic times called for drastic measures, wrong choice, I know, slap me when we're done here.” He dismisses it with a wave of his hand, “now, let’s suppose that this is what really this power I have is all about, doesn’t that make it mine for now. No. Scratch that. Doesn’t that make my blood very special blood?”

“Haven’t we been telling you that all along?” Sif shakes her head on a fond smile.

He’s grateful, but this isn’t what he’s supposed to be feeling right now, a spell he’s casted is waiting
to be activated, so at last, he comes to a solution.

“I need something sharp.” He tells them.

“Sure, here.” Kitty hands him her metal nail file, unaware of his plan.

Loki splays the book on the ground and quickly makes a cut over his sweaty palm. He hears the girls gasping in shock and rebuking him for being both stupid and reckless. He agrees with the latter, but stupid? He guesses waiting for Thor to finish her off and save the day would have been even more stupid. The tattoo around his forearm aches and he winces more, then it reshapes and forms wavy lines rounding his wrist, and they watch the display in astonishment. But then only one drop of blood spills from that cut and falls onto the same page of that book.

That single drop of blood burns into the page and a sudden flow of light gushes out from the book and from Loki’s chest as well, as if the two are deeply connected. The girls squirming beside him fall to the back with the force of the flash as Loki opens his arms and puffs out his chest that is now glowing blindingly, blows of wind dance around him and speed up, sounding like a grinding whetstone.

Everything falls to a pause as they all hide their faces behind their forearms at the light and the strong wind, which, apparently, Loki is the one causing. After what feels like short windy seconds, the light finally stops glowing gradually and so does the wind after making sure it swung Loki fringes like an oscillating pendulum. He slumps onto the book, breathing deeply in ragged gasps.

“What the hell was that?” Peter wonders aloud, his brows furrowed.

“Did he just cast a spell?” Steve asks, lips parting and closing like a dumbfounded fish.

“Was that really magic?” Wade questions, his wide eyes examining Loki and switching to look at his pack mates.

Another interval, everyone—including Thor—eyes Loki after the vivid demonstration. But then a sudden yelp surprises them, confused eyes look at Jane and finally see her clutching at her chest.

“You didn’t!” she cries after looking at her hands that come away smeared in her own blood.

“Ha!” Loki chuckles, his chuckle becoming more deep and at last he bursts out laughing. “It worked, it really worked!”

The rest is yet to catch on.

“So that’s what that spell was for!” Jane exclaims, grimacing at the painful gash on her chest. “You repelled my attack,” she groans and flops to the ground on her knees, “You despicable mortal!”

Loki rises up to his feet, all the gashes and wounds that were covering him are gone now. He’s a brand new he. He walks closer to her and only stops when he’s a couple of inches away.

“Okay, one” Loki raises his index, “I’m not despicable because I just wanted to get back at you since it was our fight when we started, didn’t plan to gang up against you” —he raises his middle finger now— “two, in case you haven’t noticed, you’re no longer his fiancée, and three” —he raises his ring finger— “this mortal just put a stop to you for jacking around and he did it so skillfully that you’ve got your own claw marks on you.” He crouches down, meeting her red eyes head-on, “since the fight is already over” —he puts down his index finger— “and the spell has already worked too” —he puts down his ring finger— “let me tell you this, I might be just a mortal” —the only finger he has raised is his middle finger and he nears it to her face— “the simple fact still remains, I am Thor’s mate.” He gives
her a shit-eating grin.

He hears the girls behind giggling, and some laughing, and his lips do a cute twitch; he also wants to laugh because the face Jane is giving him is priceless.

“I won’t forgive you!” she promises; she’s actually threatening him but he’s a little too slow to notice. “I won’t forget it. I’m telling everyone what you really are!”

“Why don’t you go get that wound treated, looks pretty ugly.” Peter advises, but more so just to get rid of her.

“An alpha getting wounded by her own claws, it looks like the player got played” Steve comments, solemnly.

She makes a tsking noise and picks her wounded body up, deciding to finally leave.

Loki then stops her, “Ms. Jane.”

She stops in her track but doesn’t turn around, “what do you want, witch?”

“I’m not trying to lord it over you but let me say just one thing, things like family titles and wealth, all that luxurious life cannot bring you happiness,” yes it can. “Not saying it out of personal experience but I know someone who did, and I know that breaking off the engagement was sudden for you and I’m sorry this happened, but I can’t walk away now. I find my happiness with them, I can’t give that up. I can’t give him up. So if you still insist on maxing out and stalking me only to attack me later when no one is around, then I promise I won’t back down. I’ll stand up to you again, except next time I’ll be stronger.” He promises, his eyes determined.

Jane doesn’t say anything in return, and very quickly, she walks away, retreating from the battle. He lets out a deep sigh of relief; at least she didn’t turn around to slap him before she went away. Thor then walks past him in a firm pace.

“Woah,” Loki hold his bulky arm by the elbow, “where do you think you’re going, tough guy?”

“After her” Thor says between gritted teeth, like Jane has just rung his door bell and ran for it.

“No, you’re not.” Loki shakes his head and rests a hand over the other’s shoulder. “The fight is over, Thor, and she’s already gone.”

“Look here,” Thor furrows his brows and flares his nose, “The fight is not over until I say so–”

“Thor!” he says over him, a cordial smile slowly blooming over his thin lips. “It’s over, give it a rest, man.”

For a moment, the two just keep looking into each other’s eyes, and he sees the man slowly demurring to do as asked.

“Loki!”

Said male turns around and he arches his brows at how proud all of them are looking at him.

“You never seize to amaze.” Natasha tells him after she crosses her arms over her chest.

“You were so cool, Loki!” Kitty gets closer to him only to wrap her arms around his.

“We better hurry home and take a look at your wounds.” Sif suggests, on cue.
“No need,” he tells her, “they already healed, and I repelled the last wound so I’m fine, for now.”

“So that was really magic?” Peter stares at him, face set in hard lines. “Are you really a witch?”

Loki’s eyes flit down briefly, before glancing up at Thor.

“It’s a moot question, but why do I have a feeling that Jane is going to put you on blast and tell everyone that you’re a witch?” Steve is making oscillating motions with his hand, his eyes looking into Loki’s, worriedly.

Suddenly, Loki doesn’t want anything but to eye the sky which is slowly turning a deep crimson; he feels a fire slowly rising within him as he absentmindedly and lazily drums his fingers over his thighs, the fire slowly turning into a burning tornado and yet he isn’t daunted by it. He can smell the earth, the water and the air, it tingles, this earthly feeling is tingling under his chest and he’s slowly feeling pleasantly warm.

“…home, and then we’ll talk.” Peter tells them in monotone, probably too shocked to say anything else.

“Let’s leave here too.” Sif looks up into Loki’s eyes, “come on.”


“Alright, I’ll go bring it.”

Of course, Loki isn’t going to let her spoil him more so he walks up to the edge of the cliff, looking where he’d left the book earlier, but alas, he only comes across the empty tote bag. She doesn’t find it anywhere either. The rest of the female betas look around, to help, but nobody finds the book.

“It might have fallen off the cliff.” Natasha theorizes, staring wide-eyed down the cliff.

“No, it was here.” Loki shakes his head, childishly, “I’m sure of it, I left it here.”

“Maybe it was the wind that–” Kitty is trying to give him her portion of theories but Loki interjects, “I left it here!” he points at the same spot he’s been sitting on.

He sees how the girls frown, darting their eyes away.

“Let’s go home for now,” he smiles tentatively at them, it’s because he doesn’t want to leave yet until he finds the book, but he’s not a heartless man, especially after looking at their pouting faces. “I’ll cook something delicious for you.”

And just like that, the happy squeaks are back.

Nobody interrupts the silence throughout the walk to the house, preferring to keep their heads on their necks because having Thor in that kind of mood never served anyone any good. And they’re a smart bunch, they’ve learned their lesson.
Loki tries to keep his promise to cook delicious food, but Thor has no interest in learning how the 
food-consuming mechanisms process as he clutches at his wrist, grinds him into a sudden halt and 
says “Sit down.”

Said male eyes the couch, and in his swivel, his hand slips from Thor’s.

“Tell us what happened.”

Loki rolls his eyes, “What’s the point, what’s done is done and Jane was defeated, end of story.”

“I said,” Thor repeats, a hint of grudging threat in his tone, “sit down and tell us what happened.”

Loki eventually gives in to Thor’s wicked eyes that speak volumes of how scary he can be when 
he’s wanting/not attempting to be. He eyes the pack for a moment before walking to that couch to sit 
down. “And I don’t even get paid for the crap I have to go through, my life sucks.”

“We also would like to know what happened, if you don’t mind, Lo.” Natasha requests of him, 
showing him yet again how smart she really is because even gnashing your teeth, you just can’t turn 
down a polite request like that.

“…and I was getting my ass kicked I had to do something, so” –he points at the back of the sofa with 
his thump hooked over his shoulder– “I drew the pentagram with my blood and used a random spell 
from the book, which, by the way, I can’t find anywhere.”

The pack can’t bring themselves to believe any of it, but they’ve come to know him for a while now 
and if there’s anything they’ve learnt about humans like him, it’s that they’re stupid beyond any 
creatures’ mind capacity and the possibility of them doing something idiotic like ‘drawing a 
pentagram with their own blood’ is actually pretty high. So they absentmindedly look behind the 
couch and can see that the bloody pentagram is really there.

“So let me get this right, you used a spell, when you already have no former experience in this field 
whatsoever, and it worked?” Steve exclaims, a look of astonishment takes over his face.

“Well, it’s not like you can take up sorcery classes from third grade.” Loki deflates in on himself. “I 
had to do something,” he flails a hand. “I couldn’t just let her do me in like that.”

“Continue.” Thor demands, a final order.

“I managed to knock her down with a fire bolt, and then I picked up my bike and was planning to go 
downtown to get help but she was fast and she tossed me in the air like a booger. I think I broke 
some ribs then but they completely healed now. That’s when I casted the second spell and I was 
whisked away to the cliff once I walked through the portal–”

“A portal!” Peter gasps, promptly. “I’m no expert, but, Loki” he gives him a vague look, “only 
professional sorcerers can cast that kind of powerful spells. I heard it usually takes years for sorcerers
and witches to completely master the spell, but because it has terrible side effects, only authorized
magic-users can use it.”

“Two of the spells you used require something of equal value, sort of a trade kind of deal.” Steve
explains, “Some spells are like that, they won’t be activated until you give something in return, that’s
what makes sorcery dangerous. They must have worked because you gave your blood in return
which lately we’ve come to understand is very special, the hard way. And yet some spells even have
terrible side effects, like the time leap which happened this morning.”

“So she was telling the truth?” Loki wonders, addressing himself, “she did say there was a time leap
and the spell I casted was the reason.”

“She was telling you the truth then.” Natasha tilts her head while shrugging.

“So what about what she said about werewolves and witches, was that the truth, too?” He amends,
peeking at her with expectant eyes.

Natasha is no longer the stuck-up she claims to be as she darts her eyes away, not so brave to answer
his question.

“Yes.” Thor deadpans, “it was the truth.”

Loki’s eyes flutter, but he clears his throat and looks his mate in the eyes. “She also said that the
elders, or whatever, are going to exile you, what the hell does that mean?”

“To werewolves, witches are despicable creatures, and so are werewolves to witches.” He tells him,
fingers twining together between his parted knees, “An accident happened in the very old past and
ever since then, werewolves were banned from mating with witches; however, there’s always a rebel
who’d go against the rules, and in this case, there was this werewolf who used to belong to this pack,
but he decided to mark a witch. Our elders found out and he was immediately banned and exiled.”

Loki swallows, terror taking hold of his features, “What happened to his mate?”

“Died, burned to death.” Thor says, crossly.

He has so many questions inside his head which he needs answers to, but he selflessly throws them
behind his head and asks the one thing that might very much answer the biggest query he has right
now, “What happened in the past?” he fidgets over the couch, “was that werewolf Tony?” he asks
this without lifting his head, as though fearing what might follow.

“Go clean up.” Thor says dismissively, “girls, take care of the food, Wade and Peter, I want you two
to fix my house. Steve, come with me.”

The pack members share an affirmative with their Alpha, the latter walks towards the front door,
expecting Steve to follow suit but it’s Loki’s hand on his shoulder that he doesn’t expect.

“Thor” he starts, his voice low and gentle, “You are doing it again, you’re hiding things from me
again.” He tells him, despair wants to be his sole friend and, it sucks, that even despair would join
the party of ‘make Loki’s life more miserable’. “Are you going to brush it off and tell me to mind my
own damn business? I know about Tony, I know about the photo you keep in your drawer, I
Thor suddenly turns and holds Loki by the shoulders, his grips firm, “You’re going through my stuff now?” he exclaims, a wave of red spiraling inside his eyes.

Loki snorts on a smirk. “Now that’s classic werewolf temper right there –”

“Are you?!” Thor snarls, chasing any traces of the smile from Loki’s lips.

“N-no…” Loki’s brows furrow and arch upward, heart thumping with fear. “I saw it when you told me to look for the key.”

Thor’s grip on his shoulders finally loosens; said male looks around at his pack’s worried faces, and then at Loki’s scared eyes. “I’m…” he starts, and then he wraps his arm around his mate’s head to talk into his ear away from prying eyes. “Wait until I get back, don’t go to sleep.” He says laconically, and unwraps his arm. “Steve, let’s go.”

And just like that, Thor walks out of the front door and leaves only the echo of the door creaking behind.

Loki cleans himself, not because Thor told him to, but because he’s started feeling disgusted covered in dry blood and dirt like that; there’s even a dry leaf in his hair. He walks down the stairs and he finds food on the table, even the book shelves were repaired and back anew. He plops on the couch and looks at the food with empty eyes.

“Don’t let it get to you.” Kitty beams. “Eat.”

Loki physically shakes the negative emotions, and plasters on a reassuring smile which somehow feels half fake.

“Whether he tells you something or nothing at all, you can only trust him.” Surprisingly, it’s Wade trying to comfort him.

“Don’t get impatient.” Natasha smiles, briefly that is, “You’re part of the pack now, and you’ll eventually know everything.”

He’s already had dinner, he can’t say he had a great appetite but he did eat; you know that feeling when you’ve had a fallen-out with someone and you’re too angry to eat even though you’re hungry, because you don’t want to give them the satisfaction? Yes, it sucks. He’s in the bathroom, brushing his teeth and looking at his miserable reflection on the mirror. The pack is staying over tonight as well, so he feels safe. Suddenly, he hears buzzing, “my phone…”

Loki finds one unread text sent by Thor, and other three missed calls from the same number starting with a plus which suggest he’s never seen it before, it’s different from Tony’s as well. If he had to contemplate it, he’d easily put the lid on it since he can count his registered contacts on one hand. This doesn’t add up. Anyways, he can play this ‘Detective Conan’ revue later, he should read the text message that is from the only man he’s not certain whether he wants to see or not right now, and wow, if condescendance had a face:
I’m waiting by the car.

Loki rolls his eyes; he’s totally being toyed and Thor needs a reality check. Resignedly, he shoves the phone into his sweatpants’ pocket and walks outside, his eyes surreptitiously looking around until he spots Thor leaning on his fancy car.

“What now?” he demands, nearing the car.

“Where’s Steve?”

“Patrolling.” He answers, curtly, and gets into the car.

“Thor, you’re not being fair.” Loki pouts, but he eventually gets in after realizing that the man isn’t in any mood to spoil anyone.

The car starts moving, the tires smoothly rolling and grinding the dead leaves speckled on the ground.

Five minutes, ten minutes now and Loki can’t avoid this suffocating silence just by looking out the window at the woods staring intensely back at him; he wants to talk to Thor, God damn, he wants to hear Thor’s deep voice and look him right in the eyes, and simply enjoy the stealthy looks they share time and again.

“I didn’t even show up at work, if I ever get fired it’s going to be all on you.” He starts, but eventually blows a sigh. “Thor, where are you taking me?”

“The butler, who works for my family, called when I was out, said mother was already on her way to town.” Thor reports, and turns the steering wheel to pivot the car into a small clearing. “She’s probably going to be here in the early morning.”

“Does she already know about me?” Loki demands, “that’s why she’s coming, right? Am I going to get burned to death?”

Thor turns off the ignition and the car stills. He looks down somewhere over his lap, a smirk pulling at his lips, “Loki,” he looks up now into his mate’s eyes, his own kind and gentle and it’s more befitting of his characters which was the reason Loki fell for him. “Mother is only coming to comprehend my reasons behind breaking off the engagement.” He assures, “you’re my mate and I don’t have to follow someone else’s order if I have you, but we have to bond, if I want my family to stop pester me about marriage, we’ll have to bond, tonight.”

“What if she’s against witches?”

“I don’t care about what she thinks of my mate, I don’t even care about some old-fashioned wolf telling me how to live my life, if they’re against witches then that doesn’t make it my problem. I chose you, and you chose me, do you see any reason for us not to bond?”

Thor’s eyes are playful but at the same time seductive, it’s unfair.

Loki shies, and faces away.

Thor ushers with his head, “Come on.”
The two are walking through a tree-sided walkway. Loki hears the purl of a near river; he hears the trees rustling and the antenna of insects after being disturbed; buzzing, almost as if they’re welcoming him to this side of the woods he’s never been to.

“My family’s residence is nestled just at the foot of that mountain,” he points at somewhere beyond the trees, “when they finally moved out, I remodeled it and turned it into an inn.”

“You mean it’s the same inn near the preserve? But I heard it closed down due to financial issues.”

“Yes, the preserve is just a few acres away.” Thor pushes some branches off of his path, “and no, not financial, but the visitors caused my workers a lot of problems so I decided to close it down and now I keep it for personal use only.”

“I think you caused your workers even more problems by closing down the inn,” Loki provides, gallantly. “That was probably their only source of income.”

Thor stops in his track and faces his mate, “I actually sent them to work at the inn we own in the other town.”

“Oh, the other inn, of course.” He hums, “Frigging rich people.”

Thor chuckles. “We’re here,” he looks ahead, and that’s when Loki’s jaw almost drops.

“I’ll be damned!” He gasps after eying the French country house, evoking a rustic appearance with hipped roofs, and rugged dormers; the rough plaster walls and the gorgeous pallet wood walkways surrounding its floor; it’s as if it just came out of a painting. No wonder guests caused troubles about this; he’d fight tooth and nail to get a room here if he had money. Even jab an old lady in the pelvis.

“Let’s get inside,” Thor offers, already walking up to the arched front door.

Loki follows almost instantly.

Once again, he’s amazed by the interior of the house; he faces the rounded entryway and the barrel vault of the ceiling from which a beautifully crafted chandelier is dangling to shine on the porcelain tile flooring.

“You can take off your shoes and wear these,” he hands Loki a pair of brown slippers he’s taken out from the shoe rack. “They’re called pantoufles in French.” He sneers.

“Thank you for this very important information, I shall mark it down for later use if I ever needed to save the world.” He scoffs, pressing his lips teasingly.

They walk through an arched doorway, and get greeted by a marble staircase.

“Go upstairs, wait in the first room on your right.” Thor says offhandedly, steering away with his hands working on undoing his belt buckle.

“Woah!” Loki rushes after the man, “Where are you going and leaving me?” He is not getting left here on his own.

“In case you haven’t noticed, I’m still shirtless” –Oh trust him, Loki has noticed– “and covered in blood and dirt, I need to clean myself up.” Without even listening to what Loki has to say about an Alpha soaking in the bathtub, Thor bounds up the staircase in the middle of the spacious hall and
disappears once he walks into another arched doorway upstairs.

“I can’t believe it, I’m already getting used to this.” Loki drags himself up the stairs with drooped shoulders, he finally reaches the said room and opens its door, hearing it whiz in greeting.

What little light that manages to stream in from the windows helps his eyes adapt to the room’s illumination, he makes out the glittering chandelier suspended from the ceiling, and the large size set of bedding with an emperor headboard, a modern dressing table with three round mirrors, the shaggy, fluffy carpet under his feet that feels really comfortable to roll on, and some old, garish colored painting of an urban town which looks like it’s taken years to finish; But all his impression hits the stone wall when he realizes that the furniture is in black and white. “What is he, a yin yang fanatic?”

He walks up to the hinged doors beside the bed that lead to a balcony, he walks out and he sees that the balcony overlooks a beautiful patio, shaded in green and has an empty pool and a dry fountain. He looks up at the sky and gets greeted by uncountable stars, he decides then waiting is tolerable because he gets to relax and get his thoughts back together.

“You’re still up?”

Loki turns around from his perch by the hinged door; he’s decided to walk in after some time and been trying to lock the handle when Thor finally walked in. He scrutinizes said man’s wet locks, the towel wrapped around his waist but making no effort to hide the rest of his naked body. The muscles built in so taut like a fucking warrior. He’s so firm without Loki having to feel him to tell for himself. The wet strands of his golden hair parachuting over deep set eyes and thick, symmetrical brows. Lush lips parted slightly. He is, without a doubt, a walking wet dream…

Loki is overcome by all the feelings he harbors for the man, and for a second, his lungs can’t chase after air and he realizes he’s holding his breath. He quickly faces the door giving him attitude so he wouldn’t have to see more of Thor’s seduction weaving tricks on his unsexed body.

“You told me to wait.”

And that’s when it happens, that so out of the blue, a distant voice in Loki’s head says we’ll have to bond, tonight, and something in him just… melts.

He hears the light tramps on the plank behind him, an overwhelming closeness approaching him. He stills completely and so does everything else.

Thor walks up to his back, moves closer to nudge his nose against the stiff shoulder and feels a shiver come to pass. Loki clenches his grip on the handle, seeking an anchor before he gets introduced to the floor face-first. He lets out a soft moan that stirs Thor into more action. The latter trails the tip of his nose along the inviting neck –tilting to leave him space, and he parts his lips, mouthing the hot skin still shuddering under his ministration.

“Turn around.” Thor orders once his parted lips take hold of Loki’s earlobe.

Loki lets out contented sighs and he is inwardly pleased that he doesn’t have to suppress his voice since nobody is keeping vigil in one mile radius. He feels his body getting maneuvered so that he is facing his mate, and it’s not a matter of pride but it’s a little vexing since he’s at the perfect height where he has to glance up to meet Thor’s smoldering gaze –aflame with hunger. Like Thor can eat him up with just his eyes, it’s fucking glorifying –being the center of Thor’s attention… being
wanted and desired.

Loki throws himself at his mate, and the skillful mouth is back on his, ravaging like a wolf that’s been confined and starved for days. And Loki whines deep in his throat, arms wrapping around Thor’s bare skin, touching and feeling, making sure this isn’t one of his masturbation sessions gone too real.

His nose catch a whiff of a fragrance, rich and earthly, permeating strongly as Thor slowly leans forward. It gives him a faint prickle at the back of his nose.

Loki’s eyes flutter shut.

Incited, Thor grabs a fistful of Loki’s hair from the back and yanks, pushing him back against the hinged door by the hip until he hits it hard enough to jar, and does Loki give a fuck? –that hand in his hair pulls again and Loki breaks the kiss with a gasp, throwing his head back. Thor licks up the long column of pale skin, reveling in the scrape of growing stubble.

“Thor…” he croaks, eyes narrowing with want.

“What?” Thor relents, his breath ghosts over Loki’s mouth.

Loki struggles to fight past this delirious haze that has lodged over his lids. His pupils land on Thor’s and something, something tingling, spirals deep inside his chest. Normally, men don’t stare into each other’s eyes and experience the sensation of drowning… He has, though, several times, with Thor.

Loki presses closer, bringing their dicks in line. And Thor is quick to react, gripping at Loki’s ass hard enough to bruise, touching too much as though if he stopped, the man in his grip would flee like a rat. Loki sucks in a surprised yelp when Thor takes his lips in a heated kiss. His hands are slow and steady as they disentangle the towel, and he exults when it falls down. He feels the man’s thick cock spring up, marked by conspicuous veins and covered in precum.

In any other circumstance with any other recipient of his kiss, Loki would have raised Hell and outright barked his disgust. But with Thor, he wants to touch; he feels like nothing in the world can make him as eager as Thor’s eyes do to him. He wraps his hand around the shaft, earning an impatient hiss from the man still sucking on his lips.

“Fuck,” Thor suddenly breathes out into his mouth, “wanted you for so long, Loki…” he thrusts against the gentle pressure, lines marring his forehead.

“You can have me,” Loki moans, breathlessly “all of me.” He drags his hand up, grip tight and slow, before sliding back down.

“Like that,” Thor rasps, fervent and hungry, “just like fucking that!”

Loki chunks his head to the back a little and drinks in the sight of Thor –an Alpha werewolf that can intimidate a herd of them with just a brow arch– thrusting into his hand, face wracked with pleasure. A fucking Greek-God shaped bundle of beautiful and majestic fantasy that has ever made him breathless coming true, even getting off using his hand –the sight alone keeps little room in his head for nothing, and if it wasn’t for the scene before him, he’d be wallowing in a mental break-down for his sudden idiocy.

Not knowing how to ask Thor to return the favor, Loki humps against his own grip, brushing the heads of their cocks together. When the other man doesn’t decipher the hint, Loki unfurls the
waistband of his sweatpants with his other hand and plucks out his cock, he grips hold of Thor’s hand that’s still plastered on his ass and drags it to his dick. Thor applies a little more pressure than necessary and Loki arches his back off the door, whimpering wantonly.

“Not so rough…”

Thor’s hand immediately gentles.

Sweaty calluses sweep across the vein on his underside. A thumb torments the crown of his cock, rubbing across the slit. So rough again. And Loki moans through it like a woman, attempting to mirror the skill but knowing, deep within, nothing really can compare.

“Fuck, yes.” Thor groans, clenching his fist in Loki’s hair again. “You feel so good, Loki, lemme hear your voice.”

Loki holds onto Thor’s shoulder with his other hand as this intensity builds up across his abdomen, hearing Thor cuss, there’s no word for it but ‘sexy’ and he can’t even. “Gonna…” —he forces his eyes shut and curls his fingers on the man’s skin, scratching in the process— “Cumming… shit… Thor!”

“Don’t stop your hand.” Thor mutters into his ear, now gnawing at the earlobe.

At that, Loki sends his sperm gushing out, thick and abundant, but soon he even feels Thor ejaculating in his hand, hot cum rendering him speechless.

“I want you…” He suddenly keens into the hollow of Thor’s neck, like the wait is causing him physical anguish. “I need you with me, inside me, Thor.”

Thor returns his gaze to Loki’s, and they’re staring at each other, a moment of stillness in the midst of the frantic.

“You look pretty done in, and I haven’t gone all the way with you yet.”

“Maybe you should.”

The stillness ends and, once more, it’s frantic groans and hands and moans.

“Take me to bed” —Loki manages to squeak through the urgent kiss— “hurry, Thor.”

“Look, when we bond, a knot is going to form, are you really okay with that” Thor asks, his lips ghosting over Loki’s.

“We’re not only bonding, you’re making love to me.” Loki says, his hand caressing Thor’s cheek, “I don’t care what happens from now on. I can finally be with you without having to worry about anyone anymore.” He adds, a blush glowing over his cheeks, “touch me, mess me up, Thor” he pleads, hugging his mate tightly, “make me yours.”

After a grueling wait of wondering just when is Thor going to be done preparing him —even after the pleasurable blowjob he’s given him, Thor finally lines his cock on Loki’s puckered entrance, both his arms bracing at either side of Loki’s head. He pushes in very slowly, enjoying how Loki clenches around him. The tight heat and Loki’s pornographic cries almost sending him over the edge. When
he bottoms out, Loki opens his legs more for a better penetration.

“It’s half-way in.” Thor eyes his mate for any signs of discomfort beside the scrunched-up face and the clenched fists on the bed sheet, “you okay?”

Loki damps his lips and nods fervently, “come on…” He rolls his hips to cause friction, “move.”

Loki can feel the heat searing his skin with a little sting, threatening to ravish what’s left of his sanity, so he cries, voicing his pleasure because this new found feeling is pretty fulfilling.

The groan in the back of Thor’s throat turns into a low snarl.

Alerted, Loki’s eyes snap open and he sees Thor’s face turning. And as the change gets clearer, even the speed of his hips thrusting against Loki’s picks up.

“Fuck, Thor, you’re gonna break me…!” he manages, barely able to gasp a word, “Oh God! Thor!”

Thor lets out a loud growl, and that’s when Loki sees no other way but to wiggle away from Thor, from the pleasure making a total moaning mess of him, and from the bond.

“Don’t run off” Thor croaks in his deeper-than-usual voice, “I’m not losing control over myself, don’t be afraid.”

Loki pants, because the werewolf now is still fucking into him.

Thor finally slows down, and falls to a slow pace.

**Thou hast the bond,**

**Deny thy seed, or grant thine soul,**

**What thy will is?**

Loki wraps his arms around Thor’s neck again for support, kissing his forehead, the eyelids of his red eyes, and then his lips that have two apparent fangs sprouting out at each of the corner. “I’m yours!” he cries out, “you belong to me, Thor, and I to you, so give me the bite, and this time, make sure it doesn’t get healed.”

Thor lets out a vibrating roar, his fangs jutting and his eyes narrowing complacently, Loki can’t take his eyes away from his mate. He peeks at the sweat glowing over his chest, his arms braced over the bed, and the beautiful curves of his abdomen.

**Be but sworn my love.**” Thor mutters, and uses his own mouth to tilt Loki’s jaw a little higher.

Loki’s heart beats so fast he is amazed it isn’t sprinting right out of his chest, he feels Thor’s thrusts slowly picking up pace again, he moans his approval, struggling not to fall onto the pillows because he can see Thor showing his fangs and closing in the distance between him and Loki’s neck. He finally meets the skin and slowly sinks his teeth into it, sharp tips piercing the skin until blood spills down.
The small curve of Loki’s back arches on the bed like a freaking canal as he whimpers at the stabbing pain and the unbelievable pleasure.

The taste of Loki’s blood inside his mouth is … heavenly; the rush and the pleasure, fusing together like a volcano erupting, it dizzies him along with his wolf who relives in the sensation, alive for even better than the promised climax itself. He groans into the hollow of Loki’s throat, his teeth going deeper, but still careful not to end up breaking his mate’s neck in two.

Loki, on the other hand, is crying out both in pain and pleasure, this is the best he’s felt in his entire life, the bite does not only sting with pain, but it’s making him more and more aroused, tickling the sensual parts of his body, urging him to let go of his human side and just lose himself into pleasure, which he does. He responds by shouting it out, to hell on the world on waiting, werewolves’ rules can go down the drain for all he cares, he’s with his mate, who’s just given him the bite while bonding, and who’s making his mind and heart melt with uncontrollable sensations.

Thor is soon not only planting his fangs, but his seed as well, forcing himself in deep, so deep; he slowly turns into his graceful human shape and he slumps forward over Loki, heat rolling off him in waves, panting heavily and not even sure if it’s him or his mate whose chest is rising; maybe theirs both.

Loki feels a sudden swell, stretching his hole from the inside. He winces but keeps the complaint to himself in order to ride out the afterglow, undisturbed.

That felt fucking amazing.

“Take it out.” Loki croaks out— for no other reason than the fact his rim can feel the thick swell still stretching him. “My voice,” He rubs his throat, “it's hoarse.”

Thor shifts just a little of his body on the bed but his arm remains draped on his mate’s chest, “it’s because you were so loud.”

Loki swipes at his head lazily, too drained to actually move, he supposes wild sex does that to you. “And why are you not taking it out?”

“I knotted, sorry, I can’t take it out.” He says, nibbling at Loki’s ear.

“What!” exclaims Loki, “that’s” – he grunts– “I swear, my life is so strange.”

“It’s only gonna take a few hours, I asked and you said you were okay with it. Look, we can just—” he cuts himself off when he listens in to Loki’s heartbeats, “already fallen asleep.” Thor props up on his elbow, eyeing his mate, sexed out and beautiful. He nuzzles his hair, his neck, the bite mark he’s just given him, breathing in his scent mingled with his own, and a dopey smile crosses his small lips.
Chapter 16

The cadence of birds in the balcony chirping like they’re being choked to death breaks Loki’s sleep. He parts his eyelids and sparkly pupils catch the light gushing in from the balcony’s slightly ajar hinged door, mirroring life. He tries to wriggle from under the heavy arm sprawled across his middle but abruptly halts all motions, face growing hot. To attest his theory, he rotates his hips but the caused friction forces a gasp from his lungs.

“It won’t go down.” Thor speaks with his mouth on Loki’s hair.

“What’ you mean it won’t go down? No offence, dude, but I ain’t keeping that thing in me for the rest of the day.” Loki’s voice is still scratchy from overuse.

“I’m gonna try to unload, but it’s not going to be pretty.”

“I’m sure I can take it,” Loki huffs, “anything but a swollen cock, man, it’s reshaping my ass.” Loki squirms beneath his mate; hands grasping at the quilt of the bed, making it rustle in the process as Thor mounts his back, only hovering at first and the slightest of movements cause even more friction. “Thor, I’m not joking.” He cranes his neck to dislodge him but Thor is built with a lot of muscles, if he doesn’t want to get off, he won’t, and Loki can’t do anything about it. “Take it out.”

Thor is silent, oh God too silent.

Loki’s shuffling comes to ease gradually, trying to get a mental hold of what scheme has the man’s brain wheeling this time when, suddenly, Thor presses down on him. Loki sucks in a surprised gasp, his entire face flames red in response, a reaction he never even thought he’d make.

“Thor…”

He bristles at the fact that said man isn’t even listening as he grinds his groin against Loki’s ass, pushing the swell in deeper. Hot breath fans on his cheek when Thor lowers his lips to the side of Loki’s neck with the bite mark. And without even meaning to, Loki bucks up, instantly feeling the slight shift of the swell.

His stomach churns, not at the revelation, but at the fact that he should be horrified but he isn’t. The swelling growing in volume should rattle his cores, should send him reeling with a look of reproach, but it isn’t.

Thor rubs his cock deeper and Loki wants to moan, the friction inside doing things to him, amazing things, god damn, Loki wants to moan but he bites his bottom lip instead.

“Loki,”

The breathy whisper against his ear sends a shiver down his body, Thor’s never gruffly spoken his name into his ears the way he just did, the breath brushes and it’s enough to set the moan free.

As though enticed by the moan, Thor fists Loki’s hair and pulls, forcing it to the side so that he has a nice view of the bite marks he carved. Loki mews at the rough treatment, fingers clutching at the quilt under him. And then hot cum shoots inside his belly, the knot twitches again, sending more cum
which reaches his p gland, coating it with hot sperm, causing a full-bodied shiver. "T…” Loki whimpers hotly, pupils sinking under his lids and lips parting open, “fuck, Thor…”

So much, Thor is cumming so fucking much like a hose Loki isn’t sure how he is still sane unlike his own cock that is flagging up for intimate attention.

Thor only nibbles at the marks, admiring his handiwork.

Loki throws a hand to Thor’s head, fingers seizing strands of short golden mane and tugging in response. “Fuck…” he whimper and thrusts his ass into Thor’s cock while Thor grinds against it. “Give it to me…” he finds himself pleading, “All of it.”

Thor grunts and shoots more cum into his mate, loving the reaction it earns him.

Loki feels the knot slowly dwindling size-wise, replaced by an over-washing feeling of absolute ecstasy, and it doesn’t take long and he’s also shooting his cum to the sheet underneath.

Thor walks down the marble stairs with bare feet, scratching his nape lazily. He finally opens the door to whoever decided to interrupt his climax, and catches sight of something but quickly closes the door. He rubs his eyes; maybe he’s a little sleep-deprived –or too much sex muddling his sight but he did not just see that! He yanks the door open again just to make sure, and it’s still there: a three feet tall, fur-coated, antlered brown thing with a face almost like a human’s but with groggy, yellow eyes, obviously standing on two hooves, holding a scythe that is twice its size.

“I’ve been watching you for a while now, and after you claimed Loki, I, Roc Ket, have come to give you the punishment you deserve, Thor Dinson.” It says, doggedly.

A rabbit just talked.

Let him get this straight, a rabbit, the little thing that hops a lot and breeds a lot, just talked.

“What?” Thor manages after a worrisome pause.

A loud thump in the ceiling interrupts their bizarre talk, and Thor quickly shuts the door on that rabbit’s snout and bounds up the stairs with an amused smirk. When he opens the door to his bedroom, he finds Loki, dressed in a pair of black boxers only, working on righting the lamp over the nightstand.

“What is it?” Thor asks, aiming the bed in a leisurely manner.

Loki’s shoulders do a little twitch and he turns around looking dejected, “Sorry,” he says, sheepishly, “when I came back from the bathroom and looked at the clock I just panicked, I tried to wear my clothes and be quick but I didn’t see it–”

Thor slumps against the bedspread and pulls Loki down with him, “where ‘you think you’re going?’”

Loki falls over the sheets beside him with a low grunt, “I have to go to work, I didn’t show up at all yesterday, not to mention that’s coming off my paycheck.”

Thor takes a deep breath, inadvertently sniffing along Loki’s neck, his own scent etched in Loki like stone. “You’re not going anywhere,” he almost moans it, deep, sexy voice turning Loki’s worlds
upside down. “You’re staying here today, with me. I even pain-drained you so your back won’t hurt.”

“You did what?”

“It’s a little trick werewolves do to remove pain from the body system, that’s why you don’t feel any pain even though I knotted inside you for the whole night.” He says, “Felt amazing, being able to knot you for the entire night.” Thor explains with a straight face, and Loki wants to smack it with a slipper because nobody should say embarrassing things with a serious face like that.

“Thank you but no thank you.” He says instead, straightening up to leave the bed, “I need to work. I can’t just cuddle all day.”

Thor sits up, ruffling his own hair.

“Not calling it a pejorative idea, but I think I’ll better spend the night at my house. I haven’t been there for a while and someone has to do the cleaning.” He informs, now working on putting on the last of his garments, “you can come over if you want.”

“I think you should stay here tonight.” Thor suggests while giving his mate a dim smile.

“At least look more excited about it.” Loki huffs, no malice in his tone; though if Thor wants him to stay over he should do more than that. “I’m probably doing the humanity a huge favor by bonding with you” –He shakes his heads dramatically before he opens the door– “call me if you change your mind.”

He walks out with his brows scrunched together, brooding over God knows what when he suddenly halts in his tracks and reels towards the door he’s just evicted. He bites his bottom lip meditatively, obviously contemplating something with the disclaimer of adult content’ on the bed in a very compromising position. He knows the way he’s handled this morning after a very intimate time with his mate the night and the knotting thing is way childish and cold, even for him, but Loki usually smoothes over the water when he can’t deal with the situation or when he thinks it’d be too troublesome to do it. He for sure is not oblivious, okay maybe he is, in most cases, but he is not a narcissistic expert who would cut people to the bone and then act like nothing has happened, it is unthinkable when people do that by the way; however, Loki is not the sharing type of person, talking about intimate details is a no-no to him, even remembering is mind-boggling, somehow, shameful even, but all the way amazing and overwhelming. That’s why his eyes can’t meet Thor’s and the excuse of having work to do was a perfected subterfuge to flee the wolf’s den.

Thor puts on his pair of boxers, walks into the bathroom to brush his teeth, “should I count?” he wonders, aloud; he can hear Loki’s footsteps the moment he left the room. He’s descending the stairs, now walking towards the arched doors. He’s taking his shoes from the shoe closet, putting them on, and at last, he opens the front door and quickly slams it shut. He’s scurrying back through the arched entryway again, and up the stairs and– “Now.”

Loki opens the door to the bedroom and leans on it after the lock clicks.

Thor rinses his mouth and walks out, eying his confused and startled mate and, werewolf powers or not, he knows Loki’s about to have a heart attack.

“There’s something outside!” he hollers, vehemently.

“That’s what I’ve been trying to tell you.” Thor grins, the whole sight is amusing.
“I think your house is being infested with huge bunnies!” Loki gushes, “There’s a freaking rabbit at your front door and it’s ridiculously cute too!”

“I know, and, what?” Thor’s eyes bug out, “cute? How in the world is that ugly hoofed monster cute?”

“I can hear you, you know. And I’m a raccoon.” An unfamiliar voice is heard echo inside the room, the other two spin around themselves, inspecting the intruder, and that’s when Thor hears his mate’s unusual but absurdly high pitched ‘kya!’ He faces his direction and sees a fluffy brown raccoon this time in the size of a panda cub standing at Loki’s feet.

“Would you look at this?” Loki crouches down, beaming brightly as if his eyes have caught on the broad daylight, “this cute little thing can actually talk?”

“Will you please stop calling it cute?” Thor begs, sounding weary, “you’ll wet your pants if you see its real form.”

“Are we seriously not going to talk about the fact that it can talk?” Loki looks up at the other, slowly starting to grin from ear to ear, “I mean you can change your form too, what’s the big deal?”

Thor rolls his eyes and Loki promptly thinks his habit of rolling his eyes is slowly rubbing off on his mate as well.

He looks at the raccoon now and quirks a broad smile, “My name’s Lo–”

“Loki. I know who you are.” The deer says, laconically, “I assume your Alpha has yet to tell you of my glorious purpose.”

Loki looks impressed and confused and all together excited, “you are so” –he starts, swallowing until his Adam’s apple juts– “so cute!” he readily tries to pounce the creature in a bone breaking hug but Thor grabs him by the collar and pulls backwards, “What in the world ‘you think you’re doing? You don’t even know what he’s here for.”

“And you do?”

“As a matter of fact, I do, and I quote: ‘here to punish me’. I saw the damn thing before you did, Loki, he’s the one who knocked.”

Loki perks up worriedly, he rises up to his feet to stand beside his mate, “Punish you, for what?”

“Ask him.” He grits out, grudgingly nodding his chin at their spectator.

The raccoon changes its form: black fur and groggy, yellow eyes. Loki recoils slightly to the back. “I’ve been watching you for a while now, and after claiming Loki, I, Roc Ket–”

“You’ve come to give me the punishment I deserve, yeah, I heard you the first time.” Thor dismisses in an indifferent tone, “Now the explaining part.”

“Ket? Are you German?” Loki asks but gets ignored by the two of them.

“I’ve been hired by a certain person to keep close watch on your actions. My orders were to make sure you keep on the family business away from any sort of distractions.” He crosses the floor with a thoughtful expression, whiskers twitching and Loki has to bite on his nails not to jump the damn thing. “I’ve also come to understand that an alien being has infiltrated into your place.”
The other two are listening intently.

The raccoon brakes and turns to look at Loki, “the alien being turned out to be a vessel at first, and then a witch, this is a great concern of mine, for no other reason but be it–”

“My mother hired you, didn’t she?” Thor cuts him off, infuriation clear in his voice.

“Whether she did or not, that is a confidential matter.”

Thor arches his brows lightly and turns around with a sigh, and Loki looks at him with bewildered eyes. “I told her to stop poking her nose into my life.” He breathes out, picking up his cell phone, “This is taking it too far” –before he even types the digits of his mother’s number, the phone in his hand heats up and it turns into a ball of smoke soon after, and, with a hiss, Thor lets go of the object– “What the hell!”

“Look here, Mr. Thor.” The raccoon approaches said male, “granted, I was hired by your mother, but I will not allow you to meddle with my assignment. My orders were to observe and judge, and I am willing to do just that, now” –he turns towards Loki– “it may have escaped your notice but this young man here can manipulate magic, he can cast spells and even summon things.”

“So?”

“Only witches can do that, and by The Law of Werewolves, chapter sixty, page sixty three” –that’s a lot of motherfucking laws– “bonding with a witch is forbidden, violating this rule necessitates a trial, most likely, the court members will request an Alpha replacement.”

Loki’s eyes tremble and he switches to look at Thor, whose face is plastered into a frown as he speaks, “I’m a born Alpha, and I’m free to make my own decisions without having to worry if it freaks mother out. It might be merely a job to you, but this is my life, and I won’t allow a three-foot freak to tell me what I can and can’t do.” He says, “And if you can find a better Alpha than me, then feel free to replace me, although I can’t guarantee you’ll find one.”

The raccoon shoots him a glare and Thor meets it head on, and this is when Loki thinks he needs to interfere, “Okay, guys!” he lifts placating hands, “How about a nice morning meal? You want the usual coffee I make, right, Thor?” he asks, and he quickly ignores the puzzled look on said male’s eyes as he faces the raccoon, “what about you, Mr. Bunny? Do you eat normal food or do you want me to fetch you some carrots?”

The small creature fumes and his groggy, big eyes bug, his nostrils flaring, “This is absurd. I am no farm animal! I will not tolerate this maltreatment!” he seethes, “also, I’m a raccoon!”

Loki scratches his head, it’s not like he scalded its tongue. “Touché!” he says, “Also, if what you’re saying is true, then I suggest you recheck your whole point of view.”

The other two knit their brows in response.

Loki crosses his arms over his chest, “You say you’ve been keeping an eye on this place, and on his actions, right?” he asks, gesturing at his mate, “and while we ignore the actual creepy part of it” –he mutters to himself but speaks on when Thor snaps his attention back to them– “by doing exactly that, you should’ve been able to realize that Thor here has been doing a great job, and if you haven’t noticed, he has a great pack; they follow his orders and they respect him and love him a lot, or is that insignificant to you?” he doesn’t wait for the other to answer, but he does saunter towards his mate, “He’s a capable man, he does his job seriously and he cares about the well-being of his pack, and I don’t want his hard work to go to waste because you deem me troublesome. If anything,
I want you to overlook the fact that nobody knows what I really am, that’s still under process since I’m a lot of things; trust me you don’t want that monkey on your shoulder. I want you to look at the fact that I care about him and I would never attempt to hurt him or harm his pack.”

The smirk on Thor’s lips is growing cocky as he leisurely hooks his arm around the small of Loki’s back, and wordlessly pecks a kiss on his temple; the normalcy of this very small gesture is kind of refreshing Loki thinks. He still needs to put some clothes on though, wandering around like freaking Tarzan.

“Very well then,” The raccoon says, looking somehow apprehensive. “But I will not tolerate the way you address me—”

Thor blows a sigh and unhooks his arm from where it is to open the window to his right, “looks like you can’t tolerate a lot of things” he proclaims, now lifting the animal by its fur, “stop nosing around and go suck a carrot or something.” He offers, and then he kicks the deer outside his window and can hear it from the sky threatening to return and that he’s a reindeer. He closes the window and dusts off his hands, “Problem solved”.

Loki is gaping, he feels a lot of things, but delight is not one of them, “that’s animal cruelty!”

Thor snorts and picks his phone from the ground, “and this is not?” he shows him the burned screen with his upper lip curled in disdain.

It doesn’t even have a pulse, you maniac.

“You didn’t have to go that far.” Loki mumbles because for some reason it feels like if he lets out even one octave higher, he’ll follow the bunny from the window.

Thor raises a brow at him, “and didn’t you have to go to work?”

Looking at the other’s cold glare, Loki prefers to jet for his work with his head still intact, thank you very much; no one likes to get mentally and emotionally threatened.

“You’re no fun.” he grouses, “fine, I’m going. Call you later.”

He finds his bike just outside and he doesn’t even need to contemplate it much because it’s very obvious that this was Thor’s doing, he must have called one of his pack to bring it to his personal inn. Loki is thankful, trust him he is, but he dislikes it when people are being used for his own convenience. He is no important person, and walking can’t possibly, least correct, harm him.

They did it. They actually did it.

They didn’t just touch or jerk each other off, no. They made love, and Thor’s thing was inside of him the entire night and, then, the shower, so much came out he thought he was going to drown in it. He can still feel his hole a little stretched, twitching around nothing.

Last night, he and Thor had sex.

Holy crap!

Although he teased his cock a few times not letting him have his orgasm in peace, Thor, in all
honestly, was nothing if not gentle, which, have you met the son of a bitch, he and gentle are on two opposite directions. Thor being gentle is a rare thing, it’s a demeanor that doesn’t get shown that very often; so for him to handle Loki like he’s a piece of glass that could break under too much pressure is quite remarkable. Loki, on the other hand, had never felt the way he did last night in the entirety of his life. He was thoroughly loved and cared for. He was carefully and eagerly kissed, touched, looked at… He was well and truly Thor’s sole attention and he loved every minute of it.

He doesn’t understand his open display of his desires, or how he didn’t mind spreading his legs for Thor and sharing body heat with another man. Actually, he does, he just doesn’t agree with the way he did it now that he’s back to his senses. Thor didn’t seem to mind so neither should he, but, God, he’s a guy, and he moaned like that… He touches the bite mark, barely registering the way it stings.

No, he’s been putting it wrong.

He and Thor finally made love.

This and that, and he is finally at his own apartment, cross his heart he is grateful his parents didn’t leave him homeless. He changes into a Green-day shirt and plain jeans, and he prays Martha doesn’t locate him like a WLR, who in their right mind would want to have a talk about the dead with a smile!

Alfred is inside the shop, inspecting his beloved items with longing eyes when Loki walks in after greeting him, shoulders slouched and brows drawn. “Sir, I need to talk to you.” He says, “It’s about yesterday, sir.” Oh, how he’s humble like a sheep.

The other man dismisses his talk with a lazy wave over his shoulder, “don’t worry about it, I had a call from Thor and he explained everything to me, and even though I was planning to cut it from your salary–”

Loki winces inwardly, no, his lovely money!

He’s literally about to cry, but Alfred surprises him when he adds, hurriedly, “but decided not to, the salary is not a lot to begin with and you’re a reliable person, besides, your alibis are very convincing especially when it’s Mr. Thor who went out of his way to call and explain everything.”

Loki’s legs almost collapse with relief, “Yea. Long live Thor, the hero.”

“By the way, son” he leans over the counter to meet Loki’s eyes, “it’s unusual of Mr. Thor to do something like this for anyone, do you know him, by any chance?”

Yea, he does. He and Thor had hot passionate sex last night is the embarrassing truth but “I work for him sometimes, that’s all.”

“How admirable!” the other nods, “young people nowadays do very little work but complain a lot, you are a model of a hard working young man, you can set an example for them.”

You have no idea.

Loki smiles, nodding, because at least the complaining bunch have a normal life.
The shop owner turns around ready to leave when he suddenly halts in his tracks, “there was something else on my mind, but I can’t seem to remember it” He says in a heard mumble, “I’ll call you if I remember, my memory is getting weaker I’m afraid.” He finally leaves to his own business.

Loki spends the next hour working and then he admits to himself that he’s missed Sif and wants to see her, he takes out his phone and notices more missed calls registered, this time he calls the number back.

“The number you have dialed—”

He curses but moments later, he receives a text message which reads [I can’t talk right now, but I’ll call you back when I can.]

And his stomach churns.

He goes through his brain memory to see if he knows someone who talks this friendly without reservation, but he can’t seem to find the answer. He will make sure to pick up this one’s call if they ever call again. Sif, on the other hand, is sounding cheerful and Loki is very much curious to know why.

“You see, the other day when I told you I had lost my powers, I was certain it was permanent, but that’s not the case at all” she chirps, “it seems like girls have this thing called ‘menstruation’” –Loki cringes because bless whoever had to go through the process of explaining that to her– “and for some reason when I had it too, my powers weakened, but soon as it ended, I regained my powers back again.”

“Hm,” he hums, understandably, “Don’t pull a muscle. Also, I don’t want you telling anybody any of this, for now.”

“Why?”

“Just because.” He shrugs, “Sif, to me, the fact that you lose your powers when you’re on your period is very dangerous news, now I know that you’re at your weakest when it happens, and if others were to know, then who knows how the information would come out.”

“As much as I want to agree with what you’ve just said, but I can’t see why I shouldn’t tell them.” She hints, “You know we’re pack now, don’t you?”

“Don’t be so sure, Sif.” Loki warns, “Besides, I’m your guardian and you’ve already admitted to that, so just do as I say.”

“I don’t understand you anymore.” She sighs heavily, “Didn’t you and Thor bond last night? Does it mean you still don’t trust him?”

“Your situation is different.” He tells her, “and I want to keep you safe, don’t go around telling people of your weaknesses. If you can’t even keep that a secret, don’t expect others to.” There is a vague pause when Sif doesn’t say anything in return. “Also,” he adds, “I want you home tonight, no staying out and no lingering outside.”

“But, Loki!” She protests, “I’ve already promised Wade that I’d meet him.”

He sighs, “don’t expect me to be tolerant after today, I’ll meet you later then.”

Now he’s sounding like that bunny, too.
Hours later, Robin walks into the shop with a blue face.

“Howdy,” Loki greets, “it’s been a while, how ‘you feeling?”

Robin looks like he rather the ground could swallow him alive than converse with anything with a pulse judging by the terribly reddish blush on his cheeks. He nods and takes out a crunched paper from the pocket of his JNY work jeans, “do you have this?”

Loki takes the paper and inspects it with furrowed brows, and then he finally makes out what the drawing means, “is this supposed to be a winged horse?”

The other nods, “it’s called Chollima.”

Loki remembers seeing its statuette somewhere around there so he hops off his stool and aims the shelves, and Robin doesn’t follow him like he usually does. Finally, he finds the appareled marble little thing and brings it to the counter to be scanned, “By the way, do you remember that time when you came in and we talked about the strange things that happen at night in town?” he asks, trying to sound indifferent and casual.

The boy nods again, but this time more fervently.

“Well, do you remember when you were talking and suddenly blurted out the word ‘pack’? I wonder what that was about.” He is scanning the item very slowly as to try to coax the answer from Robin, but Robin is awfully shier today that he hasn’t even met his eyes yet.

“You remember that but you don’t recall ripping me off three weeks ago when I bought the figurine of the winged monkey.” He bites out, acidly.

Loki is taken aback; how does one do a 180 from Piglet to Yosemite Sam in less than two seconds for no apparent reason? He humors the kid anyway and does a double mental check and actually remembers. Loki didn’t rip him off per se, it’s just that the item he purchased at that time had been the last edition and Alfred put a lit extra price on it. “It would seem so” he says, “Well, to make it up to you, this one is on me.” Because seriously, no offence Robin, but Loki doesn’t want people mugged in the alleys for three bucks.

The aspiring young man gulps his saliva like he’s plugging an unripe Quince down his throat and flits his eyes away, “I don’t want it anymore.” He huffs on a pout and attempts to run for the door, but he doesn’t get very far because Loki is on his feet before Robin realizes and has his elbow in his hand. “Robby, man” he tightens his grip, “what is it? Did I hurt your feelings or something?”

“Please let go of me!”

If Loki is a little honest with himself, he can clearly see that this is the first time Robin yells at him like this. The perplexed expression he’s had till now is gone and replaced by a very enraged look.

“Don’t raise your voice.” He orders in an unusually cold tone, “If I hurt you before without knowing then you should outright face me outright, I don’t want you hiding behind your figurines because I know you’re an amazing person and I don’t want to us to be become enemies.”

“It’s…” Robin lowers his head, the blush spreading across the back of his neck, “it’s not like that.”

“Then what is it? Why can’t you even look me in the eyes?” Loki’s voice goes up.
“Please, Loki, I don’t want to talk about it, at least not now.” He bows his head and untangles his arm from Loki’s hold.

Loki can’t see anything beyond the pink nape. “Give me your cell phone.” He orders out of the blue after he lets go of the other’s surprisingly slender arm.

Robin finally looks up and at him, “what do you want it for?”

Loki takes it out from his pocket anyway, types his own number and registers it. “You have my number now, call me when you’ve calmed down. I won’t let it slide, Robin.”

Later when his work is done, he closes down and then inspects the crimson sky which he is certain he can never tire of, and the more he thinks about it, the more it’s clearer how it’s slowly infiltrating into his veins; the smell of the earth, the air and the water, becoming one with his existence and filling up every corner of his being, luring him towards this uninhabited side of the town where green is all you see. He’d want to get lost in it, leave everything behind and just go where his senses take him to, but he can’t. Although he loves the enhancement of his now sharp awareness, he just can’t trust it enough to follow its source.

He goes grocery shopping and then he heads to his apartment, he can’t say for sure whether he’s truly missed being by himself enjoying the isolation of his room or not (though Sif was going to get whooped for ignoring his orders), but he knows that it’s been a while since he had that sorrowful dream, and he doesn’t even know why, but he still prefers not having it.

After preparing a delicious meal for himself –because he’s still eating delicious food even if a tragedy was to happen– he flops on the couch to watch the news –yes, the news! He can’t even believe how much he’s picked from the pack. And even though he’s glad the bodies stopped dropping around their peaceful town, he knows deep down that what he’s learned about the history of this town from Thor’s cryptic talk is by far scarier than his own dreary dreams. He is no laidback, he’s always known about those dark secrets that people would rather keep locked behind their doors, just as he knows now that his headaches are caused by the wolves as well, so as long as they exist around him he can never say goodbye to the pain.

The TV is still on but Loki loses interest in that non-ending circle of commercials, so he turns it off and leans to the back, replaying all the events of the past two weeks. He doesn’t even realize he’s out until he’s dreaming of a happy family around the dinner table and all of a sudden is caught on fire. He knows where this is going and what happens next, and he is definite he doesn’t want to see it so he forces himself out of his dreams and then he is up. He’d lift up this curse that’s devastating him alive if it was truly a curse, but matters of fact cannot really be changed, it is not even fiction represented as facts, but he wonders if changing airs could solve his problem. He’s lived under this roof his whole life, he doesn’t know if he can test that theory.

His dry throat takes him into the kitchen to drink some water just after he peeks at his phone screen which shows three in the morning, and that’s when he hears it, what starts off as a shriek but slowly turns into a loud laugh. He wonders what could make his old neighbor laugh like that at three in the morning. She usually is fast asleep around nine or ten, so the fact that she’s staying up is making
Loki pretty curious. Soon his curiosity turns into something akin to regret after he hears the laughter turning into a cry, and then into a grieving wail. He walks back to the couch in light steps, unaware of the reason behind it. He curls up on himself and hides his ears under his hands, wishing the wailing could end soon. He’s never wanted to be the one staying behind while Bucky crosses the river, he never wanted to be the one to survive and not even bid him a proper goodbye and he never wished for any of this. He wanted to have a normal life, he wanted to be with his parents until they all grew old and he wanted to finish school and get a job and have a wife and kids, the idea of the circle of life does not sound so boring after all.

He doesn’t know who’s behind the desk of Wish Granting Affairs Department but he or she sucks so much at their job, turning the crying into sheer laughter again, and this time it’s not regret that Loki feels, it’s fear; utter, unspeakable fear, spreading in him like a disease.

Is he going to spend his life like this?

Moments later and he hears someone knocking on his door, he props up, tears slipping from his wide, weeping eyes. He stands up to open it but he soon hears the wailing and the crying again and his legs freeze to the spot with terror.

The pounding on his door returns and Loki whimpers like a helpless animal driven to a corner.

He’s in this stance of alarm and horror when his phone suddenly rings and he almost flies out of his meat suit. Wary, blown pupils on the door, Loki backs to the couch and picks up his phone. He takes a glimpse of the caller’s ID through the corner of his eyes; as though if he looks away, whatever is behind his door could jump his bones, and man does it feel like a miracle having this little fur ball save the day, “Thor, hey, what’s up?” Dude, you have no idea how much you’ve just saved him.

“You didn’t call at all.” The man says in his deep voice. “You said you’d call.”

Loki smiles to himself, it’s weak, it’s tentative, he’s grateful his mate can’t see it. That was an offhand promise, so he never even expected Thor to take it seriously. It is things like this that make Loki so helplessly drawn to Thor.

“What’s wrong?” Thor demands.

Even if he can’t see it, he can still feel that something is not right. And wow, Loki gives him credit for that. A while ago, when he was still kept in the dark and didn’t know who Thor Dinson was and how great sex with Thor Dinson is, or how much he’d been missing on with his psychological alienation; aside from Bucky, nobody really bothered to second-guess his Game Face. And Thor does things to him; he doesn’t make him weak. He’d been when he pushed his pretense to the extreme. No. Thor makes him weird. Bad connotation aside, Loki can feel himself slowly losing his defenses.

“Nothing, man, I just got startled at the crack of dawn, nothing’s wrong.” He lies, and shortly remembers Thor can hear his heartbeats.

“What’re you hiding from me?” the other asks, on cue.

“Nothing, I mean it.” He tries for softer, “where ‘you now anyway?” he wonders, in an attempt to switch the subject, which he succeeds at when Thor answers. “I’m on my way to Lighthouse town, mother called, said we needed to talk.” He breathes out a sigh, “bet that rabbit told her what
happened this morning.”

Loki chuckles because he truly finds Thor’s and that bunny’s antics enjoyable.

Someone please tell them it’s a raccoon!

“I hear knocking on your door.” He suddenly points out, and Loki wants to plug his good ears with cellophane or sand and enjoy the silence that’d come after.

“Yea, it must be my neighbor, he can’t even tell his apartment from mine when he’s dead drunk.” He winces, hoping that will pass for the truth.

“I’m hanging up.” Thor announces and doesn’t wait for Loki’s protest.

The latter is sitting on his couch, bewildered. Did he just hang up on him? He crunches his nose and flumps the phone on the couch. Thor better pray for forgiveness because Loki knows magic now, he can grill his werewolfic ass extra crispy before he even knows what hit him.

The knocking soon ends and so does the wailing. Loki, at last, goes into another battle to conquer insomnia. Although after only half an hour or so, he hears his phone ringing again. He picks it up and with an annoyed sigh, he grouches “What ‘you want now, didn’t you just hung up on me?”

“Open the door.”

Loki narrows his eyes at the empty, is this guy for real?

He quickly bolts up to his feet and runs towards the door to open it, and that walking pile of handsome and gorgeous and thoughtful is standing at his door like a delivered parcel with Wade as his pseudo-shadow. Crap. It’s the same man he bonded with last night, and kissed and touched. It’s the same man whose big cock stayed in his ass the whole night. It’s the same man Loki had jerked off to before kidney-eating ladies became surrogate daughters or before his house became an official preserve of the supernatural.

But Thor is really here.

“What happened to your trip?”

Thor walks in and toes-off his shoes, as does the other. He is obviously ignoring the questions Loki keeps throwing at him when he finally turns around and takes Loki in a marble hug, “what does it take to bring down your defenses?”

Loki feels his breath knocked out of him, he is utterly confused and lost by that. Happy, too. He’s so fucking happy Thor is with him and he wants to wrap his arms around him and purr into his neck and then kiss him drunk. But he wants his questions answered first, and most of all, he wants Thor to stop hugging him when a member of his pack is around because, more than ghosts, he feels burdened and embarrassed when he and Thor’s closeness is scrutinized by peoples’ eyes. “What is it?”

Thor pulls back and twines his fingers with Loki’s, knocking their foreheads together, “What the hell happened here, place smells awful.”

“You just ruined the mood, good job, dickhead.” Loki mutters but quickly closes his eyes. Although Wade is looking like he couldn’t be emotionally moved even if Loki saved a puppy from drowning in a raging river, the close spectatorship, again, makes him uncomfortable.
He wants to embrace this man who held off an important trip for his sake and cry with all his might, but men aren’t supposed to cry because they are scared, a man is supposed to cry only three times in his life: when he’s born, when his parents die, and when he loses his country, or so the saying goes. But the relief leaves Loki’s legs wobbly, and honestly, he just wants to leave snob and tears on the man’s shoulder. “I’m glad you came, though you didn’t have to take it this far.” He chuckles, now motioning with his head, “come in, it’s pretty late.”

After spending a solid twenty minutes assuring Thor that his mate’s safety was not, in any shape or size, threatened, Wade retreats to Sif’s room, muttering a sleepy ‘she’s with the pack’ over his shoulder.

“Your dates have been increasing a lot, lover boy. I don’t want you stealing her away from me that much.” He finally states his complaints.

“What ‘you talking about?” is Wade’s honest answer.

“I know you and Sif are dating.”

“No, we aren’t.” says Wade, “who’s filling your head with lies, man?”

“Wait, didn’t you guys confess to each other in the Ferris wheel?”

“I did, but she turned me down and that was it.”

“What about your house, did she really go with you to your house?” if anything, the look on Loki is very much amusing.

“I’m telling you we’re not seeing each other, why the hell would I take her to my house?” he grits out, bitterly, “please, stop reminding me of this.”

Loki finally sees the melancholy swirling inside his eyes and he sets the man free from his misery.

Thor and Loki are on the couch, side by side, not saying anything until the latter finally decides to tear that silence apart.

“I’ll deal with Sif later, but has your mother finally decided on taking things with you a little more seriously?”

Thor leans heavily on the backrest, “she actually told me to bring you along, guess she wants to meet you.”

Loki’s mouth hangs open, “and you were planning to go by yourself, why?”

“Because” he grumbles “mother is judgmental. She won’t try to understand, she’ll assume things after one glance at your pretty face.” He waves two fingers, gesturing at Loki’s face.

Loki’s smirk widens, reeling his head to his mate, “you think my face is pretty?”

Thor rolls his eyes and straightens up, “since I can’t go back to my house, how about you give me a place to sleep?”

“Mm, for some reason my room rejects you, long story” –he adds after the other gives him a look–”
you can use the couch. I’ll go get you a blanket.”

He comes back with a large and white quilt, “if you still feel cold, open that built-in linen and pick what you want.”

“Loki,” the other calls out, seemingly annoyed at the room service. Well, suck it, rich boy. Loki doesn’t bathe in milk or wear silk. “Sleep on the couch,” he ushers, “I need to make sure of something.”

Loki has a pretty decent idea why his guest is being such a whiny little bitch, he groans irritably and flumps back-first into the couch, blowing a weary sigh, “it’s not Ostrich feather but it’s still comfortable, I promise.”

Thor surprises him when he presses Loki down to the couch on his side, and insinuates himself behind to spoon him, all the while grabbing the cover with him to fling it over them.

A wave of safety and home tides over Loki, he doesn’t even hate it. He repositions himself properly until he’s comfortable under Thor’s heavy arm around his middle. “I’m going with you tomorrow.” He informs his mate who is at the moment shoving his face into the crook of Loki’s neck and making soft throaty noises. “I should meet her and explain everything.”

Thor’s motions pause, “You still don’t get it, do you?” He is awed, “I don’t want to explain my life choices to anyone, and I most certainly don’t want you to do it for me.”

“I’m not doing it for you,” Loki amends, “I’m doing it for me.”

Thor gives him silence in return.

“I want her to get to know me. I want to prove to her how much I want this, and how much I deserve to be with you.” He explains, “Don’t tell me you don’t care about that because I do. I can’t stand the thought of people disagreeing with what we have, especially if it’s your mother. Now, I may not have parents whom I can share these happy news with, but I want to make your mother happy about us, and I’m pretty certain I don’t appreciate you getting worked up over this and saying no one can tell you what to do.”

“We’ll see how it goes.” This is all the man says as he leans in for another languid kiss to his temple before he bids good night.

Loki closes his eyes, and he can finally sleep at ease.

The morning sun today is faint and in no mood to glow, but Loki forces himself to wake up and the first thing he notices is the empty space behind him. So he really went by himself, that idiot. He picks his phone and goes to check on Wade but finds that the guy had evacuated already.

He carries on his usual work, but seeing how he’s slept at almost four in the morning and woke up at seven, he can really use some shuteye since not many customers are coming anyway. He leans on the counter and closes his eyes, it’s sweet, and alluring, the taste of the very few trances of a nap.
He sees the familiar door and he walks through it.

“So you have come, again” The Imugi announces.

“So I have.” Loki sighs and sits on the floor, cross-legged.

“What other queries might you have for me this time?” he asks. His tail swivels effortlessly but the sound it results in sends a shiver down the man’s spine.

“I don’t know,” he shrugs, “since I’m here it must mean I passed out on the counter.”

“So you have finally been marked by the wolf.” the Imugi points out.

“How the do you know that?” he asks, but quickly holds up a hand, “know what? Don’t answer that.” He doesn’t think he has the capacity for that yet, and can’t he keep anything a secret from anyone anymore?

“Congratulations are in order, I believe.” He relents, and Loki’s jaw almost drops with surprise. A colossal reptile did not just congratulate him for getting drilled, balls deep!

“Actually, there was something I wanted to ask you, can you please just tell me what I am?”

The Imugi’s body snakes more and Loki can’t come to tolerate the grating noise it causes.

“No knowledge comes without cost, lad.” He answers, “And just as your ancestors sacrificed to attain answers, so will you.”

Loki’s lips part to utter something but he’s soon being pulled outside the door and he wakes up startled.

“Sorry, I tried to wake you up several times, didn’t mean to start you.” A teen girl explains. Small eyes worrying, lips pressing together.

He gives her a serene smile in return, “It’s gotten this late already; so did you buy anything?”

“Yes, this” –she points at a silver flask with a blush– “please scan it for me.”

It’s Loki’s policy not to question his clients’ choices or pry on their privacy, but he can’t have a teen girl buying shady stuff like this, “I’m sorry, I can’t sell it to you if you’re buying it for personal use, and you shouldn’t drink.”

“Oh no, it’s not for me! It’s a present for my dad, tomorrow is his birthday.”

She waits for the item to get scanned, and after she leaves, he sits and stew about the pack’s birthdays. It piqued his attention and he knows it’s not going anywhere. Especially when he realizes he has no idea when or where Thor was born. He puts it in his mind to bring it up when his mate is back from his trip, and he notes it to be subtle. And you know what, he even thinks that sending a text now would be a terrific idea and he does set himself to do it but refrains from that when he reads the text he’s received from the same mysterious caller.

[I came to see you last night, but it seems you weren’t there.]

Loki texts him back, [It was 3 in the effing morning, who does that?]

The reply comes soon after, [You are right, but I still want to see you.]
Loki’s heart gives a loud thump. He types in reply, [I don’t know you, and I don’t want to get involved with you, stop bothering me.]

And the replies stop, Loki takes the signal as his cue to close down and go home.

He’s walking under the unusually bright sky night, and then he takes out his phone and sends a text to Thor, his upper teeth biting down his bottom lip.

[It just crossed my mind, but that night we first met, how did you know where I work?]

Expecting no reply back from Thor, he aims to return his cell into his pocket but a call surprises him.

“Hello?”

“Loki, It’s Tony!” He says, joyfully.

“Ah, Mr. Stark!” Loki gushes, “how’s it going?”

“I guess you finished work by now, right?” he asks, “let’s meet, I’ll come get you.”

Man, his timing frigging sucks.

It’s just a few minutes later when Stark comes by in his Porsche, he picks him up from the spot he’s been waiting at and they make their way to the only club in town, Paradise.

“Order anything you want, it’s all on me.” Stark offers as he gets out of the car and locks the doors.

Loki shakes off his bitterness, especially after the awkward ride here where they exchanged only a few words, and he is slowly feeling thrilled for the free booze that is sure to follow, and more than thrilled, there’s really no other word to it.

The club’s entire foundation is bouncing with the loud music, the disco ball flowing overhead, gets blocked when the smoke machine hisses and then there’s fog everywhere, penetrated by multicolor laser beams.

Loki observes the effects and the beats thumping in the background, finally spotting Stark prodding his way to the dance floor where two plump ladies with lush bodies are ushering him closer. Loki lifts a thumps-up when the man winks at him for the prizes he’s going to score tonight, and goes to order the drinks. He might not be good with loud atmospheres –he likes to live his life in the background because he’s really not a huge fan of spotlights– but he’s making tonight an exception. Someone is paying for his drinks, Thor reciprocates his feelings, the pack admitted to liking him a little tiny bit, and again, Thor, okay so the bit about immolation and angry mothers isn’t very worth celebrating, but, free booze! So he might as well drink the night away.

“Hey, easy now, tiger.” Tony snatches the fifth glass from him and drinks what’s in it. “We’re here to have fun, not to get shitfaced, well that too, but fun first.”

Loki is almost gone, the tip of his nose and the blushed cheeks give him away; “since when do you
“Come on, man.” He drags Loki by his arm, “you need to dance it off.” He advises, and Loki has no mental strength to go into a scientific debate with Tony about the capacity of inebriated brains.

He steps to the dance floor and grabs Loki closer, the look on his face when he turns around is of content, but compared to Thor’s dangerous eyes, Tony’s are way off. They’re dancing together with the same lush ladies grinding on them and sliding along his body, redefining his body with their tits and all this for free! His childhood friend would have bitten down on his nails with envy –he is suddenly startled when calloused hands rest on his hips. Turns out Tony is front grinding on him now, and it’s a little unsettling because he’s never anticipated a dude’s sack pressing on his, and what makes it even more disconcerting is Tony leaning into his neck and scenting the spot where Thor left the bite marks, still raw and sensitive, as though to ascertain the significance of its existence.

Loki groans his discomfort, stepping to the back a little. It’s true he bonded with a man, and it’s true his heart beats like a cat’s whenever Thor’s name is even mentioned, but that doesn’t mean he goes around having the hots for every guy with muscles. And Tony needs to understand that this is just Loki letting off some steam, not cheating on the man he loves.

Tony pulls away, and for a brief second, icy blue hues glow within his pupils which has Loki backing away altogether.

It’s around ten in the evening when Tony calls it quit and suggests giving him a ride back home.

“Holy jeez man, that Wang lady was loaded!” Tony gushes, single-handedly turning the steering wheel to the left, “boobs, man, boobs, and hers were huge” –he estimates the size of her breasts with his hand as he cups the air with his other unoccupied hand– “What about the one with the yellow shorts?” he points his thump towards the direction of the club, “he’d topple over me any time he wants, I’m telling you” Which kind of shows where his sexuality lies.

Loki barks a laugh, “he’d match your car.”

Tony returns his laugh, “I’d probably keep him in the trunk for safekeeping,” he chuckles now, “he was totally hitting on you, though.” And that’s the understatement of the year because yellow-short guy was strong on coming on him.

“You saw that?” Loki is impressed, “no offense but you’re so sharp about the weirdest thing.”

“Tell me you didn’t like it and I’ll stop.” He challenges with a cocky sneer.

“Seriously, man” Loki shakes his head as though he’d shake his memory off, because bet your ass he didn’t like it. “Talk about awkward. I’m going to fold the dear memory of me getting sexually harassed by squeeze-y hands and store it in my never-to-open-again book of memories, and just let it die.”

They laugh jointly this time, and Tony can’t fight the urge to tease, “Why, he liked you. You’d make a pretty good pair.”

“Wouldn’t pick him even if a tornado took over and there was just me and him stranded.”

Tony rocks in his seat as he laughs and gives the poor steering wheel a punch, and then he glances
fleettingly at the one riding shotgun after he calms down, an eyebrow going up, “alright then, what about me? Wouldn’t you give me a go?”

“You laugh like a hyena gone nuts, so that’s a no for you.”

Tony proves his point when he laughs again. “Wade?” He changes the candidate.

“Don’t even get me started, did you see how he lurks?” he flails a hand towards the direction of the woods afar, “the guy could literally be lurking as we speak, with eyes ready to flash laser.”

Tony’s laughter now is more controlled, “Peter?”

“He goes with the tide and is good at it,” Loki looks out the window, “he really needs to trust himself a little more.”

“Okay, Steve now”

“No and a hundred nos.” Loki rubs an eye, “I bet he’s the jealous type, those are never good and would suffocate you with how paranoid they are, eventually, they’re just never going to trust you, so what’s the point?”

Tony purses his lips, impressed, “well said.”

Loki sighs in relief when Tony doesn’t add Thor to the list.

Did he want to delve into this man’s and Thor’s past together? Yes, he did. However, any other talks about Thor were masterfully ignored by the man and so Loki didn’t bother to pry.

The Porsche smoothly pulls by the side of Loki’s residence, and before vacating the car, he bows his head, “Thanks for tonight, I really needed it.”

“Don’t even mention it,” Tony shows him teeth when he beams, “call me whenever you’re up for some fun.”

“Good night, then.” He says, tersely.

The car finally drives off and Loki sighs in a full-bodied manner, breathing in the chilling breeze of September’s first cold night.

Moments later and he feels a buzz coming from his pocket, and he can’t believe the way his heart jumped up almost to his throat. He can’t really tell if the adrenaline is rolling in because of fear or excitement, he does hope this night gets a few more days to finally get out, they can rebuke him later.

He quickly fishes his phone out of his pocket, finding a text that reads [I saw you at the shop two months ago, you were petting a stray cat, and I remember thinking to myself ‘he’s beautiful’.]

Loki mutters undecipherable noises, he wants to punch something. How can Thor say embarrassing things so easily and expect Loki to go along with it. He vibrates silently with delight for a beat before tilting his head back and letting out a sigh of relief. He will appreciate this feeling and engrave it into his heart, mind and soul. His entire being is not going to forget how he is overshadowed by delight and happiness right now, although he can’t bring himself to deny the fact that he’s gone and done
what the pack and Thor have been telling him not to, but he likes to go his own pace, and just like he also hates judgmental people, he also doesn’t one to be one. And today, he got to know a little side of Tony he didn’t even know the guy had in him; judging people based on what others tell you is not only wrong, but completely unjust to the party involved.

He is mentally preparing a speech to tell the pack if this night ever gets out when he hears the one thing that can buckle his knees, turn his darkness to light, and his despair to happiness.

“Loki.”

Said male reels around very slowly, praying what he is hearing now is not just a drunken reverie, praying what he is hearing is just a projection, a mind trick to revive the voice of his only salvation, the key to his profound happiness.

He sees him, at last.

He wants to cry, he wants to scream with joy and sadness, and he wants to smile. And only now does he understand the crying and the laughter he’s heard the night before coming from Martha’s walls. She was right in not knowing what to do exactly, because, he too, is at a loss for words.

“We finally meet.”

Loki’s vision becomes blurry with unshed tears and his jaw tightens, attempting to hold in his unspoken words. But he forces himself, he puts all his power to cross that line and blurt out the words because the other’s smile is as warm, bright and amiable as ever.

“Bu… Bucky.”
Chapter 17

Hours of driving have worn Thor out. He hated long road trips in confined spaces the most; he’s a werewolf, he should be prowling through the forest on four as the mystery of the full-moon in the clear sky draws him like bacon. He should be digging claws into wet soil as he and his pack hunt down some poor bastard: rogue omegas. God, those always give him the worst of headaches because hunting them down as they cross his territory has always been a task when ethics have become part of it; he curses tech jargons for how sociable werewolves have come to be.

Or better yet, he should be making up for the time he and Loki weren’t even a thing, but not this – driving for almost an hour, in an eye-catching piece of conveyance, on a bumpy road? If his ancestors heard about this, they’d turn in their graves.

Signs of him approaching his mother’s villa finally give, and he can’t help the frustrated sigh when he glances over at the massive structure—his mother sure obsessed over majestic dwellings.

The villa is incorporated into one of the eerier mountains that stand in rows, one of the several winding roads—which he’s been driving on—leads to the lower level of the forest, and he muses the thought of a fortress surrounding the area, it’d make the place look like a painting.

He finally reaches the place and drives up a sloping driveway and through the sliding gates, finding several, well-dressed servants at the front door for him. Thor fights the urge to roll his eyes; he’s told them in more than an occasion that he hated the attention. He leaves the car, knowing the guard will take care of it, and he saunters in, nodding as they greet him with ‘welcome home, young master’.

He walks into the hall that has plaster pillars at each side, and through the massively arched entrance, into a delicately balanced living-room beneath vaulted white ceiling. He grinds to a stop when he finally sees her, perched over a velvet armchair, gazing somewhere over her late husband’s portrait placed on the mantel of the fireplace.

“Evening, mother,” He greets, tone a notch down with exhaustion and one up to yearning.

“Thor,” she relents, levering up to her feet, “it’s been a long, long time.”

He cocks a brow at her, “did you” – he furrows his brows— “did you just quote Harry James?”

“And Kitty Kallen” She adds, approaching her son now to give him one of her rare dearly hugs, and he stiffens, the same reaction that would make his face scrunch up inadvertently. She is showing him openly how much she’s missed him, something she almost never does. His mother laughs at her son and holds him by the shoulders, looking behind at the entrance hall and back at his face, “where is he?” she asks, “I thought I said to bring him with you.”

“Well,” he cracks his neck, lazily, “there’s just me for now.” He offers, “You’ll meet him after you and I have a good talk.”
She gives a slight nod, “But you know better than to dismiss an order.”

“That was an order?” he snorts, “mother, you’ve gone soft.” He smiles, and instead of clawing his cheeks, she actually smiles back.

“Don’t underestimate me, young man,” She chuckles and Thor slowly feels the tension leaving them alone. “You’ve found a mate, and I’ll have to meet him before we celebrate, considering that I had to go through the trouble of dealing with Jane’s family, to clean your mess, as usual.”

“She tried to rip my mate’s heart out, you expected me to sit by and be wowed? She had it coming.” He sighs, “Look, mother, I’m tired. Let’s talk about this later.”

He tries to pull away from her strong grip, but momentarily teeters as her grip tightens more.

“You—” she starts, a haze of something unfathomable swirls into her eyes, and it disappears before Thor even gets a glimpse of it. “You smell different.”

“An hour drive does that to a person,” he reminds her, shrugging. “I’m sweaty and if you don’t mind, I’d like to go change and bathe.”

“No.” She denies, “It’s something else.” She studies him with narrow eyes, icy redness twanging in her pupils for a fraction of a second. “It’s inside.”

It alerts him, and if he’s a little honest with himself, it does more than just alert him on certain levels, it worries him. His mother is not your run-of-the-mill Werewolf. Her senses are sharper than most of the Betas in the household, and sharper than most of the Alphas in the country. She’s lived for a very long time and hence the ability to tell that something was certainly off about her son.

“What do you mean?”

She looks somewhere over his shoulder. “Prepare a quarter for my son.” She orders, acidly, and Thor can hear some of the servants scurrying towards the marble stairs, he feels for them because even he can never deal with a pissed-off hundred-years old female Alpha. Said woman looks up into his questioning eyes, “Would you like them to prepare a feast or a simple meal?”

“Nothing fancy would suffice.” He replies, his pupils unable to settle on one thing, trembling with turmoil.

“Go now,” she ushers him, stepping back and waving towards the vaulted ceiling, “go soak, let’s talk over a cup of coffee when you’re done.”

Hesitatingly, he walks away from her and up to the prepared room, opens its door and goes in. He eyes it after slumping back on the wall. It looks a lot like his room back in his house, minus the flat ceiling, because this one has a white vaulted ceiling as well. He chuckles numbingly when he sees that even the black and white mixture is present, his mother could have gone for creative this time around. She’s always hated his taste in colors, especially that everything he has is either black or white; but she’s come to terms with it after one grueling day of being at each other’s throats about the colors, she eventually admitted that the mixture does somehow describe her son’s personality, and he had to fight the urge to snort humorlessly at that so she wouldn’t claw his face.

He finally shrugs out of his clothes and dives into the large tub; he’s planned this since he got into the car this morning. Well, if he hadn’t dealt with the sudden urgent banking situation that occurred in the morning he would have arrived at lunch time, so what he’s saying is, it’s been a long, tiring day, and he doesn’t want to think of anything at the moment but his sore limbs.
After soaking for a good, blissful hour, he changes into his sweats: blue marine sweatpants and a white tank top. His wet hair stays unkempt. He walks down to the living room and finds the table set with all his favorites. His mother is sitting at the head of the table, without even looking up she ushers him to sit at the other end, her hands picking the napkin in her left to unfurl it over her lap. Thor seats himself at the other end of the table and does the same. He scans the cutlery and whatnot in front of him and hates how he’s never picked their names or what they’re used for.

“You must be hungry,” his mother reminds, working on picking the dinner fork, *he remembers now, “eat.”*

He nods, picking the dinner knife and fork; he cuts the under-cooked steak over his plate and almost retches at the sight of the blood that squeezes out from it.

“What seems to be the matter?” His mother inquires, zeroing in on him.

He feels restless by the weight of her gaze so he shakes his head, mumbling coyly something between the lines of not hungry. He sags back against the backrest and picks the red wine glass, taking a large swig to cool his stomach, his dinner going ignored for now. “Where’s sis?” He asks, his eyes studying the place –anything to escape his mother’s piercing glare.

She finally puts her fork down and uses the napkin to wipe the corners of her lips, “I’ve sent her for a business transaction overseas.” She reports, “I’m planning to open a new branch office in South Korea. I’ve given them a very generous offer that they couldn’t turn down.”

“And why wasn’t I informed?” he exclaims, eyes transfixed on his mother’s old ones. “I thought Hela was already in charge of our PFH in China, did she say yes? –wait, was this her idea?”

“She didn’t notify me of the share numbers’ decrease, she didn’t even notify the Registrar of Companies. I had to switch her post.” She informs, her voice growing deep into the silence of the night.

“*Mother*” –Thor puts the glass back on the table and leans forward– “that’s not just some innocent slip-up. You know better than anyone that by not notifying the share’s decrease, or increase for that matter, within ten working days, we’d get charged with fraud.” He rakes shaky fingers through his hair, “You should have called me. I’d have dealt with it, but instead, you send her to South Korea, what, so she’d mess up another ‘business transaction’ there?”

“Do you see me handcuffed?” His mother hints, taking the white wine glass to sip from, “I took care of it, nothing a handful of cents couldn’t fix. In fact, the Corp and the Repository sent letters of appreciation.” She winks at him and raises her glass for cheers.

Thor rolls his eyes, “well, thank God for small mercies,” he sighs bitterly and shakes his head, “so, what about Hela? When is she coming home?”

“In a couple of days,” She says, “She’s been there for a while, it shouldn’t be long now.” She shrugs a shoulder and takes a swig of her wine, “So, what’s his name?”

Thor’s heart gives a ridiculously loud thump, he raises his gaze to meet hers –planning to protest, but he soon swallows his protest, witnessing her blank stare. “I thought the rabbit told you everything.”

“He’s a magical raccoon, and yes, he did.” She says, “I still won’t forgive you for kicking him out of your window. He’s an ancient creature, very honorable, should be treated with respect.” She tells him as her eyebrows arched up, on a warning cue, “but” –she lets out a sigh– “it’s not him I want to
“His name’s Loki.” Thor resigns, “I met him a few weeks ago, a totally coincidental encounter, I promise.” He says hurriedly as she squints at him, “mother” –he licks his lips and props his elbows over the table– “he’s so different. I swear, from the moment I saw him, I just couldn’t–” he pauses, snorts disparagingly at his own words, “I don’t know how to describe it, but there’s something about him that draws me against my will, as if there is another me, buried deep within, wanting to crawl his way out whenever Loki’s around.” He finally risks a glance to his mother to ask, “Let me not get ahead of myself, you must have heard about his blood.”

She nods, deeply.

“A few weeks ago, we dealt with a Gumiho, and after he helped her with the ritual that turned her into a human again –something we didn’t even consider– she told us that he was a vessel, but then Jane said he was a witch, and to be honest, we still don’t know what he really is.” He scrubs his nape, trying to ease the anger that is slowly growing evident.

“You need to calm down,” his mother prompts, and honestly, Thor wants to flip the table and claw something, even calming down seems futile at this point as he tries to even out his breathing. He looks up and the room spins, his eyes fall back on the under-cooked steak and he recoils, pushing back his chair with a loud creak.

“Thor,” his mother warns coldly, her voice is anything but, “I need you to calm down.”

He feels it, the other him that’s buried deep within, wanting to crawl out, and it terrifies him, “Mother...” he wheezes out, falling to the floor on his four and retching, but nothing comes out. He can feel his mother barking orders, and can hear footsteps scurrying around like ants, and then, through his blurry vision, he sees his mother crouching beside him, rubbing his back.

“Take a deep breath,” she whispers, “Thor, don’t panic.”

It’s only several minutes later that he finally calms down, slumping to the back and leaning against the foot of the table, his chest heaving up and down as a fine sheet of sweat covers his face.

“Thor?” His mother emerges within his vision, carrying a glass of water; her worried eyes send him spiraling to guilt for scaring her.

“Didn’t” –he starts, swallowing the bile with a face scrunched up in disgust– “didn’t mean to scare you.”

“What the bloody hell was that?” she asks, forcing the glass of water to his lips, and after gulping its content with ease, he looks at her and shrugs. “Carsick, maybe?”

“You ripped out a Chupacabra’s heart when you were nine, and you didn’t even flinch!” –She gives him the Bull, kid look and adds– “This is new, it’s strange.”

“Yes, your son’s never felt sick before.” He chuckles, “it’s a good chance to see you going all mother hen on me.”

She chuckles, her stiff shoulders finally easing up. “That was such a scare.”

“Mother,” he croaks out, his voice hoarse from all the retching, “Sorry about the mess, but I feel tired, I’d like to go and lie down.”

“You do that,” she agrees instantly, “I’ll have someone clean up your mess, again.”
He rolls his eyes at her and quickly smiles, he’s had a chance to see her worried sick for him, and that was as refreshing as it’d get. He picks himself up and wobbles towards his room again. Rinsing his mouth before going to bed worked wonders, recovering from the harsh muscle reflexes. He’s never thrown up in his entire life, he’s never gotten sick so this is very alarming, and he knows his mother isn’t going to get a good night’s sleep pondering this.

*God,* he wants to see Loki.

He wants to have him here, between his arms, talking and laughing with him, hugging and kissing him back.

He can’t forget the way Loki trembled beneath him, and the way his skinny arms winded around him, clinging so tight. He can’t forget the way Loki tried to stifle his moans in a way that made him go wild, which also ended up in Loki letting go of his delicious moans. He also can’t, for the life of him, forget the way Loki’s alluring eyes stayed on his as the name ‘Thor’ slipped from his lips, whimpered.

Loki was amazing, taking all of him in and staying that way for the entire night; the two of them, being one.

He’d been struggling with himself not to do anything rush, not with his engagement to Jane still legally and officially valid, but Loki’s existence alone made that very hard to endure sometimes. He’d felt this pull way before Loki appeared in the woods; it had only gotten stronger with the longevity of his stays. He’d had many chances to chase Loki away, for both their sakes, but the thought alone caused his wolf to howl and he eventually realized that he could never bear with Loki being away.

Loki’s not easy, Thor must say. He’s not the kind of guy who listens, which is very challenging because he doesn’t meet a lot of people who go against what he says. Make that none, actually. Loki is the first. He likes to go in his own pace, and he, sometimes, goes out of his way to keep that from being hindered. He is like a bird, he’s very free and it makes Thor worry every time if Loki leaves, he would never return. He doesn’t like being shackled to one place, to one life or to one person. And werewolves bond for life.

Although Loki had admitted to being scared of being discarded like an old chair, Thor feels like he was being unjust keeping his own insecurities to himself. He and Loki didn’t get a chance to better know each other, haven’t gone on a real date yet, but the way they melted into each other that night sort of asserted the fact that both were impatient.

Every time he smelled arousal oozing out of Loki he wanted to bend the man over the couch and do him hard until he saw stars. He can’t figure out exactly when did Loki start to like him, but he is only happy that he is at least liked.

Being a werewolf, and an Alpha, has taught Thor many things; he can differentiate between the smiles he sees on people’s faces, he can smell their buried anger and jealousy, and he can hear the lies in their flattery spiels. He returns the disguised smiles with scathing glares, he treats the jealous ones poorly and he scolds the ones with fake adulation. So he knows. He knows a man with his character isn’t well liked, and that most of the women and the male omegas that had approached him had wanted an heir merely to inherit some of the famous Dinson wealth. So for Loki, the complete opposite of him, to genuinely open up to someone like Thor and smile to him without an ounce of malice or envy and to simply enjoy his company, it really reshaped a lot of his judgments.
The smiles on Loki’s face are shy, playful or gracious. He smiles openly, and it always reaches his gleaming eyes. If he feels envy, he voices it out but Thor’s never actually smelt it on the man so he assumes Loki only wants to look jealous. He generally does not care about a luxurious life, especially if it means that shackles are going to be placed on him. Loki always speaks what’s on his mind, and he never endeavors to sugarcoat it.

And Thor… he really likes that about him.

At the thought, he searches for his phone and finds it over the nightstand; he goes over the new received text messages and finally finds Loki’s.

[It just crossed my mind, but that night we first met, how did you know where I work?]

Thor’s lips slowly stretch into a smile, struggling to fight past the foggy sleep that has settled over his eyes.

He remembers that night, the first time he saw him.

A few months before the incident, Thor had been at work, minding his own business when one of his pack had called in to inform him of the new murder; he had been growing impatient with the murders increasing at an alarming rate within his territory, and he had had decided that they were leveling up their watch and tightening security.

This time, he had gone to check the body of the victim to get a good idea about what they had been dealing with. And during his inspection, he felt something, and it was eerie to say the least. It had spoken to him in a whisper. He had expected it to be the thing they had been hunting, so he ignored the inspector and the two other officers who had been dying to prove themselves to him for some strange reason, and he had walked away.

The voice had whispered again, barely recognizable; inhuman, he could tell.

He had felt his walk grow into hasty steps, and then develop into a jog and then he was running. The voice had spoken louder as he ran, so he couldn’t stop, afraid he might lose that sole connection to whatever it was that had tried to reach out to him. He had run aimlessly, crossing streets and bumping into people on the way, and then the honk blaring into his ear had been his only indication that that had gone too far and he ground to a halt in front of a Stop sign. The voice had vanished as if it had never been there, and Thor had panted, sniffing in cold air and blowing out hot steam. He had looked around still, his eyes finally settling on long and delicate hands, hands that had been petting a Tabby cat between the ears. Thor had traced those hands to finally see their owner: a raven-black hair man smiling from ear to ear as the cat purred in response to his ministration. He was ordinary, everything about him shouted ‘ordinary’ yet it had soothed Thor, pacified whatever anger he’d had through the years and lulled him slowly into a silent sphere where only he existed; a sphere so safe and assuring, and grieve-free. His shoulders had drooped limply, wanting nothing from him but to close his eyes and enjoy the sanctuary of this new found feeling. He didn’t want to
share it, even thinking about it in the presence of someone else felt like a betrayal. The other man across the street rose up to his feet and dusted off his jeans, and then walked back into the shop of Alfred’s Antiques when a customer, he assumes now, had come in.

Thor now remembers this with deep longing, and he wonders if the voice he heard then was his inner wolf guiding him to his mate, he likes the sound of that.

He replies back to the text with a [I saw you at the shop two months ago, you were petting a stray cat, and I thought to myself, ‘he’s beautiful.’] And doesn’t even flinch as he types it and sends it, then without waiting for a reply back, he immediately falls into a deep slumber.

Morning comes and with it comes a terrible nausea. Thor buries his face into the pillows and groans, still carsick? The door flings open and his mother storms in with another guest tagging along.

“Thor,” she starts, “up.”

“Leave me alone.” He groans again, fighting the feeling of sickness.

“I’ve brought a doctor to examine you.” She gushes, pulling the covers from him, “it’s unusual for you to get sick,” she sighs. “In fact, it’s abnormal.”

Thor sits up very slowly, and he leans back on the headboard to eye the new guest, “Not again.” He huffs with a twinge of clear annoyance.

“We meet again, Ronoa Thor.”

Said male looks up at his mother, “I’m fine. Just get this rabbit out of my room.”

“He’s a raccoon. And I’m afraid I can’t do that,” she shakes her head, “I couldn’t sleep at all last night, thinking of this. I can’t be sure of anything until he examines you.”

“I’m not letting a hoofed monster, who bad mouthed my mate by the way, not gonna let him touch me.” Thor berates, eyes glowing red for a fleeting nanosecond.

“I only spoke the truth about your” –Roc’s face crinkles with distaste– “mate.”

Without even touching the floor beneath his feet, Thor jumps out of his bed and in a flash, he finds himself mounting a started raccoon, his claws inches apart from its eyes.

“I do understand that this thing is necessary for the family business whatsoever, but he’s pushing his luck.” He grits out, caustically, “if you bring Loki’s name up again, I’ll rip your spine right out of your mouth.”

The raccoon is still processing the threat when Thor’s head suddenly sways and Roc pulls him down to re-positions him on the floor, all the while, Thor’s mother steps out of the room to call more servants.

“You hate me,” Roc announces the title of their antics, “I don’t like you either, but I work for the Alpha and it’s my job to care for your well-being.”

Thor flutters his eyes open to eye the other, “my threat still stands” he wheezes out, “if you as much
as bring him up –"

“I won’t.” He cuts him off, “I’ll heed your orders, even I know a real threat when I see one, and you, Mr. Thor, are definitely a threat.”

Said male’s eyes tremble so he quickly pushes the other off, feeling a sting in his stomach with an inclination to vomit, so he musters his strength, or what’s left of it anyway, to run towards the bathroom; but he’s barely ingested any meal in the past two nights, and he knows the muscle reflexes are going to leave him with nothing but pain again. Roc and Frigga wait by the door as a pale-faced Thor finally walks out, tottering on his heels.

“So, can you help or are you all bark and no bite?”

Funny, because it’s a raccoon, get it?

Roc ushers him to the bed and Thor flops down on it with a loud sigh, he wonders if this is how it feels for humans to be sick, if yes, it’s not entertaining at all.

“Let’s go over when this first started.” Roc says, changing into his scarier form now, and if it wasn’t for the sore muscles, Thor would have flinched.

“Two nights ago, I guess?” He dampens his lips, “it started as simple appetite loss, and then fatigue and shaky legs.” He recounts, thinking of more symptoms but coming out with zero; “that’s all.”

“And the vomiting?” Roc inquires with his groggy, yellow eyes bugging out more for an answer.

“It started yesterday. Somehow, I’d get nauseated just at the sight of food, makes me feel sick.” And just at the mention of it, it sends a wave of nausea to his stomach again. He coils up on his side and groans. “Just what the hell is happening to me?”

“Well, for starters” –Roc sidesteps the bed– “Werewolves can fight any sort of infection, so that tells us the cause is supernatural.”

“You’re telling me my son was hexed?” She demands, doggedly.

“Possibly.” Roc nods, “but very unlikely.”

“So which is it?” Thor growls out, pressing an arm around his middle.

“It’s something you ate.” Roc finally informs the two, “something very powerful too seeing how it has turned you into this puny cub.”

The other two send him a biting glare and Roc raises conciliating hooves in the air, “just trying to clarify the severity of the situation here.” He says, “I will go make a potion for your sickness, but I can’t promise it’ll do much to the thing you ate. You will have to ride it out until it leaves your system.”

“What a fucking help you are.” Thor mumbles and sits up again, taking his phone and finally leaving the bed.

“Son,” his mother follows as he ambles out of the door, “you still look very sick. Why don’t you sleep it off for today?”

“I’ll do that when I’m dead.” He tells her, “I’m still a Werewolf, an Alpha, and I need to check on my pack.”
“You’re not leaving this house,” she tells him from atop the stairs as she looks down the handrails, “if that’s what you’re planning.”

“Make me.” He dares her as he gives her one last glance, insistent and persistent enough to silence her, and then he walks away towards the direction of the veranda.

He calls back a few business partners and a few other coworkers, and then he calls Steve; he’ll never admit this to anyone but he misses those little shits.

Steve picks his call. “Mr. Dinson,” he starts, his voice stoic, “good morning.”

“Mr.” Thor sits at one of the benches and rubs the fatigue in his neck, “Morning, how’s everything?”

“Good, you did well.” He reports “watch out for intruders, scout the territory three times a day, and keep an eye on Loki.”

“Good.” Thor compliments and he can already picture Steve wagging his tail at the compliment. “I’ll call again later.”

“Yes.” Steve affirms, “I’ll call too if something comes up.”

“Stupid hairball, why didn’t you wake me up, I wanted to come with!”

Thor can’t help but laugh at the sudden and unexpected burst of lexis, “good morning to you, too.”

“Good morning, too.” A pause lingers before Loki says anything, and during that, Thor wonders if it’s anything he said, but Loki speaks again, “I could be reading too much into it but your voice sounds off.”

At that, Thor’s brows travel up and he curls his lips, impressed, “It’s because I just woke up, and I didn’t have my dose of caffeine, so, there you have it.”

“Wow, calling me first thing you woke up, that’s love right there!” Loki chuckles, and it makes Thor chuckle too.

“Except it wasn’t you who I called first, it was someone from work.”

“You cherish me that much?” Loki scoffs, “I’m loved beyond repair.” He says, “And you’d have lied about calling me first. You do realize I have no super hearing powers, don’t you?”

“What’s with the early banter though?” Thor asks, relaxing more over the bench now that he’s heard his mate’s voice, “Something good happened or what?”

“I don’t know.” Loki drones, “What, your pack’s been tattling again?”

“You tell me.” Thor dares, but it’s said playfully that it fills even him with astonishment.

“By the way,” Loki changes his tone, “your mother…”

“She still wants to meet with you,” he tells him with a defeated sigh, “and that freaking rabbit is here
too, it’s a living hell.”

He’s a raccoon.

“Is everything alright?” he asks, worry latent in his tone.

“Yeah, yeah.” Thor heaves out a sigh, “We’ll be going over the situation later today, we still haven’t discussed it enough to come up with anything, but I’ll fill you in when we do.”

“That’s” –Loki starts– “nerve-wracking.”

Thor laughs and nods in agreement, “What about you, how’re you doing?”

“Um,” Loki says after a small sigh, “good, I guess, as good as I can be at ass o’clock in the morning, but thanks for asking.”

Thor laughs again, he can sense his voice going deeper as the laugh increases, man he hasn’t laughed this good in a long time.

“Seriously though,” Loki says with a subdued voice, “a lot has happened in the past two nights, and I’d like you to be here with me, especially right now.”

“I’d love that, you know I do.” Thor leans over his lap, “but I have to deal with the situation at hand first.” He gives the sad news but covers it soon before it engulfs them both, “so what’s the big deal?”

“I’m not sure we should discuss this over the phone, um” he grapples for the word, “when are you coming back?”

Before answering, Thor gives his shaky hand an examination. He uses that hand to wipe the sweat over his forehead, all are nasty indications to his unbalanced state, “I’m not sure,” he says, “it could be days.”

“Is it really that serious?”

“That and I have to deal with other stuff.”

Loki prompts “Such as?”

“Nothing serious,” Thor assures, “but I promise I’ll come back as soon as I’ve dealt with it.”

“Alright then,” Loki gives in, and Thor pictures him beaming at that, “I have to get ready for work. I hope everything works out quickly.”

“Yes, me too.” Thor admits.

“Thor?” He calls, and for some reason, it makes Thor’s heart give the same loud thump, Aare you sure you’re OK, because I’d swear I heard something wrong –”

“I’m fine,” he reassures, “desperate for some caffeine though, just who do I have to kill to get some caffeine!”

Loki chuckles, “I can’t imagine you walking into some market, clawing the clerks for coffee.”

“I’m not evil.” Thor says, “If that’s what you’re implying.”

“I never said that!” the other exclaims, “although, you can be very, very evil when you want to.”
Thor pauses for a moment before he realizes it was a reference to the night they bonded, he’d tortured Loki not letting him come a few times.

“What ‘you think about phone sex?”

“Are you sure you’re not still sleep-talking?” Loki wonders aloud, annoyance in his tone.

“I’m serious.” Thor says in his usually velvety voice, “I’m holing up here for a couple more days and maybe later tonight, we can –”

“I’ll bite my tongue before I even allow myself to even think about it!” Loki huffs, the statement leaves Thor utterly deflated, could his seducing skills be going rusty?

“That leaves no room for argument,” he states, “fine then, I’ll get back to the situation I have and I’ll call you later, to fill you in.”

Again, the phone call ends with byes and a bunch of ‘good luck’ wishes.

Later that morning, Thor goes searching for caffeine in the kitchen, but much to his discomfort, the humid floor smells too strongly of raw meat and fresh blood. He tries to leave the kitchen before he gets another episode again, but it’s a little delayed of an action before he’s plastered to the sink, racking retches for several seconds as the maids squeak and scatter around him, handing him glasses of water and cans of energy drinks. His knuckles grow white the tighter he grips on the sink, when all of a sudden, his knees buckle.

“Young master!” and “call Mrs. Frigga!” echo around him, loud and turbulent.

His mother soon storms in and aims his perched form, “Can you walk?”

“Feet, weak.” he offers, panting.

“I’ll give you two more minutes, if you don’t regain your strength back in your feet, I’m carrying you myself.”

“You idiotic son,” she smiles, “I carried you a bunch of times when you were a kid, I still can.”

“Yes, well” Thor uses his other hand to support his weight on every immobile object in their way, “I’m not an invalid. I can still walk.” They cross the floor and the stairs, meandering their way to Thor’s room, “guess I’ll have to heed your order after all.”

“Mothers know better.” She tells him with a proud nod. “I’m also tucking you in and I won’t take no for an answer.”

Thor flops back into the sweet touch of satin and doesn’t even complain when his mother pulls the sheets over his chest, he can feel her cool hand pushing away sweat-soaked fringes from his face, and he can almost feel her pecking gently at his forehead, and for a moment, he doesn’t mind playing spoiled.
Thor moves his head on the pillow, seeking the coldest part of it so he can soak in it, but all he feels underneath his skin is… fur. His eyes shoot open and that’s when he sees Roc in his raccoon form, cradling his head over his lap.

“You’ve got to be kidding me!” He jerks back, but it’s so fast it sends the room spiraling in front of his eyes, and he dips his chin, willing the feeling to go away.

“I was feeding you the potion.” Roc finally says.

“You should have woken me,” Thor reasons, “don’t ever do that again, understand?”

“It’s not like I vouched for it.” Roc retorts, “Is it working yet – the potion?”

“There’s a foul taste in my mouth.” Thor reports, “I swear, if you’ve fed me something funny, I’ll have bunny stew for dinner.”

“Relax,” the animal assures, “I made the potion from natural herbs. And with the right recipe, the mixture is hardly harmful.” He finally leaves the bed to sidestep it instead, “we’ll have to wait until it takes effect.”

Thor relaxes, if only a little, and searches the room for a clock, “what time is it anyway?”

“Almost ten in the evening.”

His eyes widen at the news, “I slept through the entire day?”

“Is it working yet?”

“What?” he quickly realizes that Roc’s hinting at the makeshift medicine, “No, I mean, I don’t feel anything in particular, if that’s any a good reference.”

“That suffices,” he says, “now,” he approaches the chair-less vanity table and lifts a large bowl that’s been replaced there. “I need you to eat this.”

“What’s that?” said male inspects the contents with a cocked brow, “another one of your deadly potions?”

“You’re not dying, are you?”

Thor wonders if that’s rhetorical, but he soon ignores it when Roc speaks on.

“It’s soup.” He says, “Congratulations, you’ve officially become vegetarian.”

Thor gives him a look.

“You haven’t eaten anything for three nights now, maybe Frigga is too soft on you but I won’t accept an Alpha dying on us from hunger.” He challenges as he pushes the bowl to Thor’s chest. “You have to eat something, eventually.”

“I’ll make do,” he finally concedes. Damn it, he hated losing to the eccentric bunny the most.

Strangely enough, the veggie soup stays in his stomach, who would have thought, Thor turning into a vegetarian wolf.
“OK, so I guess your medicine worked.” He says between his teeth because he so doesn’t want to give the rabbit the satisfaction.

“It would seem so,” Roc says, proudly, “Very well then. I will take my leave and join the meeting your mother has already gone to.”

“What meeting?” He scowls,

“The meeting about The Law of Werewolves, chapter sixty, page sixty three?”

“Ah hell,” Thor swings his legs out of the bed and stands up, facing Roc as he slowly changes into his real form, “Why wasn’t I informed?”

“You were running a fever and your mother did not wish to disturb your nap.”

“A nap?” Thor growls, “I was practically comatose for hours, and it didn’t occur to her that something’s off about that? Why didn’t she even tell me about this meeting, and who is she meeting with?”

“It is confidential.” Roc provides, “even if it is about you, you are still not allowed to attend because you’re not the oldest Alpha in the family,” He explains, “but your mother is, and while it might seem like decisions are being taken without your consent, the case is entirely different.”

“Different, how?”

“When I said ‘meeting’ I overlooked the fact that it’s the first court session. Witnesses are going to give their testimonies and your mother is there as part of the jury.”

Thor lets out a hysterical laugh, “Are you even listening to yourself?”

“Believe me, this is for the best.” Roc says, gruffly, “you will be brought into a hearing, but only after they’ve collected the testimonies.”

“I’ve had it up to here with their meddling. I swear if it wasn’t for mother, I’d have killed whoever came between me and Loki.”

“Which is why you’ll be brought into a hearing,” Roc says, “You can give your own piece of the story then.”

“But mother is making a total fool out of me.” Thor lashes out again, gripping for any chance to get the tiniest angrier, “She should have told me about this, it’s about me, right?”

“I know, but young master, you need to calm down.” Roc tries to mollify the wolf growing angry, because an angry wolf is never a good thing.

Thor responds by tossing the few perfume bottles and hair conditioners that were lined over the vanity table, and he punches the mirror a couple of times for good measures, and he actually ignores it when his fangs and claws spurt out.

“Young master, you have to calm your anger!” Roc follows behind, in part to pacify his temper, and in another to keep him from going after the maids that have frozen beside the door that’s been left ajar. Just as he readies his sharp senses for the disaster to hit over, Thor’s phone rings and he spins towards its source, looking around searchingly. Roc finally finds it and risks that one chance to guard the door when he leaves his spot and leaps to fetch the phone, Thor is still working through whatever left of his strength to cause chaos in the room, items flying around and the glass coming to the floor
in pieces, bloody prints everywhere. Thor is working himself to exhaustion and there has to be someone to put a stop to it.

“It’s Loki.” Roc announces, and momentarily flinches when Thor swirls around, his facial features slowly returning to their human form, his claws and fangs coyly hiding under the skin, and he completely stills. “Young master.” Roc tries again even if he’s still perplexed, “Loki is on the phone.”

Thor walks towards him, and Roc fights the urge to step backward because he isn’t weaker than the Alpha, and he certainly isn’t going to show him any signs of it even if there were any.

“Get out.”

Roc hands the phone to the Alpha and immediately leaves the room, closing the door behind him and ushering all the maids and servants to go about their business. He’d seen Thor angry before but never this… chaotically angry. But what amazes him more is how quick the name Loki has quelled that buried anger, two syllables that prevented a certain disaster. He knows he shouldn’t, but he wants to study their relationship, he wants to study this deep bond and get some answers to the shelves of mysteries piling over his head memory. He just wants to know what it is that fascinates him about these two.

Thor eyes the room with repugnance and disappointment; a few words here and there and he went berserk, throwing a random tantrum like some freaking kid…

Chapter End Notes

Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!
He eyes the phone in his hand that’s still ringing, and finally relaxes as every fiber in him is reminded of the sphere of peacefulness from that first meeting—a secret sanctuary.

“Loki.”

“It’s your fault,” said male balks, “it was all that talk of yours about phone sex!”

Thor’s brows twitch a little, and he slowly makes his way to the tangled sheets on the bed to flop on. “What is it?”

“You made me think such dirty thoughts, I couldn’t focus at work, at all!” he groans, and because he poorly hides it, Thor can hear the barely contained moan. “I can’t even believe I called you for this. Thor, I’m so turned on and nothing I do seems to put it down.”

Thor hums “Hence the phone call.”

“I hate you for this!” Loki grits out, his voice breathy, and it ignites something within Thor. “I so hate you for this!”

“No, you don’t.” Thor smirks to himself because oh does it feel so good to have your mate this desperate for you; his wolf relishes this moment with all its glory. “Loki, tell me what you’re wearing.”

“Go die.” He bites out. “You did this to me.”

“What ‘you wearing?” Thor enunciates, doggedly, and he knows this tone will give him what he wants in a matter of moments, “Loki.”

“Dark jeans and a frigging grey T,” he huffs, “happy now?”

“Did you touch yourself?”

“What the hell are you asking now, are you drunk?” Loki says in an accusatory tone.

“Hey, you’re the one who called saying he’s horny.” He teases, but it backfires and he gradually grows blindsided by arousal, “Damn it, Loki, wanna come to you, wanna see you spread out on the bed for me.” He whispers, and he hears Loki’s stifled groan. “Wanna bend you over, lick you open.” His voice is a subdued echo in the quiet stillness of the room, and he wonders if Loki can tell that he’s planning to interrupt the stillness very soon, “I want to taste you.”

“Thor…” the other finally moans aloud, “oh fuck…”

“You like the sound of that, Loki?”

“Yeah.” He breathes out, “Keep doing it…”

“Want me to eat you out ‘til you’re begging me to fuck you?”
“Oh, yes…” the rustling from the other end of the line increases, and Thor guesses his mate is taking care of the erection himself, “Thor, I want to suck you.”

The statement sends a jolt to Thor’s cock and he slowly slides his hand under his boxers to fist and ease its throbbing, “Yeah? What do you wanna do to it?”

“Wanna put my mouth on your cock, and slowly glide up and down. I’ll take you deep in my throat and drink you, Thor. Just hearing you breathe in my ear is making me so horny.” He gasps, breathlessly.

“You’re going to put me over the edge…” Thor whines, rubbing off his cock, “Loki, take off your jeans.”

And judging by the additional rustling, Thor can tell his mate is undressing just like ordered. He can hear his muffled moans and it gifts him with a picture of Loki sucking on his finger, two fingers maybe; he’s such a prude, this is the furthest he’ll go.

“Suck harder.” He demands again, “do it long and good.”

“Mmm…” Loki starts, and languorously pulls the fingers with a noisy pop out from between presumably wet lips.

Thor cuts him off with a suppressed grunt, “wanna rim your ass,” the entire conversation is turning him on, he nearly comes in his sweats like a teen, “fuck, it’s gonna drive me crazy!”

“Oh God, Thor, do it more.” Loki says over his moans and gasps. “Love the feeling of you inside me, Thor. Can’t forget your cock.”

“Gonna ram your ass so hard, gonna fuck you so good,” He urges, enjoying the sticky sounds from both lines. “You got some fingers in that pretty hole? You pampering yourself like it’s my dick up your ass?”

“Three. I got three inside.” Loki rasps, “Oh, God…” he yelps in a high pitched whimper. “I want more. Being ridden by your dick is the best. Want you to slam into me ‘til I bruise like last time!” Loki’s breathing is still labored.

Thor feels like his cock is going to combust, all thoughts of reason flee his mind. “Wanna sit you on my dick and watch as you bounce away,” he sighs contentedly, hand jerking his cock off, “want to see you so bad, want to see you come by my dick alone.” He feels the heat encroaching on his body, he feels depraved and so horny. He’s never been one for dirty talk in the bedroom, but Loki always brings out something else in him.

Loki gasps out loud, and Thor assumes the prostate is getting worked over. “Thor,” it almost sounds like he is sniffling, “Want you so bad, want you to come inside me. Fuck me hard and leave me wet and fucked open. Come on, Thor, do it!”

“Shit,” it’s a wonder he doesn’t shoot cum on command, especially when it’s Loki, the guy he’s pinned for ages, begging him to. “Gonna drill my cock in your ass so deep it will remember the shape of me–”

A loud cry cuts him off –enclosed with lust but muffled with a twinge of pain: it’s the best thing Thor’s ever heard in his life. His cock throbs as blood rushes to and fro, and he arches his whole body back against the satin sheets, sending his cum with a strangled groan.
“Thor?” A hoarse voice pants, “ugh damn it, my voice, not again!”

Thor chuckles tiredly, the afterglow so overwhelming, “it’ll be back to normal by tomorrow, don’t worry too much.”

“I can’t wait for you to come back.”

“It’s only been two nights and you’re already a mess.” He teases, smirking to himself.

“Here’s an enclosure, you said you’d call, but you didn’t and I started thinking about you and the talk about phone sex, and the rest you can guess.” Loki chuckles, “I know I was against it, but I wish I weren’t such a prude. I admit I enjoyed this.”

Thor feels a fleeting happiness, but it’s short lived as someone opens the door to his room and walks in, flaunting and snobbish, he’d recognize this person anywhere. “Loki, I’ll try to finish my work here as soon as I can, meantime, stay out of trouble, or better yet, stop causing trouble.”

“What, you ass!” The other hisses.

“Night, Lo.” And he quickly hangs up, not wanting this person’s coming words to be heard, “took your sweet time.”

“Now that was hot,” she drawls, winking at him provocatively, “missed me, little brother?”

Thor looks up, narrows his eyes in some effort to not look abashed, “sis.”

He is sometimes very embarrassed by his sister being proud about the terrible fashion icon that she is. He can’t say his taste in clothes covers it, and even his taste in color has brought him nothing but disappointed stares. Hela is, for lack of a better word, worse.

First, she has that habit of calling her brother ‘little brother’ – with that haughty southern dialect, because in case she hasn’t noticed, that little brother has a name and he likes it, thank you. Second, and again, her awful sense of fashion, because between winter coats trimmed with a downy fox tail – which, by the way, makes her look like some single bureaucrat in her forties – and the large belt buckles that totally shout ‘cowgirl’ when she is a Werewolf, and this mini musquash jacket is by far the worst of her collection.

“As a matter of fact, I didn’t.” He tells her, flatly, “and if you’re here to grate on my nerves, then just follow back the way you came in.” He swings his legs out of the bed, ready to prop up, “nice” – he eyes her jacket with distaste – “fur” saying so, he turns his back to her, striding towards the bathroom and closing its door once he’s inside.

“Little brother,” she beseeches, “ignoring me now, and what the hell have you done to the room?”

The sound of water splashing echoes across the tiles, and Hela curls her hand around the knob of the door and pushes it open, meeting the hot steam with nonchalance. “I’ve been hearing interesting things about you.”

“I’m sure you have.” Thor says over the noise of the spray, it’s barely inscrutable but she hears it anyway and has her supernatural powers to thank for that.

“A vessel, at first, and then a witch” she says, “what next, a bloody ghost?”

“Watch your mouth.” Thor snarls deep in his throat, and it immediately silences her.
“So you really mated, I see.” she nods to herself in acknowledgment, and relaxes when Thor finally closes the tab and walks out of the tub, leaving wet footprints after him, and she realizes she’s looking at him with stupefaction. “Thor, you smell different.”

“So what, you two made a habit of sniffing me now?” He raises a skeptical brow at her.

“I wouldn’t exactly say that,” she drawls, “but it’s permeating the air, not thoroughly, but you know my sense of smell is the sharpest between all the Betas.”

He ignores her for now because there are no quirky comebacks for that ready up his sleeve yet.

“Well,” she shakes herself out of her daze and moves out of the way when her brother walks past her. She minces after him like a mannequin with her jacket fallen off one shoulder, “You’ve grown fast, sport.”

Thor slides the door of a closet open to peck out a towel, and then he wraps it around his hips and finally, finally, spares her a glance. “What’s your deal?”

She frowns at him.

“You ruin our business in China, but instead of contacting me about it, you go along with mother’s plan to switch your post to South Korea,” he seethes, “what, is this some sort of game to you now?”

“Don’t patronize me, little brother.” She berates, “I admit that was a little slip-up –”

“A slip-up?” he echoes her, “Are you out of your god damn mind?”

“So what, I don’t notify you of the shares’ decrease and you all go lashing out at me?” she snorts, her eyes blazing yellow, “You probably don’t know but we’re the wealthiest in the country, doesn’t it occur to you that maybe a little slip-up here and there is nothing compared to your little fiasco with Jane’s family?”

“If you want to act like a smart-ass with me, at least do it right.” He tells her, shaking his head sadly, “What happens in the family stays in the family, but when it concerns our business overseas, lashing out at you doesn’t even begin to touch it.”

The two can feel the proverbial rivalry bolt sparking like fire cracks between them. Thor is the first to turn away though because he needs to put some clothes on before all this breaks into a sudden combat and he’d have to fight butt-naked.

She follows close behind, at least with some audacity to look sheepish about the whole mishap. “So,” she starts–

“Don’t.” he cuts her off.

“What? I haven’t even said anything.” She whines, looking fleetingly astonished.

“I’m not going to talk about him, and that is it.” he says with a tone of finality, but the way he’s grunting while wearing his grey sweatpants makes him sound indifferent.

“And how come you told mother?”

“Honestly?” he finally looks at her and speaks firmly, “I wasn’t planning to, but mother is not the type of person you want holding a grudge against you, is she now.”

“True that.” she nods, “but everyone is talking about it. And it hurts when you come to realize you’re
the only one left out, and I’m you sister. I’m supposed to know.”

He lets out a puff of breath and walks past her again, adjusting his black T from the hems, “He is not some subject of gossip” –he walks out of the room, hating how she’s tailing him still– “just because you’re my big sis doesn’t mean I’ll grab a chair and start the idle tittle-tattle to humor your ego.”

“Oh, my God.” His sister gushes, and he reels around, “you’re really serious about him!”

He rolls his eyes, faces away and descends the stairs, “Do I look like I mate with men for kicks?” He inquires, “Of course I’m serious about him.”

“Then why didn’t you bring him with you?”

He decides against telling her how he really feels, but he also knows she’s learned most of his secrets and has even guided him through some, and vice-versa. She might come across as nosy and talkative, the two qualities he dislikes the most, but he’d never deny her support which has boosted his self-confidence back up when it’d reached the bottom. Damn it, he hates his past.

He quells.

“You know how mother tends to treat the people I go out with, even though it’s her who sets it up in the first place.” He licks his lips nervously and nears the door to the veranda, “she’s judgmental, and to be honest with you, sis, Loki is not someone I chose.”

Her brows fly up with shock.

“I felt it.” He confesses, fervently. Now that they’re seated outside on the swinging bench side by side, he knows his sister is going to get it out of him even if it takes her the next decade, and he doesn’t exactly have that much time to spare. “I felt him calling out for me, he probably –no, he definitely has no idea about this, but I’d wanted him even before we officially met.”

“Thor,” she sounds spooked enough to pique his curiosity, “do you know what that means?”

“I thought about it,” he swallows, and looks away from her intense gaze, “but that’s just a myth. I think it’s all happened because of his blood.”

“I think not!” She suddenly levers up to her feet, looking at her little brother with something akin to row astonishment, “Thor, I can’t believe you–” she gushes, bereft of words, “You’re…” she sighs, happily, he can tell, “it’s finally happened, and no, it’s not just a myth, he’s not just a mate, he’s your–”

He hides his face, doubling over, “Don’t you dare say it!”

She finally calms down and sits back down next to him, “well, have you said anything about this to mom?”

“I hinted it.” He says, hands flopping to his lap as he looks up.

“But damn it, Thor” –she chuckles, gives a dazed head shake– “you lucky son of a bitch.”

“Yeah well,” he rubs his nape, the action rough, “believe me, I’m not, where do you think mother is at right now?”

She lands her worried eyes on his, “No way!”

He nods, affirming her doubts, “at first, they sent Roc over to my house, but I kicked him out and–”
“You did what?” She doesn’t look very surprised though as much as she looks entertained, “Thor, you beautiful master piece, you’ve outdone yourself. I’ve always wanted to give that bunny a few rough kicks on the butt.”

“He tends to work on people’s neurons.” He sighs, finally relaxing and leaning back; he’s found an ally, at last. “I’m surprised you two didn’t meet on the way, he said he was going to join mother at the court.”

“So it’s really happening?” she sighs, almost defeated.

He raises his brows and turns his eyes to look somewhere beyond the dark sky, “If the elders decide—”

“They won’t.” His sister says over him, and her eyes don’t even flinch as they glint at the glimmer of what the stars decided to scatter on the night sky. “You found him, and although I don’t know what kind of person he is, or if he’s a danger or not, because you know, it’s our kind of world,” she finally looks at him, “I still think you have the right to keep what is rightfully yours, in this case, your mate.”

He’s never, not in his wildest dreams, thought his sister would support this one, but despite the crazy Beta that she usually is, her love for her younger sibling out-stands everything. “Are you sure?”

“I’m always sure when it comes to my little brother” –and if he hasn’t changed into this bloody-headed jerk that he is now, he would have allowed her to ruffle his hair– “But I still want to see him.” She beams.

He faces away.

“Come on, this is obviously not some puppy love,” she bumps his shoulder, smirking at her own insinuation, “and I didn’t mean to eavesdrop earlier but it’s kind of hard to ignore a voice sweet like his.”

“How is that different from eavesdropping?” He fumes, but it’s all brotherly and he knows more allies means more trouble out of his way.

“Hey, sexting is no joke,” she says firmly, and for a minute, he remembers why he hates this shameless side of his sister, which also reminds him of a particular Beta among his pack, “you going at it like rabbits, huh?” she grins dopily, “watch out for hearing herpes though.” she puts her palm on her chest, “It’s nasty.”

“Shut up.” He finally laughs, and after she laughs too –apparently liking her own joke, the two fall silent, and Thor waits until the perfect moment brings itself about to name his gratitude, “You’re amazing, sis, thank you.”

“Does that mean you’ll let me go see him?”

Before he’d even utter a sound, his right kneecap spasms and jerks his entire body down towards the floor, he grimaces in pain and clutches at his knee.

“Thor, what the hell?” His sister hovers, confused and worried.

“Help me back to my room,” he says between gritted fangs, “hurry!”

Hela does as asked, she hauls him up and he lands wrongly on his right feet, letting out a roar in protest. Her brows furrow at his struggle, and she slumps most of his weight on her, urging him to lean against her and to leave it to her, but through the scurrying and bumping into furniture, Hela
can’t deny the whimpers of pain Thor keeps letting out – he is in pain and that much has made itself clear. Walking back into his bedroom, she re-positions his weight over her side and scans the room, “it’s chaotic.”

He wheezes suddenly and pulls himself off of her, “I don’t know what’s going on, but it’s better if you stay away from me.”

Hela knits her brows at him and her eyes demand questions, “Thor, what–”

As if to prove a point, his entire leg convulses and thanks to their hearing powers, they hear the bone crack, loud and clear. Thor falls to the ground, curling in on himself and whimpering, “Get Roc.”

“I can’t leave you like this!” She protests, kneeling beside him in a swift. Little does she know that was a huge mistake.

Thor grabs her by the collar of the stupid musquash fur and flings her to the farthest of the room, bares his fangs and a deep growl flares up from the depths of his throat.

Hela looks up, baffled. She bounces back from the impact of the hit and quickly props on her haunches, crouching like the trained Beta that she is. Thor is still nursing his leg as it breaks again, this time, a few glitches she can handle after they figure out what this is, but his ankle twists and turns a few degrees before another crack is heard, and he slumps down, withering with pain. Hela risks a glance to his eyes and almost cries at the lost and scared look in them; he may be an Alpha, but he’s still her little kid brother. He probably tossed her away like a scrunched paper just to get her out of harm’s way, Thor would never harm a soul, and she knows him more than anyone.

“Thor, howl...” she demands, “you need to howl!”

As a reply, his other leg now decides to join the show as it spasms and breaks loudly, offering only agonizing pain in return, so much for that.

“Crap!” Hela finally names the severity of the situation and fumbles in her pockets for her phone, while waiting for it to connect, she notices the novel feeling creeping up behind her. She slowly looks up into the chattered mirror of the vanity table and gasps at the pair of red eyes glaring at her from right behind. She tries to leap away from his grasp but he’s faster so his grip does actually manage to get hold of her hair. Thor pulls her up as she flails and tosses, “let go of me!” she yells, eyes turning yellow and threatening, but who is she kidding, her brother is a natural born Alpha. Trying to get away from his grasp is like, and she’s not grappling for words for this by the way, it’s like getting your wool socks stuck to the burs, not only is it challenging, but, ah, annoyingly so.

She stares with trepidation as Thor lifts her by the hair a little higher to the level of his red eyes, and then he raises his other hand, sharp claws spurt out from underneath his fingertips, and how he is standing on his shattered legs is a life mystery, really. She uses that as leverage as she slides her foot and kicks his, resulting in his unbalance. The grip on her hair is still tight but she claws his forearm to get it loose, although it’s hardly a success at first, but he lets go of her eventually.

“Take that.” Hela harrumphs, spitting blood to the side. Mauling doesn’t seem like a plan, but if that can keep her brother from literally going berserk on her, then so be it. She throws the jacket away, finally, thank God, and swiftly flips her lace trim dress top from the bottom, making sure it’s not too tight so it won’t get in the way, her fashion sense isn’t so deadly after all.

Thor heals from whatever broken bones he had and supports his weight on his legs, albeit wobbly, and he lowers just a little to snarl at his sister.
“Now, that’s rude,” she shakes her head, “this is what I get for worrying my brains out for you, or for promising to get you through the court?”

Thor lunches towards her in a delayed speed because she predicts it and moves out of his way, thus making him land on the armoire and crafting a hole in its doors, splinters of woods and glass shatter to floor, adding one to the already sabotaged room.

Thor clambers up again, wobblier though, he darts forward and she estimates his speed wrongly as he manages to crease her flank. She falls against the items scattered on the floor with a loud thud but quickly scrambles to her feet, alerted at the sight of her little brother coming right at her again.

Hela crouches defensively but he uses the momentum to push her, she gets tossed against the wall, slams against it and slides down with a whine that’s barely stifled in. She prays this will be over soon because having her Alpha brother kill her is so not cool.

Also, if this is just a phase, if this is not him having control over himself, then if — when he wakes up, he’s going to feel very guilty, so she can’t allow him to kill her, werewolves or not, they’re brother and sister before anything else.

Someone grants her salvation, she thanks her ancestors. They must be watching out for them.

Thor goes utterly still, swaying side to side, his fangs closing on his bottom lip and drawing more blood down his jaw.

“T-Thor…” She slowly sits up, tilting to try to get a glimpse of his face.

“Fucking cut it out.” he croaks, “lock me up before I lose control over my body again.”

“The confinement room?” she starts “but, Thor, I’m not going to do that to my little brother!”

“Just hurry!” he bites out, eyes glowing red and turning dark again.

She finally heeds his order, prior to her fear that somehow made her legs all Jell-O-y, she helps him into said room and rests him over a cot.

“You have to tie me up.” He peers up at her, his fringes soaked with sweat and his eyes filled with fear.

How can she tie him up when he’s looking at her like that?

“I’m just going to close the door and call —”

“I told you to tie me up!” he snarls, and she flinches, “I’m sorry” he readily apologizes and faces the other side, “just, do it, don’t infuriate me any more than this.”

Without listening to anything else, or rather, without making any more protests, she ties his wrists and ankles to the bed, and stands by his head, looking down at him worriedly.

“Get Roc, but don’t allow anyone in. You close that door, you make sure it’s done, understand?” he instructs, pulling against the ties to make sure if they budge, they don’t. Well done, sister.

“Hang in there,” Hela vouches, “I’ll get help.”

She is about to leave the door when Thor whispers two words that eventually send her sliding down the now-closed metal door, crying silently.
“I’m sorry.”
Roc and Frigga arrive to the mansion in the same car, and they find Hela squatting at the front gate, waiting with her head on her hands. Frigga scurries towards her daughter and lifts her up to her feet, meeting her red-rimmed and puffy eyes. “What happened? Where is he?”

“Mother, it was horrible.” she breaks into a tiny sob, “he lost control and I tried not to hurt him. He remembers some of it.”

The three walk back inside towards the confinement room, into a dark basement surrounded by concrete walls and steel bars. Throughout the silent walk, Hela shudders involuntarily at the stale stench of something dead in there, but when they near Thor’s cell, she becomes less tense. Although he warns them against opening the door, Roc mumbles an incantation that turns him into a cloud of smoke, enabling him to infiltrate the room/cell through the cracks, and finally shift back into his form inside the room.

Thor opens his heavy lids, blue pupils roaming around searchingly, until he sees Roc. “I knew it smelled like Limburger, so that’s what you smell like.”

“I leave you for one hour and you sabotage the entire house?” The other accuses.

“I think you’re overselling it a bit,” he chuckles, sleepily, “the roof is still up there, isn’t it?”

“You’re missing the point.” Roc sighs, “This has gone on for far too long, I’m afraid I have to resort to the elders again.”

“No, no.” Thor shuffles against the handcuffs, “if they learn about this, they’re definitely going to use it against me in the court. What, you want to hand an evidence of my current unbalance fresh to them? You know damn well how much they want to cut the Dinson’s to shreds!” He fumes and pulls against the chains tying his wrists.

“I know, and like I said earlier, I only serve the eldest Alpha, that still stands.” Roc bends his ears forward just like a cat. “But if we want to figure out what is causing this, we’ll have to resort to someone, eventually.”

“I’ll fight it.” Thor says in his deep voice, “whatever it is, I’ll fight it with all I have, and if I don’t come out of it alive, then let worse come to worse.”

“You stupid son,” Frigga berates from outside the door, and her daughter interjects “how about we don’t talk about death, okay? We’re going to deal with this together, understand?”

He chuckles deeply, and gradually, his lids fall close.

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Hela sits on the armchair next to her mother’s, she lets out a loud sigh and relaxes in her shorts and baggy top. “So –” she starts, glancing sideways at her mother, “you already talked about him?”

Her mother only nods, her eyes transfixed on the portrait of her late husband.

“And what do you think?”

“Do you know that he hasn’t called at all, not even once? Now, call me a peeping tom if you want but my son’s welfare is my first concern,” she finally looks into her daughter’s eyes, her own igniting with a hint of neon blue, “I don’t care if they had an agreement, I don’t even care if it was Thor’s idea that he doesn’t call, but he comes across as an ill-mannered brat, and pardon me if I say, I don’t like him and I don’t want him to be my son’s mate.”

“They already mated though.” Hela shrugs slightly.

“It doesn’t change the fact that I don’t like him.”

“How about this,” Hela tries again, narrowing her eyes and repositioning herself on the chair, “Loki called a few hours ago, but you weren’t here so you couldn’t have known, thankfully, there was me, who, by good luck, walked in on a very sexy phone call.”

Her mother’s brows twitch, visibly affronted, and it makes Hela laugh, “I certainly had no need for knowing that, thank you.”

“Maybe.” Hela shrugs, playing with a lock of her hair, “but you were making assumptions, and since the opportunity helped, I was at the scene when Loki called, so I’m just letting you know.”

“I still don’t like him.” She looks at the fireplace now, a scowl growing evident across her forehead.

Going back in time, Hela’s always seen how her mother favored Thor over her, even now, she can’t help but care a great deal for him, overlooking all the evidences that might show her that Loki is actually a pretty good match for her son. But the truth is, she just doesn’t want anyone to snatch her son away from her. After the late Alpha’s violent death, Frigga built a great brick wall between the two of them and the rest of the world, and, now, Hela thinks that’s just her mother babying her brother, but if they all choose to face it, Thor was an adult who had to find a mate. Sooner or later, they’ll have to allow someone new in their life. “But Thor does.” Hela relents, a vague look in her eyes, “and like it or not, you have to accept that.”

She doesn’t even ask about how it went back at the court, it already seems like they have enough on their plate and bringing that up would only work on their anger genes.

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The night grows darker, and as Hela meditates in the growing silence after her mother bid her goodnight, she finds that no one is above scrutiny, and certainly, one day, she will have to lay out her cards as well and talk her mother into letting in another male Beta into their lives. But for now, she’ll devote her time and strength to her brother only. It’s his story that’s being written, and worry about the unpredictable can only burn your brain cells. From her perched from on the armchair, she can hear a sound growing, and between the insistent owl hoots and mosquito whines, she can finally differentiates the whimpering cries coming from the confinement room. She unseats herself and dashes towards the said room, already finding Roc and a few servants at the metal door, roaming
purposelessly.

“How is he?” She demands, slowly nearing the door as they clear her way.

“Not good.” Roc informs, “His bones are working themselves for some odd reason. So far, he has damaged epicondyles and Humerus’, and can’t say much about his Radius’ and Ulnas.”

“Speak a language I understand.” She chides.

Roc sighs and looks up at her, “in other words, both his arms are completely shattered.”

Her eyes quiver, “same thing happened to his legs when I bound him to the bed.”

“Alright, so it started as simple appetite loss, and then the vertigo and the shaky legs,” he recounts, thoughtfully, “the vomiting only started recently.”

“Wait, vomiting?” she almost laughs has it not been for the urgency of the situation. “He’s an Alpha werewolf, he doesn’t just get sick!”

“Good point, thanks for your input.” At least he compliments her for the effort through sarcasm, and then he paces more, “we didn’t wish to raise any alarm flags because I thought he’d ride it out very soon, the infection was supernatural of course so to rid him of it I made a potion, it worked, only temporarily it seems.” He gasps, “Now wait a minute” pausing, he swivels around, “the infection started from his stomach, and although it sounds bizarre, it might have moved to his legs, causing the fractures, and then to his arms.”

“What are you trying to say, exactly?” She prompts, impatiently.

Roc looks delighted for a second before scowling again, “I think I know what we’re dealing with here, but I need to make sure of something before I make any conclusions.” He tells her, “Keep him from hurting himself. I’ll bring the cure with me.”

Just as Roc vanishes into thin air, Thor’s pained cry cuts through it and it sends shivers down Hela’s spine. Instead of Roc, she paces beside the metal door, twining her fingers together, feeling a huge tide of incapability swamping over her as she listens to her little brother’s bones cracking without a pause. At times like these, it really sucks to be a Werewolf with no healing powers.

Frigga is soon by her side, dragging her long nightgown, and shaking her head sadly.

“Roc said he’d bring the cure.” The daughter informs with a tone of childish excitement.

Her mother’s eyes glitter with hope, “did he say what might have caused this to my son?”

The other shakes her head, “he only recounted Thor’s symptoms and came to a conclusion on his own.” She says, “But mother, why didn’t you call me when it all started?”

“And then what?” she challenges, “You’d be doing the same you are now.”

“At least it’d feel like I’m being there for my brother!” she says with reproach.

“Knock it off you two.” Thor says, tiredly.

The two women attach themselves to the door like magnetized objects.

“Thor, you’re alive then.” Hela jokes, but secretly breathes out a sigh of relief.
“Unfortunately.” He huffs, and it makes the other laugh, albeit faintly.

“Hey, if you don’t come out of this alive, I’ll kick you in the ass; also, Roc said he was going to bring the cure, so just… hang in there, OK?”

“What other choice do I have?” he scoffs, “this sucks.”

“Yeah, having to feel every bone in your body shatter isn’t supposed to be fun.”

“Son,” Frigga calls out, very gently, “you need to eat something; your body needs it.”

“I doubt my stomach will agree with that,” he tells her on a humorless snort, “it’s fine mother, I don’t feel hungry anyway.”

“Has your body stopped self-destructing?” she asks, curiously now.

“Good way of putting it.” he hums, “yes, for now,” he reports back, “it’s already started healing itself, the bones are a bitch though.”

“Language, kid!”

Hela laughs and can hear her brother laughing from inside the room, too.

“Not to ruin your fun, ladies” –he croaks out, wearily– “but I’m badly hurt and I know I’m gonna pass out very soon.”

“Alright, just rest up.” Hela says hurriedly, “catch up on the sleep you couldn’t get and we’ll wake you once Roc arrives with the cure.”

When she gets no reply back, she listens in on Thor’s heartbeats and smiles very slowly, “he’s out like a light.”

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Hela thrashes around on her bed; insomnia now, really?

She finally decides she’s had enough sleep for one night. Even those few hours are enough to re-boost her werewolf engines. When she sits up, she sees the first rays of the sun sneaking into her room through the curtains, only to be dimmed. A sweet smell slides under her nose, it’s nothing like anything she’s scented before, it’s unearthly, yet it freshens her, and it feels as though it connects her to every corner of the world deemed unreachable.

She hurriedly takes care of her morning routines, changes into a new pair of jeans and knitted sweater, and lets her hair dangling over her shoulders.

When she walks down the stairs, she realizes that during her muddled haste to go to check on how her brother is doing today, she must have excluded all the voices in the world that would convolute the situation more, because, standing between her mother and Roc in the living room, there’s a young man who looks up at her with delight.
Hela lingers by the last step of the staircase, a hand on the post, taking in the tremulous smile across blood-red lips, the black hair parted messily yet still pretty, showing almond-shaped, sky-blue eyes under symmetric brows, long lashes like a deer’s. Now she takes in his tall form, porcelain skin that’s made more evident by the bleu flannel and light washed jeans.

Despite the years she’s spent breathing, not once in her life did she scent something this unearthly novel. It’s something so close to musky aroma and fragrant Magnolia, the latter is most likely just an ultimate ingredient in the perfume he uses, she presumes, but the musky aroma, that she can’t honestly tell where its source is coming from. One thing she knows for sure, the smell she’s scented on her brother and was merely faint then, its source is definitely this guy.

The man’s smile grows brittle now and it downs on her that she’s taken her sweet time examining him from head to toe, probably coming across as wary and untrusting by doing that, deciding on questioning him this time around instead. She finally smiles back and strides towards him like the terrestrial half creature that she and her family are. She curses herself inwardly for not dressing properly for this occasion, but her set smile hides what she is really thinking. “You must be Loki,” she confirms, momentarily inhaling the aerial aroma permeating around him.

Said man stretches out his hand and nods, “and you are?”

“Hela.” She takes his hand in a firm grip, shaking it while eying the tattoo over his other forearm since Loki left his sleeves rolled up to his elbows. “Thor’s older sister.”

“Oh, it’s really nice meeting you.”

She realizes her lips are parting into a wide smile, she quickly faces her mother, “I assume you’ve already met, a big fan, I tell you.”

He chuckles awkwardly and quickly scratches his temple, “I bet.” he mumbles, now turning to look at Roc, “so, where’s he?”

Roc opens his mouth to reply but Hela cuts him off.

“I thought you said you’d bring the cure.” She furrows, apprehensively.

“He is the cure.” He nods towards Loki, eyes looking down disconcertedly.

Hela glances over at her mother’s unreadable expression and immediately knows that whatever her mother is thinking is not something to look forward to.

“So when you say cure, what exactly do you mean?” Hela has to ask this before someone’s neck gets snapped.

Roc heaves an exasperated sigh, “I’ve studied his condition, and giving the current circumstances, I can clearly say he’s a borderline case, Thor may get better or he may not, but those are chances I’m not ready to take when I already know there’s a cure out there.”

“A cure for what?” Loki demands, his eyes adamant.

The rest look at Roc with enormously frightened faces, and although, God, he decides against telling them, he eventually quells when Loki urges him with his arching brows.
“Thor is turning.”

“You already said that before, but you didn’t exactly stick around to explain.” Hela smiles thinly, “so what is my brother turning into?”

“I’m not saying any more than this until I confirm it.” He says, curtly, turning towards Frigga to bow his respects and then continue on ahead the general direction of the corridor, motioning to Loki to do the same.

“I don’t think it’s such a good idea.” Hela adds briskly, rushing after the two walking ahead, “He may not like you bringing his mate here, you know how he gets furious when we go against him.”

Roc continues to walk ahead, assured that the rest, minus Frigga, is following closely behind. “I wasn’t trained to consider what makes your little brother furious,” he says deeply, “he’ll learn how to let others do their job.”

A part of Hela wants to take Loki by the hand and wheel him around toward the living room, pour him some tea and have a little chat with him, about the phone call maybe, why not, but the other part fights against it because her brother comes first and if Loki is somehow able to heal him, then she’ll let Roc work. She knows it’s against her better judgment, but she listens in on Loki’s heartbeats, fleetingly loving the steady and strong rhythm, reminding her of a time she used to act a lot more like a big sister, teaching Thor how to hunt the prey his growing body then could take head on.

“You look nervous.” Loki says to her, his voice soothing and it eventually calms the swirling twit growing like a disease in her chest.

Hela looks up at him, meeting his bewitching eyes; it sinks down then why Thor likes the lad. She smiles inwardly but apparently it grows on her lips too, “I’m worried what Thor is going to say after he learns you’re here, he probably already knows; you being here is the last thing he wants.”

Loki’s brows fly up under his fringes, “Whoa, no need to sugarcoat it.”

“Let’s just say,” She grapples for the proper word, now looking back Loki after she’s found it, “Thor hates to be seen looking… fragile.” He knits his brows, showing his worry. She sighs bitterly and looks ahead, “You’ll see.”

The three walk through the dark entrance of the sliding shelf, which leads to the basement cells. Loki eyes the place with unfathomable emotions, and then he wipes his sweaty palms over his jeans and swallows the unease which has formed into a large pile of saliva inside his gorge. They walk him towards Thor’s cell, but because it has a metal door, Loki can’t figure out just what exactly they are here for.

Roc finally turns around, studying the other two with wide eyes. “I’m opening the door.”

“Wait, what?” Hela dashes forward, “we didn’t agree on this, no one is going in there.”

“Do you want your brother to get better or not?” He reminds her with his cynical voice.

“I do, but I’m not risking him snapping my neck after he does. It’s dangerous inside, and I’m not letting Loki around that time bomb, alone.” Her gaze shifts between Roc and Loki, hoping the scary scenario would fruit something close to hesitation.

“Is he tied?” Loki asks out of the bleu, his eyes examining the firmly locked door of Thor’s cell.
“Well,” Hela clears her throat, “I tied him down to a bed, but I don’t –”

“Great then,” He shines up with a beam, “I’ll be fine, you have nothing to worry about, really.” He tells her, now looking towards Roc, “You can open the door.”

Said rabbit does and Hela only watches with quivering eyes as Loki walks into the room, the door slowly closing behind him, hearing its lock rattle loudly makes Hela’s body tremble as well. She wants to open it again and grab Loki out of there, drag him if she has to, they can always find some other solution and some other cure to her brother, it doesn’t have to be like this, but looking into Roc’s determined eyes, she quells, resting her hopes on Loki to save her little brother.

She’ll stay by the door, and she’ll put her big-sister instincts on hold as the Beta takes over, ready for, God forbid, any call for help.

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