Summary

The summer after Harry's first year at Hogwarts a startling revelation is made that opens Harry up to an entirely new world. It changes his life in a way he never imagined. Now he has a family and all the craziness that comes with. After all when you're the son of Tony Stark, the one and only Iron Man, life is bound to be interesting.

Notes

I've just gotten an AO3 account. But I do have a fanfiction account where I have previously posted this story. I'll be posting the rest of the already written chapters of the story here as well as the other stories that are on my fanfiction account.
Harry Potter was less than enthused to be going home for the summer, which was strange considering he had been away at a boarding school for nearly ten months. Most students were excited to be returning to their homes to see their families and get away from schoolwork. But Harry was not one of them. To him he wasn’t really going home. No, to him he was leaving the only place he had ever really thought of as his home.

He had just completed his very first year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. That’s right, Harry Potter was a wizard. No one had been more surprised by this turn of events then Harry himself. But he had jumped right in to his new world. It was exciting, and full of adventure and new things. The wizarding world had also been full of people who cared about him, and he had gained several close friends. He had seen a three-headed dog, centaurs, and trolls. He had even faced down the Dark wizard who had murdered his parents leaving him to rot with his horrible relatives.

Harry was almost certain that that had been the best part, his discovery that his parents weren’t the wastrels that his aunt and uncle had always told him they were. It was almost a relief to Harry to hear that they had in fact died fighting to protect him from an evil maniac rather than in a drunken car crash. Unfortunately this new information came with the fact that Harry was famous because he had survived the attack from the Dark Lord Voldemort. At just barely over a year old Harry had survived the dreaded Killing Curse something no one else in history had ever done, and defeated one the greatest dark wizards of all time. Or at least that’s what people had told him. Harry was just glad that his dreams about laughter and green flashing lights were actually true, and didn’t mean that he was crazy for having the reoccurring nightmare.

Harry had excelled and thrived at Hogwarts. Before he hadn’t had that chance because he had been bullied and discriminated against by his relatives. His aunt and uncle told the teachers and neighbors that he was a delinquent and disturbed, which caused them to treat Harry with disdain. His cousin Dudley bullied him mercilessly and made sure that the other children joined in or at the very least he chased away any other child that tried to be his friend. When Harry had gotten top marks his first year in primary school his uncle and aunt had screeched at him saying that he had used his freakishness to get better marks than Dudley so that he could show off. They demanded that he never get higher marks ever again or else face the consequences, and Harry really hadn’t wanted to contemplate what those consequences might be.

It hadn’t stopped Harry from learning of course but he did make sure to do poorly on all his schoolwork. Instead Harry had just spent all his free time in the school library, and when those books became too easy he started visiting the free library down the street whenever the Dursleys left him alone. He loved to learn. He found that he could grasp concepts that even some of his teachers had difficulty understanding. He was especially interested in the various sciences and engineering. Before Hogwarts it had been his greatest wish to try building his own robot. Unfortunately he didn’t have access to any tools or spare parts. But at Hogwarts things had been different. Sure he still hadn’t had access to the mechanical parts he needed but he had been opened up to a whole new type of science: magic.

It was a completely new subject for him to learn and he had been so excited to dive right in. He’d snuck all of his school books into his room before going to Hogwarts and had read them all wishing that he had thought to buy more than just the standard books on the list. In fact his desire
to learn almost had the Sorting Hat placing him in Ravenclaw. The Hat reasoned that he was more suited to Gryffindor in the end because he wanted to use his knowledge for his own amusement. He wasn’t a complete bookworm, and he didn’t actually like to read it was just that it was normally the only way to gather the information that he wanted to learn. He was much more of a hands on person and preferred learning by doing and experimenting for himself. He was also fairly reckless and brave, which is how he had gotten himself into such instances as fighting off a mountain troll and going up against Voldemort. So in the end Gryffindor was the best choice for him.

His love for learning found him a steadfast study partner and close friend at school. A girl by the name of Hermione Granger. She was the first person Harry had ever met whom he could talk about his love for advanced mechanical engineering and have them understand what he was actually talking about. Luckily for him she was a muggleborn student and had a good grasp of both muggle science and magical theory. Together the two of them had spent hours in the library, studying and learning magic well beyond their year. His other close friend that he had acquired was Ron Weasley, a wizard who oddly enough hated doing work or reading of any kind making him an odd addition to the friendship between Hermione and Harry. But his love for adventure and knack for getting into trouble rivaled Harry’s own and thus the friendship was solid. Besides Harry liked goofing off every once in a while, unlike Hermione, so Ron made the perfect escape.

The only real sour point at Hogwarts had been his Potions Professor, Severus Snape. For some reason the man hated Harry with every fiber of his being no matter how well Harry did in his class, it only seemed to make him hate Harry more. Harry had been looking forward to potions because it reminded him a lot of muggle chemistry. He had read his potions textbook over the summer and found it fascinating that many of the magical ingredients could have such incredible reactions. They even had to be stirred in the correct direction to get the magical properties to work properly in the potion. He had had a list of questions to ask his potions professor once school started. But Snape had crushed those dreams in the very first class where he had taunted Harry. First by calling Harry a celebrity and second by asking him difficult questions. Luckily Harry had read ahead and he had a pretty good memory, it was the only way he had been able to answer the questions Snape had asked him. Instead of pleasing the professor with his knowledge however, it only seemed to make him angrier. He seemed to think that Harry was an arrogant showoff and nothing Harry did could change his opinion of him. The rest of the year had not gone much better with him looking to deduct points and give detentions as often as possible.

The only other sour point about Hogwarts had been his encounter with the Dark Lord who had murdered his parents. He had been possessing the body of Harry’s Defense Against the Dark Art’s Professor so that he could try and steal the Philosopher’s Stone hidden in the school. With the stone he would have been able to return to full power but Harry, along with his two best friends, had been able to stop him. They had gone through all of the traps protecting the stone but in the end Harry had had to face Voldemort all on his own. He’d been terrified but in the end he had prevailed. Even when Voldemort was trying to manipulate him into joining him so that Harry would give him the stone.

He praised Harry telling him how smart he was, how he could help Harry become even greater, and that he would give Harry a place of power when he finally took over Europe. But he had seen Voldemort for what he truly was and in the end he had been defeated. Headmaster Dumbledore said that he was not gone for good and that eventually he would be back. Harry knew that he would have to be prepared for that moment and decided to dedicate himself during the next school year to training and learning as much as he could. He hadn’t liked being at such a disadvantage against Voldemort. He knew he needed to come up with ideas that a normal wizard wouldn’t think of so that he could gain the upper hand against him.

Despite Snape and Voldemort, Harry was still going to miss Hogwarts fiercely. The next couple of
months at the Dursleys were sure to drag on and on. He’d be stuck doing chores, being chased by his cousin and his gang, and receiving meager meals. Worst of all he wouldn’t be allowed to do magic and there were so many different experiments that he wanted to try to see just how magic reacted with muggle technology. Everyone said it didn’t work well but Harry was determined to learn just why that was. He had wanted to stay at Hogwarts but according to Headmaster Dumbledore that was out of the question because of the wards of protection he got from staying with his only living blood relatives. He only wished that he had another place that he could go or other relatives that would be able to take him in.

Harry waved goodbye to his friends and watched enviously as Ron was swallowed by a sea of warm and friendly redheads, and as Hermione was toted away by her parents each of them eagerly asking all about her year. Harry despondently pushed his cart through Charring Cross Station searching for his relatives. He finally found them waiting by the car. His uncle, Vernon Dursley, a large, beefy man with no neck and a walrus mustache stood with his arms crossed impatiently as he checked his watch. His aunt, Petunia Dursley, a thin woman with a long neck, and a horse face stood beside him. His cousin Dudley Dursley, a massive whale of a boy with blonde hair and little piggy eyes was in the car playing a handheld videogame. He looked even larger than he had last year, which was really quite the accomplishment in Harry’s opinion.

"Move it boy we don’t have all day. We’re already late," Vernon snapped the moment Harry came into view.

Harry obediently scampered over as quickly as he could. None of the Dursleys offered him any greetings and Harry gave none in return. Vernon didn’t bother to help Harry with his trunk; he only unlatched the boot and watched while Harry struggled to get it inside. There were other bags and suitcases in the boot, which made his job twice as hard. He wondered why there were suitcases but he figured the Dursleys must have just come back from a trip or something. Once he finally succeeded in getting his trunk in the boot Harry crawled into the backseat of the car, clutching his owl’s cage with his snowy white owl Hedwig inside. The Dursleys all scowled at the owl cage and at Harry but seeing as how they couldn’t do anything about either one of them they just ignored their existence. Dudley looked a little nervous about being in such close quarters with Harry. He was no doubt still traumatized by Hagrid giving him a pig’s tail last summer. The memory made Harry’s lips twitch with a suppressed smile.

Harry sat back in the car and passed the time by going over everything that he had seen and done while at Hogwarts. He was in the middle of his first Quidditch match against Slytherin when he happened to look out the window and realized that they weren’t heading in the right direction.

“Uncle Vernon, this isn’t the way back to Privet Drive,” Harry pointed out.

“Shut up, boy. I don’t need you to tell me where I’m going,” Vernon snarled.

Harry looked at his aunt in confusion but the only reaction from her that he could see was an expression of smug satisfaction. The farther they drove in the opposite direction from Privet Drive the more nervous Harry became. He didn’t know where they were going or what was going on. Maybe the Dursleys had moved and they were going to their new house? It was the only explanation that Harry could come up with.

When they pulled into an airport, however, this idea was quickly discarded. They couldn’t be going on vacation could they? No they would never take Harry with them on a vacation. The Dursleys absolutely hated spending money on Harry would do anything that they possibly could to avoid having to do it. They would have dropped him off at Mrs. Figgs, unless she was unable to watch him for some reason. Still he was fairly certain that they would have arranged their trip to make
sure that Mrs. Figgs was available before booking the tickets.

The Dursleys all ignored his questioning as they got their luggage from the boot. Dudley looked like he would have answered him, his face gloating and full of vindictive glee. He was stopped by Petunia who still looked more calm and smug than Harry had ever seen her while he had been in her presence. It made Harry’s stomach churn with nausea to think about what had put her in such a good mood and what had given Dudley such a gloating expression. What were they planning on doing to him? Because in reality making Harry suffer was the only thing that could have put all the Dursleys in such a good mood while Harry was still in their presence.

Vernon finally snapped and told Harry to keep him mouth shut. Harry complied because Vernon’s had started to take on that purplish hue that he always turned when he was getting really irritated. All through the airport check in Harry’s thoughts swirled in confusion. He nearly had a breakdown when he was told that Hedwig would have to ride in the bottom of the plane. Seeing how close he was to the breakdown the nice airport baggage lady said she’d make sure that Hedwig was in a safe place and well taken care of. It gave him some measure of peace. But it was only a small amount he was still extremely anxious about what was to come. He’d never been on a plane before and now they would be traveling such a long distance. He’d learned by checking the flight schedule that the plane they were going on was taking them to the States, New York to be exact. He just didn’t know why they were going.

“Dudley why are we going to New York?” Harry asked desperately when Vernon and Petunia had gone to buy the family some extra snacks while they were waiting to board the plane.

“Dad said we’re dropping you off with you’re dad, and then we’re going on vacation around New York City,” said Dudley with a bored expression. He was apparently too invested in his videogame at the moment to bring up the same level of gloating he had had earlier or to remember that he wasn’t supposed to be telling Harry these things.

“My dad? But my dad died,” replied Harry feeling utterly confused. This was the last thing Harry thought he would say. It didn’t even make sense.

“He didn’t. I overheard mum and dad talking about it. Mum found some old journal of your mum’s while she was looking through a box of stuff from her mum and dad. It said she had an affair with some other guy, and that he’s your real dad. Guess mum was right huh? You’re mum really was a strumpet,” Dudley finally looked up from his game to leer at Harry at the last comment.

“That’s not true,” said Harry furiously. But his mouth was suddenly dry and it didn’t sound nearly as fierce as he had meant it too.

“Well, that’s what mum and dad said, and that’s why we’re going on the trip, to give you to your dad. Apparently he’s loaded and we’re going to get money for you. I’ll bet dad will even buy me that new Play Station,” said Dudley dreamily.

Harry barely heard him; his thoughts were chaotic as he tried to make sense of what was happening. It couldn’t be true! Everyone he had met at Hogwarts had commented on how much he looked like his dad. Harry had even seen photos of his dad and yeah maybe James Potter’s hair was a true black while Harry’s was more of a dark brown but his mum did have some influence in his genetics. His dad wore glasses and Harry didn’t but again he could have gotten the good eyesight from his mum. Their noses were kind of similar and Harry’s hair was messy, not quite as bad as his dad’s but again Harry’s had more of curl to it like his mum’s. No the Dursleys had it wrong James Potter was his dad. They were just going to be disappointed when whoever this man was turned out not to be Harry’s father and they had made this trip for nothing.
But a part of Harry, a traitorous part, whispered about how great it would be if this man really was his father. Harry shoved the thought away. For him to really be Harry’s father it would mean that Harry’s mum would have had to cheat and from everything that people had told Harry, his mum had been a kind and sweet person. He knew that she couldn’t have done it. Unless she wasn’t as kind and sweet as people had led him to believe, which would be a disappointment all of its own. In his mind he had built her up to be almost saintly for her sacrificing her life for his, and to learn something negative about her would shatter that fragile new image of her. The Dursleys had to have it wrong. The journal must have been old and her relationship with this unknown man must have been from before his mum had married his dad. But the way that Dudley had worded it made it sound like the journal had explicitly stated that this man was Harry’s real dad.

No it couldn’t be true. This was Harry’s mantra as they boarded the plane and took their seats. His seat being as far from the Dursleys as possible, which Harry was more than okay with. He had no desire to be anywhere near them at the moment. They were planning some horrible scheme to try and pawn Harry off in exchange for money. That’s all this was. It wouldn’t really matter in the end. They would be angry that their plan hadn’t worked out and they would head home empty handed with Harry in tow. At the very least Harry would get the chance to go out of the country for the very first time in his life.

The plane took off and Harry’s stomach dropped. He found that flying wasn’t as enjoyable in a plane as it was on his broom. He much preferred being the one in control of flying and he missed the feeling of the wind on his face. There were too many people crammed close together on the plane and when they hit air turbulence it jarred the entire plane in a very uncomfortable manner. At least the flight had a movie. He’d never been able to watch the television at the Dursleys or been to the cinema.

The plane flew through the night, and Harry thankfully took the chance to lose himself in the mind numbing movies and forget what was happening. The air service provided a meal with the purchase of a ticket so at least Harry was given some decent food. Much better than what he got at the Dursleys’ anyway. He dozed for a bit but despite how tired he was his mind was still too chaotic for him to try and close his eyes to sleep. He couldn’t believe that the Dursleys were actually going to such extremes to get rid of Harry. It made him question just how truthful this information was. They had to be fairly confident in the information if they were willing to spend the money and fly all the way to the States. That was the part that made Harry so nervous. They had to be wrong though; it was the only answer that Harry’s mind would allow. He was relieved when the plane finally began to make its descent so that he could get off. Going through customs at the airport was a huge pain but Harry just felt relief when he had finally gotten Hedwig back. She looked a little ruffled and unhappy but she was all in one piece and for the most part she seemed all right.

There was a five-hour time difference between New York and London, which is where they took off from. The flight itself had been a little over eight hours which meant despite their long flight it really was only as if they had taken a three hour flight. It was almost eight at night here. Luckily Harry hadn’t slept on the plane so after the forty-minute drive in a rental car into the city and checking into their hotel he was more than happy to crash on the floor since the Dursleys wouldn’t dream of giving him the bed. He woke up a couple of times disoriented and feeling like he should get up because of the time change but other than that he slept fairly soundly despite all of his worries.

The next morning the Dursleys got up early despite Dudley’s protests. Vernon had soothed him by saying that they had something to take care of and then they would be able to enjoy their vacation. He’d been looking at Harry while he said it. So as they were eating a huge breakfast with Harry watching he couldn’t help but ask.
“Are you really going to try and give me to some man you aren’t really even sure is my father?”

Harry demanded.

Vernon glared at him not wanting to put up with his questions. But Petunia put on her smug expression that Harry was beginning to hate. She didn’t question how he knew. She probably felt that they were almost rid of Harry so she was no doubt feeling generous and willing to finally tell him the truth about their very unexpected trip. The thought made Harry scowl.

“Oh he’s your father all right. I read it all right there in Lily’s diary. She kept the thing beneath a bunch of old items of our parents to make sure it was well hidden. I got the box after her death and to think I almost didn’t look inside it. Lily didn’t want everyone to know the truth that she wasn’t quite as perfect and wonderful as everyone believed her to be. She didn’t want her husband knowing of her indiscretions with some American man in a bar,” said Petunia obviously relishing the thought of finally beating her sister at something. Harry knew that she thought of herself as a proper and dutiful housewife, and to find out that his mum had been unfaithful meant in her mind that Petunia had turned out to be the better wife.

“So she met someone in a bar that doesn’t automatically mean he’s my dad right?” Harry asked nervously.

“She wrote that she was certain your father was the American man she had the liaison with,” said Petunia with confidence. This was her dream come true, beating Lily and getting rid of her horrible, freakish son. Harry could practically taste her glee over the situation. “She had written down his name and we were able to find him. He’s a very rich and well-known man, I’m sure he’ll be more than willing to take you in. He can afford it that’s for sure."

“But what if it’s not true?” Harry asked desperately.

“They have DNA tests now to check for those sorts of things and from what I’ve read he can have these things checked very quickly. He’s probably had his fair share of paternity claims with all the money he’s got,” Vernon added his two cents worth.

“But it is true and you are going to live with him,” said Petunia with an air of finality that ended the conversation and made it clear that she believed her word was law.

“I want to read my mum’s journal. I want to see for myself if that’s really what she wrote,” Harry demanded.

“You’ll know the truth soon enough boy now sit down and shut up. We only have to put up with you for a little longer and I’d prefer that I didn’t have to listen to your whining until then,” Vernon growled his face turning purple which was never a good sign.

Harry knew there was nothing more that he could do but it didn’t make him any less scared about the situation. He didn’t know what to think or feel. This couldn’t really be happening to him right? He was terrified of just how confident Petunia was and he wanted to read the journal but Petunia refused to let him look. In the end he could do nothing but go along with them. It was hard after a year at Hogwarts where he had been a leader and been able to make decisions for himself to once more be under the absolute authority of the Dursleys. They didn’t care about explaining things to him or about his opinion on certain matters. He felt helpless. They did what they wanted and expected him to fall in line or else face their wrath.

That was how Harry found himself once more in the rental car. His trunk was packed, Hedwig’s cage was in his lap, and they were off. Harry tried to entertain himself with gazing around the beautiful city. He had never seen buildings quite so tall or seen so many people before. He’d never
been to a big city like this before, besides just glimpses of London. The Dursleys never bothered to
take him anywhere so he loved getting the chance to see new places. It made Harry wonder about
American wizards and if they had a place like Diagon Alley hidden somewhere in between the
busy streets and tall skyscrapers. They drove into the very heart of the city. They seemed to be
getting closer and closer to one tall building that really seemed to stand out above the rest. It was
shaped differently from the others. Instead of just being all right angles this one had curves and
eye-catching architecture to make it stand out amongst the other skyscrapers. It had STARK
written across it in big and bold letters. It could have probably been seen for miles.

As it turned out the Stark building was indeed their destination. Harry felt his nerves ratchet higher
as they made their way into the lobby of Stark Tower. It was so pristine and to Harry it almost felt
like stepping into another world. When he had walked into Hogwarts it had been like stepping into
the past with an ancient castle that didn’t use any form of electricity. If walking into Hogwarts was
like walking into the past then Stark Tower was like walking into future. Everything looked so
advanced with the touch computer screens at the information desk, and the metal and glass motif
throughout the lobby. Harry was in awe and momentarily forgot why they were there in the first
place. He was reminded when Vernon charged up to the information desk demanding to see a Tony
Stark right away. Harry felt a jolt and wondered if that was the name of the man that they thought
was his father. If he was Tony Stark did that mean that he owned this building? The thought was
mind boggling to Harry.

“I’m sorry sir but that’s simply impossible. You can try to call his assistant and book an
appointment. But I know for a fact that the chances of that happening are very slim. It can take
months to schedule an appointment and even then Mr. Stark is known for missing his
appointments. Mr. Stark is a very busy man,” said the receptionist in a polite but firm tone.

Harry thought it was rather stupid of Vernon to fly all this way and not have researched the man
enough to realize that they would need to have made an appointment to see him. Unless he hadn’t
realized that the man was quite so busy or that it would be that difficult to get in to see him.

“I’ve tried phoning before but so far I haven’t gotten through. So I’ve come to see him in person
and I think he’ll decided to make time for me. I’m here to drop off his son, you see,” said Vernon
pompously.

That caught the woman’s attention as well as the others loitering in the lobby. The Dursleys and
Harry had already attracted people’s attention what with Harry’s large trunk and his owl cage but
Vernon’s loud declaration had people gravitating closer to hear more and see how this would all
play out. Harry himself decided to plunk down on his trunk. He had a feeling this wasn’t going to
turn out well. The Dursleys had obviously lost it. They were just trying to make money by passing
it off that he was really some rich guy’s son because if Tony Stark was the same guy who the
building was named after he must have been very, very rich maybe even more than the Malfoys.

“As far as I’m aware Mr. Stark doesn’t have a son,” said the receptionist.

“He doesn’t know. The boy’s mother was my sister and she never bothered to tell him since she
was married to another man at the time,” Petunia butted in. She couldn’t seem to help herself when
it came to badmouthing Lily. Harry clenched his fists and wished that he could speak up to defend
his mum. But the situation was already bad enough and he didn’t want to draw unnecessary
attention to himself by shouting at Petunia.

“I see, well let me just make a few calls and see what I can do,” the receptionist replied sweetly.

Harry was very certain that she thought the Dursleys were crazy too, and what she was really doing
was calling the police or security. He was proved right when two large, muscular men in uniforms
appeared from the lift and approached Vernon.

“Sir, we’re going to have to ask you and your family to leave the premises,” one of the guards requested calmly.

“I demand to see Tony Stark. We’ve traveled a long way and we’re not leaving until we see him,” snarled Vernon.

“I’m afraid that’s not possible,” replied the second guard looking irritated.

“If you don’t let us see him we’ll take our story to the papers. We’ll appeal for a DNA test and then sue him for child support. We’ve spent a lot of money on the boy and we deserve some pay back. We were willing to do this quietly but if he won’t see us then that leaves us no choice but to bring this issue out into the open,” Petunia sniffed.

The two guards and the receptionist were both looking more than a little angry now but they also looked a little uncertain about what to do with the threat of a DNA test and going to the newspapers. The receptionist picked up the phone and made another call.

“Are you threatening Mr. Stark?” the first guard asked eyes narrowing on Vernon.

“No! We just want what we are due for looking after the little brat,” Vernon snarled.

This led to some more arguing which led to the second guard trying to restrain Vernon who had begun to shake his fist at them both. Things would have dissolved into chaos had it not been for a pretty, slender woman with strawberry blonde hair stepping out of the lift and approaching the group.

“I’m Pepper Potts, I’m the CEO of Stark Industries and Tony Stark’s personal assistant. What seems to be the problem here?” she asked in a calm but authoritative voice. Even Vernon seemed to snap to attention to obey her.

“I’m Petunia Dursley. This is my husband Vernon and our son Dudley and the boy over there is my sister’s son. As I was explaining to these idiots, I’m here to drop off my nephew with Mr. Stark seeing as how he is the boy’s father,” replied Petunia nodding to where Harry sat dejectedly on his trunk petting Hedwig through the bars of her cage.

“And what proof do you have that he is in fact Mr. Stark’s son?” Miss Potts asked while looking Harry over thoroughly. Harry stared back wishing that this whole thing would just end. It had to be one of the most horrible situations he’d ever been in and he’d been attacked by a troll, a three-headed dog, a man-eating plant, and a Dark Lord.

“My sister’s journal,” Petunia replied primly. “She wrote of her affair with Mr. Stark and that he was in fact the boy’s real father, not her husband. We’d be willing to have a paternity test done to prove the truth of our claim.”

Miss Potts turned to stare at Harry some more. Her gaze was calculating and assessing. She frowned a bit, her lips turning into a grim frown as if she had reached some sort of decision.

She turned back to the Dursleys. “Alright we have a doctor on staff in the building who is capable of performing such a test here and now. If you’ll all come with me we can get this matter cleared up quickly.”

She turned on her heel and strode back towards the lift. The Dursleys all followed looking smug, well not Dudley he just looked confused and slightly annoyed probably because this was all taking
a lot longer than he had thought. Harry, of course, was left to drag his trunk by himself. One of the guards was kind enough to help him to which Harry thanked him profusely for. He had had to drag his trunk everywhere since getting off the Hogwarts Express and it was really beginning to tire him out.

He was nervous about what would happen next. He was glad that Miss Potts had stepped in to help out and was willing to deal with the Dursleys’ crazy idea. He wasn’t sure to what lengths they would have gone had she not interfered but he was fairly certain that it wouldn’t have been pretty. They were determined to get rid of Harry and they wanted to get some of Tony Stark’s money in the process. Harry had no idea if any of this was true but whatever happened, Harry had a feeling that his life was drastically going to change.
The Truth about Harry

To say it was awkward inside the lift would have been a huge understatement. No one said a word and Miss Potts and the two guards kept sending the Dursleys disgusted looks when they weren’t looking. Their pompous way of speaking, and their belittlement of Harry hadn’t endeared the Dursleys to them one little bit. Harry was just once again grateful that Miss Potts was putting up with them at all. It wasn’t as if the Dursleys had presented her with a wealth of proof that Harry was Tony’s Stark son after all. She could have just kicked them all out.

Speaking of Miss Potts, Harry caught her staring at him again. When she realized that he had caught her she gave him a warm smile, which in turn made him give her a shy, timid smile. She was definitely very nice but she had a strict air about her that was not unlike McGonagall’s. Finally they arrived at their floor. Miss Potts escorted them through the hallway until they got to a lab of sorts. Or at least Harry thought it was a lab. There were long tables with a bunch of different equipment and computers that he had never seen before. Harry’s eyes couldn’t stay still as they worked to see every little detail. His fingers twitched with the desire to touch and look through all of the different machines to figure out how they worked.

There was a man in the lab wearing a white lab coat who stepped forward to greet them. He was an older gentleman with graying dark hair, a kind smile that caused wrinkles to gather at the sides of his mouth, and intelligent brown eyes.

“This is Doctor Henry Cunningham. He is Mr. Stark’s personal physician and one of the best in his field. These are the Dursleys,” Miss Potts introduced.

The Dursleys looked him over with suspicion and grunted their greetings.

“Hello, nice to meet you all. What I can do for you all today?” he asked pleasantly, ignoring the Dursleys’ sour looks.

“We need a paternity test done for… What’s your name honey?” It took Harry a moment to realize she was talking to him. No one had ever called him honey before.

“It’s Harry, ma’am,” he told her giving her a nervous smile.

“Harry, well Harry needs a paternity test done. I’m sure you have a sample from Tony?” she asked the doctor pointedly. The doctor nodded in confirmation his eyes were a bit more interested now as he looked at Harry. “I just need to make a quick phone call but I’ll be right back.”

She exited the room pulling out her cellphone as she went. The two guards remained watching over the Dursleys carefully, no doubt not trusting Vernon’s obvious temper. Dr. Cunningham didn’t seem at all unnerved by the strange situation and smiled kindly at Harry once more. It did help him relax just a bit. However, Harry was still more anxious than he could ever remember being in his life.

“Come right this way young man. Here hop up right here on this stool,” Dr. Cunningham patted a tall metal stool in front of him and Harry climbed on without complaint. He was ready for this all to be over with so that everything would just go back to normal.

“Now, I’m just going to prick your finger with this small needle to take some blood and a swab of your mouth with this Q-tip. Is that all right with you young man? I assure you that you’ll hardly feel a thing,” he told him.
Harry nodded his agreement, and opened his mouth and held out his hand when Dr. Cunningham requested him to.

“Perfect now we’ll just get these samples ready, put them in this machine here and then I can compare them to Mr. Stark’s since his have already been prepared,” he said cheerfully.

The Dursleys watched everything that Dr. Cunningham did very closely, not that they would know what it was he was doing. Harry only had a limited knowledge about how DNA worked. He understood the basics but didn’t know what markers to look for when comparing different DNA strands to see if there was a genetic link. Biology and physiology hadn’t interesting him as much as mechanical and electrical engineering had.

After about ten minutes the machines chimed and Dr. Cunningham went over to check the results. He looked them over several times and finally wrote down his final conclusion making both Harry and the Dursleys anxious to hear the results of the tests.

“Well?” Petunia demanded.

“I’ll give the results once Miss Potts returns,” Dr. Cunningham said serenely not at all put off by Petunia’s rudeness.

Harry fidgeted nervously on his stool, the Dursleys muttered under their breath and Dudley brought out his handheld game after his whining to leave got him nowhere. He started to play, oblivious to the tension in the room. Harry was almost jealous of his stupidity and just how easy it was for Dudley to ignore what was going. After all it wasn’t his future that was hanging in the balance based on some blood work. What felt like hours later, which was realistically probably a couple of minutes Miss Potts returned. She looked a bit flustered but she visibly managed to calm herself down before turning to look at Dr. Cunningham.

“What were the results?” she asked clutching her cell phone tightly seemingly needing to brace herself for the answer.

“I can say with a hundred percent certainty that this young man right here is the biological son of Anthony Edward Stark,” said Dr. Cunningham in a firm voice.

“Right,” agreed Miss Potts her face paling before getting ahold of herself again and turning to the Dursley.

“Yes, of course. I apologize for all the trouble that you had to go through,” Miss Potts said appearing as if she was restraining herself from strangling Petunia. “Now moving on to the matter of custody. You mentioned that you wanted to turn over custody to Mr. Stark? Would that be full custody you were speaking of?” Her ability to take things in stride and think ahead to important matters impressed Harry.

“Yes and we want it done as soon as possible, but we’d like some sort of compensation for the boy. I mean we’ve been stuck raising him for eleven years ever since his mother and her husband died. We deserve something for it,” said Vernon.

“I’m sure we can figure something out,” replied Miss Potts her face tight with a forced smile. “If you come with me I can have the paper work drawn up in a matter of moments and you can be on your way. Mr. Stark would like to do this as quickly as possible with all parties coming out satisfied with the arrangement. I’ll have security escort you to the conference room and I’ll meet
“Perfect, come on Diddykins,” Petunia called merrily as the guards led them away.

None of the Dursleys even bothered to say goodbye to Harry. They just left without a backwards glance. Harry didn’t really care about them not saying goodbye. He was too absorbed in his own thoughts to even acknowledge them. His entire world was crashing down around him and he didn’t know what was real anymore. It had all been true. Harry’s mum had cheated on his dad—no not his dad—James Potter with this Tony Stark person who was Harry’s real dad. Harry didn’t know whether or not to feel elated that his dad was really alive or horrified that his mum really did have an affair with someone else. He was thrilled to be rid of the Dursleys but terrified at being given over to some person he had never even met before, even if they were his real father. What was Tony Stark like? Miss Potts was his assistant and she said that Tony Stark wanted to get custody quickly. That would mean that he wanted Harry, right?

“Harry sweetheart, are you all right?” Miss Potts asked gently.

“Yeah,” Harry mumbled.

“Did you know that Tony was your dad?”

“No, Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon just told me yesterday. I always thought James Potter was my dad,” he replied.

“Yesterday? You only found out yesterday?” She seemed shocked before composing herself. “Your aunt mentioned that your mother and her husband passed away?”

Her eyes were gentle and Harry found himself liking her a great deal.

“Yeah, I was only a year old. Everyone thought Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon were my only living relatives so I got put with them,” replied Harry.

“Well how do you feel about living with Tony now?” she asked.

“I don’t know, I’ve never met him,” said Harry with a shrug.

She smiled. “What I’m getting at is would you like to stay with your relatives?”

“No,” Harry said quickly.

She got a serious expression on her face for a moment. “They haven’t hurt you, have they Harry?”

“No,” replied Harry, the Dursleys had never hit him before. Well Dudley had but he was pretty sure that wasn’t what she was asking. “They just don’t like me. Aunt Petunia didn’t like my mum and so they don’t like me either.”

Harry was leaving the statement at that. He didn’t want her knowing about the chores and the cupboard under the stairs. He’d never told anyone about them. He hadn’t even known that what they were doing was wrong until he was older and went to primary school. It was there that he saw the way normal families were supposed to act. They were supposed to love all their children and treat them the same, which was definitely not the case with the Dursleys. But he could never bring himself to tell anyone about his situation. At his primary school the teachers would have never believed because they thought him a liar and once he got to Hogwarts it just didn’t seem as important. He supposed he was also a bit embarrassed. The wizarding world thought of him as their hero. What would they do if they knew their hero had grown up in a cupboard under the
Miss Potts looked sad before forcing a smile. “Well, I’m sure you and Tony will get along quite well. You’ll like him. You look just like him you know. I knew the moment I laid eyes on you that they were telling the truth. I knew you were his son. You have the same hair and the shapes of your faces are similar.”

“Really?” Harry couldn’t help but enthuse. Despite the situation he was still very excited at the prospect of having a living, breathing father.

“You bet,” Miss Potts agreed with an even brighter smile. “I’m going to bring you up to the penthouse Harry and get you settled, okay? Then I have to go finish the paperwork with the Dursleys. Tony’s… out but I’ve called him and he should be here any moment so you won’t be alone too long all right?”

“Okay,” Harry agreed.

She smiled and said thanks to Dr. Cunningham. Harry did as well. He was about to try dragging his trunk from the lab but Miss Potts assured him she’d send someone else to bring it up for him. For now he just carried Hedwig’s cage.

“That’s a very nice owl you have. I don’t think I’ve ever seen anyone with a pet owl before,” Miss Potts commented as they road up the lift.

“Her name is Hedwig. She’s a snowy owl and she’s very intelligent,” Harry gushed. She had been his first real present and friend, and Harry loved her. Hedwig puffed up at the praise.

Miss Potts smiled at him. There was silence for a little bit and there was an important question that Harry desperately wanted to ask. But he was nervous about the answer. But he was a Gryffindor after all and his whole house was about courage and bravery.

“Did you talk to him?” Harry asked before he could lose his nerve.

“Did I talk to who? You mean did I talk to Tony?” Harry nodded. “Yes, I did.”

“Did you tell him about me?” Harry stroked Hedwig and avoided Miss Potts’s eyes.

“I did,” she said gently. “Are you worried that Tony won’t want you?”

Harry nodded, unable to meet her gaze.

“You have nothing to worry about. I won’t lie. I don’t think being a father was ever a part of Tony’s plan for his life but I know he would never send away any child of his. Tony isn’t always the best at expressing his emotions so it may take some time for him to warm up to you but don’t you ever worry about not being wanted, okay?”

Harry just nodded.

“Hey, look at me.” Harry reluctantly lifted his gaze to look at her.

Her eyes were warm and caring as she looked down at Harry. “Everything is going to be just fine. I promise. You are more than welcome here. You won’t ever be unwelcome. This is your home now and I want you to feel accepted in it. If you ever don’t feel that way you can come and talk to me all right?”
“Thank you,” Harry murmured shyly feeling a rush of warmth towards Miss Potts.

“You’re welcome, and I mean every word,” she said sternly.

Harry smiled once again reminded of Professor McGonagall.

“Here we are,” she said blithely as they got off the lift.

Harry could only gape in wonder at the massive room he found himself in. It was beautiful and the large glass windows gave a spectacular view of the city.

“Wow!” Harry breathed in amazement. “Is this where Mr. Stark lives?”

“This is one of his homes. He just recently finished building Stark Tower actually. He moved in just a few weeks ago. It has all of the modern conveniences. In fact the things you’ll see in here are one of kind since Tony personally built them all himself,” Miss Potts explained.

Harry took a tentative step into the room. It was hard to believe that his dad owned this and that this was only one of his houses! Harry was more than certain now that Tony Stark was richer than the Malfoys if he could afford all of this. Not to mention that he must be interested in engineering like Harry if he had built a lot of the technology himself. He wondered how Draco would feel knowing that there was a muggle who was richer than his snotty family.

“Greetings Master Harry,” a male voice from the ceiling suddenly called.

Harry jumped and looked all around for the voice.

“Who said that?” Harry asked in wonder.

“That would be Jarvis, Tony’s computerized butler. He’s a system that is built into the building and he controls the tower. He keeps track of things and helps me to make sure that everything in Tony’s life runs smoothly,” Miss Potts explained carefully.

“I am looking forward to getting to know you, Master Harry. If you need anything don’t hesitate to ask me,” Jarvis said.

“So he’s an AI,” said Harry having some knowledge about such things. “It’s really impressive that Mr. Stark was able to build one into a building. I’ve never heard of anyone being able to do that before. I thought that technology like that was years away.”

“Well, Tony’s quite good at making the impossible, possible. And you seem to know what you’re talking about. Do like you engineering?” she asked.

“Yeah, I love learning about how different parts of machines work. I’ve always wanted to try and build my own robot but the Dursleys would never even let me near anything like that,” Harry replied sadly.

“I’m sure Tony would love to show some of the things in his workshop. Although, you would have to be very careful, the equipment and tools can be very dangerous,” Miss Potts told him.

“What does Tony do?” Harry asked curiously. Tony Stark was obviously very wealthy and probably very well known as well if even the Dursleys could track him down. But Harry hadn’t been allowed to watch the tellie and for the past year he’d been away at a magical school very cut off from the goings on of the muggle world. He wasn’t up to date on muggle news at all. In fact he didn’t think he’d ever watched the news before or read a muggle newspaper.
“You don’t know?” Miss Potts questioned, surprised by his lack of knowledge.

“I don’t know anything about him,” Harry replied with a shrug.

Miss Potts gave a short, amused laugh muttering something along the lines of ‘he’s going to love that’ before saying in a clearer voice: “Stark Industries was created by Tony’s father Howard who was a gifted inventor. It was originally a weapons company but recently Tony’s turned the company around and has been working to make it the only name in clean energy along with various other pursuits. He has a few other… hobbies but I’ll let him tell you about them. Now I really have to go back to take care of the paperwork in regards to your custody. Make yourself at home Harry there’s food in the fridge if you’re hungry and I’ll just turn the TV on for you. Jarvis will change the channel for you if want to watch something else or if you need anything else just let him know. Tony should be here any minute.”

“Thank you, Miss Potts,” Harry said smiling at her.

“Call me Pepper, I spend a lot of time with Tony so the two of us will be seeing quite a bit of one another.” She gave him one last smile and then got back in the lift to head back to meet up with the Dursleys to get everything squared away. Pretty soon he would be done with the Dursleys and he would never have to see them again. It was definitely a relief. Pepper’s assurances had helped to relax him a bit too in regards to finally meeting his new father.

Harry stared in stunned awe as he gazed around the room. He was rooted to the spot and felt very out of place in such a beautiful and obviously expensive room. Hedwig jolted him from his reverie with a loud indignant hoot. She was no doubt stir crazy from the long amount of time she had spent in her cage. Harry was a little hesitant about opening the cage. What if Mr. Stark didn’t like having her around just like the Dursleys? His things were much more expensive looking than the Dursleys were and he might get angry if Hedwig decided to perch on them. Hedwig hooted again and he decided that it really wasn’t fair to her to keep her cooped up for so long no matter the consequences to himself. So he opened her cage. She shot from the cage. She made several loops around the high vaulted ceiling before settling herself on one of the ledges. Harry tentatively made his way to the couch. It was leather and looked very expensive. It made Harry nervous about attempting to sit on it.

The rug looked comfortable so he decided that kneeling on it was probably a better option. He lowered himself onto the rug to watch the television but his gaze traveled to look out the window. There was a large balcony outside that overlooked the city. Harry was almost giddy as he stood back up to go and walk out on it. Hedwig joined him swooping down to perch on his shoulder. He was thankful for her constant presence, at least he had her as some source of familiarity in this strange new environment. The glass doors opened automatically for him and he walked out onto the stone walkway. The railings were made of glass as well and standing next to them gave Harry the sensation that he was about to fall. There was another balcony underneath this one that was a little wider but he still had a good view of the street. He couldn’t quite believe just how tall the building actually was. He grinned as he looked out over the city with the wind ruffling his hair. If he closed his eyes he could almost imagine that he was flying. For the first time since coming to the States he felt content.

A strange whirring sound pulled him from his thoughts. He opened his eyes to see something hurtling towards the tower. It was too small to be a plane or a helicopter and it was vaguely shaped like a person. The red and gold colors of the object stood out to Harry. As it got closer to the tower Harry realized it was in fact shaped like a man. Some type of robot maybe? His eyes widened when he realized that whatever it was, it was slowing down and it looked like it was going to land on the strange circular ledge off to the side of the building. Harry watched in amazement as the walkway
opened up and all these different mechanical devices were revealed. They worked together to start dismantling the robot as it walked down the pathway towards the penthouse. As more of the pieces were pulled from it, it became apparent to Harry that it wasn’t a robot at all but a man wearing a suit of metal.

Harry gaped in astonishment and quickly rushed back inside to meet the man, wondering who he was and wanting to know more about how he managed to make a suit of armor that could fly. Hedwig squawked unhappily as she was displaced from his shoulder but followed him back inside the penthouse. Once inside Harry was confronted with a man of average height and build with messy dark brown hair and artfully styled facial hair. He had intelligent brown eyes, which were looking Harry over as intently as Harry was looking him over. There was something familiar about the man but Harry couldn’t quite place it. He moved towards him cautiously suddenly forgetting all about the questions he’d wanted to ask about the metal suit.

“Hey,” the man finally greeted.

“Hullo,” Harry murmured back unable to take his eyes from the man.

“Nice accent,” the man commented.

“Thanks?” Harry replied in confusion.

“Tony Stark,” the man said offering Harry his hand. He wore an unidentifiable expression as he gazed at Harry.

Harry’s eyes widened in shock and his mouth dropped open. This was Tony Stark? But that meant that this man was Harry’s dad. He now knew why he looked so familiar. It was because Harry saw similar features in the mirror every morning. Seeing Tony Stark for the first time made him realize that he really looked nothing like James Potter, albeit superficially. When comparing him to Tony Stark, however, the resemblance couldn’t be denied.

“Harry, Harry Potter,” replied Harry, slowly reaching out to shake the man’s hand. He searched Mr. Stark’s face for some sign to see if he was happy about Harry being here or not but the man’s expressions were inscrutable.


“Right away, sir,” Jarvis responded.

There was another long pause. Harry stood awkwardly staring at his scuffed trainers glancing up at Mr. Stark through his bangs. Tony kept looking around the room as he rocked on his heels but his eyes kept eventually returning to look at Harry. He looked to be at a loss and didn’t seem to know what to do. It made Harry feel a little better that he seemed to be as confused about this entire situation as he was. At the very least he didn’t seem like he was hostile even if he wasn’t being overly affectionate. Honestly, Harry probably wouldn’t have known what to do with someone like that. He was never used to hugs or a lot of praise due to his life at the Dursleys.

“So I guess we should find you a place to sleep. We definitely have enough rooms around here. Come on I’ll show you,” he said moving towards a door along the same wall as the lift. Harry hadn’t even noticed it when he’d first entered the room, too enamored by the large glass windows and other gadgets in the room.

Harry followed along obediently. Hedwig swooped down to perch once more on Harry’s shoulder.
“Whoa, where’d you get a tame owl?” asked Mr. Stark startling a bit when he noticed her.

“She was a gift. Her name is Hedwig. She’s very intelligent,” Harry informed him stroking her feathers. Hedwig puffed up at the praise and then proceeded to preen Harry’s hair in affection.

“Very interesting gift choice,” Tony murmured, still staring at Hedwig.

“Do you want to pet her?” Harry offered.

Tony looked thoughtful for a moment then shrugged, “Sure, why not?”

He reached out to stroke Hedwig’s feathers. She watched him closely in suspicion and Harry crossed his fingers, hoping that she wouldn’t bite him. Luckily she didn’t and allowed him to give her a couple of quick pats.

“Very nice owl,” Mr. Stark commented offhandedly causing Hedwig to puff up again.

“She likes you, she normally bites anyone else who pets her,” Harry told him.

“Now you tell me that she bites? What? Were you hoping she’d bite my fingers off?” Mr. Stark gasped in mock outrage.

“Well, she didn’t,” Harry said with grin at his over exaggerated expression.

“Good thing too or I’d have had her stuffed.” Hedwig hooted in indignation and Harry hoped that he was joking. “And then I’d have had to build myself some new robotic fingers, which actually might not be a bad idea... You know in the event I ever lost a limb. It’d be good to have a backup...” He noted Harry’s shocked expression. “Let’s go find you a spare room shall we, kid?”

He led Harry to the door. There was a keypad, which Mr. Stark quickly typed the password into before the door clicked open and they entered a corridor. Like the room he had first entered it was made of the same dark gray stone and it was almost familiar in the way that it reminded him of Hogwarts’s stone interior. Thinking of Hogwarts made him think of Dumbledore. What would the Headmaster do once he realized that Harry wasn’t at the Dursleys anymore? He said that he had needed to stay with the Dursleys for the protection of being with his mum’s blood relatives. The Dursleys had been the ones to give him up though. Whatever reasons they had decided to take Harry in, in the first place didn’t seem as important to them now as getting rid of Harry or getting money from Tony Stark. It didn’t seem like there was anything that the Headmaster could do to change their minds. Harry felt a moment of worry that he might be putting his new father in danger but then he remembered the suit of metal he had been wearing. He seemed like a man who could take care of himself.

Mr. Stark showed Harry several of the rooms. He showed him his own master bedroom but mentioned that he rarely slept there because of long nights in his workshop so if he really wanted he could have the room. Harry was surprised by the generous offer but declined it nonetheless. He was used to small spaces. Even at Hogwarts he’d shared a dorm room with four other boys so he really didn’t need Tony’s huge bedroom.

In the end Harry chose the bedroom across from Mr. Stark’s own. It was already completely furnished with a queen-sized bed, desk, wardrobe, and dresser. Mr. Stark said that he’d call an interior designer so that Harry could decorate the room in any way that he wanted.

“You don’t have to do that, sir.” Harry told him feeling awkward that Mr. Stark would spend money to decorate the room when it already had nicer furniture and looked more put together than anything he had at the Dursleys. He also had his own private bathroom with a huge tub and a
separate waterfall shower. It was more than Harry had ever dreamed of.

“It’s not a problem. Besides what kind of father would I be if I just gave you some old, boring guest
room? You should personalize it, make it your own. Also don’t call me sir. Sir was my father. You
can call me Tony. Okay kid?”


“No need to thank me. The way I see it, I have what ten? Eleven years worth of gifts to make up
for. When’s your birthday by the way?”


“Right, and you’ll be how old then?”

“I’ll be twelve,” said Harry.

“I can’t believe it’s been almost thirteen years since I met Lily,” whispered Tony looking a bit
dazed.

“You remember my mum?” Harry asked excitedly.

Tony hadn’t even mentioned anything about his mum and with his confusion over Harry’s age he’d
begun to fear the man didn’t even remember her.

“I do. She was gorgeous, witty and she could do this thing with her…” he trailed off as he realized
just who it was he was talking to. “You really probably don’t need to know about that part.”

“Aunt Petunia said you met in a bar,” Harry persisted.

“We did. I was in London for a business trip and I was tired so I decided to avoid the press by
going to this dive bar. And that’s where I met Lily. She seemed out of place in a dump like that and
it immediately drew me to her. I wanted to see just what her story was. We ended up talking for a
while and I really enjoyed the conversation. She could keep up with me, which was kind of rare.
She honestly didn’t know who I was and that made things more interesting. I didn’t have to worry
about an ulterior motive with her. We decided to meet again.

“We met every day for the next two weeks that I was in London and on the last one she came back
to my hotel room with me. She confessed to being married and well back then my moral compass
wasn’t all too strong so it didn’t bother me that much. So we uhhh well,” he glanced at Harry’s
eager expression, cleared his throat uncomfortably and continued. “We uhh… made you and then
said our goodbyes. I never saw her again although I was tempted. She really was a really
interesting woman, very mysterious and sexy as… um she was very pretty and nice I mean. But,
well, anyway that is how I met your mother,” Tony finished lamely.

Harry was quiet for several moments. So it had all been true. His mum had had an affair that had
led to him. He didn’t know how he felt about that. Well on the one hand he was grateful because if
they hadn’t he wouldn’t exist. But they had both known what they had been doing was wrong but
they did it anyway. Some of his worry must have shown up on his face because Tony spoke up
again.

“I know it’s hard to understand kid. But I think maybe you’ll understand better when you’re older
that adult relationships can be a bit tricky. Sometimes you can have feelings for more than one
person at time. Of course you shouldn’t act on them when you’re with someone else but that’s not
always what happens. People make mistakes. It’s in our nature and all that. But oh hell, I’m really
the last person you should probably be listening to about this stuff. I’m terrible with relationships. Pepper would definitely be better at this. Hell Jarvis would be better and he’s not even a real person,” Tony said, looking extremely uncomfortable.

“Okay,” said Harry feeling just as uncomfortable with the situation.

“I did really care about Lily, though, and it’s more than I can say for a lot of the women I’ve dated. Actually I was crazy about her and she seemed to really like me too. We just didn’t go about it in the right way. If it’s any consolation I don’t think she meant for it to happen at the time. But sometimes people don’t always think rationally. But live and learn and all that jazz.”

“I guess I just don’t like that mum lied to everyone about me. It wasn’t very fair,” replied Harry softly.

It was nice to know that his parents had cared about one another but it was hard hearing that his mum and dad hadn’t cared about who they hurt with their relationship. It also hurt that his mum had kept the truth from everyone, even Tony. Maybe if she had come clean earlier then maybe he wouldn’t have had to grow up with the Dursleys.

“Yeah, it’s a tough situation and I’m sorry that we put you in it. But whatever we did it isn’t your fault. You’re completely blame free. And I am happy to have you here,” Tony told him.

“Really?” Harry asked.

“You bet. I’ve always wanted a Mini Me of I course I was planning on building one but you work out fine too,” said Tony.

“Mini Me?” Harry asked in confusion.

“No. Oh well, maybe that’s a movie a little bit out your age range. What do kids your age do exactly?”

Harry shrugged. He had no clue what normal kids his age did since he’d never really been one.

“Master Stark, the food you ordered has arrived,” Jarvis suddenly chimed in.

“Great, I’m starving. Let’s eat,” Tony enthused heading back towards the living room.

Harry dutifully followed. He was feeling a little bit better about the situation. He was more comfortable in Tony’s presence. At the very least he was reassured that his father actually wanted him around. It was a disappointment that both his parents had knowingly committed adultery but like Tony said it wasn’t really his fault and he figured in the end it didn’t change the way that his mum had loved him. The same could be said about Tony’s feelings towards him. It was nice to have a father who cared after all.
Tony Stark was a lot of things. He was easily one of the most intelligent men on the planet. He was also one of the richest. He was good looking and charming, and could get any woman that he wanted. Not that he wanted to of course since he had Pepper now. She would probably castrate him, and then proceed to destroy him in a very horrible and painful manner if he ever even so much as looked too long at another woman. She knew him too well. He definitely didn’t want to go out that way. After all what would people say if Tony Stark, the Invincible Iron Man, was whipped by a slender strawberry blonde woman? It really didn’t bear mentioning.

Anyway he’d gone off on a tangent. Tony was a lot of things. He had been the Merchant of Death. But he was working on that. He was Iron Man, a hero and celebrity to the public. To the government and SHIELD he was an arrogant menace who didn’t play well with others. But the one thing he never thought he’d be was a father. The very thought of having children left him in a cold sweat and feeling slightly nauseous. So how had he ended up one?

Tony hadn’t had the most amazing of childhoods despite all the material possessions his parents had showered him with. His mother had been distant at best and blatantly neglectful at worst. She’d only had him to land his father and after she got her money she kept her distance from Tony. His father was too busy creating SHIELD and searching for good ol’ Captain America to spend too much time with his only child. Not to mention his bad drinking habits. Then there were Tony’s own self-destructive habits to consider. He liked driving fast, performing dangerous stunts, drinking, and he could be quite obsessive when he got a new idea; going for days without sleep and only eating when Happy, Rhodey, Jarvis, or Pepper stepped in to remind him.

Frankly he just didn’t think that he was father material, and there were many who would agree with that assessment. He wouldn’t know what to do with a kid. This was why he was careful. He had to be or else get trapped like his father, and sentence some poor kid to the miserable life that he had had. So despite the many women he’d been with, he had never once slipped up. There had been only one time that he’d been less than careful, and provided a small window of opportunity for something to happen. But then he’d never heard from her. He’d been sure if something had happened she would have notified him. Lily had been honest, secretive about her past and purposefully left out details yes, but brutally honest when it counted. After all she did spill the beans that she was married that first night when he first tried to pursue her. She told him nothing else could happen between them and despite his frustration he’d agreed only for the chance to see her again arrogantly thinking he could change her mind. That in itself was a shining example as to why he shouldn’t be a father.

He’d been thrilled when things took a turn in the direction he’d desired them to since he’d first spotted her in the bar. A little guilty too since she had seemed so faithful to her husband. So when things finally happened he had been in too much of a hurry, too intrigued by the stunning and brilliant red head he had gotten to know in the past two weeks for him to be cautious. And now he was paying for that stupidity. Well maybe that was mean. So far Harry seemed like a fairly decent kid. But then again Tony had contributed to fifty percent of his DNA so he was bound to be a pretty awesome kid or well at least half awesome.

When Pepper had called to tell him that he needed to get his ass back to the tower because some British people had shown up with a kid that looked eerily like him, he’d felt like his world had tilted off its axis. For Pepper to have called him in such a wild panic he knew it had to be serious. He also knew when she told him the names of the couple that this was the real deal. Lily had only mentioned her sister and her husband once but the names were strange enough for them to have
stuck in Tony’s head. Combined with the fact that they were British was all the information that Tony had needed.

He’d known then that it had finally happened. His worst nightmare had finally come true. He didn’t even need to read the text Pepper had sent him afterwards to inform him of the positive results of the DNA test. He had already known. He was a father. A father to the eleven, almost twelve-year-old boy with messy dark brown hair like his and emerald green eyes like Lily’s sitting across from him trying to eat Lo Mein with chopsticks and failing miserably.

“You don’t have to eat Chinese with chopsticks,” Tony offered. He was only proficient at it due to all the company luncheons he’d had in China.

Harry sent him a determined, stubborn look that clearly said he was at the point where he just wanted to beat the chopsticks at their own game and that giving up now meant that they had won. Tony could relate.

“Here hold them like this, at least you’ll get more in your mouth that way,” Tony said showing him the proper technique.

Harry flushed in embarrassment but grinned in triumph when he actually managed to get some of the noodles in his mouth after that. Tony grinned too. He really was a cute kid. Tony gave most of the credit for that to himself; although, he did seem to have Lily’s sharp cheekbones. But most of it came from Tony, obviously. It was weird to have this virtual stranger who looked like a younger version of himself sitting across from him, casually eating food with him, and knowing that if it weren’t for Tony they wouldn’t even exist. Tony had made a lot of different things in his life: weapons, robots, and other various technology but this was the first time he’d actually made another human being. An even scarier thought was that he was now responsible for another human life, and considering that he was barely responsible with his own life he wasn’t sure if he could be trusted with Harry’s. At least he had Pepper and Jarvis to help him. Between Pepper and Jarvis he was fairly certain that Harry would survive to make it to his teens. After all how much more difficult could taking care of a kid be from taking care of a dog? He just had to make sure to feed him, clothe him, and occasionally make conversation with him right? Yeah, this was going to be a piece of cake.

“Why did you build that metal suit? It looks really neat,” Harry suddenly piped up looking at him with interest.

“You mean you don’t know?” Tony replied stunned that he wouldn’t know about Iron Man. He thought he was fairly well known all around the world by now, especially after the incident at the racetrack in Monte Carlo.

“No, that’s why I asked,” Harry said giving him a duh look. Tony was fairly certain that he stole that look from Tony since he was very fond of giving it to people when they said something stupid.

“I’m Iron Man,” Tony added just to see if the name would ring any bells.

It didn’t. “The suit’s not even made of iron. Why would you give it a name like that?”

“The public gave it that name not me; although, my very first suit was made up of random iron scraps. So when I upgraded the armor I stuck with the name for simplicity’s sake,” Tony responded with a shrug.

“So why did you build it? How did you build it?” Harry persisted looking very interested.
“Well, it’s kind of a long story. But I guess you could say I’m sort of, well, I guess you could say I’m a superhero.”

“Really? Do you go around saving people? Like in a comic book?” Harry looked a bit more star struck now.

“Yeah, I even have a really cool story on how I became a hero wanna hear it?” Harry nodded eagerly. “Well, before everything happened Stark Industries used to make weapons. I made a trip to some hostile territory in Afghanistan to give a display on a new missile I’d built: the Jericho. Afterwards I was traveling back to the airport with a group of soldiers for protective detail and we were attacked. A group of terrorists called the Ten Rings wanted to kidnap me so that I could build weapons for them. The soldiers were over powered and during the ambush I was hit in the chest —”

“Are you all right?” Harry gasped sending nervous glances towards Tony’s chest.

Tony couldn’t help but grin. It was kind of nice to have someone hang on his every word the way that Harry was. It was pure interest in his story not like other people who wanted to use the information to sell papers or use it as some form of blackmail. Harry was actually concerned for Tony’s wellbeing not Tony Stark: Genius, Billionaire, Playboy, Philanthropist. It was also nice that Harry had no biases from an outside source. His opinion about Iron Man hadn’t been influenced by the media, and Tony was free to give him his own personal view on the events without any previously formed prejudices.

“I’m fine now. But you see some shrapnel, little pieces of metal, got stuck around my heart. To save me the terrorist group got a doctor to try and save my life. The best he could do was put an electromagnet in my chest to keep the pieces from moving any closer to my heart. His name was Yinsen and he saved my life, more than once. Anyway while I was trapped I updated the device the good doctor put around my heart. I needed a power source to continuously power the electromagnet. So I made the arc reactor. See?” Tony pulled down the neck of his shirt so that Harry could see the glowing blue circle lodged in the center of his chest. “This little baby will keep me going for a long time. Of course I’ve made several improvements since the original. It’s also what’s going to put me on the map for being the only name in clean energy.”

Harry’s eyes widened and his hand moved as if to touch it but he pulled back at the last moment. He shyly met Tony’s gaze.

“It’s okay you can’t hurt it, you can touch it if you want,” Tony assured him.

“Er, um that’s okay. I better not,” Harry mumbled looking uncertain as he gazed at the arc reactor in Tony’s chest.

Tony shrugged. “Well anyway the terrorists wanted me to build them the Jericho. But instead I started building my very first and very crude suit of armor. It was actually pretty good if I do say so myself for being built with a couple of scraps inside a cave. Once it was almost done I used it to break out. But Yinsen didn’t make it. He sacrificed himself to give me the chance I needed to escape.”

For a moment Tony couldn’t continue, remembering just how much of an amazing man the doctor had been. One of those rare, genuinely good people. If wasn’t for him Tony wouldn’t have changed. Sure it wasn’t much he was still volatile and self absorbed but he did make Tony want to at least try to be a different person, a better person. If it wasn’t for him he never would have escaped or become Iron Man. All the people he had saved since then were in large part thanks to him. He really couldn’t have done any of it without Yinsen.
“I’m sorry,” Harry said softly. His eyes full of understanding and sorrow. Tony could see that the kid actually got it. That he understood where Tony was coming from and that was more than what he had expected from an eleven year old. What sort of eleven year old understood about the burden of another person sacrificing their life for yours? Apparently Harry. The question was how?

“Me too kid, me too. So I built the suit, stopped making weapons, and decided to put a stop to all the groups that were terrorizing innocent civilians. Since then I’ve had a few other little adventures,” Tony mused thinking back to Obi, Vanko, and Hammer.

“You really are a hero,” said Harry looking a bit starry eyed. Maybe Tony was giving him the wrong impression about what he was really like but before he could correct him Harry asked eagerly, “Will you tell me about your other adventures?”

“Sure, I don’t see why not,” Tony grinned, glad to have an enthusiastic audience to his exploits. He wasn’t sure why but he wanted Harry to see him as a hero. He wanted him to be proud that Tony was his real father and not Lily’s husband like he’d grown up believing. He wanted to outshine whatever stories Harry had been told about this other man. He was Tony’s kid, and he felt a strange surge of jealousy to think that Harry might prefer Lily’s husband over him.

Tony gave him a rundown of everything that had happened to him since he became Iron Man. He left out the bad things like his almost dying from the palladium core in his previous arc reactor. There was no need to worry the kid too much. He did describe in detail how he ended up kicking Vanko’s robot’s butts even showing Harry clips of video from the fight. It was while showing him these videos that he realized Harry was smart. Not just normal smart either but probably genius level. Lily had been uncommonly intelligent and he had graduated from MIT at 17 so it did make sense that any child they had wouldn’t exactly be an idiot. Still Tony hadn’t been expecting it.

When Tony talked about the thrust reactors and the various other parts of his suit he hadn’t expected Harry to be able to understand what he was talking about so he’d dumbed down the explanations. But Harry did know and if he didn’t know right off the top of his head it only took a quick explanation for him to figure it out, and give insightful feedback about it.

This new awareness of Harry’s intelligence was exciting to him. It gave Tony a way to connect with Harry because he had no other clues on how to interact normally with kids. He’d been worried that he wouldn’t have anything to talk about with Harry, and was relieved that they actually had something in common. Tony had started testing Harry’s knowledge by upping the level of difficulty in their discussion. He was ecstatic when Harry was able to keep up with him and was actually as enthusiastic about mechanics and engineering as Tony was.

“I’ve always wanted to build my own robot but I’ve never gotten the chance to. The Dursleys wouldn’t even let me watch the tellie let alone give me spare parts to build my own remote control car,” Harry said with a pout.

“Well, I can’t let any kid of mine reach his twelfth birthday and not have built his own robot. I built my first engine when I was six you know,” Tony bragged.

“Really?” gasped Harry looking excited.

“Yup, now let’s go down to my workshop. I have everything that you could possibly need to build yourself the most bada— awesome robot ever. But FYI no building any doomsday devices. Pepper would kill me if I let you do that,” Tony informed him.

“I won’t,” Harry assured him seriously.

The two of them headed towards his workshop. He wasn’t sure if he should be letting an eleven-
year-old use a soldering iron or a blowtorch but he was supervising and Harry seemed like a pretty responsible kid. Besides Tony had taught him how to use all the equipment beforehand, and he’d used tools like that when he was Harry’s age and he was fine. Tony wasn’t sure how long the two of them were in the workshop but it was surprisingly fun. Harry was a whiz and soaked up all the information that Tony imparted to him like a sponge. By the end of their bonding session they’d built a remote control monster truck that could transform into a small robot and shoot flames. Harry named his creation Tank and the huge smile on his face as he tested it out made Tony feel oddly lighthearted.

He’d only known the kid for a couple of hours and he was already feeling sappy towards him. It was definitely a strange feeling. He honestly hadn’t thought he was capable of it. When he’d first realized the truth about Harry his first thought had been there must be someone else who could take him. But when Pepper told him his relatives had come to drop him off and that his mother had died, he knew there was no escaping the responsibility. He then came to the decision, after freaking out a bit, that he would at least try to make an effort to be a semi-decent father. It was obvious the kid didn’t have anywhere else to go, and going with Tony couldn’t possibly be worse then ending up in foster care. He didn’t want to be the same absentee type of father that his own had been. But he hadn’t been expecting to make a connection to Harry so early on in their relationship. He still had no idea if he was capable of being a father but after spending time with him he at least knew that he wanted to attempt it.

“Master Stark, Miss Potts would like me to inform you that she has ordered pizza and that she is in the penthouse waiting for you and Master Harry,” Jarvis informed.

“We better go, Mini Me, Pepper does not like to be kept waiting when pizza is involved,” he told Harry.

“Ahhhh,” Harry whined looking disappointed.

“Bring the car. Just don’t make it transform or shoot fire balls,” Tony offered.

Harry grinned, and scooped up his new toy before following Tony into the elevator.

“Thank you, for everything, Tony,” Harry gushed, green eyes bright with happiness. “Today was so much fun. The only other person I’ve ever really talked to about this stuff is my friend Hermione, she’s really smart too. She’s a bit too practical though. She likes to follow the rules and keeping things structured. She’d tell the professors for sure if I ever tried to build a fire breathing robot.”

“Sounds like Pepper. Always taking the fun out of things,” Tony mused. “But I had fun too kid, we’ll do it again sometime, okay?”

Harry nodded enthusiastically the simple statement seemed to make him even happier and it was weird to Tony that he was the cause of that happiness. He was pretty sure he had never made anyone that happy before with so simple a gesture.

When they made it back to the penthouse Pepper was flopped in one of the armchairs looking exhausted. Surprisingly Harry’s owl was perched on the arm of the chair and was allowing Pepper to pet her. The thing was definitely an interesting pet choice and surprising enough it did seem pretty smart. More than he was expecting from a bird. He wondered where he had gotten it and just who had given it to him. The bird just better not crap all over his penthouse. Pepper looked frazzled and Tony knew that the conference with the Dursleys must have been difficult for her to show physical signs of her stress. She was normally always Miss Cool, Calm, and Collected. When she saw them step out of the elevator she forced a large grin.
“What have you got there, Harry?” she asked brightly.

“A remote control car,” Harry enthused.

“Very neat, did you build it?”

“Yup! Well Tony helped a little,” Harry added sheepishly.

“Did he?” Pepper’s eyes narrowed on him in suspicion.

“Hey, don’t look at me like that. It’s completely kid safe,” Tony assured, crossing his fingers behind his back as he lied to her.

“Uh huh.” She didn’t look too convinced but she seemed too tired to press the issue. “You did a great job Harry and I’m glad you finally got the chance to do what you’ve always wanted. Here I bet you both are hungry. I ordered us a couple of different kinds of pizza. I wasn’t sure which kinds you liked, Harry.”

“I don’t know, I’ve never had pizza before,” replied Harry looking over the selection curiously.

“Never had pizza! Where have you been that doesn’t have pizza? It must be a dark, terrible place. A wasteland, where dreams go to die,” Tony gasped clutching his heart and making Harry laugh. But inside Tony was kind of concerned over why a kid his age would have never had pizza before. Pepper was frowning darkly and even the bird seemed to be scowling. Tony was now more curious as to how Pepper’s meeting with the Dursleys went. There had been several irregularities he’d noticed while spending time with Harry and he wanted to get to the bottom of them.

“Well, go on grab a slice, let’s see how you like it. New York City pizza is some of the best out there. So if you don’t like then there’s something wrong with you.” Tony waved him towards the pizza boxes.

Harry took a slice of cheese pizza and took a bite chewing slowly.

“Well?” Tony demanded impatiently.

Harry looked thoughtful for a moment his expression carefully neutral until a wide stretched over his face. “It’s really good.”

“Good, cause if you hadn’t liked it you would have been disowned.” Tony grinned and grabbed his own slice as he flopped down on the couch.

Harry laughed and Pepper rolled her eyes before turning to Harry asking him how he liked his new room and said that tomorrow she would take him shopping for new clothes while the decorators got his room ready for him. That was another thing Tony had made a note of. Harry was in serious need of some new clothes. The ones he was currently wearing looked five times too big for him and they looked like hand-me-downs at best and rags at worst. Yeah he definitely needed to hear more about these Dursleys but he had a feeling he wasn’t going to like what he heard.

Pepper was very good at talking to Harry. She was kind but authoritative and Tony would forever be eternally grateful for her. He was pretty sure that if she wasn’t here he’d be having a full scale melt down right about now, like crying in a corner and rocking back and forth bad, over the fact that for the next six almost seven years he was going to be legally responsible for a kid and all that it entailed. He knew there was no way he could do it alone.

“So Harry now that Tony has custody of you, we can change your last name or you can keep it as
Potter which would you prefer?” Pepper asked. “You don’t have to make a decision right this minute of course, it’s just something I’d like you to think about and I wanted to give you that option if you wanted it.”

Harry looked nervous and glanced at Tony out of the corner of his eyes. “Well, I’m not really a Potter now am I? So I guess being a Stark wouldn’t be too bad. I mean if you want me to be?”

It seemed to be some sort of test for Tony. But Tony honestly didn’t understand what the kid was getting at. “I don’t have a problem with you being a Stark. Of course you’ll have to make sure to live up to the legacy. After all we Stark men are known for our dashing good looks, our brains, and our killer charm with the ladies.”

“Tony,” sighed Pepper with a roll of her eyes.

Harry smiled. “Okay, I’ll change my name to Stark. Um well my middle name is James is that okay?”

“Do you want to change it?” Pepper asked gently.

Harry again looked contemplative. “I don’t think so, if that’s okay?”

“Sure, kid its absolutely fine,” Tony assured. The kid did deserve to have a bit of stability.

“So Harry tell us more about you? What are your favorite subjects in school? Who are your friends?” Pepper questioned.

After a little more prompting and assuring that they both really wanted to hear the answers, Harry launched into a long winded story about his love for engineering, his two bests friends Hermione and Ron, and how he wanted to some day fly. They learned he had attended a boarding school for the first time this year in Scotland. He described the teachers and the school, which sounded like a pretty impressive old castle, quite a bit but Tony couldn’t help but feel he was leaving some important details out. There were several times that he would start telling them a story but then cut himself off midway through and it piqued Tony’s interest. It reminded him a bit of his conversations with Lily, and he wondered just what he was hiding. The fact that Harry had avoided all the attempts to give him the name of the school only made him more interested in discovering the truth. He made a note to have Jarvis do a search for boarding schools in castles in Scotland as soon as he could.

After their long discussion the three of them watched a movie. Tony got bored and started flicking pieces of popcorn at Harry. The look of surprise on his face as he threw popcorn at him was hilarious and after only a moment’s hesitation he started throwing it back. It ended with Tony being double-teamed and wrestled to the ground while popcorn was tipped down his shirt curtsey of Pepper holding him down while Harry poured. After that Pepper proclaimed it was time for bed.

“But mom, I don’t want to go to bed yet,” Tony whined.

Harry grinned and nodded in agreement. They might have gotten away with it too had Harry not let out a wide yawn.

“It’s almost ten, Tony. And Harry we have a big day ahead of us tomorrow, not to mention you’re probably still a bit jet lagged. I’ll make sure you get all settled in all right?” Pepper offered.

Harry nodded without complaint as Pepper escorted him back into the living quarters. She took the time to tell him the password into their private quarters something Tony hadn’t thought of doing the first time around. Tony trailed after them into Harry’s bedroom feeling very out of place in the
domestic scene as Pepper showed Harry how to use the different faucets on the shower and sink, and that Jarvis controlled the lights so he just had to tell him when he was ready for bed. Hedwig’s cage had been settled on a nice stand and the owl had put herself to bed on her perch with her head tucked beneath her wing. Harry’s trunk had been put at the edge of his bed and Tony felt strange knowing that that trunk was all Harry had in regards to possessions. It seemed like a kid his age should have had more toys or something.

“Goodnight Harry, tell Jarvis if you need anything and he’ll get Tony or I. Anytime of night don’t hesitate okay?” Pepper insisted sounding like a worried mother hen.


Then surprising Harry and Tony, Pepper swept Harry up in a fierce hug. Harry blushed a bright red but he ended up hugging Pepper back just as tightly.

“Goodnight Tony,” Harry said giving him a slight, awkward nod.

“Night, kiddo,” said Tony ruffling Harry’s hair feeling just as awkward.

With that Tony and Pepper left Harry alone in his new room to get ready for bed and headed back to the living room.

“So spill what happened with the Dursleys,” Tony demanded.

“Oh my god! They are the most despicable people I have ever met in my entire life,” Pepper ranted. “I mean they didn’t just not like him. They hated him, Tony. I mean they actually hated a little boy in their care. A baby, Tony. A cute little baby who had done nothing wrong. The sister was a bitter witch of a woman and extremely jealous of Harry’s mother. So she just decided to take it out on Harry. There were even a couple of times they slipped up and called him a freak. I think they must have been intimidated by his intelligence or something, which they should have been considering they’re all as bright as a box of rocks.”

“What else did you find out?” he asked feeling his anger threaten to start to bubble up. He decided that it was time he did a search on the Dursleys, Lily and Harry.

“He’s been living with them since he was fifteen months old. They said Harry’s mother and stepfather died in some sort of car accident. The sister made it sound like the husband was drunk or something but knowing how hateful that woman is I’m not inclined to believe her. They also went on and on about how they struggled without any other income to support Harry but their obnoxious, pig of a son had an expensive gaming device and nice clothing while Harry obviously got his hand-me-downs. An environment like that can’t have been good for his self-esteem. I guess we should be thankful he’s as well adjusted as he is. I just don’t understand those people. Harry is such a sweet boy. They had to be monsters to go out of their way to be cruel to him.” While she had been continuing her tirade she had been pacing back and forth in front of Tony. She only stopped when she finished speaking, and looked at Tony with sad eyes.

Tony felt a peculiar sensation of anger swell in his chest to know that Harry had grown up in a similar environment to his own but even worse. At least he had had nannies and butlers, and free access to anything he wanted. It seemed like Harry had been treated like a very unwanted freeloader being both neglected and mistreated.

“No wonder he was so concerned about getting my approval. Do you think they hit him?” Because if they had he would kill them. It was as simple as that. He’d hire someone to make it look like an accident and that would be the end of them.
“Harry said no when I asked him and I’m pretty sure he was being honest. But what they did was almost worse. I’m sure there’s more to the story but according to some of the reading I’ve done it’ll take time for Harry to trust us and talk to us about what his life was like at the Dursleys. I don’t know if you noticed but most of what he told us about his life was about the boarding school he attended this past year. He barely even mentioned his life before that except to tell us about how he spent a lot of time in the library of his elementary school.”

“Yeah, I noticed. Was there anything else about the Dursleys? Where do they live? Where do they work? What are their hobbies?” Tony asked Pepper in rapid fire. “Jarvis get me everything you can on the Dursleys. Also while you’re at it pull up everything on Harry Potter’s school records and Lily Potter’s death.”

“Right away, sir,” Jarvis responded in typical fashion.

There were many different ways that he could have his revenge on the Dursleys. He’d just need to hit them where it hurt them the most.

“The little I was able to gather was that they live in Surrey or at least they did. They were planning on moving now that they’ve been ‘compensated’ for taking care of Harry,” Pepper spat. “In the end just gave them what they wanted to get rid off them even though they certainly didn’t deserve it and I knew we would get them back later once Harry was securely in your custody and they signed all the waivers so they would never get the chance to contest it or make trouble for you or Harry. I made them sign waivers saying they could never go to the papers or tell anyone anything about what they know about you or Harry. So there’s absolutely nothing they can do in regards to blackmail or threats once we go after them and if they do they’ll be thrown into a federal prison for twenty years. Either way it will be a win-win situation for us. Anyway the uncle works for a drill company Grunnings or something and the aunt’s a stay at home mom. The cousin was just the whiniest little shit in the entire world.”

“Wow Pepper, I never expected to hear you speak so badly about a kid,” Tony mocked absently while his mind was whirling with plans.

“You would too if you met the kid. Tony, you’re going to make these people pay, right? You won’t let them get away with this? And I know the responsible thing for us to do is to turn them over to the authorities and let them deal with it, but I think whatever you can dish out might be better,” Pepper said hesitantly, nervous about giving Tony such leeway.

Tony grinned evilly. “Of course. No one messes with the Tony Stark. It’s nice to have you on board for once, Pepper. Together I’m pretty sure we can make the Dursleys lives a living hell.”

“Good,” Pepper grinned back just as fiercely.

Tony’s grin widened. If he had more of a heart he might have almost felt sorry for what was in store for the Dursleys but he didn’t so he would enjoy every second of making their lives miserable. Did they really think they could take money from Tony Stark after the way they had treated his kid? Did they think they could just waltz in demanding his money and practically forcing him to buy his kid from them? Obviously didn’t know anything about him or what a vindictive son of bitch he could be. There was a reason people had called him the Merchant of Death before they called him Iron Man. Tony Stark had more resources and more weapons at his disposal than any man on Earth. He could kill them and get away with it and what was more he wouldn’t lose a wink of sleep over it. No the Dursleys would be quivering in their boots if they knew what kind of man it was that they had pissed off.

He settled down on the couch and scanned the information that Jarvis managed to bring up on
Harry and Lily first. He remembered then that he had done a search on Lily before to see if she had indeed been genuine when they first met. One could never be too careful when one was as rich as himself. He was able to prove that a Lily Evans did exist and her picture matched her face. He found the records of where she was born, where she had grown up and where she went to school up until the age of eleven. After that he could barely find anything on her except for the article on the death of her parents in some sort of gas leak that led to an explosion and her marriage license to a James Potter who he couldn’t find anything on. His search on her now was barely any more successful. He did find Harry’s birth certificate and an announcement of the deaths of Lily and James Potter. But the cause was listed as a gas explosion too, which was a bit too much of a coincidence for Tony. Had Lily’s family been involved in something that led to their deaths? And it said Harry had somehow survived the explosion. How did that work? It just didn’t seem plausible, unless he had been in a different part of the house and the house had been large enough for that area to not have been affected. The police report was far too vague for Tony’s liking.

Leaving that for later he then looked over Harry’s school records. His first year of school he passed with flying colors and there was even a note from the teacher that said they should seriously consider moving him up a grade but the request was denied by his legal guardians. The next year however Harry did extremely poorly and the teacher had notes about him being disruptive and having behavioral problems. The next few years followed in a similar pattern. Notes from parent-teacher conferences said that the Dursleys agreed with this assessment of Harry’s character and blatantly told teachers that Harry was a nuisance at home as well. Going on a hunch Tony brought up the grades of Harry’s cousin and found that they were mediocre at best. Tony seethed with the realization that the Dursleys must have ordered Harry not to get better grades than his tub of lard cousin. He was relieved that Harry hadn’t let the Dursleys keep him from educating himself. Who knows, if things had been different they might have killed Harry’s interest in school all together. Tony did wonder if he should start looking for a tutor for Harry but he figured there would be more than enough time for that once he was settled in better.

The other strange thing he found was that the records for this boarding school didn’t match up. The Dursleys had stated their reasons for not sending him to the public school was that they were sending him to St Brutus Secure Center for Incurably Criminal Boys. But there was no record of a Harry Potter ever attending which was a good thing for the Dursleys because Tony would have killed them if they had actually sent him to that horrible place. But then where had Harry been for the past year? Tony really didn’t like not being able to find out. People were supposed to be able to find out anything on the Internet and Tony was one of the best hackers out there. But wherever Harry had been they obviously didn’t file their records on a hard drive.

The information Jarvis found on the Dursleys was basically the same as what Pepper had told him. The uncle was a mediocre drill salesman, the aunt a stay at home mom who liked to throw dinner parties and the overweight cousin who was an idiot and a bully. He was disgusted to see that they made a very comfortable living. There was no reason whatsoever that they couldn’t have afforded better clothes for Harry besides pure spit. He was also so much skinner than their own small whale so he knew they must not have been feeding him well enough. He had decided to watch the security videos of the Dursleys just to see the way they acted for himself. He was disgusted by their behavior and the way they constantly referred to Harry as a brat or simply the boy and at worse they called him a freak.

Tony noticed that all of the vacation tickets or hotels that they booked were just for three people, which meant they had left Harry behind. There was a pattern forming one he really didn’t like. He grew more and more enraged with these people the more he learned about them and the urge to spoil Harry rotten was growing just as bad. He realized that if they had been too cheap to buy him clothes that actually fit him then would have probably been way too cheap to buy him birthday and Christmas presents. The thought that Harry might never have gotten birthday or Christmas presents
made Tony almost physically ill. At that point he knew nothing he did to the Dursleys could be considered too awful or cruel. He would put feelers out so he would know exactly where they ended up moving to, and make sure someone was always watching them to learn their habits. He wouldn’t do anything to them just yet he wanted to bide his time, let them think they were safe and then he’d pounce.

The Dursleys wouldn’t know what hit them. He’d make their lives hell by doing little things at first. He’d hire people to sneak in and mess with their plumbing, electricity and furniture until they thought they were going crazy. He would mess with their pasts, ruin their credit scores, and wipe out any record of graduating from high school or college. He’d give out their National Insurance Numbers, and make credit cards in their names and hand them out for people to use. He’d have someone stage a break in and trash their home and steal their most valued possessions. He would destroy their vehicles and get the uncle fired from his job without any chance of getting a new one considering by then his records would be nonexistent and his credit would be down the drain. He’d get dirt on them then spread the rumors to all the neighbors since they were people that cared about their proper public image. He’d stop their bill payments from going through so they would lose their house and he would lock up their bank accounts to keep them from getting access to the money they’d demanded from him to try and support themselves. Then once they were sufficiently cowed and broken, Tony himself would pay them a visit. After he was through with them he’d give them the option to turn themselves over to the police or let Tony crush them completely. He’d also spend the time to teach the fat bully a thing or two. It would be wonderful and he couldn’t wait to start. They were going to regret the day they had made an enemy of Tony Stark.

Tony was then reminded that he had a lot of enemies. It was really going to be imperative that he keep Harry a secret from the general public for as long as he could. People would use Harry to get to him and he didn’t want to put the kid in that kind of danger. He was determined to even keep the information from SHIELD since he didn’t trust their security systems or their motives. He was already making the arrangements to turn Harry’s identity into the best kept secret in the world. He was building all sorts of different firewalls and codes protecting the files, which named Harry as his biological child and his ward. He also had Pepper draw up some of the most airtight contracts for any workers that may come into contact with Harry, and for those who already had. He knew they could still talk on pain of death. But realistically he knew that couldn’t completely isolate the kid from the world that eventually the secret would get out. He would just try to keep it a secret for as long as he could. And when the truth did get out he would protect him to the best of his ability and that’s all he could do. After the years he’d suffered with the Dursleys he deserved the most comfortable and safe life Tony could provide.
Would You Like to Phone a Friend?

The next morning Harry woke up confused as to why he was so comfortable. He had been expecting to wake up to the uncomfortable cot in the small room at Privet Drive. But the bed underneath him at the moment was even more heavenly than the beds at Hogwarts. It was then that he remembered where he was. Harry opened his eyes and was confronted with the view of his new bedroom.

He grinned to himself. Yesterday really hadn’t been a dream after all. He was really in New York City with his new father, a superhero just like in one of Dudley’s comics that he used to steal. Only he was funnier and smarter and cooler and well, real. Harry had to admit he was thoroughly enamored with Tony. He’d let Harry in his private workshop, and helped Harry to complete his life long dream. Remembering that dream he quickly glanced to the space next to his bed, and grinned widely when he saw the robot he had made sitting where he’d left it. He had named it T.A.N.C for Totally Awesome New Creation or well just Tank. He’d named it that after Tony explained that Jarvis stood for Just A Rather Very Intelligent System. He wished that he could show Tank to Ron and Hermione. Ron would think it was wicked and want to use it to set Mrs. Norris on fire, and Hermione would secretly be impressed all the while saying how irresponsible it was to have something dangerous like that.

He wanted to send them letters but he didn’t think even Hedwig would be able to fly all the way back across the ocean. Maybe he could at least try phoning Hermione. He’d have to ask Tony if it was all right because long distant phone calls were probably very expensive. Speaking of owls he didn’t think anyone would be able to send him one. If they did, the owls would have to go over the ocean, and he was pretty sure that they would just turn around and go back to the one who sent them before even attempting it. Ron and Hermione would no doubt get worried when this continued to happen, and think that something had happened to him when the owls couldn’t find him. He would definitely have to phone Hermione, and have her try to get in touch with Ron for him so they wouldn’t worry about where he was. It wasn’t too pressing of an issue because the only ones who would probably actually try to contact him would be Ron and Hermione, and it had only been two days since the end of term. Hagrid might owl but probably not until closer to the new school year or until around his birthday.

Harry would worry about that later. Right now he caught a whiff of pancakes, and he noticed that Hedwig was no longer on her perch. He pulled on the black slacks from his school uniform and the nicest shirt of Dudley’s that he owned, the one that had the least amount of holes. Pepper said they would be going out today, and considering how nice Pepper and Tony’s clothing were he didn’t want to embarrass them with the rags the Dursleys had given him. He then made sure his trunk was locked tight. He couldn’t imagine what would happen if they found his books or the photo album with all the moving pictures. But technically wasn’t he allowed to tell Tony? He was his father after all. Hermione had been allowed to tell her parents about Hogwarts. They surely couldn’t arrest or expel him for that. But then again this was the United States maybe the laws were different for American wizards. Would he need some sort of permission slip to tell Tony? Or would he need to okay it with the ministry and the Americans? Whatever the case Harry decided it would be best to simply wait things out.

He wanted to get to know Tony better and feel him out to see where he stood in his thoughts on magic. So far Harry was very impressed by him. He was very laidback and liked to joke with Harry. Harry didn’t think he’d ever gotten on this well with an adult before especially after such a short time after meeting them. It may also have been because Tony was closer to being a big kid rather than an adult that they got on so well.
He also really liked Pepper. She was kind and understanding but not too overbearing or smothering, which made for a very good balance. When she had offered to let him change his name he had been relieved. He felt like an impostor using James Potter’s surname. He didn’t really think it was fair to use the name of the man who had given his life for him, and to continue to pretend to be his son when it was all just a terrible lie. He had decided to keep his middle name the same to honor James for sacrificing himself for him and his mum even if he still felt a guilty little about it. Had James even known the truth that Harry wasn’t his real son? He didn’t know but it bothered him quite a bit. Harry also wasn’t really sure if he felt comfortable taking on the last name Stark but as it was he was even more uncomfortable being called a Potter when he really wasn’t. He was glad Tony at least didn’t seem to mind that he had decided to take his last name.

Harry still wasn’t one hundred percent comfortable in his new surroundings. He didn’t know what to make of the things that Tony had told him yesterday about him and his mum. He knew it was going to take some time before the information really settled in his brain and he was able to deal with it. For the time being he was just going to try and take things day by day. He’d process the information more once he felt more settled into his new environment.

Harry followed his nose back out to the main area of the penthouse to find Tony making waffles with a large industrial sized waffle iron. There was batter everywhere, even on the ceiling. Harry figured it took special skills to get it all the way on the ceiling especially with how high the ceilings in the penthouse were.

“Good morning, Mini Me. Did you sleep okay?” he asked looking up briefly from his fight with the waffle iron.

“Yeah, the bed is really comfortable,” agreed Harry, hesitantly walking closer to the chaos Tony was creating.

“Great, cause if it wasn’t we could always pick out a new one,” Tony offered half serious. “We could even get you bunk beds. I bet those would be fun. All that room for activities.”

“That’s okay. The mattress I have now is good,” Harry assured him.

“If you say so.”

Tony looked like he had no clue what he was doing and Harry would have laughed had he not looked like he was moments away from smashing the thing on the floor.

“Do you need any help?”

“No, that’s okay, kiddo. I wanted to try and make you breakfast but this thing isn’t cooperating. And here I thought I could understand any machine. Now look Iron Man outwitted by a waffle maker.” He was trying valiantly to pull out the waffle that was only half cooked and stuck to the top of the waffle iron. Batter from the half cooked waffle was spilling everywhere and he kept burning his fingers on the hot iron.

“Did you spray the sides of the iron first?” Harry asked.

“Spray it? With what?” Tony asked perplexed.

“You know with cooking spray or margarine, so it wouldn’t get stuck to the iron like that. Sometimes kitchen appliances like that will say non-stick but you still have to put something on them or else you never get them off,” replied Harry knowledgeably.

Tony blinked and then looked sheepish, scratching at the back of his neck. “Yeah, cooking’s not
really my thing."

“It’s okay. I know how to cook. I used to make breakfast all the time. I can make you breakfast,”
Harry assured moving to help him. It was the least that he could do for Tony after all that he had
done for him. Since he had been young the Dursleys had drilled it into his head that he shouldn’t
be such a burden to other people and that he needed to earn his keep.

“You know what, on second thought why don’t we go out to eat? You haven’t seen any of the city
and I know a perfect little diner that’s very good at keeping their noses out of their customers
business, and hiding them from the press. We can meet up with Pepper afterwards and do some
shopping. Sound good?”

Harry nodded, excited about the prospect of getting to go out to eat. First of all because he’d never
even been out to eat before and second because he couldn’t wait to see more of the city.

“Oh before we go, have you thought about a color scheme for your room?” Tony asked. “Pepper
needs to know so she can tell the decorators what to do while we’re out.”

“Umm, I don’t really care,” Harry shrugged.

“Okay how about a favorite theme or color or something?” Tony persisted.

“Do you think they could paint a starry night sky on my ceiling? And maybe a forest or something
on my walls?” Harry asked wanting something to remind him of Hogwarts. “If it’s not too much
trouble.”

“No trouble at all. And that sounds like a great idea,” Tony grinned. “Oh just one more thing. The
owl. Is she okay by herself?”

“Yup, she’s fine.” Harry looked to where Hedwig was nestled on the ledge around the high ceiling
looking extremely content with her new surroundings. She certainly had no trouble adjusting to this
new lifestyle. At least that made one of them.

“She won’t leave any unsightly droppings on my stuff now will she?” Hedwig hooted imperiously.
“That’s not creepy or anything... Like she can almost understand...” He shook his head as if to stop
himself from even thinking the thought that an owl could understand what he was saying.

“She won’t, she knows to go outside,” Harry said quickly to distract him.

“Good okay, let’s go.”

They took the lift all the way to the basement where all of Tony’s cars were parked. He had a lot of
them and they all looked extremely fancy and expensive. They all also had Stark written on the
license plates proving that they did in fact all belong to Tony. Tony ushered them into the backseat
of a nice dark colored one with leather seats, which was parked right outside the doors to the lift. A
man with short dark hair and a large build sat behind the driver’s seat, which was on the opposite
side from what Harry was used to. There were a lot of little things that made America different
from Britain and Harry was having fun picking all of them out.

“Harry meet Happy. Happy, Harry. He’s my driver and sometimes bodyguard or he used to be until
I upgraded to being my own bodyguard,” Tony introduced.

“Hullo,” Harry greeted.

“Nice to meet you, Harry,” Happy greeted back as they drove out of the parking lot.
As they drove out Harry realized that there was a frenzy of people milling around outside the entrance to the garage. They had cameras and signs and eagerly charged the car when they saw it. But luckily the windows were darkly tinted so they couldn’t see inside the car making Harry feel a bit safer. Happy also made sure to be quick and pulled out into the street before any of them could get too close.

“Who were they?” asked Harry in shock.

“The media, my fans, crazies who think I’m the devil incarnate. You know, the usual,” Tony shrugged, casually. “The media sort of likes to follow my every move.”

“Are you really that famous?” Harry worried. He was already famous enough in the wizarding world he didn’t really want to have a lot of attention on him in the muggle world too. Besides muggle media seemed ten times worse then anything he’d faced so far in the wizarding world. If that small example was anything to go by.

“Yup, but don’t worry I’ve kept any information about you from leaking to the press. You won’t have to worry about being hounded by those sharks. I’ve grown up with the fame so I’m used to it. It doesn’t really bother me that much anymore. I just can’t bring myself to care about what they think. The public opinion is just too fickle. One minute you’re a savior the next they’re dragging your name through the mud. But you aren’t used to it so I’ll make sure they stay far away from you for as long as I can.”

“Thank you,” said Harry, relieved.

“Don’t mention it, kid. It’s the least I can do for bringing you into this mess,” Tony murmured softly and Harry wasn’t sure if he had meant for Harry to hear it.

Breakfast was in a small, secluded diner that Tony paid the owner to close down for just Tony and Harry. Harry was a little shocked by the amount of money Tony had spent and tried to get him to stop. Tony waved away his concern and assured Harry that he had more money than he could spend in ten lifetimes. Harry was still uncomfortable with it but Harry had a feeling that his complaints wouldn’t stop Tony. The man obviously enjoyed spending his money on Harry or anything else that happened to strike his fancy at the moment. Harry did have to admit that it was exciting to be the only ones in the restaurant, and to be able to order anything that he wanted from the menu without worrying about the cost or that he was putting someone out by making them pay for him. Tony even blew bubbles in his chocolate milk and encouraged Harry to do the same.

“So where did you get that scar kid? Should I start calling you Scarface?” Tony asked with a grin.

Harry frowned, that seemed like the type of jibe Draco Malfoy, his nemesis at Hogwarts, would call him. He also didn’t like the fact that Tony had finally noticed the unique lightning bolt-shaped scar that he normally tried to hide from the world.

“You don’t know what Scarface is do you? ‘Say hello to my little friend’ no? Nothing? Oh kiddo, we need to watch some movies. Get you up to date on the times,” Tony sighed dramatically.

Harry nodded. Television and movies didn’t interest him that much since he had never watched it. But he had a feeling watching movies with Tony would be a lot of fun. It seemed like he had to make comments about everything and everyone, and would probably make the actual watching part more enjoyable.

“So where did you get the scar?” Tony asked again looking curious. “It’s a pretty unique shape and kind of in a strange place.”
“I don’t really know. I’ve had for as long as I can remember. Aunt Petunia says I got it in the accident,” Harry said with a shrug trying to be vague.

“Oh when your mom and James died?” Tony asked frowning, obviously trying to work out what set of events would have to occur to give such an odd scar on his forehead.

“Yeah,” Harry nodded, not really comfortable with this line of questioning. He really didn’t like thinking about it. It made him uncomfortable to think about his mum and James’s deaths since they had been murdered while trying to protect him and he had ended up surviving.

Tony seemed to understand it was an area Harry didn’t want to discuss, and went back to blowing bubbles in his milk, making Harry laugh.

After their amusing breakfast they met up with Pepper in a clothing store that Tony had once again bought out for the day to make sure that no one saw Harry. Again the experience was incredible for Harry. He got to be the only one in the store and be able to pick out anything he wanted. He’d been hesitant at first but when Tony started throwing things in piles left and right he figured that Tony was going to get him stuff anyway so he might as well get the things he wanted. They also made a stop at a toy store where Harry only grabbed a few things he wanted to give to Ron and Hermione as gifts. He wasn’t much for toys himself considering he had never really had any growing up.

Their last stop was at a pet shop where they picked up some new things for Hedwig. He was fairly certain she would adore her new, state of the art cage and toys. They also bought some live mice, which Tony had shrieked in fear over making Pepper and Harry burst into laughter. He’d tried to act tough afterwards and play it off as if he had been joking but Harry and Pepper weren’t about to let him get away with it. While at the pet store, Harry ran across a couple of cages with snakes in them. One was a large yellow Burmese python and the other was smaller corn snake. They were having some sort of argument over what types of mice tasted the best when he had first approached them. Harry had fond memories about the snake he’d set loose on Dudley at the zoo so he’d thought he’d stop and have a chat with them while Tony and Pepper were distracted by an argument over Tony’s work schedule. The snakes had been thrilled about him being able to speak with them and quickly demanded that he set them loose.

“I can’t, I’m sorry. I’ve just moved in with my father and I don’t think he’d like it if I got two snakes. Besides I already have an owl,” Harry said apologetically.

“An owl,” the corn snake hissed in disgust.

“Yes, as if a bird could compare to the majesty of a snake,” the python sniffed in snooty disdain.

“I really am sorry, maybe I can come back and visit?” Harry offered.

“I suppose. Although, I don’t know why we’d want to talk with someone who prefers a feather-brained creature to us. Even if you are a rare Speaker of Snakes,” the python hissed imperiously.

“I told you, I am sor—”

“Harry? What are ya doing kiddo?” Tony asked appearing in the aisle.

“Oh… nothing?” Harry’s heart was pounding in fear. Had Tony heard him? What if Tony thought he was a freak for talking to the snakes? He couldn’t let him know that he actually understood them.

“It sounded like you were hissing at the snakes,” said Tony lifting one eyebrow in confusion as he stared from Harry to the snakes who were watching them a little too intently for it to be considered
normal.

“Really?” Harry asked, honestly perplexed.

It had sounded like perfect English to him. The snakes even sounded like they had American accents albeit hissier. In a way it did make sense that he was hissing because to everyone else that’s what snakes sounded like. He just hadn’t realized that that was what he sounded like. He wasn’t sure what was worse being caught talking to snakes or hissing at them. Both would probably make people question his sanity. He should really ask Hermione if she knew anything about wizards being able to speak with animals. He hadn’t even thought of it himself when he first entered the wizarding world. He’d been too distracted by everything else.

“Yup,” Tony said still eyeing him closely.

“Oh well, it was just for a bit of fun to see if I could get a reaction out of them,” Harry said hoping that he would buy it.

“Riiiiighttttt, just don’t plan on getting one, Dr. Dolittle. Snakes are where I draw the line in the strange pet department,” Tony said still watching Harry closely.

“I won’t,” Harry assured him. Not even bothering to question who Dr. Dolittle was. He was getting used to Tony always saying strange things that he didn’t understand.

Harry let loose a sigh of relief that Tony had dropped the subject. For the rest of the day Harry did catch him giving him the occasional odd look and he prayed that he hadn’t scared Tony too much with his snake routine.

Pepper, Tony, and Harry ended their shopping trip with dinner at a small posh Italian restaurant. It was there that Tony and Pepper broached the subject that they were seeing one another with Harry.

“Oh, okay,” was all Harry had replied.

“Oh? That’s all you have to say?” Tony asked incredulously.

“Well, I thought it was rather obvious. You look at Pepper like Ron’s brother Percy looks at Penelope Clearwater,” said Harry calmly taking another bite of his dessert. He was comfortable enough now with Tony to kid around with him without fear of being scolded.

Pepper laughed and Tony looked a bit dumbfounded.

“I do not look like a lovesick teenager,” Tony declared petulantly.

“I don’t know Tony, he does have a point. You do act quite a bit like a teenager sometimes. Well, actually probably closer to a temperamental three year old,” Pepper mocked.

Tony pouted.

“I do not look like a lovesick teenager,” Tony declared petulantly.

“I don’t know Tony, he does have a point. You do act quite a bit like a teenager sometimes. Well, actually probably closer to a temperamental three year old,” Pepper mocked.

Tony pouted.

“You’re sure, you’re okay with this, Harry?” Pepper asked and he could tell that she was honestly concerned about his opinion. “It’s a lot to take in all at once. Discovering that you have a different father from the one you’ve always had and then finding out that that father is already in a relationship with another woman. It can be intimidating and I don’t want to make you feel like you aren’t welcome in our lives because you are more than welcome.”

It was a new sensation for Harry to have an adult care so much about his feelings. He knew the professors at Hogwarts cared about him in their own way, well except Snape of course. But none
of them went out of their way to talk to him about how he felt about going to Hogwarts or being the Boy Who Lived. They didn’t listen to him like Pepper had been doing so far. It had to be difficult for her as well, having the son from her boyfriend’s previous relationship suddenly appear out of thin air. It must have been a huge shock and an inconvenience to her. But she seemed to take it all in stride and actually wanted to make him feel welcomed in her and Tony’s life.

“I’m more than fine with it. I like you, Pepper,” Harry admitted flushing.

“Oh no, don’t even think about it, she’s mine and while in some instances an older woman might be a good idea, Pepper is far too old for you,” Tony said saving them all from the moment getting too emotional.

As it was Pepper did tear up a bit, looking very pleased before concentrating on her dessert.

The rest of their dessert went well with more lighthearted joking. By the time they made it back to the tower the decorators had come and gone and all of Harry’s new things had been put away in his room. It was strange to think that it was his room. He’d never truly had his very own room before and it was great. Tony had been right personalizing it had made it feel more like Harry’s, like he was making his mark and that by changing the room he was making his presence here a more permanent fixture in the penthouse and in Tony’s life. Besides the painting was spectacular. The forest was very realistic and with the soft, thick rich brown carpet they had installed to make it look like a forest floor it really captured the image of being in a forest. His favorite thing though was easily the ceiling. He absolutely loved it, even if it couldn’t quite compare to the great hall in Hogwarts. It was as close as something non-magical could ever come, and Tony had taken the time to create it himself. He wasn’t sure when exactly he had fit it in between shopping and meals, but he had and that’s what really made it that much more special to Harry.

“See it’s like one of those planetariums that projects a picture of the night sky. Except mine is ten times better because well I made it. It’s more realistic and has more functions. It’s a hologram screen set on the ceiling. It copies whatever the star chart is supposed to be around here for the time of year, and projects the picture like you’re actually looking up at the night sky. In the morning when you get up you can program it to look like daylight. Neat right?” Tony enthused.

“Yeah,” Harry replied stunned and amazed by his creation.


Tony just looked smug.

“Thank you,” Harry breathed.

“Hey what did I tell you? No thanks needed, it’s what fathers are supposed to do. Do stuff for their kids without looking for any type of compensation.” The last word was almost growled and for a moment he looked angry. It was gone in a moment and it didn’t seem to be directed at him for in the next instant he was smiling at Harry.

Harry grinned at him in turn, all his fears about the snakes washed away. Maybe Harry was still a bit leery of Tony what with his questionable morals in regards to his relationship with his mum but it was hard for him not to like him. There was the fact that he was a hero, he helped him build a robot, and he actually seemed to be making an effort to make Harry feel welcome in his life. He bought things for Harry without looking for any type of reparation on Harry’s part, and though they were essential everyday needs that any parent would provide it was still more than Harry had ever received before. Those things alone made him outshine any adult he’d ever encountered. Add that to the fact he was Harry’s living, breathing father and he couldn’t stop himself from liking
The next day Pepper and Tony both had to go back to work. Pepper was the CEO of Stark Industries and was very, very busy. Tony mainly worked on projects that Pepper needed him to or developed things that he wanted to. He was currently working on a device that would be able to power Stark Towers for an entire year and that was just the prototype. They did make sure that one of them was always there with him, and Tony even ended up bringing him down to his workshop with the promise that he would sit in a corner because what Tony was working on was just a bit too dangerous for him to help with. Harry agreed, simply happy to get to watch Tony while he worked.

He’d been nervous the first few times going into Tony’s workshop because he knew that magic and technology didn’t exactly mix well, which is why wizards still used owls to send letters and what not. He knew that mobile phones and electricity didn’t work in Hogwarts because of all the magic. However all the equipment in Tony’s workshop didn’t seem to be affected by his presence in the slightest, which made sense because his presence never made any of the Dursley’s electronics malfunction. The only time he could really remember actively causing problems is when he happened to be at school, and Dudley and his gang had been teasing him. He had been distressed and the lights had started to flicker in the classroom. The teacher had waved it off as bad wiring and Harry had believed it because at the time he hadn’t even known he was a wizard. But now it did make him wonder if technology only had bad reactions to active magic or powerful surges in magic. Hogwarts was filled to the brim with magic. You could almost feel its presence in the air. One young wizard not actively using their magic probably wouldn’t cause a lot of disturbance amongst the electrical items. Harry was curious, he wanted to discover just how much magic needed to be used in order to disrupt electronics and why they were disrupted in the first place. Unfortunately it wasn’t something that he could test at the moment since he couldn’t perform magic outside of school.

Later that night Pepper had to fly down to Washington DC for a meeting, which left Harry and Tony all on their own. Tony let Harry pick out whatever he wanted to eat from a variety of takeaway menus. Harry decided to go with Indian and they got a bunch of different types of curries that Harry had never gotten the chance to try before and he loved it. Then they had big, hot fudge sundaes, and Tony put on a movie. It involved elves, dwarves, and even a wizard with a long grey beard that resembled Dumbledore’s. Harry thought this would be a great way to bring up the subject of magic with Tony.

“What do you think about magic?”

Tony looked flummoxed before repeating slowly, “What do I think about magic? You mean like turning people into toads and fairy godmothers who can turn pumpkins into carriages?”

Harry nodded. Those were things that could be done with advanced transfiguration after all. “More or less.”

Tony snorted. “That’s easy, there’s no such thing. I hate to break it to you kid but there’s only science. You see way back in the Stone Age when people didn’t understand something they would call it magic and ta da! Mystery solved. All their cattle suddenly drop dead they would just think oh it must be that old hag down the road. She’s angry at me and she must have killed my cows with some sort of voodoo. Instead of thinking rationally and working it out that, just maybe, the cattle’s water source might be contaminated. Anything that history has called magic or claimed it was the work of some vengeful god can all be explained today through science.”

“But surely there are things that still can’t be understood with science?” Harry persisted.

After all science couldn’t exactly explain why Harry could talk to snakes or how he could turn a
toothpick into a needle.

“Well, we might not have the tools to understand them yet. But we will one day. It doesn’t mean we should go all halfcocked and start throwing out that it’s the work of some mystical sorcerer,” replied Tony firmly wiggling his fingers dramatically.

“Oh wizard,” Harry murmured.

Tony just chuckled. So Tony firmly didn’t believe in magic. Well that was certainly going to make things interesting when he did find out about Harry being a wizard. Would he accept it? Would he accept Harry once he learned the truth? If he could get him to believe it first. Tony seemed pretty convinced that science was the only option. Harry had studied both science and magic and though there were times that they did seem oddly similar Harry was of the opinion that they were two different things. It left Harry a bit nervous about coming clean to Tony and he decided to keep the information from him until he knew for certain that Tony wouldn’t be disgusted by him once he knew the truth. His only experiences with muggles who knew the truth about magic were the Dursleys, and their feelings of utter loathing made him a bit more cautious about who to trust with the secret. He didn’t know Hermione’s parents so he couldn’t exactly say whether or not they were one hundred percent accepting about their daughter being a witch. They seemed all right with it but he had only seen them briefly at the train station when they had come to pick her up. He really needed more time on how to go about explaining such things to Tony especially when he couldn’t even use his magic as proof.

Several more days passed before he felt settled into his new life enough to ask a favor from Tony. He really needed to talk to Hermione. He needed to tell someone about his newfound father and he desperately needed her advice on telling Tony about magic. Of course if he was even allowed to in the first place that was another big reason as to why he needed to call her. He didn’t have any access to resources in America. He didn’t know where any wizarding streets or shops were located and thus he couldn’t get in contact with anyone on what sorts of laws there were. He knew Hermione would be able to get him information much quicker and would be more thorough about it. She would also enjoy the chance to compare the two different wizarding rules and regulations whereas the information would probably put Harry to sleep.

“Tony do you mind if I phone a friend back in England?” Harry asked him.

“Are you sure you’d like to use one of your lifelines?” Tony replied in an odd tone of voice.

“Um yes?” Harry asked uncertainly. Did that mean he was only allowed to use the phone so many times?

“That means you’ll only be left with the 50/50 and the ask the audience. With that being said is that your final answer?” Tony continued to use that same odd tone.

“What?” Harry asked in confusion.

“Pop culture references are completely wasted on you aren’t they?” Tony said sadly.

“Sorry?” said Harry with an uncertain shrug still extremely confused.

Tony snorted. “Yes, you can call your friend. Do you know if she has a computer with video chat capabilities? Because then you can talk to her on the big screen in here.”

“I don’t really know, actually I don’t even have her number.” He had never asked for it since it went without saying that the Dursleys would have never have allowed him to phone her.
“What’s her name?” Tony asked going over to the table which held a completely holographic computer.

“Hermione Granger. Her parents are dentists and her birthday is the 19th of September, 1999,” Harry offered and he realized that was really all he knew about her life outside of Hogwarts.

“An older woman, very nice,” Tony muttered absently as he scanned through the list of people that had popped up in his search.

“She’s just a friend,” Harry said with a roll of his eyes.

“Uh huh. This her?” he asked waving towards a picture of a slightly younger Hermione. She was in a newspaper article about winning a spelling bee or something.

“Yes.”

“Hmm. Hermione Jean Granger. Daughter of Doctors John and Jean Granger. The winner of several different debates and a spelling bee champ. Huh,” said Tony, whatever he was scanning had made him stop reading aloud and he was now looking at the screen with avid interest.

“What is it?” Harry asked.

“Oh nothing, thought there was a glitch in the screen. But it’s fine,” Tony assured him. “She does have a video chat program and an address. I set you up with one of your own and all you have to do is try calling her. It says she’s available at the moment.”

Harry felt excitement as it rang and a bit of trepidation. It looked like Tony had no intentions of leaving the room and Harry would have to be careful to make sure that Hermione didn’t say anything about magic in front of him. It took several rings and he wasn’t sure if she was near her computer to answer the call but she did eventually pick up. He grinned as Hermione in all her frizzy haired, buck-toothed glory was plastered over the large screen of the penthouse living room. He had never been so happy to see a familiar face. He hadn’t realized just how overwhelmed he was about being alone with strangers, in another country until he saw her.

“Harry? Is that you?” she asked in excitement.

“Yes, it’s me, Hermione,” Harry couldn’t help but reply with equal enthusiasm.

“How did you manage to phone me? I thought you said you’re relatives would never allow to use the phone let alone the computer,” she said frowning.

“Well, I’m not with my relatives, at least not the Dursleys,” Harry couldn’t help but draw the moment out.

“You mean you’re with relatives but not the Dursleys. I thought they were your only ones?” Hermione asked not looking too happy about not knowing something or at least not being able to figure it out.

“I thought so too. But it turns out my dad is alive,” Harry told her glancing at Tony who was watching their conversation with unveiled interest.

“Well it turns out James Potter wasn’t my real dad. The Dursleys found out and they flew me to
America as soon as they picked me up from the train station. They brought me to Stark Tower in New York City. Have you heard about it?"

“Yes, it was just recently built by Tony Stark. He’s brilliant you know. He built his first circuit board at 4, his first engine at 6 and he graduated MIT at 17. He built a suit of armor with a self-powering device called the arc reactor. It’s ever so fascinating. I’ve read all about it even though Iron Man does seem to be a bit of an impractical use for such advanced technology and cause a lot of trouble. They call Tony Stark the Leonardo Da Vinci of our time because of all of the leaps in technology he’s made,” Hermione recited in typical Hermione fashion.

“I’m not fond of that name. I don’t paint,” Tony butted in, moving into the path of the camera so Hermione could see him.

“You’re Tony Stark,” Hermione gasped in wonder, looking a little star struck.

“I am. Thanks for the summary of my illustrious history. Very flattering,” Tony grinned and winked at her.

Hermione flushed scarlet. “Why are with him, Harry?”

“Because he’s my real dad Hermione, we did a DNA test to prove it and everything. As soon as they found out the Dursleys gave over my custody to Tony,” Harry explained.

“But what about…”

“School?” Harry quickly finished for her. “We haven’t talked a lot about it.” Harry emphasized hoping she would understand what the it in question was. “I suspect I’ll be back in the fall though. After all we learn so many important things there like history with Binns and chemistry with Snape.”

Understanding shown in Hermione’s eyes. “Right of course. I would hate that you would end up going to school in America. I would never be able to see you again and your education is ever so important.”

“Well who am I to split up such a good friendship?” Tony teased lightly. “You’ll have to tell me more about this school of yours, though. I want to make sure it’s really up to snuff. Only the best for a Stark.”

“Oh I assure you it’s a very special school, very private. Hardly anyone is able to get in,” Hermione assured him then for the next fifteen minutes she regaled Tony with an in-depth, completely made up school curriculum.

By the end of it even Tony looked thoroughly impressed and his eyes were a little vacant from the overload of information Hermione had provided him with. Harry heaved a sigh of relief that she had managed to distract him from any suspicions he might have had.

“Why don’t you tell me everything that’s happened Harry? I would love to hear how you are adjusting to America. I bet living in Stark Tower is really fascinating. They have some of the most advanced technology in the world there,” Hermione said, dreamily.

“Well, I have to get back to my workshop or Pepper will kill me when she gets home so I’ll let the two of you catch up. Just hang up whenever you’re through okay, kid?”

“Nice meeting you, Mr. Stark,” Hermione said.
“You too Miss Spelling Bee Champ and you can call me Tony.”

“It’s really not proper,” Hermione chided.

“I’m not a proper kind of guy,” replied Tony and he chuckled at the stern expression Hermione threw his way.

“How did he know that I was a spelling bee champion?” Hermione demanded as soon as Tony had left.

“He has really sophisticated computers that can practically find out anything,” Harry gushed.

“Oh I wish I could be there with you. I bet Mr. Stark will be able to teach you so much. My parents got me a muggle tutor in the summers but Tony Stark is one of the most intelligent men on the planet, and can teach you things that no one else even knows about,” Hermione sighed looking dreamy.

“I’m sure that you would be more than welcome to come for a visit. You should see all of the labs and equipment he has here. There are whole levels of the building designated for research. Also he has the whole building wired with a state of the art security system that is actually highly functioning AI so he knows everything that goes on at all times,” Harry told her hoping she’d get the meaning of his words. Just because they were alone didn’t mean that Jarvis wasn’t watching them and could report the information back to Tony later. Harry liked the AI and he knew it would do anything to protect him but Tony had built him to be completely loyal to Tony and Tony alone.

“Right, that’s very fascinating you’ll have to tell me more about it later when you get the chance. For now tell me everything that’s happened. Start from when you first left the train station. Don’t leave anything out,” she demanded.

Harry did as she said. He didn’t have too worry too much about slipping up about magic since there really hadn’t been any instances of it since his arrival here.

“What do you think?” Harry asked once he was finished.

“I think you need to get your mum’s journal. Maybe once you read what her thoughts were on the situation you might feel a bit better about things. Do you know if you’re aunt still has it? Or did they give it to Mr. Stark?”

“I don’t know,” said Harry glumly. Honestly he’d forgotten all about it with everything else going on. “I’ll ask Tony.”

“Good, but you do know Mr. Stark was right? It’s not your fault, Harry,” she said gently.

“I know, Hermione its just…”

“You’re not who you thought you were anymore,” Hermione finished for him.

“Exactly, everyone kept telling me how much I looked like my dad, like James. It just feels like I’ve been living a lie. My mum lied to me and everyone else. She didn’t even tell Tony and she probably didn’t even tell James the truth either and I don’t know how to feel about her anymore, Hermione. Everyone said how wonderful she was. How could she be so wonderful and keep such a big secret?”

“I don’t know, Harry,” she said sadly. “But you can’t let yourself get too distracted by it. Whatever your mother did, you aren’t to blame all right?”
“All right,” Harry replied dutifully, not sure if he really believed it anymore.

“Right and I’ll make some inquiries on how to go about explaining our school to your father. Professor McGonagall came to my house and gave my parents a complete overview of what to expect. I never really thought about the legalities of it all. But it’s definitely something I shouldn’t have overlooked. I’ll make some inquires get back to you in a couple of weeks with an answer is that all right?” Hermione said, once more all business.

“That’s fine,” assured Harry. Even if it did turn out he could tell Tony by the end of the week he wasn’t sure if he would, Tony’s attitude towards magic made him cautious. “Will you let Ron know? I know he doesn’t have a phone but I thought you could send a letter for me so he doesn’t try to contact me at the Dursleys and get worried about me? Just tell him I’m on vacation don’t tell him about Tony just yet. I’d prefer to do that in person. Besides one of his brothers might read the letter and then the entire world will know.”

“Of course Harry, do you want me to notify Professor McGonagall? Or the Headmaster to the change of your location? You probably should,” Hermione worried.

Harry wasn’t sure if he wanted to tell them just yet. McGonagall had known his mum and James Potter. She also seemed to have had a soft spot for James Potter. She might be disappointed to find out that Harry wasn’t actually the son of one of her favorite students. As for Dumbledore he had seemed very insistent that he stay with the Dursleys. What if he decided that it wasn’t safe for him to stay with Tony and Pepper, and made Harry go back with the Dursleys? He wasn’t sure if he could make him go back because the Dursleys obviously didn’t want him and Tony had officially gotten custody of him but Harry didn’t really want to take that risk right now. He wanted to wait and just enjoy his time with Tony and Pepper, and not worry about how Voldemort might cause trouble for them later on. For once he just wanted to be normal. He wanted to be just Harry.

“No, I think I’ll wait for now. There’s no need to worry them.”

“If you’re worried about what they might think about you once they know, I think you would be surprised. Perhaps they would be a bit shocked but it wouldn’t change their feelings towards you. They care about you Harry and not just about who your parents are,” Hermione said in an attempt to reassure him.

“I suppose that’s part of the reason. The other part is that I just don’t think there’s any reason for them to need to know at the moment. I know everyone will have to know eventually but I just want to keep it a secret for now,” Harry shrugged, but internally he was dreading the sort of scandal it would cause once the wizarding world found out that the Harry Potter, The Boy Who Lived, wasn’t actually a Potter.

“Whatever you want, I’ll do it for you. I know this can’t have been easy for you. But are you all right Harry? This is a big change for you, finding out about… about what your mother did and that your real father has been alive all this time. But it can turn out be a good thing if you let it. Mr. Stark seems nice. A little odd but nice all the same,” Hermione said softly.

“Yeah, we’ve gotten on pretty well so far,” agreed Harry.

“If you want to talk more about it I’m here, you know. Now that you aren’t at the Dursleys you can phone me whenever you want to. Well as long as you take the time difference into account,” said Hermione with a smile.

“Right, I’ll make sure to remember that,” Harry smiled back.
“I’m happy for you Harry. I think this will be a very good change for you.”

“I hope so Hermione, I really hope so,” Harry murmured back.

They said their goodbyes and then with Hermione chiding him to start his summer homework they hung up.

Harry returned to his room to pull out his charms work seeing as how it was the easiest subject for him to complete. He never knew that Tony had been watching their conversation from his workshop or that the man hailed as the Da Vinci of their time was twisting his mind in circles trying to figure just what his newly discovered son was hiding from him.
Furious

Harry had been living with Tony for a total of three weeks and things were going well. If only Tony could ignore the fact that Harry was hiding something from him, which he couldn’t. He really didn’t like it when information was kept from him. It nagged at him until he devised some way to figure it out. And in the end he always figured it out.

Tony knew something was going on with Harry and his school. He just didn’t know what it was. He had theories. Outlandish ones yes but he was running out of leads to go on. His ideas ranged from a super secret spy school to a super secret school for geniuses. But then this brought up the point that if they were super secret he would know. He would know because SHIELD would know, and Tony made it his mission in life to regularly hack SHIELD to keep up to date on what the spy organization was doing. He hadn’t liked being ambushed and spied on like he had been during his first encounter with them several months ago. He was determined to stay ahead of the curve this time, and not be outshone by those stiff secretive spies. Wow that’s a lot of s alliterations in one thought process.

He also wanted to know more about Harry’s life with the Dursleys. It was eating him away inside to hear vague references to things that had happened but not being able to outright question him on it. Pepper kept saying it was too soon and that it would halt the thin bond of trust they had formed or some psychobabble shit like that. Tony wanted answers now! At least to one of the two secrets. He definitely wasn’t known for having an amazing amount of patience, and the mysteries surrounding his kid were enough to drive him up the wall. He was Tony’s kid and he should be allowed to know what was going on with him. The not knowing was literally making him insane. The secrets were huge chunks of missing information, and Tony needed to know what those secrets were. How else was he supposed to get to know Harry on a close, personal level?

But despite listening in on Harry’s conversations with his friend, and flat out asking him about his school he was no closer to the answers. It was very frustrating not knowing critical pieces of Harry’s life. It didn’t help that he was being purposefully evasive making Tony all the more suspicious of him. It strengthened his desire to find out his secrets because Tony knew if he was putting that much effort into concealing them then they had to be fairly huge secrets.

Despite these two little snafus everything else was going pretty well. They ate meals together. Discussed advanced thermonuclear physics together. Watched movies together and were generally getting to be pretty good friends. Of course Pepper nagged him that he shouldn’t be trying to be his friend but his father. Tony didn’t know how though. If he tried emulating his own father then he’d hire a nanny and see the kid once every couple of months. He thought his own technique really wasn’t that bad so far. Sure he hadn’t really had anything major to deal with yet since Harry was a pretty low maintenance kid, barring the whole secret thing. Harry was polite and friendly and smart. He had a decent sense of humor even though his knowledge of pop culture was practically nonexistent. All in all Tony really didn’t mind having him around.

Harry and Tony had even developed a routine. They got up had breakfast together. Sometimes with Pepper. Sometimes without depending on if she had flown off to a meeting or not. They would then go down into the workshop where Tony had given Harry his own array of parts and tools to work with while he worked on his own projects. He’d been worried at first about inviting him down to his workshop on a daily basis. He was nervous that Harry would be a distraction or that he would touch something, and mess up what he was working on. But he didn’t, he was very responsible in fact more so than Tony. Sometimes Harry would do his own thing, and other times he would sit quietly and watch Tony work, occasionally asking him a question about what he was
doing. It was kind of nice to have some company. He was normally only surrounded by his robots and Jarvis while working on a new idea. Harry was also intelligent enough to keep up with him so his company was actually beneficial in bouncing ideas off of him.

On another positive note Tony had tracked down the Dursleys. They had settled back at Number 4 Privet Drive in Little Whinging, Surrey. They were planning on moving to a better, more upscale location with the money they had gotten from Tony. Tony, however, had quickly blocked any progress in their attempts to buy a new home. While he was doing that he also implemented the first phase of his plan. He’d hired several highly skilled people with dubious pasts, and sent them in to mess with their plumbing, electricity, and furniture. He also had them set up cameras so he could document the whole thing and show Harry later. He thought the kid would get a kick out of seeing his relatives so humiliated. Phase two would commence in the next few weeks or so after their daily lives had become sufficiently unsettled and unbearable.

It was just another routine day since Harry arrived. They were down in the workshop and he had almost completed the arc reactor prototype. He couldn’t wait for it to be finished so he could test it out. The world was going to be in awe of his genius once they realized he had created something that could power an entire building for a year, and still be considered green energy. He just decided to take a break from the arc reactor, and was working on some upgrades to his newest suit the Mark VII. He had stepped into the back room where he kept his other suits under lock and key when he heard the door to his workshop slide open. He thought Harry must have decided to head back up to the penthouse for lunch or something but he stopped dead when he recognized a deep male voice questioning Harry.

“Who are you?” Nick Fury, Director of SHIELD and number one, one-eyed annoyance in Tony’s life, demanded.

Tony moved back towards the main workshop area but stopped just shy of entering, keeping out of sight of the Director. It was too late to do anything now. Fury had seen Harry and wouldn’t stop until he figured out what a kid was doing in Tony Stark’s private workshop even if Tony tried to play it off like he was no one special. It was just too bizarre. Fury would know that Tony would have never let just anybody in his workshop. Tony knew Fury wasn’t here because he had found out about Harry. First because he had been far too careful and second, the most obvious reason, was because Fury seemed confused about who Harry was. He would have to have words with Jarvis as to how Fury had gotten in to the building in the first place but for now he just wanted to see how this all played out.

“Harry,” Harry replied looking slightly confused by Fury’s appearance. Yeah, Fury really needed to work on his wardrobe. The all black leather ensemble and the eye-patch really screamed space pirate or being a part of some weird biker gang.

Fury was staring at Harry. His one eye looking him over keenly before recognition, followed swiftly by dread dawned on the super spy’s face.

“Oh hell no! Stark, get your ass out here! This cannot be happening. This is a disaster waiting to happen,” Fury ranted.

“Problem Director?” Tony asked casually as he walked back into the workshop. Harry was staring wide eyed at Fury, obviously not knowing how to react to the man’s crazed ranting.

“What the hell is this Stark?” Fury said waving in Harry’s direction.

“I believe he said his name was Harry and you should really know better than to swear in front of children, Director,” Tony chided, annoyed with the way Fury was referring to Harry especially
with the kid still in the room. He knew the jabs were meant to be towards Tony but Harry would no doubt take them personally.

“Don’t get smart with me, Stark. Who the hell thought reproducing with you was a good idea?”

“My mum,” Harry chirped, glaring at Fury.

In his head Tony applauded his cheeky courage and sent Harry a wink, which made the kid grin.

“Right, and she thought it was a good idea to leave you with the most irresponsible man on the planet?”

“My mum’s dead, sir.”

To Tony the added sir sounded like he was challenging Fury. It was like he said ‘take that and shove it where the sun don’t shine you one-eyed idiot’. For a minute Fury looked a little flabbergasted by Harry’s snappy response. Tony could relate. The kid had this whole wide-eyed innocent look but he had courage and spunk. But Fury wasn’t the Director of SHIELD for nothing and he wouldn’t be intimidated by an eleven year old. He quickly arranged his face back into his stoic mask.

“Why wasn’t I informed about this development?” Fury demanded.

“Contrary to your beliefs, SHIELD does not run my life and they do not need to know about the intricate details of it,” Tony sniped, he was still angry over their meddling even if they had inadvertently saved his life, and Fury’s attitude towards Harry was really irking him. He made it seem like Tony was some wild maniac who was completely incapable of taking care of a kid. His reaction brought up all the old fears of him being incapable of raising Harry.

“In the past you’ve proven that you need someone to look after you,” replied Fury not in the least concerned by Tony’s anger.

“What do you want Fury? Besides coming here and criticizing me on whether or not I am allowed to procreate?” Tony demanded.

“It’s confidential,” Fury snapped back, tossing a look towards Harry.

“Harry, kiddo, why don’t you head upstairs? I’ll be up in a moment okay? Right after I deal with the mean and nasty pirate,” Tony told him.

“Okay,” Harry said still glaring at Fury for insulting his mother.

He turned on his heel and stalked from the room. For a moment the lights in the workshop flickered before settling back down. Tony frowned. There must have been something wrong with the wiring. He would have to look into it later after dealing with Fury, and explaining to Harry just who Fury was.

“How long have you known about him?” Fury asked the moment Harry was gone.

“Three weeks Director. And I really don’t appreciate you saying those things in front of him. It was a bit unnecessary,” Tony said casually while inside he was still stewing.

“You’re lecturing me on propriety?” Fury demanded. “That’s rich Stark considering your behavior a couple months ago.”
“You didn’t need to make him feel like he was some sort of strange anomaly for being my son. He’s just a kid,” growled Tony.

“Which is exactly why you shouldn’t be anywhere near him. No offense Stark, but you’re not exactly kid friendly or the responsible type. You’re great with computers and mechanics. But are you even capable of keeping a goldfish alive? Let alone another human being.”

Tony snorted. He knew that was as close to an apology as he was going to get from the super spy. “I’m doing just fine with Harry, Fury. It’s been three weeks and the kid is still alive and fully functional. Just tell me why you’re here since it wasn’t to discuss the fact that I have managed to reproduce.”

“Why have you been hacking SHIELD, Stark?”

Tony put on a blank expression. “I don’t know what you’re talking about.”

“Cut the crap, Stark. You’ve been looking through top-secret programs that you have no right even knowing about. It needs to stop.”

“I’ve just been making sure you haven’t found out about Harry. Okay? You’re security systems aren’t exactly the best but you do have some pretty good spies. Basically that means you’re good at acquiring information but not good at keeping it a secret. I don’t want anyone knowing about Harry, Director. Not even you.”

“The only people we can’t seem to keep information from is you. And why are you so worried about people knowing about the kid?” Fury questioned.

“Hello? Billionaire? Iron Man? Any of these ringing any bells, Director? There are people out there who would jump at the chance to get their hands on Tony Stark’s kid and use him against me,” Tony giving him his patented duh look that Harry had inherited from him.

These were things that Tony was actually terrified about. Harry’s life would be at risk if people found out he had a kid. He knew he would guard Harry with all the resources he had at his disposal but he knew there would always be a slight chance that something could happen. Tony had thought himself safe, and look what had happened to him. He had been kidnapped by terrorists who wanted him to build weapons for them. He could only imagine what someone desperate enough would do to Harry to get him to cooperate. Harry was a weakness now, and he had to make sure to do whatever he could to protect him.

“You have to know that SHIELD would never let anything like that happen to your son, Stark. We protect our interests,” said Fury looking insulted even at the mere mention of SHIELD not being able to do something.

“Right, but I’m not really of interest anymore am I? Not since you scrapped me for the Avengers Initiative,” said Tony. He was only a little disappointed at being declined. After all he worked much better alone.

“You’ll always be of interest to us, Stark,” said Fury a hint of threat in his tone.

“You mean the bad kind of interest, don’t you? Less of a sweet, high school crush and more of a stalker with a shrine in the closet, right? Because you’re afraid of what would happen if I ever turned against you,” Tony was slightly amused that he could make SHIELD uncomfortable.

“Don’t push me, Stark.”
“You know my tech outclasses yours and that if I really wanted to I could probably become the next supreme overlord of the planet. Hmmm Emperor Tony. Has a nice ring to it don’t you think, Director? I wouldn’t mind the bowing and scraping. And look, now I have Harry to continue my dynasty. It’ll be a never ending rule of Starks.”

“Stark…”

“Honestly, Fury, you have nothing to worry about. Just stay out of my life and you won’t ever have to worry about any trouble from me. Pinkie swear.”

“Don’t count on that Stark. There may be a time when we do actually need you. Will you be prepared to meet that challenge? Can you take up a fight that has nothing to do with you? Cause so far all you’ve ever used that suit for are problems you’ve created for yourself or for your own personal gain,” said Fury.

“I guess we’ll just have to wait and see Director,” said Tony in a jibbing tone.

“I guess we will. Good luck with the kid, Tony. Try to do by right him or find him a better home. I’ll keep him out of SHIELD’s database for now as a favor for the kid, not you. The less people who know about him the better. And for god’s sake stop hacking SHIELD, Stark! I’m going to end up having Natasha come and kick your sorry ass, and that’s something you definitely don’t want your kid to see,” Fury said as he stalked from the room muttering about the downfall of humanity due to Starks multiplying.

Tony sat down at his workbench feeling a bit overwhelmed. He was surprised by the surge of protectiveness he had felt when Fury started going after Harry. He was also surprised just how much he wanted to prove Fury wrong, and that he could be a good father to Harry. Maybe that’s what the one-eyed bastard wanted in the first place; to push Tony and test him to make sure he did treat him well. Or maybe he was just being an ass. Tony was going with the latter because he didn’t like the one-eyed Director throwing his own concerns back in his face.

Tony would never admit it but he was terrified of failing Harry. He was so scared that he was going to completely screw up Harry’s life. He could barely focus on the fact that he was a father. Even thinking it still terrified him. Tony didn’t want to end up like his own father but at the same time he was worried that taking an active part in Harry’s life would be even worse. He wasn’t the best of role models despite the image of himself he’d portrayed to Harry. He didn’t want Harry to hate him. He was afraid to let himself care about him, to become too attached because he wasn’t sure if he would even be able to succeed in being a father. Being a dad and allowing himself to care left him open and vulnerable, something he really didn’t care for. So he tried not to think about his fears, and focused on areas of Harry’s life that he could discover and control.

Tony should have known that hacking SHIELD so often would bring their attention eventually but he was desperately looking for information on the school that Harry went to. He knew it existed. His friend Hermione was certainly real and when he had first looked her up it showed the same gap in her own education as Harry’s. She declined an acceptance letter from a very prestigious school in Britain in favor of this other school. But there were no records of where she ended up going, only a short note that she had chosen some other gifted school instead. So it definitely existed somewhere, there was just no way for him to track it online. He’d used satellites to try and track down possible locations for it but so far he’d found nothing that fit the profile.

It also sparked a memory for him when he noticed that Hermione Granger had declined her invitation to the prestigious school right after she turned eleven. He had never been able to track down Lily’s school records after the age of eleven, the age both Harry and Hermione were when they first would have attended this school. So the logical conclusion was that Lily had gone to this
school too. But the sister hadn’t, and Harry’s cousin hadn’t so why had Lily and Harry? Why did this Hermione girl go when her parents hadn’t? There was also the strange term that Hermione had used to describe her summer tutor. At first he wrote it off to be some British slang word but the more he thought about it the more unlikely it seemed. He looked up the term but couldn’t find a meaning for it. And why would she need a ‘muggle’ tutor in the summer? What wasn’t she learning at this school that she needed a tutor in the summer? It was a strange pattern, one that Tony was having trouble solving on his own.

Still feeling a bit frustrated over his meeting with Fury, and his lack of answers with Harry he went back up to the penthouse. He found Harry washing the dishes he’d left in the sink. Tony suddenly realized that it must have been Harry who had been doing all his dishes for him. He had thought Pepper had hired a cleaning lady without telling him or she had told him and he just hadn’t been paying attention. Watching the practiced way Harry cleaned the dishes, he knew now it had been him the whole time. How had this escaped his notice? Why would he decide to do this? Did he feel like he needed to do this to earn Tony’s affections? Either way it made Tony angry. No eleven year old boy should be that good at washing the dishes.

“Harry, you don’t have to do that,” Tony barked at him.

Harry startled and turned around to face him. “That’s okay, Tony. I want to help out and I used to do it all the time at the Dursleys.”

“You don’t need to help out, okay? I’m not like you’re aunt and uncle. I don’t expect you to clean up after me. I pay people for that,” Tony said moving forward to snatch the plate from Harry’s hand and tossing it into the sink with a loud clang.

“What do you mean?” questioned Harry nervously.

Tony instantly felt guilty. He didn’t mean to scare the kid but he was just so tired of tiptoeing around it. He wanted to know the truth. It was obviously worse than what he thought if Harry was so good at cleaning. He also mentioned that he knew how to cook. What had the Dursleys done? Made him their live-in maid? The thought sparked a hot rage inside Tony.

“I know what they did, Harry. I know how your relatives treated you. I know everything,” Tony said. Maybe if Harry thought he already knew everything he’d be more willing to explain it all to him.

Harry looked stricken. “I didn’t want you to find out. I don’t want anyone to find out.”

“It’s okay, no one else needs to know. I don’t care about what happened, just talk to me kiddo.”

“I don’t want to talk about it,” said Harry stubbornly.

“Harry, it’s fine all right. Just tell me what happened,” Tony demanded trying to hold on to his patience. It wasn’t Harry’s fault that the Dursleys were cruel bastards but it was so hard that the kid was so stubborn in keeping it a secret. He didn’t understand why he was so against it. He was away from those horrible people there was nothing they could do to stop him from telling people the truth now.

“You already know. Why do I have to tell you again?” Harry said glaring at him much like he had been glaring at Fury earlier.

“I want to hear it from you.”

“Why? Why do you need to hear about my horrible life with the Dursleys?” Harry suddenly raged,
surprising Tony since he’d never heard the kid raise his voice.

“I just want to help you, Harry. What they did to you wasn’t right.”

“Then how come no one ever did anything to stop it? The teachers, the neighbors. No one ever said a word about how wrong it was. They just all hated me, and thought I was a freak and I didn’t know why. A part me even began to believe that there was something wrong with me,” Harry cried.

“They were idiots. There’s nothing wrong with you, okay? Absolutely nothing,” Tony growled.

“Then why did they hate me?” Harry demanded and the tears in his eyes were filled with more emotion than Tony capable of deal with.

“They were supposed to love me, Tony. They were my relatives and they were supposed to care for me. Why did they make me sleep in a cupboard under the stairs? Why was it that no matter how hard I tried to impress them I was never good enough for them?” Harry questioned half sobbing now.

Tony could only feel the blood drain from his face at Harry’s admission. He wasn’t even close to having any answers to those types of questions. But it seemed he wasn’t required to because Harry wasn’t even close to being done with his confession.

“They treated me like I was freeloader and that I owed everything to them. They made me earn my keep so that I could pay them back for their so-called generosity. They made me do all the cleaning and cooking and even the yard work while Dudley didn’t have to do anything. They told me my parents died in car crash because they were drunks and burdens to society and that I was just like them. I never got to have a birthday party and they would lock me in my cupboard whenever Dudley had one. I had to watch through the cracks while he got cake and presents, and played with his friends. The first Christmas present they ever got me was just this year. Do you know what it was? It was a fifty pence piece,” Harry snarled.

“The only good thing I had was school. But they even took that away from me by telling all the teachers I was disturbed so they would never believe me when I told them about how Dudley and his gang used to chase me and beat me up. Harry Hunting they called it. They made a game of it and there was nothing I could do about it. Dudley even chased away anyone else who even tried to be my friend. I was all-alone, all the time. I couldn’t even do well in my classes or else Aunt Petunia and Uncle Vernon would punish me by locking me in my cupboard or giving me scraps from meals I cooked for them. They never took me anywhere. I had to stay with Mrs. Figgs down the street while they got to go on vacations. Because I’m a freak and freaks aren’t allowed to do things like normal people. Is that what you wanted to hear Tony? You wanted me to tell you what I’ve never told anyone else so congratulations,” Harry finally gasped out breathing hard, the tears in his luminous green eyes filling and pouring over and down his cheeks.

Tony could only stare at him in stunned silence. For once in his life he was at a loss for words.

“I didn’t realize, I didn’t know,” Tony finally managed to croak out.

He’d made a lot of assumptions based on what he’d found while digging up dirt on the Dursleys, and what he’d observed of Harry’s interactions with them in the lobby and the lab. But it was so much harder to hear it from Harry. To hear him tell him about just how cruel they had been to him and just how much it had affected him, it really got to Tony. He also never would have guessed that they had practically treated him like a slave, that they made him live in a cupboard, and that they had actually never given him a single scrap of affection. These were things that stunned him
to his core, and made him sick to think about. Harry kept it so well hidden. He acted like a normal kid albeit more cautious and a bit distant but he doubted few would ever guess he was hiding such a huge secret. He was so guarded with his secret that if Tony hadn’t pushed so hard he doubted he would have ever known the whole truth.

“You just told me that you knew everything,” Harry cried in outrage, looking more mortified than anything else.

“I knew about most of it. But not the cupboard part or the cleaning and cooking part. They really kept you locked in a cupboard?” Tony demanded in pure disbelief so sad and so very, very angry at the Dursleys.

“You tricked me! You lied to me so I would tell you! I hate you! It’s your fault I had to live with them. If you had cared more about my mum maybe she would have told you the truth and then she wouldn’t have died and I could have grown up with her instead of with the Dursleys,” Harry shouted and to Tony’s shock all of the lights, screens and other electrical devices suddenly exploded in a shower of sparks.

Tony was momentarily shocked by the occurrence, and stood firmly rooted to the floor in the midst of the explosion. Harry too looked equally stunned and frightened. His face, which had been flushed red with anger, was suddenly a pale, ghostly white.

“Harry? Are you all right?” Tony questioned taking a step towards him afraid he might have been hit or something. “Jarvis report on the damage. Jarvis report? Jarvis?” He tried again when there was no response. There must have been some strange electrical surge. It was no problem the back up systems should kick on any moment.

“I did it,” said Harry staring him straight in the eyes still looking a little queasy.

“You did what?” Tony asked in confusion.

“I made everything explode with my accidental magic,” said Harry softly.

“Harry, we already talked about this. There’s no such thing as magic. Okay? This isn’t the time to fool around something could have gone seriously wrong with the system,” he was worried because the back up should have kicked on by now. Did someone deliberately hack him?

“I’m not fooling around. I’m a wizard, Tony. Whether you believe it or not,” snapped Harry.

“You’re not a wizard, Harry,” Tony said in annoyance, trying to get Jarvis back online from his phone. But strangely enough that too was destroyed.

“I am a wizard. I go to a magical school called Hogwarts School for Witchcraft and Wizardry. I have a wand and a flying broomstick and books full of magical spells. My mum was a witch, and she and James Potter died fighting a dark wizard called Voldemort. Who tried to kill me, James Potter died to protect my mum and I from Voldemort. And I wish that he was my real father and not you,” Harry hissed coldly.

Tony’s entire world was shaken by his words and tone. He was once more at a loss for words as Harry glared fiercely at him. Then he turned on his heel and headed towards his bedroom. “Oh and I can talk to snakes!”

“Harry?” Tony called after him but his voice was barely above a whisper.

He didn’t respond and Tony heard his bedroom door slam shut. Tony knew he should go after him
but he couldn’t. One he couldn’t move, and two he was still too angry about the Dursleys. He
wouldn’t be in the right state of mind to hold a civil conversation with the angry eleven year old.
Maybe he was also a bit terrified of the prospect of facing Harry right now. He was normally so
happy and easygoing it was shocking to see him so angry. Of course he had every right to be but
still Tony didn’t have any idea about how to deal with it. He could barely deal with his own
emotions right now, he wasn’t sure how he could go about sorting out the emotions of someone
else.

He staggered onto the couch, his legs were shaky, and he felt strangely lightheaded. He couldn’t
remember the last time he’d felt this horrible. He didn’t think he’d even felt this bad when he had
been actually dying. Hearing that his kid had been abused in such a horrible way was shocking
enough. But then hearing that his kid hated him and wished that someone else was his father was a
huge blow. Tony hadn’t been expecting the words to hurt as much as they did. It felt like someone
had literally ripped the arc reactor right out of his chest and let the shrapnel pierce his heart. Things
had been going so well and that’s what had made this sudden, unexpected fight so much more
difficult to deal with. Why hadn’t he listened to Pepper and waited for Harry to come to him in his
own way? He’d ruined everything. Fury was right he wasn’t cut out to take care of a kid.

And he wasn’t even going to address the issue of Harry believing he was a wizard and that Lily
was a witch. But it did still make him think. He remembered when Harry had left the workshop
earlier while he’d been angry at Fury how the lights had flickered, and just now some sort of surge
dismantled every single electrical device in the radius of the penthouse even his cell phone. The
only thing not affected had been the arc reactor but that wasn’t really electricity. The question was:
how did Harry make it happen? Harry seemed to think it was because he was a wizard. He said the
mysterious school he went to was a magical school. Tony couldn’t believe that. He could believe
that Harry might be some sort of telepath with the ability to control and manipulate energy at a
certain frequency level. It was much more probable than a wand waving wizard.

He shook himself. He could think about the logistics of that later because honestly he couldn’t
even fathom that there might be some truth to it. Right now he should really be thinking about how
he could make things up with Harry. Was it even possible at this point? He cared about Harry more
than he thought he would ever be capable of but he was at a loss. For once in his life he had no idea
what he should do next. Harry’s life was so much worse than he imagined, and having Harry hate
him left him feeling desolate and uncertain. Maybe he really wasn’t cut out to be a father. He’d
obviously done a piss poor job so far to completely alienate him in such a spectacular manner. His
own father should be proud. It had only taken Tony three weeks to make Harry hate him. Hell it
had only taken him one day.

Tony was sure that he had never felt more like crying than in that moment. He was really
beginning to like Harry and he thought Harry had felt the same now he had ruined it. It was his
worst fear come to life. He had thought of his own wants and needs before Harry’s. That’s what it
boiled down to. Tony hadn’t wanted to wait to find out the truth about Harry’s past so he pushed
and pushed regardless of how forcing him to reveal those truths would affect Harry. Maybe Harry
would be better off with someone else. Someone who could be understanding and gentle and
sentimental. Someone who could actually help him overcome all the horrible things that had
happened to him like he clearly needed to. Because Tony clearly wasn’t cut out for it. He had
enough trouble dealing with his own problems. He really couldn’t do this.

With that thought in mind he got into his liquor cabinet and proceeded to get drunk because
obviously he had the emotional coping skills of a two-year, and he was incapable of dealing with
this situation. It was all a blur after that.

“Tony,” he felt someone poking him.
“Five more minutes, Pepper,” he murmured.

“Tony!” Pepper shrieked and shoved him off the couch.

He fell to the floor with a thud. It made the throbbing in his head so much worse and the room was spinning. He lifted his head and opened eyes.

“Nope,” he breathed and closed his eyes tightly shut once more against the pain the morning sunlight caused him.

“What the hell are you doing? Why the hell are you hung over Tony? Why weren’t you answering your cellphone? I’ve been trying to get ahold of you and Harry for hours. I flew all the way back from my meeting because I was worried about the two of you… And why is nothing working in the living room?” Pepper demanded not allowing him to wallow in his misery.

That caught his attention. He vaguely remembered something. Then like the sudden sting of a slap in the face he remembered everything that had happened. Fury had stopped by, and then he and Harry had a fight to end all fights. Well it was more like Harry handed him a spectacular ass chewing, which had certainly been within his rights to do so. Tony had then proceeded to get drunk, very drunk to forget about said ass chewing and about how horrible Harry’s declaration of hate had made him feel.

He groaned loudly. He really wished it had all been some horrible nightmare. Unfortunately he had never been that lucky.

“He hates me, Pepper,” Tony said, still unable to pick his head from the carpet. He deserved to spend the rest of his life lying on this carpet, in pain for what a shitty father he turned out to be.

“Who? Harry? What happened Tony? I haven’t seen you like this since you thought were dying. In fact I think you looked better when you thought you were dying,” she said crouching down beside him to peek at him in concern.

“I’m an asshole. I did exactly what you told me not to do. Harry got mad and told me about how he had to sleep in a cupboard under the stairs. And that he thinks he’s a wizard. And that he wishes James Potter was his real father and not me.” The last part was almost whispered since it was still painful for Tony to even contemplate.

“What did you do?” Pepper demanded, a fierce, angry expression on her face.

“I made him tell me about the Dursleys. I pushed him when I should of left him alone. Then everything exploded, literally, exploded like the lights and everything, and he stomped to his room after telling me he could talk to snakes. Then I got drunk instead of talking to him because Fury was right I shouldn’t have been allowed to reproduce or care for a kid when I probably couldn’t even take care of a goldfish,” Tony rambled.

“You forced Harry to tell you about how the Dursleys treated him. He, understandably, got mad and went to his room after some sort explosion knocked out all the power in the penthouse living room. Then instead of trying to fix the situation with Harry or apologize like a reasonable person would do, you got drunk and left Harry to his own devices, is that about right?” Pepper asked sounding dangerous.

Tony nodded, not even bothering to lift his head up from the rug. He knew her expression would be murderous. He was well aware he was a dead man and he wouldn’t even try to stop her from whatever form of punishment she would dish out.
“You are an idiot. No that’s not good enough. You’re a selfish, moronic bastard who can’t even face the problems you’ve created because you’re too much of a spineless, pathetic wimp when it comes to facing your emotional problems. I can’t believe you would do something like this, Tony.”

“I know, I’ve ruined everything with him.”

“You should have gone after him, Tony. At least tried to fix things. He probably feels like you don’t even care about him, Tony,” Pepper reasoned.

“I don’t think he cares about what I think. You didn’t hear the way he sounded when he told me he hated me and wished I wasn’t his father,” Tony said.

“Tony I know you like to act like nothing bothers you and that you’re this indestructible force, and you like to hold your emotions inside. But I know how much finding out about Harry has affected you. I know how terrified you are of doing something wrong. But doing nothing in a situation like this is worse than if you had at least tried to work things out. I know you’re worried about being your father. But you’re not him, Tony. You were doing great up until today. You and Harry were really making a connection. We’ll work this out, but you have to try Tony you can’t just give up when you hit a rough patch. Parenting is a full time job and unfortunately you can’t just quit or give it up whenever you feel like it or because you’re afraid. So man up and take responsibility for once in your life. Now I’m going to check on Harry. Then you and I are going to sit down and have a little chat.”

He listened as she got up and headed towards the bedrooms. He deserved whatever torture Pepper could think up for him. But her words struck a cord in him. She was right he couldn’t just give up. He had another person depending on him now for their every need, and while that was completely overwhelming and he didn’t want anything to do with it he knew he needed to do it. He wanted to do it because whether Harry liked it or not he was his father for better or worse and they would have to learn to live with one another. He was still terrified that he would screw things up but he knew he at least had to try to do better.

“Tony! Harry’s not his room, or bathroom or any of the other bedrooms,” Pepper cried racing back into the living room.

That made Tony sit up. “Call security we’ll have them secure the building and check all the rooms.”

“His trunk was open and it was almost empty. It also looked like he packed some of his clothes in a hurry. I think he’s run away Tony. Harry is alone somewhere in New York City. And who knows how long he’s been out there. Your fight happened yesterday and it is officially eight AM the next morning so he could have possibly been gone all night. Something horrible could have happened to him. This is an unfamiliar city with unfamiliar people,” Pepper said looking more stressed out than he had ever seen her before.

Tony felt himself pale. Then jumped to his feet despite the insistence of his body telling him not to.

“Did he take his robot?” Tony demanded.


“Did he or didn’t he, Pepper?”

“Yes, I think so, it wasn’t in his room,” she finally snapped.

“Good, then I can find him.” He raced towards the elevator.
“What are you going to do, Tony?” Pepper demanded.

“I’m going to find my son,” Tony stated simply.

Once in the elevator he was able to get in touch with Jarvis and have him prepare his suit. It seemed whatever power outage had happened only affected everything in the penthouse living room; the rest of the building was in perfect working order. But he’d think about that later. He suited up in a matter of moments and shot out of the specially designed emergency exit. He shot off through the air and had Jarvis pull up the GPS tracking system he’d installed in Harry’s robot so that he could keep an eye on where Harry went with it.

Jarvis locked on the robot’s location and he crossed his fingers in hopes that Harry would be there too. He’d never felt this terrified before in his life. He’d also never before hated himself as much as he did right now.

“Jarvis full power to the thrusters,” he commanded.

“Right away, sir,” Jarvis responded promptly.

“Please be all right. I promise to do better. Just let him be all right,” Tony murmured to himself as he flew as fast as he could towards his destination.
Harry had never been quite as angry or upset as he was in that moment after his fight with Tony. It felt like yet again his world was crumbling before his very eyes. He was beginning to really like Tony. But then he’d proven that he was just like all the other adults in Harry’s life, and he couldn’t trust him. Harry had never really had any positive experiences with adults; they always seemed to let him down in the end. He was almost more upset with himself because for a moment he had had hope that this time things would be different that things would finally get better, and he would have a real family.

Tony had lied to him. Made him think that he already knew about the Dursleys so that Harry would tell him everything. Harry never talked about the Dursleys. He just never saw the point in complaining about something that had always been a part of his life. He knew on some level that what they had done wasn’t right, and yes when he really thought about it, it filled him with a blinding anger and resentment over their treatment. But he could ignore it to a certain degree, and move on because he knew that one day he would be free of them. The Dursleys just really didn’t matter in the grand scheme of things especially once he discovered that he was a wizard. It had made their treatment more bearable. He now understood they were hateful and bitter. But when he had been younger he had cried, and wished that they would love him or show him some affection. He learned soon enough that they never would, and so he got over it. He moved on, and tried to focus on other aspects of his life. But there was still a part of him that yearned to have the type of loving family that he saw other kids have.

Finding Tony had given him the hope that he might actually have a family. Tony actually seemed to like him and want him around. Pepper also seemed to feel the same way. Both of their attention and affection was more than he thought he would ever receive in regards to parental affection. He had really begun to enjoy it. Now he felt like any hopes or dreams he may have had in regards to having a family were ruined beyond repair.

He shouldn’t have said all those hateful things to Tony; he didn’t really even mean them. Harry had been so angry with Tony, and so angry with himself that he had just wanted to hurt Tony as much as Tony had hurt him. After the initial burst of anger he’d been terrified about what Tony’s reactions to his hateful words would be. He had just wanted to get away from him. He wanted to hide from him, and the hate that Tony would no doubt feel for him now. He couldn’t deal with the rejection that would so obviously come from his father after the way he had yelled at him. So he had packed a bag with all of the essentials, and he’d slipped into the lift and out of the building without anyone being the wiser. Hedwig had followed him from street lamp to street lamp as he walked through the busy streets, watching over him. It was still relatively early in the afternoon, so for the first couple of hours he’d just wandered aimlessly around the city. Then before long he found himself in Central Park. It was very nice and beautiful, and he had stopped to rest on a bench. Hedwig settled in a tree branch close by to keep an eye on him, which he was grateful for. At least he could always count on her.

He couldn’t decide what to do next. Harry knew he would eventually have to return to the tower; after all he didn’t know anyone else in America or have anywhere else to go. He didn’t have any money, and Tony still had custody of him that is if he still wanted him after all the horrible things he’d said. But he didn’t exactly want to go back. He was angry at Tony even if he hadn’t quite meant all those terrible things. In his own way he even acknowledged that Tony had just been trying to help him by prying the truth from him. He knew this relationship was as new to Tony as it was to Harry, and a part of him was regretful for running away instead of going back to try, and talk things through with Tony.
But he was afraid that he had pushed the man too far and now he wouldn’t want Harry. He was worried that he had ruined his chance with Tony. He would never admit it but not being wanted was one of Harry’s greatest fears. He’d been unwanted his entire life, and it made Harry’s reactions to certain situations a bit extreme. He had always been punished for everything he did so in his mind he was the one who was wrong for fighting with Tony, and the man was no doubt angry about it. So even though a part of him knew that Tony was the one who was wrong he still felt like he was the one responsible, and that he should be the one to make reparations with Tony. He was just afraid that Tony wouldn’t want to. Because despite his anger at him, Harry desperately still wanted his love and affection.

His train of thought was interrupted when a man sat down beside him on the bench to eat a hotdog. Harry peeked over at him. He was just an ordinary businessman; Harry guessed because of the suit that he was wearing. He had short trimmed, brown hair and a high forehead, which Harry took to mean that he was balding prematurely. When he saw Harry looking he sent him a warm smile. Harry gave him a timid one in return.

“What brings you to the park today, young man? Enjoying your summer vacation?” asked the man politely.

Harry just nodded and mumbled a ‘yes sir’, fiddling idly with his bag.

“Hmm the shy type, that’s okay. It takes all kinds to make the world go round,” the man hummed and then went back to eating his hotdog.

Once he was done the two of them sat in silence for a while. Harry staring at the pigeons unseeingly, and the businessman humming a merry little tune under his breath as he leaned back in a relaxing pose on the bench. This man looked like he lived and worked in the city maybe he could give Harry a better idea of where he could find a place to sleep tonight or at the very least tell him how he could get back to Stark Tower. He’d completely lost sight of the huge building, something he hadn’t thought possible. But the city was huge with buildings just as tall or taller than Stark Tower effectively hiding it.

“I’m Harry,” he greeted.

“Harry…?” the man questioned looking for a last name.

“Just Harry,” Harry replied firmly, as far as he was concerned, at the moment, he didn’t have a last name.

“Okay Just Harry. I’m Phil,” the man, Phil, greeted extending his hand for him to shake.

“Do you live around here?” Harry asked, shaking his hand.

“I’m here on business actually. I travel a lot for business but I’m pretty familiar with the city. I take it you’re new to the area,” said Phil no doubt noticing his accent. He seemed to be the observant type.

“Yeah, I’ve only been here for a couple of weeks. Since you’re familiar with the city do you think you could tell me a little bit more about it? I’m a little lost,” Harry hedged.

“Of course, I would love to. But shouldn’t you be going around visiting the city with your parents?” Phil asked his brow creasing with concern.

“My mum died and my father well, we had a fight,” Harry admitted in a rush. He wasn’t sure why he told him. There was just something so gentle in the man’s eyes, and despite his vow to be more
careful in trusting adults he found himself trusting Phil and his calm, soothing presence.

“Ah, so you ran away,” Phil said knowingly.

“Yes,” Harry said simply even though the man hadn’t actually asked him a question.

“That doesn’t seem like such a good move especially in a big city like this that you aren’t familiar with,” Phil commented, but not sounding at all judgmental.

“I just had to get away. You see, my dad hates me now,” Harry told him, feeling sorry for himself.

“Why would you think that?” Phil questioned in concern.

“Because I told him that I hated him,” replied Harry.

“I’m sure he doesn’t hate you. Things can often be said in the heat of the moment that we don’t really mean. Besides you shouldn’t just runaway from your problems. That won’t ever solve anything,” said Phil wisely.

“Yeah, I guess. But I was so angry at him. I’m still mad at him for what he did. I don’t know if I can ever forgive him. Or if he can ever forgive me. I just don’t trust adults. You can never depend on them,” Harry said, forgetting for a moment that Phil was actually an adult.

Phil looked at him for a long time before he seemed to reach some sort of decision. “I’ll be honest with you, Harry, my boss won’t like it but I think you deserve to hear the truth. I work for SHIELD. I believe you met my boss earlier today. He was wearing an eye patch and a long black leather coat, and he came to speak with Tony. You see, SHIELD is a secret government security agency that watches, and protects people. It pays special attention to the more unique individuals in our world. Ones that can become potential threats or potential allies. We look into them and protect them or take them out, whatever is necessary. I know who Tony is and who you are. My boss, Nick Fury the Director of SHIELD, asked me to watch out for you and your dad for a while after meeting with Mr. Stark today. When I saw you leave Stark Tower by yourself shortly after the meeting, carrying a backpack; I realized what you were doing. I followed you to keep you safe, and to see where you were going. I sat down next to you to find out why you had run away, and to make sure that you were all right.”

Harry sat in silence for a moment. This man said he was some sort of spy whose job it was to protect Tony, and by extension watch over him as well. He wasn’t sure how he felt about that. But for some odd reason despite his outlandish claim Harry’s gut told him that he could trust him, and that he was telling him the truth. It was strange to have someone whose job it was to look after Harry. His whole life he’d been the only one there was to look after himself. At least the man had come clean to him. Harry really appreciated his honesty if nothing else.

“For what it’s worth, I think you can trust Mr. Stark. Sometimes he may not seem like the most caring or dependable person but when the chips are down I think he’s really the type to pull through,” Phil commented.

“He tricked me into telling him about my relatives,” Harry said sourly.

“Why would he have to trick you into to telling him about your relatives?” Phil asked, his eyes keenly assessing Harry.

“Because of something they did,” said Harry with a shrug, avoiding eye contact. There was no way he was going to tell Phil anymore than that. He was through discussing the Dursleys. He never wanted to even think about them again.
“Maybe he was just concerned about your wellbeing?”

“He was prying,” Harry snapped, his anger flaring at the memory.

“This thing with your relatives has obviously affected you for you to be so defensive about them. And maybe Tony went about things the wrong way but maybe he didn’t know how else to bring them up when they so obviously bother you,” Phil commented mildly not at all put off by Harry’s angry outburst.

Harry shrugged. It was less about the Dursleys to him, and more about Tony betraying Harry’s trust by tricking him into telling him about them.

“So tell me more about SHIELD. What do you do exactly?” Harry asked after a moment of silence. He didn’t want to talk about the fight or Tony anymore, and he couldn’t help but wonder if SHIELD knew about the wizarding world. If they watched over unique people then witches and wizards certainly fell under that category.

“SHIELD actually stands for Strategic Homeland Intervention, Enforcement and Logistics Division. We are security for the country and in part the world. We try to protect the world from threats that they aren’t quite ready to deal with just yet.”

“What do you mean by that? What sorts of threats aren’t they able to deal with?”

“Well, for one, weapons like Mr. Stark builds. They’re so far beyond anything anyone else could create right now that if he ever decided to turn against the world, not that he would of course, he could become a real danger. But if he did for example decide to go rogue we would be the ones to put a stop to him. We have a lot of resources at our disposal, and some of the best people in the world working for us. For the most part, though, we are a spy organization. We do a lot of observing and information gathering. We only step in when the situation looks like it’s going to get people hurt. It’s a job that’s never boring, and I’ve seen my share of amazing things. Just a few months ago I was called down to New Mexico where someone from another world had crash landed.”

“Another world? Like an alien from outer space? How is that possible?” Harry gaped in astonishment. He hadn’t even thought something like was possible. But he really shouldn’t disregard anything as impossible; after all he was a wizard.

“Do you know anything about Norse Mythology?” Phil asked.

“A little,” Harry nodded.

“Well, it was Thor, the God of Thunder himself who came to Earth all the way from the realm of Asgard. His father sent him here as a punishment without any of his powers to teach him a lesson when he almost started a war,” Phil explained.

“A god? Really?” Harry asked, a bit skeptical. Although, he really shouldn’t be, considering all the things he had seen. Three headed dogs and centaurs were creatures right out of tales from Greek Mythology so why shouldn’t other mythological stories be true as well?

“Well, we’re not quite sure if they’re real gods but they’re pretty darn close compared to us. They’re stronger than us, they have powers we can’t really comprehend, and they’re very close to being immortal. I saw with my own eyes Thor whip up of a thunder storm once he got his powers back.” Phil said, his eyes far away obviously reliving whatever he had seen.

“Wicked,” said Harry his mind whirling with the thought that there were whole other worlds out
there. He would have loved to meet Thor or one of the other Norse Gods. He wondered if they could do magic like wizards and witches could or if what they could do was something else entirely. It was a very interesting subject to think over.

“It was indeed,” Phil said with a genuine smile.

“So what happened? Why did Thor have to whip up a thunderstorm?” Harry asked.

Phil animatedly launched into a story about how Thor had been cast out of Asgard, and how he had to prove himself to be worthy of using his hammer, Mjolnir, again and regain his powers. But while he had been doing that his brother Loki was plotting against him. He’d sent some robot to destroy Thor but Thor sacrificed himself for his friends, and got his powers back. He had gone back to Asgard to deal with his brother, and SHIELD hadn’t seen the Asgardian since. Harry listened to the story with avid interest already dreaming up possible ways of how he could get to Asgard to meet them.

“So what other sorts of things has SHIELD had to deal with?” Harry asked. If they had discovered a whole other world then it was quite probable that they had discovered the wizarding world that hid along side their own.

“Well, if you’re referring to the wizarding world, we try to stay out of their affairs as much as possible. Unless of course it starts to affect the general public. Then we would have to get involved. But since we’ve known about their existence they’ve been able to successfully handle any problems that have popped up on their own,” Phil gave a smile at Harry’s flabbergasted expression.

“So you do know about wizards? Did you know I was a wizard?” Harry demanded in shock.

“I received a notice from the American Wizarding Government while I was following you that let me know that a minor had caused a large disturbance with their accidental magic, which may garner muggle attention in a location I currently was looking after. They gave me the curtsey of looking into the matter for myself. This isn’t something they normally would do because accidental magic isn’t something that SHIELD is required to look into but I am a special case. I’m a liaison between SHIELD, and the American wizarding world. I grew up in the wizarding world, and I am quite familiar with it because I’m squib,” Phil explained.

“What’s a squib?” Harry asked in confusion. It was a term he was unfamiliar with, and it made him realize just how much he didn’t know about the wizarding world and its customs. He barely knew anything about the British wizarding world. Considering the differences between muggle Britain and muggle America it was safe to assume that there may be some small differences between wizarding Britain and wizarding America as well.

“A squib is the opposite of a muggleborn. I have two magical parents but I myself can’t use magic,” Phil said calmly.

Harry could only gape at him in amazement. He hadn’t even thought such a thing could be possible. But it sounded absolutely terrible. Magic was so wonderful in Harry’s eyes that he couldn’t imagine the horror of growing up surrounded by it but being unable to use it.

“I’m sorry,” Harry murmured feeling guilty, and sorry for Phil.

“Oh, don’t be. I enjoy my job with SHIELD. I’ve seen things and done things that I certainly never would have gotten the chance to do if it hadn’t been for my lack of magic. It made me branch out more into the muggle world. I worked my way into SHIELD, and got myself a good position as a
high-ranking agent. Once there I was able to bring the magical world to SHIELD’s attention, and open the magical worlds eyes’ to the ever-growing influence and skills that muggles possess. I’ve been able to help both sides come together and form a solid truce between them. SHIELD has only been around for a couple of decades, but it is a steadily growing force in the world, and the cooperation between SHIELD and the magical world has been very beneficial for both sides.”

“So Tony doesn’t know about the magical world, right?” Harry asked just to be sure. Harry didn’t think he did since he was adamant that Harry wasn’t a wizard but Tony seemed to know Director Fury fairly well.

“No, despite the fact that Tony regularly hacks SHIELD’s database he doesn’t know anything about it. Only Fury, myself, and a few specially selected others know about the actual existence of the magical world due to the International Statue of Wizarding Secrecy, which is a law that all wizards in the world are required to follow. Only top elected officials in muggle governments are allowed to know about the wizarding world in the event that there is some type of emergency that has to be covered up. It was a pretty big concession to get them to inform SHIELD. But in the end they realized that having SHIELD’s trust is a much better option than keeping them in the dark considering they would have found out on their own sooner or later. This way we can all work together and learn from each other. For example SHIELD teaches the wizarding world about new technologies so that they can better hide themselves from the general public, and wizards offer themselves up for study purposes so that they can learn about the origin of their abilities.”

“But isn’t magic difficult to study for muggles?” Harry asked a bit confused.

“Well since we’ve been working together we’ve found that there actually is a fairly close correlation between magic and science. They are intertwined in complex and amazing ways that we haven’t been able to figure out yet. It’s a genetic ability, making it something that is passed down through bloodlines, giving witches and wizards the ability to wield this type of energy or as wizards call it: magic. It’s based a lot on will and intent. I could go into further detail but it would probably be best if we saved it for another day. We should really be focusing on what your plans are for the future.”

“I don’t know if I want to go back to Stark Tower,” Harry said mulishly.

“Understandable, but where else are you going to go? You should really think about going back to the tower and talking with Mr. Stark. He’s probably very worried about you.”

Harry shrugged noncommittally. Tony probably never wanted to see Harry again. But now after talking with Phil, Harry couldn’t help but feel he had overreacted just a bit. Yes, he was thoroughly angered by what Tony had done, and he was a lot more cautious about trusting Tony but he still wanted to be a family with Tony. Maybe he was naïve or too desperate for Tony’s affection but everyone deserved a second chance, right? This was all new for Tony and he was trying. Just because they had one fight didn’t mean it was over. He should talk to Tony. But at the moment he still needed a little time to cool off and really think things through. After all, this was an extremely important decision that would affect his future relationship with his father.

“Would you like to come back to SHIELD’s New York base for a little while, and think things through?” Phil prompted.

Harry immediately perked up, and nodded his head eagerly.

“All right, Fury is going to kill me for this but we really can’t stay on this bench forever. It’s never a good idea to stay in the public eye, in one place for too long. You never know who might notice you, and give your location away to your enemies,” Phil said climbing to his feet and scanning the
area with a critical, experienced gaze.

“Can you tell me more about the American wizarding world?” Harry asked, excited that he was going to get to learn more about SHIELD.

“Of course,” Phil agreed easily.

“Do they have hidden streets like Diagon Alley?”

“You bet, one of the most popular streets is located here in New York City. Maybe we can stop by it before we head back to the base. Would you like to do that?” Phil asked.

“Yes!” Harry said in excitement but then he thought about it for a moment. Would American wizards know who he was?

“Do American wizards know about Voldemort?” Harry asked.

“The British Dark Lord from several years back?” Phil questioned.

Harry nodded.

“I think everyone in the wizarding world has heard about him. A man so terrible that people were even afraid to say his name is sure to have a reputation throughout the wizarding world. He was a truly horrible person and incredibly insane. What he did is fairly well known especially since it only occurred about a decade ago,” said Phil looking thoughtful.

“Do they know about me then?” Harry asked softly assuming that Phil would already know who he was.

“You? Why would they…? Harry. You’re Harry Potter,” Phil said looking mildly surprised and his gaze instantly flitted to his forehead where his scar was hidden by his bangs.

“Kind of,” Harry said flushing in embarrassment.

“Of course, Tony Stark’s long lost son would end up being Harry Potter. The Director is going to love this,” Phil chuckled looking equal parts amused and exasperated.

“Is it a problem?” Harry snapped remembering the Director and his disrespectful thoughts towards his mother’s intelligence. He wasn’t overly fond of the Director from his brief meeting with him and he wondered with a pang if he should stay with Phil. But he really liked Phil. The man seemed so honest and to genuinely care about Harry’s wellbeing. Besides he was providing Harry with a lot of useful information about SHIELD and the American wizarding world.

“Of course not. I doubt anyone in America would even recognize you. People have heard about you here but you’re much more popular in Britain and Europe where the threat of Voldemort was much more real. And you being Mr. Stark’s son is just one of those quirks of fate that will no doubt get the Director all bent out of shape. Although, I think he might want to record Mr. Stark’s face when we sit him down and explain to him about the wizarding world,” Phil replied calmly, a small smile gracing his lips.

“Well, I kind of already told him,” Harry admitted nervously.

“You told him? How did he take it?” Phil asked in surprise, looking interested in his response.

“Well, I sort of shouted it at him, and he didn’t really believe me even after I made the entire
penthouse explode,” Harry explained flushing.

“Ah, so you got angry during your fight and that’s what caused your accidental magic. But Mr. Stark still didn’t believe you when you told him?” Harry shook his head. Phil smiled. “I think it’s going to take a lot more proof than just that one small display of magic. But don’t worry I’ll help you explain the truth to him. And don’t worry about getting in trouble with the wizarding government. It’s completely okay to tell close muggle relatives or whoever your current guardians are about magic.”

“Good, I was having my friend Hermione check for me just to make sure but she hasn’t been able to get back to me yet.” Hermione and her parents had ended up going on holiday shortly after talking with Harry so she hadn’t been able to get access to the books that she needed to find the correct information.

“Well, now you know you have nothing to worry about,” Phil assured him.

“No, I just have to worry about whether Tony and I will be able to patch up our relationship,” Harry murmured morosely.

“Of course you will. Things may look bad right now, but I’m sure that you and Mr. Stark will be able to get through this. You have to look on the positive side of things. Now come on I’ll take you to Horizont Alley,” said Phil waving Harry up off the bench.

Harry stood and Hedwig ruffled her wings in preparation of following them.

“Do American wizards use owls?” Harry asked and Phil followed his gaze to Hedwig.

“They do but they tend to use hawks more often or even on the rare occasion eagles. The floo network is also very popular, but I believe the same could be said of British wizards.” Seeing that Harry was about to question him about what the floo was he explained, “The floo is a lot like the telephone. You throw floo powder, which is made from ashwinder eggs, into the fire and you can either travel through the flames to a new location or you can simply stick your head in and speak to the person that you wish to.”

“Wicked,” Harry murmured trying to imagine having to stick his face in a fireplace to talk to someone. “Wizards do come up with some crazy ideas about how to keep in touch with people.”

Phil smiled. “I definitely agree. Maybe once Mr. Stark’s on board with the whole magic thing he can find a connection between magic and technology, and make a smoother communication method. So far no one else has been able to do it. Although, the only people we really have working on the problem are a few muggleborn wizards and witches who are also interested in muggle science. There aren’t that many, though, that are knowledgeable enough in both fields of study to really make any significant breakthroughs. Again it’s only really been the last couple of years that we’ve even had the resources to try.”

“If anyone could do it, it would be Tony,” Harry couldn’t help but agree. If nothing else, Harry would always admire Tony for his intelligence and skills when it came to mechanical engineering.

Phil nodded his agreement. He then led Harry to a dark car with black tinted windows. The two of them got in the back seat and the driver brought them to an older part of the city with more brick buildings that were far from being skyscrapers. They stopped in front of an old pizza place called the Pizza Palace. Harry figured that it must have been like the Leaky Cauldron in London. It was a place that marked the separation between the muggle and magical world. He and Phil walked inside, and Harry knew instantly he was entering the magical world. The people inside wore robes,
not quite the same style that he was used to in England but they were distinctly wizard robes. Fewer people were wearing robes however, and a lot of them seemed to be wearing more muggle clothing. But it was muggle clothing that was reminiscent of the 30s and 40s in American history. When Harry commented on this Phil told him that robes were considered more formal wear for American wizards, and not as many people wore them nowadays as they used to. American wizards were also more up to date with the times but still lagged behind muggle culture a bit due to the fact they had no real need to use advanced technology when they had magic.

“American wizarding culture has been influenced a bit more by muggle culture than Europe’s. There is a larger population of muggles in America and by default we have a lot more muggleborns. Of course pureblood sentiments have never been that strong here as they are in Britain. The reason for this being that wizards immigrated to America in the first place because they were escaping the persecution, some from pureblood ideals, and some from muggle religions. There is a little discontent between those who are wizard born and those who aren’t but it’s nowhere near as bad as in Britain and Europe,” Phil said elaborating on Harry’s question about clothing.

Harry couldn’t help but wonder what Malfoy would have thought about America. He hated muggles and muggleborns by default. It would probably kill him to discover that being a Pureblood or muggleborn wasn’t as big of a deal here. Hermione would definitely like it.

“Wizarding Britain is also much more isolated than America is and therefore it’s a lot more resistant towards allowing anything muggle into the culture. America is much larger. The population of wizarding Britain is about 15,000. In comparison the American population is about 100,000. The population is more wide spread because of the size of the country with the government being centered in New York City because it is the most densely populated area of the country. Basically this means Americans have more muggleborns and therefore there has been a greater influx of muggle influence on the culture.”

“I didn’t realize that there were that many wizards in the world,” said Harry in surprise. But it did make sense. America had a much higher muggle population than England. It would only make sense that their wizard population would be proportionately higher as well.

Phil led him the rest of the way through the pizza shop, and out back to the dingy alleyway. Someone else was just about to go through the alleyway as well, and Harry watched with interest as they tapped the lids of a couple of garbage cans in a certain sequence with their wand. The brick wall of the alleyway swung open like a door instead of the bricks rearranging themselves like they did in the entrance of Diagon Alley, and Harry got his first good look at this new aspect of the wizarding world. Horizont Alley was just as awe inspiring as Diagon Alley had been with the feeling of magic in the air, and all the witches and wizards milling about. There was a more modern feel to it than Diagon Alley, and the shops were all nestled together in perfect, bright colorful squares; a lot like children’s building blocks. Horizont Alley also looked to be far larger than Diagon Alley, and had several different streets branching off from the main thorough fair.

“Like I said this is a very popular spot for American wizards, and a lot of them travel from all over the country to get here,” Phil explained as they made their way through the crowded street.

Harry noted that there were all the same shops as he was used to back in Diagon Alley they just had different names, and were run by different people. None of the shops looked quite as ancient as some of the ones in Diagon Alley but then again wizarding America had only been established for a few centuries as opposed to the many that Britain had been around for. The shops were just as filled with magic and wonder as the ones back in London. They stopped at a couple of different shops while Phil continued to point out the little differences between the cultures. It succeeded in
providing him with a better understanding of wizarding Britain. He learned that American wizards used many of the same spells with some variations, and learned the same subjects in school. There were six different wizarding schools in America, the closest being Salem Academy in Salem, Massachusetts. All in all there weren’t that many differences beyond the fact that America was closer to their muggle counterparts.

The most interesting thing Harry learned about was probably Quodpot. He was pretty sure he remembered reading something about it in *Quidditch Through the Ages* but he hadn’t really paid that much attention to it since at the time he’d been too focused on learning about Quidditch. It seemed that here in America it was Quodpot that was the much more popular sport, and Harry just couldn’t accept that. After all in Quodpot there was no snitch, and therefore no seeker. He said as much to Phil who only gave Harry a small amused smile at Harry’s indignation over America’s preference for Quodpot.

They concluded their outing by Phil getting them both an ice cream cone. Harry tried protesting but Phil ignored him and did it anyway. They sat in comfortable silence outside the small shop, people watching. They were talking about Hogwarts, and Harry’s friends and professors. Harry wasn’t sure how but they somehow got on the topic of Voldemort. Before Harry knew it he was telling Phil all about what had happened with the Philosopher’s Stone and Voldemort. Phil looked very surprised by the revelation of Voldemort being alive. He questioned Harry on everything he knew looking intense, and Harry complied trying to remember as much as he could about what had happened. He figured Phil wanted to look into the whole Voldemort matter, and Harry wanted to help him as much as possible.

By the time that Phil was through asking questions it was getting late, and they decided to call it a day. It had ended up being a very good day for Harry despite the way it had started out. It had been very enjoyable to get to see a whole new part of the wizarding world and learn more about the wizarding world in general. He also liked that not one person recognized him or made a fuss about him being there.

Phil did try one last time before leaving to get Harry to go back to the tower.

“Are you sure Harry? Mr. Stark must be very worried about you by now,” said Phil earnestly.

“No, I really don’t want to and please don’t call him. I don’t want him to know where I am.” Harry was secretly worried that even if he did know he wouldn’t even want to come and get Harry, and that would be even more devastating to him.

Phil took a deep breath, and held Harry’s gaze for a few moments. He seemed to be searching for some sort of clue as to what the right decision was in this situation.

“All right, but just for tonight. We’ll call Mr. Stark first thing in the morning. I suppose it won’t hurt him to sweat things out for just one night. It might even help him learn a lesson,” Phil murmured.

Harry just grinned, happy to put off the inevitable confrontation with Tony a little longer.

Phil and Harry both left the alley via the Pizza Palace. The same dark car they arrived in was
waiting for them out front, and they climbed back in. They drove to yet another part of the city, and stopped in front of an old antique store. It surprised Harry when they went inside. He hadn’t thought a secret government building would be in an old rundown antique shop. But he should have known by now due to his experience with the wizarding world that appearances could be deceiving. The shop owner asked Phil about the weather, and Phil said something about forgetting an umbrella. The shopkeeper went to the shelf behind the counter and pulled out a book. The whole shelf to Harry’s left suddenly cracked open and revealed a long metal corridor.

“Muggles are brilliant,” Harry gasped in surprise as Phil led him through.

“They are, aren’t they? And they get more and more amazing every year.” Phil commented nonchalantly. “Are you hungry, Harry? We can stop by the cafeteria before we go and find you a room for the night.”

“Okay,” Harry agreed easily.

He led Harry through the hallway, only occasionally passing someone. They all seemed to know Phil, and would give him a short respectful nod sometimes calling him Agent Coulson. They eventually came to a small cafeteria with round tables, and a buffet style assembly line with a bunch of different food. There were only a couple of other people in the cafeteria. One table held two young women, and an older balding gentleman. They wore lab coats, and were talking animatedly amongst themselves. The other table held a muscular man with short dark blonde hair who was shoveling food in his mouth at an alarming rate. He wore a strange skintight shirt with no sleeves, and had a bow settled across the table in front of him. They all looked up when Harry, and Phil entered. They looked surprised to see Harry, and were looking him over closely. The man with the bow’s stare was the most penetrating, and made Harry shift uncomfortably under the weight of his gaze.

“This is Harry, he’s going to be spending the night here tonight,” Phil introduced to the people in the cafeteria. Harry gave them all a quick smile while edging closer to Phil.

“Harry this is Clint Barton he’s an agent who works for SHIELD,” Phil pointed to the man with the bow. The man gave a brief nod before he went back to eating, having obviously written Harry off as being unimportant. “This young lady right here is Dr. Jane Foster recently relocated from New Mexico.”

“New Mexico? Where Thor was?” Harry asked in excitement.

“You know about Thor?” asked the thinner woman with the lighter brown hair. Jane Foster was her name according to Phil.

“Yeah, Phil told me all about it,” Harry said eagerly.

“Phil?” Clint Barton said, lifting an eyebrow and smirking at Phil.

“That’s his name,” Harry said in confusion.

“Right of course, silly me,” replied Clint still smirking.

“Uh hmm,” Phil said drawing their attention back to him. Harry flushed at having interrupted him.

“Anyway the other young lady is Darcy Lewis.” The dark haired woman gave a little wave. “And that leaves Dr. Erik Selvig. They are all associates of SHIELD’s and have just started working with us after the events I told you about in New Mexico.” The older balding man smiled at him and nodded.
“Very nice to meet you all,” Harry greeted.

Just then Phil’s phone rang. He answered with a curt, “Coulson.”

He listened for a moment his face perfectly blank despite the shouting Harry could hear coming from the mobile phone before turning to Clint. “Can you stay and watch Harry for a minute. I need to go have a chat with the Director.”

“Do I look like a babysitter?” asked Clint frowning.

“Do I look like a baby?” Harry inquired snappishly. He’d had a long day and was suddenly feeling bold despite his unfamiliar surroundings.

Clint’s lips quirked in a smile.

“We can keep an eye on him Agent Coulson until you get back,” Dr. Selvig offered.

“Thank you, I’ll be right back Harry, feel free to get whatever you want to eat, okay?” Phil said.

Harry nodded and Phil disappeared out the door in a flash.

“Come on over Harry and grab a tray. Take as much as you want, there’s plenty to go around,” Dr. Selvig pointing towards the assembly line, which consisted of several different meal options.

Harry did as he suggested, grabbing a tray for himself and perusing the different food options that the cafeteria provided. He ended up getting a little of everything, and Dr. Selvig grabbed silverware and a drink for him. Harry then settled down at the table with the two doctors and Darcy. Clint had stopped shoveling his food down as quickly as he had before, and kept casting curious, probing looks at Harry.

“Your accent is the most adorable thing I’ve ever heard. You’re also a little cutie pie. You’ll definitely get all kinds of lady action when you’re older,” said Darcy winking at him. Dr. Foster slapped her arm and glared at her. But she didn’t seem at all phased by it.

“So Harry what are you doing here?” Dr. Selvig asked Harry gently.

“I got in a fight with my father and ran away,” Harry murmured flushing, and feeling guilty and impossibly young.

“And SHIELD stepped in? You must be important. I didn’t think they got involved in arguments between kids and their parents. Unless they’re going to try turning you into some sort of super spy,” Darcy joked.

“Well, Phil said that he’d been assigned to watching my father so when I left he had to follow me,” Harry shrugged feeling awkward and not really wanting to talk about it with these strangers. But he didn’t quite know how to politely change the topic.

“I thought Coulson was assigned to watching Tony Stark,” Clint mused aloud.

“He is, Tony’s my father,” Harry explained focusing on eating his food.

He looked back up when the silence had stretched for a long time.

“You’re Tony Stark’s kid?” Clint asked staring at Harry with wide eyes.

“Yeah,” replied Harry wondering if he shouldn’t have admitted that. But they worked for SHIELD
so they had to keep it a secret right? Besides Clint probably would have figured it out anyway if he knew Phil was watching over Tony.

“No wonder you’re such a little cutie. Stark is hot!” said Darcy.

“Darcy,” Dr. Foster hissed but she too was looking Harry over closely.

“So you and your father got into a fight?” Dr. Selvig asked gently not all concerned by his revelation, and Harry found himself liking the man.

“Yeah, it was stupid. But he made me so mad,” Harry murmured.

“Oh you’re not the only one kid. I’ve heard Stark has that affect on people,” Clint murmured. “God I can’t believe Stark reproduced. Wait until I tell Nat. She’s gonna flip.”

“Well I’m sure you and your father will make up. It’s what families do. They annoy each other and make each other angry. But in the end they always make up because there is no closer bond than family whether that bond is created through blood or love, it doesn’t matter,” Dr. Selvig said.

“I guess,” Harry said. He didn’t have enough experience to know what families were really like.

“Take Thor for example, his brother tried to have him roasted by this badass robot thing but he still seemed pretty set on helping him out afterwards,” Darcy commented earning herself a glare from both doctors for swearing in Harry’s presence.

“You were there when Thor fought the Destroyer?” Harry asked eagerly.

“Yeah,” said Dr. Foster looking a little upset.

“That’s so cool. I wish I had seen it,” Harry said dreamily.

“It was cool, but it was sort of scary too because for a moment I—we, I mean, weren’t sure if Thor was going to make it,” said Dr. Foster and for a moment her eyes were wide with remembered fear.

Dr. Selvig told Harry the rest of what happened in more intricate detail than Phil had. Harry was particularly interested in hearing more about the Destroyer since it seemed to be a robot that had been created by gods. The idea was fascinating to Harry and he wished he had gotten to see it so he knew what it was made out of.

“I made my own robot,” Harry informed them proudly. Even if he was mad at Tony he still treasured Tank, and had brought it with him despite the limited space in his bag.

“Really?” Dr. Selvig asked looking impressed.

“Yeah do you want to see? I brought it with me,” Harry said already moving to pull Tank from his bag.

He set Tank on the ground, and then made it transform from a car into its robot form. He had it move around, and perform different stunts enjoying the praise he received over Tank.

“So the rumor is true. Stark really does have a kid,” came a female voice.

Harry looked up to see a beautiful woman with short, dark red hair wearing a tight black jumpsuit. There was something about her that put Harry on edge. Despite her superficial similarities to his mum, which should have put him at ease his instincts were telling him that this woman could be a danger to him if she chose. He didn’t think she would attack him but she had the potential to if she
really wanted to.

“Harry this is Natasha, she works for SHIELD as well,” Dr. Selvig introduced. Harry could tell that
Darcy and the two doctors were also a little weary of this woman. Harry figured she must be some
sort of super spy. Or maybe even an assassin. He couldn’t believe that he might actually be in the
presence of a real life assassin.

“Nice to meet you,” Harry murmured.

“Agent Coulson asked me to come and show you to your room. It’s almost nine now and you
should be getting to bed. He can’t do it himself since he’s been called away at the moment,” she
explained in a no nonsense manner.

“Okay,” Harry mumbled tucking Tank back into his bag and pulling it back onto his shoulders. He
said his goodbyes to the doctors, Darcy, and Clint then followed Natasha from the cafeteria.

Natasha was silent as she led him through the corridors and Harry kept peeking up at her in fear
and curiosity. He was far too shy to attempt to ask more about her, and she didn’t seem inclined to
depart any information about herself to Harry. When they finally arrived at the room Harry would
be staying in she told him that there was an attached bathroom inside, and showed him how to use
the intercom if he needed anything. Other than that he was to stay inside the room until someone
came to get him the next morning.

“It’ll get better,” she said to him before turning to leave.

“What will get better?” Harry asked in confusion.

She just gave him a brief smile, and left the room.

Still pondering over what she meant he got ready for bed. He was exhausted by the day he had had,
and just wanted to sleep. He dreaded the morning when he would have to call Tony and let him
know where he was.

His peaceful dreams were interrupted by yells and shouts, and the sound of some sort of explosion.
Harry sat up, suddenly afraid that SHIELD was being attacked or something. He went to his bag to
grab his wand just in case he needed to defend himself. The thuds and shouts were getting closer
and closer to his room. He was suddenly terrified that whatever was causing all this commotion
was coming after him. But he stood tall and firm, and tried to prepare himself so that in the event
that whatever had broken in was coming after him he would be ready for it. However he couldn’t
have prepared himself for what greeted him when the door suddenly burst open. Harry was
confronted with the surprising sight of the bright red and gold of the Iron Man suit. The faceplate
slid upwards, and revealed Tony’s anxious and relieved expression.

He took two long strides across the room to reach Harry, and before Harry could even protest he
had swept him up into a tight, fierce hug.

“Oh thank god,” he murmured pressing his face into Harry’s unruly mop of bed-tasseled hair.

Harry was too shocked by his sudden appearance to do anything but stand there and let Tony hold
him.

“Don’t ever do that to me again. Okay Harry? I don’t think my heart could handle it. I don’t think
I’ve ever been so worried,” Tony pulled back so that Harry could look up into his face. Tony
looked terrified and relieved, and were those tears in the man’s eyes? No it had to be a trick of the
light. But when one tear escaped Harry knew that they were in fact real.
Harry could only nod in the face of this startling revelation that Tony did in fact care enough about him to storm SHIELD, and to shed a tear in relief at his being okay.

“I’m so sorry, Harry. I’m sorry for everything. I was just trying to help, and I know I went about it the wrong way because I’m an impatience idiot. But please just give me another chance and I promise I won’t ever mess up as badly as I did. I can’t promise that I won’t ever mess up because well, I’m me and making messes out of things is what I do. But I swear to you it won’t ever be like that. I won’t ever mislead you like that again. I want you in my life, Harry. You’re my son, and I care about you. I don’t care if you still hate me, you deserve to after what happened. But I just want the chance to make things up to you for being such a horrible father.”

Harry felt tears start to form in his own eyes. No one had ever said anything like that to him before and he really didn’t know what to make of it or how to respond.

“Really?” he gasped, he honestly couldn’t even find it within himself to be angry anymore.

“More than anything, kid,” Tony said earnestly. “I was ready to tear down the entire building, and start World War III for you. I know I messed up, in a colossal way with you but I want to fix it. I really want to. I just want a chance to prove to you that I’m good enough to be your father.”

At that pronouncement Harry burst into tears at his words, and threw himself at Tony not even caring about the how uncomfortable the press of the metal suit was. Harry clutched him tightly afraid that he would change his mind and leave him. Any resentment he felt towards Tony momentarily flew out the window in the face of knowing that he was wanted, and Tony still cared about him.

“Its okay, Harry. I’m here, and I promise I won’t ever just give up like that again. I know better now and more than anything I want to be your father,” Tony murmured against his hair. “I can’t promise I won’t ever make you mad or hate me but I’ve been told that’s sort of how things happen in parent-child relationships.”

Harry snorted in amusement his emotions all over the place. Mostly he was embarrassed about sobbing all over Tony like a little kid. He quickly tried to rein in his tears. He couldn’t remember the last time he had cried like that, and he didn’t want Tony to think of him as some sort of baby that needed to be coddled.

“So do you forgive me?” Tony asked hesitantly.

“Only if you admit that you were wrong for tricking me about the Dursleys,” Harry said stubbornly.

Tony gave him a grim smile. “I was completely wrong for lying to you, and tricking you into telling me about them. But I don’t regret finding out. What they did to you was wrong and horrible, and I needed to know about it. I am going to spend the rest of my life making it up to you for not being there for you when you needed me to be.”

Harry stared at him for a long time weighing his honesty. He knew he was being sincere, and Harry wanted nothing more than to believe him and just go back to the way things were. But he would be a bit more cautious with Tony now. He’d try to withhold his feelings, and not get too attached too quickly like he had before. They still had so many things to work on in their relationship, and Harry figured a good first step was to be honest with one another and for Harry to forgive Tony. They would take things slowly and really get to know one another.

“I forgive you,” Harry said honestly.
“Thank you, Harry. And I’m so sorry. I was wrong. You should probably have recorded that because no one would ever believe that I was capable of uttering those words aloud and in that order,” Tony chuckled.

Harry smiled and unable to stop himself he once more threw himself into Tony’s arms. The man laughed, and hugged him tightly back ruffling his hair affectionately.

“Hey, this might be a bad time but didn’t you mention something about you being a wizard?”

Harry’s stomach sank. This was going to be a long day.
Tony was fairly certain that he had never been as emotionally comprised as he was in that moment. His whole life he had worked hard to suppress his emotions, and show the world a perpetually snarky, uncaring front. He’d forced himself not to care because if he didn’t care than he couldn’t get hurt. He’d cared about his parents, and they in turn had neglected him. Then they had died while he’d still been young, and any hope that one-day they would come to love him was lost. It had shattered him, made him emotionally withdraw from the world at large. He turned towards a world of fast women, and copious amounts of alcohol to forget. He participated in dangerous stunts, and gambled with large amounts of money with little care just for the thrill. Very few people managed to break through his hard exterior, and got to see the real person beyond the armor that he had incased his heart in. Obi had been one of the few he had trusted and cared about, and he went and betrayed that trust in the most horrible way imaginable. It had crushed him. Then when he thought he had been dying he’d gone off on a huge destructive rampage. Only Rhodey and Pepper had been there to pull him out of it.

The point of the matter was that Tony just had a really hard time letting people in especially after everything that had happened in his life in the past few years. When he had found out about Harry he knew logically that he was his son, and that he was supposed to feel some sort of attachment to him and he did. In the three weeks he’d spent with him he’d found himself liking having Harry around. But he’d hardened himself against feeling anything more towards him. He didn’t want Harry taking a place in his heart. It would only cause him that much more pain in the long run when he screwed up. He knew it was a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy because by believing that he was going to be a bad father he had ended up becoming one. It was only when he’d discovered that Harry was missing the morning after their fight that he realized just how much he really did care, and that if didn’t start acting appropriately he would lose Harry. And that was something he really didn’t want. That meant he couldn’t just drink himself into a stupor every time they hit a rough patch.

He was just relieved that he had found him, and that he was now safely ensconced in his arms. He was pretty sure that he never wanted to let the kid go again. The best part was that Harry had forgiven him. He still had a look of caution in his eyes in regards to Tony but it was much more than he had been expecting. He was sure that Harry would never even speak to him again let alone willingly hug him. It was just more proof that Tony didn’t deserve to have a kid as awesome as Harry was. He had a heart of gold, something he certainly hadn’t inherited from Tony. He was pretty sure that he could hold on to a grudge well beyond Judgment Day.

It was while he was holding Harry that he noticed Harry was holding something strange. It was a thin polished stick of some sort. It sparked a memory of Harry shouting at him that he was a wand-waving wizard. “Hey, this might be a bad time but didn’t you mention something about you being a wizard?”

Harry pulled back from the embrace and looked up at him with wide, nervous emerald green eyes.

“Yeah,” he murmured.

“Are you still claiming that you are one?” Tony asked cautiously.

“Yes,” Harry snapped glaring at Tony.

“Okay, okay. I’ll try to reserve judgment. But you have to admit it is a pretty outlandish claim to make, right?” Tony really didn’t know what to do about the fact that Harry still firmly believed
himself to be a wizard. He was surprised that Harry was still holding on to this belief even while he had calmed down enough to have a more rational conversation. Was there something wrong with Harry? Who put those outlandish thoughts in his head?

“Yeah, I was really shocked when I found out,” Harry admitted.

“We’ll talk more about this later. Let’s just go home,” Tony said wrapping his arm securely around Harry.

“We should talk to Phil before we leave. He said he could help me explain things to you since he knows about the wizarding world,” Harry said fiddling with his stick, wand, whatever.

“Phil? Who’s Phil?” Tony asked in confusion.

“He’s an agent who works for SHIELD, and he found me in the park yesterday. He said it was his job to watch out for me, and we talked for a while. He’s a squib so he knows all about the magical world. He took me to a wizard shopping alley, and let me sleep here for the night because I didn’t want to go back to the tower,” Harry informed him.

“I’m glad you had someone looking out for you. But I really wished you would have called to let me know you were all right,” Tony murmured.

“I’m sorry for what I did. I shouldn’t have run away like that,” Harry said softly.

“Hey it’s okay, I understand. I would have preferred that you hadn’t run away but I understand. We both made some mistakes, and now we’re moving forward.”

He couldn’t exactly be that harsh with Harry about not calling after all he was the one who had gotten completely wasted, and passed out while his son had been off gallivanting around New York City with a SHIELD agent. It did give him pause though; that Harry said a SHIELD agent knew about this so-called magical world of Harry’s and had even taken him some wizard place. He’d figured out that he was in a SHIELD base after the second hole he blasted in the wall. He would never tell them but he was grateful to the spy organization for watching over Harry. But why would they have entertained Harry’s delusion that magic was real? Unless… Unless what Harry had said was true. No, he couldn’t accept that.

“Stark!” came an all too familiar voice, jolting Tony from his thoughts. “What in the hell do you think you’re doing smashing your way into a secure government facility?

Fury swept into the small bedroom which Harry and Tony currently occupied. Tony figured it must have been where Harry spent the night. Following closely behind the irate Director was the ever calm and collected Agent Coulson.

“I thought you could use some new sky lights in here, Director. It’s awfully gloomy. But I guess that’s just the way that you like it,” Tony replied smiling. He was feeling so much better now that he had Harry safely in his sights once more even if Harry was still claiming to be a wizard.

“You are paying for the repairs, Stark,” Fury growled.

“Duly noted,” Tony agreed sharply.

“So now that we’re all here I think there are a few things about Harry that you need to be informed of. I think it would be best if we all sit down and have a comfortable discussion to get everything out on the table,” said Agent Coulson.
“My place would be better,” Tony immediately butted in.

He had a feeling he knew what sort of talk Agent Coulson was getting at, and he really didn’t want to think about it. Harry had said that a Phil who worked for SHIELD would explain to him about his belief in being a wizard. This meant that SHIELD knew something about what Harry had been referring to as magic, which meant that there was a large possibility that Harry had been telling the truth. He needed time to come to terms with the fact that magic just might exist in some form. Although, he figured he would need a couple of years before he could even contemplate the existence of magic or that his son might be wizard, not just the fifteen minutes it would take to fly back to the tower.

“All right, you can head on back to the tower, and the three of us will meet you there for our discussion,” said Agent Coulson amicably.

“Can I fly with you?” asked Harry sending Tony big, puppy dog eyes that made Tony melt a little. It wasn’t fair that he could use his own pout against him.

Before their fight the kid had been begging for a chance to fly with Tony. So far he’d been too busy to give Harry what he wanted.

“I don’t know if it would exactly be safe. Also are you sure you won’t freak out?” Tony asked doubtfully.

“No, I love to fly. I’ve flown lots of times,” Harry replied.

“You’ve flown lots of times… On what a flying broom stick?” Tony asked sarcastically.

“Yes,” Harry said looking dead serious.

Tony just stared at him blankly. He looked over at Fury and Coulson to see if they were buying this.

“Quidditch is a very popular game to European wizards. It’s played on flying broomsticks. It involves seven players on each team: a seeker, a keeper, three chasers and two beaters. There are four balls used: a golden snitch, two bludgers and a quaffle. Harry is a seeker on his school team,” Agent Coulson piped up looking far too pleased with himself with his casual and infuriating explanation.

That statement had all sorts of questions rattling through Tony’s mind but he stopped himself from asking them. He needed some time to think, and gather his wits if he was actually going to get through this conversation with Agent Coulson and Fury. It appeared that SHIELD was backing up Harry’s belief that he was a wizard, and that this wizard stuff wasn’t just some isolated thing but some sort of secretive community that was all over the world. Tony didn’t like it, but it did sort of fit in with the gaps in information about Lily and Harry. He needed more information but for once he was almost too terrified about getting it. This could very well shake his belief in the world around him.

“Right, of course, I knew that,” Tony muttered. “Okay, Mini Me, let’s head back to the tower. Pepper is probably yanking her hair out with worry by now, and I definitely don’t want to end up dating a bald chick. We’ll meet the Men In Black over here back at the tower, and have our little heart to heart about you being Merlin then, okay?”

Harry nodded looking excited about getting to fly with him. He grabbed his getaway bag, and then ran into the attached bathroom to change into a new set of clothes.
“You better get your act together, Stark,” Fury commanded harshly as soon as Harry had disappeared into the bathroom.

“I don’t need you telling me what to do, Fury,” Tony hissed back.

“Apparently you do, considering the mess you’ve made of things with your kid. Coulson found him on a park bench in Central Park by himself, and due to the fact that he’s at least half as stubborn as you are he refused to go home. I don’t know what happened between the two of you but the kid was devastated by your actions,” Fury replied.

“Yeah, yeah I know, okay? Go ahead and gloat. Say I told you so or that I’m an unfit parent, whatever. I don’t care what you think of me. As long as my son forgives me, I can deal with whatever opinion you might have of me, Director,” Tony said stiffly.

Fury gazed at him with dark, penetrating eyes. “Don’t screw up again,” he gave Tony one curt nod before sweeping out of the room.

“We’ll see you at Stark Tower within a half hour to explain things, Mr. Stark. Try to keep an open mind, Harry really needs you to accept him for who and what he is,” Agent Coulson told him firmly yet gently before he turned to follow Fury from the room.

Harry emerged from the attached bathroom wearing a pair of jeans, and an AC/DC T-shirt that Tony had picked out for him. Tony couldn’t help but grin at the picture he made since he had the exact same T-shirt, and it made Harry look literally like a miniature version of him. It was a very stark (pun intended) reminder that he was, in fact, his son. The warm fuzzy feeling in his chest unnerved him but he’d already made the decision that he wasn’t going to let his fear of his emotions ruin his attempts on building a better relationship with his son. If that meant keeping an open mind that all this hocus-pocus might be real then he would do it.

“All set?” Tony asked.

“Yup,” Harry chirped swinging his backpack up onto his shoulders.

“Hold on tight to your bag if you drop it at the height we’re going to be flying you could really give someone a decent whack on the head,” Tony told him.

Harry’s eyes widened in shock. “Don’t worry about it. I’m just kidding. But it’s actually, probably the truth, so be careful.”

Harry relaxed a bit but his grip on the straps of his backpack tightened.

“How did you know where I was?” Harry asked.

They had started walking back through the base. Tony was aiming towards the area where he first blasted a hole through the wall. When he had first arrived in the more dilapidated part of the city he thought for sure he would find Harry dead with some junkie trying to sell parts of Harry’s robot for money or drugs. He hadn’t even entertained the possibility that SHIELD might have him. But it seemed like it would be a lot like Fury to be keeping a close eye on Tony after finding out about Harry. It was also a lot like the Director to take Harry, and then let him sweat it out for a while thinking he was missing to teach him some sort of lesson. He hated to admit it but boy had he learned it.

“There’s a tracking device in Tank,” Tony replied honestly.

“What?” Harry gasped.
“It was for your own safety. I told you I had a lot of bad guys are after me. This was sort of a last resort in the event that I ever needed to find you I would have some way to track you down,” Tony explained.

“Oh,” he replied, quietly.

“And I’m glad I did it. It was the only way that I would have found you if you really had been in trouble or lost or something.”

“I am sorry for running away like that. I shouldn’t have done it,” Harry told him.

“Hey, I can’t really blame you since I did the exact same thing. Must be a genetic trait.”

Harry’s lips quirked into a smile, which made Tony grin in response.

They walked the rest of the way in a somewhat companionable silence.

When they got to the huge hole in the ceiling that Tony had inadvertently created in his single-minded pursuit of finding Harry, Harry gaped at the destruction in awe.

“I told you I was worried. I was ready to come kick the butt of anyone who had messed with my kid,” Tony told him seriously.

Harry flushed but there was an obvious note of happiness in his eyes at Tony’s statement.

“Okay I’m going to swing you up and hold you in my arms. You loop your arms around my neck and hold on as tightly as you can, okay?”

Harry nodded looking determined. Tony scooped him up, and gently but securely held him against his chest. Harry looped his arms around his neck and clung to him like an urchin. Tony had Jarvis gently activate the thrusters, and they were air born in a matter of seconds. Harry yelped in surprise as they took off but the grin on his face as they rose above the city showed that he was anything but scared. Tony kept the speed ten times slower than what he normally would. One because Harry wasn’t in a suit and wasn’t protected by the wind resistance, and two Tony really didn’t want to risk dropping Harry by going too fast. He did however fly high enough where people wouldn’t be able to discern the features of the person he was carrying. It wouldn’t due to have someone get a video or picture of Iron Man carrying Harry.

As they flew Tony was once again reminded that Harry was definitely his son. His sharp green eyes flashed over the city below him without an ounce of fear, and more than once he tried to get Tony to go faster or do some sort of aerial maneuver. He did concede to speeding up a little bit but there was no way in hell that he was going to do a barrel roll while carrying Harry in his arms.

They flew around the city a bit, instead of taking the direct route to the tower. Tony was in no hurry to get back to have that conversation with SHIELD, and Harry was really enjoying the flight. In this moment between Harry and he everything was peaceful. Once their feet touched the ground they would once more be faced with all the problems they had between them, and it would be impossible for Tony to avoid whatever the truth Harry and SHIELD were planning to force on him.

He touched down on the landing pad outside Stark Tower, and set Harry down so he could run inside ahead of him so the suit could be removed. Harry’s owl had somehow known that he had returned to the tower, and was waiting inside for him with Pepper. He watched as an anxious Pepper swept Harry up into her arms in a tight embrace.

“Oh thank god you’re safe. Don’t you ever do that to me again Harry James Stark,” said Pepper
squeezing the poor kid so tightly he wasn’t sure if he could breathe properly.

“I’m sorry for worrying you, Pepper, I promise that I won’t ever runaway like that again.” Harry looked much more repentant with Pepper. Of course she was the only one that was innocent in all this.

“You better not, young man. I know Tony is an idiot but you could have called me, okay? You can always call me Harry no matter what. Besides running away doesn’t solve anything,” she said sending a sharp look in Tony’s direction.

 Appropriately chastised Tony let his head drop in shame. Harry wore a similar expression of remorse.

“I know and I’m really sorry for everything,” murmured Harry letting Pepper stroke his hair, which showed just how repentant he was since he wasn’t someone who often allowed prolonged physical contact with people.

“Good. Here, let’s get you something to eat, I bet you’re hungry. Did you even eat yesterday? Where were you?” Pepper asked already ushering him over to the kitchen, falling naturally into mother hen mode.

“I was with Phil most of the day. He works for SHIELD,” Harry explained and then at Pepper’s insistence he told her everything that had happened yesterday.

Tony listened in to the conversation without being too intrusive trying to make himself invisible. He was worried Harry wouldn’t be as forthcoming with him around since he wasn’t exactly Harry’s favorite person at the moment. Harry did hesitate for a moment about telling Pepper about magic, and when he did Pepper sent him a sharp shocked glance to which Tony could only shrug.

“I don’t know anymore than you, which is why the Director and his loyal sidekick Agent are going to be stopping by any minute to give us a crash course in what being a… wizard actually means,” he hesitated on the word wizard it made him feel strange to admit such a thing out loud. It felt like he was conceding that this crazy story might actually be true.

Admitting to the existence of magic felt like such a cop out, and Fury and Agent Coulson better come prepared to give a damn good presentation because he was ready to analyze the hell out of whatever they threw at him. He really couldn’t just blithely accept the existence of magic. It was going to take something very impressive and extensive to get him to believe that this was actually a real thing.

“You don’t mind do you? About my being a wizard and having magic right, Tony?” Harry asked timidly.

“No, of course not,” Tony assured him. Of course at this point he wasn’t exactly convinced of its existence so it was easy to placate him.

“The Dursleys didn’t,” Harry murmured softly.

That one statement made Tony still and suddenly everything clicked. If this wizard thing was real then it would make sense as to why the Dursleys hated Harry, and why the aunt hated Lily. Harry and Lily would have possessed abilities that they didn’t, and it probably frightened them. Abilities beyond the norm didn’t frighten Tony, in fact they excited him. If it could be proven that this was real then he would embrace it, and do whatever he could to learn more about it to help Harry. He would do whatever he could to make him feel comfortable with himself, and whatever abilities he
“I think we’ve already established that the Dursleys were idiots and any opinion that they may have had is entirely wrong,” Tony said offhandedly.

It seemed to do the trick because Harry’s tense shoulders relaxed fractionally.

“Sir, Director Fury and Agent Coulson are in the elevator, and are on their way up,” Jarvis suddenly chimed.

“All right let’s do this,” Tony murmured making his way over to the couch.

Pepper followed with Harry reluctantly trailing behind. The three of them sat in tense silence as they waited for the elevator doors to open, and for Fury and Agent Coulson to make their appearance. When they finally did Pepper greeted them warmly.

“Nick, Phil so glad you could join us,” Pepper smiled and waved them towards some chairs opposite the couch where the three of them were sitting together.

“Phil? Wait he’s the Phil from yesterday? And here I could of sworn his name was Agent,” Tony piped up.

Pepper sent him a withering glare that he interrupted to mean ‘not now, this is a serious discussion you idiot, and I want to get to the bottom of it’. Tony wanted to get to the bottom of it as well but he was nervous, and the way he dealt with nerves was to be snarky.

“Contrary to popular opinion, yes I do in fact have a first name,” replied Agent Coulson genially as he sat down. He shot Harry a warm, genuine smile, which Harry returned with a large one of his own. Tony felt a twinge of jealousy stir inside him. He remembered when Harry had graced him with a similar one. He wondered if Harry would ever decide to give him one again.

“Let’s not beat around the bush we all know why we’re here, since I’m assuming, despite the fact that he shouldn’t have, that Harry told you about his being a wizard, Miss Potts?” Fury questioned leveling his one eye on Pepper.

“He did. But only because I asked him,” Pepper said defending Harry since he looked rather nervous when Fury mentioned he shouldn’t have told Pepper.

“It’s fine, since you are technically one of Harry’s guardians, and in a steady relationship with his father there are no problems with you being informed about the wizarding world, Miss Potts,” Agent Coulson replied evenly.

“So you’re really going to try and convince me that this is a real thing? Wizards and magic?” Tony couldn’t help but butt in skeptically.

“Would we be here if it wasn’t?” the Director replied sarcastically.

“Could be some sort of elaborate hoax,” Tony muttered.

“Trust me, Stark, I have much better things that I could be doing with my time then playing pranks on you. It would be satisfying but a waste of time,” said Fury.

“True and you know I would get you back ten times worse,” Tony pointed out.

“Tony, you’re getting us off track. Maybe you should start from the beginning, Phil. You
mentioned a wizarding world, what does that mean exactly? Are they actually from another world?” Pepper questioned, ever the voice of Tony’s reason.

“The wizarding world isn’t a separate place exactly. It exists alongside our own and occupies the same space. However, they are hiding in plain sight from normal every day people that wizards refer to as muggles. Wizards and witches have been around for as long as humans have existed or at least as far as we can tell. They have the ability to control a force of energy beyond the realm of normal human capabilities, which can do a wide range of extraordinary things. They tend to live longer lives, well into their hundreds or in rare cases two hundreds—”

“Nicholas Flamel lived to be over six hundred but that was because of the Philosopher’s Stone,” Harry cut in.

“Philosopher’s Stone?” Tony asked blankly.

“I think we’re getting ahead of ourselves, Harry,” Agent Coulson said gently, giving him a small smile.

“Oops, right, sorry,” Harry said bashfully.

“It’s all right. Now where was I… Wizards and witches are essentially the same as humans expect of course for the… well for lack of a better term except for the magic that they wield. It is a force of natural energy that they are born having the ability to manipulate. We believe that is what keeps them living longer than the average human. But we don’t know a lot about their genetic make up besides the fact that magic is a trait that is passed down through bloodlines. However there are the occasional hiccups. For example it is possible, though rare, for two magical parents to have a non-magical child, and that person is called a squib. I myself am a squib, which is why I know so much about the magical world because I grew up in it. But I have also spent a lot of time in the muggle world.”

Straight-laced, ordinary looking Agent Coulson was claiming to have grown up in the wizarding world? Well this day certainly couldn’t get any stranger for Tony.

“There is also the opposite of a squib which is someone who is normally called a muggleborn. This means they have two non-magical parents but they are born a witch or a wizard. Like Harry’s mother was. It is our belief, though we don’t have any definite proof, that muggleborns are actually the descendants of squibs and muggles, and for whatever reason magic decides to pop back up in the family line at random intervals. But there hasn’t been a whole lot of study into the matter. It has only been within the last few years that SHIELD has known about the magical world. Before that only top government officials were allowed in on the secret. The wizarding world is a very private one, and prefer to keep their abilities to themselves and distanced from the muggle world especially after all the persecution they faced in the past.”

“Right Salem Witch Trials and all that,” muttered Tony.

“Unfortunately that was mostly muggles who were executed. But it did leave wizards and witches throughout the world with the strong desire to hide themselves from human eyes. There is a wizarding society in all of the inhabited areas of the world. They use spells made up of specific words and wands movements to control their magic. Their spells make it possible them to hide themselves from prying eyes, and they have been hiding themselves ever since the days in which they were persecuted for their abilities. Compared to the muggle population the wizarding one is somewhat small. They use wands made from various types of woods and magical cores to help focus and control the use of their magic. They can do anything from changing the shape of an object, to making things float or controlling fire or water, and so much more. There are very few
limits to what they can achieve, and there are strict laws of magic that witches and wizards must follow. For example a wizard cannot make food out of thin air. They can, however, summon it or multiply it if it already exists.”

“Makes sense you can’t make something out of nothing. It would be completely impossible,” said Tony feeling somewhat mollified that there were actual laws to this magic thing. If there were laws, then it followed some sort of logical pattern which meant it probably wasn’t as illogical as the coined termed magic made it out to be.

“Exactly. There are also a wealth of magical creatures out there that wizards protect and hide from human eyes,” Phil commented.

“Magical creatures? What like fairies and unicorns?” Tony asked skeptically. A genetic ability to manipulate energy was one thing but unicorns were another matter entirely.

“There really are unicorns, I’ve seen a unicorn, well a dead one. And my friend Ron, his older brother Charlie works on a dragon reserve in Romania. We sent a baby dragon there that the gamekeeper had hatched. I also road on a centaur’s back once, and I saw a three headed dog,” Harry suddenly cut in.

Tony stared at him not even knowing what to do with that sort of information. “You seem to have lived a fairly interesting life so far.”


“Oh it was fine, Fluffy went right to sleep after listening to some music,” Harry assured quickly.

Pepper looked appeased but Agent Coulson’s eyes had narrowed with suspicion. Whatever he knew about three headed dogs seemed to suggest that it probably wouldn’t have been as simple as Harry made it out to be. Tony filed that information away for another day.

“Okay so magical creatures are supposedly real. Keep going,” Tony commanded.

“Electrical energy or any type of new technology have adverse effects when brought into contact with powerful concentrations of magical energy,” Coulson explained.

“Which is why everything in the penthouse exploded yesterday?” Tony asked, well besides his arc reactor. There was an area of study that he could look into once he was ready because he had to admit the more he heard the more he was inclined to believe.

“Yes, Harry’s display of accidental magic caused the disruption. Because Harry is still young his magical core is still a bit unstable so any time he is experiencing heightened states of emotion his magic will lash out, as he gets older his control over his magic will become stronger and these bursts of accidental magic won’t happen as often. When a child has a case of accidental magical parents are normally the ones to clear things up but in the cases of muggleborn children Aurors, the magical police force and Obliviators wizards and witches who wipe the minds of non magical people who witness magic step in to hide the problem,” Coulson explained.

“Whoa wait a minute are you telling me wizards can just go around erasing people’s minds without anyone knowing?” Tony demanded.

“Only with just cause. Using magic against or even in front of a muggle is forbidden unless there is a very good reason. Even then you still have to have a trial, and if your reason isn’t good enough you can be given a fine or even a few months in prison,” replied Coulson calmly.
Tony thought about that for a while. It didn’t quite sit well with him but there wasn’t much he could do about it at the moment.

“So the wizarding world sounds fairly organized if they have police and laws pertaining to who can and can’t know about their world,” Pepper commented.

“Yes, the wizarding world isn’t that different when it comes to their governments. Each individual society is controlled by their own government much like muggle countries are ruled by their own governments. There are basic laws that all wizard governments adhere to. For example the International Statue of Wizarding Secrecy. This is the law that states only elected officials, blood relations or close guardians can know about the wizarding world. There is an International Magical Office of Law that oversees the entire wizarding world to make sure that all witches and wizards adhere to these laws. And finally there is an International Confederation of Wizards. It’s sort of like NATO in which most wizarding societies take part in it to discuss the issues and problems within their own societies.”

“Problems? What sorts of problems could a magical world have?” Pepper asked.

“Well, just like in the non-magical world the magical one has its fair share of evil villains looking to take power and change the world to suit their ideal image. And because of their magic things can often get pretty messy. There was just recently a particularly nasty war in Britain just as early as a decade ago amongst light and dark wizards. Before that another wizard help start World War II,” Phil explained.

“War? Harry didn’t you say something about your mom and James fighting a dark wizard?” Tony asked frowning.

“Yes, you see the wizarding world just like the non-magical world is prone to prejudices. It just so happens that there are some wizards who hate anything and anyone non-magical. Those who can trace their magical blood back several generations call themselves purebloods. While some of them have no problems with the magical world there are others who are elitists, and despise the fact that muggleborns are allowed to be a part of wizarding culture. They have a severe hatred for anyone non-magical and don’t believe that they are worthy of magic. Several years ago a dark wizard who called himself Voldemort started up a war to take over wizarding Britain so that he could push this pureblood agenda. He wanted to kill off all muggleborns, and succeeded in causing a lot of panic and fear with his attacks and murders against muggleborns. It became so terrible that people were even afraid to speak his name,” Phil explained.

“So what did people call him? That evil scary wizard guy?” asked Tony.

“You-Know-Who or He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named,” Harry said.

“Really? You’re pulling my leg right? You-Know-Who?” Both Harry and Coulson’s faces were completely serious. “Wow! Talk about unoriginal.”

“They were terrified of this man, Mr. Stark, and they had very good reason to be. He was an extremely powerful and intelligent wizard. Who also happened to be a mass murdering psychopath bent on total world domination,” Coulson stated.

“Okay if he was so amazing what happened to him?” Tony continued.

“Harry did,” replied Coulson.

Tony snorted. “And here I was just starting to think this magic thing might be true.”
“Voldemort attacked the home of James and Lily Potter on Halloween night 2001. The story goes that he killed James first and then proceeded to the nursery where he killed Lily who sacrificed herself for her son. Voldemort then cast the most terrible of the three outlawed, Unforgivable curses, Avada Kedavra, the Killing Curse. Nothing can stop it or block it and if it hits you then you die, instantly. Harry is the first and only known person to survive it. If the list of events are to be believed,” Phil said.

“It’s why I have this scar. It’s from where the curse hit me and then rebounded on Voldemort. Headmaster Dumbledore said my mum’s sacrifice gave me a special kind of protection, and that’s what saved my life,” Harry said pointing to the lightening bolt on his forehead.

“Right… Before I get too wrapped up in this whole Voldemort and spell of death thing, I’m still not even convinced magic is real,” said Tony because if he did believe that meant accepting that Lily had been murdered by some evil wizard who had attempted to then murder his son only for him to somehow survive a magical spell used specifically to kill people, which no one was supposed to survive.

“Harry why don’t you show Mr. Stark a couple of the spells you’ve learned,” Agent Coulson said smiling warmly at Harry.

“But I’m not allowed to do magic outside of school,” replied Harry frowning.

“I’ve gotten you a free pass for today so that you could show Mr. Stark what you can do,” said Coulson.

Harry’s eyes widen with surprise, and then with a grin he ran to his bag and returned with the same polished stick he’d seen earlier.

“Can I see that?” Tony asked holding out his hand for the stick.

Harry handed it over with obvious pride. “It’s my wand. It’s made from holly and has a phoenix feather core.”

“Of course it has a phoenix feather core,” Tony muttered as he turned the stick over in his hand looking it over closely for any sort of hidden software. He scanned it closely but the only information that he got back was that it was an ordinary piece of wood with a strange type of energy emitting from it. He handed it back to Harry.

“All right this is one of the first charms we learned in Charms,” said Harry looking a little nervous to have all eyes on him. “Wingardium Leviosa.” Harry swished and flicked his wand in a certain pattern and before Tony’s eyes the book on the table lifted into the air.

Pepper gasped but Tony quickly waved his hand around the book to check for strings or anything else that might have caused the book to suddenly lift into the air.

“Jarvis, are you recording this?” Tony asked.

“Yes, sir,” replied the AI. Tony was pleased that everything was back online in the penthouse living room so that he would have an accurate record of just what Harry was doing.

After he’d made the book float he then looked across the room and with another wave of his wand he said “Accio Tank.”

His robot came flying across the room and landed in his arms.
“Lumos,” he declared and instantly a light appeared at the end of the wand. With a whispered “Nox,” the light went out. He went through a range of various other spells that Tony observed closely to check for the slightest chance that this was all a hoax.

After the display Tony was that much closer to believing in magic. But it still took over an hour for him to grill Agent Coulson a bit more thoroughly on all the details of the wizarding world and on this Voldemort guy. When they were approaching two hours in to the discussion, and Harry had performed all of the spells he knew at least twice at Tony’s insistence, Tony was starting to believe that this magic stuff might actually be a real thing. Oh he didn’t think it was actual magic, but he was convinced that there was an entire race of people out there capable of manipulating this incredible energy force, and he accepted the fact that Harry was one of them. It also helped when Agent Coulson told him about Thor and the incident in New Mexico. He’d read something about it briefly while hacking SHIELD but there hadn’t been much on it since it had happened fairly recently. Learning about more instances of the bizarre things out in the world only helped him to assimilate that there was more out there than what he could see with his own two eyes, and numerous spy satellites.

“We’ll leave you with several books that go into much more detail about the history, and what sorts of things you can expect when raising a wizard. If you’d like to talk further or you want to get in touch with the wizarding world you know how to contact us. We would love to have someone like you to look into the relationship between magic and technology. So far anyone we’ve had working on the subject hasn’t been able to make any breakthroughs,” Coulson offered as he and Fury got ready to leave.

Tony followed them to the elevator.

“How much of a threat is this Voldemort guy? You mentioned that he was still alive or some sort of evil ghost thing,” Tony asked them in a hushed whisper, not wanting Harry and Pepper to overhear.

“We don’t know. We just became aware that he wasn’t completely destroyed. We need to look into the situation more closely,” Coulson said calmly.

“If we can get past those stiff British wizards,” Fury snapped.

“I’m guessing they’re not exactly friendly,” Tony commented.

“They just aren’t the most open to interference in their affairs with non-magical people,” replied Coulson.

“Keep me updated,” was all Tony replied.

“We will, and for god sakes Stark try and keep us updated on any breakthroughs you make,” Fury snapped before disappearing into the elevator.

“Will do,” he assured them.

He planned on looking into it but there was no way that he was going to help out SHIELD with anything. He would do this for himself and for Harry.

“How are you taking everything?” Harry asked him once SHIELD had left.

“Surprisingly well,” replied Tony even though he really, really wasn’t. Dragons, unicorns and pixies were real. His son knew how to ride a flying broom, and there was entire population of people out there that he had previously known nothing about. Tony hated not knowing things.
“Well it is a lot to take in. I was really shocked when I found out. But magic is great. Are you sure you’re all right with everything? With me being a wizard?” Harry asked.

“Of course, Harry, we care about you no matter what,” Pepper assured him with a huge smile but Tony could tell that this revelation was a lot for her to take in as well. It didn’t change her feelings towards Harry but finding out that fairytale creatures actually existed was sort of like getting hit in the chest with a two by four.

“Yeah kiddo everything is completely fine. Just like Pepper said it doesn’t matter to me if you’re a wizard to me you’re still my kid. But you do know I’m going to be bugging you nonstop until you tell me every little detail that you know about magic right? Can’t believe I just said magic. We should make a new name for it. I’m Tony Stark, I’m Iron Man, the builder of technology for the future. I can’t just go around saying magic. It just sounds too… wrong. Hmm let’s think, what could we call it?”

“Let’s just stick to what Harry knows okay, Tony?” Pepper said exasperatedly.

Tony pouted he really didn’t want to refer to something as magic even though what Harry was able to produce was quite impressive. He’d been having Jarvis take notes on the level of energy waves that Harry had been producing while performing his wand waving spells, and he was planning on going over the data later.

“Do you want see my broom, Tony? Phil said I could show you guys and even fly around on it as long as I didn’t go outside,” Harry said obviously eager to show off.

“Do I want see a flying broom? Um yeah,” said Tony grinning.

Harry grinned back and raced back to his bag. He pulled out something that looked like a toothpick with bristles but after tapping it twice it quadrupled in size into the sleekest looking broom Tony had ever seen. He didn’t even think that it could be used as an actual broom since the bristles were so tightly packed. It did make him wonder just why witches and wizards had decided it was a good idea to make brooms, of all things, fly.

Harry flew a few laps around the ceiling of the penthouse. He performed a few daring stunts that had Pepper nervously wringing her hands, he had Tony nervous too not that he would ever admit it. After he was done, and had once more settled back on the ground Tony couldn’t help but ask him more about his school. Harry launched into a delightful description about Hogwarts, and it’s four houses, professors, students, ghosts, moving staircases, and the many adventures he had gone on. Tony wasn’t quite sure what to make of some of the things Harry told him.

Some of his adventures seemed a little extreme. Was it normal for an eleven year to fight off a mountain troll in the wizarding world? And that wasn’t even mentioning the fact that this Voldemort person seemed to still be alive albeit a really angry ghostly spirit thing. Tony needed more information. Harry seemed to really love Hogwarts and all the people he had met there but Tony was really hesitant about letting him go back after hearing all the stories especially knowing that the evil maniac who had originally tried to kill him was still around. And he really didn’t like the idea of sending his kid off to some boarding school so soon after he had met him. But again Harry was excited at the prospect of going back, and Tony was hesitant to make him angry by flat out denying him the chance to return. He would need to have a serious talk with these professors of Harry’s to make sure he was really safe. Tony wasn’t going to let himself be a failure this time.

He needed to learn more about these wizards. He had some solid connections with the American wizards through SHIELD, not that he particularly wanted to owe SHIELD anything. He still had the option to gather more information through them. The British wizards were another matter.
entirely, and they were the ones he needed the information from. His son was a British wizard. Lily had been a British wizard, and they were the ones he would have to deal with if Harry really wanted to go back to school there. It was just so strange thinking that his son was a wizard, and he wasn’t just any wizard either, he was famous amongst them. He was hailed as some sort of hero for defeating some evil bastard when he was a baby, and that evil maniac and his minions could potentially still be out there searching for ways to get to his son. Without the chance to learn more about the British wizards Tony figured it was time he hunkered down and figure out the limitations of magic. He was going to do whatever was necessary to insure his son was protected, and building him a range of different gadgets to protect him from magic seemed like a very good place to start.
Two weeks. It had been two weeks since Tony had found out about the magical world, and he had been studying up on it ever since. He had pestered Harry about everything that he knew, and demanded that they go to the wizard ‘shopping mall’ that Phil had taken Harry to. It had been a great deal of fun for Harry to show Tony around the wizarding world. He’d answered all of Tony’s questions that he was able to as Tony closely observed the wizards as they went about their normal, day to day lives. Harry knew that he desperately wanted to do a more in depth study of magic but the only magical person he had access to was Harry, and according to wizarding law underage wizards weren’t allowed to do magic outside of school without a special permit. Tony was trying to get Phil to get special permission for Harry. He dangled the possibility of working with SHIELD to get technology to work with magic in front of their eyes as an incentive.

Tony seemed pretty sure that he was capable of achieving it. But Tony lamented the fact that he only had a limited amount of data to work with. He’d tried to get more while they had been at Horizont Alley but unfortunately all of his recording devices stopped working the moment they stepped onto the street. His arc reactor continued to work in the presence of strong magical energy so he had figured that whatever link he discovered between magic and technology would come from arc reactor technology, something he had been looking into anyway.

Harry was just relieved that Tony seemed to have taken the whole magic thing in stride. Sure he’d been skeptical for a few days even after the long discussion and the numerous books he’d read on the subject. His path towards acceptance was also helped along a great deal by him watching the clips of Thor’s little trip to New Mexico. Knowing that the Norse Gods of myth existed in some form went a long way towards him accepting that there was more to the world than he had initially believed.

But it wasn’t until they had actually gone to Horizont Alley that Harry believed everything had really sunk in for Tony since it allowed him to see the magical world with his own two eyes. Pepper was also taking everything very well. She’d said something to the effect that she’d seen Tony do so many weird things that nothing could really surprise her anymore. She had loved the Alley too, and getting to see all of the wonders of the magical world. Harry wished they could all take a trip to Diagon Alley together since that was really the first place Harry had been introduced into the wizarding world, and that was the world that he was more familiar with; although, he found the American wizarding world just as exciting.

Tony and Pepper enjoyed themselves at the alley. They bought a bunch of candies, and Tony of course bought a bunch of joke stuff from the local joke shop much to Pepper’s annoyance. Tony was a little insulted during their trip since only a few people recognized him. Harry could tell he was used to people clamoring for his attention everywhere he went, and was a little put out by the fact that he didn’t receive the same reaction from wizards. Harry, however, thoroughly enjoyed himself. The chance to spend a normal day with Pepper and Tony without worrying about paparazzi, both muggle and magical was a dream come true to Harry. It was like being a part of a normal, everyday family even though Tony could probably never really be classified as normal. He liked the fact that shop owners automatically assumed Tony and Pepper were his parents. He also enjoyed having Pepper and Tony’s full attention focused on him. It reminded him a great deal of their first shopping trip together, and it did a lot towards healing the relationship between Harry and Tony.

In the week following their trip they had managed to form a closer relationship. They were still a bit cautious with one another but they were a lot more honest and open with one another. Since
they were being honest with one another Tony admitted to Harry that he was in fact punishing the Dursleys for their treatment of Harry. Harry had been stunned by that revelation. He had always dreamed of getting back at them, and the fact that Tony cared enough to want to punish the Dursleys for him was incredible to Harry. He had never been so grateful towards Tony. The two of them had giggled over the videos of the pranks that Tony had played on the Dursleys. Tony continued to assure him that what the Dursleys had done to him was cruel and was meant to hurt him, and it was only right that they were punished for it. However it was still a surprise when Tony announced he was going to send the Dursleys to prison.

“So kiddo, I was just informed by my associates in jolly ol’ England that the Dursleys have reached their breaking point. I’m going to take the jet, and fly over to give them an ultimatum. They either turn themselves in to the police or allow me to continue tormenting them,” said Tony grinning wolfishly.

“You’re going to send them to prison?” Harry had always known that what the Dursleys had done to him was wrong, he had just never thought that what they had done was worthy of actual jail time.

“Yup, that’s where they deserve to be. They shouldn’t be out, and about living happy lives after the things they’ve done. It isn’t legal for people to leave kids locked in cupboards or make them work like slaves,” said Tony pointedly.

“I guess,” Harry shrugged.

“There’s no guess work about it. It’s the truth, kiddo. What they did was wrong and they should pay for it,” Tony said firmly. “I’m just telling you because I wanted to know if you wanted to come with.”

Harry was surprised by the offer.

“I don’t know if it’s something that a normal person would offer, letting their kid watch their recently discovered father send their idiot relatives to jail. But I think that it’s something you deserve to see, if you want to that is. I just wanted to give you the choice,” Tony said looking awkward but sincere.

“I’ll go,” said Harry before he could talk himself out of it.

He thought Tony was right. It would be good to reaffirm to himself that all these years the Dursleys had been wrong about him. To know for certain that what they had done was truly wrong, and that they deserved to pay for what they had done to him by seeing them arrested for their crimes.

Tony just nodded in agreement. A short time later the two of them were packed up on Tony’s private jet and on their way to England. It was a much better plane ride experience than Harry’s first trip with the Dursleys. Tony’s plane was just as large as a commercial plane but had comfy lounge chairs instead of seats, and the flight attendants offered them any type of gourmet food or drinks that they could possibly want. Pepper remained behind because someone had to run Stark Industries.

Harry and Tony played a game of wizard’s chess with the board Tony had bought in Horizont Alley to pass the time. He had been enthralled with the way the pieces could move on their own, and had closely studied the board and the energy it emitted. The two of them had more fun destroying each other’s pieces rather than playing an actual game. The rest of the time Tony looked over his notes and data on his tablet while Harry slept.
They arrived in England on a private runway not too far from Little Whinging with little fuss or attention from the paparazzi that constantly followed Tony around. Tony had rented a car, and he personally drove them to Privet Drive. Harry wished that he had Hedwig with him but she had remained behind in New York. As it was Tony was able to catch on to his nervousness about the upcoming confrontation.

“You don’t have to go in with me, Harry. You can wait in the car,” Tony offered.

“No, I want to see them,” Harry insisted. He was a Gryffindor, it was time that he faced his fears. Confronting his relatives had always been one of his biggest fears and it was time that he did it. There was no better time than now with his father at his side, willing to support him no matter what he chose.

“Okay. Just so you know I plan on yelling and shouting at them a lot. I also want to give you the chance to get out anything you want to say to them. So feel free to say whatever you want. This is your chance to just get all of this off your chest, and move on. But at any time you feel uncomfortable or anytime that you want to leave you just let me know and we’ll get out of there quicker than I can hack SHIELD.”

Harry just nodded his agreement, relaxing a bit to have Tony’s firm support.

As the familiar, identical houses of Privet Drive came into view Harry couldn’t help but tense up a bit once more. There were just too many bad memories in the little suburb for Harry to ever feel truly comfortable here. When asked which one was the right house Harry directed him to Number 4. The car was gone and according to the people Tony had working for him the Dursleys had stepped out for dinner since they had caused their oven to explode the night before. They were expected to be back any moment. Harry wasn’t at all surprised when Tony opened the door with the key, and swept inside so that the two of them could wait for the Dursleys to return.

Inside, the house was complete chaos. It looked nothing like the way it had when Harry had last seen it. The house had once been perfectly immaculate, in large part due to Harry’s efforts. But right now it looked as if a bomb made up of garbage had gone off inside the house. The furniture in the living room was ripped and torn. Picture frames and vases were broken, and no one had bothered to sweep them up, which was very unlike Harry’s aunt. There was a steady stream of water dripping down the stairs from the second floor causing large water stains to form. When Harry peeked into the kitchen he was shocked to find that it was in even worse shape than the rest of the house. The cupboard doors all seemed to be cracked or crooked while the sink dripped a gross brown sludge. Plates and old food were piled along the counters in a disarray, and half of the appliances seemed to be broken in one way or another.

Tony whistled looking impressed at the destruction around them. “Wow I have to hand it to those guys, they really knew what they were doing. Definitely money well spent.”

Harry only nodded still stunned as Tony led the way back into the living room to wait for the Dursleys. Harry could only imagine the type of life that the Dursleys had been living for the house to have fallen into such a state of chaos. They were always so image conscious. Things must have been absolutely terrible for them to have let the house get this bad, and risk the notice of the neighbors. He’d watched some of the videos of some of the funnier events like the clogged toilet incident, and the fire alarms turning on at all hours of the night but he hadn’t really noticed the truly poor state of the house. It made him surprisingly cheerful to know how much the Dursleys must suffered over the last month and a half.

Tony and he had just settled down on to the non-destroyed part of the couch when the Dursleys arrived home. Tony looked perfectly at ease in his surroundings, his arms flung carelessly along
the back of the sofa. Harry fiddled with the zipper on his jacket. He couldn’t help but be a little afraid about the confrontation that was about to happen. Tony had brought his special suitcase that allowed him to put on the Iron Man suit in a moments notice, just in case. He had told Harry he didn’t think he would need it but it was always a good idea to be prepared. Harry had a surprising epiphany as he sat on the couch in the Dursleys living room. He felt safe with Tony. With his arm resting along the back of where he sat, and his body pressed closely to his own Harry felt safer than he had in a really long time. For once in his life he had an adult that was sticking up for him, and was willing to do something for him. He was challenging the Dursleys, and telling them that they were wrong for what they had done to him. Harry had never believed he would ever see something like this happen. With the feeling of safety firmly fixed in his mind he watched as the Dursleys stumbled in to the house.

They all looked exhausted. Their clothes were untidy, and Dudley and Vernon even looked like they had lost a bit of weight. Petunia’s face was even more pinched than it normally was, and Vernon’s face was already looking a bit reddish with annoyance. When they saw Harry and Tony sitting on their couch they looked too stunned to form words.

Tony sent them a wolfish grin as he stood, and straightened his impeccable and expensive suit.

“Hi, Tony Stark. It’s so nice to finally get the chance to meet my son’s loving relatives. Have you liked the visitors I’ve sent by to personally thank you for all you’ve done for him?”

“All of this is because of you?” gasped Vernon shaking with rage and his face was rapidly changing to its normal unhealthy purple hue.

“And here I thought you wouldn’t mind a few more presents from me, Dursley. After all you were very eager to take my money,” said Tony sounding deceivingly jovial.

“You can’t do this! I’ll have you arrested for this!” Vernon shrieked.

“Oh that’s not going to happen but you’re more than welcome to call the police. In fact you might as well since I’ll be calling them myself in few minutes,” said Tony.

“What reason would you have to call the police on us?” Petunia demanded.

“How dare you?” Petunia questioned shrilly.

“I dare because of what you did to my son,” snarled Tony, any pretense of cheerfulness disappearing.

“What did we do? What has the little liar been telling you?” Vernon said taking a threatening step towards Harry.

It was the wrong move. Tony’s features darkened even further and Harry was almost certain that he was about to put on the suit so he could crush Vernon into the stained carpet. Tony blocked the path between Vernon and Harry looking murderous.

“Don’t you ever call my son a liar again. You’ve been lying to people about him his entire life. You don’t deserve to judge him you pathetic excuse for a man,” Tony hissed and Harry felt a moment of amazement to see Vernon cower underneath the brunt of Tony’s anger.

“You don’t understand. He’s a freak, he—”

Vernon didn’t get a chance to finish because Tony had punched him square across the face. Petunia
cried out in shock. Dudley was in the corner watching with terror filled eyes as his father went down. Harry could only watch in utter amazement and admiration of what Tony had just done.

“What did I say about insulting my son?” Tony demanded glaring at Vernon from his position on the floor. “I know all about Harry being a wizard and you know what? I don’t care. I’m a man of science, someone who would be the last person in the universe to believe in magic. But I’ve accepted that my son is a wizard. You people disgust me with the way that you could hate an innocent child just because he was born with something that you weren’t willing to understand or learn about.”

“It’s not our fault! We never wanted him,” Petunia snapped back, although she was trembling a fair bit, afraid to turn Tony’s wrath towards her.

“Then you should have sent him to a home that did!” cried Tony.

“That man said if we took him in, he would provide us with protection from the people who killed my sister,” replied Petunia.

“So you kept him around for your own safety but you refused to even treat him decently despite this protection he provided all of you with?” Tony scoffed glaring in disgust at Petunia. “Just what was this protection and who was the one who gave you custody of Harry?”

“The headmaster at that freak school, Albus Dumbledore. He said there would be some sort of protective barrier built from my sister giving up her life for the boy’s. He said it could only be built through Dudley and I since we were my sister’s last living blood relatives,” Petunia explained.

The wards were not knew information to Harry since Dumbledore had explained it to him at the end of the year when he had asked to remain at Hogwarts over the summer. But it did come as a shock that they were the only reason that the Dursleys had taken him in. Harry didn’t think anything they did could hurt him now but knowing that they had never truly cared for him even for a moment was upsetting. Petunia didn’t even seem to care about his mum or at least she was really good at hiding it.

“Right, well I’ll be having a chat with him later. Right now we’re talking about you and the consequences of your actions. I’m going to give you and the walrus a choice. You can turn yourselves over to the police, and admit to what you’ve done… Or I can continue with my little presents until there’s nothing left and you have no other options but to go through with my plans. Either way it will end with you doing some jail time. One choice just means you’ll being doing a bit less time and save yourself some misery.”

“This isn’t legal. You can’t do this,” Petunia hissed.

“I can and I will. There isn’t anything that you can do to stop me,” said Tony once more regaining his casual air.

“We’ll go to the media. Tell the world about what you’re doing to us,” said Petunia.

“You signed a contract. If you so much as take one step in that direction you’ll be thrown in jail faster than you can say Iron Man,” said Tony.

Both Vernon and Petunia looked terrified as they realized they were trapped.

“What about my Diddykins?” Petunia gasped helplessly, looking tearfully over at Dudley who was still in the corner gaping like a fish.
“You should have thought of that when you kept my son locked in a cupboard under the stairs while spoiling your own son,” replied Tony not at all sympathetic.

“You cruel bastard. You’ve ruined my house, my credit, and my bank account. I got fired because of you. You’ve ruined my life even after everything we had to put up with, with your miserable spawn. I won’t let you get away with this,” Vernon snarled, struggling to get to his feet.

“I already have, Dursley. You should be glad I’m giving you a choice especially with the way you keep slandering my son,” said darkly.

“I will do whatever I want, and you can’t make me,” Vernon howled sounding a great deal like Dudley having a temper tantrum. But even in anger it was obvious that he didn’t dare attack Tony after Tony had proven that he was capable of physically standing up to him.

“Oh you’d be surprised what I could make you do, Dursley,” Tony hissed, making Vernon take a fearful step back.

“Vernon, I think he’s serious. Think of Dudley and what he could do to him. We can’t fight him with all the influence and money he has,” Petunia cried.

Vernon practically vibrated with rage but it seemed, even with his limited intelligence, that he knew he had been beaten.

“Fine, call the police,” snarled Vernon.

“Do you even recognize that what you’ve done to Harry was wrong?” Tony asked in amazement.

Petunia’s head dipped a little bit in shame but Vernon looked entirely unrepentant. “We did nothing to him but provide him with a home, and clothes despite all of the troubles he caused us.”

“Right because a cupboard is a real home, and the rags you gave him were real clothes. This is why I don’t feel an ounce of guilt in doing all of this to you Dursley because you honestly think what you were doing was okay. You deserve everything you’re about to get,” snapped Tony in disgust.

Tony whipped out his phone and called the police.

“One more thing. Is there anything you’d like to say to them, Harry?” Tony questioned turning concerned eyes towards Harry.

Harry gathered his courage and stepped beside Tony facing Vernon and Petunia. Tony put a comforting hand on his shoulder and Harry couldn’t help but feel an extra surge of confidence at the touch.

“All I ever wanted was for you to like me. I never understood why you didn’t until I found out about magic. I hate you for the way you treated me and the way you made me feel growing up. But now I feel sorry for you, too. Aunt Petunia you’re bitter and jealous of my mum, and you took that out on me. Uncle Vernon you just hate anyone that is different, and you’re too small minded to learn more about wizards before you pass judgment on them. Thanks to Tony and Pepper, I know that I’m not a freak, and what you did to me was wrong. I’m going to move past what you did to me, and I’m going to live a happy and productive life. But you are going to have to live the rest of your lives in guilt and misery because of what you did to me. Dudley I hope that you can learn from this and not turn out like your parents because there is still time for you to change.”

Once Harry finished he stared at all the Dursleys. Dudley just gaped at him like he’d never seen
him before. Petunia actually did look a bit regretful while Vernon just looked angry and resentful. But he was too intimidated by Tony to try anything with Harry.

“Oh and I want my mum’s journal,” Harry added as an after thought.

“You heard the kid,” Tony added.

Petunia glared at them but she disappeared upstairs and returned with the journal. She shoved it into Harry’s hands, and he couldn’t quite believe that he would finally have some answers on why his mum had done what she did. The police and child services arrived soon after. Tony took charge and got things moving fairly quickly as he explained the situation to them, and the Dursleys confessed or Petunia did while Vernon just muttered angrily under his breath. The Dursleys were arrested. Tony had a whole team of people watching over the proceedings closely to make sure the Dursleys continued cooperating. They would make sure they were actually charged, and put in prison. Harry also had to give his statement. Since the Dursleys were pleading guilty he wouldn’t have to attend a trial, and his formal accusation and statement would be enough for the court. Once that was through Tony took Harry out to dinner, and then the two of them got back on the plane to head home.

As soon as they were back on the plane Tony asked if he could scan Lily’s journal quickly. He said he didn’t want to intrude too much he just wanted to make sure it was all age appropriate. He seemed satisfied with what he found, and handed the journal back over. Harry was thrilled and terrified to finally get the chance to learn about his mum’s thoughts. Unable to wait a moment longer he flipped open the diary and began to read.

***

I’ve begun this journal as a way to deal with the tumult of my emotions after my mum and dad’s unexpected deaths. It was Death Eaters. To the muggle world it has been written off as some sort of explosion but of course I know the truth. They were murdered. This war is getting worse by the day, and despite what everyone thinks I’m terrified. I hate Voldemort and all of his Death Eaters for their racial slurs and their cloistered ideals, and I want to stop them. But the violence and fervor with which they fight scares me. They are so convinced that what they are doing is right.

Things were so different before graduating from Hogwarts. When the Headmaster approached me to join his Order of the Phoenix I had been all too eager to join, and help out anyway that I could. But that was before I really understood the horror of war. I will do my part to protect others, and have done so by facing down dark wizards several times in several terrifying battles. I want to see the world freed from Voldemort’s grasp, and I will do whatever I can to accomplish this. My parent’s deaths have shaken me, though. It’s made me second-guess all of my decisions. It worries me that because of this war I’ve rushed my decisions, that, and my fight with Petunia.

She accused me of being the reason for our mum and dad’s deaths. She said if I had never gotten involved with the wizarding world then maybe Voldemort, and his Death Eaters would have never targeted our parents. I’m afraid that our relationship is incapable of being repaired. I don’t know how it could have come to this. Petunia and I used to be so close, and I hate that she’s grown to hate me for being a witch. But maybe she’s right about one thing. When I found out about being a witch I did turn my back on the muggle world. I stopped being a part of the muggle world in my efforts to make myself fit in with the wizarding world. That is something I regret, and I want to fix it. I want to spend more time in the world I grew up in. The world my parent’s grew up in. At the very least it will get me away from the horror and terror that suffuses the wizarding world right now. Maybe I can even convince James to join me in my reintegration to the muggle world.

***
James hasn’t exactly been supportive of my desire to reacquaint myself with the muggle world. He thinks that we have more important things to be focusing on and in a way he’s right. But I need a distraction so I’ve started taking trips on my own. It feels nice to get away from the constant terror and pressure of the wizarding world’s war. James distracts himself by spending time with Sirius, Remus, and Peter, and I take trips into London. I’ve been meeting up with old primary school friends who are attending university in London. I’ve really enjoyed my time on the campus, and I’ve gone with them to a couple of their classes. It makes me wish that I could have enrolled. It’s what my parents had always dreamed of.

My mum and dad weren’t exactly thrilled when I told them James and I were engaged. They liked James, and got along well with him but they wanted us to wait since we were both so young. I’m starting to think that maybe they were right. But at the time we were so in love. We were both each other’s first serious relationship, and it was so hard to resist someone who fought so hard to get my attention. And I have to admit that James really proved himself by maturing in our seventh year. And when he proposed a few months after graduation I couldn’t help but say yes. With the fear of the war and that any moment could be our last, I threw caution out the window and agreed.

I realize now that we may have been a bit rash. I still love James but I’m not sure that I’m in love with him. I feel like we rushed into things, and never really got the chance to know if what we felt was more than just a school crush. There are just so many other things I wanted to do before getting married and settling down, and I regret jumping in to things. Maybe I’m being selfish but spending more time in the muggle world, and seeing what my friends do makes me realize what I’m missing out on. Sometimes I wonder if James feels the same way when Sirius teases him about needing to ask my permission before he goes out to spend time with his fellow Marauders. I see the flash of irritation in his eyes and the way he asserts that just because we are married doesn’t mean I’m his keeper. I tend to agree with him even if the harsh words hurt a bit. We went from being children to being shoved into adulthood so quickly. There’s so much pressure on us. Sometimes I just want to do something crazy and unexpected, something that normal young women my age do.

Tonight I went to some rundown muggle pub in London. I was feeling a bit down after an Order meeting where we received some bad news about the Prewett twins. I just wanted to spend some time alone to think. More and more I’ve been retreating to the safety of the muggle world, and tonight was no exception. Instead of seeking James’s comfort I went to a pub, which I suppose goes to show the awkward state our marriage is currently in. I wasn’t expecting to meet anyone there. I chose the place because of its rundown quality. I didn’t want to talk to anyone and the fewer people around the better. But I didn’t get my wish. I met someone.

His name was Tony. Anthony Edward Stark to be exact. He gave me his full name when I failed to recognize him. It seems he is rather famous in the muggle world due to his wealth and genius level intelligence. He was an American, and owns a large and lucrative weapons company. He was extremely intelligent and witty, and he made my stomach twist itself into strange knots like a girl with a crush. I tried to ignore the feeling but he made it difficult. Even after I told him I was married he just shrugged it off, and said that it was fine and it wasn’t illegal for us to continue chatting with one another. I couldn’t help but agree with his logic. He asked me to meet him again. I should have said no. He didn’t seem like he was the type of man to just want to talk with a woman. But he was just so different and interesting. I have to go back.

I feel so guilty. I’ve never felt more horrible in all my life. My parents would be so ashamed if they knew what I had done. I’m ashamed of what I’ve done even if at the time it felt like the most
amazing night of my life. Last night was Tony’s last night in London and we—I… I cheated on James. I never would have thought myself capable of such a feat. Yes I’ve been feeling more and more trapped in my marriage with James but it was no excuse to do what I did. Tony was fun and exciting, and a wonderful distraction from the wizarding world but I can’t believe that I would ever do something so wrong. What have I done? Why have I done it? I have to tell James. I have to. I just don’t know how.

***

I’m pregnant. I don’t know how I let this happen. Well I know how, I’ve been careless. I haven’t even worked up the courage to tell James yet about cheating and now I find out that I’m pregnant. Some Gryffindor I turned out to be. I’m a coward and an adulteress. Everything seems to be spinning out of control, and the worst part is that I have no one to blame but myself. No, what the worst part truly is, is that I don’t know who the father is and that I’ve gotten an innocent child involved in this situation. I want to say with utter certainty that it is James’s child since I was only with Tony once but considering how far along I am there is some possibility that the baby is his. I don’t know what to do. The only way to know for sure is a blood potion when the baby is born.

I’m terrified about being a mother. I’m only nineteen, soon to be twenty, and there is a war going on. The added stress of the baby possibly not being my husband’s is killing me. I only have myself to blame but it doesn’t stop me from feeling anxious and horrible. I haven’t even told James yet about the baby. I’ll have to tell him eventually. But how can I tell him when the baby might not even be his?

Either way despite all the anxiety and terror I still love this baby with my entire being, and I don’t want them to suffer for my mistakes.

***

The last few months have been difficult. James found out I was pregnant due to the fact Molly Weasley noticed the signs while at an Order meeting. He was surprised but after a while he seemed to be happy about it. It killed me to see him that way, and I can only pray that the baby is his. I’ll do the test once the baby is born, and once I know for sure I’ll tell him, either way. I owe him that much. I’ll just wait until then.

***

I’m a mother. My beautiful baby boy was born two days ago on July 31st. Harry James Potter. He’s perfect and I can only hope that he isn’t the one who is going to pay for my mistakes. I hope that I can make it up to him by loving him unconditionally. James is thrilled and I’ve bought a paternity potion to test Harry. I only need to work up the courage to give him the test.

***

Albus came by today to see Harry. He told us of a prophecy about a child who would be able to defeat Voldemort. He says that Harry could be the child of the prophecy. Or it could be Neville Longbottom. The beginning of the prophecy states that ‘The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches… born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies’. There is more but I don’t dare write it down here. Not even with all the protective wards I keep on this journal.

The problem is that Voldemort found out about the prophecy, and he’s planning on coming after the Longbottoms and us. He’s going to try to kill my son. I will do whatever is necessary to protect my son. We have to go into hiding with Harry. I know now I need to perform the test. I need to
know for certain. The prophecy might not really mean Harry at all if it turns out that Tony is really Harry’s father. Of course the prophecy is fairly vague. The ‘born to those who have thrice defied him’ part could mean that he is our biological son or that he was just born to us. He could have been born to James since he was there for the birth without Harry being his natural born son. It’s too much to consider. I need to know the truth.

***

I’ve completed the test. Harry isn’t James’s son. I cried for hours yesterday. James thought it was because I was worried about Voldemort. I’ve never felt so awful in all my life. I have to tell him the truth. But I’m afraid. I’m afraid James will leave Harry and I in our moment of need. Maybe it’s selfish of me but I’ve come to realize that a mother will do anything for her child.

I’m not even certain telling the truth will change Voldemort’s mind about coming after Harry. He could simply think that it’s some sort of diversion tactic to get him to leave Harry alone. It’s not as if he would ever take the time to stop and give Harry a paternity potion before killing him. And there’s nothing Voldemort values more than his own life and he will do whatever is necessary to remove any possible risks to himself. I don’t know what to do. But I know I have to do whatever is best for Harry even if that means keeping up a lie a little longer and risking the lives of others to keep him safe.

***

I’ve told James the truth. It just came out. I couldn’t keep up the lie anymore and allow James to continue to live a lie. He hates me, to put it mildly. He shouted at me for hours and I let him not even bothering to defend my actions. He then stormed out without a backwards glance. I can’t help but wonder if I will ever see him again.

***

James came back tonight. Three days after leaving. He wants to get a divorce and I’ve agreed. He said he would stay until this thing with Voldemort is sorted out since he agreed with me in that Voldemort might just think this is a diversion tactic. We’ve moved our things to separate rooms and he no longer looks or speaks directly to me. He still takes care of Harry but he is much more distant towards him and it kills me that I’ve brought this situation down on Harry. He doesn’t deserve James’s apathy for my mistakes. But at the same time I don’t blame James for it was I who deceived him, and allowed him to believe that Harry was his son. I can only hope that one day both James and Harry can forgive me for what I’ve done. Not to mention Tony. He deserves to know that he has a son, and Harry deserves to know his real father. I have so much to make up for.

***

Harry closed the journal after reading that last entry. It was written only two days before Halloween 2001. He wasn’t sure how he was supposed to feel now. He was vaguely disappointed and yet at the same time he still loved his mum. It was confusing. He loved her for her obvious love of him but he couldn’t help but feel betrayed knowing that she had lied to everyone about something so huge. Sure in the end she had come clean to James but not soon enough. He wanted to hate her because maybe if she had told the truth things could have been different for Harry. But he found himself incapable of anything more than vague resentment since she was dead. He would never get the chance to talk about any of this with her, and vent his feelings about the situation with her. All he had were some of her thoughts and feelings at the time. They were only random snippets of her life since she wrote less and less frequently as time went on. He couldn’t get angry
since it would do him no good to hate someone who was gone. It was far too late to change the past and Harry recognized that anything she had done wasn’t his fault.

“So I was thinking about a few new adjustments to the suit,” Tony said casually.

Harry looked up. There was concern in Tony’s eyes but the man seemed to realize that Harry wasn’t ready to talk about what he had read and was offering him a distraction. Harry smiled at him, a rush of warm feelings towards Tony flowing through him. Tony had really been there for him; today and he had to say he was feeling very grateful to having Tony in his life.

“What were you thinking?” Harry asked dutifully, and Tony quickly launched into a long-winded explanation of the new repulsors he was thinking about installing and it effectively distracted him.

Maybe his mum had made mistakes and maybe things could have been different but at the moment there was no place he would rather be than with Tony. With Tony he finally had a real home, and he would never have to go back to the Dursleys again.

While Harry and Tony were flying over the Atlantic, the Dursleys were being interrogated about their nephew. The people Tony had hired were watching over them carefully to make sure that they were completely honest in their admissions of guilt. Later on Vernon and Petunia Dursley would be convicted of child abuse, and would each be sentenced to several years in prison along with many more years of probation. They would never regain full custody of their son.

But back to the present. It was also during Harry and Tony’s flight that Harry came to a very important decision. It was a combination of seeing the Dursleys pay for the injustices they showered on him, and by a renewed sense of trust in Tony. Harry had finally and conclusively decided that his home with was Tony. This caused the impenetrable blood wards surrounding Number 4 Privet Drive to crumble.

They had been weakening steadily over the last couple of weeks without Harry there to renew and strengthen them. The wards would have managed to last an entire year from Harry’s last departure but there was one sure fire way to shatter them. Harry stopped thinking of Privet Drive as his home. It also helped that the Dursleys had been permanently removed from the residence, and felt such strong resentment towards him that they would never welcome him back to live with them even under the most extreme duress. Up until this point no one in the wizarding world, besides one Hermione Granger of course, knew that Harry was no longer with his relatives. With the wards shattering so suddenly, and so spectacularly it got the notice of Albus Dumbledore, the Headmaster of Hogwarts school of Witchcraft and Wizardry, Supreme Mugwump, Chief Warlock etc.

He had monitors on Privet Drive to let him know the state of the wards. If he hadn’t been so busy trying to locate where the shade of Voldemort had fled to he would have realized that they had been weakening due to the fact that Harry had never arrived there at the end of the school year. But he didn’t so when they did break, the alarms that rang throughout his office caused him to jump in shock. Still in shock it took him several moments to realize just what the alarms going off meant, and when he did he felt himself pale.
The wards around Privet Drive, protecting Harry Potter had fallen. Albus Dumbledore was instantly consumed with dread and fear for his student’s life. He quickly called on the only two people he trusted enough with this information. He briefly explained the situation and then together the three of them apparated to Privet Drive to discover what had caused the wards to fall.

What they found was startling. The house was empty, and in shambles but it didn’t look like anyone had recently broken in or attacked. Of course it was hard to tell considering the level of destruction in the house. They searched the house but found no traces of dark magic or indeed any type of magic that would suggest wizards were involved. Dumbledore closely inspected the wards for the cause of the deterioration while his two companions questioned the neighbors if they had seen anything.

All three of them were startled by what they discovered. Dumbledore discovered the wards had broken not because of a malicious attack but because Harry no longer called Privet Drive home. The question of why he no longer did was still unknown. Professors Snape and McGonagall discovered that the Dursleys had been arrested after admitting to child abuse. No one had noticed where Harry had gone since they had been too focused on all the police cars, and the angry outbursts of Vernon Dursley as he was carted away. None of them had even noticed that Harry hadn’t been at Privet Drive this summer. Dumbledore went to see Arabella Figgs, a squib living in the neighborhood who had been watching over Harry since he first started living there, in hopes that she could provide him with more information on this situation.

She reported that she hadn’t seen anything unusual, in fact it seemed that she hadn’t even noticed that the Dursleys had been arrested. All of these things unsettled Dumbledore a great deal. The Dursleys being arrested for child abuse, Arabella’s lack of knowledge, and the fact that Harry had truly not wanted to return to Privet Drive for the summer were events that worried Dumbledore. At the time Dumbledore believed that he simply did not want to return to the muggle world after experiencing the wonder of the magical one. He would have never expected anything to be wrong with the way Harry’s relatives treated him. He thought maybe there was a bit of dissatisfaction with the arrangement on Harry’s part but not enough to warrant Harry’s removal or for the Dursleys to be arrested. What exactly had been going on? Arabella had never given him a report that would cause him to question their guardianship or look into Harry’s treatment any further so he had left Harry and his relatives in peace. He was a very busy man, and sad to say he just didn’t have time to check up on him that’s why he had delegated the position to someone he thought that he could trust.

It seemed that this decision hadn’t been the best for Harry. But Dumbledore knew he couldn’t dwell on that at the moment. There was another far more important matter to look into: what had happened to Harry Potter?
For once things were going well, perhaps too well. The Dursleys were in prison and Harry, and he had come to have a closer relationship because of it. Harry’s twelfth birthday was coming up, and Tony and Pepper were planning something special for him. Tony had even completed his arc reactor prototype earlier then expected, and he had installed it into Stark Tower. So far it was working beautifully. He had decided that delving more into arc reactor technology would be the way to go when trying to make things compatible with magic. He just wished that he had a way of testing it, and had attempted to get Harry to bend the rules and perform magic in its presence.

Pepper had taken the jet to D.C. for a meeting on the zoning for the next three buildings now that they knew the reactor worked. The meeting had originally been planned for the day before Harry’s birthday. She didn’t want to miss Harry’s first birthday with them so she had managed to reschedule it for a week earlier. With Pepper gone it allowed Harry and Tony to do what ever they pleased. This ended up with Harry flying around in the penthouse living room on his broom, and Tony wearing the boots and gloves of the Iron Man suit enabling him to zoom around the penthouse as well. Each of them had a nerf gun that they had personally upgraded, and were firing at one another in abandon. The room was completely trashed with little foam darts sticking to a wide range of surfaces even the gloves and boots of the Iron Man suit.

“Sir, Agent Coulson from SHIELD is on the line,” Jarvis chimed.

“Tell him I’m busy,” he said as he narrowly avoided the most recent volley of darts from Harry. Tony had to admit that the kid was incredible on that broom of his, and Tony had been working on adapting the suit to be able to perform some of the more difficult maneuvers Harry could perform.

“Sir, I’m afraid he’s insisting,” replied Jarvis.

“Grow a spine Jarvis. I’m in the middle of something here,” Tony drawled while ducking behind the kitchen counter and firing an onslaught of foam darts at Harry who executed a perfect barrel roll to avoid them.

“Yeah, he’s getting his butt kicked by me,” Harry crowed as he shot over him, and bombarded him with a bunch of foam arrows.

“Sir, the telephone. I’m afraid my protocols are being overridden,” said Jarvis as a call came through on his phone revealing Agent Coulson.

“Mr. Stark, we need to talk.”

“You have reached the live model decoy of Tony Stark. Please leave a message,” Tony said hoping the man would get the hint, and leave Harry and he alone to their game.

“This is urgent,” Coulson insisted.

“Then leave it urgently,” replied Tony.

He’d just finished speaking when the doors of the elevator opened and revealed Agent Coulson carrying a briefcase. His eyes widened slightly at the sight of the destroyed penthouse but other than that his normal genial, placid expression didn’t change.

“Security breach,” said Tony, frowning. He thought he had fixed the glitch in Jarvis that allowed SHIELD to keep breaking in after Fury had gotten in a few weeks ago.
“Mr. Stark,” said Coulson.

“Phil!” Harry cried in excitement.

Harry swooped down and dismounted his broom to greet the SHIELD agent.

“How many times do I have to tell you. His name is Agent,” Tony sighed resigned to whatever SHIELD wanted.

He’d had minimal contact with them since the whole magical revelation issue. They’d bugged him a few times when they found out what he had done to the Dursleys but once they discovered what the Dursleys had done to Harry they had fully sanctioned his decisions, and even helped move things along. They had been trying to butt in on his research on magic but so far he hadn’t let them anywhere near his research. He hoped that Coulson wasn’t here to try and force him to work with them. They may have more connections to the wizarding world but Tony really worked best solo. Also when he did discover the correlation, which he knew he would eventually, all of the credit would go to him.

Harry snorted at Tony’s comment then turned eagerly towards Coulson. “What are you doing here?”

“I need Mr. Stark to look this over for me as soon as possible,” said Coulson lifting up the briefcase he was carrying.

“I don’t like being handed things,” Tony said waving the nerf gun in his hands.

“I’ll look at it,” offered Harry reaching for the case.

Coulson actually started to hand it to him but Tony quickly intervened by snatching it from his grasp.

“For future reference official consulting hours are between eight and five, every other Thursday,” he said already pulling open the case.

“This isn’t a consultation,” replied Coulson.

“Then what? Magic? I told you and One-Eyed-Willy that I didn’t want to work for your little wizard division,” said Tony heading towards his worktable.

“It isn’t about the wizarding world or magic,” Coulson said.

“Then what else could it be? The only other thing you have on me is the Avengers Initiative but that was scraped. Besides I thought I didn’t even qualify because apparently I’m volatile, self-obsessed, and don’t play well with others,” he mocked.

“Things have escalated beyond the need for personality reports,” Coulson replied calmly.

“So it is about the Avengers,” he murmured.

He installed the case and Harry came up behind him looking on in curiosity as the various pictures and files for the potential members of the Avengers Initiative came up.

“What is all that?” Harry asked.

“This is,” Tony enlarged them. “This.”
The various videos played and Harry gaped openly at the different profiles.

“It’s Thor!” Harry gasped watching the video of the Asgardian and the Destroyer do battle with wide eyes.

Tony was too focused on the images of the tesseract, and the dark haired man with the hungry look in his eyes pictured beside it, to comment on Harry’s excitement. He quickly scanned the information about the collapsing SHIELD facility, and the Asgardian god who stole the tesseract and put some sort of mind control on some of their agents. It seemed he had made several comments that hinted at wanting to enslave the planet. A couple of months ago he might have found all of this a bit too fetched, and simply dismissed it but having a broom riding wizard as a son had raised the bar on his weird meter slightly.

It did however frighten him a bit, not that he would ever admit such a thing out loud. This guy seemed like he posed a major threat to the world, and SHIELD was asking for Tony’s help to contain him. They want him to help locate the tesseract before this Loki guy got up to anything that couldn’t be stopped. Tony had responsibilities now. He couldn’t just jet off at a moment’s notice leaving Harry by himself especially since Pepper was a couple of hours away by plane. But if he didn’t help he could be risking Harry and Pepper’s lives. He had things worth fighting for now but those same things made it difficult for him to just go gallivanting off, without a care, to confront it. What would happen to Harry if something ever happened to him? But what would happen to Harry if Tony didn’t try to stop this guy? He might succeed in enslaving the Earth and then where would they be? Tony couldn’t let that happen.

“I know this is a lot to ask from you,” Coulson said making Tony jump since he hadn’t heard him move beside him.

“You could say that,” Tony drawled.

“But you know we wouldn’t have asked if we didn’t truly need you on this, Mr. Stark,” Coulson said quietly.

“I know, and that’s why I’ll do it. What am I supposed to do with Harry? I have to make sure that he’s safe,” Tony murmured glancing over to where Harry was watching the footage of the Hulk with close scrutiny muttering something about a mountain troll. Reminding Tony that he really needed to have a chat with Harry about what went on in that school of his.

“I can get some friends from the wizarding world to watch the building until this whole thing blows over,” Phil offered.

“Yeah, you do that. I’ll have Happy stay with him in the tower while your witchy friends keep an eye on him,” said Tony.

“Thank you for doing this, Mr. Stark,” Coulson said sincerely.

Tony just nodded, his gaze turning back towards the screen lost in his own thoughts. He absently listened as Coulson and Harry chatted for a bit before Coulson headed back into the elevator.

“Tony, what does all this mean? Does SHIELD want you to stop this man? He’s Thor’s brother Loki, right? That means he’s a god or else pretty close to being one. What has he done to get SHIELD’s attention?” Harry asked proving just how perceptive he was.

He turned to look at his son feeling extremely guilty for what he was about to do to him.

“He’s stolen something and he’s planning on hurting a lot of people. SHIELD needs me to help
them find him, and take him down if necessary before he does,” replied Tony steadily.

“But he’s really strong. He could hurt you,” said Harry looking worried.

“Hey, there’s no need to worry about me, Mini-Merlin. I’m more than capable of taking care of some whacked out wannabe god. Don’t you have faith in your old man?” Tony demanded indignantly.

Harry gave a small smirk at his joke. “I could help you.”

“No way, no how, not a chance in this universe. You’re staying here with Happy. Stark Tower is one of the safest buildings on the planet, and this is where you’re going to stay while I take care of Rock of Ages. And you’re not going to argue about it, okay? For once in this relationship I’m going to be the adult and you’re going to be the kid,” Tony said firmly.

Harry stared at him for a long time.

“I just don’t want anything to happen to you, Tony,” Harry murmured quietly.

“Hey, I’m far too fond of myself to let anything happen to me all right?”

Harry laughed. “Right.”

The rest of the night passed with Harry sticking close to him and Tony was only too happy to have him do so. Their relationship had come such a long way from where it had started as virtual strangers. Tony had never believed that he would ever be capable of caring for someone other than himself. He never believed that he would be able to put someone else’s needs above his own. But he had and he was. Harry was changing him, making him want to be a better person. He wanted to be a real hero rather than just the figurehead that everyone believed him to be.

The next morning Tony said his goodbyes to Harry, leaving him in Jarvis and Happy’s capable hands, not to mention the wizards Coulson had asked to watch over him. Pepper had been informed of the situation, and she was trying to get back to New York as soon as she possibly could, which would probably be a day or so at the earliest. Tony then suited up and shot off towards the SHIELD base. On his way there however he got word that this Loki guy had just shown up in Stuttgart, Germany where he had crashed some poor guy’s party. He recalibrated his trajectory towards Germany.

***

The day had just continued to get more and more interesting. After the incident in Germany he’d proceeded to get into a pissing contest with the God of Thunder, who wore a cape of all things. He’d met Captain America who up until recently had been spending his time as a block of ice, and now he was working in a lab with none other than Dr. Bruce Banner aka the Hulk. It had been an all around awesome day. This was history in the making, and Tony Stark was right in the middle of things. Just as it should be. He couldn’t wait to tell Harry all about it. After seeing Loki, and what the guy was capable he was even more certain that he was where he was supposed to be. The guy’s crazed plan needed to be stopped in order to protect the lives of those he cared about.

He called Harry to check in with him, and assured him that he was all right. He asked endless questions about Thor, Bruce, Captain America, and Loki, and Tony tried to give him as many
details as he could to sate his curiosity. The incident in Germany had been on the news, and it had piqued Harry’s interest and worry. Tony felt bad about worrying him so much but Loki needed to be stopped, and he had the power to do so. It was only right that he used that power to protect the people he loved. At least they already had the whack job in custody. One less thing for them to do. Now they just needed to find the tesseract, and it was only a matter of time before they did.

“So who was that?” asked Bruce once he’d gotten off the phone.

“My son,” he replied, feeling strange to admit such a thing. It was also a surprise that even though he had just met him, he trusted Bruce with that information. Strangely enough he trusted the man. He didn’t know why exactly, he just did. He just had a certain vibe about him that appealed to Tony.

Bruce looked a little stunned by his casual admittance. “Oh, I… I didn’t know you had a son.”

“Oh, no one does. Well, almost no one. You’re actually the first person I’ve been able to tell,” Tony grinned.

Bruce just chuckled and proved to Tony why he already liked the man so much by dropping the subject. Instead he asked him about Stark Tower, and Tony invited him over. He would love having the incredibly intelligent scientist come work with him. There weren’t many people in the world that could keep up with him, and he would enjoy having someone around who he could bounce ideas off of. He’d be a great teacher for Harry, too. Bruce with his calm, friendly demeanor was much more suited to a teaching position than Tony ever could be. And he may be afraid of what the Hulk was capable of but Tony was convinced that there was more to it than just a mindless green rage monster.

Bruce and Tony continued to work together in the helicarrier lab as the day went on. Bruce even sided with him during his argument with good old, naïve Captain America. Of course Bruce was a little nicer about it than he was. It was nice to have someone on his side for a change especially in the environment that he was now in. The discovery that SHIELD was hiding something from them came as no shock to him even though poor Cap seemed a little discouraged. The guy was a bit too trusting in Tony’s opinion.

The revelation led to a catfight that would have made a group of teenage girls proud. The squabble, as the God of Thunder so eloquently put it, was petty and meant to distract them from what was really going on. Tony was kicking himself for not realizing it sooner. He should of known Reindeer Games wasn’t the type to just come quietly. He should have known he would have some ulterior motive for coming with them so easily. When the explosion rocked the helicarrier Tony couldn’t help but let loose several choice expletives as he made his way to the shipping container that held his suit.

Once his suit was on he and Cap had to work together to repair the helicarrier. Tony wasn’t the guy’s biggest fan but at least he was a good person to have around in a crisis. Unfortunately there was too much damage to the blown out propeller. He knew he had to get inside to clear the rotors and actually start up the propeller manually. The positive aspect of doing this was that it would save the lives of everyone on board. The negative was that this would be a very risky venture, and he might not make it out alive. He couldn’t do that to Harry. At the same time he wasn’t sure if he could live with himself if he didn’t try and all of the people on board died. He didn’t want Harry to think that he was a coward. He wanted Harry to continue to believe that he was a hero and capable of saving the world. If that meant sacrificing himself then he would do it to prove to his son that he could be a good person. Besides Cap was there to slow it down when the time came. He would get out. Despite his initial anger towards the good Captain he knew he could at least trust the man to
do everything within his power to save his life.

“Stark, we’re losing altitude,” the Captain chimed.

“Yup, noticed,” he replied and started pushing, hoping that he would make it out of this in one piece.

He pushed harder and harder, giving it everything he had. The propeller spun faster and faster. The helicarrier was regaining altitude. He felt relief that he had restarted it but now it was time for him to get the hell out of here.

“Cap, lever,” he said.

“I need a minute here,” the Captain replied. Tony could here gunshots in the background, a flash of cold fear slithered down his spine.

“Lever. Now,” he snapped, truly nervous now. He wasn’t sure how much longer he could keep up with the speed of the propeller, and if he failed he wasn’t sure if the suit would be able to protect him from the cutting force of the propeller.

There was no response from the Captain. His fear about not getting out of this alive became all the more real. His fingers slowly lost their hold on the blade in front of him. He slammed into the blade behind him.

“Uh oh,” was all he could say. His mind was consumed with terror that he had failed Harry.

He was sucked into the blades of the propeller. It tossed him around like a rag doll. The suit took the brunt of the damage but it was still touch and go for Tony. The suit was badly destroyed but he was utterly relieved when the propeller slowed for just a moment and he was able to slip out. He mentally thanked Captain America for pulling through. He shot towards his location to return the favor. He was just barely able to fly through the open archway and slam into Captain America’s attacker before collapsing. He was exhausted and sore, and stunned to be alive.

Back in the conference room Fury, Agent Hill, and the Captain looked just as rough as he did. They were also down two members, and Agent Coulson. Tony had felt something twist inside of him when he learned that Loki had killed Coulson. How was he going to tell Harry? Harry had loved the guy. Tony had even liked him. Tony would forever be grateful to him for the way that he had treated Harry, and helped him during a time he had truly needed it. The only positive thing was that they had gotten that bird guy back. Other than that they had gotten their asses handed to them.

“Are you sure there’s nothing they can do? You know magically?” Tony had asked Fury when they first met in the conference room.

“It was too late, Stark. Not even magic can bring back the dead,” Fury responded blankly. Tony’s hopes had plummeted then, and true grief over the loss of someone so great hit him.

He listened absently as Fury spoke about the Avengers, and Coulson’s death. He was too wrapped up in his feelings of failure. Sure he had survived and for that he was grateful. But Loki had gotten away and there was no telling what the crazed lunatic would do next. He’d already killed one person that Tony cared about. He couldn’t let him hurt any more. However, he couldn’t sit there and listen to Fury ramble for a moment longer about being a hero. Not when he had failed to be that hero to his son by being his normal narcissistic self. If he hadn’t been so worried about what Fury was up to, and taunting Captain America because of some misplaced sense of anger towards his father then maybe he would have realized Loki’s plans earlier. He just couldn’t stand Fury
trying to guilt him into fighting, not after all the secrets the man had kept from them. He would do something about Loki on his own, and away from SHIELD.

He got up and stalked off. He needed to talk to Harry.

He found himself walking towards the area the containment cell had been in, the place where Loki had murdered Agent Coulson. Once there he gazed around feeling a stabbing pain in his chest at the reminder of how he had failed the man. He pulled out his phone to call Harry. He needed to hear his son’s voice. He was thankful that Harry picked up on the first ring.

“Tony?” Harry gasped sounding worried. He hated doing that to him. Hated worrying him. He was a kid; he shouldn’t have to worry so much about his father.

“Hey, Mini-Merlin,” he said, deciding he couldn’t tell Harry about what had happened just yet. Tony was still too overwhelmed by the situation himself to even begin to explain it to Harry.

“Is everything all right?” Harry asked, just as perceptive as always.

It brought a reluctant smile to Tony’s lips.

“Oh course! Everything is just fine, kiddo. I’m just checking up on you and Happy. You haven’t driven him crazy yet have you? It would take a lot of effort for me to break in another driver.”

“Tony, he’s been working for you for years. I don’t think there’s anything that I can do to drive him crazy that you haven’t already done,” he replied cheekily.

Tony snorted. “You’re probably right.”

“Of course I am,” Harry responded proudly and launched into a play by play of what he’d been doing since the last time he’d called.

Tony glanced to his side and noticed the Captain standing there.

“Hey, kiddo I’m really sorry but I have to go. I’ll call back again soon, okay?”

“Yeah, okay,” replied Harry sounding a bit disappointed about cutting the call short.

They said their goodbyes and Tony turned to face Steve Rogers, Captain America; the man Tony’s father had been obsessed over finding. Tony himself had nurtured a fascination with the man once, if only because his father seemed to care so much for him. That fascination and admiration had turned to resentment, however, when Howard Stark chose to look for the body of dead man in his free time rather than spending it with his son. He couldn’t exactly hate the man now. He knew better. It wasn’t Steve’s fault that Tony’s father hadn’t been around. Captain America really seemed to be just like he was in all the stories about him. He was just and kind, and Tony had to admit that he felt a little inferior to the man.

“Who was that?” Steve asked.

Tony shrugged. He didn’t really feel like explaining to Captain America of all people about his illegitimate son at the moment.

“Was Coulson married?” Steve tried once he realized Tony wasn’t planning on answering the first question.

“No, there was a cellist. I think,” Tony responded wanting to talk about Coulson, needing to
express his anger over his death.

“I’m sorry, he seemed like a good man,” Steve said obviously attempting to be a calming presence. Tony wasn’t having any of it.

“He was an idiot,” he said explosively.


“For taking on Loki alone,” replied Tony.

“He was doing his job.”

“He was out of his league. He should have waited. He should have…” Tony trailed off, at a loss for words and just so angry about the way things had turned out.

“Sometimes there isn’t a way out, Tony,” Steve stated calmly, trying to placate him.

“Right, I’ve heard that before,” he muttered, his mind flashing to his time in the cave.

“Is this the first time you lost a soldier?”

“We are not soldiers,” he snarled, feeling an inexplicable rage at the thought. It made him angry knowing that Coulson had given his life trying to protect theirs. He shouldn’t have had to and would have never been in that position had he never started working for SHIELD.

Tony didn’t work for Fury and he certainly wasn’t one of his little spies so the thought of being confused as one added to his anger. “I’m not marching to Fury’s fife,” he snapped out once he’d managed to calm himself down a bit.

“Neither am I. He’s got the same blood on his hands as Loki does,” Steve replied, surprising Tony that the all American super solider would be willing to go against his orders. There was more to Steve than he had originally thought. “But right now we need to put that behind us and get this done. Now Loki needs a power source. We can put together a list.”

“He made it personal,” said Tony in surprise pulling his gaze from the spot where Phil Coulson had taken his last breath.

“That’s not the point,” Steve said dismissively.

“That is the point. That’s Loki’s point. He hit us all right where we live. Why?” Tony demanded.

“To tear us all apart.”

“To divide and conquer is great. But he knew he would have to take us out to win. That’s what he wants. He wants to beat us; he wants to be seen doing it. He wants an audience,” Tony rambled trying to gather his thoughts together and figure out what this was all leading up to. He was pretty sure there was a connection in there somewhere.

“Right, I caught his act in Stuttgart,” Steve said. Tony hadn’t thought the man capable of snark. But it was right thing to say to give him just the push he needed to finally realize what Loki wanted.

“That’s just previews. This is… this is opening night, and Loki’s a full tilt diva. He wants flowers. He wants parades. He wants monuments built to the sky with his name plastered on… Son of bitch,” Tony trailed off. If he had been afraid while stuck between the blades of the helicarrier
propeller that was nothing to how he felt now. He was utterly and completely terrified, more so than he had ever been in his entire life.

Loki was heading towards his tower. Whether he meant to or not he was heading straight towards his son. Tony was going to annihilate him if so much as touched a hair on his kid’s head. He started running from the room.

“Stark!? Wait, where are you going?” Steve called.

“He’s heading towards Stark Tower in New York City. I’ll meet you there,” was all he shouted back.

He needed to get there as soon as possible. He trusted the good Captain to gather the necessary forces and meet him there. He just needed to get to his son as fast as possible.

When he arrived at the tower he ignored the lights coming from the roof of the building even though he was pretty sure the opening of the portal was what was causing the light. But Tony honestly couldn’t focus on that right now. It was just more proof that Loki was indeed in the tower somewhere, and that his son was in danger. He hadn’t been able to get in contact with anyone in the tower during his flight over and his whole body was tense by how nervous he was.

“Jarvis, scan for Harry and Happy,” he commanded as he drew closer to the landing pad. He had no choice but to remove his armor since it was so badly damaged that there was no chance of it holding up against the self proclaimed god. His only hope of taking down Loki was to get ahold of his new tracking cuffs, and to have Jarvis quickly finish his new suit.

“I’m afraid something is disrupting my system, sir. I can’t get a read on anything in the building,” replied Jarvis apologetically.

Tony landed and as he walked into his penthouse he kept an eye out for Harry. He noticed a small figure standing in the middle of the room. A measure of hope welled inside him that the figure might be Harry. He scanned the area for Loki and didn’t see him anywhere. Tony felt a rush of relief. Maybe Harry had been able to hide from the leather-wearing ass. Or the wizards Coulson had assigned to watch out for him were keeping Loki busy. When he fully entered the penthouse it was to find Harry standing there safe and sound.

Tony couldn’t help but grin and rush to his side. He enveloped his son in a tight embrace.

“Thank god. I was so worried,” Tony said just breathing in Harry’s familiar scent.

“I’m fine. Why were you worried?” Harry asked in confusion but allowing Tony hug him.

“Loki escaped, and I thought that that crazed horn wearing god would get to you before I could,” Tony said still holding tight to his son, not quite ready to let him go.

“You shouldn’t say things like that about Loki, Tony. He’s powerful and we should all respect him,” said Harry.

For a moment Tony thought Harry was being sarcastic. After all that was the only context in which he could imagine Harry saying those words. However, Tony quickly realized that Harry was being one hundred percent genuine. He pulled back from the embrace so that he could get a better look at his son.

“What do you mean by that kiddo…” he trailed off when he got a good look at Harry’s eyes.
His son’s beautiful emerald green eyes were an unnatural, opaque blue.

“Harry?” he gasped.

“I can’t let you stop him, Tony. He’s here to free the world. Everything will be better under his rule. You’ll see,” Harry said, smiling placidly at him before Tony was slammed backwards by a powerful invisible force. His son had attacked him!

He flew across the room and landed harshly on the floor. Harry slowly approached him, looking ready for a second attack. He was stopped however when the tall, black, gold, and green clad form of Loki stepped up behind him. Loki placed his hand on Harry’s shoulder a fond, gloating expression on his face as he gazed down at Tony.

“What the hell have you done to my son?” Tony snarled struggling to his feet.

He needed to get to the metal cuffs on the kitchen counter so he could activate his suit and get his son away from this mad man. He never thought he could ever hate someone as much as the black haired man in front of him. He had killed a man Tony considered his friend, and now he had put his son under some form of otherworldly mind control. Tony was going to rip him to shreds.

“Your son. He was quite a pleasant surprise, you know. Such a wonderful child, intelligent and resourceful, and with such a thirst to prove himself. He reminds me of myself. Just think how shocking it was to discover that a man such as you, a man of science, would have a child of magic. A child born with the ability to wield magic, much like myself. You wouldn’t be able to understand what it is like to manipulate such power,” Loki mused.

“What the hell did you do to my son?” Tony snarled again in response.

“I’m simply helping him realize his full potential. He’s an extremely intriguing young man, and with my help he could be truly great. I think I would make an excellent father figure for a boy such as he. After all how could a man like you ever begin to understand him?” Loki asked his lips curling into a knowing smirk as he gave Harry’s shoulder a possessive squeeze.

Tony wanted nothing more than to blast the expression off the bastard’s smug face. Somehow he had guessed Tony’s own insecurities about being able to raise Harry especially when it came to magical things, and he was exploiting that vulnerability. He tried to shake it off. Harry and he got along fine, and he was definitely more suited to raising Harry than this whack job could ever be.

“Maybe you’re right. But that doesn’t change anything. He’s still my son and if you weren’t using you’re little glow stick of destiny on him he would be trying to kick your ass right about now. After all why would he want a father like you? What kind of coward hides behind a kid? I thought you were a god. If you were a real god you wouldn’t need some alien army to come back you up to take what you wanted. If you were a real god you wouldn’t want to take over this puny planet to begin with. But that’s right, you were kicked out of Asgard. You ruined you’re chances there. Just like you’ll lose here too,” Tony taunted, turning Loki’s own tactics against him. And as he spoke he had backed up against the counter, casually leaning one arm against it to appear as if he just needed the extra support. He grabbed the cuffs and slipped one on. Before slipping his hand down to put on the other one.

“You know nothing you pathetic mortal! Nothing of the knowledge and skills I possess. The power I now wield,” Loki hissed looking enraged.

“Loki, he’s trying to distract you. He’s up to something,” Harry suddenly piped up.
“Ah yes, I see. Thank you, Harry. You truly are a wonderful help. It won’t work whatever you are attempting,” said Loki giving him a bright grin.

“You’re going to lose,” Tony hissed.

“How can I possibly lose? Even now my army comes,” said Loki his manic gaze turning towards the large windows. With dread Tony could see that he was right. The Chitauri had arrived.

Tony gathered his determination.

“We’ll stop you.”

“Who? I don’t see anyone standing with you. So please, tell me. Who is there to stop me?” Loki mocked.

“The Avengers, that’s what we call ourselves. Earth’s mightiest heroes type of thing.”

“Yes, I’ve met them,” said Loki not looking at all impressed.

“It takes us a while to get any traction. I’ll give you that one. But let’s do a head count. Your brother the demi-god. A super soldier, a living legend, who kind of lives up to the legend. A man with breath taking anger management issues. A couple of master assassins. And you’ve managed to piss off all of them. Because when they come and they will, they’ll come for you.”

“I have an army,” said Loki smugly, but he looked angry.

“Yeah, you do and maybe it will be too much for us. But if we can’t protect the Earth you can be damn well sure we’ll avenge it,” Tony snarled.

“Well, how can they fight me when they’ll be so busy fighting your son? Harry, it’s time for your father to leave,” Loki called.

Tony turned to look into his son’s filmy blue eyes. Harry smiled and raised his hand. He twitched his fingers and Tony was once more thrown across the room. Harry lifted him into the air and spun him a bit before dropping him again, causing him to land painfully on his back. It knocked the breath from his lungs and Tony laid there panting, unable to move. Harry however looked like he was enjoying this. The expression made him shudder.

“See all of the things I can teach you?” Loki whispered into Harry’s ear. Harry just nodded, smirking.

“Anytime now, Jarvis,” Tony coughed out desperately.

He didn't really appreciate being beaten up by his own son. The worst part of it all was the expression on Harry's face and how closely in mirrored Loki's own.

“Finish him,” Loki hissed.

Harry hesitated and for a moment his blue eyes flashed their normal emerald green. Tony stared with bated breath, hope rising within him at the sight.

“I said finish him,” Loki snarled impatiently.

Harry lifted his hand.

“Harry kiddo, I know you’re in there. Fight it. I know you’re stronger than he is. You can break his
hold on you!” Tony shouted.

Harry shook his head, his eyes shut tightly as he fought.

“Enough!” Loki screamed.

He lashed out at Tony grabbing him by the throat and launching him out the window.

“Deploy! Jarvis deploy!” he cried.

Mere moments before he became a human pancake his suit closed around him. He immediately shot back up into the penthouse living room. He was just in time to see Harry scream. A shockwave exploded out from him sending Loki soaring out through the window onto the balcony. Harry proceeded to drop to his knees gripping his head in agony. Loki was back up in a moment looking ready to engage in a fight with Tony when Thor slammed down beside him. Tony turned his back on the dueling brothers to focus on his son.

“Harry?” he cried desperately pulling at Harry’s hands to better see into his eyes. “Please talk to me. Tell me what’s going on. Tell me you’re okay.”

His only response was to groan, and continue to cradle his head. Tony took him into his arms and rocked him, trying to soothe him.

“Come on kiddo, come back to me. I know you can do it, Harry,” he breathed rubbing his back and praying that he could break the hold Loki had on him.

“Tony,” his voice sounded muffled and confused.

“Harry! Let me see those eyes, kiddo,” Tony demanded gently moving Harry’s hands away from his face.

“What happened?” Harry asked looking up at him with clear emerald eyes.

Tony just chuckled in utter relief with the knowledge that Harry was no longer under the control of that mad man.

“Loki!” Harry gasped. “He… He attacked Happy. Knocked him out. But I think he was okay. There were some other men, wizards I think. He stopped them too. I’m not sure if they’re all right. Then he used that staff he was carrying on me. It made me feel like I was floating. Everything was really fuzzy and I couldn’t think for myself. I just wanted to do everything I could to help Loki. It… He made me… I… I hurt you.”

“No, that wasn’t you. You could never hurt anyone like that,” Tony told him firmly.

“But I—”

“No, Harry. Loki made you do those things. He did the same thing to a couple of world-class spies and a really intelligent scientist. You’re an eleven, almost twelve-year-old kid. It’s amazing that you were able to fight off the mind control whammy he had over you,” Tony praised, truly amazed that Harry was capable of such a thing.

Harry didn’t look convinced and Tony knew it would take time for him to get over this. He’d make sure that Loki paid for making Harry doubt himself. “I’m glad you’re okay.”

“No as glad as I am that you’re okay,” replied Tony, yanking him in for another hug and a quick
kiss to his forehead.

Captain America contacting him over their arrival into the city had him reluctantly pulling away from Harry. It woke him up to the chaos that was going on in the city below them. As he looked out over the city he was shocked by what he saw. There were aliens zooming around everywhere on small hovercrafts, and what looked like a giant flying whale.

“Well that’s not something you see every day,” Tony murmured in shock.

“We have to stop them,” Harry cried eyes wide as he looked over the destruction.

“I have to stop it,” Tony corrected him. “We just need to find a safe place for you.”

Unfortunately Tony couldn't really think of anything within a close distance. He had no idea how the wizarding world was dealing with this situation, and if they would have any safe place for Harry to go. At the moment the only place safe place he could think of was for Harry to go lock himself in his workshop. It wasn't exactly a completely sound option but Tony couldn't think of anything else on such short notice. He didn't want to leave Harry behind at the tower again. But hopefully Loki was distracted enough with Thor, and his army now to forget about his son.

“Harry go down to my workshop. Seal yourself in and don’t come out until all of this is over.”

Harry opened his mouth to protest. “No, I said go. You’re not equipped to handle something like this. Now, just do what I said.”

His expression was still mutinous.

“Please just go.” Tony pleaded.

“Only if you promise to come back,” replied Harry firmly.

Tony stared into his green eyes, so brave and determined for his age.

“I’ll do my best,” replied Tony seriously, unwilling to lie to Harry.

Harry just nodded.

“Now, I really have to go kick some alien butt. The city wouldn’t stand a chance without Iron Man around to save the day,” said Tony with a grin.

Harry smiled back as Tony shot off into the city. He took out as many of the Chitauri as he could. Banner finally turned up and that’s when things really started getting interesting. The important thing was, was that they were really working together as a team and taking out a lot of the aliens before they could harm a lot of people. Unfortunately it was only a matter of time before they failed. They were making a difference but none of that mattered if they couldn’t close the portal. The Chitauri would just keep coming until they were completely overrun.

Tony was relieved when Natasha discovered a way to close the portal. Unfortunately that feeling was abruptly cut short when he got news of a nuke heading their way. Tony knew what he had to do. If he didn’t bring that nuke through the portal it would completely decimate the city, Harry and everyone else included. There was only one option.

Tony grabbed on to the nuke. He changed the course and steered it straight up towards the portal.

“Shall I call Master Harry, sir?” Jarvis questioned.
“Yeah,” Tony murmured as he and nuke entered the portal.

The phone rang a couple of times before Harry answered.

“Tony!” Harry cried.

“I’ve only got a couple of seconds here, kiddo. But I just want to say… I want to tell you that I love you, Harry. I couldn’t have asked for a better son. I love you and I’m sorry for doing this to you,” Tony said.


Tony’s heart broke at Harry finally calling him dad.

“Bye, kiddo,” Tony said ending the call.

He was close enough to the Chitauri ship now to let the nuke go. He watched absently as it hit its target, and destroyed the warship. The damage to his suit was getting to him and he was losing power. But it didn’t matter anymore. He had saved his son, Pepper, and so many others. He was just collateral damage. Soon his suit stopped functioning all together, and he started losing consciousness. His last thoughts as he succumbed to darkness were of Harry and Pepper. He really wished he could have been there for Harry growing up, and get to see firsthand the amazing person Tony knew he would become.

He hadn’t been expecting to wake up. But he wasn’t complaining when he was jolted awake by a loud, familiar roar. If only everything didn’t hurt so much. Every part of him seemed to ache. The pain didn’t stop him from smiling as he gazed up into the concerned and relieved faces of Steve, the Hulk, and Thor.

He was about to ask if one of them had kissed him when a shouted “Dad!” had him jerking up.

He gasped when Harry shot towards him, leaping over debris and clutching his broom in one hand as he ran. He launched himself at Tony sending them both toppling over with Harry sprawled on top of him. Harry clutched at him, and Tony could feel him shudder as he tried to suppress his sobs.

“It’s all right, Harry. Everything is going to be all right now,” Tony said feeling tears of his own sting his eyes. He was relieved to be alive. Apparently the universe wasn’t quite ready to be rid of him.

Harry just gripped him tighter.

“You know we’re going to have to have a talk about you listening to me. I clearly remember telling you to stay put.”

Harry just snorted.

“Yeah, you get the not following rules thing from me. And, well a kid flying on a broom is probably like the fortieth on the list of weird things that happened today. So we’ll just think about the consequences for that later,” Tony said with a grin. “But anyway who’s up for shawarma? I saw a shawarma place a couple blocks back and I’ve always wanted to try it.”

“First, there is something that we must do,” said Thor looking ominous.

“Right, your brother,” said Tony darkly.
“The Hulk tossed him around like a rag doll. I saw him,” Harry said grinning over at the giant green creature.

The Hulk grinned back. “Puny god.”

“Whoa, you can talk big guy? Who knew?” Tony exclaimed.

“We can discuss this later. Right now we should go grab Loki before he decides to try and slip away from us,” Steve said, ever the practical one.

So that’s how they all ended back up at his tower, dramatically looming over the broken form of Loki where he lay in the crater caused by the Hulk’s smashing of him. Tony punched Loki across the face just to be safe and as punishment for his treatment of Harry.

“No one messes with my kid,” Tony growled.

“So now what?” Harry asked once Thor had securely tied up Loki, and the rest of the Avengers were milling about the destroyed penthouse.

“Shawarma,” Tony replied with a grin.
Harry and Happy were playing poker with candy. Happy was losing. Harry laughed as Happy lost yet another hand and proceeded to mutter under his breath about Stark genetics. Harry may not have been a good chess player but he was surprisingly good at poker once Happy had taught him all the rules. While they played Happy told him about some of Tony’s more amusing adventures.

“Why do all these stories end with Tony naked in strange places, and you having to pick him up?” Harry couldn’t help but ask.

“They don’t all end that way.” Happy protested.

“The last three have.” Harry argued.

“Well, it’s not my fault that your dad can’t seem to keep his clothes on. I don’t know if you’ve noticed but your dad is a bit impulsive. Sharp as a tack but he can be dumb as a rock when he comes up with a new idea. His self preservation instincts are severely lacking.”

Harry could only agree considering some of the things he’d heard and seen Tony do.

Despite the stories and the poker Harry’s mind kept wandering back to what Tony was doing, and if was all right. Harry wasn’t stupid he knew what Tony did was dangerous. Sure, initially he had just been amazed by what Tony did as Iron Man, and proud to discover that his dad was a real life hero. It was only recently that he really started to grasp the dangerous side of it. It was a bit of an oversight on his part considering that he was well acquainted with the fact that things weren’t always sunshine and daisies. He’d been in enough dangerous situations on his own to know better. Tony always made everything seem so easy, and that it wasn’t such a big deal that people had tried to kill him. Harry must have gotten that unfortunate trait from him. It just seemed that the Starks were danger magnets, and always ended up with people who wanted to kill them.

These were the thoughts that kept lingering on his mind while Tony was away dealing with Loki, the supposed God of Mischief. When Jarvis informed him that Tony was calling them Harry practically lunged for the phone, eager to hear how things were going. It was difficult for Harry to sit back when life-threatening things were happening around him. He was used to being right in the middle of things, and doing all that he could to help. Being stuck at home was new for him. However, he had enough common sense to recognize that there wasn’t much that he could do in a situation like this one. It was really up to people like Tony who had experience in these types of situations or happened to have a highly advanced, powerful suit of armor to protect them.

“Tony?” Harry gasped as he answered the phone.

“Hey, Mini-Merlin,” he replied. There was something off in his voice; Harry couldn’t help but think that something had happened.

“Is everything all right?” Harry asked.

“Of course! Everything is just fine, kiddo. I’m just checking up on you and Happy. You haven’t driven him crazy yet have you? It would take a lot of effort for me to break in another driver.” Tony babbled.

“Tony, he’s been working for you for years. I don’t think there’s anything that I can do to drive him crazy that you haven’t already done,” he replied cheekily.
Tony snorted. “You’re probably right.”

“Of course I am,” Harry responded, happy to hear that Tony’s voice had returned to normal.

Harry launched into a description of his day. He told him how he was beating Happy at poker, and about all of the stories Happy had told him. He expected Tony to protest the stories or make some sort of remark about them to defend himself but he seemed distracted.

“Hey, kiddo I’m really sorry but I have to go. I’ll call back again soon, okay?” Tony said, cutting Harry off mid sentence.

“Yeah, okay,” Harry murmured before saying goodbye. His shoulders drooped and he tried to avoid the concerned look on Happy’s face as he put the phone down.

“How’s everything all right?” Happy asked, watching him closely.

“Yeah, he was just checking in.”

“Well, how would you like to hear about the time I found your dad passed out in a pie shop? He had bought the entire store just so he could eat all of their pies. He had to have eaten ten of them by the time I found him.”

Harry couldn’t help but let out a snort. “He’s a bit daft, isn’t he?”

Happy only grinned in response and launched into his story.

He’d only gotten about half way through the story when an alarm rang throughout the building.

“Jarvis?” Happy called standing up quickly, his hand slipping under his jacket for his gun.

“There’s been a security breach in the entrance hall. I would suggest quickly proceeding to Master Stark’s workshop while I call Master Stark for back up. The agents Agent Coulson assigned to watch the building are attempting to fight back. It appears to be—”

Jarvis was abruptly cut off and all of the lights went out in the penthouse. It was still the middle of the day so the large windows provided an ample amount of light. It was still eerie being in the modern penthouse and not have any of the appliances working.

“All right, Harry we need to get you somewhere safe, now.” Happy grabbed hold of his arm and started pulling him towards the bedrooms.

Harry couldn’t help but wonder what was happening. His mind was whirring with possibilities. Tony had sounded off during their conversation but he would have told them if they were in danger from Loki. So was someone else attacking the tower? Someone Tony didn’t know about? Or someone working for Loki?

The sound of the lift had both Happy and Harry stopping quickly. With the entire building’s power shut down the lift shouldn’t have been operating at all. Harry watched eyes widening in shock as the doors opened to reveal a tall man wearing black, green, and gold leather armor, and holding a long gold staff with a glowing blue stone on the end. He had long black hair that was slicked back behind his head, and his eyes were an eerie pale blue. Harry recognized the man instantly. He had seen his picture with all the other information that Phil had brought with him. This was Loki, the man Tony had left to stop. This was the man who had godlike powers, and wanted to use them to take over the world.
With his free hand Loki was holding a blonde man wearing navy blue wizard’s robes off the ground by his throat. Harry gasped as the man suddenly slumped like a puppet with his strings cut. Loki dropped him to the lift floor where another man in wizard’s robes lay unconscious or perhaps worse. Loki stepped from the lift into the penthouse his sharp blue gaze locking on Happy and Harry. Harry could do nothing but stare at the god as he stared at him. He could sense the magic surrounding him. It was almost like being in Hogwarts or Diagon Alley. He could just sense the man’s sheer magical power in the air around him.

“Go up to the roof. You know what to do from there,” Loki snapped.

For a moment Harry thought he was talking to them. A quick glance into the lift showed a familiar face. It was Dr. Selvig, the kind doctor that Harry had met while staying at SHIELD. He had an odd, vacant smile on his face, and he was carrying some sort of metal contraption along with a metal briefcase that he was hugging protectively to his chest. Harry couldn’t imagine what Dr. Selvig was doing with someone like Loki. There seemed to be something off with the doctor’s eyes but he wasn’t able to get a good look before the lift doors closed once more.

“What do we have here? Does the metal man have a heart after all? How foolish of him to leave it so unguarded,” Loki purred once they were alone. He glided gracefully forward. A predator stalking his prey.

“Not one step closer, mister,” said Happy keeping his gun trained on Loki while keeping his body in front of Harry as a shield.

“Or what? You’ll shoot me? Your pathetic mortal weapons wouldn’t even scratch my skin,” Loki taunted.

“I’m warning you,” Happy growled.

Loki only chuckled as he continued to slink towards them.

“Harry run!” Happy shouted.

Harry’s legs obeyed before his mind could really think it through. He sprinted towards the bedrooms. If he wanted to be of any help he needed to get his wand first. Behind him he heard Happy firing at Loki. He peeked back to see that Loki had stopped and though the shots seemed to slow him down a bit, they certainly didn’t stop him.

“Happy!” Harry shouted once he had the door open.

Happy turned to run back to him. Loki pointed his staff towards Happy. It glowed an ominous blue but just before he fired Hedwig swooped down and knocked his wrist aside. A powerful blue force exploded from the staff and hit the wall leaving behind a scorch mark. Hedwig’s distraction gave Happy enough time to reach Harry. Hedwig also shot towards the open doorway and made it through just in the nick of time. Once the door shut the reinforced steel door shook from another blast from Loki’s staff.

“That won’t keep him out for long. Tony keeps some weapons in his bedroom. I’ll grab them, and hold him off at the door. You need to barricade yourself in your room,” Happy ordered.

Harry nodded. He wasn’t planning on barricading himself in but he was going to go to his room to grab his wand and invisibility cloak. He raced into his bedroom with Hedwig at his side. The trunk with all of his magical items was at the foot of his bed. He dropped to his knees beside it and swiftly started shuffling through it. The sound of the door to the hallway smashing open had him
jumping and glancing quickly towards his bedroom door. There was the sound of more gunfire, and then a thud. Hedwig puffed up her feathers, her wings half unfurled looking like she was preparing for battle. Harry quickly went back to searching for his wand and cloak, hoping that Happy was all right.

His fingers had just closed around the handle of his wand when the door to his bedroom slowly opened. He jumped to his feet and whirled to face the God of Mischief himself. The god’s eyes were calculating as they roved over him. An amused smirk settled over his sharp, lean features.

“Well, this is certainly an unexpected surprise,” he drawled stepping into the room.

Hedwig screeched and launched herself at him. Loki merely lifted his free hand and Hedwig dropped to the ground, unmoving.

“Hedwig!” Harry cried running towards her. He didn’t even care about Loki in that moment. Hedwig was the one constant in his life. The first true friend he’d ever had. She couldn’t be dead.

“She is alive. I’ve merely put her to sleep. She is quite the loyal creature. You’re very lucky.” Loki informed him.

“You’re very lucky. If you killed her things wouldn’t have turned out well for you,” Harry growled gently stroking her feathers while also checking to see if she was still breathing.

Loki chuckled. “Brave words for a mortal child. Do you know who I am?”

“You’re Loki. But I don’t care who you are. It doesn’t matter because I’ll do my best to stop you,” said Harry his recklessly brave Gryffindor side coming out to play.

“Ah, there’s no doubt in my mind now. You are the son of the Man of Iron. What is your name young mortal?”

“It’s Harry,” he spat out. “What are you doing here? What do you want?”

Harry was trying to formulate some sort of plan. He had his wand but he had only had one year of a magical education under his belt. Yes, he was smart and had spent a lot of time in the library. He had even learned some advanced spells that they didn’t teach until fourth or fifth year. But he wasn’t completely proficient at them, and he definitely wasn’t anywhere near the level of being able to compete with a millennia old god. He just had to remain calm and confident, and believe that he was going to be able to get through this. Or at the very least last long enough until Tony arrived. Because there was one thing Harry had come to trust about Tony and that was that the man would always be able to find him.

“I’ve chosen your father’s tower as the location to herald in my new reign,” Loki declared and as if on command the lights in the tower suddenly came back on.

“Jarvis?” Harry called.

“Your father’s mechanical servant has been shut down, permanently, for the time being. We are alone.”

“Why are you doing this? Why do you want to rule Earth? Aren’t you a god? Shouldn’t you want to rule Asgard or something?” Harry asked.

Loki’s features darkened. Asgard was obviously a sore subject for the god.
“I have a much more glorious purpose now.” His gaze became distant for a moment.

“Taking over the world isn’t exactly what I would call glorious,” muttered Harry.

Loki’s eyes snapped back into focus and trained themselves on Harry.

“You are not what I expected a child of Stark to be,” Loki observed.

“What do you mean?” Harry snapped self-consciously.

Loki’s eyes lit up with amusement.

“Oh don’t worry, I mean it in the most positive of ways. You are not like other mortals. I can feel
the magic in you. You are one of those rare mortals who have a strong connection to the magic of
the universe. I wouldn’t have expected a man like Stark to have a child with such an ability. He
seems so resistant to the idea of magic. Of course the two are practically the same. But magic is
just a little bit more. It has a spark of life in it. A will of its own, and it seems to favor you for some
reason,” Loki explained drawing closer to Harry.

“You know a lot about magic?” Harry couldn’t help but ask. After all how often would he ever get
the chance to talk to a Norse god about magic? And Loki seemed to like to talk about himself so it
would waste time if Harry kept him talking.

A full grin split Loki’s features this time. “You could say that. And I could teach it all to you if
you wanted.”

“Why would you do that? You don’t even know anything about me. Besides isn’t Tony sort of
your enemy?” Harry questioned.

“Ah, yes but that is what would make it so brilliant. It would truly crush his spirit to see his own
child turn against him,” Loki mocked.

“I would never do that,” Harry snarled, wanting nothing more than to hex Loki.

“I can already see the potential bursting inside you. You could be great you know. And I could
help lead you down that path to greatness,” Loki drawled unknowingly restating what the Sorting
Hat had told him last year. And just like before Harry wanted no part in the type of future Loki was
explaining.

“Not if that greatness comes at the price of hurting other people,” Harry told him sternly.

Loki sighed. “So young and yet already so full of morals. Are you sure you aren’t related to that
ridiculously patriotic man instead of Stark?”

Harry just glared at him.

Loki shook his head, looking disappointed. “Don’t you realize that you are better than they are?
They are all fools who fear and hate that which they do not understand. All those who are different
face this prejudice. Yet they are the weak ones, and it is not my fault if they cannot protect
themselves. They have no reason to mock you. To hate you for being better then they are. They
chose their fate and for that they must suffer.”

For some reason Harry got the impression about half way through his diatribe that Loki wasn’t
exactly talking about him anymore. He had that distant look in his eyes again, and they seemed to
be bluer than they had been before. Either way his rant made him seem like a crazy person.
“I’m not better than anyone,” Harry mumbled his mind going back to all the times he had been told he was less.

“But you are. You have a gift that the general masses could only dream of having. Others crave this power and this is why they will always be envious of you. The wretched mortal filth cannot be trusted to have their own thoughts. They will always seek to destroy that which they cannot have. That is why they must be subjugated. They must be freed from freedom. You will see they will be happier this way. To have their thoughts, thought for them.”

The insane light in Loki’s eyes made Harry take a step back. Something was wrong with him. The more time Harry spent listening and watching him the surer he became of this fact. Unless it was normal for an Asgardian’s eyes to have such an unnatural spark to them. The brighter the blue glow in his eyes became the crazier his words were. As a whole he didn’t seem to the most stable of people but it seemed the angrier he got the more erratic he became. Staring into his eyes made Harry feel unreasonably chilly, like he was gazing into a dark endless void. There was something in that void that was probing at the depths of his thoughts. It was cool and slimy. It felt like it was slithering through his mind, searching for his weakest points.

“I think you’re wrong. Not all people are like that,” Harry said defiantly.

“Really? What about your relatives? Was it right for your Aunt and Uncle to lock you in a cupboard and to treat you like a slave? Were they good people who loved you despite your differences from themselves? No. No matter what you did you couldn’t earn their affection because you were not their son by birth. You were foreign, and controlled powers that their pitiful minds couldn’t even begin to understand.”

Harry’s mind faltered in its escape plan. He didn’t want Loki to know about that, and he absolutely hated that he was bringing it up.

“How do know about that?” Harry hissed.

“This staff that I was given has gifted me with a wealth of power and knowledge. I can do so much more now. See things from far off worlds that others can barely imagine. I know things that others could never dream of. It is only right that I rule these pitiful creatures. Dr. Selvig is even now preparing the portal and soon my army will come. I will reign supreme, and all will kneel before the might of Loki,” Loki breathed in exhilaration.

Harry shivered as he felt the cold power emanating from the insane god wash over him. It was only then that Harry realized just how close Loki had gotten to him. He was barely a few metres away. Harry slowly inched away. He wanted to keep some distance between the two of them. Harry wouldn’t put it pass Loki to attack him at any moment. He was too unpredictable at the moment.

Loki wasn’t deterred. He just stepped closer every time Harry stepped back. “I have seen into your mind. I have seen how alike our childhoods were. My father always loved my brother over me. It was not until recently that I learned why. Odin plucked me from Jotunheim during the last war between the Frost Giants and the Aesir. I was not his true son and therefore he could never love me the same as Thor. I was just another stolen relic to be kept safe should he ever have need to use me,” Loki whispered.

For a moment Harry could almost swear that his eyes looked more green than blue. There were tears in Loki’s eyes that sent a pang through Harry’s heart. For a moment Harry could sympathize with the god. When he had been young he had just wanted the Dursleys to love him but at one he realized they would just never love him the way they loved Dudley.
“We have so much in common you and I. There are so many things that I could teach you. Together we could do anything. If you join me, you could have your revenge on your relatives. You could have all of the knowledge, and power you ever wanted,” Loki claimed, his eyes flaring blue again. The god was clearly losing his grip on reality if he thought those things could sway Harry.

Loki was very close to him now. If he was going to do something he really had to do it soon. There was only spell he was confident in using that just might work to help him get away. At the very least it would hopefully distract Loki long enough for him to get past him and out of his room.

“I’m really going to have to pass,” Harry insisted. Then before he could think better of it he lifted his wand. “Expelliarmus!”

A red jet of light shot from his wand and slammed into Loki. It sent Loki reeling back from the close range of the spell, and the staff flew from his hand. While he was momentarily incapacitated Harry shot forward towards the door Loki had previously been blocking. He snatched up the staff as he ran by. The staff seemed to be the source of Loki’s power, and Harry wanted to weaken him as much as possible. However, it was the wrong thing to do.

The moment his hand closed around the staff it was like an explosion went off inside him. It was like every nerve ending was suddenly on fire, but filled with ice at the same time. Pain like nothing he had ever felt before was coursing through his veins. The pain was from the overwhelming influx of energy that was pouring into him. The worst part was the voices. They were whispering things in his mind, terrible things. Wonderful things. They told him how he would never be good enough, how they could help him if only he listened to them. He could make the Dursleys suffer. He could destroy Voldemort for killing his mother. He deserved the power. He deserved to rule. But first he would need their help. Only they could make him great.

It was that utterance that snapped Harry from the ensnarement they were working over his mind. He dropped the staff. It was only then that he became aware of his surroundings once more. He had fallen to his side from the sheer force of the agony touching the staff had caused him. Loki was standing over him. His murky blue-green gaze locked on him. He hesitated slightly before reaching down and snatching up the staff once more.

“Now, you have seen the power that you can wield if you join us,” Loki proclaimed.

“No, I won’t do it,” Harry whispered weakly, his body was still shuddering with the aftereffects of touching the staff.

“I think this might change your perspective on things.” Loki swung the staff forwards.

The tip of the staff pressed against his chest, right over his heart. The poisonous power of the staff surged through Harry once more. It was a more concentrated power. It had a purpose and it was more difficult for him to fight off. It seemed to seek out his heart and mind. It locked away all of his own will leaving behind only his memories and a strong desire to see Loki succeed. It made him feel detached and very far away from himself. The energy from the staff and the way it interacted with his magical core was a different story. It seemed to open up his magic, giving him access to it in a way that he had never believed possible.

“Now do you see, Harry? Do you see all that we can accomplish together? But first we must crush your father, and the other fools who seek to stop us. It will be poetic to see the father being crushed by the son,” Loki hissed.

“I understand now,” Harry replied and in that moment he did. He wanted nothing more than to see
Loki accomplished his goals. The energy had opened him to a whole new world of possibilities and he couldn’t let anyone try and take that away from him.

“Then go wait in the penthouse. Your father will be arriving soon and I want you to give him a proper welcome.”

Harry nodded knowing exactly what he meant, and Loki grinned pleased by the turn of events. Harry walked out towards the penthouse to wait for Tony. He stepped carelessly over the unconscious body of Happy. He appeared to still be breathing but at this point Harry hardly cared either way. A part of him screamed that this was wrong but it was locked tightly behind a brilliant blue cage in his mind. The rest of him had a task set before him and he needed to complete it no matter what.

When Iron Man finally did arrive it was all too easy for Harry to catch him unawares. He allowed the man to hug him before he blasted him off his feet. It was so simple all he had to do was think it and it happened. It was all so much easier than having to channel his own energy through another magical object.

The part of Harry that was still him vaguely registered that he shouldn’t be able to do magic like that. But the staff that Loki had used to pilot Harry’s body had given him a wealth of information on how to better manipulate his own magic. He had a better sense of his own magic, and how it moved through him and connected with the world around him. He could see the magic in the world around him. It was everywhere and connected to so many different things. It was wonderful.

Harry listened absently as Loki and Tony argued. It didn’t really concern him. He was only waiting for the moment when he could be of use again. He did break into their conversation once when Tony was trying to sneak something off the counter. Loki often became too wrapped up in his own speeches to pay close attention to what his enemies were up to. Harry was more than happy to help him out in that area.

Loki saying his name brought his attention back into sharp focus. “Harry, it’s time for your father to leave.”

Harry couldn’t help but smile as he raised his hand more than willing to use his power again. He only had to twitch his fingers and Tony was once more thrown across the room. The task was simple as he lifted him into the air and spun him around before dropping him. It was great fun for Harry. It amused him to watch how helpless Tony was against him.

“See all of the things I can teach you?” Loki whispered into Harry’s ear. Harry just nodded unable to stop the smirk from stretching over his features. He understood now, he really did, and he couldn’t wait to learn all he could from Loki.

“Anytime now, Jarvis,” Tony coughed out. He looked so bruised and battered. The part of Harry that knew it was wrong to see Tony this way took hold. He shouldn’t feel amused or elated to see his father like this. Just a few hours earlier he had been worried sick about him.

“Finish him,” Loki hissed.

Harry hesitated. This wasn’t right, he couldn’t kill Tony. Tony was all Harry had left in the world. Tony had taken him in, given him a home where he felt safe, and a family to call his own.

“I said finish him,” Loki snarled impatiently.

But Tony wanted to stop him. He wanted to keep him from using this new power because he was
afraid of him.

“Harry kiddo, I know you’re in there. Fight it. I know you’re stronger than he is. You can break his hold on you!” Tony shouted.

Harry stared at Tony. His eyes were moist with unshed tears and the lines of his face were creased with worry. Tony was worried about him. He wasn’t afraid of him. Tony cared about what happened to him. Tony believed in him. Suddenly, Harry recognized that something was wrong with him. The thoughts in his head weren’t truly his own. He didn’t want to hurt Tony. Tony was working so hard to make up for the years they had lost. Harry closed his eyes and shoved back as forcefully as he could against the voices in his mind.

“Enough!” Loki screamed.

Harry vaguely heard the sounds of shattering glass but he was too focused on his own internal battle. He couldn’t lose or else he would be forfeiting his own mind in the process. The voices tried once more to lure him back into their web of mind control. But Harry knew better now. He was more aware of their lies, and he could fight back. He had to fight back. He couldn’t hurt Tony again. The voices seemed to realize that their soft whispering lies wouldn’t work anymore so they tried a new tactic. They moved on to trying to overpower him by sheer force. The pain was incredible and he couldn’t help but scream aloud as he fought back with his own magic. The voices were getting weaker, cut off from their own power source, and unable to sustain themselves without an anchor to Harry’s own magical core. Something else seemed to be helping Harry to fight off the voices within him. It was a dark energy that seemed to be concentrated in his scar.

The dark energy worked with Harry’s own magic to help protect its host from this foreign invader and together they finally wiped it out. However, in the process the dark energy was also destroyed and the ensuing climax to their internal battle caused an external shockwave to explode from Harry’s body. Harry could do nothing but lay curled up on the floor clutching at his head from the pain. The war inside him had felt like it had waged for eons, and it was difficult for him to reorient himself to the outside world again.

He could hear the cry of “Harry?” and feel hands gently tugging at his own. “Please talk to me. Tell me what’s going on. Tell me you’re okay.”

Harry could only respond with a groan and continued to clutch at his head. His whole body hurt and he was absolutely exhausted from the magical struggle. The hands that had been pulling at him suddenly moved to scoop him up into a warm embrace. He was gently rocked in the comforting hold, and strong hands rubbed his back in a soothing gesture.

“Come on kiddo, come back to me. I know you can do it, Harry,” a voice he finally recognized as Tony’s whispered against his hair.

“Tony,” Harry mumbled still feeling a bit disoriented. His memories were all in a confusing jumble. The pain and the mind control left him seeing the events of the last few hours in a disjointed mess.

“Harry! Let me see those eyes, kiddo,” Tony demanded gently prying his hands away from his face.

“What happened?” Harry asked. He was unclear as to why Tony was being so insistent at seeing his eyes.

Tony just chuckled. A huge grin stretched over his features, and his brown eyes were shining.
“Loki!” Harry gasped suddenly remembering everything. “He… He attacked Happy. Knocked him out. But I think he was okay. There were some other men, wizards I think. He stopped them too. I’m not sure if they’re all right. Then he used that staff he was carrying on me. It made me feel like I was floating. Everything was really fuzzy and I couldn’t think for myself. I just wanted to do everything I could to help Loki. It… He made me… I… I hurt you.”

It all came out in a confused heap. The events of being under the influence of Loki’s staff were becoming less clear. At the time he had felt levelheaded, albeit detached, and that what he was even doing had been the right thing. It had warped his perceptions.

“No, that wasn’t you. You could never hurt anyone like that,” Tony told him firmly.

“But I—” He should have fought back harder. Maybe if he didn’t still harbor a small pool of anger and resentment towards Tony then maybe he could have broke the hold over him sooner.

“No, Harry, Loki made you do those things. He did the same thing to a couple of world-class spies and a really intelligent scientist. You’re an eleven, almost twelve-year-old kid. It’s amazing that you were able to fight off the mind control whammy he had over you,” Tony praised him.

Harry didn’t feel in the least bit worthy of his praise. He was happy to have Tony believe in him, though.

“I’m glad you’re okay,” Harry murmured. It was a relief to have him back, and all in one piece especially since Harry been personally responsible for tossing him around like a puppet on its strings.

“No as glad as I am that you’re okay,” replied Tony, yanking him in for another hug and a quick kiss to his forehead.

Just then a voice from Tony’s comm came over the line telling him that the other Avengers had just arrived in New York. Tony pulled away from him and got up to look out the window. Harry reluctantly followed. Outside there were strange creatures on strange flying machines zooming everywhere. They were firing at buildings and people. There was even a giant flying whale-like thing. It was complete chaos. Even after spending a year in the wizarding world Harry had never dreamed of anything like this happening.

“Well, that’s not something you see every day,” Tony murmured sounding just as stunned as Harry was.

“We have to stop them,” Harry insisted. They were killing people and destroying the city.

“I have to stop it,” Tony corrected him. “We just need to find a safe place for you.”

Harry felt anger surge inside him. Tony couldn’t just leave him again.

“Harry go down to my workshop. Seal yourself in and don’t come out until all of this is over.”

Harry opened his mouth to protest. He didn’t want to be left behind. He wanted to help. It was in his nature to face things head on, and to want to do everything in his power to protect others. Hermione called it his ‘saving people thing’.

“No, I said go. You’re not equipped to handle something like this. Now, just do what I said.”

A part of him understood that he couldn’t fight this battle. But at the moment he wasn’t sure Tony could either. He certainly didn’t want Tony going out there and getting hurt.
“Please just go.” Tony pleaded.

“Only if you promise to come back.” Harry insisted. He couldn’t lose him.

“I’ll do my best,” replied Tony seriously.

Harry just nodded. He could accept that answer. It seemed he had gotten his self-sacrificing behavior from both parents. If Tony had to, Harry knew he would sacrifice himself to save the day just like Harry himself would.

“Now, I really have to go kick some alien butt. The city wouldn’t stand a chance without Iron Man around to save the day,” said Tony with a grin.

Harry just smiled back before Tony shot off into the battleground that New York City had become. He watched him until he had disappeared around a building. Then he ran back into the bedrooms to check on Happy and Hedwig. Tony had told him to go to his workshop but Happy was still completely knocked out and there was no way he was leaving him. It took him a lot of effort but he managed to drag Happy into his bedroom. The door was still intact and he quickly shut them in. He checked on Hedwig as well and placed her gently on his bed. His wand lay abandoned on the floor where he had dropped it after first touching the staff. A shudder travelled up his spine as he remembered the pain and the voices. The voices coming from the staff did make him wonder. Were they something of Loki’s own making or were they something else. Loki did say someone had given the staff to him so it could have been them.

He was jarred from these thoughts by a loud growl, and then the sound of shattering glass followed the vibrations of the tower as something slammed into it.

Hesitantly he made his way back out in to the main area of the penthouse. What he saw shocked him. It was the Hulk. He was much larger and more intimidating in person. Not quite as big as the mountain troll but from what he had read in the Avenger files he was infinitely stronger and more dangerous.

Loki was back in the penthouse as well and was picking himself up from the floor so that he could shout abuse at the Hulk.

“Enough! You are all of you beneath me! I am a god you dull creature. And I will not be bullied by —”

The Hulk cut him off by grabbing hold of his legs. Harry watched in utter amazement as the Hulk picked him up and slammed him into the floor like a child with a ragdoll. He paused for a second in his smashing to peek at Loki and then proceeded to slam him a couple more times for good measure. By the time he was finished there were Loki sized holes in the floor of the penthouse. The god in question was bleeding and lay in a stunned heap in the hole the Hulk had dropped him in.

The Hulk turned and muttered, “Puny god,” as he sauntered away.

He caught Harry’s eyes and paused for the briefest moment as he passed by. Harry was nervous that the Hulk would attack him but he just grunted and proceeded to jump out of the tower onto the back of one of the flying whales. Harry cautiously took a peek at Loki. The god stared up at the ceiling with clear, bright green eyes making a strange wheezing sound. The color of his eyes did make Harry pause because he was certain Loki hadn’t had such clear green eyes before.

“Loki?” Harry asked not really sure why he was even bothering with the insane god.
He turned confused green eyes on Harry. It was as if for a moment he didn’t even recognize Harry. Harry was about to question this phenomenon further when the phone rang. He leapt over to the couch and found the phone lying safely on the ground. Somehow it had managed to survive all the damage that had happened in the living room. It was Tony calling and Harry immediately answered hoping to tell him about what had just happened in the penthouse.

“Tony!” Harry cried.

“I’ve only got a couple of seconds here, kiddo. But I just want to say… I want to tell you that I love you, Harry. I couldn’t have asked for a better son. I love you and I’m sorry for doing this to you,” Tony said.

“What do you mean? Tony? Tony! Dad!” Harry gasped, confused and terrified enough for the word he had wanted to use for a while now to just slip out.

“Bye, kiddo,” Tony whispered in a choked voice before ending the call.

Harry sat there with the phone to his ear, and nothing but dead silence ringing from the other end. The call could have only meant one thing. Tony was calling to say goodbye. He was going to sacrifice himself. He didn’t know how or why but Harry knew that was what he was doing.

No! Harry couldn’t let that happen. He sprinted to his room. He grabbed up his broom, enlarging it, and hopping on it in one smooth stride. He was air born and zooming out of the ruined penthouse windows a second later. There weren’t any more aliens flying around they had all dropped to the ground, appearing lifeless. Harry could barely bring himself to care; he just needed to find his dad. He happened to glance up at the sky, and gaped at the large black hole that wavered up in the big blue sky. It was a real portal into another world, and Harry could only stare at it as it got smaller and smaller. At the last moment a familiar red and gold shape fell through the portal before it closed for good.

Harry didn’t hesitate before shooting towards it. He watched in terror as his dad continued to fall. He should have stopped himself by now but he realized that Tony must have been unconscious or worse since he was still falling. Harry wasn’t sure if the Iron Man suit would be able to save Tony from the impact he was going to make when he hit the ground.

Unfortunately Harry didn’t think he would be able to get to Tony in time to try and slow him down. It was with great relief that he watched the Hulk shoot out of nowhere and catch Tony in his arms. Harry changed his course for where the Hulk at jumped down, luckily it wasn’t too far from him and he was close enough to watch them safely land. From a distance he could see three figures surrounding the stretched out form of a motionless Iron Man. The moment he was close enough he jumped off his broom and sprinted the remaining distance over the wreckage to his dad’s side.

“Dad!” Harry cried.

Relief swamped through him when he saw Tony jerk up, their eyes connecting. He launched himself at Tony sending them both toppling over with Harry sprawled on top. Harry clutched at his dad, and tried to suppress the sobs of relief that were coursing through him.

“It’s all right, Harry. Everything is going to be all right now,” Tony assured him, stroking his hair.

Harry just gripped him tighter.

“You know we’re going to have to have a talk about you listening to me. I clearly remember telling you to stay put.” Tony joked.
Harry just snorted. Of course he would have to make light of the fact that he had almost died.

“Yeah, you get the not following rules thing from me. And, well a kid flying on a broom is probably like the fortieth on the list of weird things that happened today. So we’ll just think about the consequences for that later,” Tony said with a grin. Harry hadn’t even thought of the consequences of flying through the city but there were sure to be a few. “But anyway who’s up for shawarma? I saw a shawarma place a couple blocks back and I’ve always wanted to try it.”

“First, there is something that we must do,” said a tall, red cape wearing blonde man. Harry instantly recognized to be Thor, the God of Thunder. Harry would have been more thrilled to meet him had he not had the day he just had.

“Right, your brother,” said Tony darkly.

“The Hulk tossed him around like a rag doll. I saw him,” Harry couldn’t help but point out. It was definitely one of the highlights of this awful day. He turned to grin over at the Hulk.

The Hulk grinned back and repeated his words from earlier, “Puny god.”

“Whoa, you can talk big guy? Who knew?” Tony exclaimed looking stunned.

“We can discuss this later. Right now we should go grab Loki before he decides to try and slip away from us,” said the other blonde man in a red, white, and blue suit. Captain America or Steve Rogers if Harry remembered correctly.

The others agreed and they all made there way back to what was left of Stark Tower. The five of them met up with Natasha and Clint.

Harry almost felt bad for Loki as all the Avengers stood over him, angry and united in that angry. He looked so broken from the Hulk’s thrashing as he calmly lifted his empty hands in surrender. It didn’t stop Tony from punching him in the face knocking him back out. He really did deserve it for everything that he had done. But Harry couldn’t help but think that there was more to Loki’s story.

“No one messes with my kid,” Tony growled, wrapping a secure arm Harry’s shoulders.

“So now what?” Harry asked.

Thor was tying up Loki and the other Avengers all looked completely exhausted. Harry couldn’t blame them he was tired too. He was physically and magically exhausted.

“Shawarma,” Tony replied with a grin.

“Sounds good to me,” huffed a short man with messy dark, greying hair. He was clutching at a pair of too large ripped pants.

Harry gaped at him when he realized that this man was the Hulk’s other half.

“Chin up, kiddo,” Tony said putting a finger under his jaw to close his gaping mouth.

“So, this is your son?” the man who was sometimes the Hulk asked.

“Yup, this is my Harry,” Tony announced proudly. “Harry meet Doctor Bruce Banner. You already had the pleasure of meeting his large, green alter ego who likes to smash things.”

“Hello Dr. Banner. It’s nice to meet you,” Harry greeted.
“Call me Bruce and it’s nice to meet you too, Harry.” He reached over to shake his hand and nearly lost his hold on his pants in the process. “You don’t happen to have any spare clothes I could borrow, do you Tony?”

“I think I can rustle up something for you big guy especially after the way you handled Reindeer Games. But I’ll expect everything back dry cleaned.” Tony wagged his finger at Bruce.

Bruce just smiled, he surprisingly seemed to understand and tolerate Tony’s attempts at humor. It was obvious that Tony and Bruce got along quite well with another. Harry could see why, Bruce just seemed to exude a calm, unassuming presence despite the anger that no doubt simmered just beneath the surface.

“You have a son, Man of Iron?” Thor suddenly boomed. He had been watching over Loki’s unconscious with slumped shoulders and a forlorn expression. Now he was suddenly animated and excited.

“Uh, yeah Point Break, that was kind of why the kid was calling me dad back there in the wreckage,” Tony drawled.

Harry now had the eyes of all of the Avengers on him. Clint and Natasha already knew about him so it wasn’t some big revelation to them. Steve Rogers on the other hand looked flabbergasted as he stared from Harry to Tony.

“Yeah, I know it’s a shocker to find out Stark reproduced,” Clint grinned, elbowing Captain Rogers. Captain Rogers gave a weak smile in response.

“Cap you’re just lucky that you get to know three generations of Starks. Maybe four if you’re really lucky, and Harry finds some nice girl to settle down with,” Tony pointed out. Captain Rogers on the other hand looked a little green.

“Your son is a Seidr?” Thor questioned.

“A what-deer?” Tony frowned.

“A Seidr, a being born with the ability to wield magic. Of course that was primarily a term for the Norse magic users,” explained Thor.

“I’m a wizard actually. My mum was a witch,” Harry seeing no reason to keep it a secret anymore. After all half the people here weren’t exactly normal themselves.

“Get out of here,” Clinton snorted.

“Nope, he really is a wizard. He has a flying broom and everything,” Tony crowed excitedly. He had definitely come a long way in his acceptance of Harry being a wizard. “Show ‘em, Mini-Merlin.”

Harry shrugged and held out his Nimbus 2012 for Clint to inspect.

“The magical world is a real thing. I’m not making this up Legolas. Go ask your one-eyed boss about it,” Tony insisted when Clint still denied that Tony was telling the truth.

Natasha on the other hand appeared to already be aware of the information, and finally told Clint that it wasn’t a joke.

“Nat, how could you keep something like this from me?” Clint whined.
“Orders,” was all she replied.

Clint sighed but settled down. By that time Bruce had gotten dressed, Happy, the wizards, and Dr. Selvig were taken to hospital, and SHIELD had come to collect Loki and bring him to his temporary prison. The Avengers, plus Harry, all went for some well-deserved shawarma.

“You seem to be taking this wizard thing pretty well,” Tony commented to Captain Rogers while they were eating.

“Well, we did just fight off an alien invasion led by a homicidal Norse god,” Captain Rogers replied good-naturedly.

“True, but why do I get the feeling that that isn’t all?” Tony pressed.

“I heard and saw some things during the war.”

“What kinds of things?” Tony persisted. “Come on Cap you got to give me something.”

Captain Rogers pinched the bridge of his nose and appeared to be asking for patience.

“Hydra and the Red Skull had an ally. A man named Grindelwald who could do extraordinary and unbelievable things. He had his own army of people, wizards, who were just like him. They were trying to take over the magical parts of Europe. They wanted to get rid of all the non-magical people in Europe but they cut some sort of deal with Hydra so that the two ended up working together. We ended up working with some wizards on the opposing side from Grindelwald. They were led by a man named Albus Dumbledore—”

“He’s my headmaster at the school I go to,” Harry cut in. It was amazing to think that Captain Rogers had known Dumbledore back in those days. He wondered what the headmaster had looked like.

“Wait, he’s still alive?” Captain Rogers gaped.

“Yeah, he’s well past 150 years old,” Harry explained.

Captain Rogers was still staring. “I just didn’t think I would ever get the chance to see anyone from the time before I was frozen.”

Harry couldn’t help but feel bad for him.

“Well, I’ll definitely reintroduce you to Dumbledore if you want,” Harry offered.

“That would be nice,” Captain Rogers agreed with a smile. Harry grinned back.

“Okay, less talking more eating. The God of Hammers over there has somehow already inhaled four plates worth and looks ready to start scrounging off ours,” Tony commented, glaring at the god in question.

For the rest of the meal Harry got the chance to hear the firsthand accounts of the battle from the Avenger’s perspective. He had to say it was incredible to be sitting and eating with the people who saved the lives of millions of people. And his dad was the biggest hero of them all.

They finished up their shawarma and the Avengers all came back to the tower to sleep for the night. The city was in too much of a state of chaos and they were all too tired to try and find accommodations elsewhere. By the time they arrived Pepper had gotten back and she was standing
in the pile of the wreckage holding Hedwig and crying.

“Pepper!” Harry cried running towards her.

“Oh thank god!” she gasped and swept Harry up into a tight embrace.

“Um, I’m alive too,” Tony offered.

She chucked her mobile phone at him.

“Anthony Edward Stark! If you ever do anything stupid like riding a nuke through an unstable inter-dimensional portal again I will kill you!” she snarled looking deadly.

“Yes, dear,” Tony said cowering slightly.

“I’m so glad you’re alive,” she whispered before collapsing into his arms.

He caught her and dragged Harry into their embrace.

“Everything is fine I wanted to redecorate the place anyway and look we made new friends,” Tony cheered.

“Just shut up for once will ya?” Pepper asked but she was smiling.

“I think that’s one thing that’s beyond the realm of his capabilities,” Harry said sagely.

“Hey, for that I’m not buying you anything for your birthday,” Tony sniffed.

Harry just rolled his eyes. Despite the terrifying day he had had and all of the things he had faced since coming to live with his dad he wouldn’t have changed a single moment of it. He was with his dad and Pepper in their destroyed tower. He was right where he belonged.
Birthday Bashing

Barely a week had passed since the invasion of New York. The news stations were continuously running wild stories about what had happened. They were printing all kinds of things about the Avengers. Some were hailing them as heroes while others condemned them as no good vigilantes demanding that they be incarcerated. Either way people couldn’t get enough of talking or hearing about them.

In all the initial confusion people had barely noticed Harry’s little trip on his broom. When they did finally take notice, they believed it was just some Stark technology prototype since no one had actually gotten any pictures of him flying, only a few sightings from far distances. So at least the secret of the wizarding world was safe. There were a few grainy pictures of Harry hugging Tony in his Iron Man suit. This caused all sorts of rumors and speculation about who he was, and what his relationship to Tony was. Reporters were especially eager to get as much information as they could on Tony since he was the only member of the Avengers whose identity had been one hundred percent confirmed.

The only thing Tony had to say about the public’s discovery of Harry was that the cat was out of the bag even if the pictures in the paper didn’t give a clear view of Harry’s face. They were like a dog with a bone, and they wouldn’t give up trying to figure out who he was. It was only a matter of time before they discovered who he was. Pepper was planning on holding a press conference in the next couple of weeks to explain Harry’s existence. She and Tony wanted to wait until after Harry’s birthday. They were throwing him a party, and then the three of them would be jetting off to Tony’s private island to spend a week in seclusion away from the demands of the rest of the world.

Harry had to admit that he was extremely excited for his upcoming birthday. All the Avengers were planning on attending, and Tony had bought a bunch of traditional party games for all of them to play. The closest Harry had ever come to having a birthday party of his own before was when Hagrid had told him he was a wizard last summer, and given him his very own birthday cake. It had been the best birthday he had ever had. This birthday, however, was shaping up to be even better.

Or at least it would be if it wasn’t for the fact that Harry was being plagued by the after effects of being controlled by the staff. He was experiencing random bouts of uncontrollable magic. Over the last few days, ever since his exposure to the Loki’s staff, his magic would randomly surge up inside of him and explode from him. Luckily he could feel the magic when it was about to burst from him. He was able to hide himself away before the magic ruptured from him like water through a broken dam, and alerted anyone that there was something wrong with him. He was lucky that Tony hadn’t had the time to restore Jarvis to spy on him.

Tony kept trying to talk more about what had happened while the staff had possessed him but so far Harry had managed to avoid it by using diversion tactics. With all of the repairs, the uproar from the press, and the Avengers and SHIELD coming in and out it wasn’t all too difficult to hide things from Tony. The man was simply too busy, and for once Harry was grateful for his inability to pay attention to him.

The only time they had really talked was the day directly after the attack. Tony forced him to sit down and tell him about what had happened. Harry had reluctantly complied.

“Something was off about him, though,” Harry murmured, remembering Loki’s changing eye color.
“Yeah, he was bat shit crazy,” Tony snorted in reply.

Harry rolled his eyes, “No, something more than that. It was almost like he was being controlled too. I mean his eyes kept changing colors, and after the Hulk smashed him it was like he was waking up from the effects of the staff. Cognitive recalibration, just like with Dr. Selvig and Clint.” Harry couldn’t help but think that Loki had been suffering from some sort of control. There were too many scenes pointing towards it.

“No, Harry, Loki was just crazy. He…” Tony hesitated and Harry saw a flash of pain cross his features. “Loki killed Agent Coulson, Harry. Without remorse, just because he tried to stand up to him and stop him.”

“What?” Harry choked, trying to hold back the instinctual rush of tears his words produced.

“Agent Coulson is dead and Loki killed him. He killed a good man. Some glowing spear didn’t make him do it. He did it because Agent Coulson was in his way. He’s the God of Lies, Harry. Don’t let him manipulate you into feeling sympathy for him. He doesn’t deserve any, especially after what he did to Agent Coulson. And to you. I have zero tolerance for anyone that hurts you,” Tony growled.

Harry couldn’t help the surge of hate and loathing towards Loki that rose up in him. A part of him recognized that it might not have been entirely Loki’s fault but losing Phil made him squash it. He hadn’t known Phil for a very long time but the short time he had known him had made a huge impact on him. He’d been one of the few adults to be entirely honest with him. He had helped him out during a time he’d truly needed it. Harry found that he couldn’t summon any compassion for a man who had killed Phil willingly or not.

“Yeah, you’re probably right.” Harry furiously wiped away the few tears that managed to escape.

“You okay, kiddo? I know you really liked Phil,” Tony murmured, awkwardly putting his arm around Harry’s shoulders, and patting his arm. The two of them had come quite a long way in being comfortable with shows of physical affection. But neither of them were especially good at knowing what to do in terms of how to comfort one another.

“Yeah,” Harry shrugged, leaning back against him in acceptance of the offered comfort.

“You can talk to me about it you know. Or Pepper. Pepper would probably be the better option because she’s better with talking about all this emotional stuff. But I’m always here for you too. I may not be the best at it but I’ll try my best.” Tony rested his chin on Harry’s head.

“Thanks, dad,” Harry grinned truly grateful to have Tony in his life now.

“Love that you call me dad now,” Tony murmured ruffling his hair affectionately.

Harry smiled. He really enjoyed having a dad now especially one like Tony. But he didn’t say it out loud. It was just too corny.

“So did I ever tell you about the first time I met dear Agent Coulson?”

Harry shook his head.

“Well, it was a few months ago. I was having some problems with the arc reactor. Nothing I wouldn’t have solved on my own eventually but he and SHIELD came to help anyway…”

Harry had listened quietly to the story. The two of them had continued to commiserate over the
achievements of Agent Phil Coulson. It went a long way towards improving Harry and Tony’s mood over Phil’s sudden and unfortunate death.

The morning of his birthday dawned with yet another burst of uncontrollable magic. The sudden explosion of magical energy left him shuddering on the floor of his bedroom in pain before he managed to sit himself up. He crawled back onto his bed and stretched out. He was tired and wanted nothing more than to take a nap even though he had just woken up. He couldn’t stay in his room too long. Today was his birthday after all and Tony or Pepper would eventually come looking for him. The party, however, wouldn’t be starting until the early afternoon. He had been so excited for his birthday party but that excitement had now been tempered by the problems with his magic.

These surges in his magic were starting to happen more frequently, and more painfully. They completely exhausted him. It felt as if all of his magic was completely drained from him. It was really beginning to worry him. He just didn’t know what to do about it. What if the staff had broken something inside him? What if it had destroyed his ability to control his magic and he forever suffered from these painful and debilitating magical outbursts? Harry knew he should tell Tony what was happening to him. He was just afraid to. A part of him didn’t want to find out about what was happening to him. What if they ended up finding out that something was wrong with him? Harry was pretty sure he would be devastated if he couldn’t do magic. He wanted to just ignore it in hopes that it would just eventually solve the problem on its own. It was a naïve thought. He had decided though that he would wait, just until after his birthday. Tony and Pepper were working so hard to make the day special for him. He didn’t want to ruin all their hard work.

He laid on his bed for several moments trying to regain his strength. The exhaustion only lasted for about ten minutes. His magic would still feel like it was completely drained for several hours but the whole body exhaustion never lasted for very long. The pain lingered a bit but he was able to ignore it for the most part as long as he didn’t exert himself too much.

Once he felt some what restored he got up and headed back out into the penthouse living room. The penthouse had been cleaned but the damages had yet to be repaired. Tony wanted to frame the dents in the floor where the Hulk had smashed Loki. Pepper was against it and had planned for the repairs to be done while they were on Tony’s island.

Bruce was attempting to hang a Happy Birthday banner on the wall while Tony gave him instructions.

“More to the left,” Tony commanded.

“You just told me you didn’t want it over there,” Bruce sighed.

“Yeah, but I changed my mind,” replied Tony.

“Tony, if you’re trying to aggravate Bruce into turning into the Hulk again I will hurt you. The damage to the tower is already bad enough,” Pepper muttered from where she was Stirring something in the kitchen.

“I’m not.” Tony’s response was a bit too quick to be completely honest. Apparently Pepper thought so too because she narrowed her eyes at Tony. Tony flashed her a wide innocent grin complete with puppy dog eyes.

Pepper was the first one to notice him. “Happy birthday Harry!”

She set down the bowl she was stirring and came over to wrap Harry into a tight embrace.
“Thank you,” Harry couldn’t help the wide smile that graced his features as he snuggled into Pepper’s warm embrace. It was nice to have people who actually recognized that it was his birthday.

“Birthday? It’s your birthday?” Tony questioned feigning shock.

Harry pulled back from Pepper and the two of them shared a commiserating look.

“Yup,” Harry agreed.

“How old are you turning again? Seven? Eight?” Tony teased.

“Twelve,” Harry glowered.

“No, there’s no way you can be turning twelve. I’m not that old,” Tony whined.

“Face it, you’re a crotchety old man now,” Harry teased.

“Hey! I will never be old! Or crotchety!” Tony protested. “I just get better looking as time passes.”

“Oh, trust me Tony I don’t think anyone is ever going to confuse you with being an adult,” Pepper assured.

“Happy birthday, kiddo,” Tony threw out his arms and pulled him in to fierce hug.

Harry hugged Tony back. Life was so different for him now. He never thought he would be comfortable hugging someone like this or having people to celebrate his birthday with. But now it was just natural for Tony and him, and it was something he truly enjoyed.

Bruce gave his own congratulations. Pepper went back to making pancakes for his birthday breakfast, which the four of them sat down and ate together. Bruce was currently living in the penthouse with them. He’d tried to protest and offered to pay rent. Tony wouldn’t hear of it and he wouldn’t let him leave. To pacify him Tony offered Bruce a position as Harry’s tutor in exchange for free rent. Of course Bruce didn’t know that Tony was building him his own suite in the tower or that he was going to pay him for tutoring Harry. Tony was looking forward to the man’s reaction when he found out. Harry got on very well with Bruce. The man had a gentle disposition coupled with a dry wit that Harry enjoyed. He was also extremely intelligent and was incredibly patient. They hadn’t started having lessons yet but Harry was looking forward to them.

The rest of the morning passed with Harry watching while the three adults set up for his birthday party. They refused to let him help so he just had to sit and watch, and laugh while Pepper and Tony bickered good-naturedly. As three o’clock rolled around Harry’s guests began to trickle in.

The first to arrive was Captain Rogers. He had a poorly wrapped present under one arm and wore a brown leather jacket.

“Hullo, Captain Rogers,” Harry greeted enthusiastically to the super-soldier.

“Hello, Harry, happy birthday,” he replied, smiling brightly at Harry.

“Thanks,” Harry grinned reaching out to take the present and put it on the table with all the others. He could tell it was some sort of ball from the shape. It sort of awed him that he actually had a table full of presents just for him. It was already more than he had ever gotten before and it was all a little overwhelming.
“Cap, glad you could make it,” Tony came up to clap a hand to Captain Rogers’ back.

The two of them had an awkward relationship. According to Tony they had started off being fairly hostile to one another. After the battle they seemed to have reached some common ground were attempting to get along with one another. But they still struggled due to all of their differences.

“I told you I was coming,” Captain Rogers replied with a frown.

“It’s a just a saying, Cap. And here I thought you just had a problem with technology not taking things literally. Between you and Thor you have all the technologic knowledge of a monkey. Well maybe a little less,” Tony teased.

Captain Rogers took good-natured teasing well, and just rolled his eyes and sighed in defeat.

“Maybe dad can give you some lessons,” Harry offered.

“I think I would be better off on my own,” Captain Rogers replied.

Harry thought about it for a moment. “You’re probably right.”

Tony just huffed, nose in the air.

Thor and Jane Foster arrived soon after Captain Rogers. The God of Thunder was beaming from ear to ear as he escorted Jane into the penthouse as if entering a grand ballroom. He looked so happy to be reunited with the scientist. He looked like a wiggly puppy who had just gotten a new toy. Jane appeared equally smitten with the Asgardian. Thor had been staying at the SHIELD base where they were currently holding Loki while Thor got things ready to return them both to Asgard. He was still taking his brother’s betrayal rather hard.

The next guests to arrive were Clint and Natasha. The super spies weren’t enjoying their new fame. Their entire job description was to be anonymous, and all the news coverage with their pictures in it wasn’t exactly conducive to their positions in SHIELD. They both looked a little grim but they seemed to perk up a little when they saw the Chitauri piñatas Tony had gotten. Clint especially seemed to be taking things hard. Harry had heard that he too had been under the influences of the staff. He really wanted to ask the archer about his experience while being controlled by it.

Unfortunately, Happy was still in hospital at SHIELD after being tossed into a wall by Loki so he wasn’t able to attend. Tony and he had been to visit a couple of times, and he was perfectly fine they just wanted to keep him longer because of the fact that he’d had a personal run in with Loki. Dr. Selvig was likewise detained with Darcy keeping him company while Jane spent as much time as she could with Thor before he had to leave.

The party was amazing. They played all sorts of corny party games like pin the tail on the donkey, and bobbing for apples. Clint was the master of pin the tail on the donkey and Bruce was surprisingly good at bobbing for apples. They smashed open piñatas, and ate cake both of which Thor was a master of. Harry had never seen anyone eat that much cake before, and even after he ate all the cake he pulled out a box of strawberry poptarts and proceeded to eat them as well. After all of that it was finally time to open presents. Tony seemed to have been determined to get him one of everything. He got him all his own tools and all sorts of various parts to start building whatever he wanted. He also got him a bunch of wizard gag gifts, which the two of them planned on using on the rest of the Avengers at a later date.

The best thing he got him, however, was the phone call on the webcam. He’d set it up in his bedroom so that the two of them could have a few moments of privacy.
“Hermione!” Harry cried with a huge grin.

“Harry! Happy birthday! How are you?” Hermione questioned looking worried.

“I’m fine,” he reassured her.

“Are you certain? I mean aliens attacked New York City. Aliens Harry, can you believe it?” she asked, eyes wide.

“Considering I was only a few metres from them, yeah I can,” Harry grinned at her.

She shook her head, bushy hair flying everywhere. She looked equally disbelieving, and in awe.

“You have to tell me everything,” she pleaded.

Harry was more than willing to tell her the entire story.

“That was very brave of Tony,” Hermione murmured once Harry.

“Yeah,” Harry agreed whole-heartedly.

“And it must have been really difficult for you, Harry.” Her brown eyes were full of concern.

“I don’t know what you mean. I didn’t even do anything. I mostly just stood around while my dad and the other Avengers did all the work,” Harry shrugged.

“What I meant was that it must have been hard for you to almost lose your dad like that. And I highly doubt you just sat around if what you told me about your encounter with Loki is anything to go by. I also doubt you told me the whole story about that. You always leave things out to make it sound less dangerous,” Hermione huffed.

“For a moment I thought I had lost him,” Harry murmured, completely ignoring her questions about Loki. Those questions could easily lead to ones about his unstable magic and he wasn’t sure if he was ready to talk about that just yet.

“I’m sorry you had to go through that, Harry. I know how close the two of you have become. Thinking that you had lost him so soon after finding him must have been horrible.”

“It was scary and I may not like the fact that being Iron Man puts him danger. But I’m proud of him, Hermione, because if I could do the things that he could I know I would be doing the exact same thing,” Harry insisted.

“I know you would be. The two of you are a lot alike in that regard, you’re always putting yourselves into stupidly dangerous situations,” she grinned at him.

“I guess we are,” Harry agreed, grinning back.

“Right, well… tell me more about the Chitauri. I wonder what sort of planet they come from. Did you notice if they wore air-filtering devices of some sort? Could you describe them to me all of the videos and pictures weren’t very conducive to making any type of analysis about them,” she prattled on obviously trying to distract him.

A knock came to his door and he called for them to come in. It was Tony.

Harry grinned at him.
“Hullo Mr. Stark,” Hermione greeted.

“How many times do I have to tell you, it’s Tony,” he sighed and shook his head looking disappointed by Hermione’s manners.

“Right,” Hermione replied noncommittally.

“Mini-me, Miss Manners, I have a surprise for the both of you. I already talked to your parents Hermione about this. But how would you like to come for a visit in just one weeks to our private island?” Tony asked.

“Really?” Harry gasped in excitement as Hermione’s mouth dropped open in shock.

“Happy birthday, kiddo,” Tony grinned.

“Thank you, dad,” Harry threw his arms around Tony’s neck and gave him a fierce hug.

“Thank you, Mr. Stark for inviting me. I would love to come,” Hermione gushed.

“It will be nice to finally meet you in person,” Tony assured with a grin.

They talked for a little bit longer before finally hanging up so that Harry could return to his guests. Hermione promised to bring her and Ron’s birthday presents when she came. They both couldn’t wait until they were together again. He wanted to tell her more about what had happened with Loki and the staff. During their call he had considered telling her about the magical outbursts but he didn’t want to worry her, just as he didn’t want to worry Tony.

He and Tony returned to the living room where the rest of the Avengers, Jane, and Pepper were still talking and having a good time. As the party was winding down one last guest arrived. Director Nick Fury stepped out of the lift still decked out in his normal leather attire.

“Who invited you?” Tony jeered still upset with the Director.

“I came to say happy birthday to Harry, Stark. And to bring by a friend,” Fury motioned towards the lift and out stepped Agent Phil Coulson perfectly alive.

For a moment there was absolute silence. No one said a word until Tony finally broke the silence. “What the hell is this?” he demanded looking really angry.

All of the Avengers looked really angry in fact, and Harry couldn’t blame them. He was feeling pretty angry about the whole situation himself. He still hadn’t come to terms with the fact that Phil was dead, and now to discover that he was in fact alive was shocking. It was playing with his emotions in the worst possible way, and he really didn’t like it.

“We can explain,” Phil said in a calm voice. But there was something off about his tone. Harry took a closer look at him. Phil looked pale, his features were drawn tight. He looked tired. He was holding himself unnaturally stiff. Harry couldn’t help but think that Phil didn’t look all that well.

“Explain how you lied to us? Made us think you were dead to manipulate us into doing what you wanted?” Tony snarled at Director Fury.

“He did die. If only for a short time,” Fury amended.

“I was able to get in contact with a healer friend in time to repair most of the damage and save my life. The last few days has been spent repairing the rest of the damage made by the spear. It wasn’t
exactly a normal weapon, and the energy signatures it was putting off were affecting the speed of my recovery,” Phil explained stoically.

Natasha looked like she wanted to attack both Fury and Phil. Clint looked like he would join her. Thor looked hurt and confused while Captain Rogers just looked disappointed. Bruce appeared to be trying to contain his anger over the situation.

“And you didn’t think to tell us sooner?” Tony growled.

“We weren’t sure if he was going to make it. It was touch and go for a while there. As soon as we did know, we told you. It’s why we’re here. He was just released. And lying about his death was my idea. He wasn’t even aware enough at that time to make a decision like that. So there’s no need to be angry with him,” Fury snapped out.

“Oh trust me, I’m not angry at him,” Tony snarled.

“I think it would be best if you left, Director. This really isn’t the best time for this,” Captain Rogers said quietly, his tone firm and commanding.

“I apologize, I just wanted to be here for Harry’s birthday,” Phil said.

“Not you, Coulson. Just the Director,” Tony assured still glaring at the Director Fury.

Tony was really protective with his emotions. Losing Phil had really affected him and Harry knew it would be a while, if ever, that Tony would forgive Director Fury for this deception.

Director Fury just nodded his acceptance. For a moment Harry felt bad for the Director. It had to be difficult making decisions like that. Decisions that made everyone hate you even if you were just doing what you thought was right. For the most part, though, Harry was just relieved that Phil was alive and he told the agent so.

“Me too, Harry. And happy birthday. I brought you something that I thought you might like,” Phil said pulling out a package.

Harry grinned up at him and took it. He opened it and burst into laughter when he found a book on Quodpot.

“Thanks.”

“I thought I could change your mind about your dislike of Quodpot,” Phil said.

“I’m not so sure about that,” Harry informed him. He didn’t think he would ever like another sport better than Quidditch.

Phil laughed and then he flashed Harry one of his rare smiles. Reaching over he ruffled Harry’s hair affectionately before going over to be greeted by the Avengers. He was enthusiastically welcomed by Pepper, Captain Rogers, Thor, Jane, and Bruce. Tony, Clint, and Natasha all seemed a bit more standoffish. As time went on the three of them thawed out a bit, and got over Phil’s supposed death. Harry understood that Phil didn’t have anything to do with the deception. He was angry at the Director but he was just thrilled that Phil was alive, and had even made it to his birthday party. If there was one person that he could talk to about what was going on with his magic it would be Phil. His survival also made him reconsider telling someone about the change in Loki’s eye color.

During the party Tony had invited all of the Avengers to come live in the tower once it was
finished. Bruce of course had already taken him up on the offer. Natasha and Clint said they would think about it. Captain Rogers reluctantly agreed after some prodding from Tony, and Thor said he would be glad to call the place home when he was on Midgard.

The party had lasted much longer than they had all expected to. Despite the rocky start they had had, all of the Avengers had really come together to form a fairly solid team. Everyone got along really well, and their shared experiences really brought them all together. But eventually it was time for them to head out, which Harry was grateful for since he could feel his magic beginning to build inside him once more. He needed to get to his room before his magic burst from him, and everyone was made aware of his condition.

He was just about to make his escape too when Phil called him over.

“Is everything all right, Harry?” the agent questioned.

“Yes, of course. Why wouldn’t it be?” Harry replied quickly, feeling anxious and doing his best to suppress the building magic despite the pain it caused him.

Phil’s eyes narrowed on him. Harry didn’t know how but somehow the man suspected something.

“I don’t know why wouldn’t it be?” Phil repeated.

“I really need to get something from my room,” Harry hedged and tried to walk away.

“Harry what’s happening to you?” Phil questioned softly.

“Nothing wrong with me,” Harry snapped.

“Whoa, kiddo, what’s going on here?” Tony asked as he walked up to the two of them. His brow was furrowed as he looked from Phil’s concerned features to Harry’s angry ones.

“Nothing,” Harry murmured sullenly.

“There’s something wrong,” Phil said solemnly.

“What? Harry, what’s he talking about?” Tony asked looking a little worried now.

“Nothing is wrong with me,” Harry repeated despite the fact that the build up of his magic was beginning to make him feel lightheaded.

“You don’t look so good, kiddo,” Tony said reaching out to touch his feverish brow.

The moment his hand made contact with his forehead he was thrown back by the backlash of his magic running through him. Tony was tossed across the room into the couch, the force causing the couch to topple over.

“Dad!” Harry gasped.

He was afraid to run to him though. His magic was still surging through him and he was afraid he might hurt Tony more if he touched him. Captain Rogers was the first one to reach Tony’s side. He helped the stunned man to his feet.

“What the hell was that?” Clint demanded. The archer had pulled out a handgun and was looking for the threat.

“Me,” Harry whispered. “There’s something wrong with my magic. Ever since Loki used his staff
on me. I can’t control it anymore. It just keeps lashing out of me. Something is broken inside me.”

Harry couldn’t hold it back anymore. The swirl of his emotions became too much and he lost the little control he had over himself. He broke down, and the magic exploded out of him like a shockwave. He cried out in pain and as if from a distance he heard the sounds of cries and crashes as everyone tried to get out of the way of his burst of wild magic. When the surge finally ended Harry dropped to his knees. He wasn’t able to stay upright any longer. He was exhausted and in pain. He fell forward to lay on the floor in hopes of regaining his strength. He needed to check on everyone. He had to see if his uncontrollable magic had hurt anyone.

When he did manage to look up, Harry was horrified by what he saw. Bruce was changing. Before his eyes the quiet and calm doctor was becoming the raging Hulk. Once the transition was complete he took a brief look around the penthouse. His eyes locked on Harry and he let loose a loud, angry roar as he recognized him as the source of his pain. He took one menacing step towards Harry before pausing. He looked momentarily conflicted as if a part of him knew Harry was a friend but also viewed him as a threat. Before he could make up his mind Thor’s hammer slammed into him. The Hulk crashed through the recently replaced glass of the penthouse and into the building directly opposite. The Hulk was quick to shake it off and take off to smash the next building.

Thor and Captain Rogers were the only ones who had managed to get to their feet after the surge of magic. Thor looked ready for battle and immediately leapt after the Hulk in an attempt to contain him.

“Thor and I will take care of the Hulk. Everyone else stay put, and figure out what’s happening with Harry,” Captain Rogers ordered before he too set off to help Thor settle down the Hulk.

Clint was helping Jane and Pepper to their feet while Tony was getting himself back up onto his feet for the second time. Natasha was crouching besides Phil her normally expressionless face showing the minutest hint of worry. The recently healed agent looked even paler and more drawn where he sat leaning against the couch he’d crashed into. But he waved away Natasha’s attempts to check on him in favor of pulling out his mobile to make a call. Harry just watched feeling sick inside at having caused the chaos around him.

“Harry, are you okay?” Tony asked limping as he made his way towards him.

Harry flinched back when he reached out to touch him. He was terrified that he might hurt Tony again.

“Don’t pull away from me, kiddo,” Tony warned.

“I don’t want to hurt you again,” Harry murmured.

“I’m tougher than I look,” Tony assured and before Harry could protest again he pulled Harry up into his arms.

“What happened, Harry? What was that?”

“My magic. I can’t control it anymore. It just keeps exploding out of me,” Harry choked out.

“How long has this been going on?” Tony was now holding him out at arms length. His hands were firmly placed on Harry’s shoulders trying to force him to meet his eyes. It was only Tony’s grip on shoulders that was keeping him upright. He was more exhausted than previous episodes and he’d never had two outbursts in one day before. This thing with his magic was getting worse.
Harry shrugged, staring stubbornly at the floor.

“Harry?” Tony said warningly.

“Ever since Loki used the staff on me,” Harry finally muttered.

“Why didn’t you tell us? Why did you just let it go on like this?” Tony demanded.

“I didn’t want to worry you,” Harry replied.

“Harry, I’m your dad. It’s my job to worry about you. You need to tell me about things like this. Something could be seriously wrong.” Tony glanced at Phil who was watching them both with concern. The two shared a look that Harry wasn’t able to decipher.

“That’s exactly the point,” Harry exploded yanking away from Tony’s hold. “What if something is wrong? What if I won’t be able to do magic anymore?” Harry whispered in fear.

“Then you can’t do magic anymore. It doesn’t change anything you’ll still be my son. If you want to fly I’ll build you a suit. Not being able to do magic isn’t the end of the world.”

“You’re right. I know you’re right but magic is what made me special. It saved me from the Dursleys,” Harry whispered.

“What makes you special is just being you, kiddo. I mean you’re already half special without even trying because you’re my son,” Tony said with a grin.

An unwilling chuckle escaped Harry’s lips.

“Right,” Harry agreed.

Tony grinned back. “Now let’s figure this thing out. Agent tell me you were just on the line with some awesome House-like magical doctor who can make a diagnosis in two seconds.”

“Close, I called my older brother. He’s a healer and he’s the one who took care of me while I was recovering. He should be here any moment,” Phil informed them. He was now sitting on the couch with Natasha hovering nearby keeping a close on him and a wary one on Harry.

And as if on cue there was a loud crack. A man in dark green scrubs appeared in the middle of the room. He looked like an older version of Phil with thin blonde hair, light blue eyes, and a more open, friendly expression. He had a large black bag with him.

“Phil, are you all right?” he questioned his first concern obviously being his brother.

“Fine, fine. Everyone this is my brother Healer Jack Coulson. He’s the head healer at Sacred Spells Hospital in Massachusetts in the magical maladies department. Jack this is Natasha, Clint, Pepper, Jane, Tony, and his son Harry. Harry is the person I called you about,” Phil introduced pointing everyone out to him.

Jack Coulson’s light blue gaze locked on Harry. His gaze was assessing and he quickly pulled out a few objects from his bag.

“Hello, Harry. It’s nice to meet you. Phil’s told me a lot about you,” Jack greeted with a warm smile.

“Hullo, nice to meet you too,” Harry replied.
“Why don’t you and your father come right over here so we can take a look at what’s going on with your magic,” Jack patted one the vacant couches.

Tony put his arm around his shoulders and steered him over to the couch. They sat down and Pepper came around to sit on Harry’s other side. Harry turned to give her a timid smile. She looked worried and quickly reached out to grip Harry’s hand.

“Thank you for coming on such short notice,” Pepper murmured squeezing Harry’s hand.

“Oh, it’s no problem,” Jack assured pulling out something that looked like a stethoscope but had a triangular shaped blue stone on the end. “Now Harry I would like to hear a bit about what has been happening from your perspective.”

Harry slowly explained everything that had happened to him since his run in with the horrible, mind controlling staff.

“Hmm, well let’s take a peek at the levels of your magical core.” Jack moved to put the stone over Harry’s heart but the moment he did the stone glowed an intense bright blue. Jack yelped and pulled back.

“Are you all right?” Harry asked in concern.

“I’m fine, I’m fine,” he assured.

“What was that?” Tony demanded.

“That was Harry’s magic reacting to the magic in the scrying stone,” replied Jack calmly.

“And I’m guessing it wasn’t supposed to have that reaction,” Tony observed.

“No, not exactly,” Jack said gently, and he put away the rest of the magical objects he’d originally pulled out. He was now wearing a poker face that was similar to Phil’s and that’s what drove home that this thing was much more serious than Harry originally believed. “Let me just try a few more things.”

He pulled out his wand, and began to cast a couple of spells. A few had volatile reactions and after a few moments Jack set his wand aside.

“So what’s the diagnosis, doc?” Tony questioned, brow furrowed.

Jack’s grim expression said it all. Harry’s heart dropped into his stomach. He was going to lose his magic.

“You see every witch or wizard has a magical core. This magical core holds a witch or wizard’s internal magic and enables them to connect with the magic in the world around them. Every magical core has a lining or a shield. It contains the magic and keeps the core separate from the rest of the body. This barrier allows a witch or wizard to have a measure of control over their magic. This magical shield is also the reason why witches and wizards need a focus, like a wand, to draw their magic out of this shield and interact with external magical forces. Of course in periods of extreme distress breaking through this barrier becomes much simpler and magic bursts through the shield. This is why when we are young we have accidental magic. Our magical shields are also a bit thinner and less stable. As we grow older we train ourselves to safely draw magic through our shields from our cores and use it towards the purpose we desire. Some are capable of moving magic through this shield without a wand. But it is very difficult and only the most powerful of wizards are capable of wandless magic.
“The magical lining also has another purpose. It acts as a protective barrier between the magical core and the body itself. A mortal body isn’t meant to be completely suffused with magic at all times. Short periods for extremely powerful spells are all right but of course risky and dangerous. Magic in its purest form is an almost sentient entity, and can unintentionally cause damage if its not properly contained. Without this shield protecting the magical core their magic can cause a witch or wizard a lot of damage,” Jack explained carefully.

“That’s all great to know and all but what exactly does that have to do with Harry? What’s going on with my son, Witch Doctor?” Tony demanded.

“As far as I can tell…” He sighed, taking a deep breath before he could continue. “As far as I can tell when Loki used the spear to control Harry the energy in the spear completely destroyed the barrier around Harry’s magical core to gain access to it, and control it for its own purposes. That is why he keeps having these magical outbursts. There is nothing to keep his magic in his core anymore. Magical cores are constantly able to replenish themselves and so his core is naturally continuing to restore itself. Unfortunately, there is nothing to contain that magic anymore or to tell it that it’s completely full. Once it’s fully restored it doesn’t know what to do with itself and it just comes bursting out or when he’s feeling a particularly strong emotion it lashes out with nothing to filter it or hold it back.

“The feelings of weakness afterwards are caused by the complete emptying of his magical core. The pain is from the magic rushing through his entire body through pathways that it really shouldn’t be,” Jack continued carefully.

“What does this mean for Harry?” Pepper demanded. Her body was tense and Harry could read the fear in her features. Harry himself was numb with fear and what all of this would mean for him.

“Unless we can find a way to somehow rebuild his magical shield, his condition will become fatal. Not right away but it seems his condition is steadily worsening and if something isn’t done soon I believe he could only survive a few weeks at the most,” Jack told them solemnly.

“There’s a way to do that right? Rebuild his magical barrier-thing?” Pepper gasped out, tears in her eyes.

Tony was just staring straight ahead, his eyes not looking at anything. Harry’s heart was pounding in his chest. This entire conversation couldn’t be happening. He’d never been so terrified in all his life. He never expected that anything like this could ever happen to him. He’d faced death before at the hands of Voldemort but this somehow seemed more horrifying because this was something that he couldn’t fight.

“We can try. But I won’t lie to you. I’ve never seen or heard of an occurrence of someone’s entire shield being destroyed. Even sealing small holes in the shield has been met with few instances of success. A wizard’s magical shield isn’t meant to be broken. In all honesty I’m surprised he’s still alive. When healers speculate what would happen if a person’s shield failed most believed it would be instant death from the influx of pure magic to the body. But of course that is pure speculation.”

“Then you don’t actually know if it could be fatal,” Phil stated since Tony still seemed incapable of speech.

“It is. All of Harry’s internal organs are suffering from the damage of the constant extreme exposure to the pure magic. Of course as witches and wizards we are magical beings so we have a strong, natural tolerance to magic. We can all live through this everyday exposure with hardly any adverse affects. It’s part of our world after all. But the constant, extreme exposure that Harry’s going through isn’t meant to happen to us. It's like someone is constantly sending powerful spells
at him all at once. Overexposure to any type of energy can be harmful to anyone. Then if you
factor in that the barrier was destroyed by an unknown, alien energy the effects can be even more
unstable,” Jack explained gently.

“So there’s no hope,” Pepper whispered in distress. Harry’s heart clenched at the thought.

“No, of course not. There are several things that we can try. Of course if I knew a bit more about
the staff used to destroy his shield maybe I would have a better idea on how to go about repairing
it. But I and my team will do our best to help you, Harry,” Jack assured.

“Would it be helpful if you spoke to someone who knows more about the staff?” Tony asked
suddenly, snapping out of his dazed staring. He now seemed to be almost hyper-focused, staring at
Jack with intense brown eyes.

“Yes, of course,” Jack agreed.

“Mr. Stark,” Phil protested at the same time Pepper warningly said “Tony, you can’t mean to—.”

“You want to ask Loki?” Clint demanded cutting her off.

“Anything that might better the odds,” Tony replied, deadly serious.

“I don’t think he’d be willing to work with us,” said Clint.

“Oh, he’ll be willing,” Tony growled.

“All right then, I’ll make sure we get access to him,” Phil whipped out his mobile and proceeded to
make some calls.

“The sooner we speak to Loki the sooner we can come up with a game plan,” Jack told Phil. Phil
noded in understanding.

Pepper wrapped her arms around Harry whispering reassurances into his hair. Harry leaned back
against her feeling numb with fear. He had never imagined that his magical outbursts would come
to this. None of this felt real. Tony suddenly turned to Harry and grabbed him by the shoulders. He
turned his body so that they were facing one another.

“Everything is going to be just fine. I won’t let anything happen to you. I promise,” His eyes were
fierce and Harry found himself relaxing slightly after hearing the conviction in Tony’s voice.

“I believe you,” and Harry did. In that moment Tony seemed like he was capable of making
anything happen and Harry had complete faith in him.

Tony just nodded in acceptance of his belief.

Just a few moments later Phil had gotten them access to Loki. Jack didn’t want to risk apparating
him, which Harry discovered was a method of teleporting wizards used to get from place to place
quickly. He didn’t like the way that Harry’s unguarded magical core was reacting with the magic
he himself had been using to examine him. Jack was afraid that apparating with him might
exacerbate his condition. They took one of Tony’s cars instead. Tony drove while Pepper, Phil,
Jack, and Harry rode with him. Natasha and Clint were following them in their own car while Jane
was staying behind to apprise Thor and Captain Rogers of what was happening if they returned to
the tower.

The trip to the secure SHIELD base was made in taut silence. Everyone was lost in their own
thoughts and fears. Harry was incredibly grateful for the people in his life. They were people that he had come to trust and count on, and Harry was grateful for them.

Director Fury met them at the entrance. Phil quickly explained the situation and the Director was more than willing to let them see Loki. The Director escorted them down the hall towards the holding cell where they were keeping the god. Tony kept his arm around Harry’s shoulders and Pepper was holding his hand. Jack and Phil followed along beyond them.

Loki’s glass prison was carefully guarded by a dozen SHIELD agents in full battle gear. Inside Loki was laying on a metal cot still dressed in the same leather armor he’d been wearing when Harry last saw him. An addition to his attire was the muzzle-type thing he was wearing over his mouth and chains around his wrists and ankles. He was also still sporting various cuts and bruises that he’d sustained while being beaten by the Hulk. It went to show how strong the Hulk was if the god hadn’t been able to entirely heal from them yet.

Fury had the guards move aside. They trained their weapons on the chained god while Fury went into the cell and removed Loki’s muzzle.

“We need to have a little chat with you, Loki. It seems you made an even bigger mess than we thought,” Fury growled before stepping back out.

Loki slowly moved to his feet and walked as close to the glass as the chains he was wearing allowed him. His gaze flicked quickly over all of them, resting for a moment longer on Harry. Harry noted his eyes were still green.

“And what is it that you wish to blame me for, Director?” Loki drawled in a careless manner.

“Trying to murder my son,” Tony snarled.

Harry was pretty sure that if Loki wasn’t in that cell Tony would be attacking him right now. Loki snorted. “I assure you I was never going to actually harm your son, Stark.”

“Yeah, sure. Intentional or not, you’ve still hurt him,” Tony snapped.

“What’s happened?” Loki demanded turning to look back at Harry more closely.

“He’s dying, and we need your help to try and save him,” Jack informed Loki stepping up to the glass.

“Explain,” Loki demanded, still imperious despite being a prisoner.

Jack gave him a quick explanation of the situation. Loki listened closely, hand under his chin, and eyes focused with a sharp intensity.

“Is there any information you can give me about the staff that might help us restore the shield around his magical core?” Jack questioned.

“Perhaps. Let me examine him myself,” Loki commanded, once Jack had finished his explanation.

“You think I’m going to let you get your hands on my son again?” Tony snorted.

“You will if you want him to survive,” Loki replied.

“We don’t need you,” Tony snapped.
“Oh, but I believe you do. Isn’t that right?” He turned to glance at Jack.

The healer’s face flushed slightly.

“What does he mean by that?” Tony questioned.

“The mortal magic user is out of his depth. He has no idea what to do in a situation such as this. I am your son’s only hope, Man of Iron,” Loki taunted.

“Is this true?” Tony turned to Jack, a desperate look on face.

“There are many different things that we can try. Nothing that is a one hundred percent guarantee. We’ve never dealt with anything like this before. Do you think that you can do better?” Jack asked of Loki.

“I am of Asgard. I have a knowledge of magic that your people never will,” Loki replied arrogantly. It seemed his ego was something that hadn’t been affected by the staff. If he’d been under its effects at all.

“So you think you can heal me?” Harry asked.

Loki’s light green eyes locked with Harry’s darker emerald.

“I believe so. I would need to examine you to be certain,” he replied and for some reason Harry believed him.

“And how can I trust you with my son?” Tony demanded. At this point he looked desperate.

“I would give you my word that I would not cause any other unnecessary harm to him,” Loki vowed.

“You’re the God of Lies like I can actually trust your word,” Tony rolled his eyes.

“I trust him,” Harry said.

Tony stared at him like he was crazy, and maybe he was. But he didn’t think he had anything to lose at this point.

“Oh no, he’s not going in there. That’s just what he wants you to do. He’ll use you as a hostage to escape,” Fury growled.

“It may be our only option to save Harry’s life, sir. And I think all of us are willing to take that risk,” said Phil calmly.

“I have to agree with Phil. Loki really should have a look. In this instance his knowledge of the subject is much greater than my own. And if he has a surefire way to heal Harry than all the better,” Jack agreed.

Fury glared at Loki. “Just let it go on the record that I think this is a stupid ass decision. And the moment your ass gets out of line I’m shooting you. You got it?”

Loki just nodded, glaring right back at the Director.

“Um, I still haven’t agreed to this yet,” Tony moved between Harry and Loki.

“Dad, I agree with them. You were the one who wanted to ask Loki for advice in the first place.
And I want Loki to examine me if there’s any hope to help me,” Harry said firmly.

Tony stared at him for a long time before turning to glare at Loki. “If you harm one hair on my kid’s head I’ll make what the Hulk did to you look like love taps.”

Loki dipped his head in acknowledgement of the threat.

Fury nodded to the guards. They opened the doors and trained their weapons on Loki. Harry moved to enter the cell. Surprisingly, however, Tony came in the cell with him. Loki and Tony eyed each other warily before refocusing their attention to the matter at hand.

“Come and sit here, Harry,” Loki motioned to the metal cot in the center of the room.

Harry did as he asked trying to not show just how afraid he was to be in the god’s presence once more especially after what happened last time.

Loki moved to stand in front of him. “Now, I am just going to do a brief scan to see the problem for myself and see if what I have in mind is feasible.”

Loki placed his hands on either side of Harry’s head, they weren’t touching him just hovering close by. Harry could sense his cool magic as it flowed over him. Loki closed his eyes concentrating at the task at hand. Several tense moments passed before Loki backed off. His expression was grim and Harry feared for the worst.

“It is beyond the capabilities of your mortal magic,” Harry could practically feel everyone’s shoulders slump in defeat at Loki’s words. “But there is something that I might be able to try. If you are willing?”

He looked to Harry and then to Tony.

Harry took a deep, fortifying breath. “I trust you.”

“Well, I don’t. What exactly are you planning?” Tony demanded.

“I would pour my own magic into Harry’s body and use it to wrap around his magical core to mold a new shield. This would, in essence, completely change the structure of his magical core. It would reorder it and recreate it into that of Asgardian core since my own magic will leave an imprint of itself behind for such a complicated undertaking,” Loki explained.

“And why can’t you just heal the shield thingy instead?” Tony questioned.

“Healing it would suggest that some of it still existed. Some of it may have still been left directly after freeing himself from the enchantment but the subsequent magical expulsions have destroyed any remnants of the shield. I have nothing to work with so I have to create something entirely new,” Loki stated calmly.

“And how will pouring your own magic into him not just exacerbate his condition and kill him instantly?” Jack questioned frowning.

“Not if I’m careful and direct it straight to his core,” replied Loki.

“This is purely theoretical. You have no idea if you can recreate a new shield and core. And if you do succeed you have no idea the effects it might leave him with,” Jack argued.

“But he will be alive and any of the consequences wouldn’t be life threatening,” Loki countered.
“You can’t know that!” Jack’s eyes narrowed.

“I can, I’ve spent over a millennia studying magic to predict the effects with incredible accuracy,” Loki sniped back.

“Okay, okay. Do you have any other ideas, Witch Doctor?” Tony demanded, butting in on their argument.

Jack slowly shook his head.

“Fine, then just do whatever you have to do to save my son, Sitting Bull,” Tony snapped.

Loki glared at Tony for the nickname before he turned back to look at Harry.

“Will it hurt?” Harry asked not really caring all that much if it did or not as long as it saved him. He’d just turned twelve he wasn’t ready to die yet.

“No,” Loki assured.

“Then what are you waiting for?”

Loki smirked. His hands once more went to the sides of his head. This time however he placed his surprisingly cool fingertips against his temples. Loki’s eyes locked with his own and he could feel Loki’s presence entering his mind. Harry gasped as he was suddenly falling through flashes of his own memories. He saw himself in his cupboard, weeding in the garden at Privet Drive, on the roof after being chased by Dudley’s gang, the snake at the zoo, and Hogwarts. The flashes stopped and Harry found himself standing in the Gryffindor common room.

“It’s rather garish with all the red and gold. But then so is your father’s suit,” drawled a familiar silky voice.

Harry turned to see Loki standing by the fireplace. The two of them were completely alone in the normally boisterous common room. It was rather eerie.

“What’s going on? How did we get here?” He was utterly confused. Everything felt so real.

“We aren’t actually in Hogwarts. We’re in your mind,” Loki shrugged as if it didn’t matter.

“And why are we in my mind exactly? I thought you were going to fix my core,” Harry was worried that Loki had betrayed them.

“I chose to settle your conscious in a place you feel comfortable while we wait for the process to be complete,” Loki explained.

“Right, why did you agree to do this, again?”

“Why do you trust me?” Loki countered.

“I don’t know. It just seemed to me that what happened at the tower wasn’t entirely your fault. It looked like you were under the effects of the staff too,” Harry replied.

“That is where you are wrong, child. The events that occurred in New York were entirely my doing. Don’t make me out to be some sort of sympathetic villain who is truly a hero underneath,” Loki sneered.

“I’m not. And I noticed you didn’t deny that you were being controlled by the staff,” Harry pointed
“Clever, child,” Loki chuckled. “You were able to fight off the staff’s effects. Don’t you think I could have done the same if I truly wished to?”

“So you were being controlled?” Harry persisted.

“To a degree,” Loki shrugged but Harry couldn’t help think that he looked a bit uncomfortable at this line of questioning.

“So nothing you did was your fault.”

“It is my fault, you foolish boy. I hate my father and my brother. I wanted to see them destroyed. That was all under my own power. Perhaps I did not truly wish to take over Midgard but I did want vengeance against Asgard. I was merely given the tools to do so.”

“You’re missing the point. All that stuff you did it wasn’t you. You shouldn’t be imprisoned for it,” Harry argued.

“I will serve my time and that is all there is to it. Now stop distracting me this is much more dangerous than I let on,” he said idly.

“What!?” Harry cried.

“Don’t worry, it’s not dangerous for you. If it fails you’ll be in no worse shape than you were before.”

“What about you then?” Harry questioned.

“I’m changing your magical core, Harry into that of an Asgardian’s. It’s not a simple thing. In fact it’s not something that anyone bar the All-Father should be attempting.”

“Wait, you’re turning me into an Asgardian?” Harry frowned at him.

“No, that would be entirely impossible. Only the All-Father has the ability to gift the true powers of an Asgardian. What I am doing should only change your core. I’m rebuilding your magic with my own, which is why I am forced into recreating it in the image of an Asgardian. It is the only way to salvage it since your wizard magical core is hopelessly torn to shreds. Of course there might be some unforeseen effects. This has never been done before.”

“What kind of unforeseen effects? Will I still be able to perform magic the same as before?” Harry questioned warily.

“Well, for the most part yes. You should still be able to channel your magic through your wand in the same manner you are accustomed to. You may also be capable of feats that you weren’t able to before while others may be more difficult. It is my own magic being used to recreate your core. I mentioned before I will leave an imprint on your magic.” At Harry’s continued glare Loki sighed and added, “In essence I will become your magical parent since your core will be modeled after my own with slight variations.”

“My magical parent?” Harry questioned slowly to make sure he had heard the god correctly.

“Yes, you’ll have three parents: Stark, and your witch mother are your genetic parents, and I will become your magical one since you will be inheriting your new magical core directly from me.”
“And why would you do this? Why are taking this risk for me? And why would you let me inherit your magic like this?” Harry didn’t believe Loki was a particular malicious person but he also seemed the type to do things that really only benefitted himself.

“I am only doing this to repay a debt. It is my fault that you are dying, and so I should be the one to save you. You would have never been harmed if it had not been for me, and my thirst for vengeance or my desire to prove myself. It is only right that I be the one to save you. I may have been under the spear’s power but as I said before if I had tried harder in the beginning I could have stopped all of it from happening. I also admire your courage and would not wish to be the cause of your demise. I apologize for harming you,” Loki said, eyes downcast.

“Apology accepted,” Harry told him.

Loki gave him a quick, crooked smile that Harry recognized to be a real smile. The first he had seen from the God of Mischief. Without warning Loki jerked forward with a cry, nearly falling to his knees.

“Loki?” Harry stepped towards him, concerned by his unexpected stumbling.

“I’m fine,” the god regained his footing but he looked a little bit more insubstantial than he did before. Almost like one of the ghosts in Hogwarts.

“What’s wrong?” Harry was feeling a little off himself. He was beginning to feel unnaturally warm.

“A problem has arisen and there is only one way that it can be remedied,” He stepped towards Harry a knife appearing in his hand.

“You can’t just tell me something like that, and then pull out a knife,” Harry cried backing up.

“To ease the process and make sure your body accepts the new magical core I need to give you in an infusion of my blood. The blood of an Asgardian. I didn’t think it would come to this but the process is a bit more arduous than I initially perceived. Your body is having a difficult time accepting the transition of your core and giving you my blood will insure that it does,” Loki explained.

“What!?”

“If you wish for this to work we must exchange blood,” Loki slashed his palm without hesitation.

“But isn’t this all in my head? How can we actually exchange blood here?”

“I’m a god, Harry, of course I can accomplish something so simple,” Loki replied dismissively.

“What will having some of your blood do to me?”

“Nothing, it shouldn’t have any effect beyond easing the transition of your core,” Loki assured still holding out the knife.

Harry took a deep breath. He was out of his depth in a situation like this. There was nothing for him to fight, no puzzle for him to solve. The only thing he could do was trust that Loki knew what he was doing. Harry reluctantly held out his hand to Loki. He dragged the blade quickly across his skin. It stung a bit but it was easily ignored when Loki pressed their cut palms together. Harry could feel Loki’s blood surge through him. It zinged through him, lighting up neurons and energizing every muscle. He could feel his magic reorganizing itself within him. It felt wonderful.
He hadn’t realized just how damaged he was until he was put back together again.

When the change was finally complete he found himself waking up in the real world. He could still feel the cool power of Loki’s magic passing through him as it slowly withdrew from his newly built magical core. There was a strange prickling on his hand that gained his attention. He glanced down and saw a smooth white scar on the palm Loki had cut while the two of them had been inside his mind. It was proof of what Loki had done to him. The Asgardian gently pulled away from Harry. He looked even paler and thinner than he had before. His cuts and bruises seemed to stand out even more. He looked utterly exhausted as he fell back against the cot barely able to stand up.


“Yeah, I think I am,” Harry replied turning to glance at Loki. “Thank you.”

“Yeah, thanks,” Tony muttered unwillingly.

Loki just nodded, giving Harry a small, smug smirk before his eyes seemed to slide shut of their own accord.

Tony quickly ushered him out of the cell. Those waiting outside greeted him with warm embraces. The entire process seemed to have only taken five minutes even if it had felt much longer to Harry. Everyone was just glad that it seemed to have been successful. Jack quickly checked him over to make sure he was going to be all right.

“So he’s going to be okay?” Tony questioned.

“Everything seems to check out. His core is completely stable from what I can tell and any damage to his internal organs has been healed,” Jack informed them. “Of course we’ll do several check ups to make sure that everything remains stable.”

“We’ll keep the wannabe ruler of the world here in case anything goes wrong,” Fury growled.

“What is this about keeping my brother, Director?” Thor appeared wearing his battle armor, and covered in dirt and sweat.

“Your brother actually just helped fix a problem he created. But to make sure he actually fixed the problem, we’ll be keeping him close at hand in the event we need to consult him again,” Fury told Thor.

“Perhaps you should tell me what has happened,” Thor requested brow furrowed.

Phil, Fury, and Jack quickly filled in the god on just what had happened. Thor’s brow furrowed further at the part about the magical transference.

“Magic is not my area of expertise. I trust Loki’s knowledge wholeheartedly. If he said that this will heal the son of Tony then I believe him. I would consult more on the matter with my father if you wish? There are none more knowledgeable than he,” Thor offered.

“Yeah, that would be great,” Tony agreed.

“Very well,” Thor nodded and then went to check on Loki.

Pepper, Tony, and Harry said their goodbyes to the SHIELD agents and healer Jack before leaving. They had decided to get out of there to make the most of the rest of his birthday.
“My birthdays just never turn out well,” Harry muttered, although he was extraordinarily grateful that he would be living to see another birthday.

Tony chuckled. “I promise next year no aliens, no dying, no gods well maybe Thor. But, honestly that oversized teddy bear barely counts as a god. We’ll go to my island and just spend the month there. I’ll even have them build a couple of waterslides.”

“You don’t need to build waterslides for me,” Harry insisted.

“Oh, they’re not for you. They’re for me. I always loved water slides,” Tony reminisced.

Harry laughed and threw his arms around Tony who pulled him close. He wanted to enjoy the rest of the day with his dad and Pepper.

“Let’s get ice cream,” Harry said.

“Lots of ice cream. Big sundaes with fudge and caramel and whip cream,” Tony agreed.

“Sounds like a wonderful plan to me,” Pepper agreed smiling at the two of them.

Harry smiled at them. He was happy that everything turned out all right, and that he had people who cared so much about him. He would think about the consequences of what Loki had done to him later.
It had been a week since Harry’s birthday and Tony was still reeling from the events. The day after Harry’s birthday, Harry, Pepper, and Tony had packed up and headed off to his private island. Being on the island had gone a long way to relax him but he still felt a sliver of fear every time he looked at his son. He’d almost lost him. He never wanted that to happen again. It had been the single most terrifying moment of his life. His own almost death was nothing compared to Harry’s. In that moment he’d truly understood how much Harry had come to mean to him. He would have given away everything that he owned if it meant that Harry would live to see another day.

Tony wasn’t sure what he would have done if Loki hadn’t saved him. As much as it galled him to say, the god had actually done a good job. He gave his all to save Harry. Apparently he’d been unconscious for two days after whatever he had done. Of course Harry would have never been in that position in the first place if it wasn’t for the god. Tony wished he knew more about just what it was he had done. He talked a lot to Coulson’s brother, Dr. Agent to Tony, about what had happened. Dr. Agent didn’t seem to be entirely sure either. Asgard and the abilities of its people were just as new to the wizarding world as it was to the non-magical world. But Tony wanted to know. Pepper said not to pry and just be happy that Harry was alive and healthy. Tony just wanted to make sure his son stayed that way. It was just too bad that Thor had taken Loki back to Asgard already. They had stayed just long enough to make sure that Harry remained stable before taking off. Fury had been angry by the turn of events but he couldn’t exactly argue when the All-Father demanded to have his wayward son and his cosmic cube returned.

Pepper had released a press statement about Harry sooner rather than later. Tony had decided to stay on the island longer than they had originally planned and he wanted to take advantage of that time. If they released the news of Harry now than hopefully all the excitement would die down by the time they returned. Harry had been through too much already and Tony really wanted to give him as normal of a life as he possibly could. Well, his life would never be completely normal. He was a wizard and Tony was his father. The press could be vicious especially where Tony was concerned. Tony wanted to block Harry from their influence as much as he possibly could.

Tony had set up a workbench outside on the beach and that was where he sat. Harry’s fully recovered owl was perched beside him seemingly observing everything that he did. Tony found himself chatting to the creature while he worked. He was building his first prototype for a phone that would work in the presence of magic. It was all about frequencies. Magic was a different type of than electrical energy and the two of them tended to cancel one another out. Tony just had to discover the correct wavelength so that the two would be able to work in tandem just like the arc reactor. His next step was building a suit that would work in the presence of magic. Once he’d managed it successfully he was planning on making Harry one as well. Not that he was going to tell Pepper about it. Harry was far too accident prone to not need the suit. Tony was terrified that he would be killed without having some sort of armor that he could have close at hand if he really needed it.

Harry was swimming in the ocean with Pepper. Tony smiled to see him so carefree as the two of them splashed each other. This was Harry’s first vacation and Tony was determined to make it a memorable experience. So far the three of them had had a great time. Pepper was more relaxed then he ever remembered seeing her. It went to show that she had needed the time off just as badly as Harry and he did. Tony and Harry had really been testing the strength of her nerves these past couple of months. He was grateful that Harry and she got along so well. He never realized how good Pepper was with kids until now. Although, he shouldn’t really be surprised, she had been dealing with him for years.
Tony was jolted from his reminiscing by the whirring blades of a helicopter. He looked up and saw his own personally designed Stark helicopter making its way towards the landing pad. Tony grinned at the way Harry burst out of the water.

“She’s here!” he cried racing past Tony towards the launch pad.

“I’ll beat you there,” Tony challenged and took off sprinting after him.

Harry snorted glancing back at him. The look on his face told Tony that Harry didn’t believe he was capable of the feat. And he was right. Harry beat him to the landing pad easily. Panting and feeling old Tony stood beside Harry as they watched a bushy haired girl followed by a harassed looking Dr. Banner exit the helicopter. Tony soon learned why Bruce looked so harassed when he heard Hermione’s mouth going a mile a minute as she threw rapid-fire questions at the poor doctor.

Bruce had been really resistant to coming to the island. In fact he’d nearly managed to slip away from him all together after the party fiasco. But Tony wasn’t about to let the man who saved his life get away from him. He caught up to Bruce before he could disappear to some third world country as penance for his transforming at Harry’s birthday. Bruce was too hard on himself. Tony had every confidence in the man that he would have never hurt Harry at his party. He had seen the Hulk stop in his tracks when he realized Harry had been the cause of his transformation. Tony was positive that even if Thor hadn’t thrown his hammer at him he wouldn’t have attacked Harry. The good doctor wasn’t as confident in himself. Tony was determined to help the man see the good in himself and in the Hulk.

“Hermione!” Harry cried.

“Harry!” the girl shouted back and soon she was running full tilt towards Harry bags forgotten.

She threw herself at Harry and the two stumbled by the force. Tony couldn’t help but smile as he watched the reunion between the two friends. It was obvious that the two of them were extremely close.

Tony flashed a huge smile and threw out his arms as Bruce made his way over to their small group. The man was carrying his own small bag along with Hermione’s.

“Bruce,” Tony said as he caught the man in a tight hug.

“Tony,” Bruce replied shifting uncomfortably, not used to people being happy to see him.

“Glad you could make it,” Tony clapped him on the back before releasing him.

“Yeah, well the threats to have me gagged and bound, and dragged here against my will were great motivators,” Bruce griped, but he was smiling.

Tony just grinned.

“Oh, thank you for carrying my bags, Dr. Banner,” Hermione took her bags from the man, flushing slightly at her forgetfulness. Obviously Bruce had been about as successful as Tony about getting her to call him by his first name.

“My pleasure, Hermione,” he assured the girl.

“Hi, Bruce,” Harry greeted, with a bright grin that was identical to Tony’s own.

“Hello, Harry,” Bruce said giving Harry a warm smile.
Tony didn’t miss the slight tension in his shoulders, and the guilt that sprung up in his eyes. Harry had apologized profusely for his part in causing Bruce to transform. Of course Bruce had assured him it wasn’t his fault. No, the man insisted on putting all the blame squarely on his own shoulders.

“Hermione, allow me to officially introduce Tony Stark, my dad,” Harry waved grandly to Tony. There was so much pride in his tone when introducing him as his dad that Tony teared up a bit. No, it was sand in his eye, goddamn it!

However, the sand in his eye didn’t escape Bruce’s observant gaze, and the man sent him a knowing look. Tony was pretty sure he would never live this down.

“Hello, Mr. Stark. It’s nice to finally meet you in person. And thank so much for inviting me. I’ve never been to a private island before, and it’s incredibly beautiful here,” Hermione said, formal as ever.

“It’s great to have you, champ,” Tony assured her.

“Wait until you see the workshop! It’s not as good as the R and D floors at the tower but its still amazing,” Harry informed her.

“Why don’t you go show her to her room, and then you can show her the workshop. As long as you don’t touch anything until I get there of course,” Tony warned knowing that Pepper would have his head if he let the two twelve year olds loose in his workshop.

“Okay,” Harry grinned. “Come on, Hermione!”

The two of them grabbed her things, and then took off, running down the path to the house. Tony threw his arm around Bruce’s shoulders and started to pull him along down the path with him.

“He seems better,” Bruce commented as they walked.

“Yeah, he’s doing great. No side effects from our friendly Norse God of Mischief’s mumbo-jumbo so far,” Tony agreed.

“And how about you? How are you adjusting to everything?”

“Me? I’m fine. I’m Tony Stark, Man of Tomorrow, adapting is what I do,” Tony joked.

“You’re still human, Tony. A human who saved the world by riding a nuclear missile into an inter-dimensional portal to stop an alien invasion and nearly died. You also happen to be the father of a boy who almost died and then was saved by the man who tried to take over the world,” Bruce replied casually.

“You sound like Pepper. I’m doing okay. I’m over the whole New York thing, okay. I have more important issues to think about. I would love to know more about just what the God of Hair Gel did and how it will affect Harry in the long run. But I’m trying to move on, and not obsess over it. It’s hard, though, I’m not used to restraining myself,” Tony admitted.

“I can tell,” Bruce snorted.

Tony laughed. “And how are you? Not gonna try to run away again are you?”

“No, I’ve learned my lesson, Tony, I promise I won’t. Although, I really don’t see how you can feel comfortable with me here,” Bruce disparaged.
“I don’t think there’s a better place on the entire planet for you than on island in the middle of nowhere,” Tony assured him.

“Yeah, with two children close by,” Bruce muttered.

“How was your trip with Miss Granger by the way? She seems like a ball of never-ending questions.”

“She’s an intelligent girl, very curious… and persistent,” Bruce chuckled.

“A good friend choice then?” Tony really did want to know. He always thought parents who wanted to know every aspect of their kid’s lives were paranoid. But he now found himself wanting to know every little detail of Harry’s. How else was he supposed to keep him safe?

“I think so,” Bruce agreed.

“I think she’s too much of a good influence. A rule follower, I’ll have to make sure to teach them both how to break rules, and have a little fun every now and then,” Tony mused.

“Just not too much fun,” Pepper drawled.

She stood at the end of the path, and greeted Bruce warmly. Harry and Hermione were already inside having lunch. No doubt plotting how they were going to spend their week together.

“Ah, Pepper why do you always have to ruin my good ideas?” Tony whined.

“Because your ‘good’ ideas usually end with something being destroyed, and me having to clean up the mess,” Pepper retorted.

“True, but we always end up having fun,” Tony pointed out.

Pepper smiled and gave him a quick kiss on the cheek before heading into the house.

“Now that you’re here I would like your help with a few things. You’re in on the whole wizarding world secret now not to mention that you’re an expert in several different fields that I myself am a little fuzzy in. You might be able to shed some more light on this whole magic versus tech debacle. Especially with your knowledge on gamma radiation,” Tony offered knowing that he couldn’t ask for a better work partner than Bruce.

“I don’t know how much I can help you with the magic part. But I’d be willing to try. To be honest I’d love to learn more about some of the magical animals and plants. Hermione was telling me all about various potions that things could be used for. It’s really quite fascinating. I thought I might be able to use some of them in my own research,” Bruce shrugged self-consciously.

“You’re fine just the way you are, big man. And I mean that in an entirely platonic and friend-like way. Trust me I’m quite happy in my relationship with Pepper,” Tony assured him.

Bruce rolled his eyes and headed up into the house. “So where’s my room?”

Tony laughed and followed him inside.

Hermione stayed for the entire week. Harry and she thoroughly explored the whole island. They made a robot, and Tony and Bruce made a robot. The four of them then had a robot fight much to Pepper’s exasperation. Of course she was really just amused by how much fun they all had. It was actually a pretty close fight but Bruce and Tony were victorious in the end. Harry had really
improved in his mechanical engineering knowledge from all the time he had spent watching Tony working in his workshop. Hermione stayed for the entire week but at the end of the week Hermione had to return home much to Harry’s disappointment. Pepper ended up flying back with her so that she could attend a meeting in London, and so that Hermione didn’t have to fly back alone. That left Tony, Bruce, and Harry to their own devices.

Tony quickly set up an island wide laser tag fight consisting of robot animals and booby traps full of blue slime that turned your skin blue for several days afterwards if you fell in. The three of them went wild. Tony had honestly never had so much fun before. He was pretty sure that Bruce hadn’t either. But what he was truly happy about was Harry’s reaction. He’d never seen Harry be so carefree before in the days following their playful romps around the island. Tony didn’t want to leave. Unfortunately real life called and there were projects he needed to get done. Projects he couldn’t complete from the workshop on the island. He decided to fix that and he would have it updated for their next visit.

The three of them finally headed back to New York. They were greeted by the newly redecorated Avengers Tower and the other Avengers. Thor was still in Asgard but Steve, Natasha, and Clint had all moved in already. Clint and Natasha needed a secure place to stay when they weren’t off on missions, and he was fairly certain that Steve was lonely in his apartment without knowing anyone from the current time period. Despite all of their initial hesitations about moving in Tony knew that they were all grateful to have a place to go. Tony had even put their names on the tower to make sure that they didn’t feel like they were only staying on Tony’s good will. He wanted to make them feel welcome. All of the Avengers now owned an equal share of the tower.

When Bruce, Tony, and Harry finally arrived home to the tower Steve was the only one there at the moment. Natasha and Clint were off doing whatever they did. Whether it was a mission or just a vacation, Tony didn’t know. Steve only knew that they would be back in about a week.

The weeks spent on the island had caused the frenzy of Harry’s existence to die down a bit, not to mention all of the Avenger stuff. There were still reporters camped out on the sidewalk of the tower but there were always reporters outside Tony’s residences and there probably always would be. Tony was just hoping that they would leave Harry alone. Pepper thought it would be a good idea to pick a news station that they could trust and just do an interview with the two of them. It would go a long way in further keeping the media hounds off their backs. However, he knew that Harry strongly disliked media attention, and he didn’t think that he would be comfortable in doing one. Tony would worry more about it later.

Now he was focused on building his magic resistant suit. Between Bruce and Tony the two of them had come up with the right frequency to keep the suit powered in the presence of magic. Tony’s next step was to build a compact and easily manageable suit for Harry to carry around with him. Bruce and Tony were also working on developing technology that not only worked in the presence of magic but that would actually repel it. It was the middle of August, and Harry still thought he was going to return to Hogwarts. Not that Tony had even talked with him about the possibility of not going. But Tony was certain that he still wanted to go back to Hogwarts. His desire to return was only reaffirmed after his visit with Hermione. Tony on the other hand wasn’t overly sold on the idea. But he didn’t want to tell Harry no, and cause a fight between the two of them. Harry seemed to really love the place. He had friends there. He was familiar with it and enjoyed his time there. Tony wanted him to go to a school of his choice, and be happy there. He just needed more facts about Hogwarts before he sent him off.

According to Coulson Hogwarts was one of the best magical schools around and the headmaster was one of the best they had in years. This seemed to be contradictory to what Harry had told him about the school. What with Voldemort’s possessing a teacher, and attacking Harry. The fact
that Dumbledore had been the one to place Harry with the Dursleys was also a mark against the
headmaster in Tony’s book. He wanted to get in contact with Hogwarts, and learn a little bit more
about them. Tony wanted to tour the grounds, get to know the teachers, and learn more about their
curriculum. He wanted to be reassured that his son was going to be safe if he was going to be
sending him away to school for a couple of months at a time.

Tony decided to take steps to get in contact with Albus Dumbledore. He asked Coulson if he could
contact the headmaster to see if he would be willing to come and speak with him about Harry.
Coulson assured him that he would get a message to him, and get back to Tony as soon as possible.

A few days later he was in his workshop with Bruce. Harry was hanging out with Steve. Steve was
teaching Harry basic fighting techniques. Tony was more than happy to have Captain America
teaching his son how to defend himself. He couldn’t deny the fact that he had been a little jealous
after their first lesson. Harry had come back singing the praises of the super soldier, and Tony felt a
little insecure about it. But he was working on that. Harry would really benefit having some basic
training on how to defend himself. Not to mention that Steve was also a really nice guy who would
never intentionally try to steal his son’s affections from him. Tony did feel a little intimidated.
After all he may have been Tony Stark and Iron Man but even he would have trouble living up to
the wholesome image of Captain America.

Tony was nearly finished making his suit for Harry. He’d been working on it nonstop since they
returned from the island. He just needed to decide on an appropriate color scheme for it. It couldn’t
be the same as his obviously but he wanted it to be sort of matching. Bruce complained that he was
spending too much time worrying about the colors when he should have been more focused on the
magical properties of things.

“Tony, you know that you can sleep every so often. It’s not like there’s some sort of deadline for
you to finish this suit,” Bruce noted casually.

Tony blinked thrown from his concentration. He looked up at Bruce. “I don’t know what you mean
by that.”

“Really? The circles under your eyes are huge. You always stay here even after I’ve gone to bed,
and you’ve been drinking copious amounts of coffee. You look like you’re ready to pass out, and
it’s only your sheer stubbornness that’s keeping you awake right now,” Bruce commented mildly.

If it had been anyone else Tony might have snapped at them to mind their own business. But Bruce
hardly ever commented on Tony’s more destructive behavior. That’s how Tony knew that the man
was really worried about his health.

“I can’t sleep. Not until I know that Harry’s safe,” Tony whispered simply.

He couldn’t admit to the nightmares that he had every night. Not even to Bruce or Pepper. Tony
had had horrible dreams about Harry being ripped away from him in various different scenarios
since Harry’s birthday. Not to mention the ones about falling through the portal before that. It was
eating away at him. He’d been trying to hide these struggles from everyone. He thought he had
been fairly successful so far. At least he knew where Harry had gotten his avoidance issues from.

“Harry is safe, Tony,” Bruce said gently.

“I told you about that wizard right? The one who killed his mom and is now after Harry?” Bruce
nodded. “How can I just sit around, and wait for him to try and attack my kid again without doing
anything about it? I need to do whatever I can to protect him because I’m pretty sure that he’s not
just going to give up. Crazed wackos like that never just give up.”
“Working yourself into the ground isn’t going to help Harry. In the long run you’re just going to be worn out, and you’ll start making mistakes. And you know that you’ll only worry Harry if you don’t take care of yourself. You need to sleep, and you need to relax. Trust me I know what happens when you let yourself get too worked up,” Bruce flashed him a sardonic smile.

Tony flashed a reluctant smile in return. He wasn’t quite ready to admit that what he was doing was wrong, however. He was doing the best that he could with the skills that he possessed to protect his son from forces he really didn’t know that much about.

“I’ll keep it in mind,” Tony murmured.

Bruce just nodded. He didn’t look convinced but he at least seemed to understand that he couldn’t force Tony to do something that he didn’t want to. Tony was grateful for that. The two of them went back to focusing on their individual projects. Over the past week Bruce had been looking through Harry’s beginner potion textbook and some other texts that Coulson was able to get from his brother. He was really hopeful that there might be something to tame the beast inside him. Tony was determined to convince the man that there was nothing wrong with the Hulk before he was able to find a cure for himself.

“Sir, Agent Coulson is on the line. He says that he has a Mr. Albus Dumbledore here to see you,” Jarvis suddenly chimed.

“Really? It’s about time I met the man. Send ‘em up, Jarvis,” he commanded. He would have liked to have known they were coming by sooner in advance but he was just glad that he would finally be able to confront Dumbledore.

“Right away, sir.”

“Albus Dumbledore, isn’t that the wizard that Steve worked with in World War II?” Bruce questioned.

“He’s also the headmaster of Harry’s school, and the one who placed him with his dear, sweet relatives,” Tony fiddled with a screwdriver. He had to admit he was feeling a little anxious about this confrontation. He wanted some damn good reasons for why the hell his son had been with the Dursleys, and why no one had ever noticed just how poorly he’d been treated.

“Oh, do you want me to leave so that the two of you can speak alone?” Bruce asked.

“Nah, stick around, big man. I might need you if things turn south,” Tony shrugged.

“Are you anticipating that this meeting is going to turn out badly that you would need the Hulk?” Bruce grinned.

“You never know. It’s always nice to have big green around just in case,” Tony grinned back. “No, but honestly I have no idea what to expect from this meeting. From Steve’s stories he seems like an upstanding guy. I just don’t know if I can forgive the man for leaving my son with people who hurt him like the Dursleys did,” Tony said.

“I don’t believe that I will ever forgive myself, Mr. Stark,” came a weary voice from the doorway.

Standing there with Coulson were three people. Tony was still trying to get used to the whole robe thing, and the older man’s brightly colored robes really didn’t endear them to him more. The older man looked like Merlin, plain and simple. He had a long white beard and hair, and looked as old as Harry and Steve claimed him to be. He wore half moon glasses in front of sorrowful blue eyes that gazed at Tony with a deep bone weary, sadness. The other two people that had accompanied him
were an older, severe looking woman with gray robes, and a sour faced man with greasy black hair and a sharply hooked nose. The woman appeared to be upset while the younger man wore the pinched look of someone who had just caught sight of something that disgusted him. Tony couldn’t help but wonder what his problem was.

“Allow me to introduce myself, I’m Albus Dumbledore. These are my associates Professors Minerva McGonagall and Severus Snape. They are two of Harry’s teachers at Hogwarts. They agreed to accompany me when Mr. Coulson here apprised us of the situation between Harry and yourself, and that you wanted to talk me about Harry’s life at Hogwarts,” Dumbledore greeted.

Tony just nodded. “I do. There are some inconsistencies that I want to get to the bottom of. Why don’t you all take a seat?”

“Of course, I too have several things I would like to discuss with you as well,” Dumbledore said as he moved to take a seat in one of the workbenches. The others followed suit, taking seats near Dumbledore while Coulson commandeered a seat in the middle. He was no doubt prepared to step in if things started getting heated.

“I would like to know what gives you the authority to question us about what happens with Potter and Hogwarts,” the black haired man, Snape, questioned.

“Maybe I should introduce myself. I’m Tony Stark, I’m Harry’s father. His biological father. And this is my friend, Dr. Bruce Banner.”

He heard the woman draw in a sharp breath before releasing it slowly.

“So it is true? You are claiming to be Potter’s father?” Snape sneered.

“Uh, not claiming. I am Harry’s father. I have a DNA test that proves it along with Lily’s own testimonial to back up the fact that I am his father. So that means its Stark not Potter,” Tony said glaring at the man.

If it was even possible the man’s expression grew even more pinched.

“I won’t believe it until I complete the tests for myself,” Snape said in a clipped tone.

“Sorry, but I don’t see why I need to prove anything to you. You’re just a professor,” Tony glared.

“Of course you need to prove yourself. We need concrete proof that you are who you claim you are. Not just the word of some muggle doctor and yourself,” Snape snarled back.

“Severus please, we aren’t here to fight. We are all here for a common goal. We are all here to make sure that Harry is all right,” Dumbledore chastened.

“Oh, I can assure you, he’s more than all right with me,” Tony informed them stiffly.

“You’ll have to forgive us, Mr. Stark but for the past few weeks we’ve had no idea where Harry was and it has been quite distressing. We were under the impression that Harry was safely with his relatives. When we discovered that he wasn’t with them, and that no one knew where he was we were very worried. Mr. Coulson has informed us that you are aware of the threats that are posed to Harry so as you could imagine our minds immediately jumped to the worst possible conclusions. We thought perhaps he had been kidnapped or worse. We had no idea what had happened to him, and you could say that we were a bit panicked.”

“Yeah, I can see how worried you were the first ten years of his life leaving him with people who
abused him,” Tony said sarcastically.

Dumbledore’s whole frame seemed to sag. “I take full responsibility for what happened with the Dursleys. I thought it was what was best for him at the time. I never once thought that they would treat him in such a manner.”

“Explain to me how it was even your job to place Harry with the Dursleys,” Tony wanted to know. There had to be someone else before those people.

“There was a great deal of chaos in the Ministry during that time. Harry’s placement fell to me because of the position I held in the Ministry and my relationship with the Potters. And frankly, there was no one else available to take care of the matter at the time. Voldemort’s followers were running scared after the defeat of their lord, and they needed all available wizards to help take them into custody. I acted quickly because I wanted to get Harry in a protected place as soon as could be arranged. I knew that Voldemort’s followers would seek to retaliate against the boy, and that was last thing that I wanted to happen. The man named as Harry’s guardian in James and Lily’s will was not… in a position that would allow him to take custody of him at the time nor would he have been able to anytime in the near future.”

Snape snorted at Dumbledore’s words, and Tony sensed that there was more to the story that he wasn’t telling him. Tony was determined to get all of the answers he wanted until he was satisfied with the reasons behind his son’s treatment. Dumbledore shouldn’t even bother trying to hide things from him. No one could hide things from Tony Stark.

“And who was next in line for custody? It can’t have been Petunia. Even I knew they didn’t get along that well,” Tony demanded.

“It was war time and there were many casualties. The family that was next in line for custody was attacked shortly after the Potters were, and were left incapable of caring for their own son let alone Harry. That only left the Dursleys, as they were his own living relatives. I knew Lily wasn’t close to her sister and her husband but I never once believed that they would treat him the way that they did. I don’t think even Lily would have believed her sister would have been capable of allowing her son to grow up the way that he did,” Dumbledore explained looking upset.

“So you were aware of what they were doing?” Tony growled.

“No, Mr. Stark. I knew that there was minimal affection between them. But I comforted myself with the knowledge that the blood wards built on their familial connection was the safest place in the world for him. Please believe me when I say that I was not aware that they kept him locked in a cupboard under the stairs or used him for manual labor. I would have removed him if I had known,” Dumbledore said all but pleading for forgiveness.

“And why didn’t you know about it? If you placed him with them shouldn’t you have been keeping a closer eye on him? Wasn’t there anyone keeping tabs on him? Don’t you wizards have anything like social services keeping track of things like this?” Tony questioned.

“We do not I’m afraid, and muggle child services never got involved with the Dursleys either. I would have been alerted to such a report if one was filed against them, and taken appropriate action to remove Harry from their care. A friend of the Potters and mine was supposed to be watching over him in the event that any of Voldemort’s followers discovered his location,” Dumbledore said carefully.

“Obviously they weren’t doing a very good job if they let it happen,” Tony snapped.
“I admit that in hindsight Arabella wasn’t the best choice. I thought that she would have alerted me if she noticed anything that was amiss in the slightest. She is an older woman and she didn’t recognize that anything was wrong. I didn’t recognize the signs nor did any of Harry’s muggle teachers. Harry is very adept at hiding the things he doesn’t want people to know about.”

Tony had to concede to that, considering what had happened on Harry’s birthday. Harry was really good at hiding things. That was something the two of them both needed to work on. They needed to be more open and honest with one another. They both hid things from the world that would cause others to worry or make them look weak. What it really came down to was trust. And Tony and Harry both had trouble trusting other people. This was something that Tony himself would need to overcome before he would be able to help Harry.

“Okay, that makes sense. Harry’s good at hiding things, and managed to hide what was going form everyone. But that doesn’t excuse the fact that no one noticed that something was wrong. It’s completely unacceptable that it was allowed to happen. He’s a kid and we can’t have expected him to solve this problem on his own. Someone should have been there for him. And when he didn’t want to go back there this summer, you had to have questioned why he didn’t want to go back? I mean it’s not normal for a kid not to want to go home after being away for so long,” Tony couldn’t help but think of his own experiences. He had even wanted to go home after months away at his various boarding schools. Or at least he had when he’d been younger. By the time he was a teen he’d gotten over his desire for his parent’s affection when he realized that it was never going to happen.

“As I said before I speculated there must have been some discontent in the relationship between them. I never thought it was to such a negative degree. I know now that I should have spent more time checking in on him. The truth of the matter is that I had other concerns that required my attention. I hold many different leadership positions in the wizarding world, and they often keep me very busy. I put other matters before him and delegated my role to someone whom I believed that I could trust, and for that there is no excuse,” Dumbledore said solemnly. The old man did seem to be truly repentant but Tony couldn’t just forgive him so easily for putting Harry through the things that he went through.

“No, there isn’t,” Tony agreed.

“As if you are one to judge him. You were not exactly there for Potter either,” Snape spoke up.

“Excuse me, who are you again to criticize me? I didn’t even know that I had a son,” Tony argued.

“Would you have even stepped up, and taken care of him at that time? You hardly seemed like the type,” Snape glared.

“Oh and you know all about what type of man I am?” Tony couldn’t help but feel attacked because to be honest if they had come to him a few years earlier with Harry he had no idea what he would have done. Even now he had been reluctant to take him in, there was no telling what it would have been like a few years ago. There was a huge chance that he might have tried to push him off on someone else, or just hired someone to take care of Harry for him. He would like to think that he would have done the right thing but there was honestly no telling what he would have done at that point in his life. But it didn’t mean he liked being attacked by this person who didn’t even know anything about him.

“I’ve read enough about you to know that you’re an arrogant child. You’re a narcissistic playboy with little regard for anyone else. Let alone a child you had with another man’s wife. I now know where Potter, excuse me, Stark got his own arrogance from.”
“That’s enough you greasy bastard. You can insult me all you want but the moment you start in on my kid, that’s when I stop being nice,” Tony said in a deceivingly calm voice.

“Tony is a wonderful father. There isn’t a child more loved than Harry is by Tony,” Bruce suddenly hissed.

Tony looked over to the doctor to see his eyes briefly flash a bright green. Coulson reached over to calmly place his hand on the doctor’s shoulder, and gave Bruce a gentle smile. Bruce started in surprise. He gave a quick apology before excusing himself. Tony was glad to have the man’s support. It was almost a compliment that the man got riled up enough to almost transform on Tony’s behalf.

“Gentlemen please remember we are here to talk about Mr. … about Harry. Mr. Stark you wanted to learn more about Hogwarts, and Albus and Severus you wanted to learn more about how Harry came to be here. Do you think you all can be a little more civil to one another so that we can get those answers?” demanded the older woman, McGonagall, speaking up for the first time. She sent them all sharp glares, and Tony found himself straightening up unconsciously at the reprimand. She reminded him a bit of Pepper but somehow even stricter.

Tony agreed as did Snape, albeit more reluctantly. The two of them continued to glare at one another. Tony didn’t know what the man’s problem was but he was having serious doubts about his ability to teach his son. McGonagall asked him about the order of events from his perspective. Coulson had given them a brief overview when he got in touch with them, and realized how upset they were over Harry’s disappearance. Tony was more than happy to tell them about how the Dursleys stormed the tower, and handed Harry over to him.

“We’ve been trying to get to know one another ever sense. It’s been going fairly well, all things considered. He even calls me dad now,” Tony couldn’t help but proudly tell Minerva, as she insisted he call her.

“You must know this is a very big shock to all of us, on several levels. We all personally knew the Potters. Albus and I both taught them, and Severus went to school with them. We never for a moment believed that Harry was anything other than James’s son. It is a huge shock to us. Nor were we aware of the treatment Harry received at the hands of those horrid muggles. I always knew they were the worst sort,” she said choking up a bit.

“Couldn’t agree more. Now there are a few other things I wanted to talk you all about. I’d like to hear more about Hogwarts. There were a few… incidents that had me concerned about sending Harry back there,” Tony told them.

“I assure you that Hogwarts is one of the safest places in the wizarding world,” Dumbledore assured, bristling a little bit.

“Then explain to me how the man that’s already tried to kill Harry once was able to get a teaching position there, and almost finish the job,” Tony leaned back in his chair giving him a pointed look. He was curious as to what explanation they could possibly have.

Dumbledore nodded looking uncomfortable. “I was aware that it might still be possible for Voldemort to still be alive. I was made aware that he was going to try and take the Philosopher’s Stone, something that would be able to restore him to his full power. I made arrangements to protect it within the school. For as I mentioned Hogwarts has some of the strongest wards in the world, and I thought it would be the safest place for it. I had no idea that Voldemort was able to possess a staff member that I both knew and trusted. Again I can only blame myself for the oversight.”
“You aren’t the only one Albus. The rest of us were fooled by Quirinus as well,” Minerva pointed out.

“Okay so he tricked you. But why the hell would you put something like that in a school with children? I mean yeah you said it was one of the safest places but you were making a target out of a school full children, for a mad man. There had to be other options,” Tony remarked.

“I overestimated my own power. I thought that it would be better to have the stone as close to me as possible. I also put too much trust in the fact that I would be able to keep the stone’s location a secret,” Dumbledore replied calmly.

“So you really screwed up. How can I be assured that this sort of thing isn’t going to happen again? What steps are you going to take to protect Harry from this Voldemort guy?” Tony questioned.

“Yes, SHIELD would also like to know more about what steps are going to be taken to ensure the removal of the dark wizard known as Voldemort. We would also like to know how it is that he is still alive yet the British Ministry didn’t think to inform the American Wizarding Government of such a monumental threat,” Coulson said in his mildest yet most dangerous tone of voice.

“Unfortunately our ministry is unwilling to even listen to the possibility that Voldemort might still be alive. If your organization is willing to help us look into the matter, then it would be quite helpful,” Dumbledore replied. “As for Harry’s safety. I want nothing more than for him to return to Hogwarts, and you have my complete assurance that I will do everything within my power to ensure that Harry and the rest of my students are safe from Voldemort.”

“I want specifics. I want to see the school. I want to meet the teachers, and learn more about Hogwarts before I can fully trust you with my son,” Tony informed him.

“Yes, of course. You’re more than welcome to. We would also like to meet with Harry, and see how he is adjusting to all of this,” Dumbledore commented.

“I think we can do that,” Tony agreed. “In fact I think there might be another familiar face here for you to see. Come on let’s all go up to the penthouse. It’s almost time for lunch, and we can all sit down in a more comfortable setting to continue this conversation.”

The five of them took the elevator up in silence. It gave Tony time to think about the conversation they had just had. While it went a long way in reassuring him that Dumbledore and Hogwarts weren’t all bad it hadn’t completely reassured him. The wizarding world seemed like a really dangerous place for Harry, especially the British wizarding world. Of course he couldn’t be too judgmental considering the danger he had put his own son in within just a month and a half of knowing him. But Tony was terrified of sending him back across the ocean where he wouldn’t be close by to step in if something went wrong. He would have to talk to Harry about it. If Harry was really set on going back Tony was less reluctant to send him after speaking with Dumbledore and Minerva. Snape seemed like an ass but he figured that it might have something to do with the fact that he had gone to school with James and Lily. They must have been friends, and he wasn’t too thrilled to discover that Tony had had an affair with Lily.

Tony shook away the guilt that surged up, and had Jarvis get in touch with Steve and Harry. Jarvis assured him that they would be up shortly after their most recent sparing session. Tony was looking forward to both Steve’s and Dumbledore’s reaction to seeing each other. He thought it would do the Cap a lot of good to talk with someone he had actually known before becoming a Capsicle.

Tony waved them towards the couches, and let them all get settled comfortably in the living room before starting to ask some rapid-fire questions of Dumbledore. The man did his best to keep up but
Tony was pleased to see that he was more than a little flustered by Tony’s in-depth and persistent questioning. Tony learned quite a bit about Lily, Voldemort, and the war that had gone on in Britain. He learned about Sirius Black who had betrayed Lily and James to Voldemort, which gave Voldemort the window of opportunity to go and kill them. He’d been James’s best friend and their so-called Secret Keeper for the spell protecting them called the Fidelis. Dumbledore also told him a bit more about Voldemort’s agenda and his Death Eaters. He also told him about his own organization called the Order of the Phoenix. It was a secret organization apparently since the Ministry of Magic had been pathetic in their attempts to stop Voldemort.

“I want to know more about just why Voldemort was after the Potters,” Tony observed. “I mean from what you’ve said, it seems like they were deliberately hiding from him and that he was determined to kill them. Why?”

Snape and Minerva both glanced at Dumbledore looking curious about how he would respond. Dumbledore himself appeared pensive while Coulson looked politely attentive but Tony knew the agent had to be as interested in his answer as Tony was.

“There was a prophecy that Voldemort heard that led him to believe he must kill Harry,” Dumbledore finally admitted. Snape drew in a sharp breath and his normal dour expression actually seemed a bit uncomfortable with the turn in the conversation.


“Prophecies are quite a common thing in the wizarding world. If made by a credible seer you can almost guarantee that it will come to pass,” Coulson spoke up.

“Right so what was this prophecy about?” Tony drawled not really sure if he believed that someone was capable of telling the future.

“It foretold that a child would be born at the end of July to a couple that had thrice defied him who would be able to defeat him,” explained Dumbledore.

“And Harry was the only who fit that description?” Tony raised one eyebrow feeling skeptical.

“Voldemort believed that he did even though there was another boy who fit the prophecy. Of course with the revelation of Harry’s parentage it complicates matters,” Dumbledore frowned.

“So Harry might not even be the child of the prophecy?” Coulson questioned.

“I believe that he is. There was more to the prophecy and Harry fits those requirements,” Dumbledore explained.

“Perhaps you should tell us the whole prophecy,” Coulson suggested even though Tony knew it was more of a command and less of a suggestion.

Dumbledore hesitated.

“He’d my son. I have a right to know about the things that might be a threat to him,” Tony growled.

Dumbledore sighed and dutifully began to repeat the prophecy, “The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches… born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies… and the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not… and wither must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives… the one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies…”
Tony mulled it over. “The scar on his forehead, you think that’s the ‘mark him as his equal’ part?”

“I do,” Dumbledore nodded.

“I don’t want my son fighting some dark wizard,” Tony said firmly.

“I’m afraid Voldemort won’t leave Harry alone until either he or Harry is dead,” Dumbledore murmured.

“Well then, I guess I’ll have to take care of him then. Harry just turned twelve. It shouldn’t be his responsibility to defeat this guy,” Tony argued.

“Prophecy is a tricky thing, Mr. Stark, Harry might not be able to avoid it the confrontation,” Dumbledore cautioned.

“We’ll see about that,” Tony replied not in the least bit deterred.

“You seem like a man capable of anything you put your mind to Mr. Stark,” Dumbledore smiled, a twinkle lighting his blue eyes.

“Dad! Natasha and Clint are back! Steve and Natasha were sparring, it was brilliant,” Harry exclaimed as he rushed out of the elevator, completely ignoring their company.

“Who won?” Tony asked curiously.

“Natasha,” Steve answered rubbing his back and wincing.

“Ha! Jarvis please tell me you got that on video.”

“Of course, sir,” Jarvis replied sounding insulted that Tony would even think otherwise. Or at least as insulted as an AI was capable of being insulted.

“Now, that that’s covered, maybe now you can notice the fact that we have some company,” Tony pointed out.

“Professors! What are you doing here?” Harry gaped, looking a tad nervous.

“Your father asked us to come for a visit to discuss your return to school,” Dumbledore replied calmly, smiling at Harry.

“I don’t have to go back to the Dursleys do I? I mean they’re in prison now so I can’t really go back anyway,” Harry said sounding nervous and glancing at Tony.

Tony pulled him down to sit beside him to reassure him. “You’re not going anywhere, kiddo.”

“Yes, Harry, I would never dream of sending you back even for the protection the blood wards provided. I apologize for not heeding your concerns more carefully,” Dumbledore said solemnly.

Harry shrugged. “S’okay.”

“No, Harry it’s not. And I am deeply sorry for not listening to you either,” said Minerva, looking upset.

Harry smiled. Minerva smiled back looking relieved that Harry seemed happy.

“Albus, you really are alive,” Steve breathed looking stunned as he stared at the older man.
Dumbledore turned to glance at Steve and the older wizard looked as stunned as Steve did.

“Steve? It can’t really be you,” Dumbledore gasped.

“Yeah, it’s a long story,” Steve murmured, rubbing the back of his neck self-consciously.

“I would love to hear it. For so long I mourned your death, and wished there was something that I could have done. You were a truly heroic young man. We could not have won the war against Gellert without your help in defeating Hydra,” Dumbledore praised.

Steve blushed but he sat down, and told them all about what had happened to him, and how he managed to survive. Tony took that moment to talk with Harry.

“So you want to go back to Hogwarts?” Tony asked him.

“Yeah,” said Harry sending him a confused glance, which Tony interpreted to mean: ‘Of course I do you idiot’.

“I just wanted to know what with the whole Voldemort thing. You don’t have to go. You can go to a school close by,” Tony offered hopefully.

“I always just assumed that I was going to go back. I told you how much I love Hogwarts, and I want to go back. My mum went there and I have friends there. Do you not want me to go back?” Harry asked, examining him closely.

“No, I just want to make sure that it’s what you want,” Tony shrugged dismissively. There was no way he was going to let on just how he nervous he was to send Harry away. He figured that it was something that all parents suffered from, letting their children go.

“It is,” Harry assured him. “Although, I’ll miss being at the tower. There’s no telling what kind of trouble you’ll get up to without me around.”

Tony laughed. It looked like Harry would be going back to Hogwarts.

“Can we go shopping in Diagon Alley? I can show you and Pepper all around. And maybe you can all come to one of my Quidditch matches,” Harry said eagerly.

“Sounds great,” Tony agreed.

Harry really did love Hogwarts, and Tony couldn’t bear to pull him out of it. Maybe it would even be good for Harry to get away from all the craziness that had become Tony’s life. Dumbledore and the other professors had reassured him about Harry’s safety at Hogwarts, and it wasn’t like Tony’s life was exactly safe with his numerous enemies. Tony tried to relax. If anything did happen then all he had to do was bring Harry home. It wouldn’t hurt to give them another chance.

Tony invited the British wizards to dinner. It gave them the chance to meet Pepper, Natasha, and Clint. Bruce also returned looking more relaxed. Steve and Dumbledore kept up with their stories from the war. Tony hadn’t seen Steve quite so animated as he was speaking with Dumbledore. It was probably great therapy for the man to talk about it. After all to him the war must have seemed like it happened just last week. Not almost seventy years ago.

While everyone seemed to be having a great time, Tony couldn’t help but notice that Snape went off to be by himself. Tony decided to go and confront the man. He had observed the man’s obvious dislike of himself and of Harry. Harry likewise didn’t seem to like the man, and Harry liked almost everyone. The kid had even felt somewhat guilty about Loki.
“So what’s your deal?” Tony drawled as he approached the man.

He was out on the refurbished balcony that had originally been destroyed by Loki and Thor’s little brotherly spat. Everyone else was still inside enjoying dinner, and conversation. Snape turned to fix him with a dark expression.

“I have no idea what you are talking about,” Snape sneered.

“Right, so I’m just imagining your hostile attitude?”

“I came out here to be alone, if you are incapable of noticing. I have no desire to be bothered with your presence,” Snape replied.

“Yeah, well this is my house so you don’t really have a choice,” Tony informed him.

“And here I thought that no one could be more insufferable than James Potter,” Snape muttered.

That caused Tony to pause in thought. Then it all clicked in his wonderfully brilliant mind. He felt like Sherlock Holmes after just solving a difficult case.

“Oh, I get it,” Tony told him.

Snape just glared at him, unwilling to fall for the bait.

“You liked her. Schoolboy crush but she fell for someone else so you take it out on the son of the man who you think stole her from you,” Tony observed out loud.

“What are you blathering on about?” Snape demanded angrily.

“You. You liked Lily; more than liked considering you’re still being an ass about losing her. And you’re taking it out on me and Harry,” Tony explained.

“You know nothing! I’m sure you hardly even knew her. You used her and left her. You didn’t deserve the affection of someone like Lily,” Snape snarled.

“Well, Lily thought differently. And I may not have been the most shining example of someone you’d want to get involved with but I never forced Lily into anything she didn’t want to do. There’s no one to blame about what happened but Lily and myself. So be as nasty as you want to me. Harry’s the only one who’s truly innocent in this whole thing. So I don’t want to see you continuing to treat Harry the way you have been,” Tony warned.

“I will treat your son the way that I see fit,” Snape scowled.

“Yeah, that’s not going to work for me, Snape. Harry’s a good kid and if I hear you’re being intentionally cruel to him, you won’t like what will happen,” Tony informed him.

“Mr. Stark, your arrogance is truly astounding. Your son is a pampered prince whom the entire wizarding world adores. If my treatment of him helps to deflate his ego a bit than I am glad to do it. And I do not take threats to my person lightly,” Snape drawled darkly.

Tony chuckled. “Wow, you are unbelievable. You can’t see beyond your own bitter disappointment to realize what is right in front of you. Harry is an incredible kid and you’re letting your hatred keep you from seeing that. It’s not his fault that Lily chose someone else, and you can’t keep blaming him for your own mistakes. I mean it about Harry. Leave him alone. I really don’t react well when other people touch my stuff and you really don’t want to answer to me,” Tony
turned and went back into the house.

If he heard any more out of Snape he might end up doing something rash and cause some sort wizard-human war. He was done with the man, and if he heard anything about him from Harry he was going to find a way to exact revenge on the hateful man.

Dumbledore arranged a day for him and Pepper to come and visit Hogwarts before Harry had to go back. Steve had also been invited. Once the schedule had been worked out the three wizards took their leave. Tony spoke briefly with Coulson before he too departed. He wanted to make sure that he would have his support when dealing with the Ministry of Magic. Their government seemed truly corrupted, and he didn’t want any problems from them. Coulson of course assured his and SHIELD’s full support.

“That was an eventful day,” Tony mused.

“You’re not going to sleep tonight, are you?” Bruce muttered.

“I’m not sleeping until Harry goes back to school,” Tony replied. “Probably not even then.”

“I’ll make some coffee,” Bruce sighed.

Tony flashed him a bright grin. There would be time for more work tonight after everyone else went to sleep. For now he gathered everyone up, and sat them down to watch a movie. He did his best to try and enjoy the movie. But all his fears for Harry’s safety kept nagging at him. Whatever time he spent worrying would be worth it however, to see Harry happy. Tony snorted at the thought of how far he had come in such a short amount of time. Even just a year ago he would have never believed himself capable of looking out for someone else beside himself. Now he had himself a pretty good-sized family. Pepper was his significant other. Harry was his magic wielding son. Bruce was his brother with anger management issues. Steve was of course the doddering old grandpa while Clint and Natasha were the crazy aunt and uncle who were secretly assassins. Coulson was the scary, overprotective uncle who worked for the government.

Tony smiled. He wouldn’t have traded any of it for anything.
Tony had been acting really strangely ever since Dumbledore, McGonagall, and Snape came to visit. He'd been spending most of his time in his workshop. When Harry tried to go and spend some time with him in there he’d kick him out claiming that he was making him a surprise. He was excited about the possibility of a surprise but he was a little annoyed about not getting to spend a lot of time with Tony. He would be going back to Hogwarts soon, and he wanted to spend as much time as he could with his dad.

Harry was beginning to feel more than a little conflicted about returning to Hogwarts. On the one hand he was extraordinarily excited about going back. He really missed Hogwarts and all its strange little quirks. He missed his friends and being able to do magic whenever he wanted to. But on the other hand he was really going to miss Avengers Tower and all of the Avengers. Most of all he was going to miss his dad. Harry had dreamed of having a dad for so long. But not even in his wildest dreams had imagined that he would have one like Tony. He was funny, kind, intelligent, and brave. He was a real life superhero, and the best part of all was that he proved, several times, that he would always be there for Harry. Tony wanted to be his dad. Harry couldn’t have asked for anything more.

A week and half before he was supposed to return to Hogwarts they had decided to take a trip to Diagon Alley. Tony had gotten in touch with the Grangers and Weasleys so that they would meet them there. Harry wasn’t sure how he had gotten in touch with the Weasleys but it made him nervous to think of Ron’s and his family’s reaction to his father being someone other than James Potter. It was almost a relief to have had Tony being the one to explain the situation to them instead of Harry having to do it himself. Phil had gotten them a portkey to take them directly to Diagon Alley. Harry, Tony, and Bruce had been fascinated by the concept of a portkey. It would be able to transport them all the way across the Atlantic Ocean in just a matter of moments.

The day of the trip dawned. Harry practically jumped out of bed in his excitement. He couldn’t wait to see his friends and to properly introduce Tony to Ron. He also couldn’t wait to introduce Tony to the place where he himself was first introduced to magic. After the shopping trip they would be taking a tour around Hogwarts. Harry was thrilled at the chance to show Tony around the castle he considered to be his first home. It was the first place where he felt like he actually belonged, and he desperately missed it. However, it was no longer his only home. In the two and half months since Harry had started living with Tony he had come to see the tower as his home, and all of it’s occupants as his family.

Harry dressed quickly before rushing out to the kitchen. The portkey was set to leave for 7:17 am so that they would arrive in London at 12:17 pm since they were five hours ahead of them. Tony complained about the strangely specific time but Pepper quickly shut him up.

As he entered the kitchen he was greeted by all of Avengers minus Thor of course, and plus Pepper and Phil. Phil was wearing his typical suit while everyone else was in their pajamas. Bruce was making omelets while Clint was flipping pancakes with practiced ease. Natasha was chatting with Pepper about some of the new deals that Stark Industries was working on. Natasha had briefly worked for Stark Industries while she was spying on Tony for SHIELD. Pepper still valued her opinions and insight. Tony and Phil were trying to explain a movie reference to Steve that he obviously didn’t get. Phil explained with extreme patience while Tony, in shocked outrage that Steve didn’t understand the reference, insisted on having movie nights from now until Steve was up to date on all pop culture references.
All of the Avengers had been living together in the tower now for a couple of weeks, and Harry really looked forward to the times when everyone was all together. It was like be a part of a large and chaotic family, something Harry always dreamed of having. Breakfast was one of his favorite times of the day since everyone was always so relaxed, still dressed in their pajamas with sleep ruffled hair.

“Hey kiddo,” Tony greeted, being the first to notice him. The others all called various greetings as he made his way towards them.

“Good morning,” Harry said as he sat down at the table.

“Are you excited about today?” Phil questioned.

“Yeah, I can’t wait to go,” Harry enthused.

“Is it all right if Steve, Bruce, and Agent go with us today, Harry?” Tony asked.

“Yeah, I don’t mind. The more the merrier,” Harry agreed easily, smiling at the other men.

“Steve here wants to meet up with Dumbles again and Bruce is dying to get more information on potion ingredients,” Tony explained.

“And I have some business I need to conduct with the Ministry of Magic. I will be able to spend some time with all of you after it’s completed,” Phil explained.

“It’ll be great. I can show Steve and Bruce all around Diagon Alley and once you’re finished, Phil, we can all get ice cream at Fortescue’s,” Harry was all too eager to have them all come along. He couldn’t wait to show off his new family to his friends.

“So this magic street, what does it sell? I mean can you buy big black cauldrons and eye of newt?” Clint snorted.

“Yup,” Harry chirped, giving Clint a bright smile.

Clint stared back a frown creasing his face. “All this witchy stuff is just a bit too over the top for me.”

“Wizard stuff. I’m a wizard. Witches are girls,” Harry told him in exasperation. This was probably the hundredth time they’d had this conversation.

“Yeah, Katniss, get it right,” Tony said looking amused by Clint’s discomfort.

Harry did feel bad for him. Clint didn’t have a good experience while being under the influence of Loki’s staff. He’d worked with enemies of SHIELD to try and take down the people he worked with and cared about. He’d been forced to kill people against his will. The experience had, understandably, made him more than a little leery of magic or at least the brand of mind control that Loki had been using. Clint didn’t treat Harry any differently despite his discomfort with magic. He was intelligent enough to know that just because Harry was magical it didn’t automatically mean he was a monster. Clint’s obvious acceptance of him meant a lot to him especially knowing what Clint had suffered. Clint’s acceptance didn’t stop him, however, from teasing him about magic.

Clint smirked, “Yeah, my bad. It’s just the wands and the brooms. It’s so cliché it doesn’t seem real.”
“Brooms are awesome. You have to come see one of my Quidditch matches.”

“I’d love to see how anyone can make a sport played on flying brooms be interesting,” Clint agreed easily, not looking overly impressed.

“Quidditch is actually really dangerous because it’s played so far off the ground, and at such high speeds. Not to mention the bludgers. They’re like bowling balls and it’s their job to hit players,” Harry explained causing Clint to look a bit more interested.

“What!?” said Pepper in alarm. Tony’s eyes were wide as he glanced at Harry.

“Don’t worry they don’t actually let anyone get hurt too bad. Not like professional Quidditch,” Harry reassured them.

“Quidditch is quite tame in comparison to Quodpot. I should know. My nephew is on his school team. He wants to become a professional player despite my sister-in-law’s concerns,” Phil added supportively.

Pepper was still frowning, and Tony was trying to look nonchalant like it really didn’t bother him that much. But Harry knew him well enough now to recognize the slightly pinched look for the worry it really was.

“Don’t worry, I’m always careful,” Harry told them, crossing his fingers behind his back.

Clint snorted obviously not buying it but didn’t comment. They all went back to their breakfasts.

Once they were finished the six of them that would be travelling to Diagon Alley met in the living room. Phil produced the portkey, which turned out to be a potted plant.

“This is going to take us across an ocean?” Tony commented skeptically looking a tad nervous.

“Yes, Mr. Stark,” Phil said blandly. Harry noticed the tiny spark of amusement in his eyes. “Now I need everyone to take a firm hold of the pot. It’s now a quarter past seven so it will be activating shortly.”

“Yeah, this wizard stuff is really weird,” Clint muttered from his space sitting on the counter munching on some bacon.

“You may feel a bit of discomfort,” Phil mentioned with a minute left until their departure.

“How much discomfort?” Bruce questioned looking a bit worried.

Phil just gave a small smile. Harry and Tony shot each other nervous looks.

The clock struck 7:17. All at once Harry felt like something hooked him behind his navel and yanked him. Harry was vaguely aware of the other’s gasps of surprise as they went spinning out of control. Harry gripped the edge of the pot for all he was worth terrified that he would be thrown off and end up somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. He managed to maintain a strong hold but he wasn’t prepared for the sudden landing. He dropped to the stone street in a pile with everyone else. The only one who was able to stick the landing was, of course, Phil. He looked down at the rest of them with his normal placid expression as they tried to reorient themselves.

“What the hell was that?” Tony complained, climbing to his knees.

“I think that was worse than the rides at Luna Park on Coney Island,” Steve agreed.
“No, that was worse than Tony’s driving,” Pepper panted as she got to her feet.

Bruce just groaned, rubbing at his back as he stood up.

“I think you’ll find wizarding transportation, while very quick, can be rather… unpleasant. You’ll get used to it the more you use it,” Phil said pleasantly.

“Um no, that was my first and last time using a potted plant to get anywhere. I’m a billionaire and a genius I bet I can figure out a better teleportation method,” Tony had a faraway look in eyes, already mapping out his first prototype.

“Tony,” Pepper said waringly.

“Okay, okay. I’ll save that thought for later,” Tony sighed brushing off his suit.

“Can we go now?” Harry asked eagerly.

While they had been speaking Harry had noticed that the portkey had brought them to a small alcove just off Diagon Alley. He liked Horizont Alley but Diagon Alley would always hold a special place in his heart. It was the first place that he had been introduced to the magical world.

“Lead the way, kiddo,” Tony grinned.

“I’ll meet you all around 1:30 at Fortescue’s,” Phil gave them all a quick nod before blending seamlessly into the large crowds moving through the street. There were a lot of families out and about to get their shopping supplies.

“We’re supposed to meet them in front of the entrance to the Leaky Cauldron, which is this way,” Harry informed them as he dragged them along in his eagerness to get there.

Steve and Bruce were both amazed by Diagon Alley, which made it difficult to move them along quickly. Tony and Pepper were a bit more acclimatized to seeing magic performed from their previous trips to Horizont Alley. They were interested in observing the different surroundings and the older buildings. Harry pointed out the shops as they walked by but he didn’t stop. They would have more time to explore once they had met up with Ron and Hermione’s families. He just wanted to get this initial meeting out of the way as quickly as possible. He had to admit that he was feeling more than a little nervous about the Weasley’s reactions.

Once they got close to the entrance it wasn’t too difficult to catch sight of the Weasleys. A large group of red heads could stand out in any crowd.

“Ron!” Harry called out to him once they’d gotten close. He ran the rest of the way to meet Ron.

“Harry!” Ron yelled back running to meet him halfway.

They gave each other a quick tight hug.

Fred (or was it George?) greeted “Harrykins you grew—”

“A little over the summer,” George (or Fred) finished as the twins trotted over to them.

“Hey!” Harry complained glaring at the twins who just grinned back unrepentantly.

“So this is the famous Ron Weasley?” Tony came up behind them.

“Yes, sir,” Ron nodded, looking up a Tony and shifting nervously.
“It’s Tony, freckles.”

Ron flashed him a quick smile, some of the tension leaving him.

“He’s really your dad, Harry?” Ron asked in concern.

“Yup,” Harry agreed proudly, looking over at Tony.

“It’s nice to meet you,” Ron said finally accepting the situation after seeing just happy Harry was.

“You too,” Tony nodded. “And who are you two?”

“Gred and Forge,” Fred and George introduced together before giving a sweeping bow, which had Tony chuckling.

“They’re my older brothers, Fred and George,” Ron said in exasperation.

“Good luck figuring out who’s who,” said Harry.

Tony looked at them critically for a few moments.

“George,” Tony said pointing to the twin on the left. “And Fred,” he said pointing to the twin on the right.

The twins gaped at him in open amazement.

“How did you know?” Fred asked.

“Our own mum can’t tell us apart,” George agreed in awe.

Tony just flashed them a secretive grin. The rest of the Weasleys soon joined their group.

“Oh Harry, dear,” Mrs. Weasley greeted sweeping him up in a tight hug.

“Hullo, Mrs. Weasley,” Harry managed to choke out despite the air being crushed from his lungs.

Behind them Tony was greeting a tall, thin red haired man who must have been Ron’s dad. The adults quickly went about introducing each other. Harry took note of how standoffish Mrs. Weasley acted around Tony. She was very kind to everyone else but she seemed to be a bit cold towards Tony. Harry had a few guesses as to why. Harry really hadn’t thought a lot about how people would react to his having a different father. He’d purposely not thought about it. In reality he had always known that people’s reactions probably wouldn’t be positive about this revelation. James and Lily Potter were icons in the wizarding world. They were idolized just as much as Harry himself was. They were seen as the perfect couple, martyrs who sacrificed themselves for their son. The wizarding world’s reaction probably wasn’t going to be very favorable when they discovered Harry’s true paternity. It was just a bit jarring to witness it from the mother of his best friend.

The rest of the introductions were made quickly. They had to redo them all when the Grangers made their arrival. It took them a while to get all sorted out but they finally set off towards Gringotts in one large group. Harry did his best to forget about his newly awakened anxiety. He wasn’t ready yet to confront the possible negative reactions he might receive when the truth came out. He just wanted to enjoy himself today with the people he cared about most in the world.

Mr. Weasley seemed very interested in muggle technology and instantly began questioning Tony all about it. Occasionally Mr. Weasley would mutter things like ‘amazing’ and ‘fantastic’ when Tony and Bruce explained something simple like the toaster. Steve seemed like he was benefiting
from the conversation on modern technology as well. Harry had to stifle his laughter when he saw Tony’s stunned expression when Mr. Weasley actually asked him about the function of a rubber duck.

Harry, Ron, and Hermione walked a little bit away from the group so that they could have the chance to speak alone. They had a lot to catch up on, especially Ron and Harry.

“Wow, Harry. I can’t believe it. I mean when mum told me I thought Fred and George somehow convinced her to pull a prank on me. But then mum would let the gnomes in the garden live in the house before she went along with one of their pranks. I mean how did it all happen exactly?” Ron gasped out.

Harry quickly explained everything that had happened since leaving Hogwarts. He told him about the trip to New York and meeting Tony. He explained to him about his mum and Tony’s relationship, about how Tony confronted the Dursleys for him, and Tony’s involvement in the alien invasion on New York.

“That’s incredible!” Ron crowed once he got to the part about the attack on New York. He seemed to be completely okay with the fact that Harry had a different father, and was completely focused on learning more about the air crafts the aliens had flown around in. But that was one of the reasons why Harry liked having Ron as friend.

The British wizarding world had heard about the attack but apparently they didn’t think aliens from another world and Norse gods were important. They only had a little article about it in the *Daily Prophet*, and were otherwise unconcerned. The wizarding world really almost was a separate world from the muggle world in the sense that they paid very little attention to muggle affairs. Harry realized that this really wasn’t a great idea. The non-magical world was changing rapidly. It was creating people with abilities that were beyond those of what the wizarding world could understand if they didn’t stay up to date with scientific advancements.

“Isn’t it though? The discovery of alien life is ever so exciting,” Hermione gushed looking starry eyed.

“Did the wizarding world know about Asgard?” Harry asked.

“No, just stories is all,” Ron shrugged and asked more about the types of weapons the Chitauri had used.

Hermione and Harry frowned at the lack of information. They should have expected it. Ron was far from a scholar. They’d have more luck in the library looking up the wizarding world’s views on Asgard. They hadn’t seen anything in their searches before but they hadn’t specifically searched for it before either. Harry was just glad that Ron seemed to be taking the whole new father thing fairly well. It was a relief to have his easy acceptance of the matter. He was a bit jealous that Hermione had gotten to go to Tony’s island but Harry assured that he would definitely get to go on the next trip.

Once they arrived at Gringotts Steve and Bruce were able to exchange their American dollars for galleons. The two of them decided to go off on their own, and look around while the rest of them did their school shopping. Tony was going to exchange money as well before Harry mentioned his vault. However, Harry wished he hadn’t because it made him question whether or not he even had a right to the money in there.

“Hmm, why don’t we leave that for you when you’re older? You can use it for extra spending money in college or something,” Tony suggested not realizing Harry’s inner turmoil.
“Yeah, you’re probably right,” Harry murmured glancing away to look at the Weasleys. He felt bad knowing he had all that gold and Tony was a billionaire while they would barely be able to afford all of the books they would need for Defense Against the Dark Arts this year.

“Hey, what’s wrong?” Tony questioned catching on.

Having grown more comfortable with Tony since his birthday incident he decided to confide his worries to him, “What if it’s James’s money? I don’t feel right taking it.”

“Harry, don’t think like that. That money was left to you by your mom and James. I’m sure both of them would want you to have it now. But if you really don’t feel comfortable using it you don’t have to. I think we both know that I have more than enough money to spend in several lifetimes,” Tony assured him.

“I also feel sort of bad just letting it sit there when the Weasleys actually need it,” Harry went on.

“Maybe there’s something I can do about that,” Tony looked thoughtful.

“I don’t think they would be the type to just take money,” Harry thought they might get offended or upset if Tony just tried to give them money.

“No, nothing like that. Don’t worry about it, kiddo. This is adult stuff and though it might be difficult to believe, I am an actual adult. I’ll take care of it,” Tony assured him.

Harry relaxed a bit. Tony was right and Harry was glad that he had confided in him. It was nice to have some around he could trust to take care of his worries for him. He didn’t have to carry the weight of the world by himself anymore. He had Tony on his side now, and he was a very good person to have on your side.

They spilt off into groups. Pepper went with Mrs. Weasley and Ginny. Fred and George met up with their friend Lee Jordan, and Percy likewise split from the group. Mr. Weasley took the Grangers for a tour of the alley, after a bit of reluctance Tony went with them. That left Harry, Ron, Hermione with an hour to go and explore before they needed to meet up with everyone else at Flourish and Blotts. It was nice for the three of them to have the chance to reconnect. It was like they had never been apart, and he was once again truly grateful to have them as friends. Harry was able to tell them more about his summer, and how much his and Tony’s relationship had grown. Ron and Hermione also told him all about their own summers.

“So, your dad’s a good guy then?” Ron asked in concern.


“He really is very nice,” Hermione added.

“It must have been strange, finding out your dad was someone completely different,” Ron told him in rare moment of emotional understanding. Ron may not have been the best at it but the fact that he still cared meant a lot to Harry.

“It really was. I wanted to tell you but I didn’t really have a way to contact you,” Harry apologized.

“S’okay. I understand,” Ron shrugged. “We can use the floo. I think the network is able to connect over the ocean.”

“Phil mentioned the floo. It’s be wicked to talk through the fire,” Harry grinned.
“So did you really meet a god? Was he scarier than You-Know-Who?” Ron wanted to know.

Hermione looked interested as well. During their time on Tony’s private island they had been so busy exploring Tony’s lab that they hadn’t spent a lot of time talking about Harry’s interactions with Loki. He hadn’t told her anything about the change in his magical core and he wasn’t sure if he would at the present moment out in public where anyone could overhear. It was definitely something he wanted to keep a secret at the present moment.

“He was more powerful and it was terrifying but he wasn’t as awful as Voldemort. Voldemort was just plain evil and crazy. Loki… Loki’s not all that bad.” Harry knew that a lot of people, especially Tony, wouldn’t agree with him but it was hard for Harry to hate the god after he had saved his life. It did make Harry wonder about just what Loki had done to him. He hadn’t used a lot of magic since the change. Phil’s brother Jack had given him a small exam to check on him and nothing seemed all that different. But Harry couldn’t ignore the niggling in the back of his mind that something was fundamentally different inside him. He was forever irrevocably changed by what Loki had done to him, and only time would tell what the long term effects would be.

“Huh,” was Ron’s only response before switching topics to the new brooms that had just come out and whether they could stand up to Harry’s Nimbus.

They ended up meeting up with the twins and Tony in Gambol and Japes Wizarding Joke Shop. Of course both Tony and the twins had naturally gravitated towards the joke shop. Tony said he was even considering funding the twins after hearing about some of their ideas on creating joke products. He was that impressed with their ideas. He also told Harry that he had offered Mr. Weasley a position working for him on some magical projects on the side. Apparently Mr. Weasley was already in possession of an illegal flying car, and Tony was more than interested in what other whacky ideas Mr. Weasley could come up with. Mr. Weasley had enthusiastically agreed.

The trip had been going extremely well which should have alerted Harry that something of course had to ruin it. Flourish and Blotts was their last stop before heading to meet up with Phil, Steve, and Bruce for ice cream. They’d saved it for last because of the sheer number of books they would have to buy in Defense Against the Dark Arts this year.

When they entered the bookshop it was pure chaos. There was a huge line of middle-aged women who were converged around a golden haired man wearing powder blue robes. There were large posters of him set up beside him flashing equally blinding white smiles that sent the crowd wild. A harassed looking wizard was bravely attempting to get everyone into a semblance of order. It wasn’t working out very well. Harry recalled the banner on the windows out front that proclaimed that Gilderoy Lockhart was here for a signing of his autobiography.

“Gilderoy Lockhart? Isn’t he the one who wrote all of our Defenses textbooks?” Harry questioned frowning.

“Yes, and to think we’ll actually get the chance to meet the person who wrote them all,” Hermione said looking star struck, which Harry hadn’t expected from someone like Hermione. Then again she loved books with a passion, and meeting an author was probably a dream come true.

“So, I’m guessing this guy is like the me of the wizarding world. Except with a really cheesy smile and no where near as good looking.” Tony muttered.

Harry wanted to laugh at his disgruntled look. He definitely wasn’t used to being overlooked when out in public especially after the Avengers and the revelation of having a long lost son. Harry was actually surprised that wizards weren’t aware of that information just yet. Considering how hardly
any of them had paid attention to the attack on New York fewer had probably heard about the story
about Tony Stark’s long lost son and connected him back to Harry Potter. Harry was a little
anxious thinking about when they would actually find out especially after witnessing Mrs.
Weasley’s reaction to Tony.

They made their way up the line to meet up with the rest of the Weasleys and the Grangers. Mrs.
Weasley looked just as crazed as the rest of the witches trying to get closer to Lockhart. Pepper on
the other hand looked more than a little exasperated, and smiled in relief when she saw them
approaching.

“This is different. I’m normally the one on the receiving end of all of this,” Tony joked once they
reached her.

“This guy looks completely phony,” Pepper muttered to which several witches shot her dark glares.
Pepper only snorted not in the least bit intimidated.

A little man with a large camera shooting out purple smoke as he snapped a bunch of pictures of
Lockhart suddenly bumped into Ron.

“Oi! Watch out!” Ron cried rubbing the foot that been stomped on.

“Get out of the way, this is for the Daily Prophet,” the man in the hat snapped, unrepentant.

“This is completely mad,” Ron complained to Harry.

Harry could only nod in agreement. However Ron’s loud exclamation had drawn Lockhart’s
attention. Harry watched with a feeling of vague unease as Lockhart’s blue eyes drifted from Ron
to Harry. He definitely didn’t like the way his eyes lit up with recognition.

“It can’t be Harry Potter?” he cried out.

Harry froze like a deer in headlights as the crowd parted right to him. Lockhart quickly darted
forward to snatch Harry’s arm to drag him into the spotlight. Harry could feel his face burning as
the crowd cheered and the camera started clicking away like mad.

“Nice big smile, Harry. Together we’ll make the front page,” Lockhart enthused as he threw his
arm over his shoulders to keep him from escaping back into the crowd.

“Uh, I don’t think so, Goldilocks,” Tony had stalked forward, and looked quite murderous towards
Lockhart.

“You,” Tony snapped at the photographer. “Don’t take another photo or I’ll have my lawyers sue
you for everything you’re worth, which can’t be much considering what you’re wearing,” Tony
looked the photographer up and down, a cold, scathing look in his eyes.

The photographer stopped, looking at Tony in shock and fear.

“Uh, sir, I don’t know who you think you are but we’re trying to take a picture for the front page of
the paper and we need you to move,” Lockhart flashed an ultra watt smile and made a shooing
motion at Tony.

Tony just stared at him with a look of disbelief on his face. Harry too, was shocked by the man’s
stupidity. Tony’s anger was obvious, and Lockhart seemed to be completely oblivious of it. Then
again he was too focused on hamming it up for the photographer and the crowd to really look and
see just how angry Tony really was.
“No, you won’t. You won’t be taking any pictures of him without my consent. He’s a minor and any photos taken of him without the consent of his legal guardian, who is me by the way, will cause a lawsuit I don’t think you’d be able to handle. I’m really not the type of guy whose bad side you want to be on,” Tony hissed quietly.

Lockhart finally seemed to get the hint through his overly styled head that Tony meant business. He quickly removed his arm from around Harry’s shoulders.

“Oh um, I… I can’t interest you in having just one photo taken? It’s for the *Daily Prophet*. They do a wonderful job with their articles. It will be a great opportunity to get Harry some publicity especially if it’s with someone who is used to being in the public eye,” Lockhart offered with an attempt at charming Tony. However he was still a bit too scared of Tony for it to effective in any way, shape, or form.

Tony just continued to give him a dark look.

Lockhart gave a nervous giggle and flashed a weak grin. “Here Harry why don’t you just take a free set of my books?”

Harry accepted the books with a muttered thanks. The crowd clapped looking confused by the turn of events. Tony put his arm around his shoulders, and steered him out of the spotlight. The crowd willingly parted, whispering and trying to figure out just who Tony was to their Boy-Who-Lived. Harry was thoroughly embarrassed and just wanted to get away from it all.

“What an idiot,” Tony snorted.

Harry could only agree. They pushed their way through the chattering crowd until they had reached the edge of the crowd where Ginny was standing with her new cauldron. Tony left him, Ron, Hermione, and Ginny to go back and grab the rest of their group who had gotten stuck in the crowd. Harry dumped the free set of books in Ginny’s cauldron. He would just buy his own set.

“Are you all right Harry?” Hermione questioned in concern.

“He’s just upset that he didn’t get to have his picture in the paper,” came the all too familiar snide voice of Harry’s archenemy.

“Leave him alone,” Ginny snapped.

“Got yourself a girlfriend and a new father then, Potter?” Malfoy taunted causing both Ginny and Harry to turn red. Ginny in embarrassment and Harry in anger. He really didn’t appreciate Malfoy’s tone.

“Go away, Malfoy,” Harry glared at the blonde boy in annoyance.

“Who is that man anyway, Potter? You rather look like him. Is he your filthy muggle uncle then?” Malfoy sneered.

“Why don’t you just shut your mouth, Malfoy. No one wants to hear anything that comes out of your smarmy mouth,” Ron sneered glaring at the white blonde boy with the pointed features.

“Weasel, I’m surprised to even find you in a shop. Are you sure your parents can afford it without starving themselves for a month?” Malfoy sneered back.

“You! I’ll—” Ron went a bright red and started towards Malfoy with the obvious intent to cause harm.
Hermione and Harry both grabbed the back of his jacket to keep him from actually attacking. Luckily the adults arrived before the situation could get worse.

“Ron!” Mr. Weasley yelled in an admonishing tone as he arrived with Tony, Fred, and George on his heels.

“Arthur Weasley,” drawled a smooth voice.

Harry stared at the older wizard with long blonde hair that approached them. Harry knew without a doubt that he was Draco’s father despite having never seen the man before. They had the same pale, pointed features and wore identical sneers on their faces as they glanced at Harry’s mix-matched group.

“Lucius,” Mr. Weasley greeted looking like he smelled something foul. It was disconcerting to see the friendly man so angry. Harry knew that Mr. Malfoy must have been really bad news.

“Busy time at the Ministry, I hear. All of those raids. I do hope they’re paying you overtime,” Mr. Malfoy sneered as he grabbed up a tattered book from Ginny’s cauldron and looking at it with great disdain.

“Obviously not,” Mr. Malfoy muttered. “Dear me, what’s the use of being a disgrace to the name of wizard if they don’t even pay you well for it?”

“I think the only disgrace here is standing in front of us,” Tony cut in glaring at Mr. Malfoy.

“I don’t believe I know you,” Mr. Malfoy noted as he glanced at Tony.

“You wouldn’t,” Tony said staring back.

Mr. Malfoy’s cool gray eyes swept over Tony’s muggle suit, and his nose wrinkled in disgust. “Ah yes, of course I wouldn’t. You’re a muggle as well as an American. I see you’ve fallen even further Weasley to be publically associating yourself with muggles.”

“Listen here you pretentious bastard. You think you’re something wonderful because of some misplaced sense of superiority. Well, I hate to be the one to break it to you, but your so-called blood purity doesn’t matter. I’m Tony Stark one of the richest and most intelligent men on the planet. I’m not magical but I’ve fought wannabe gods, and aliens from another world. And I beat them all. As far as I’m concerned an stuck up snob like you doesn’t even register in my sphere of importance. You’re not even fit enough to lick my boots. But it could be arranged if you keep running your mouth about my friends,” Tony offered.

“You think you can threaten me muggle?” Mr. Malfoy snapped, his jaw twitching with suppressed rage. He obviously wasn’t used to people sticking up to him in such a blatant manner.

“Uh, no I don’t think I can, I know I can,” Tony deadpanned. “And for the record I don’t just threaten, I follow through so just keep that in mind before you dig yourself into a deeper hole.”

Mr. Malfoy glared at Tony but he didn’t seem willing to continue the conversation with so many witnesses.

“Until we meet again,” Mr. Malfoy flashed a sneer. He shoved Ginny’s book back into her cauldron. Taking hold of Malfoy’s arm he swept them both from the shop.

“Well, he is a wholly unpleasant person,” Tony observed.
“Yes, he is. He gives all wizards a bad name,” Mr. Weasley murmured solemnly.

“So, whose up for some ice cream?” Tony questioned flashing them all a bright smile.

Harry shot him a relieved smile back. Tony always seemed to know what to do, and Harry was grateful to have someone who was capable of sticking up for him.

At Fortescue’s they finally met back up with Steve, Bruce, and Phil. After ice cream they said their goodbyes to the Weasleys and the Grangers, and set off for their tour of Hogwarts.

They’d been given another portkey to take to Hogsmeade, which was apparently the village just outside of Hogwarts. Harry had heard some of the older students mention it before, and he knew that third years and above were allowed to go to visit the village on designated weekends. No one was happy that they would be taking another portkey. But a portkey was their only option for the trip to Hogwarts. Any other mode of transportation would have taken too long causing them to spend the night. Tony insisted on finding a better mode of teleportation, and that the trip back to the tower would be the very last time he ever used a portkey.

Hogsmeade was an entirely wizard town. It was very quaint and piqued Harry’s interest. Harry wanted to explore the wizarding town but unfortunately they didn’t have the time to. Professor McGonagall met their group in Hogsmeade to show them the way up to Hogwarts. Carriages pulled by animals that Harry couldn’t see brought them up to the castle. Apparently the others could see them. Professor McGonagall explained that they were thestrals and they were invisible except to those who had seen someone die.

“That’s not morbid or anything.” Tony muttered.

“Fascinating,” Bruce murmured leaning out of the carriage a bit to get closer to the invisible animal to study it.

“What do they look like?” Harry felt a little left out being the only one who couldn’t see them.

“You really can’t see them?” Bruce responded.

Harry shook his head.

“Thestrals are similar in appearance to horses. The differences are that they are skeletal and have leathery wings. Despite their appearance and the nature in which they can be seen, they are in fact gentle creatures. Hogwarts wouldn’t use them otherwise,” McGonagall explained curtly.

“Invisible death horses,” Bruce shook his head and took his glasses off to clean them obviously disbeliefing of the entire situation.

“I wonder if I could use them to try and make the suit invisible,” Tony muttered.

“No, Tony, the last thing we need in this world is an invisible Iron Man,” Pepper glared sternly at Tony who sent her an innocent look back.

Harry knew they were all about to get more of a shock once they reached the castle, and they were confronted with all of the ghosts that called Hogwarts home. The thestrals were all but forgotten once Hogwarts finally came into view.

“You know I wasn’t expecting a place called Hogwarts to look that,” Tony exclaimed as his eyes swept over the massive and beautiful castle.
“Hogwarts is one of the oldest magical schools in the world. It has a very rich history and was built by some of the most powerful witches and wizards to have ever lived,” Phil commented mildly.

Harry wondered if Phil had ever seen Hogwarts before. It was hard to tell if he was as impressed as the others obviously were by the old castle. But as usual it was impossible to tell with Phil. Harry wondered vaguely about what his meeting with the Ministry of Magic had been about, and if it had gone well.

The carriage dropped them off and they made their way through the large front doors into Hogwarts. The group was silent as they got their first good look at the inside of the castle.

“So where are we going to start?” Harry asked McGonagall eager to get started.

“How would like to give them the tour? While I can answer any questions your father may have about our curriculum,” McGonagall offered.

“That would be great,” Harry enthused. “We can start in the Astronomy Tower. Work our way from the top to the bottom.”

“Sounds good. I can test to see if the magical resistant cellphone works here. Coulson was saying that Hogwarts was one of the most magical infused places around, and that if it could work here it would work anywhere,” Tony withdrew the small prototype he had been working on.

“Don’t get your hopes up, Mr. Stark, muggle technology does not work well in the presence of magic,” McGonagall informed him

“Yes, but I made this so it should work,” Tony pointed out.

McGonagall gave him a skeptical look.

Tony checked the mobile. “It’s working so far. I’ll keep an eye on it.”

“Come on, let’s go,” Harry commanded.

Harry led the group up the stairs. He purposely didn’t warn them about the moving staircases, wanting to see their reactions.

“What the hell?” Tony gasped when the staircase they were standing on decided to shift.

“Is everyone all right?” Steve questioned. Phil and McGonagall were the only ones who weren’t rattled by the movement.

“Oh I forgot to warn you, the staircases like to move,” Harry responded flashing an innocent grin.

Tony glared at him. “So that’s how it’s going to be, huh? A day full of you trying to make me scream like a girl?”

Harry’s grin stretched wider, and he nodded his head.

“Well, I hate to break it to you but it takes a lot more than some moving staircases to scare Iron Man,” Tony boasted.

“If you say so,” Harry shrugged.

Harry enjoyed several more laughs that day at the expense of the others. The moving and talking paintings were more than enough to cause Bruce and Tony to mutter to themselves about how it
defied the laws of science. Steve practically had a heart attack when they stumbled upon Nearly Headless Nick. And Harry got to hear Tony give a startled scream when Sir Nicholas demonstrated just how he was nearly headless, and went on about the injustice he suffered at not being allowed to join in on the Headless Hunt.

They were able to meet with most of the professors since almost all of them had returned the castle by now to prepare for school year. Professor McGonagall gave them a running commentary about the castle’s founders even telling them the story of the fight between Salazar Slytherin and the three other founders that Harry hadn’t heard before. Harry pointed out his favorite parts of the castle, and told them the stories of some his favorite moments. They met the Fat Lady and he showed them the room he would be sharing with his fellow Gryffindors. Tony greatly approved of the Gryffindor color scheme.

Thankfully it was getting late so they didn’t have time to tour the dungeons. The last thing Harry wanted was to have a run in with Snape. It would definitely ruin the great day he had had. He had seemed to be in an even worse mood than he normally was during his visit to Avengers Tower.

“Would you like to have something to eat before you leave?” McGonagall offered.

Harry eagerly accepted for them. He really missed all of Hogwarts’s food especially the pumpkin juice. The smaller table that was set up during school breaks was placed in the middle of the great hall when they stepped inside. There were already a couple of people sitting at the table eating the meal laid out. Harry easily recognized Professor Flitwick, his diminutive Charms Professor, and Hagrid, the half-giant grounds keeper who liked to keep dangerous pets. Dumbledore swept into the great hall only moments after they entered.

Dumbledore greeted them enthusiastically. Introductions were made for Professor Flitwick and Hagrid.

“Ah yes, Mr. Stark, the Headmaster has informed the staff of the situation,” Flitwick chirped in his normal overly excited manner.

Harry expected an equally excited greeting from Hagrid but the half-giant looked uncharacteristically cold. His dark eyes were glaring at Tony.

“So yer the one who’s disrespected Lily and James?” Hagrid demanded.

“Hagrid, please, we’ve spoken about this. There’s no need to talk about this in front of Harry,” Dumbledore said in a soft but authoritative tone.

Harry felt a sting of discomfort strike him even as Hagrid subsided. It was obvious that the grounds keeper wasn’t okay with the situation. It left Harry feeling uneasy and reminded him of Mrs. Weasley’s own negative reaction to Tony. They weren’t acting coldly towards him but their anger towards Tony was hurtful to him nonetheless. Logically, Harry knew that this discovery was a hard pill for people to swallow. It had taken him a couple of months to come to terms with the situation. He knew it must be even more difficult for the people who had actually known Lily and James as a couple. Harry understood that what Tony and Lily had done wasn’t right but over the past couple of months as he’d grown closer to Tony he’d easily begun to overlook the obvious injustice that the two of them had committed. Of course Harry was glad that they had because otherwise he wouldn’t exist.

Harry was just finding the obvious hostility from people he knew and trusted to be a little difficult. It was a wake up call to him. It made him realize that not everyone was going to be as happy about this revelation as he was. And it hurt. He knew he had been purposefully naïve about the entire
situation but things had been going so well for him for once that it had been easy to forget the reality of the difficult life he led. Harry had grown to love Tony. He saw him as his dad but now he knew that the wizarding world wasn’t going to feel the same. It made him anxious to see how they would react to him. Harry knew he was strong that he could stand whatever the world decided to throw at him. He knew his true friends would stick by his side no matter what. But that didn’t mean he wanted to face that adversity. He just wanted to enjoy his time at the first place he had ever called. For the first time Harry was actually nervous about going back to Hogwarts.

Harry made sure not to let his new feelings of unease show through just yet as they headed home. He wanted to think things through on his own for a bit. If he was still feeling unsettled he could talk with Tony about it once they got home. Harry was beginning to realize that, just maybe, returning to Hogwarts wasn’t going to be as wonderful as he had hoped it would.
In two days Harry would finally be returning to Hogwarts. However, today would Harry’s last day in the tower. Tomorrow morning they would be taking the jet to London so none of them had to experience the horrors of taking a portkey again. He was feeling more comfortable with the idea of returning to Hogwarts after he and Tony had talked about it. Tony had been able to impart some words of wisdom to him due to his own experience being in the public eye, and constantly having people judge him.

“When you’re a public figure people are always going to decide who they think you are. You can’t constantly worry about what people think of you. It’s too much effort and not worth wasting your time over. People are going to think what they want about you regardless of what you say to them. The most important part is just knowing who you are. You keep people who you love and can trust by your side, and you ignore the rest. People are going to be idiots no matter what. They’ll make up stories because they’re bored or want to sell papers. I’ve had to deal with the publicity my entire life. I know the highs and lows, and how quickly the public can turn on you. I want to protect you from that but realistically I can’t stop people from thinking. I’ll do my best to keep them from printing stories about you. But the freedom of the press and all that make it difficult.

“If you really don’t want to go back to Hogwarts then I’m behind you one hundred percent. But I don’t want something that might happen hold you back from doing what you want to do. Don’t let other people’s opinions stop you. Look at me, I always just do what I want and somehow it works out.”

“Did it bother you, the way Hagrid and Mrs. Weasley acted towards you? I didn’t like the way they treated you,” Harry had confided in him. Harry knew that Tony was far too observant not to have noticed, and wanted to know if he had been offended by their behavior.

“It’s nothing that I didn’t expect. But I don’t care what they think of me. All I care about is the way treat people you. That’s a completely different situation and definitely not okay in my book. I’m kind of the bad guy in this situation, kiddo. To them I tried to ruin a perfect marriage. I knew my relationship with your mom was wrong but I did it anyway. I wasn’t a good person back then, Harry. I freely admit that. Like I said I did things how I wanted when I wanted and didn’t really think of the consequences to other people. I’m trying to be better,” Tony had conceded.

“You are doing better. You’re a superhero. You save people, and you’re an awesome dad,” Harry had declared proudly.

“Thanks Mini-Merlin,” Tony had wrapped his arm around Harry’s shoulders. The gleam in his eyes had told Harry how truly touched he was by Harry’s claim.

“But its still not all your fault,” Harry had told him adamantly.

“Yeah, well life’s not always fair. I’m willing to shoulder the blame as long as I’ve got you,” Tony had shrugged it off.

Harry wished that he was capable of doing the same thing. He still didn’t like the thought of Tony being painted as the villain.

“What do I say to people? You know if they ask about you and mum?” Harry had asked.

“I don’t know, what do you think you should say?” Tony had challenged.
“It’s none of their business?” Harry had offered.

“Perfect,” Tony had ruffled his hair before the two of them returned to watching the Bond marathon they had been enjoying.

Now Harry was heading to his last sparring session with Natasha and Steve. The two of them traded off with his basic training depending on whichever one of them was available at the time. Sometimes Clint joined them. Hand to hand combat wasn’t really Clint’s thing but he helped improve Harry’s aim by teaching him basic archery skills and knife throwing. Clint had the best aim Harry had ever seen. He always hit his intended target without fail. Harry thought improving his aim at archery and knives would insure perfect aim when casting his spells.

Natasha, Steve, and Clint were all the training room when he arrived. Natasha and Steve were sparring with one another while Clint watched from his position on top of the climbing wall. Harry paused to watch as well. Watching the two of them spar with one another was really something amazing to behold. They were both very good but even with Steve’s greater strength, Natasha was obviously more skilled. But still it made for a good show. Steve could take Natasha’s hits with minimal damage while Natasha was fast and skilled enough to evade Steve’s attempts at stopping her. Both he and Steve had learned quite a lot from Natasha in the finer arts of physical combat this summer. Steve had gotten really good. Harry was pleased to say that he was a lot more confident in protecting himself in a physical confrontation. He’d gotten stronger and was more lean than scrawny now.

In the end Natasha won their scrimmage by getting Steve in a headlock on his stomach. Harry clapped and rushed over to them.

“So what are we going to do for my last practice?”

“It’s not your last practice. I still expect you to practice your training while you’re at school,” Natasha said sternly.

Once Harry had gotten to know her a little better, Natasha really wasn’t that scary. She was actually a very nice person, and a really good teacher. She was strict like McGonagall but she knew exactly when to push or when to give him space. She was knowledgeable about many different forms of martial arts. Harry enjoyed their sessions together.

“I will,” Harry assured her. He wanted to be able to protect himself without magic. It would give him an advantage over his opponents. He would make sure to practice every day.

“Good. Let’s get started then. Run through your warm ups,” Natasha commanded.

Harry immediately obeyed, going through his normal routine to warm up and loosen his muscles. Natasha then helped him stretch. She had imparted to him just how being flexible could aid him in a fight. He believed it after watching the way Natasha could flip around, and outmaneuver her opponents. Harry had been pleasantly surprised by his own limberness. Natasha attributed it to youthfulness, and told him that it would be important for him to keep up with his stretches if he wanted to maintain his level of flexibility. Once he was ready Natasha and he went through a series of maneuvers. Harry practiced moving as smoothly as possible, and having as much control over his own body as possible. He kicked and punched the air, spinning and dodging invisible foes.

Steve and he squared off to spar. Steve was always extremely careful with Harry. He was afraid of hurting him. It made Steve focus more on technique rather than brute strength, which was exactly what Natasha wanted from him. While Harry was encouraged to try his hardest when sparring against Steve, knowing that the Captain was durable enough to take the hits.
Their practice was going well. Harry was feeling confident and surprisingly graceful in his movements thanks to all of the practice. Steve, of course, was letting him make hits so that he would know what it felt like. Natasha was circling them correcting their stances and offering advice on other moves they could have tried.

It happened suddenly. Harry landed a solid open palmed hit square to Steve’s chest, something he had done often enough in the past. But what he wasn’t expecting was for Steve to fly back off his feet, and slide off across the floor. They all froze at the shocking turn of events. Harry was stunned, and stared from his hand to Steve in confusion. He hadn’t felt any different when landing the blow. Everything had felt completely normal. How had he done it?

“Was that a burst of accidental magic?” Natasha asked looking him over.

“It must have been,” Harry murmured.

There was no other explanation for him being able to knock Steve off his feet like that. Steve was a tall and heavily built man, not to mention a super soldier, there was no way Harry could have possibly knocked him off his feet without assistance of some sort. But that didn’t make sense. His accidental magic only reacted when he was feeling a particularly strong emotion. Harry had been exerting himself but he had felt perfectly relaxed. He shook it off. It had to be nerves about returning to Hogwarts tomorrow, and his magic was reacting subconsciously. He hadn’t had the chance to practice using his magic with his newly remade magical core. He felt fine with the new structure, and he hadn’t any other outbursts. It had to just be nerves, and his magic just slipped out easier than it did before.

“Are you all right Steve?” Harry asked.

“I’m fine. Don’t worry about me, Harry. It takes a lot more than that to hurt me,” Steve flashed him a reassuring smile. However, the Captain wasn’t able to completely hide the wince of pain as he climbed to his feet while rubbing his chest.

“Maybe we can take a break and jump on the trampoline for the rest of the session?” Clint offered.

Harry grinned. Clint loved the trampoline and the two of them had gotten up to a lot of mischief on it. The trampoline was set in the ground of the training room with a foam pit surrounding it. For safety, of course.

Harry looked to Natasha for permission. She rolled her eyes and sent Clint an indulgent smile.

“It is your last day,” she sighed.

Clint grinned back before sprinting towards the trampoline with Harry hot on his heels. The two of them hopped onto the trampoline, and started trying to bounce the other off into the foam pit giggling like children. The incident was soon all but forgotten as he and Clint flipped and spun around.

Afterwards they headed back up to the penthouse for lunch. Pepper, Bruce, and Tony joined them.

“I have something special I want to give you,” Tony announced after lunch. “You’ve probably noticed that I’ve been working long hours in the lab recently. Well, I’ve been working on something I wanted you to be able to take to Hogwarts.”

Harry’s interest was piqued. He couldn’t wait to see just what Tony had made him. The red and gold metal knapsack that he was presented with was the last thing that Harry had been expecting.
“A bag?” Harry asked curiously.

A slightly manic grin stretched across Tony’s face as he slapped a pair of metal wristbands on him. Then he pressed a button on the side of the metal case. The knapsack unfurled itself before launching itself at Harry. He was only able to give a startled yelp before the suit wrapped itself around him, incasing him in a protective metal suit. The lights inside the helmet flickered on and Jarvis’s chimed a welcome in his ear.

“Your own suit! I modeled it after my own. I only reversed the colors. And it’s perfectly capable of working in the presence of magic since it runs on arch reactor tech,” Tony cheered.

“Tony, I can’t believe you did this,” Pepper gaped openly.

“Don’t worry, Pep, it’s completely harmless. It’s meant to be a pretty, protective shell, and of course it can fly to get out of sticky situations. Most importantly while active it is capable of recognizing dangerous settings. If you’re in an inescapable and life threatening situation it will unlock the combat mode for you to be able to use the weapons, and escape,” Tony enthused.

Pepper didn’t look sold on the idea. “I don’t think they’ll let something like this into a school, Tony.”

“That’s why we’re not going to tell them anything. Besides it’s a magical school. They have things like thestrals. A suit of armor isn’t a big deal. And Harry’s responsible enough to know that it’s only to be used in case of emergencies,” Tony waved away her concerns.

Harry nodded in agreement.

“I love it,” Harry told Tony once he figured out how to slide the faceplate up.

Tony looked so pleased with himself. Harry was amazed by the fact that Tony had actually taken the time to make a suit just for him.

“Can I try flying now?” Harry asked eagerly.

“Um, yeah. What else would expect? We’ll spend the rest of the day going over how to use it. Of course you don’t need to do much. I installed Jarvis and he’ll be able to take care of everything for you. Not to mention the suits directly connected to the mainframe so I will be notified immediately if you ever need some help,” Tony explained.

But Tony ended up showing him how to use everything anyway. He taught him how to take the suit on and off, and how to control the suit manually. The best part, however, was flying without a broom. It was more freeing somehow. The broom flying had really helped him adapt to flying in the suit. He was a natural at it in no time, and Tony and he ended up playing tag in the large training room.

That night the Avengers plus Phil, Pepper, and even Director Fury gathered for a huge dinner in the tower. Tony had gone all out ordering food from Harry’s favorite Chinese restaurant, and getting his favorite dessert to send him off. It was loud and boisterous, and like being a part of a real life family. It made Harry realize that it wasn’t just him that enjoyed these dinners. As he looked around the table he realized that the other Avengers looked forward to this as much as he did. Everyone that Steve had known was dead making the rest of them the only contacts he had left. Bruce likewise didn’t have anyone else since he had distanced himself from other people due to his condition. Harry didn’t know a lot about Natasha and Clint’s pasts but he figured that they couldn’t have many people they were close to considering the dangerous lives they led as spies. Despite
their differences the Avengers needed one another, and Harry knew he was lucky to be a part of it.

After dinner everyone stayed. Conversation strayed to a variety of different topics. Harry found himself sitting with Phil. His curiosity got the best of him. He couldn’t resist asking Phil what type of business he had conducted with the Ministry of Magic.

“It’s all right if you can’t tell me,” Harry assured when Phil hesitated.

“It does in part pertain to you, Harry so I think you have a right to know.”

Harry waited patiently for him to continue. His interest was piqued.

“I went to talk to Minister Fudge about Voldemort still being alive. Unfortunately, he was very unwilling to even entertain the notion that he might still be alive. However, SHIELD is making Voldemort one of their top priorities, and we will be looking into the matter with or without the British Ministry’s help. I’m going to be putting together my own special team within SHIELD, and hopefully one of the projects we’ll be overseeing is Voldemort,” Phil explained.

Harry felt relief slide through him. It was nice to know that he had a group like SHIELD on his side.

“Oh, will you keep me updated on what you find?” Harry asked. He still wanted to be involved with the investigation. Voldemort had murdered his mum, and tried to kill him as well. He wanted to see Voldemort destroyed once and for all.

“We’re going to be consulting with your father on the matter so I’ll make sure he passes along the information to you as well,” Phil assured him.

“Thanks Phil,” Harry smiled.

“You’re welcome. I hope we can ensure that you don’t have any more mishaps while at school,” Phil told him sincerely.

Harry thanked him again before Clint suddenly engaged him in a spitball competition. Steve tried to protest the juvenileness of it but a spitball to the face from Tony had Steve up in arms and ready to retaliate.

Once the spitball fight came to end with Clint being the clear winner, Pepper sent them all to bed. Harry said his goodbyes to Phil and Fury since they wouldn’t be able to make it to breakfast tomorrow before they left for London. Harry already had everything packed but he double-checked just to make sure. In the morning Tony, Pepper, and Harry would be taking the jet to London. They would spend the night in a hotel, and catch the Hogwarts Express the next morning.

The morning of their departure Clint, and Bruce made a huge breakfast. Then the goodbyes started. Harry wasn’t used to having people who were going to miss him. Everyone wished him well, and told him to call them often especially since Tony’s magic resistant mobile phone had proven to be effective. It was surprisingly difficult for him to say goodbye to the tower and all of the Avengers. After just a couple of months the tower had become his home and he was going to miss it.

Happy drove them to the airport. The paparazzi were still just as rabid to get pictures of Tony and Harry together. After his run in with the public in Diagon Alley Harry was even more wary of them.

The three of them settled on the jet, and were off to London. On the trip Harry and Tony went over the lay out of Harry’s suit some more. The two of them were drawing up improvements that could
be made when Harry came home for break. Tony told him to keep a note of improvements if he came up with any. They talked about other inconsequential things trying to keep themselves occupied on the long flight.

They arrived in London late in the afternoon. The three of them went to explore the city. Harry had never spent time in muggle London before and enjoyed the chance to get to know the city. They saw the sights, did some shopping, and got dinner in a fancy restaurant. Tony wasn’t as easily recognized in London as he was in America, which made it easier to go about doing normal things without the interruption of the paparazzi.

After dinner they returned to the extravagant hotel Tony had booked for the night. Even after a couple of months of it, Harry was still trying to get used to the rich lifestyle Tony lived with such a casual ease. It made him feel slightly out of place to be a part of such luxury. They had gotten the presidential suit, which held its own large hot tub. Harry took advantage of this while Pepper and Tony settled down together in their bedroom. He had just relaxed himself in the hot tub when a strange creature popped out of nowhere.

Harry jumped, spilling water out of the tub and on to the floor. He scrambled back in the water gaping at the odd little creature that had suddenly appeared. It was small with huge bat-like ears, large round bulging eyes, and a long pointed nose. It was wearing what looked like a dirty pillowcase on it’s thin frame.

“Harry Potter, sir,” the creature spoke in a tremulous voice. “Dobby is so happy to have finally found you, sir. It’s such an honor to finally meet you, sir.”

“What… who are you?” Harry finally managed to get out.

“Dobby, sir. Dobby the house-elf, sir,” the creature murmured in awe.

“Um, yes, nice to meet you, Dobby,” Harry watched the creature closely incase it decided to attack; although, it looked relatively harmless.

“Nice to meet you, Dobby. Oh, Harry Potter sir, you are too kind.”

“Er, uh, thanks. Can I ask just why were you trying to find me?” Harry questioned.

“There isn’t much time Harry Potter, sir. Dobby has taken too long in trying to find you, sir. Dobby almost didn’t make it,” the little creature worried.

“That’s alright just sit down and tell me what was so important about meeting—” Harry was cut off when Dobby loosed a long wail.

“Sit down? Harry Potter is asking Dobby to sit down,” the creature sobbed.

“Alright, alright. Calm down Dobby. You don’t have to sit down,” Harry tried reassuring the creature. He wondered at what point he should go and get Tony and Pepper. Although if Dobby kept up with the loud noise they’d come looking for him anyway.

“You are too kind Harry Potter, sir. No wizard has ever asked Dobby to sit down. You are truly a great wizard, sir, to be so nice to Dobby, sir,” Dobby warbled.

“You must not have known very nice wizards,” Harry glanced over the creature’s clothing and then at his bandaged hands. He wondered what had been done to him.

Dobby looked like he wanted to say something but then lunged forward to bang his head on the
side of the hot tub. “Bad Dobby! Bad Dobby!” He shouted.

Harry surged forward to stop him.

“Stop that! You’ll hurt yourself,” Harry cried.

“Dobby must punish himself. He almost spoke ill of his family, sir,” Dobby said ears drooping.

“Your family?” Harry was confused.

“The wizard family that Dobby serves, sir. Dobby is a house-elf. Bound to serve one family forever,” Dobby explained.

“Did they send you to find me?”

“Oh no, Harry Potter sir. Dobby’s family would punish Dobby if they knew he was here. Dobby will have to punish himself after this. Shut his ears in the oven. If they ever knew, sir…” Dobby trailed off and Harry figured that his punishment would be even worse then sticking his ears in the oven.

“Don’t they care about you hurting yourself?”

“No, sir. Dobby is always having to punish himself for something. Sometimes they remind Dobby to give himself extra punishments, sir.”

“That’s awful why don’t you just leave?” Harry was appalled by Dobby’s treatment.

“Dobby is bound to his wizard family serve. Bound forever. Dobby cannot leave unless his family frees him, sir,” Dobby said wringing his hands.

Harry felt bad. He understood what it was like be stuck with cruel masters and no hope of escaping. It was pure luck that he gotten Tony in his life.

“Is there anything I can do to help?” Harry wanted to know.

It was the wrong thing to ask but Dobby instantly went into hysterics, crying in gratitude about Harry’s kindness.

“It’s okay. Calm down, Dobby,” Harry attempted to placate him.

“The great Harry Potter. The defeater of He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named is too good to Dobby,” Dobby continued to wail.

“All of that is a load of rubbish and you don’t have to keep calling me sir,” Harry assured him.

“You are too good Harry Potter, sir,” Dobby cried.

Dobby’s wails had finally caught Tony and Pepper’s attention. The door to bathroom banged open. Tony rushed in looking concerned.

“Harry? Are you all right? Why are cry—” He stopped and stared at Dobby in open mouth shock.

Dobby gave a startled yelp at Tony’s sudden appearance, and promptly disappeared with a snap of his fingers.

“What the hell was that!?” Tony cried.

“I have no idea. What was that?” Tony turned to Harry for answers.

“I don’t really know. He said he was a house-elf named Dobby, and that he came to tell me something. But with all the crying and trying to hurt himself he never seemed to get around to it,” Harry shrugged.

“A house-elf named Dobby. Huh… this is my life now. Fighting aliens and being visited by strange little gnome creatures,” Tony muttered.

“Gnomes are actually vicious little creature that live in gardens. Dobby seemed harmless in comparison.”

Tony sent him a look. Harry flashed him an innocent smile back.

“Should we be concerned about the house-elf visit?” Pepper asked, focusing them back to the point of the matter.

“I don’t think so. Like I said, he was harmless. He just kept hurting himself because he wasn’t supposed to be here. But he seemed really excited to meet me,” Harry told her remembering the reverent way he mentioned Harry defeating Voldemort.

“Maybe he was just a fan, and just wanted the chance to meet you?” Tony offered.

“I guess that makes sense. I sort of feel bad for him. He said he’d have to put his ears in the oven in order to meet me,” Harry told him.

“That’s awful,” Pepper cried.

“Maybe I’ll have to get in contact with the British Magic Ministry or whatever it’s called. I can’t have random creatures just popping in and out of your room all the time to meet you. And here I thought my fans were bad. Having magical fans who can teleport is definitely worse,” Tony said.

“Yup,” Harry agreed.

“You weren’t kidding when you told me about your popularity, huh?”

“Nope,” Harry sighed.

“I’ll see what I can learn about this house-elf. From what McGonagall told us on the tour the barriers around Hogwarts will keep out any unwanted guests. So you should be fine at Hogwarts,” Tony reassured him.

Harry smiled gratefully at him.

“Let’s all get to bed. You have a long day tomorrow,” Pepper threw a towel over his head and gave it a brisk rub to dry him off.

Harry laughed and pulled away looking up at her from under the towel.

She smiled back before frowning a bit. “Did your hair get darker?”

Harry frowned and tried to peek at it. It looked like the same dark brown to Harry.

She shook her head. “It’s probably just the lighting. Wow, it’s been a long day. Off to bed with
you. Both of you.” She sent Tony a stern glare.

“But mom,” Tony whined.

She smiled at him, looping her arm through Tony’s to drag him away.

Harry changed out of his bathing suit, and into his pajamas. He wondered about Dobby’s visit. But he figured Tony must be right. Dobby must have just been a fan. Harry couldn’t help but think that his life would have been so much simpler if he wasn’t the Boy-Who-Lived. He didn’t want to be famous. He didn’t the world knowing about his personal life, and forming their own opinions about his and Tony’s relationship.

The next morning the three of them ordered breakfast from room service, and ate in the room. Tony was abnormally quiet as Pepper and Harry talked about Harry’s upcoming trip on the Hogwarts Express. Harry hadn’t realized just how much his leaving was going to affect Tony. Honestly Harry thought Tony would like to finally have some time to himself after all that had happened.

Before long the three of them needed to leave. Tony grabbed Harry’s trunk, and Harry grabbed Hedwig’s cage. Tony had a car drive them to Charring Cross Station. The station was bustling with tons of people, and the three wove their way through the crowds with Harry leading the way towards Platform 9 3/4. They arrived in time to watch another family disappear into the barrier.

“That’s not something you see every day,” Tony commented offhandedly.

“You can go first,” Harry offered Tony with a grin.

“Ha, ha, very funny,” Tony muttered.

“Why don’t we all go together?” Pepper suggested looking a little nervous about trying to walk through something like looked like a solid wall.

That decided they walked forward at a brisk pace. Harry couldn’t help but flinch as they reached the barrier. Even though he had done it before it didn’t make running at a brick wall any easier. All too soon they had made it across to the other side of the barrier. Harry smiled as he was greeted by the bustling sounds of Platform 9 3/4. Hogwarts students and their families dragging their trunks and animal cages while the Hogwarts Express billowed smoke in the background.

“That was amazing,” Pepper said looking a little awed.

“It’s pretty impressive for a train,” Tony agreed.

“Look, there’s Hermione and her parents,” Harry said spotting Hermione’s bushy hair through the crowd.

They headed over to where Hermione was saying goodbye to her parents.

“Harry! Aren’t you excited? I can’t wait until classes start. I’ve made a list of all the things I want to research this semester,” Hermione greeted enthusiastically.

“It should be a great year,” Harry agreed glancing back to where Pepper and Tony were greeting Hermione’s parents. They all chatted for a bit, waiting for the Weasleys to show up before boarding the train.

However, when the Hogwarts Express released a whistle informing them it was about to leave they
decided to board the train just to be safe.

Harry turned to Pepper and Tony. It was time to say his final goodbyes.

“You have a great time at school, Harry. And if you need anything, anything at all, don’t hesitate to call us. But you should call us anyway. At least three times a week,” said Pepper in a rush. Harry couldn’t help but wonder if there were actual tears in her eyes as she gazed at Harry.

“I’ll try,” Harry assured her. Pepper gave a half laugh and half sob as she swept Harry up in a crushing hug.

“Oh, Pepper don’t smother him,” Tony complained with a smile. Pepper reluctantly released him and stepped back so Tony could move closer. He leaned down to talk to Harry so that their conversation would be overheard. “But really I expect to hear from you once a week, kiddo. If not I’ll think something horrible has happened, and storm Hogwarts in a rain of repulsor blasts with the Hulk and Captain America at my side, okay?”

“I will. I promise.” Harry looked down at his shoes suddenly nervous about what he should say.

He’d been so focused on getting to Hogwarts that he hadn’t really focused on just how much leaving Tony was going to hurt. The last two and half months had been amazing. Tony had become a huge part of his life. He had changed his life so much. Tony had made it so much better. They were still working things out but Harry knew he could trust Tony.

“I’ll miss you,” Harry said finally.

“Me too, kiddo,” Tony choked up but was trying not to show it. “I had a pretty spectacular summer with you around.”

“It was definitely memorable,” Harry agreed.

“If you need anything, call me, and text me whenever you can. Most of all have fun, pull a few pranks, and learn some new magic we can use to scare Barton. Just don’t get in too much trouble, otherwise Pepper will get mad at me. Now, go catch up with your friend. I’m sure she wants to review the entire year’s information before you get to school,” Tony grinned.

“Right,” Harry murmured.

“Now get over here, Mini-Merlin,” Tony opened his arms wide in invitation.

Harry grinned and threw himself into Tony’s arms, “Bye dad.”

“Bye Harry. Have a great time and I’ll see you soon, okay?” Tony gripped him tightly and pressed a quick kiss to his hair.

Harry reluctantly pulled back from the embrace. Harry and he walked on to the train. Hermione had found a compartment with Neville Longbottom. Harry gave Neville a quick greeting before going over to the window to wave to Pepper and Tony. Tony smiled and waved back. Harry stayed at the window until the train began to pull away. The Weasleys had made it just moments before the train was set to leave. Ron and Ginny appeared in their compartment breathing heavily, having run the whole way to catch the train in time. Harry leaned out the window waving to Tony until the platform disappeared from view completely. Only then did Harry return to his seat, and greet Ron and Ginny.

“How was your summer, Neville?” Harry asked the quiet, slightly pudgy boy. He needed
something to distract him from leaving Pepper and Tony behind.

He listened absently as Neville went on about the greenhouse his Gram had let him set up.

“What about you, Harry?” Neville asked politely.

“I found out I have a different father who builds flying metal suits. Then I met the Norse god Loki who was leading an alien invasion against to take over the Earth. And I spent the rest of the summer living in America with a group of superheroes,” Harry replied.

Neville blinked a few times. “Oh, that sounds… interesting.”

“Yeah,” Harry nodded.

There was a long period of silence

“What are aliens exactly? Is it a muggle thing?” Neville asked.

Hermione and Harry laughed, and launched into explanation about aliens. Neville, Ron, and Ginny were all very interested in hearing more about science fiction. After spending a summer with Tony, Harry was more than up to date on a wealth of different movies. They talked about their summer homework for a bit, mainly on Hermione’s insistence. Neville brought out his Exploding Snap cards, and the five of them played a couple of rousing games. Their good time was ruined when the door to their compartment was thrown open. Draco Malfoy flanked by his two gorilla-like cronies stood in the doorway wearing a smarmy grin.

“Hello Potter. Or I guess its Stark now, isn’t it? My father looked up Tony Stark and found out about the whole sordid affair. How James Potter isn’t your real father,” Malfoy smirked.

Harry glared at the blonde boy. Technically Malfoy was only telling the truth. His name was Stark now. Harry just didn’t like the way Malfoy said it. Out of everyone, Harry knew Malfoy would be the worst he would have to face in regards to his parentage. Harry also knew that it would have only been a matter of time before everyone found out the truth. He just thought he would have had more time to prepare himself for the eventual leak. But he supposed it was better to deal with Malfoy in the beginning, and just get everything over and done with so he could enjoy his time at Hogwarts.

“You’re right, my last name is Stark now. Just like my dad.” Harry shrugged, feigning carelessness. Malfoy just wanted to see him humiliated but Harry wasn’t going to give him the satisfaction, and besides he was proud to have Tony as his father. Malfoy’s words didn’t matter to him because he was an idiot who wanted to hurt him.

Malfoy looked taken aback for a moment that Harry was admitting it so easily, and that he hadn’t managed to upset Harry.

“You’re mother was just a filthy mudblood after all. That’s what happens when they marry above their station,” Malfoy sneered.

“My mother was a brilliant witch who gave her life for mine. My dad is a genius, and a hero. And anything else about them isn’t any of your business, Malfoy,” Harry snapped coldly.

“Yeah, so sod off, Malfoy!” Ron snarled jumping up.

“Whatever you say, Stark. It doesn’t change the fact that your mother is a slag,” Malfoy said in a superior manner.
“There’s no need to use such foul language, Malfoy. I think it’s time you leave,” Hermione commanded.

“Oh shut up, mudblood,” Malfoy snapped.

“Leave her alone. She’s twice the witch you’ll ever be,” Harry snarled. He had a good understanding of just what mudblood meant, and he didn’t like the word being used in regards to his mum or Hermione.

“Just go away. No one wants to hear your negative opinions,” Neville spoke up bravely.

“Oh really fat arse? What are you going to do about it? You think a pathetic lump like you can make me leave?” Malfoy whirled on Neville causing the boy to cringe back.

“The only pathetic one here is you, Malfoy. You need to hurt us to make yourself feel superior. Just leave, Malfoy, before someone gets hurt,” Harry demanded.

Malfoy just glared, feeling secure with Crabbe and Goyle backing him up.

“I won’t ask again,” Harry growled. He could feel his magic reacting to his anger. It was surging up inside him more powerful than he had ever felt it before. But it didn’t feel wild or uncontrollable. It was concentrated and Harry knew he could mold it to do what he wanted. And he wanted Malfoy to leave.

“You can’t tell me what to do, Stark. You’re barely even a wizard. A mudblood mother and a muggle father. You’re no better than being a mudblood yourself,” Malfoy smirked.

Harry didn’t think, he just willed it. He lifted his hand a shot of blue fire shot from his palm. It slammed into Malfoy, and caused him and his goons to be forcefully ejected from the compartment. Harry had a moment of fear that he had hurt them. He was almost relieved when Malfoy stood up whining loudly, and brushing ice from his robes.

“You’ll be expelled for this, Stark,” he cried.

“For what? I didn’t do anything to you, Malfoy,” Harry replied feeling oddly calm.

“He’s right, I didn’t see anything,” Ron smirked at Malfoy.

“Go away, Malfoy,” Hermione sighed in exasperation.

Malfoy sent them all one last withering glare before stocking off, Crabbe and Goyle at his heels.

“Wow, Harry! How did you do that?” Ron exclaimed.

“I have no idea,” Harry replied, still more than a little stunned.

“Well, he’s a git and deserved to be knocked on his arse,” Ron said firmly.

“Ron,” Hermione chided before turning to reassure Harry. “Don’t pay attention to anything that Malfoy said, Harry. He just wants to hurt you and get you in trouble. Reacting like that just gives him what he wants. You handled yourself well, until the end that is.”

“I know, Hermione,” Harry sighed. But he couldn’t help the anger that bubbled inside him when Malfoy had talked about his mum.

Facing Malfoy hadn’t been that bad. He was feeling more confident that he could deal with
whatever else people decided to throw at him.

The rest of the trip was only interrupted by the sweet cart, which Ron and Harry eagerly fell upon. Around the time the night started to fall, the Hogwarts Express began to slow. They had already changed into their school robes, and were more than prepared to disembark from the train. This year they would head up to the school in the thestral pulled carriages with the rest of the student body, instead of taking the boats as first years. Harry was more than willing to impart his knowledge about the thestrals when the carriages that pulled themselves startled Hermione.

Harry couldn’t help the smile that stretched across his face as he got his first good look at Hogwarts. The castle, all lit up at night, was truly something amazing to behold. It was beautiful, and Harry felt a rush of warm familiarity at finally returning to the castle. He missed his dad and the tower but he was happy to have finally returned to Hogwarts.

The great hall with its floating candles was another welcome sight. Harry, Ron, Neville, and Hermione made their way over to the Gryffindor table. They were warmly greeted by their fellow Gryffindors. Dean Thomas and Seamus Finnigan were the other two boys in Harry’s year, and they shared his dorm room. Harry gladly chatted with the two boys about his summer. Dean Thomas was from a muggle household, and he had heard all about the attack on New York. He was very eager to learn more about the invasion. He was also aware that Harry was Tony Stark’s son. Harry was relieved to discover that the discovery hadn’t changed Dean’s opinion of him at all. It made him relax. The more people that accepted the discovery the more Harry relaxed.

“Why is that loony Lockhart here?” Ron suddenly demanded.

Harry turned around to look where Ron was looking. Sure enough there was Lockhart wearing shiny metallic gold robes with hints of light purple. He was grinning and smiling at everyone. Snape who was sitting next to him looked even dourer than he normally did as Lockhart chatted away beside him.

“Oh no,” Harry muttered noticing the place where Lockhart was sitting.

“Oh, do you think he’s our new Defense Against the Dark Art’s Professor?” Hermione gasped. “It would ever so exciting to have the author who actually wrote all those texts teaching us. He has so much experience, and he must know so much.”

“I don’t know, he’s kind of… odd,” Harry said looking warily at the man.

“I’m sure he’s brilliant. He wouldn’t have been hired if he wasn’t,” Hermione argued.

“If you say so,” Harry murmured not at all convinced. He would just have to wait and see what happened.

The sorting began shortly after. Professor McGonagall led the small, terrified first years into the great hall. The Sorting Hat was brought out, and it sang a new sorting song before the first years were sent up one by one. Ginny Weasley joined Gryffindor to the applause of her brothers. Harry smiled in remembrance of his own sorting, and how he had insisted on being placed in Gryffindor. He absently wondered what his life would be like if had let it put him in Slytherin. He could imagine that it would especially horrible now with Malfoy knowing about Tony.

Before the feast could begin Dumbledore called their attention to say a few words. He gave a speech about having a good year, and then indicated where Lockhart sat smiling his ultra white smile at everyone.
“This year we have Gilderoy Lockhart,” Dumbledore had to pause as the uproarious cheers from the female population of Hogwarts were too great for him to continue. “This year we have Gilderoy Lockhart joining our faculty as our Defense Against the Dark Arts Professor.”

There were more cheers and screams of joy, and if possible Professor Snape’s expression became even more pinched than before. Everyone knew Snape wanted the Defense position but he seemed to genuinely dislike Lockhart. Snape was giving the man a dark look that was very similar to looks he often reserved just for Harry. Maybe Lockhart wasn’t all that bad if Snape disliked him so much.

Harry was just relieved when the food made its appearance, and everyone settled back down to eat. The meal was wonderful, like always. He easily allowed himself to be swept into conversation with those around him. It allowed Harry to distract himself from the surprising amount of homesickness he felt. He missed the tower and all of the Avengers. He even missed Jarvis. The end of the feast arrived and the various houses all made their way up to their dormitories.

Harry texted Tony and Pepper to let them know he was safe and in Hogwarts. Tony responded, telling him goodnight and to have a good first day of classes. This allowed Harry to relax a bit. He settled into his bed that night looking forward to starting his classes, and getting back into the swing of using magic. Harry really hadn’t had the chance to practice using his magic, and he wanted to get better acclimated to the new way his magic worked.

The next morning Ron and he got dressed before they headed down to breakfast. As they entered the already crowded great hall he couldn’t help but feel like people were staring at him. Harry was well acquainted with students staring at him. His first few weeks of Hogwarts he’d been subjected with a lot of stares and whispers before everyone had gotten used to him. Harry took a covert look around the hall. Quite a few people were indeed looking at him.

“Why is everyone staring at me?” Harry questioned as he and Ron sat down beside Hermione.

“Oh Harry, some woman wrote an article about you and your father,” Hermione said concern written all over her features.

Harry felt dread suffuse him. But at the same time it was almost a relief to just have everything out in the open instead of having to wait in anticipation of when everyone would find out. He just hoped that the article hadn’t attacked his mum or dad.

“Do you have The Prophet?” Harry asked.

“I borrowed it from Padma,” she reluctantly handed it over to Harry.

Harry looked at the front page which held a picture of himself and Tony in the bookshop under the glaring title: HARRY POTTER: NOT A POTTER? Harry took a deep breath and quickly read the article. It wasn’t anything terrible, nothing that hadn’t been in the press statement that Tony and Pepper had released to the muggle public. The article just went over the discovery that James Potter wasn’t his biological father. It talked about Tony getting custody of him, and went on to talk about his life with Tony with surprisingly accurate details about the day they spent in London before Harry returned to Hogwarts. Harry had no idea how this Rita Skeeter woman had known any of it.

“Are you all right Harry?” Hermione asked in concern once Harry had finished reading.

“I’m fine. It wasn’t anything too terrible.” Harry could shrug this off. He was going to call Tony about this though.
“I’m sure people will talk about it. But before long something new will come along and they’ll forget all about it,” Hermione said knowingly.

“I know,” Harry agreed.

“And if anyone says anything we’ll hex them,” Ron said.

“Ronald!” Hermione glared at the redhead.

“They’d deserve it Hermione,” Ron replied unrepentant.

“We’ll tell a professor, Harry, and they’ll take care of it,” Hermione told them sternly.

“I think Harry can take care of himself after what he did to Malfoy,” Ron noted.

“Just try not to get us expelled. It’s only the first day of school,” Hermione huffed.

“I’ll do my best,” Harry promised.

The rest of breakfast was spent ignoring the stares of everyone around him. Surprisingly his fellow Gryffindors rallied around him, and for the most part they all acted like nothing was wrong. Harry was grateful for their support as the rest of the day passed, and the stares and whispers continued. No one had approached him or said anything to him yet. It was no different than his first few days at Hogwarts when everyone had been interested in getting a look at the Boy-Who-Lived. Harry was thankful that no one was outright antagonistic about it.

That night Harry called Tony about the article. Tony’s main concern was that Harry was all right, and that no one was treating him any differently. Harry told him about the stares and whispering.

“You can always come home, kiddo,” Tony offered.

“I know. But I want to stick it out. It’s nothing that I can’t handle,” Harry insisted.

“You’re a tough kid. I know that. But you don’t have to be if you don’t want to,” Tony assured him.

“I can’t just run and hide every time someone says something mean to me. I have to make a stand somewhere. I can’t let it get to me. Like you said I can’t let other people’s opinions keep me from doing what I want. And right now I want to stay at Hogwarts,” Harry told him.

“All right, Mini-Merlin. I’ll talk to this Skeeter woman. She must have bugged us to get all of those details about our little shopping trip. I’ll figure it out though. That was the first and last article about the subject,” Tony swore.

Harry believed him. He took a deep sigh of relief. Tony was on the case. He would take care of it. Harry had his friends, and Tony. He wasn’t alone in this situation. Harry didn’t have to face this on his own. It wasn’t the end of the world, and he had certainly survived much worse in his life. He would get through this.

III

Sirius Black lay curled up in his cell, waiting, always waiting. He’d lost track of how long he’d been locked away. It felt like a hundred years had passed him by. It was impossible to keep track of time in Azkaban. The prison was always dark and gloomy. The temperature was constantly damp and chilled. The wails, shrieks, and whimpers that ricocheted through the dark stone building were
the only lullabies that played for the prisoners. Sirius only had his own scrambled thoughts to keep himself sane in a place where madness ran rampant. The knowledge that he was innocent also went a long way in warding his mind from the dementors. But not even that could stave them off forever. His only other respite was his time spent in his animagus form. The dementors ignored the large black dog offering him some time away to rally his strength.

Sirius was woken from his normal state of light dozing by the sounds of footsteps. He’d already been brought his morning meal. The only other reason for the arrival of the guards would be a new prisoner coming to join the fun or the Minister. Cornelius Fudge, the Minister of Magic, delighted in visiting Sirius Black. He stopped in every once in a while to tour the prison and gloat over those incarcerated there. He often stopped in on Sirius more often than most due to his notorious and lethal status in the wizarding world. He absolutely hated the self-important man’s visits. Sirius did often wonder, however, what the pompous windbag would do if he ever discovered that he had the wrong man, and that the real culprit had been on the loose for years.

Changing back into his human form, Sirius crossed his fingers in hope that it was just a new prisoner. Of course his luck wasn’t that good, and the footsteps paused at the door of his cell.

“Black, I have something you might like to look at. I think you might even find it enlightening,” Fudge offered cheerfully even going so far as to give a little chuckle.

It was the man’s overly smug tone that filled Sirius with instant anxiety as he cautiously approached the cell door.

He could see Fudge’s smiling face through the small slot in the door. Fudge placed what looked like a folded newspaper in the slot for Sirius to take. Feeling a sense of dread wash through him, Sirius reached for the paper. He turned so his back was to Fudge as he unfolded the paper. Sirius didn’t want to give Fudge the satisfaction of whatever reaction he was hoping to get out of him.

With great trepidation he opened the newspaper and was confronted by the shocking title flashing in large bold letters: HARRY POTTER: NOT A POTTER? By Rita Skeeter. Utterly confused and angry Sirius quickly read through the article about Lily’s supposed scandalous relationship with an American muggle. The relationship had resulted in Harry’s birth making the muggle Harry’s real father and not James. The truth had all come out when the muggle got custody of Harry and took him on a shopping trip to Diagon Alley. There was a picture of on the front page of the man in question with an arm wrapped across the shoulders of a slender boy who looked quite a lot like the man in the muggle suit. The article continued on page four discussing Harry’s life with his newly discovered muggle father. But Sirius couldn’t keep reading. His stomach was twisted in knots and he felt physically ill.

Sirius couldn’t accept this. He tossed the paper to the floor in a fit of fury.

“How can you let the Daily Prophet print such lies?” Sirius hissed in outrage.

“Oh they’re not lies, Black. It’s all true. Harry Potter isn’t a Potter at all. He’s the son of this man, Tony Stark, a rich American muggle. I just thought you might want to know. I know how disappointed you’ll be, knowing that you didn’t actually betray James Potter by sending You Know Who after his family. Since they weren’t really his family after all. A cuckolding wife and a child that was never his. Such a shame for such a noble man to have died for a child that wasn’t his. He probably never realized that the boy wasn’t his,” Fudge remarked.

“No, it can’t be true. Not Harry,” Sirius croaked.

“It’s all true. The ministry has concrete proof of it. Harry Potter is Harry Stark. Your precious
master was defeated by the child of a muggle and a muggleborn witch,” Fudge taunted.

Sirius’s legs lost the ability to support themselves causing him to slowly sink to the ground. Thoughts of revenge against Peter, and getting custody of Harry, James’s son, were the only things that kept Sirius going. Harry not being James’s son was devastating to him. It was like losing James all over again. At least with Harry being alive it was like there was still a piece of James alive somewhere in the world.

No, Sirius just couldn’t accept this. It had to be some sort of trick. It could be Death Eaters trying to come up with some plot to discredit James and Lily’s names, to belittle their sacrifice. This Tony Stark could be working with them to try and hurt Harry. Sirius needed to know the truth. He needed to see the facts for himself. Only then could he start to accept that Harry might not be James’s. But he was! Sirius was so certain of this fact. He’d looked just like James when he was younger. Hadn’t he? His memories of little Harry were fuzzy due to his time in Azkaban. Was that even Harry in the picture on the paper? They could have taken the real Harry and replaced him with an imposter.

Sirius shook his head he needed to get out of here. He had to get out of Azkaban to prove these claims wrong. He had to prove to himself that they were wrong. Fueled by the surge of determination he came up with a plan of escape. It had been there all along and it was utterly brilliant. It had just needed the right motivation for him to realize it. Sirius would be long gone from Azkaban before his jailers even realized he was gone. Soon he’d get to Harry and he’d prove all these rumors were false. He would save Harry from the ones who were trying to turn him against James.
Metamorphosis

Harry was right. The news about him having a different father was blown over in a matter of weeks. This was all thanks to the shocking escape of Sirius Black from the wizarding prison Azkaban. Harry hadn’t even known Sirius Black had existed let alone that the man was his godfather. The man was the one who was responsible for turning his mum and James in to Voldemort. He had also killed twelve muggles, along with their other friend Peter Pettigrew who had set out to stop him. Pettigrew had been honored for his attempt to stop the mad man even though he hadn’t stood a chance against him. He had still been brave enough to try.

The wizarding world was in an uproar. Black was considered Voldemort’s second in command, and he had escaped from a prison that they had believed to be inescapable. There were all sorts of searches going on for the escaped prisoner, and the wizarding world was terrified about an attack from the mad man. This had given everyone a new reason to stare at Harry. They all believed that Sirius Black was coming to murder him. Tony was not happy about the situation in the least. He’d hassled SHIELD until they agreed to look into the matter even though they didn’t really have any jurisdiction over the incident. Of course he was making his own inquiries into the situation, and he was taking steps to find and recapture Sirius Black. He had also checked in with Dumbledore and Phil in regards to the protections surrounding Hogwarts to insure that Harry would safe within the walls of Hogwarts. Tony was still making Harry carry his suit with him at all times despite the reassurances that Hogwarts was the one of the safest places in the world.

Unfortunately Sirius Black was the least of his concerns right now. He was outside Hogwarts, and Harry was more focused on the problems going on within Hogwarts. First of all Lockhart was driving him crazy. He wouldn’t leave Harry alone. The professor was always calling Harry up to the front of the class to play a part from his books, and the worst part was they weren’t learning a thing from him. The man was incompetent, which finally became apparent to everyone when he had let loose a bunch of Cornish Pixies on their classroom. Harry and Hermione had taken to studying the material by themselves in the library along with their research on Asgard and the Nine Realms. Even Quirrell had been a better professor despite his stutter and being possessed by Voldemort.

Second, Snape was being surprisingly civil to him. He no longer went out of his way to be cruel to him. In fact it was as if, to him, Harry no longer existed. Harry honestly didn’t know if this was a good thing or not. He found it very unnerving, and he was just waiting for the moment when Snape would finally lose it and lash out at him.

Lastly, Harry was experiencing some changes that just didn’t seem like normal growing pains. It was these changes that distracted him from the other matters. It had been little things at first. Nothing that was too out of the ordinary or would cause too much worry. It started with his magic.

In the beginning of the year when practicing spells his wand responded the same as it always had. As the year went on and the more he used his wand, the less it seemed to respond to him. Spells that he was once able to complete without any difficulty would suddenly have severe reactions. They would often end up doing the exact opposite of what they were supposed to or just fail completely. However, he had discovered that with some concentration he was able to perform some of those spells without a wand while others didn’t work no matter how hard he tried.

Wandless magic was one of the most difficult things for a wizard to do but lately it was much easier for Harry without a wand than with. At least some of his spells ended up working without using his wand. He hadn’t been too nervous though. Loki had said there might be some changes to
his magic. He also considered that with a new magical core modeled after a Frost Giant’s it might be creating some adverse effects when reacting with his phoenix feather wand. Fire and ice didn’t mix well after all, and casting out powerful ice blasts, like the one he had flung at Malfoy on the train, was something that came extremely easily to him now. Harry simply believed that he might need a new wand to connect with his newly designed magic.

However, the differences in his magic weren’t the only changes that he was going through. As the weeks passed Harry began to notice some physical changes as well. He was finally forced to take notice of these physical changes during Quidditch practice. The Gryffindor Quidditch captain, Oliver Wood, had them outside practicing as often as possible, and for long periods of time leaving the other teammates groaning and sweating. Harry believed his new increase in stamina was all thanks to the training he had done over the summer.

The incident with the bludger changed his mind. One of the bludgers suddenly decided to go mad, and it targeted Harry out on the field. Harry had been caught off guard and it had slammed into him, knocking him clean off his broom. Luckily he hadn’t been that high off the ground but he’d been high enough. The combination of the bludger and the fall should have broken something but it didn’t. He was bruised and sore but other than that he was fine. His teammates wanted to rush him to Madam Pomfrey but he managed to talk them out of it. It had been dark out. They hadn’t seen just how far he had fallen. The bruises didn’t end up lasting as long as they should have anyway.

It was then that Harry began to wonder if Loki’s blood was having a more influential affect on him than Loki said it would. He had decided to test out his theories. Harry was surprised but pleased with the results. He had grown stronger, and faster. His sense of hearing and sight had improved. He was more durable against physical harm and against magic. Nowhere near to the extent of Loki or Thor but enough to give him leverage over the average human. The physical changes didn’t stop there. His hair had darkened from black-brown to black. It hadn’t just been Pepper’s imagination. Luckily that seemed to be the extent of the changes to his appearance. Harry didn’t like the connotations of all these physical changes.

He had been spending a lot of his free time in the library trying to find more information about Asgard and the nine realms. He wanted to learn more about the type of magic that Loki had used on him. There had to be more to it considering the changes he had been undergoing. Unfortunately, his search had been relatively fruitless. For the most part wizards seemed to believe that Asgardians were myths just like muggles. Harry did manage to find a reference to Frost Giants in an ancient history book. It stated that they were extinct now if they were ever real to begin with, and it didn’t provide any other pertinent information. He was hoping that a pass to the Restricted Section would give him access to more information about the traits of Frost Giants.

It was one such night that he was heading back from another fruitless search that he heard something in the walls. It was late when he heard a faint shuffling sound coming from inside the wall. He paused to listen but didn’t hear anything else. Harry decided that he was tired, and that he was simply hearing things. He kept on trudging back up to Gryffindor Tower. A scratching sound from further down the hallway had Harry pausing and reconsidering his decision. He was positive that he had heard something that time. Before he could think better of it he began to follow the sound. It sounded as if there was something moving in the walls. Something big enough to make the pipes and stones groan and shift under its weight.

He was so focused on following the sound that he wasn’t paying attention to where he was going. Harry ended up running into Hermione and Ron.

“Harry, we’ve been looking everywhere for you. It’s almost past curfew, and you really shouldn’t be out late with Sirius Black on the loose,” Hermione informed him worriedly.
Harry shushed her, trying to catch another hint of movement from the thing in the wall.

“Harry—”

“Just listen,” Harry commanded and motioned for Hermione and Ron to follow him.

“Mate, what are you doing?” Ron questioned softly, frowning as he followed along.

Just then it sounded like the creature or whatever it was slid downward.

“It just went down a floor,” Harry cried moving to run towards the stairs.

“What just went down a floor? Harry what’s happening?” Hermione grabbed hold of the back of his robes to halt him.

“There’s something in the walls. Didn’t you hear it just now?” It was plenty loud enough for them to have heard it too.

“No, Harry, I didn’t hear anything,” she said carefully, glancing at Ron in confirmation.

“Sorry, mate,” Ron shrugged.

“But I… I know I heard something,” Harry was utterly certain. His magic and body may be going haywire but he trusted himself to know if what he was hearing was real or not.

“Maybe it was just a rat or something in the walls. Scabbers has been running off a lot lately,” Ron offered.

“It sounded a lot bigger than that,” Harry replied.

“We can find out tomorrow. We should really get back to Gryffindor Tower. You know the professors are being much harsher about curfew after Sirius Black’s escape,” Hermione reminded.

“Yeah, you’re right,” Harry said after a moment.

He wanted to go and search out the noise again but he knew it would be better to head off to bed now. This could all be investigated at a later date when he didn’t have to worry about making himself seem crazy in front of his friends. For now he followed Hermione and Ron back up to the tower. His mind swirling with possibilities over what could have possibly been moving around in the walls of Hogwarts.

The next morning when the three of them walked into the great hall they were greeted by hushed whispers. There was a tension in the air and most of the staff was missing from their table.

“What’s going on?” Harry asked Neville as the three of them sat down. Harry wondered if there was a new development in the case of Sirius Black. Had they found him? Had he attacked someone?

“I’m not sure. I heard there was some sort of attack on the second floor last night,” Neville said in a hushed tone.


“I’m not sure I heard someone was petrified and there was a message on the wall written in blood. I don’t know if it was Sirius Black that did,” Neville explained.
“That’s awful! Who was attacked? Will they be all right?” Hermione wanted to know.

“I’m not sure. But I think they’ll be all right. There’s a potion that can be brewed from mandrakes that can cure someone from being petrified. But we just planted the mandrakes in Herbology and it takes several months for them to mature,” Neville told them. He was always the most confident when talking about Herbology.

“I heard the writing said something about a chamber being opened,” Parvati Patil suddenly chimed in from where she and Lavender Brown sat gossiping with one another.

“Chamber?” Harry asked.

“The Chamber of Secrets, and it said enemies of the heir beware,” Lee Jordan added from where he sat between Fred and George.

“The heir of what?” Ron frowned.

“We don’t know, but the professors—”

“— seem really worried,” Fred and George answered.

“What if it was Sirius Black? And this is some sort of attack on the school?” Ron worried.

“It can’t be Sirius Black. There’s no way he could have gotten into the castle,” Hermione stated firmly.

“Then what is it?” Harry wondered.

No one seemed to have an answer to his question.

Harry’s thoughts were racing as he made his way to the Transfiguration classroom. He wanted to know more about this attack. It also seemed like too much of coincidence that the night he had heard something moving in the walls was the same night that someone was attacked and petrified. Could it have been Sirius Black in the walls? Maybe the message written on the wall had been a warning that he was going to unleash his revenge on Harry?

When they got to class McGonagall appeared even sterner than she normally did. Her face appeared pinched and she snapped at everyone to quickly get into their seats. The tension in the air was nearly palpable. Everyone in the room wanted to know about what had happened last night, and who was attacked but no one was brave enough to ask McGonagall while she was in this mood. No one, but Harry that is. At least he waited until class was almost finished.

“Professor what is the Chamber of Secrets?” Harry asked. He decided that he would start with what he thought was the least offensive part of the attack.

“Mr. Stark, that isn’t something that we need to discuss at this time. The Chamber of Secrets is a myth that has existed as long as Hogwarts has been standing,” McGonagall dismissed the question her expression somehow becoming even more pinched.

“But professor don’t we deserve to know what’s happening in our school?” Harry argued.

McGonagall sighed. She suddenly looked years older and infinitely more tired.

“Very well, would you all like to hear the story of the Chamber?” she asked.

The rest of the class eagerly nodded. McGonagall sighed again and began to tell the tale of the four
founders and Salazar Slytherin’s split from the others. Harry listened closely, and when she got to the part about the monster in the Chamber it made him wonder.

“Professor McGonagall, what sort of beast did Slytherin have down there?” Harry asked.

“There isn’t a monster in Hogwarts, Stark, because the Chamber does not exist. The attack that took place against Mr. Finch-Fletchley was a prank gone wrong, and the staff of Hogwarts is doing all that we to find the culprits. When we do they will be appropriately punished for such behavior. This was not the work of some made up Slytherin monster nor was it the work of Sirius Black. Spreading rumors to the contrary will only cause unnecessary panic,” with that McGonagall dismissed the class.

“What sort of things can petrify someone?” Harry pondered as they left the classroom.

“I’m not sure exactly. I don’t think there’s a spell for it. Maybe a potion… We should go to the library after our classes to look it up. We should also look into the history of the Chamber of Secrets,” Hermione stated.

“Oh, not the library,” Ron whined.

“Ronald, this is important. Someone was attacked in the school last night and we need to find out how,” Hermione argued.

“Yeah, I don’t think this is a prank. I heard something in the wall last night, and I bet if we find out what it was we’ll find the answer to what attacked Justin. Sirius Black could have opened the chamber. He did go to Hogwarts and from the information I looked up on him he came from an old, dark family. He could be the Heir of Slytherin,” Harry said.

“It’s always the library with you two. I hate the library almost as much as spiders,” Ron muttered as they trooped to their next class.

The next few days were spent with Harry, Hermione, and a reluctant Ron in the library looking for possible types of monsters in the Chamber. Ron was more of a hindrance to their search but he did point out an interesting phenomenon to Harry. Ron had caught sight of a line of spiders heading out the window. It was a strange sight to see so many spiders together all heading in the same direction. It added another level of strangeness to what is already going on in the castle. Hermione and he had discovered that there had been a previous attack in Hogwarts where the Chamber of Secrets had been opened. A girl had actually died due to the attack. However, they also discovered that Hagrid had been the one blamed for the attack, and it was actually the reason behind his expulsion from Hogwarts. They discovered that he had been keeping an acromantula in his room. It seemed typical of Hagrid and luckily he wasn’t sent to Azkaban. Harry couldn’t help but have his doubts about the attack. He didn’t think that an acromantula could have killed the girl without leaving a mark or been capable of petrifying Justin Finch-Fletchley.

Harry hadn’t told Tony about the attack just yet. He knew he could trust Tony now and he was bound to find out eventually, anyway. But this was a Hogwarts problem, and Harry wanted to figure things out on his own. After all he had proven himself more than capable of dong so last year with figuring out Voldemort’s plan and then facing him. He didn’t want to run to Tony with every problem that might come his way. With the life he led he was bound to have a lot of challenges that he needed to face. He wanted to prove that he was capable of taking care of himself. The professors didn’t seem to think that the attack was real while the ministry seemed to believe that Sirius Black was behind the attack. Dumbledore was often away from the castle in the following days.
Shortly after the attack it was announced that a Dueling Club was going to be started up. Harry was looking forward to the idea of having a chance to learn different fighting techniques with magic. Harry could read about dueling styles all he wanted but he was much better at learning by doing. He’d grown by leaps and bounds this year in learning how to protect himself physically. He wanted to learn how to protect himself magically as well. Maybe learning how to duel could also help him learn how to control his changed magic.

For these reasons Harry was looking forward to attending the first meeting of the Dueling Club that weekend. However, when Ron, Hermione, and he walked in to see his two least favorite professors it made him rethink attending. Lockhart was standing on a raised platform in the middle of the room. The robes he was wearing were even more outrageous than the ones he normally did. Then there was Snape standing off in the corner looking like a looming black bat. He was glaring darkly at everyone. Harry wondered how Lockhart had managed to get him to come. He was certain that Snape disliked Lockhart as much as Harry did.

“All right everyone quiet down,” Lockhart called. The room instantly quieted. “I’m glad to have such a large turnout for our little Dueling Club. I hadn’t imagined that so many of you would be interested when I suggested the idea to the Headmaster. I thought it would be beneficial to all of you if I imparted some of the skills I’ve learned over the years in fighting off various creatures.” Lockhart digressed into a story about how he had defeated a werewolf.

“Oh, yes of course, let’s get started then shall we? As you can see Professor Snape, has graciously agreed to help me today. Professor Snape perhaps you would like to help me demonstrate to them the proper dueling technique?” Lockhart grinned cockily, twirling his wand and nearly dropping it.

Snape smirked and for a moment Harry almost felt bad for Lockhart. But then again the fool had brought it on himself.

“All right everyone quiet down,” Lockhart called. The room instantly quieted. “I’m glad to have such a large turnout for our little Dueling Club. I hadn’t imagined that so many of you would be interested when I suggested the idea to the Headmaster. I thought it would be beneficial to all of you if I imparted some of the skills I’ve learned over the years in fighting off various creatures.” Lockhart digressed into a story about how he had defeated a werewolf.

“Professor, I believe we only have two hours. Perhaps we should get started,” Snape interjected smoothly.

“Oh, yes of course, let’s get started then shall we? As you can see Professor Snape, has graciously agreed to help me today. Professor Snape perhaps you would like to help me demonstrate to them the proper dueling technique?” Lockhart grinned cockily, twirling his wand and nearly dropping it.

Snape smirked and for a moment Harry almost felt bad for Lockhart. But then again the fool had brought it on himself.

“Maybe we’ll get lucky and they’ll off each other,” Ron whispered excitedly to Harry as the two men got into position.

Harry grinned and nodded his agreement. Hermione shot them a dirty look.

“I’m going to use a nifty little spell I used on the banshee. First, we to bow to one another, then we effect the proper dueling stance like so, and then the duel begins,” Lockhart instructed.

The two professors bowed quickly to one another. Before Lockhart could even open his mouth Snape had sent an *Expelliarmus* at him. The man flipped through the air and landed hard on his backside. Several older girls rushed to his side while everyone else burst into loud raucous laughter. This was the first time Harry ever found himself cheering for Snape.

Lockhart finally managed to pick himself up. He tried to play it off as if the fall was intentional but no one was buying it. Harry couldn’t help but laugh at the man’s bumbling. He wasn’t laughing a moment later when Lockhart called him up to be one of the student demonstrators. Harry didn’t want to be the center of attention with his out of control magic. Lockhart forced him up on stage anyway. Matters were only made worse when Snape called Malfoy up to be his partner.

Malfoy sneered at him as he came up. The blonde Slytherin hadn’t been bothering him as much since the incident on the train. Malfoy hadn’t been able to completely keep his mouth shut about Harry and his father but it hadn’t been anything that led to another fight. Harry could see that Malfoy was going to use this time to his advantage, and try to humiliate Harry as much as possible.
Harry couldn’t let him have the satisfaction.

Snape murmured in Malfoy’s ear as they prepared to face each other. Harry wondered what sort of advice he was giving him. Most likely it was a way to kill him and make it look like an accident. Lockhart in comparison was useless in helping him muttering about some trick he’d used while facing a yeti. Harry was lucky that he already knew some spells beyond what the normal second year knew. Unfortunately, he was afraid to try any of them incase they backfired on him. He had managed to hide his uncontrollable magic from people so far, and he wanted to continue doing so.

“Whenever you’re ready boys,” Lockhart clapped.

Harry glared at Malfoy as he smirked back. The two of them bowed to one another. Harry immediately shot a leg locker jinx at Malfoy. The blonde boy was able to avoid it due to the weakness of the spell. Harry had good aim but the spell seemed to fizzle out, and it slowed down before reaching his opponent. Malfoy then sent a swelling hex to Harry’s head. Harry ducked out of the way. His reflexes had become inhumanly sharp but he tried his best to avoid making such a thing obvious to the crowd watching him. Harry was nervous to try using another spell with his wand. He wondered if he would be able to get away with firing off a bolt of power while making it look like it had come from his wand.

The problem became unnecessary when Malfoy suddenly shouted, “Serpensortia.”

A huge black snake shot from his wand and landed with a thud on the platform. Students screamed and Harry froze as the snake hissed. It was a shock to Harry but he couldn’t understand the snake.

“Don’t worry boys, I’ll get rid of it,” Lockhart boasted.

Harry tried to protest Lockhart’s involvement but it was too late. Lockhart fired some sort of spell at the snake. It didn’t banish the snake it only tossed him up into the air and made it come back down twice as angry. Harry knew something had to be done when it went after the other students around the stage. Without really thinking Harry sent a blast of ice towards the snake. The ice incased the snake and froze it right in its tracks. Silence filled the classroom. The students stared at Harry in amazed shock. The blue flames were unlike anything that most wizards were capable of producing especially without a wand. Harry caught both Snape’s and Lockhart’s looks of shock before he jumped down from the platform, and left the room. Hermione and Ron followed him out.

“Harry! Wait!” Hermione called.

He paused and let them catch up.

“That was wicked mate! You created those same blue flames again. How did you do it?” Ron asked.

“There’s something I have to tell you. But not here,” Harry knew he needed to confide in someone about the changes he had been undergoing.

“I know somewhere we can go,” offered Hermione.

Ron and Harry followed her to the second floor girl’s bathroom.

“We can’t go in a girl’s toilet,” said Ron flushing all the way to his ears.

“Don’t worry no one ever uses this bathroom. It’s Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom,” Hermione explained.
“Moaning Myrtle?” Harry questioned.

Just then the ghost of a teenage girl appeared. She wore thick glasses and old styled Hogwarts robes.

“Well, that was strange,” Ron commented.

She then disappeared by diving straight into the toilet by the far wall.

Harry told them about the problems with his magical core, and what Loki had done to save him.

“Yeah mate, magic like that is really tricky especially when you add in the part with the blood,” Ron agreed.

“Maybe my dad can ask Thor about it,” Harry murmured deciding it was finally time to talk to Tony about the changes.

The whole school was talking about Harry freezing the snake. Luckily everyone seemed to think he had been using his wand, and he had just managed to perform a really powerful ice spell. But with the looks that Snape kept sending him, Harry knew that Snape had seen what really happened. He didn’t think Snape would do anything about it. He’d been ignoring Harry’s existence lately and Harry didn’t think this would change anything.

Later that night Harry was nervous about calling Tony. He knew Tony wasn’t going to like the revelation that Loki was Harry’s magical parent. He really wasn’t going to like the changes that
Harry was experiencing at the moment either.

“Hey kiddo,” Tony greeted when Harry called that night.

“Hey dad,” Harry said.

“How was your day? You had that dueling club thing, right? How’d that go? Did you kick some butt?” Tony teased.

“You could say that,” Harry hedged.

“Did something happen?” Tony questioned in concern.

“There’s something I have to tell you,” Harry confessed.

“Why do I get the feeling that I’m not going to like this?” Tony sighed.

“It’s about Loki.”

“I’m really not going to like this,” Tony murmured.

“When Loki changed my magical core he modeled it after himself. He said that sort of made him my magical parent. While he was creating my new core he said something went wrong and he needed to give me a transfusion of his blood. And now… well…”

“And now…” Tony pushed.

“There have been some changes,” Harry admitted.

“What kind of changes?”

Harry told Tony about all of the changes to his magic that he had been expecting, and the physical changes that he hadn’t been. Once he was through telling him everything Tony was quiet.

“Dad?” Harry asked hesitantly.

“I should have known that we couldn’t trust that little weasel,” Tony muttered darkly.

“I should have told you when it happened,” Harry apologized.

“I know you should have but it’s done, and I guess it wouldn’t changed what’s happening now. We need to figure out if this could have long-term effects. I’ll try to see if I can get in touch with Thor. He was going to ask his father about what Loki did anyway but he never got back to me,” Tony informed him.

“Thanks dad,” Harry sighed.

“No problem, kiddo. I’m glad you told me. Just let me know if you start feeling sick or if things start getting really out of control. As soon as I get ahold of Thor I’ll come and get you to get you checked out. I’ll talk with Coulson and have him talk to his brother about it. Maybe there’s something they can figure out while we try to get in touch with Thor.”

“Okay, I’ll let you know if anything changes,” Harry promised.

They said their goodbyes. Harry felt a little bit better about coming clean about the changes. He did feel a little bad about not bringing up the Chamber of Secrets. But he would tell him about it later.
Harry figured he could only bring up so many things at one time before Tony’s head exploded. Besides Harry wanted the chance to solve the mystery himself before Tony got involved. He was fairly certain that Tony would remove him from Hogwarts before he had a chance to save the school.

Harry had taken to sneaking out of bed at night to try and find the monster. He knew it was risky but he just wanted proof of the creature’s existence so that the professors would actually listen to him. Using his invisibility cloak he roamed the hallways listening carefully to try and discover the sounds that he had heard before. Harry knew he had to be careful because it was either a monster from the Chamber of Secrets or it was Sirius Black coming after. Or in the worse case scenario it was Black who had been the one to release the monster. In that instance Harry wanted to be the one to stop Black. Harry hated the man for his betrayal, and wanted to see him pay for what he had done to his mum and James. Harry had always cherished his friendships because he knew what it was like to not have any.

After all the hours spent in the library Hermione and he had come up with a shirt list of beasts that were capable of petrifying someone. They had all turned out to be very deadly. He’d brought his suit with him for added protection. His sneaking around came in handy a week later. He was walking through the hallway on the second floor when he heard the slithering noise from before. Unlike last time it didn’t sound like it was coming from the wall. This time it was louder and it sounded like the beast was actually in the hallway. Harry cautiously crept around the corner just in time to see the tail end of a giant scaled creature. The body looked snake like but massive and with strange spines rising up along the creature’s back.

Harry whipped out the list Hermione and he had created. He scanned it quickly but none of the creatures on the list was snake like. In all honesty snake like made a lot of sense, since Salazar Slytherin’s symbol was in fact a snake. Harry ran through a list of beasts that were snake like, could grow to large sizes, and could live for thousands of years. There weren’t many. In fact Harry could only think of one: a basilisk. But he was pretty sure that their gaze didn’t petrify people it just killed them. Maybe they had an eyelid of some kind that could weaken the effects of their gaze? Harry remembered something else about the basilisk: spiders flee before them. Harry’s mind instantly snapped to the line of spiders marching from the castle that Ron had pointed out. Harry was becoming more and more certain that the creature was a basilisk. A surefire way to kill one was the crowing of a rooster.

Harry decided to run back to the Gryffindor Common Room and tell Ron and Hermione about his discovery. Together they could find a way to get ahold of a rooster. It now made sense as to way all of Hagrid’s chickens had been attacked. Harry really hadn’t thought much of the attack considering all the other things that were going on in his life. But the basilisk couldn’t have attacked the chickens, which meant that there was someone who had let the basilisk out, and was making sure that it stayed that way. To Harry this seemed like proof that Sirius Black was responsible. It was a perfect way of getting rid of Harry without actually putting himself at risk at getting caught. He could have set the beast loose and then hidden himself away to wait for the job to be complete. Of course Harry realized that by trying to actively find the creature was putting him directly in the path of letting Black’s plan succeed. But Harry couldn’t just sit around and let people be attacked. If the professors weren’t going to do anything about the basilisk then he would.

A piercing scream stopped Harry dead in his tracks. Before he could think better of it he sprinted towards the source. He made it just in time to see a petrified Penelope Clearwater. She stood frozen with a look of horror on her features as she stood in a puddle of water. Harry looked up just in time to see the tip of the basilisk’s tail disappear into the girl’s bathroom. Surprisingly Harry recognized it to be Moaning Myrtle’s bathroom. With all the water pouring out of it, it made him wonder if a pipe had burst.
Harry knew he should have gone to get help but he didn’t think he would have time. He needed to see where the basilisk was going. There had to be some sort of doorway it was using to get in and out of the walls. By the way the massive snake disappeared into the relatively small bathroom Harry had a fairly good guess that one of them was inside this bathroom.

Harry made it into the bathroom just in time to see the basilisk disappear through a huge opening in the bathroom sinks. Harry watched as the rest of the basilisk disappeared down the hole before he decided to approach it. He gazed down the pipe. He couldn’t see the bottom of the moldy, cobweb filled pipe. Now would have really been the time to go get some back up but Harry wavered in his decision. He really didn’t want to lose sight of the basilisk, and what if the pipe closed? Harry decided that finding the opening to the pipes was enough proof. Even if it closed he was sure there was a diagnostic spell that someone like Dumbledore could perform to prove that it really did exist. He was just about to turn back when he caught a flash of bright orange before he received a violent shove from behind that caused him to stumble and fall back into the pipe.
Battle of the Basilisk

Harry slid down into the darkness. The pipe twisted and turned, and Harry tried desperately to orient himself to release his suit. He had no idea what to expect at the end of this tunnel and he wanted to be as prepared as possible. He was thankful that he had brought his suit with him. He managed to deploy his suit just as he shot out of the opening of the pipe. The suit finished wrapping around him moments before he crashed onto the stone ground. He shook himself as he stood up and Jarvis greeted him in a warm but worried tone.

“Master Harry, why have deployed your suit? What sort of danger are you in? I am scanning the area now, sir, but I seem to be experiencing some difficulties. I cannot connect with the main database, and I am unable to notify Master Stark that your suit has been deployed,” Jarvis informed him.

“It must be the tunnel we’re in. It’s so far under Hogwarts and it has to have some impressive magical shields around it if no ones been able to detect its existence for so long,” Harry reasoned.

Harry explained to Jarvis why he had deployed the suit while he started walking through the large tunnel. It was littered with the bones of small animals, and disturbingly large shed snakeskin. It made Harry wish that Jarvis was able to connect with the main system back in the tower. Jarvis did suggest switching to heat vision if they caught sight of the basilisk. It did make Harry wonder why Justin and Penelope had just been petrified while the other girl had died. What had they done differently? Perhaps there were different strengths to its eyes? Or maybe a person needed to have direct eye contact with the basilisk. Harry was hoping for the latter because that was going to be the only thing that saved him if he came in contact with it.

Harry supposed he could have just flown back up but someone up there had pushed him down the tunnel. He wanted to find out who was behind all of this and just what they were up to. He continued walking through the tunnel until he came to a large open doorway. It led into a huge chamber with large ornate columns and a huge statue of a man with a long goatee. He assumed the man to be Salazar Slytherin, and decided that Slytherin looked rather ape-like.

Harry entered the large chamber cautiously. It appeared to be empty but Harry wasn’t about to let his guard down.

“Jarvis, can you scan the chamber?” Harry asked.

“I seem to be picking up two other life forms directly in front of you, sir. One appears to be human, while the other is decidedly… not. In fact it reminds me a great deal of the whale-like creatures that the Chitauri employed. However, not quite as large,” Jarvis reported.

“Well, at least that’s one thing in my favor,” Harry muttered.

Harry reached the middle of the chamber, and received the shock of his life. Little Ginny Weasley stepped out from behind one of the columns. The flash of bright orange he’d caught sight of before falling suddenly made sense to Harry now. But Ginny couldn’t have been the one to push him. Why would she have done something like that? She was just a first year who was too shy to barely speak in his presence. She was just Ron’s little sister. What could she possibly be doing down here?

Harry slid the faceplate on his suit up so Ginny would be able to see that it was him.
“Ginny? Are you all right? You shouldn’t be down here. The monster in the school is a basilisk. I’ve followed it down here,” Harry told her.

“I’m fine Harry. The basilisk won’t come until it’s called,” Ginny replied sounding far too careless for Harry’s liking.

As Harry drew closer to Ginny he realized that there was something off about her. Ginny didn’t look well at all. She looked extremely tired and wane. She was very pale, her freckles stood out in stark relief against her waxy white skin. The deep circles under her eyes were like craters. In her hands she was clutching a dripping wet, black leather bound book.


A quick, fierce smile flashed across her otherwise expressionless face. The grin was completely alien to her normal, friendly features. It was rather eerie to witness.

“Stupid boy, don’t you even realize your friend is gone?” Ginny hissed in a tone very unlike herself.

“What do you mean? And did you say something about calling the basilisk?” Harry questioned, frowning.

Something was very wrong here. This wasn’t Ginny. It looked like her but she wasn’t under her own control. It reminded him of Loki’s staff, and the people who had been under its control. Ginny certainly seemed to be possessed in some way. Harry tried hard to remember all that he could about possession. He never got the chance to. All at once Ginny’s entire body seized up, and she collapsed onto the stone floor. Harry would have run to her side but just then the book she had been holding shuddered and flew open. A black swirling mist rose up from the blank pages and formed itself into the shape of a young man. He was tall with strong, classically handsome features, dark hair, and dark eyes.

“Who are you?” Harry asked, wearily eyeing the… man? Spirit? He really wasn’t sure.

“Harry Potter or Stark now I suppose, it is so nice to finally stand face to face with you. Ginny has told me so much about the famous Harry Stark, and his incredible defeat of the Dark Lord Voldemort,” the young man said as he stepped closer to Harry.

Harry noted that he wore Hogwarts school robes with a Slytherin tie. The robes were the same older style as Moaning Myrtle’s had been.

“Are you some sort of ghost?” Harry asked.

“Oh no, I am so much more than that. I am a memory of Tom Riddle, preserved in the diary all these long years. Ginny here gave me the chance to free myself from its pages by pouring out her inner most thoughts and feelings to me,” the spirit, Tom Riddle apparently, gloated.

“Will it kill her? What you’re doing, will it kill her if you don’t stop now and reverse it?” Harry demanded glancing to where Ginny lay at Riddle’s feet. She looked almost translucent she was so pale while Riddle continued to grow more substantial by the moment.

“Yes, the trusting little fool will die so that I may live once more. She should have known better than to put her trust in such an object, and in a stranger so willing to listen to her problems. She served her purpose, however, and in the end turned out to be quite useful. She told me all about you. Couldn’t shut up about your accomplishments and your hero muggle father with his flying metal suits,” he spat in disgust glaring at the suit Harry now wore. “But what I want to know is
how a baby. The child of a muggle and a mudblood, could have defeated the greatest dark lord in centuries."

"Why do care about that? Voldemort must have come far after your time in Hogwarts judging by your robes," Harry said in confusion.

"Voldemort is my past, present, and future," Riddle pulled out Ginny’s wand.

In the air he wrote out Tom Marvolo Riddle. With another wave of the wand the letters rearranged themselves to spell out I am Lord Voldemort.

"That’s a nifty little trick," Harry murmured feeling fear slide through him. This wasn’t some angry spirit of an old Hogwarts student out for some petty revenge. This was a young Voldemort trying to get a body back, and if his indifference towards using Ginny was any indication he seemed to be just as cruel as older self.

"Yes, well I could hardly keep my filthy muggle father’s name," Riddle replied not catching Harry’s sarcasm.

"It was you wasn’t it? You released the basilisk when you were here at school, and then you created the memory in the diary so that you could possess someone to do it again," Harry pondered aloud.

A smirk flitted across Riddle’s lips. “Not a complete idiot I see. Yes, I discovered I was the Heir of Slytherin, and I went searching for my ancestor’s chamber so that I may continue his noble work. But then they were going to close Hogwarts after that stupid girl died. I couldn’t let that happen. It was all too easy to frame the half giant and his pet for my deeds. For all their talk of equality they were still so quick to judge the half creature. They even gave me a medal for it.”

“You won’t get away with it this time. I won’t let you,” Harry growled.

“Do you really think your muggle weapons can really stand up to the might of the great Salazar Slytherin?” Riddle demanded.

“Yes, I do,” Harry challenged.

“We shall see,” then Riddle turned and a series of hissing sounds issued from his mouth.

The mouth of Slytherin’s statue opened and Harry could hear the coils of the basilisk sliding together. Harry immediately had Jarvis switch to heat vision. He knew that he needed to get to the diary before Riddle completely stole Ginny’s life force. The diary seemed to be the source of Riddle, and hopefully if he destroyed it before whatever transfer he was doing was complete it would stop him. But first he needed to avoid being eaten by the basilisk.

Harry shot into the air; deploying all the maneuvers Tony had taught him to outrun the basilisk. With the heat vision the basilisk stood out in shades of cool blues and greens. Luckily the change in vision seemed to be working. But just in case Harry avoiding looking directly into the basilisk’s eyes or in the vicinity of its face.

The basilisk was fast despite its size but Harry could turn on a dime, and was an excellent flyer. He was far too swift as he darted around tall columns to avoid the creature’s massive jaws. Harry’s plan was to lead it away from where Riddle stood shouting at it to get Harry. He needed to trap the thing to give him enough time to go back and destroy the diary. Without the basilisk he thought he had a good chance of defeating Riddle especially with his suit. Harry hoped that destroying the diary would destroy Riddle and cause the basilisk to return to whatever dormant state it had been in
before this all started. If it was still alive after Harry was finished with it.

“Jarvis are all of the repulsors in effect now?” Harry asked.

“Yes sir, I would say you are in sufficient danger to unlock the security measures put in place on the suit,” Jarvis agreed.

“Perfect.”

Harry flew through the opening of the chamber, and back into the tunnel. Jarvis had warned him earlier about the rocks in the tunnel being unstable. Harry was hoping that one good blast would cause the tunnel roof to cave in and bury the basilisk. Unfortunately, the basilisk was gaining on him in the relatively straight path of the tunnel. The creature could really move when it wanted to, and without room to maneuver around Harry was stuck.

“Jarvis full power to—” The basilisk’s sudden lunge caught Harry by surprise.

He narrowly avoided being swallowed whole by performing a quick barrel role but he didn’t manage to avoid it completely. The side of the giant snake’s head hit him, and sent him crashing into the wall. The force of the hit caused the wall to shudder ominously. In a daze Harry picked himself up at Jarvis’s forceful urgings.

Harry was standing right beside the basilisk’s middle. The creature itself was a little dazed from slamming its head into Harry and the wall, and seemed to be trying to orient itself. Harry knew that now would be the perfect time to trap the basilisk. This section of the tunnel was narrow enough that the basilisk couldn’t easily turn itself around to snap at him. Harry took aim of the already weakened cave wall, and fired. The blast was loud and the shockwave trembled through the tunnel. Harry shot out from under the crumbling rock as it came crashing down. The basilisk’s shrieking hiss of rage and pain reverberated through the tunnel.

Harry took a moment to look back. The tunnel was completely caved in. The only piece of the basilisk that he could see was the tip of the tail and it wasn’t so much as twitching. The basilisk was out of the way but now his only means of escape was also cut off. He would have to find his own way out. If he made it out.

Harry made his way back towards the chamber.

“Jarvis, report,” Harry commanded.

“We are at 73% capacity, sir. Some damage was sustained to the left arm and chest plate from the hit but it isn’t anything too concerning at the moment,” Jarvis reassured him.

“All right let’s go kick Riddle’s butt,” Harry growled, sounding more confident than he actually felt.

“Of course, sir,” Jarvis agreed.

Harry swiftly made his way back to the chamber. Tom Riddle was no longer standing underneath Slytherin’s statue. Ginny was still lying there, and Harry was relieved to see that the diary was as well. Harry rushed to Ginny’s side. She looked so still that Harry worried that he was already too late to save her. He checked and was utterly relieved to discover that she was still breathing. But Harry wasn’t sure for how much longer. He turned his gaze to the diary.

Harry grinned, and aimed at the diary. He sent the most powerful blast he could at the diary. When the blast subsided Harry gaped to see that the diary was completely unharmed. The stone around it
was blackened but the diary itself looked just as it had before. Confusion swam through Harry. Why hadn’t the diary been destroyed?

“Didn’t I warn you that your muggle weapons stood no chance against my power?” Came the mocking voice of Tom Riddle.

He appeared from around a column looking more substantial than he had before. Harry was beginning to panic now. He had gotten rid of the basilisk but how was he supposed to save Ginny? If he couldn’t destroy the diary would he have to destroy Tom Riddle instead?

“You did, but you’ve been in the diary for a while and you haven’t seen my dad’s created,” Harry taunted.

Before Riddle could open his mouth again Harry fired off shot at Riddle. The teenaged specter of Voldemort was able to dodge the blast at the last moment.

“You can’t stop me,” Riddle hissed whipping out Ginny’s wand.

He fired off a curse. Harry darted out of the way of it. He took to the air, the only place he would have the true advantage. Riddle snarled and fired off several more curses in rapid succession. Memory or not Riddle was fast, and seemed to know an endless amount of painful spells. Harry was able to fire off a couple of missiles but Riddle had a great shield charm. The suit was actually slowing him down with his greater speed. But he was grateful for it when one of the curses finally connected. It sliced through the left leg of the suit. Harry cried out as he felt the sharp bite of the magic and was tossed across the chamber floor. Luckily the suit had protected him from most of it. Looking down he saw that it hadn’t protected him completely. There was a large cut in the suit and Harry could see some of his blood dripping down.

“The cut is not fatal, sir, but if it is not taken care of soon you could pass out from blood loss,” Jarvis explained, a hint of worry to his computerized voice.

“I should be fine. I’ve been healing faster than normal,” Harry commented refocusing his attention onto Riddle.

“Just give up now, Harry, and I will give you a quick death,” Riddle offered, gloating.

He thought that he had beaten Harry, that Harry could be so easily cowed. But he didn’t know Harry or the things that he had seen. Harry was made of stronger stuff than that. He wouldn’t give up. He’d learned that from Tony.

“Not a chance,” Harry snapped.

He fired off a repulsor beam at Riddle while he wasn’t expecting it. He managed to throw up a shield before the blast hit him but it still sent him flying off his feet. Harry didn’t give Riddle a chance to recover. He pulled out the skills Natasha and Steve had taught him over the summer. Harry sent a swift hit to Riddle’s chest as he tried to stand knocking him back onto his back. Before he could get another chance to orient himself Harry kicked away Ginny’s wand. He then restrained him, holding him down with a knee to his back and yanking his arms together.

“How do I destroy the diary?” Harry demanded. His leg ached where it had been hit, and unlike his other wounds it didn’t seem to be healing any time soon. The blood was still seeping from the wound in a steady stream. He was tired and he knew he needed to find a way to stop Riddle quickly. He didn’t have time to get help now. If he did Riddle was likely to get away, and Ginny might die.
“Do you honestly think that I would tell you that when it would destroy me?” Riddle gasped out.

“Yes, because I’ll find a way to destroy you anyway. You’ll just be saving yourself a lot of trouble by telling me now,” Harry was attempting to sound intimidating and confident.

He wasn’t sure it was working since Riddle just looked amused by him.

“I think you’ll find the task of destroying me a difficult one,” Riddle wore a large grin now, his dark eyes locked on something behind Harry.

Harry heard something sizzle and looked to his shoulder. A piece of the shoulder plating looked like it had melted. He looked up and his heart dropped into his stomach.

“This isn’t good,” Harry murmured.

“Agreed, sir,” Jarvis chimed in worry.

The basilisk, looking a little worse for the wear, as it hovered above where Harry held Riddle pinned to the ground. The venom from its fangs were dripping down from its open jaws and melting the layer of paint from the suit. Harry launched himself into the air. He was too slow. The basilisk’s jaws closed around him. The metal shrieked as it halted the basilisk’s bite enough to protect Harry’s skin from being pierced but several large holes were punctured in the suit. The suit shuddered with the damage and Harry could feel the cool air through the open holes. Harry managed to grab ahold of couple of its teeth, and hoped the suit would hold together long enough to get him out of this situation. He shoved with all his strength to pry open the jaws to keep them from slowly crushing him to death.

“Jarvis, fire the repulsor beam straight from the arc reactor,” Harry demanded.

“The suit won’t be able to function if you do this, sir. We are already losing power rapidly. Doing this will drain it completely,” Jarvis cautioned.

“Just do it!” Harry shouted as the basilisk thrashed its head trying to swallow him, and his grip began to slip.

The blast shot from the arc reactor. It turned Harry’s world into a bright explosion, and for a moment he couldn’t see a thing. Once the reactor’s power had been completely depleted Harry was able to get a clear view of the roof of the chamber, which was odd because he was still inside the basilisk’s mouth. He didn’t really get a chance to process it more because in the next instance he was crashing. The basilisk’s head dropped to the stone chamber floor with a reverberating thud. The basilisk was dead with a huge hole in its head and was no longer able to support itself. Harry came tumbling out of its ruined mouth.

He sluggishly yanked off the pieces of his suit. It was no longer functioning and it would just be dead weight on him. Harry didn’t like the fact that he no longer had Jarvis with him. He hoped that he would be able to get himself out of this mess on his own. Harry staggered to his feet and discovered Riddle standing there in stunned silence. Riddle was gaping at the utterly destroyed head of the basilisk in shock and slowly growing rage.

“How did you kill her,” Riddle hissed once more wielding Ginny’s wand. “You killed her with your filthy muggle weapons.”

“Well, she did try to eat me first,” Harry offered.

Riddle advanced on him. Harry backed up a few steps favoring the leg that had been previously
sliced open. As Riddle drew closer Harry couldn’t help but notice that Riddle looked like he had been burned on the side of his neck. The pattern of the burn reminded him a great deal of the way the basilisk venom had melted his suit. Had Riddle been splashed with the venom when Harry made the basilisk’s head explode? At least Harry knew that Riddle was capable of being physically harmed.

“I will destroy you, Harry. It’s such a shame we are so alike. Both raised by muggles who hated us, both of us have useless muggle fathers, and we even look something alike. You could have joined me, and been a part of my new order. Now, you will be nothing more than a memory.”

“We’re nothing alike. I have a father who loves me and cares about me. I could never be like you,” Harry shouted back.

A part of him was terrified by the similarities between Riddle and himself. But Harry had Tony and Pepper. He had a family and Harry wouldn’t ever do anything to jeopardize that family. Harry had learned from his interaction with Loki that it was a person’s actions that truly mattered not their pasts. After all Loki had spoke of their similar pasts as well.

Riddle glared at him and raised his wand to cast a spell. Harry summoned his magic. At that moment he was thankful for all the changes happening within him. It gave him faster reflexes, and allowed him to fire off a blast of magic without needing a wand. He shot a blast of blue flames at Riddle. Riddle was able to shield from the flames and fired off several blasting hexes Harry’s way. Harry managed to avoid a couple of them but with his injured leg one hit its mark. He flew backwards across the floor coming to a stop beside Ginny and the diary.

Harry glanced at Ginny and noted that he didn’t have long. She was look more translucent by the moment. Harry then glanced at the diary. Harry had sent one of the strongest repulsor blasts he could at the diary and it hadn’t damaged it a bit. But here it was with a newly created burn mark. Harry took note of a basilisk fang lying near the diary. Could the venom be harmful to it? There was only one way to find out. Riddle was gaining on him and he had to act fast. He thought he’d beaten Harry for good this time and was taking his time to stroll over to where he lay, apparently defeated. Harry grabbed up the fang.

“What are you doing?” Riddle demanded his face contorted in rage.

“Stopping you,” Harry said simply.

He stabbed the diary with the fang. Harry was rewarded with a scream of agony from Riddle, and the diary immediately started to gush black ink. Harry stabbed it again, and again. Holes began to appear in Riddle. In one last shriek of rage Riddle attempted to lunge at Harry. He didn’t make it far before he exploded into nothing. Harry glance at Ginny, and smiled when he saw that she was quickly becoming more substantial. At that moment he wanted nothing more than to just pass out but he knew he had to find a way out of the chamber.

As if in answer to his thoughts a beautiful song filled the chamber. Harry felt relief wash over him as the brilliant form of Fawkes, Dumbledore’s phoenix, swooped into the chamber. The beautiful bird knelt beside him, and tilted its head as it cooed at him.

“I’m all right. It’s Ginny we need to worry about it. I think she almost died. Do you know a way out? We should really get her to the hospital wing,” Harry told Fawkes in a rush.

In answer the phoenix turned and held out its leg. Harry glanced at Fawkes skeptically but grabbed hold of his leg, and then got a firm hold on Ginny and the diary. He felt guilty about leaving the pieces of the suit in the chamber. Tony had spent time to make it especially for him. But it was
utterly destroyed and there was no hope of repairing it. It was better to just make a new one.
Fawkes swept quickly into the air. Harry’s surroundings blurred as Fawkes flew faster.

The next thing he knew he was in Dumbledore’s office. McGonagall was already there looking
panicked. Apparently they had found a bloody message on the wall about a body lying in the
Chamber of Secrets forever. The students had all immediately been accounted for, and it was
discovered that Harry and Ginny were the only two missing. A search had started, and Fawkes had
been sent to search as well, leading to their discovery.

He told Dumbledore everything that had happened to lead him to the Chamber while Ginny and he
were taken to the hospital wing. McGonagall went to contact the Weasleys and Tony. Harry was
actually more terrified of facing Tony than he was about facing the basilisk.

When Harry got to the part about the diary, Dumbledore frowned. He asked Harry if he had been
able to understand the basilisk. Harry told him that he hadn’t been. He hadn’t been able to have a
conversation with snakes since the one he’d had in the pet store at the beginning of summer. While
research the Chamber of Secrets Harry had learned that speaking to snakes was called Parseltongue
and was primarily an ability from Salazar Slytherin’s line. Harry had no idea where his ability had
come from or why it had suddenly gone away. Dumbledore seemed almost relieved to know that
Harry couldn’t speak Parseltongue.

Madam Pomfrey cleaned up both of them. She checked Ginny over and assured him that she was
fine. She just needed sleep. Harry on the other hand needed a blood-replenishing potion and
Madam Pomfrey had to use a healing spell to finally close the wound on his leg, which was
probably going to leave a scar. She then gave him strict commands to sleep. She would wake him
up when his father arrived. Harry decided he might as well get as much sleep as he could. He was
definitely going to need it when he faced Tony.

Tony was used to being on his own. He’d spent most of his childhood alone. But he couldn’t deny
the fact that he had been feeling lonely ever since Harry had gone back to school. He never once
thought that he would miss Harry’s presence this much. The kid had only been in his life for a few
short months, he shouldn’t feel this sense of absence so strongly. But now he wasn’t even sleeping.
Nightmares about New York, and now about Sirius Black finding Harry plagued any attempts he
made at sleep. His newest worry was the effects that Loki’s meddling had had on Harry. He’d tried
to get in contact with Thor but it wasn’t exactly easy getting in touch with another realm.

He did his best to keep himself busy with projects. It was difficult though with the other Avengers
off doing their own things, and Pepper was busy with the Stark Industries. Tony had a lot of free
time on his hands now. He almost wished for a national catastrophe so that he would have
something to do with himself, and take his mind off his problems. He could only tinker with his
suits so many times before even that became boring. He had almost been thinking about going
back to Malibu but he didn’t want to leave the only place where Harry had actually lived. He liked
going into his room and looking through some of the projects they had done together when he was
feeling particularly sorry for himself.

So it came as something of a relief to him when Thor turned up on his roof one fine November
day.

“Master Stark, Thor seems to have appeared on your roof,” Jarvis informed.

Tony popped up from his workbench with a huge grin.
“Let him in, Jarvis,” Tony practically skipped up to the penthouse.

Tony was relieved that Thor was here. He wondered if any of the messages he had attempted to send had worked or if the god was here on another matter entirely. Either way Tony was just glad that he was here.

Thor in his full armor, and red cape was standing in the middle of his living room when he arrived up in the penthouse. Things were looking more promising by the moment.

“Hey Point Break, what brings you to my humble abode?” Tony asked as he approached the God of Thunder.

“Friend Tony, I’m afraid I am not here for a social visit,” Thor said looking uncharacteristically grave.

“Well, hey, do you need some help fighting trolls or something? I’d be willing to help but there’s something I wanted to talk to you about first,” Tony rubbed his hands together in anticipation of a fight.

“No, I am here about your son. Is he here?” Thor looked around expectantly.

“Harry? No, he’s not. So you did get my messages?”

Thor frowned in confusion and such his head.

“I tried to send you some messages about Harry. I need some information and wanted to ask you some questions. So why do you want him?” Tony questioned. All of his earlier excitement had been replaced by uncertainty.

“My father has given me orders to bring Harry to Asgard as quickly as could be arranged.”

“What! No, you can’t just take my son!” Tony exploded, ready to do battle against the god. He was actually glad that Harry was at Hogwarts maybe the magical school would hide his son from the Asgardians.

“No, Tony, no we do not mean to take him forever. On this I give you my word. We want to help him and you. You would, of course, come with him,” Thor placed a calming hand on Tony’s shoulder.

Tony shrugged him off, “Explain.”

“I told my father of what Loki had done to heal your son. He questioned Loki on what he had done as well. However, Loki refused to give him all of the details. My father is concerned about what was done, and what Loki’s intentions were in healing your son. He would like the chance to look Harry over himself,” Thor explained.

“This was actually what I wanted to talk to you about. Harry told me a little bit about what happened when Loki healed him. Apparently Loki wasn’t being completely honest about what he was doing. Shocker I know. I just wasn’t expecting to have to travel to another world to do it. Does your dad think what Loki did was harmful?” Tony wanted to know.

“Not immediately, but it could have long lasting effects if it is not taken care of. My father does not wish for this to happen. Both he and my mother are very knowledgeable about such magicks. We also have many expert healers. They will be able to determine if what Loki has done to Harry is harmful or not. They do not think it is, but Loki may not have fully understood what he was doing
and he may have accidentally made a mistake,” Thor assured.

Tony sighed and ran a hand through his hair. He knew that Loki couldn’t have been trusted. Any mistakes that were made were probably unintentional knowing the little snake. But at the time he had been desperate. They had had no other immediate options. Harry would have died if he hadn’t let Loki do what he did. Thor wasn’t saying that what Loki had done was harmful but they just wanted to know for certain. How could Tony not agree to that? The King and Queen of Asgard were the best people he could hope for to help him figure out what was going on. It would be better to know and take care of it now rather than later.

“Right, fine, let’s do this,” Tony agreed.

“Do not worry, Man of Iron, we will make sure Harry is all right. He is wonderful boy. I would not want anything to happen to him,” Thor reassured.

“He’s at school so I’ll just get in touch with them, and let them know I have to take him out of school for a bit. Any idea how long this is going to take?” Tony fired off a text to Coulson who was his contact in the magical world.

“I am not sure. It depends—”

Tony cut Thor off when he saw Coulson calling him.

“Stark,” Tony answered.

“Mr. Stark, I was just about to call you,” Coulson said.

“What’s up?” Tony asked immediately not liking Coulson’s cautious tone.

“There’s been an… incident,” Coulson replied carefully.

“What kind of incident?” Tony demanded his mind instantly going to Sirius Black.

“The kind with a giant snake attacking the school, a secret chamber, and Harry saving someone’s life while fighting the giant snake,” Coulson informed him.

“Right, well, you are going to give me all the details, now. And then you’re going to get me one of those portal key things to get me to Hogwarts as soon as possible,” Tony said tightly, trying and failing to remain calm.

“It’ll be there in five minutes,” Coulson told him before giving him the details of the situation. Tony listened as calmly as possible wondering how he hadn’t been informed about a monster loose in the school and students being attacked. And why hadn’t Harry told him about any of this?

“Tony?” Thor questioned looking concerned once he had hung up with Coulson.

“We’re going to pick up Harry. Apparently he got into a fight with a basilisk. Ever heard of them?”

“They are a most dangerous beast. The older they are the powerful they become. Their eyes cause instant death to mortals and even cause Asgardians to fall into deep sleeps, which they can die from if not treated quickly. Young Harry came into contact with one?” Thor sounded impressed.

“He killed one,” Tony said.

“What a great accomplishment for one so young. This is cause for celebration,” Thor praised.
“Yeah, it’s a celebration that he’s alive. Not that he went after the thing in the first place,” Tony growled.

“Young boys often want to prove their strength to their friends and to their fathers. I myself slew a dragon in my youth to prove my strength,” Thor boasted.

“Harry should know that he doesn’t have to prove anything to me.”

“It takes many lessons before children find their way. It did for me. But then I would have never come to Midgard or met the Lady Jane,” Thor flashed a sardonic grin.

Tony just ran his hand through his hair again. At this rate he’d be bald in no time. On the other he probably deserved a kid who was always in some sort of danger considering his own wild youth. He was just grateful when the portkey arrived. Thor seemed a little suspicious of it but didn’t protest using it. That changed after they actually used it. Thor proclaimed that it was worse than using the Bifrost, and that he would not be doing it again under any circumstances. Tony supposed he had something to look forward to when they actually traveled to Asgard. If wizarding travel was worse than Asgardian he would be able to tolerate it.

Thor and Tony rode up to the castle in the carriages pulled by the skeletal horses. It was a little cramped in the carriage with the very large God of Thunder but he was too anxious to get to Harry to really feel too uncomfortable about being squished. It was really late or really early depending on the point of view. Not that it mattered since Tony hadn’t been sleeping anyway. Minerva McGonagall met them at the front entrance to lead them to the infirmary. Her only reaction to Thor was to give him a quick double look. Other than that the stern witch was able to withhold her thoughts about the large Asgardian’s presence. Thor was actually quite impressed with Hogwarts, and was almost childishly delighted by the moving staircases. Tony would have found it more hilarious if he wasn’t here to check on his injured son.

Upon arrival to the infirmary Poppy Pomfrey, the school nurse, greeted Tony with a warm, reassuring smile. She gave him a rundown of Harry’s condition to assure him that Harry was fine just tired. He’d had a nasty cut but she had taken care of it. She mentioned that Harry seemed to be healing quite quickly on his own. Tony caught Thor tensing up at that news. Tony would have to explain the rest of Harry’s changes to him later. He hadn’t had the chance to tell Thor anything before having to rush here. Thor gave him some space as he followed Madam Pomfrey over to the bed where Harry slept. Tony felt relief wash over him as he saw Harry sleeping peacefully on the bed and all in one piece. He couldn’t help but notice that Harry had been right his hair was darker. To have proof of the actual changes was unnerving to witness.

Tony reached out to stroke his hair.

“Dad?” Harry murmured eyes fluttering open at the contact.

“Hey kiddo,” Tony whispered back.

“So you know,” Harry said glumly.

“About you and the giant snake? Yeah, I know and I can’t say that I’m too happy about it,” Tony stated as he settled in the chair beside Harry’s bed.

“Dad, I had to do something. I couldn’t just leave Ginny. She—”

“You didn’t have to go after it alone, Harry,” Tony cut him off.
“I didn’t, I was going to get help when I found it, I promise. But then Ginny or I guess Riddle possessing Ginny shoved me down the pipe. I tried to call you but Jarvis couldn’t connect with the tower from under all the wards in the chamber,” Harry defended in a rush.

“Slow down, just tell me the whole story. From start to finish don’t leave anything out,” Tony demanded.

Harry reluctantly told him the story of the writing on the wall, which led to the search for information on the Chamber of Secrets and the monster it was supposed to contain. Tony had to admit he was impressed with the way Harry had handled himself against the possessed diary spirit thing but it didn’t make up for the fact that he had been in danger to begin with.

“Don’t ever do something that stupid again. You’re going to turn me gray before my time. Then what will people say? They’ll start calling me old,” Tony shuddered.

“I can take care of myself,” Harry jutted his chin out in a stubborn move Tony recognized all too well.

“I know, but that doesn’t mean you should go looking for danger,” Tony argued.

“I wanted to solve the problem. No one else seemed to believe that the basilisk was real. No one else would listen and I couldn’t sit around while people’s lives were in danger,” Harry pleaded.

“You can when it puts your own life at risk. You’re all I’ve got, kiddo, I couldn’t stand it if something happened to you. Promise me you won’t put yourself in danger like that again.”

“I can’t do that. If someone is in danger I’m going to help them. I got that from you after all,” Harry hinted slyly.

Tony sighed. How could he punish Harry for things he did himself?

“Just promise me you’ll be more careful if you get in a situation like that again, and that you’ll at least try to get help next time. I don’t want you looking for trouble,” Tony persisted. After all he wasn’t really mad at Harry about all this. He was angry with those in charge, however.

“I can do that,” Harry grinned.

Tony grinned and ruffled his hair.

“Good, now get some sleep. I’m going to talk with your Headmaster. We’re going to Asgard,” Tony nodded to Thor.

At finally being acknowledged Thor bounded over to them like an over eager golden retriever.

“Harry it is good to see you have survived your battle with the basilisk. There will be many on Asgard who would enjoy hearing about your defeat of it,” Thor boomed.

“Thor!” Harry greeted with a large smile for the Norse god. “So we actually get to go to Asgard?”

“Yup, the All-Father wants to have a look into just what Loki did to you when he messed around with your magic. And I think we can all agree to get this checked out incase there are any long-term effects,” Tony explained.

“Right, I can’t believe I’ll get to go to another realm,” Harry agreed looking excited.

“I’ll see you in a little bit. Get some rest,” Tony kissed his forehead.
Tony pulled Thor aside, “Would stay with him? I need to go have a talk to his teachers.”

“Of course, my friend, I will guard his bedside and insure that no harm befalls him,” Thor swore.

“Right, I’II be back,” Tony was going to have a few words with Dumbledore and he didn’t want Harry hearing about it. He had been okay with Hogwarts before because he thought the place was safe from outside forces getting in. But two years in a row Harry had been in danger from things inside the school itself. Tony didn’t want to smother his son or be a helicopter parent but Hogwarts just didn’t seem like a good place for Harry to be anymore. He knew Harry might be upset but Tony was putting his foot down, and he was taking Harry out of Hogwarts. He’d find him a tutor or something.

Tony was briefly stopped in his mission by the Weasleys. They were utterly grateful about Harry saving Ginny but they didn’t seem to be too concerned about the event happening in the first place. They seemed convinced that the school had done all they could. In fact wizards in general seemed to have a blasé attitude to the whole event. The school hadn’t even shut down when two students were attacked and someone threatened the school. Tony would have thought some sort of investigation should have been performed, and the school checked to rule out all possibilities. This convinced Tony it was time to take Harry out of Hogwarts.

Albus Dumbledore found him just as Tony was leaving the hospital wing “Mr. Stark.”

“Headmaster Dumbledore,” Tony said coolly.

“I can see you would like to speak with me,” Dumbledore said regarding him cautiously.

“You bet I do,” Tony said stiffly.

“We can talk as we walk,” Dumbledore offered genially.

“Perfect,” Tony followed him into the hallway.

“You’re upset about the basilisk,” Dumbledore stated calmly.

“Damn right I am. My son could have died today, and I didn’t know anything about it,” Tony snapped.

“We weren’t trying to keep the events that took place a secret Mr. Stark. The problem was that we weren’t sure what was causing students to be petrified. The ministry was convinced that Sirius Black was behind the attacks. I wasn’t convinced and did my best to look into the matter myself while trying not to alert the ministry.”

“Harry was convinced that he was the only one who thought the attacks were more than a prank,” Tony glanced at Dumbledore to gauge his reaction to his statement.

“Yes, we didn’t want to panic the students. With just one attack that is what seemed to be the most likely option that one student was trying to scare the rest of the school. However, the ministry became fixated on Sirius Black. They wanted to send dementors, ghastly creatures not fit to be around children, to guard the school. Unfortunately, these matters kept me away from Hogwarts so I was not able to notice the signs,” Dumbledore said sadly.

Tony sighed, “I know there’s probably a lot more to the situation than I understand. I know wizards do things a bit differently, and I know everyone has a few idiot politicians they have to deal with. But the point of the matter is that whatever system you’ve got in place is just not working for my son.”
“You mean to remove Harry from Hogwarts?” Dumbledore questioned in obvious shock.

“Yeah, I do. I don’t like seeing my son once every four months, and I don’t like him being involved in a world that just thinks of me as some muggle,” Tony confessed.

“I understand your reasons Mr. Stark, but are you certain this is the wisest choice? Harry has friends here, and he will receive a good education here,” Dumbledore argued.

“I can get a tutor and he can stay in contact with his friends. I’m not cutting him off completely,” Tony replied.

“This event has come as a shock to you. If you give it some time you may change your mind,” Dumbledore tried.

“No, I really don’t think so. I’ve been thinking of it for a while. This is just the straw that broke the camel’s back,” Tony said firmly.

“I see, simply know then that Harry always has a place here,” Dumbledore told him, his blue eyes finally losing their twinkle as he realized he was out of options.

“I appreciate that, and I’m sorry that it has to be this way,” Tony did feel bad about taking Harry from a place he loved so much.

“As am I,” Dumbledore agreed.

“Now, I need to grab Harry’s things.”

“I’ll have the house-elves bring them to the infirmary. Will you be leaving right away?”

“We’re actually going to visit a friend. He came with me and I think he’s eager to get going, so yeah as soon as we have his things we’ll be leaving,” Tony said.

“I’ll get Harry’s friends then so that they can say goodbye,” Dumbledore said before sweeping off down the hallway.

Tony turned back to the infirmary. He had no idea how he was going to break the news to Harry. As he entered the hospital wing he wasn’t surprised to see Harry awake with Thor regaling him with tales from his adventures in Asgard.

“Dad,” Harry grinned at him looking a bit sheepish to have been caught awake.

“Hey kiddo, there’s something I want to talk to you about,” Every immediately caught on to the seriousness of Tony’s voice and they gave them some space.

“What is it?” Harry asked wearily.

“You know we’re leaving for Asgard as soon as possible, right?” Harry nodded his understanding. “But we’re not coming back.”

“We’re not coming back to Earth? Or I’m not coming to Hogwarts?” Harry asked.

“You’re not coming back to Hogwarts,” Tony said steadily but firmly.

Harry was silent for a moment. “Is this because of the basilisk?”

“Sort of. But it’s also because I don’t like seeing you once every five months. We’ve already
missed so much time together. I don’t want to miss anymore,” Tony said sincerely.

“Okay,” Harry agreed.

“Just like that? No fight? No yelling?” Tony asked in surprise.

“I think you’re right. It’s a good idea. And I’ve really miss you too,” Harry admitted.

“I’m glad to hear it,” Tony grinned and ruffled his hair. He glanced behind and noticed that Dumbledore had arrived with Harry’s two best friends. “You’re friends are here to say goodbye. I’ll leave you to it.”

Tony stepped back so that the three of them could have a private moment. Harry started telling them about his adventure with the basilisk. Tony knew when he told them about leaving Hogwarts because Hermione started to cry.

“The two of you can come to visit whenever you want to,” Tony reassured them.

“We’ll still miss you,” Hermione cried.

“I’ll miss you too. Here take my mobile phone that way we can stay in touch,” Harry pulled out the phone from his robes and passed it over to Hermione.

“We’ll keep you updated with everything. You know if Snape’s being more of git or if Fred and George prank the Slytherins,” Ron grinned.

“Right,” Harry grinned.

There was another round of hugs, and then they were ready to go. Thor grabbed Harry’s trunk up like it was nothing, and Tony helped Harry up. Tony would have waited to let Harry rest a bit more but he really didn’t want to wait around at Hogwarts after the awkward conversation with Dumbledore. He was angry and upset with the wizarding world and didn’t want to keep Harry here any longer than was necessary.

They made their way off school grounds so they could take the portkey back to the tower. Thor wasn’t thrilled by it but he agreed it was the fastest way. They both agreed that they would leave for Asgard the next morning. He wanted to give Harry the chance to rest some more, and get everything in order before leaving for an unknown amount of time to a mythical realm. Thor was happy enough to sit around and eat Tony’s large supply of Poptarts.

Tony found himself much more relaxed with Harry in the house. He set the two of them up on the couch and popped in a movie. Thor joined them. Tony stroked his fingers through Harry’s soft hair, and tried not to think about the implications of his hair getting darker. Tony was certain that no matter what happened, no matter what they discovered when they went to Asgard, he would love Harry regardless. Harry was his son and nothing could change that.

///

Severus Snape was doing what he did best. He was hunched over a large cauldron making a potion. It was in the very early hours of the morning, and he was slaving away to finish the last stages of the extremely delicate potion. He had been working on this potion for the last three weeks. He had
been planning on using it to prove a point; although, it seemed like it was too late for that. The Potter brat, for that’s who he still believed he was, had gone from Hogwarts permanently. Severus was glad to see him go but he would have preferred for it to have been after he had proven the truth to the world.

Severus didn’t believe Tony Stark. He didn’t believe that Harry Potter was anything other than the spawn of James Potter. They had the same smug attitude and stupid Gryffindorish bravery, not to mention the same black hair. The boy was his and Severus was going to prove it. To get back Lily’s good name.

Lily would have never been unfaithful, and if she had she certainly wouldn’t have chosen anyone like Stark. Severus would have never believed that he would find a man he disliked more than James Potter or Sirius Black but Stark had proven him wrong. Severus had enough knowledge of the muggle world, being a half-blood, and he had looked up Tony Stark. The man was an even more arrogant and selfish arse than James Potter, which was quite the accomplishment in Severus’s book. The man had had a string of sordid love affairs, and an innumerable amount of drunken escapades. Stark was a waste of a human being, and Severus couldn’t stand the thought of Lily’s reputation being besmirched by his outlandish claims. James Potter was practically seen as a saint now for dying for a cheating wife and a baby that wasn’t his.

For these reasons Severus had brewed a genealogy potion. The last ingredient he needed to add was the pieces of hair he had collected from the boy. Pleased with the success of the potion he ladled some out into a smaller vial. Then he put the hairs in, and swirled the vial until it turned the appropriate violet color. Severus then pulled out a piece of parchment, and let three drops of the potion fall onto it.

Severus stepped back to watch as Potter’s lineage was written out before his eyes. Branches and names formed as his genealogy to his grandparents, including any aunts and uncles, was revealed. Once it was finished Severus picked up the parchment to have a closer look, and nearly dropped it again in utter shock. As he had expected Lily’s name was listed as one of Harry’s parents with Lily’s parent’s names attached to Lily’s own and Pentunia’s beside Lily’s. Then disappointingly Tony Stark’s name was also attached to Harry’s as one of his parents. But this was not what had made Severus drop the parchment. No, that honor belonged to the third name attached to Harry’s in the slot reserved just for his parents. According to this chart Harry had three biological parents. It was impossible but Severus knew he had brewed the potion correctly and that results had to be correct. It seemed that Harry Stark had somehow ended up with three parents.

Now, if only he could remember where he had the third name. It was oddly familiar and not just because it was the name of Norse god. Severus sighed. He felt like he had failed Lily. But there was nothing he could do. He couldn’t change anything. Still he decided he would keep the information about the third parent to himself. Harry Stark’s parentage was already enough of a circus. Severus didn’t need to feed the flames.
It felt good to be back in Avengers Tower, and back with Tony even if it was only for a short time. Harry had hoped to see Pepper or the other Avengers before they had to leave for Asgard but he didn’t get the chance. The Avengers were currently scattered around the globe, off on their own missions or seeing to some business. He did get to say a quick hello to Phil but he had to leave quickly. He and his new SHIELD team were heading off on their first mission to South America. Harry was a little upset about Tony’s firm stance about not going back to Hogwarts, and maybe he would have put up more of a protest about it if he hadn’t been in the hospital wing after fighting a basilisk. It was sort of hard to argue when there was physical proof. Maybe Tony would feel differently about it in the future, and Harry would be able to go back in visit. He certainly would keep in contact with his friends. For now, though, he wanted to focus on the adventure that was laid out before him. He was going to Asgard to meet with the King and Queen. It had only been recently that he found out that other worlds existed and now here he was getting the chance to go off and see them.

The next morning Harry and Tony each packed a small bag to bring with them. They weren’t sure how long they were going to be staying in Asgard. Thor assured them that they would be provided with anything else they might need if their stay lasted longer than expected. Once they were ready Thor brought them up to the roof to call for Heimdall to open the Bifrost. Harry and Hermione had done quite a bit of research on Norse Mythology. Harry had become quite familiar with all of the different legends and gods so he knew about Heimdall being the gatekeeper of the Bifrost. Thor had also confirmed this information to him. It made Harry eager to see just how many other myths about Asgard and its inhabitants were true.

“Do not worry my friends the Bifrost is much easier mode of transportation than the methods used by your mortal magic users. Just stand close to me while I call to Heimdall to allow us passage,” Thor smiled.

Harry glanced at Tony to gage his reaction, and Tony shot him an encouraging smile back. Harry was excited at getting the chance to see Asgard. It was a realm of magic and home to people who were practically gods. Harry would get the chance to meet some of the people with powers that entirely dwarfed his own, and who had lived for thousands of years. Harry did wonder if he would see Loki while he was there, and what his reaction would be when he saw him. Had Loki even planned on seeing Harry again? Had this been Loki’s intentions all along? The two of them now shared several of the same characteristics. Did Loki know that he would have gained more than just his magical power from him? There were so many questions that he needed to have answered, and Harry wasn’t sure what to think of Loki now. He thought that he had been helping him as a way to make up for hurting him in the first place.

Thor called out to Heimdall in a clear, firm voice. There was a moment of anticipation and then bright and colorful lights surrounded the three of them. The sensation of traveling through the Bifrost felt a lot like floating but at an incredible speed. Harry could have sworn he saw stars and whole planets pass before his eyes. The three of them ended up in a large gold dome. Beyond the dome Harry caught a glimpse of the shimmering lights of the Bifrost but he couldn’t see Asgard yet. A man wearing gold armor and wielding a large sword greeted them.

“Thank you Heimdall. This is Tony Stark, the Man of Iron, and his son Harry. Tony, Harry, this is Heimdall he guards the Bifrost,” Thor introduced.

Heimdall nodded his eerie reddish orange eyes flickering over Tony and Harry. “My prince, I see
that your mission was successful. Your mother and father will be pleased to see that. I have informed them of your arrival and they will meet you and your guests in the throne room.”

“My thanks,” Thor nodded to Heimdall. “Now let me introduce you to Asgard.”

Thor swept them towards the opening and out on to the shimmering bridge connecting the golden dome to Asgard.

Tony loosed a whistle as they both got their first good view of Asgard. Harry was speechless. The glittering gold city of Asgard was utterly incredible. It looked almost unreal where it sat on the sparkling water in the light from the golden sun. Asgard was an island surrounded by jagged peaks and the large body of water that surrounded Asgard seemed to drop off the side almost as if the island was floating at the top of the world. Harry couldn’t believe that he was actually here, and followed Thor through the gates of Asgard in a daze. Both Harry’s and Tony’s heads were swiveling every which way in an almost comical manner. But neither of them cared. They were too invested in taking in all the sights that they possibly could. The palace of Asgard was amazing. The spires were magnificent and seemed to stretch all the way to the sky and beyond. Nothing on Earth could ever hope of comparing to it.

Thor led them through the massive golden corridors lined with spear wielding guards. He brought them straight to the throne room where Harry and Tony got their very first look of Odin, the All-Father, King of Asgard. His hair and beard were thick yet gray. He wore an eye-patch but that didn’t lessen the power of his piercing stare of his remaining blue eye. He wore golden clothing that was even more ornate than Thor’s or Loki’s, and wielded a staff. He sat in a lavish gold throne on a raised dais. Beside the king was a beautiful woman with long strawberry blonde hair, and wearing an elaborate dress. Harry deduced that she was Frigga, the Queen of Asgard and the mother of Thor and Loki. She smiled warmly at them as they entered while Odin watched him with his ancient blue eye.

“Father, mother, may I introduce to you the Man of Iron, Tony Stark of Midgard, and his son Harry. Tony, Harry these are my parents Odin and Frigga, the King and Queen of Asgard,” Thor introduced.

“Hey,” Tony nodded giving a little wave.

It wasn’t often that Tony felt intimated but Harry could tell that he was feeling a little out of his depth. Harry didn’t blame him. He was feeling the same way. Meeting Thor was one thing. It was a different experience being faced with beings who were powerful enough to crush him but being in their domain made it even more terrifying. Every single person that they encountered in Asgard would be stronger, faster, and in general more powerful than both of them. But Harry trusted that Tony wouldn’t stay intimidated long. Tony was just too confident in himself to let this unnerve him for long.

“It is good that you were able to come so quickly,” Odin nodded.

“Yes, thank you. We are so pleased to have you here in Asgard so that we may resolve this issue. We were quite concerned about what happened and wish to set things right,” Frigga said amiably.

“It was most distressing when Thor revealed to me what Loki had done to your son, Tony Stark. I would like to find out the extent of the damage my wayward son has caused,” Odin intoned.

“Right, I do too. So let’s not beat around the bush. Let’s figure this out right now, sound good?” Tony clapped his hands together and looked up at Odin expectantly.
Odin nodded and stood from his throne. Without a word he turned and strode from the room expecting everyone else to follow. Frigga held out her hand to them and indicated that they should follow her. Tony and Harry looked at one another. Tony gave him a brief reassuring smile. Harry tried to send him one back. This was it. They would finally find out the extent of the damage that Loki had caused him.

“He reminds me of an even grumpier Fury,” Tony whispered to Harry as they walked. Harry knew he was trying to distract him, and he appreciated the effort.

Harry snorted. “He’s the King of Asgard, don’t upset him unless you want to be turned to ash by that scepter of his.”

“At least Loki came by his arrogant spear wielding nature honestly. Besides I’m Iron Man, I think I can take—” But Frigga interrupted him.

“Harry, what do you think of Asgard?” Frigga questioned.

“It’s very beautiful, ma’am. I’ve never seen anything like it,” Harry replied honestly.

“I’m glad. I will have to give you and your father a tour once we have everything straightened out,” Frigga smiled.

“That would be nice.”

“I’d love to see where you make those flying boats of yours,” said Tony.

(Of course Mr. Stark I can introduce you to our head blacksmith. He is the one who creates and builds most of our new weapons and transportation. I’ve heard that you yourself are quite ingenious. I’m sure the two of you would get along very well,” Frigga said.

They all chatted a bit more before they reached the examination room. There were several other Asgardians in the room when they entered waiting for them. A stone platform with strange symbols carved into it sat in the middle of the room.

“This is our examination table, Harry. With it we will be able to detect any physical or magical damage that you may have sustained. Here, I’ll help you up, and make sure that you are in the proper position,” Frigga offered.

Harry took her hand and allowed her to guide him up and onto the platform. She positioned him in the exact center of the platform on his back. Frigga then moved to stand behind his head and the other Asgardians stepped up into positions around him. Harry gasped in awe as the platform was activated. Harry stared up at the images that were projected on top of him. It was an in-depth view into his own internal structures. The orange seemed to be the physical parts and the golden-green part seemed to be his magic. Frigga and her assistants began to sift through Harry’s magic and blood to discover if there was anything wrong with him. While they were doing that Odin asked him just what had happened while Loki had been healing him. He also asked what sorts of symptoms he had been experiencing. Harry told him everything. He knew that it wouldn’t be prudent to withhold information at this point. He needed to be as honest as possible if they were going to discover just what was going on with him.

After nearly a half an hour of intense searching Frigga announced that he was perfectly healthy and that there would be no long lasting negative effects.

“Well, that’s a relief. But why am I sensing that you’re about to tell me something that’s going to make me want to consume copious amounts of alcohol?” Tony questioned.
“I don’t believe the news that I have to tell you is necessarily bad, Mr. Stark. I believe that Loki was in fact telling you the truth of his intentions when he set out to heal Harry. He was just trying to restore Harry’s magical core in the only way he knew how, which was by modeling it after his own. However, Harry’s body is mortal and was not able to sustain a magical core of an immortal. To remedy this Loki gave him an infusion of his blood to stabilize him to ensure that his body accepted the magical changes. I don’t believe he expected this infusion to cause any long lasting effects. Unfortunately, there were,” Frigga explained delicately.

“Just say whatever you’re going to say,” said Tony looking disgruntled.

“Loki has inadvertently made himself one of Harry’s biological parents. Completing the blood transfusion while in such a delicate state altered Harry’s genetic makeup. His body latched on to the blood infusion whilst in that delicate, fluctuating state, and caused the changes to become permanent. In essence Harry now has three genetic parents. That is why Harry has grown physically stronger. He has inherited one third of Loki’s own strength,” Frigga announced.

“Wait, are you saying that technically Loki is one of my parents now?” Harry gaped.

“Yes,” Frigga said firmly.

Tony gave a startled laugh. “I can’t believe this. Of course this happened.”

Harry had no idea how to process this. Finding out that he was now technically related to Loki was strange. It wasn’t like finding out that Tony was his father. Loki had only become his parent through a magical accident while he was trying to fix another magical accident that he had caused Harry. More importantly would this change Tony’s opinion of him? Knowing that Loki was now one of his parents too?

“We will leave the two of you alone to speak. When you’re ready have one of the guards escort you to the dining hall. We will meet you in our private dining hall for lunch,” Frigga then forcefully ejected a stunned Thor and a grim faced Odin from the room.

“Hey, kiddo, are you okay?” Tony questioned once they were alone coming up to wrap an arm around Harry’s shoulders. His own shock seemed to have been pushed aside in favor of comforting him. Harry was grateful to have Tony by his side.

“Yeah,” Harry shrugged.

Did this change his opinion about himself? No, he had gone through this once before. Harry was much more capable of handling this situation now especially knowing the Tony was still on his side. Finding out that his parents were different than who he had thought they were didn’t change who he was as a person. He was still the same Harry on the inside. Tony became his dad not because they shared blood but because he wanted to be his dad. He had continuously proven himself to Harry, his mum had given her life for his, and Loki had sort of messed up his life. Therefore in Harry’s mind Loki wasn’t really his parent. They may have shared blood but Harry wasn’t just going to start thinking of him as his new father. Tony already occupied that role in his life.

“That didn’t sound too convincing,” Tony teased.

“No, I really am fine. It’s just a lot to take in,” Harry muttered.

“I know it is and I wouldn’t know how the hell to handle this situation if I was in your place. You’re a tough kid, Harry. You’re strong and I have total confidence that you’re going to get pass
this. But I want you to know that this doesn’t change a thing about how I feel about you. You’re still my son no matter what. Hell, Loki could have replaced my DNA with his, and you would still be my kid. Got it?”

“Yeah, I understand. Thanks and you know you’ll always be my dad. Blood doesn’t mean everything and Loki certainly couldn’t take your place,” Harry hugged Tony tightly.

“Exactly, let’s go see what type of food they’ve got prepared. Do you think it will be better than Chinese?”

“No,” Harry said with one hundred percent certainty.

“Neither do I. We’ll choke it down anyway in case Fury 2.0 decides to smite us,” Tony joked.

The guards escorted the two of them to the dining area. Odin, Frigga, and Thor were already seated at the table. Odin and Frigga were quietly arguing about something while Thor still looked a bit stunned by the revelation.

It didn’t stop him from shouting out excitedly, “Nephew! Come sit by me,” when he saw Tony and Harry enter.

“Right, technically, you’re kind of Harry’s uncle,” Tony scratched the back of his neck and whispered into Harry’s ear, “You’re family tree just got a whole lot more complicated.”

“Frigga seems really nice and Thor was kind of like an uncle anyway,” Harry replied.

“True. Hey, Point Break, how would you feel about being Harry’s god father?” Tony giggled at his own cleverness.

“Godfather?” Thor frowned.

“It’s just something that we have on Earth. In the event that something that happened to me you would watch out for Harry,” Tony explained.

“You would honor me with such a title, Man of Iron?” Thor questioned looking truly touched.

“Yeah, sure. I mean it doesn’t get much safer than having the real God of Thunder looking out for him,” Tony replied.

“I will do my best to uphold my position,” Thor said gravely looking between Tony and Harry.

“How are you feeling Harry?” Frigga asked as Tony and Harry settled down at the table with the Asgardian royal family.

“I’m okay. I mean I already sort of accepted that Loki was my magical parent. It’s just a bit of a shock that I have three parents now,” Harry responded.

“And you’re sure that there won’t be any long term negative effects?” Tony questioned.

“No, surprisingly, Loki did well creating a clean bond. Harry’s body accepted the transfusion without any side effects,” Frigga explained.

“Yes, it is surprising that Loki’s foolishness didn’t cause your son any undue harm,” Odin said darkly he obviously suspected that there was something more to the story.

“Yeah, thank god, or um gods?” Tony muttered.
“The greatest change Harry will experience is the change to his magic because his entire core has changed to that of a Frost Giant’s, which I’m sure he’s already noticed. The physical changes won’t be as significant because he only inherited a third of Loki’s blood. I don’t believe he will change any more than he has now. Harry should also have a normal wizarding lifespan albeit he may be a sprier in his old age than most others. As for his magic, I would love the opportunity to teach you a bit about how to control it. I taught Loki, and with you inheriting his magic I would be more than capable of teaching you as well. You are also my grandson now. I’ve been waiting for grandchildren for centuries now, and I would love to get to know you,” Frigga offered smiling at Harry.

“That would be great,” Harry enthused but then he thought better of it. He glanced over at Tony “I mean as long as my dad is all right with it.”

“I think that would be a great idea too. Who better to teach you how to control your powers than the Queen of Asgard?” said Tony with a smile. “But just how long do you think this will take?”

“Harry seems like he is a good student. I would say I can teach him the basics for control within a month or two. Of course any more advanced magics would take much longer,” Frigga replied.

“Can you teach me to still use my wand so that I can keep using mortal magic, and then maybe go to a school in America?” Harry questioned glancing at Tony.

“Of course, the problem might be that you need a new wand. With the change to your core it isn’t that far of a stretch to think that you would need a new one. If that is the case I can have you fitted for a new wand,” Frigga assured. “And as I said I will teach you the basics of Asgardian magic. Who knows you may change your mind and prefer to start practicing our magic.”

“I’m up to learning anything,” Harry smiled.

“So you said one to two months learning the basics. Now is Harry going to have to stay here?” Tony questioned with a frown.

“You are welcome to stay as well,” Frigga offered though Odin frowned.

“I would love to stay but I do have some things I need to take care of back on Earth. I know Harry needs to learn how to control his new powers but I just got him back from boarding school. I’m not sure if I’m ready to let him go again so soon,” Tony admitted.

“Thor makes frequent trips between Asgard and Midgard. Perhaps he could bring Harry back to Midgard once every fortnight?” Frigga suggested.

“It’s just like any father’s custody agreement. And it’s only for two months at the most,” Tony muttered. “What do you think kiddo? Would you be okay here for two months? I’ll stay with you for the first week to make sure you’re comfortable. But do you think you would be all right staying here on your own?”

“Like you said I really need to learn to control my magic. This is the best place to do that. And if I get to come home every two weeks it’s already better than being at Hogwarts because I’ll get to see you more often.” Harry wasn’t sure if he wanted to stay in Asgard longer. But he really needed to learn to get control of his powers, and how many people got the chance to be taught magic by the Queen of Asgard? He was pretty sure this would be a once in a lifetime chance.

“Okay then, we accept your very kind offer, Queen Frigga,” Tony said.

“Yes, thank you so much, ma’am,” Harry chimed in.
“It is no trouble at all. Like I said I look forward to it. My boys are all grown up and you are my grandson. I wouldn’t mind if one day you perhaps called me grandmother,” Frigga offered and Harry could see just how much she wanted him to refer to her as such.

“I would like that. I’ve never had a grandmum before,” Harry smiled at her.

His eyes flickered to Odin to catch the king’s reaction. Harry didn’t think he would be calling the All-Father grandpa anytime soon. The god didn’t seem to be as enthusiastic about Harry and Tony’s presence as his wife and son were. In fact he didn’t look happy at all. He must be upset with everything that Loki had done, or perhaps he just didn’t like having mortals in Asgard. Either way he didn’t look too happy about Harry’s extended stay. It made Harry a bit uneasy but it was easy to ignore with Thor and Frigga’s jubilance over having him there.

The next week passed quickly. Frigga hadn’t started magic lessons with him yet but both he and Tony had gotten crash courses on Asgardian history and those of the other eight realms as well. Tony spent some time trading ideas with the head Asgardian engineer. He ended up returning to Earth with a bunch of ideas and he left quite a few ideas with the Asgardian crafter. The day after Tony’s departure Harry began his magic lessons with Frigga, and sword fighting lessons with Thor’s friend the Lady Sif. Both were excellent teachers. Frigga had an endless amount of patience, which made sense considering she was married to Odin and had raised Thor and Loki. But she was strict and had very high expectations. Harry did everything he could to make sure that he didn’t disappoint her. Sif was very skilled at fighting, which is probably why she was named the goddess of war in Norse Mythology. She also had a surprising amount of patience but again she had grown up with Thor and Loki. Apparently Loki had even permanently died her hair black. Harry couldn’t imagine her with golden locks, and told her that her raven hair suited her.

It was one day two weeks into his training that Frigga brought him on a fieldtrip. She said she was bringing him to see another magic user because they had a few pointers that might help him to better focus on the control of his magic. The last thing Harry expected was for her to bring him to the prison cell where they were holding Loki.

“Loki, I’ve brought Harry with me in hopes that you could perhaps help him improve his control over his magic. He’s come such a long way already. I just know that you would be perfect to give him that extra little push,” Frigga offered cheerfully.

Loki glared at her from his cell. It was a fairly nice cell as far as prisons went especially considering his crimes. He was the only prisoner who had furniture, and at least he wasn’t bound and gagged anymore. The many other prisoners occupying the jail didn’t seem to be as lucky. If the people of Earth knew that this was going to be Loki’s punishment they probably wouldn’t have sent him back to Asgard.

“I told you I didn’t want to see him,” Loki snapped.

“And I think it would be a good idea for the two of you to talk,” Frigga said sternly.

“This was a set up?” Harry questioned in surprise. He hadn’t been expecting it of kind and welcoming Frigga. But Loki had to have gotten his penchant for tricks and cleverness from somewhere. It certainly couldn’t have been Odin.

“Yes, she thinks now that we share blood that we must bond,” Loki sneered in disgust.

“I thought that it would be beneficial to both of you to clear things up. As much as you might wish to deny it the two of you are family now. It is not a connection to be taken lightly. I think the two of you deserve the chance to speak to one another and come to some sort of agreement about your
relationship. Now this can be done the nice way or I can put Harry in the cell with you Loki and the two of you can stay that way until you’ve agreed to speak to speak one another,” Frigga said sounding every inch Loki’s mother.

Loki gave a laugh of disbelief. “You would lock a child in with a monster like me?”

“You’re not a monster, Loki,” Frigga insisted. “You won’t hurt Harry. He’s your child after all.”

“He’s not my child,” Loki snapped.

“He is your child. You made him your child through your actions,” Frigga replied calmly.

“Don’t I have any say in this?” Harry asked becoming annoyed.

“Of course, Harry, that is why you are here. To ask questions, to express your feelings over what has happened. This is your chance to say what you want and how you wish to proceed with Loki.”

“I don’t know what I want from Loki. I mean it’s not like he meant to this on purpose. He shouldn’t feel obligated to have a relationship with me, and I shouldn’t feel obligated to form one with him,” Harry said truthfully.

“This is true, but this is a matter that the two of you need to have some sort of closure to. You can’t go through the rest of your lives without at least sitting down to talk about what’s happened at least just once. If you decide you want nothing to do with each other then so be it. Give yourselves the chance to make that decision together who knows what might happen? So what will it be? Do I need to lock the two of you up? Or are you going to cooperate?” she looked between the two of them sternly.

“We will talk you overbearing woman,” Loki said petulantly.

“Wonderful, I’ll leave you two boys to it then,” Frigga nodded and with a wave of her hand a protective barrier rose up between Harry and the rest of the prison leaving Harry and Loki alone with only the glowing golden barrier of his cell between them.

“So this is awkward,” Harry murmured sparing a quick glance at Loki. He looked a lot better than the last time he had seen him. He was no longer bruised, and didn’t look as sick as he had before.

“Yes, but unfortunately she truly means it. She is a stubborn woman. If we don’t have a little heart to heart you’ll be sharing this prison cell right alongside me,” said Loki.

“Fine then let’s just get started. How do you feel about all of this?” Harry asked.

“Honestly, I’m a bit surprised. This was not what I intended when I restored your magical core,” Loki began.

“I figured,” Harry replied.

“I never intended to have any children,” Loki said replied. It was then that Harry realized just how scared Loki was about this entire situation. He put up a good show of indifference but he was so overwhelmed that the slightest bit of his panic managed to leak through. It certainly made Harry feel better knowing that the centuries old god was just as terrified as he was.

“I don’t expect you to try and be my dad or anything. I already have a dad. But Frigga is right, we should at least try to be friendly with one another,” Harry offered smiling up at him.
“Of course, and I’m sure it will annoy your father should we become friendly,” Loki grinned looking utterly pleased at the thought.

Harry glared at him, “If you just want to talk to annoy my dad than I’ll leave now.”

“No, I truly wish for us to form a relationship of some sort. I will not lie; annoying Stark will be a large perk of forming a relationship. But I have no other family, Harry, and I would like us to create some sort of bond between us,” Loki said sincerely.

“I would like that, too,” Harry agreed. “Maybe we could just start with you being my magic tutor? I’m having trouble learning how to channel it now without my wand. I would sort of like to know how to use my wand again, too.”

“Well, you’ve come to the right place. I am a master of control, and I can teach it to you as well,” Loki boasted.

“Let’s get started,” Harry smiled.

Through magic Harry and Loki were able to establish a connection. They were friendly towards one another but they were still very far away from feeling familial towards one another. That would take time. But Harry found himself liking Loki the more time they spent together. Once Harry had gotten past the rough exterior Loki was actually hilarious and an amazing magical tutor. However, Harry was cautious about becoming too attached. Loki was a master manipulator who had had centuries to perfect the art. How would he ever know for certain whether or not he was being sincere? Harry supposed that only time would really be able to tell.

///

Loki watched as Harry departed from the prison after yet another lesson. Despite himself, he had grown fond of the boy, and this connection was troubling. It was going to get in the way of his plans. From the beginning, when he first altered Harry’s core to match his own he had had a reason. A reason that was far different from others believed. Yes, he did feel a measure of guilt but it wouldn’t have been enough to endanger himself in trying to complete such a complicated spell.

Loki had known that once Odin heard of his magical transference, which Thor blab tell him, he would demand that Harry be brought to Asgard. Odin wouldn’t trust Loki’s motives, just as he shouldn’t, and he would feel the need to investigate just what Loki had done. Once on Asgard he knew that one way or another Harry would find his way to Loki’s cell. Loki had intimate knowledge of the way Asgardian cells worked. They were keyed in to one’s innate powers, others could pass in and out of the cells but the ones who they wanted to be kept inside were unable to leave. That is why Loki needed a matching magical signature.

It would take a bit of skill but eventually Loki knew he would find a way for them to switch places. Loki would cast a strong illusion around Harry that would last for several days, and Loki would take Harry’s place. No one would notice the difference. The cell was keyed into Loki’s unique magical signature, a signature that Harry now shared. As long as it was Harry taking his place in the cell no alarms would go off and Loki would be able to escape with no one the wiser. They would be searching for a missing child not an escaped prisoner. And by the time they did discover the truth he would be faraway enacting the next steps of his plan.

However, his plans were falling apart. He hadn’t intended for the blood he had given Harry to have long lasting consequences. Loki hadn’t thought he would develop some measure of affection for the boy while trying to find a way for the two of them to switch places. In all honesty he had discovered away several weeks ago he had just been holding off. But no more, he couldn’t allow
some trivial little blood connection to a child he hardly knew stop him from his goals. Loki had to act, and he needed to do it soon before Harry departed Asgard for good. He had wasted enough time already on sentiment now he must follow through. But just one more day. He wanted to revel in just one more day of interacting with someone who didn’t entirely despise him.

Just one more day, and then he would be free.
Tony was having a relatively good day. He’d managed to sleep for two hours last night. His son was in a safe place learning how to control his new magical powers. One of the psychos that had hurt his son was locked up even if said psycho was now his kind of second father. But Tony was trying not to think about that too much because it was just too weird, and it did things to his head. He was already overworking himself building new suits, and doing all of the research that he could on Sirius Black and Voldemort. Pepper was worried about how much he was working but Tony couldn’t find it within himself to care. If him staying up all hours meant that Harry was going to be that much safer than he would do it. Some called it obsessive behavior. He called it being prepared.

Tony was thinking about taking a break and heading back to Malibu for a little while. His fellow Avengers were beginning to wonder about him. Bruce was just as helpful as he had been during Tony’s last no sleeping binge. But he was beginning to worry about him now. Tony’s behavior had gone to the next level after actually seeing Asgard and how it completely dwarfed Earth in every way possible. It made Tony start thinking about what else was out there. About what else could possibly be coming after them. Tony needed to keep his loved ones safe. Harry had been in Asgard alone for a week now, and was scheduled to come home this coming weekend. Tony couldn’t wait; although, sometimes he wondered if Asgard wasn’t a safer place for him. Earth seemed to have made a target of itself after the first failed invasion. Tony was pretty sure that no one would be stupid enough to attack Asgard.

He was working in the living room, tinkering with his latest project, an implantation under his skin so he can call his suit whenever he wanted, when Jarvis alerted him to an intruder.

“Sir, there appears to be a large black dog in the elevator,” he informed him.

“What?” Tony wasn’t sure if he had heard Jarvis correctly.

“A dog is in the elevator, and the elevator is on its way up,” Jarvis repeated.

“A dog,” Tony said slowly. “And how did a flea bitten animal find their way into my tower? Let alone work the elevator”

“I’m not quite certain, sir,” Jarvis replied sounding as disgruntled as an AI was capable of sounding.

“You’re not sure,” Tony repeated.

“No, sir, my protocols seemed to have gone a bit fuzzy around the animal.”

“Did you just make a pun, Jarvis? Either way, call security to have it removed. The thing just better not pee on my carpet before they get here,” Tony muttered.

He stood up as the elevator pinged planning on grabbing ahold of the furry menace himself. Tony wasn’t prepared for the huge mangy beast that lunged out of the elevator. It looked like a combination of a massive black German Shepherd and some sort of wolf hound. It was thin, and appeared to be rabid. The beast started stalking towards him a strange intelligence in its murky gray eyes. Tony immediately turned the arm canon he’d been tinkering with on the dog as it snarled and barked at him.

“Nice, doggie,” Tony whispered.
The creature paced closer, and Tony was preparing himself to put the poor thing out of its misery. However, his jaw went slack and he completely forgot what he was going to do when the dog changed. One moment he was a dog the next a ragged and deranged looking man was standing in his penthouse. The man was extremely gaunt as if he hadn’t had a decent meal in a decade, and he appeared to be completely out of his mind. His hair was a black tangled mess that looked like it hadn’t been washed in years. The man’s gray eyes were locked on Tony with a sort of crazed fury that had a tingle of fear trickle down his spine.

However, Tony soon realized something. He knew this man. Despite the thick and wild beard covering his face. Tony knew he would have recognized this man anywhere. He’d been studying his face for over a month now. This was Sirius Black. Somehow the man had found him and come after him, and most likely his son as well. Tony had been starting to believe that Sirius Black might be innocent with all of the inconsistences in his imprisonment. Considering the fact that he was standing in the middle of his penthouse looking ready to end him Tony figured there might be some truth to the story after all.

“Sirius Black,” Tony greeted cautiously.

“Tony Stark,” Black spat back.

“So, what brings you here? Because I hate to break it to you, if you came for Harry you’re going to be disappointed. He’s not here at the moment,” Tony was just going to get that information out of the way. He wanted Black to know that there was no way he was getting his hands on his son.

“I didn’t come here to hurt Harry. I admit, at first, I wanted to get him away from you because I thought you were poisoning him against James. I thought that you were lying to him, and were working for Voldemort. But then my mind cleared a little, ten years in Azkaban can do funny thing to your head, and I was able to think a little more rationally. You’re a muggle, Voldemort would never work with a muggle, and you were far too well known in the muggle world for Death Eaters to be controlling you without anyone realizing it. I finally accepted the truth. You are Harry’s father, which means that you slept with Lily. You enticed her, and cuckolded James. So I’m going to make you pay. If it wasn’t for you, James might still be alive,” Black snarled proving he wasn’t quite as sane as he thought he was at the moment.

The accusation brought Tony up short. Black had gone through all the trouble of tracking him down to come and yell at him for sleeping with his ex-best friend’s wife? That didn’t seem like the work of a man who had plotted to murder his friend. Something wasn’t right here. Maybe Black wasn’t the murderer he thought he was. Although, the man was certainly crazy now, and he intended to hurt Tony. But it wasn’t for the reasons that everyone seemed to think. He wasn’t spouting about loyalty to a Dark Lord, and coming to kill him for being the muggle father of the boy who defeated him. He wanted revenge for his dead friend who he obviously still cared about.

“Listen, I understand you’re angry. Just calm down. Let’s talk about this,” Tony cautioned.

“Angry? Angry doesn’t even begin to describe what I’m feeling right now. To find out that my best friend was betrayed like that. How could you?” Black hissed.

“It wasn’t anything personal. Yeah, it wasn’t right but I’ll freely admit that I was an ass. Back then I didn’t think about who I was hurting and I didn’t care. I just did what I wanted without thinking about the consequences,” Tony replied honestly.

“Then why shouldn’t I just kill you now?” Black growled.

“Because I’m a better person now. Harry’s helped me do that. And because a man that came all the
way across the ocean and tracked me down while being hunted just to avenge his friend’s honor certainly didn’t give him up to be executed,” Tony said.

“I would have never betrayed James and Lily. I would have died first. Even if I had known Lily had betrayed James I would have still done it. She was my friend too, and I loved Harry,” Black pleaded momentarily distracted with the need to prove himself to someone.

“I believe you,” Tony said earnestly.

Some of the craziness seemed to fade from Black’s eyes at finally having someone believe him.

“You do?” he choked out in disbelief.

“Yes, I’ve been looking into your case after you first escaped. Great work by the way, you’ll have to tell me how you did it. I’ve heard Azkaban is supposedly inescapable. But anyway I thought you’d come after my kid, and I wanted to know what I was up against. I happened to notice some irregularities. First of all you never got a trial, there wasn’t an investigation, and you were never proven to be a Death Eater. You were just locked away without any proof. Something definitely wasn’t right. I want to help you prove your innocence,” Tony explained.

“The only person who believes me is the man who slept with James’s wife,” Black chuckled hysterically.

“James was a good guy. He gave his life for Harry and I’ll always be grateful for that,” Tony said softly.

“Yeah, he was, one of the best,” Black mumbled nostalgically.

“I feel bad about what I did. But I don’t regret it, and I won’t apologize for it. If I hadn’t done it then there would be no Harry, and I definitely wouldn’t change that,” Tony vowed.

“About Harry, how is he?” Black asked.

“He’s good, he’s in Asgard with his grandparents,” Tony said just to throw Black off.

It worked because Black gave him a wonderfully confused look.

“Why don’t we get you cleaned up and get you some food then I can explain everything. Unless you still want to kill me?” Tony offered. “In which case I’ll have to have you blast you into the wall.”

“If you can prove I’m innocent then I can hold off on killing you for now,” Black said.

“Good enough for me. Let’s go, Fido,” Tony waved him towards the bathroom.

An hour later saw Sirius Black sitting in his kitchen having a bowl of some much needed soup. The man had taken a shower, had a haircut, his beard was now trimmed, and he was wearing some of Tony’s clothes even if the arms and pant legs were a bit short. Being cleaner only made it easier to see just how truly starved the man was. The food and clothes Tony gave him certainly didn’t endear Black to Tony any more if the glare Black was shooting at him was any indication.

“So how did you find me?” Tony asked conversationally.

“It wasn’t hard. Your name is everywhere in the muggle world. I had you’re name from the Daily Prophet. The moment I tried looking you up I found you,” Black replied smugly.
“You came from a completely wizarding family. How’d you know how to navigate the non-magical world?” Tony asked curious.

“I was the rebel of the family. I hated their views on muggles and muggleborns. To piss off my mother I learned everything I could about muggles and their culture. I even got myself a muggle motorcycle. Of course I tampered with a bit so that it could fly but you get the point. Things have changed a bit since I was in Azkaban but I knew where to look, and I’m not an idiot. Just a bit mad,” Black shrugged.

“Huh, I think you’ll have to tell me more about that bike later. But we should probably try to stay on topic here. Why else did you decide to come after me? There had to have been another reason besides payback to put all this effort into getting here when you’re probably the most wanted man in Europe,” Tony questioned.

“I wanted to check on Harry. Make sure he was all right, and before I got a little more rational I was thinking about different ways to murder you,” Black said with grin flashing his yellow teeth. Tony made a mental note to buy lots and lots of teeth whitener for him.

“Well, you’re not the first person to want me dead. I doubt you’ll be the last,” Tony responded dryly.

“Got a real charming personality do you?” Black joked.

“I’m very charming. More charming than you, Black,” Tony sniffed, offended.

Black barked out a loud laugh. “So what’s this about Harry being in Asgard with his grandparents.”

“It’s a long and very bizarre story,” Tony sighed.

“We’ve got time, and I want to know about his life. I want to hear about it all,” Black insisted.

“Don’t say I didn’t warn you because I’m pretty sure this is about to blow your little wizarding mind,” Tony then launched into the story. He decided to start from the beginning, from the very first moment he found out about Harry all the way up until he left Harry on Asgard.

“Aliens are real and they attacked the Earth. Asgard is real, and the Loki from Norse mythology is now Harry’s third parent,” Black whispered in disbelief as he took a sip of his scotch. During the story the two of them had shifted onto the couch, and were now indulging in a glass of Tony’s finest scotch. The conversation certainly called for a good drink.

“Yup, I know its crazy. I’ve just kind of accepted that this sort of thing is how my life is now,” Tony shrugged taking a drink for himself.

“And he’s really a god?” Black asked.

“More of an alien but when you compare them to us… He might as well be,” Tony replied.

“Merlin’s balls.”

“What you said. At least the fruitcake is locked up tight in an Asgardian prison. I’ve seen it for myself, and there’s no way he’s getting out,” Tony assured. More to reassure himself than Black.

“Do you think he’d hurt Harry if he got out?” Black wanted to know.
“I don’t think so. Although, I don’t know what his reaction to the news that he was technically Harry’s other parent was,” Tony groused.

He’d only gotten a quick peek at Loki in his cage. Just long enough to make a face at the madman. He couldn’t help but feel a little intimidated by Loki being in Harry’s life. There was now a contender in Harry’s life who actually had a stake in it. He was biologically related to Harry and that was something that they couldn’t just ignore. Tony just hoped that Loki would stay locked up for the rest of their lives so they wouldn’t have to deal with the wacko. However, knowing Loki he would find some way to escape.

While he had Black at his disposal and was deciding their next course of action Tony asked him more about the European wizarding world. Black had grown up in an ancient ‘pureblood’ family. He’d been out of the picture for nearly eleven years but he could give Tony a more in-depth look into their world. His brief conversation with Dumbledore didn’t provide him with the knowledge he wanted, and Coulson while knowledgeable hadn’t actually been around during Voldemort’s reign of terror. Black had not only lived it but had been right in the middle of it. Black had also gone to Hogwarts with Lily, and could provide Harry with more information about his mother that Tony couldn’t.

“Are you serious?” Tony asked in shock.

Black had told him all about his school days, which mainly consisted of his three best friends. The four of them made up the Marauders, and had come up with little nicknames for one another in honor of their animagus forms. Tony had been interested in the animagus transformation, and why they decided to learn such dangerous magic without help. Black reluctantly admitted that one of their friends had been a werewolf leading to Tony’s question.

“Always,” Black replied with a wide grin.

Tony dropped his head in his hand. “I walked right in to that one.”

“You certainly did,” Black loosed a barking laugh.

“How often do you use that joke?” Tony asked.

“Every chance I get, Tin Can,” Black replied.

“Hey, no, nicknames are my thing, Lassie,” Tony insisted. “So this friend of yours is really a werewolf? It just doesn’t seem logical that someone would be forced to change based on the lunar cycle.” But then again Tony knew a man who could turn into a green rage monster.

“Yeah, it’s not a pretty thing to witness. We always did everything we could to make it more comfortable for him. He hated what he was. I should have known he wasn’t the traitor. I should have trusted him with the truth that we’d switched Secret Keepers,” Black looked regretful.

“Yeah, who was the real Secret Keeper by the way? And why the switch?” Tony asked.

“James and I thought we were so clever switching. Everyone knew how close we were. His parents took me in after my own family disowned me at sixteen. We never thought Voldemort and his followers would suspect little Peter Pettigrew. We should have known better. His animagus form was a rat. Should have known he’d turn on us. He even kept hinting about Remus spending too much time with the other werewolves. It made us cautious so we never even told Moony about switching,” Black’s eyes were filled with hatred towards Pettigrew, even more hatred than he had shown towards Tony.
“Well, it’s too bad you killed the man. We could have used him to clear your name,” Tony frowned thinking up some other ways to clear Black’s name; although, as long as Black didn’t want to return to Europe he should be fine. The wizarding world really didn’t have extraditing laws. The only problem would be if they discovered his location and came after him.

“Oh, the little rat’s alive,” Black snarled.

“What? Didn’t you blow him into a bunch of little pieces? Something about there only being a finger…” Tony trailed off as he recalled the details of the case that had bothered. “I mean I could understand if you really did kill him all things considered. But it would make sense, everyone else was vaporized. But this guy’s finger survived? And he was the closest one to you? I don’t think so.”

“The bastard cut it off, turned into a rat, and scampered off into the sewers leaving me to take the blame. Of course this was after he started screaming about me betraying Lily and James to anyone within earshot. I was so shocked that I’d been bested by Peter bloody Pettigrew that I just starting laughing. I couldn’t stop when the Aurors showed up because I knew they’d convict me. I was from a dark family, a Black. Of course I’d betrayed my friends. Of course I’d show my true colors eventually. They had witnesses. They threw me in Azkaban, no trial necessary apparently. I was in too much shock to protest in the beginning. I blamed myself for my recklessness. I should have taken Harry, gotten things cleared up at the Ministry, and then had help going after Peter,” Black looked so lost.

Tony could relate. His own hot temper had gotten the better of his rational mind too many times to count.

“Sometimes you get framed by your friends for murder. No need for the continued pity party,” Tony smirked attempting to lighten the mood.

Black rolled his eyes. “When you’ve spent eleven years in Azkaban having all of your happy memories sucked out of you we’ll talk.”

“Yeah, well I was held hostage by terrorists in a cave for months,” Tony protested.

“Were there dementors?”

“No, but—”

“Then I win,” Black said smugly.

“Well, I fought aliens.”

“Don’t even bother, Stark. You’re not winning this,” Black shook his head, unimpressed.

“Now listen here, Spot, this is my—”

Tony was cut off when his elevator doors opened and Coulson stepped out.

“Jarvis, what did I tell you about letting SHIELD agents into the building?” Tony whined.

“To only allow access to Agents Romanoff, Barton, and Coulson,” Jarvis replied primly. Tony sighed. “You could have told me at the very least, Jarvis.”

“Of course, sir,” Jarvis agreed readily.
“Mr. Stark should I even ask why a dangerous criminal is sitting in your penthouse sharing a drink with you?” Coulson asked dryly.

“The better question would be: what does SHIELD know about the situation?” Tony asked.

“Nothing as of yet, I’m here through my connections in the magical world. Someone saw Mr. Black in the city,” Coulson announced.

“How could they? I was careful,” Black frowned.

“You’ll find American wizards have a higher surveillance system in place especially in large cities, and you were spotted while apparating into an alley in the city,” replied Coulson.

“They use CCTV?” Tony asked, curious.

“No, pigeons,” Coulson was all smug secretive smiles.

“A spell to look through the birds’ eyes?” Black asked looking equally curious.

Coulson just continued to look smug and secretive.

“Who are you?” Black questioned looking completely bewildered.

“I’m a squib who now works with a separate, secret muggle government that investigates and takes care of various odd occurrences outside the realm of capabilities of witches and wizards. Our name is SHIELD it stands for Strategic—”

“Blah, blah, long boring name that’s an acronym for SHIELD, and doesn’t really matter,” Tony cut in.

“I didn’t know muggles had anything like that or that there was even a need for something like that. Considering everything that’s happened since I’ve been in Azkaban it’s probably useful. The world is certainly a different place now,” Black shrugged in acceptance.

“Since neither of you is dead, I assume that Mr. Black isn’t guilty of the crime he has been accused of?” Coulson questioned.

“Nope,” Tony grinned.

“I see, this changes things,” Coulson said thoughtfully easily believing Tony. He trusted Tony’s judgment enough to accept Black was innocent.

“I’m going to clear his name,” Tony insisted.

“It will need to be done quickly. The American Wizarding Government had already alerted the International Magical Office of Law who in turn notified the Ministry of Magic by the time I was given the information. They will be here soon to try and collect Mr. Black. However, due to recent events coming to light SHIELD is willing to offer its support in proving your innocence, Mr. Black.”

“Thank you, both of you,” Black nodded gruffly.

“I needed a distraction anyway. I’ve already made over thirty different new suit designs in my down time, and until I get to my workshop in Malibu I won’t be able to start mass producing them,” Tony muttered.
“What is that you do exactly anyway? I saw your iron suits on a muggle news broadcast,” Black frowned in confusion as he glanced over at Tony.

“Gentlemen, we can discuss that later. I think it would be more prudent if the three of us headed over to the Ministry of Magic before they have a chance to storm the tower,” Coulson reminded them.

“You really think we should just head right into the hands of the people who want me Kissed?” asked Black in shock.

“Kissed? You’re afraid they’re going to kiss you? What kind of punishment is that?” Tony frowned.

“A Dementors Kiss is where you have your soul sucked out of you. If you don’t die immediately, you’ll spend the rest of your life as a vegetable,” Black informed, a hint of fear in his eyes.

“That sounds pleasant,” Tony muttered.

“I have quite a few contacts in the Ministry. Trust me. I will sort out this situation without the danger of having your soul removed, Mr. Black,” Coulson assured.

“You’re all I’ve got. Let’s go,” Black stood.

Tony groaned. “Don’t tell me we’re taking another portal key.”

“Portkey, and yes,” Coulson shot him an exasperated look.

“I really need to get a move on that teleportation device,” Tony grumbled as he stood to take hold of the straw hat Coulson had brought in his briefcase. The man was always frighteningly prepared for everything.

“Wait, before we leave I’m going to bring some insurance with me. I’ve been working on a prototype. All of my suits are capable of function in the presence of magic now but my newest suit will hopefully repel magic,” Tony announced proudly.

“I don’t believe that you will need the suit, Mr. Stark,” Coulson argued.

“Bring it. I’ve seen some the things your suits can do on the muggle news. They’re wicked things, and I’d love to see the faces of the Ministry officials when they get their arses handed to them by a muggle machine,” Black flashed a fierce grin.

Coulson sighed. “I assure you both that I will be more than capable of keeping the situation under control. As long as the two of you let me do all the talking.”

“I better get the suit. The track record of me keeping my mouth shut isn’t exactly a great one,” Tony countered.

“Get the suit,” Coulson ordered.

Tony grinned and had Jarvis send it up. He had the suit fold down into a briefcase. The suit hadn’t been thoroughly tested yet but Tony was pretty confident that it would hold together and at least serve as full body armor if things came down to a fight.

Now that he had his suit, Tony once more took hold of the straw hat along with Coulson and Black.

“This particular portkey is voice activated,” Coulson explained.
“What’s the activation word?” Black asked.

“Ministry of Magic,” Coulson replied with a slight upward tilt of his lips.

Before Tony could protest the feeling of something hooking him behind his bellybutton over took him. Everything spun wildly around him. Upon arriving at their destination Tony once again found himself crashing to the ground. Coulson and Black both landed gracefully. Black sent him a smug, superior smirk. Tony sent him a one-finger salute.

Tony climbed to his feet and took in his surroundings. They were in a large corridor with polished dark woodened floors, and with a peacock-blue ceiling. Golden symbols swirled along the ceiling constantly changing and moving. The walls were also made of dark wood, and rows and rows of fireplaces. All sorts of witches and wizards were coming in and out of the green flames, and moving through the hall. In the middle of the hall stood a large golden fountain with a witch and wizard, and several other magical creatures standing around them. Tony thought he recognized the little one with the big ears. It looked like Harry’s little stalker from the hotel. Tony wondered absently what had happened to the little weirdo.

Coulson confidently led them towards a golden gate with a desk on the left where all of the other wizards seemed to being going through. The sign above the desk read SECURITY. A wizard in bright blue robes sat reading a newspaper. Coulson flashed some sort of pass at the wizard as the three of them passed. The wizard barely took the time to glance at the badge before waving them through. The three of them joined the crowd in moving through the smaller golden gates towards a row of golden elevators. For being one of the most wanted criminals in the wizarding world no one seemed to recognize Black. But then again they were probably looking for a madman. The groomed, albeit gaunt, man in a normal business suit probably didn’t register to them much.

The three of them entered an elevator, and Coulson yanked the grill of the elevator shut before anyone else could get on with them. A few papers flapped above their heads, zooming around the compartment like bird. The elevator slowly began to ascend. It was a little wobbly, and Tony feared that it was about to break down and send them crashing to their deaths.

“Someone really needs to have a talk with you wizards about easy transportation,” Tony groused as he reached up to grab a handrail just in case.

“There’s no such thing as easy wizarding transportation. I should take you on the Knight Bus some time. I think you would really enjoy it,” Black grinned.

“You know as much fun as that sounds, I think I’ll pass,” Tony replied dryly.

Tony listened patiently as they continued up through the levels of the Ministry. Coulson continued to keep other wizards and witches out with stern glares. In fact one wizard was so traumatized he dropped a box of toads that were belching fire. Neither Black nor Coulson so much as flinched at the revelation.


“Don’t try to understand wizarding logic. We don’t have any,” Black informed him seriously.

Tony sighed.

Finally it was announced that they had arrived at level two, the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, including the Improper Use of Magic Office, Auror Headquarters, and Wizengamot Administration Services.
“We’ll need to have Mr. Black questioned under Veritaserum, a potion which forces the drinker to tell the truth, to have a record of his innocence if we want to push for a trial,” Coulson explained as a bunch of the little memos flew in and out of the elevator waiting for them to get off.

“I’ve been a guilty man for eleven years. Let’s go rub my innocence in those bloody bastards’ faces,” Black snarled striding forward.

Coulson quickly followed, leaving Tony to catch up to the two of them. They moved through a hallway with rows of doors. They finally entered an open area with a bunch of cubicles. A sign declared that this was Auror Headquarters. Wanted posters, mainly of Black, were strung up the cubicle walls along with ones from the broom game Harry loved so much. It was oddly quiet for it being the center for the wizarding police force. Black muttered something about them all being out looking for him under his breath, and Tony shrugged figuring that he was probably right. Coulson made his way to a reception area where a woman was sitting filling out paperwork with a feathered quill.

“Excuse me, Miss, we would like to speak with the head of the department to conduct a questioning with Veritaserum in order to prove the innocence of a prisoner,” Coulson announced politely.

“I’m afraid you’ll have to make an appointment for something like that. There’s all sorts of paperwork that would need to be filed. The prisoner would need to be removed from Azkaban under an armed guard, and a certified Auror with the proper training and authority would need to be the one to complete the questioning. You won’t be able to make an appointment for quite a while. We’re very busy right now. If you haven’t heard Sirius Black is on the loose,” the woman replied without bothering to look up.

“What a coincidence the prisoner I’m here about today is Sirius Black,” Coulson replied. That got a reaction out of the woman. Her head shot up and she caught sight of Black. She shrieked and scrambled out of her chair only to faint dead away on the floor.

“Perhaps we should have anticipated this reaction,” Coulson said calmly.

Tony didn’t buy that. This was just the reaction that Coulson was hoping to get.

A large black man burst from one of the cubicles. His wand was raised, and he looked ready for a fight. He reminded Tony of Fury. If Fury wore robes, had both eyes, and was a semi-decent person.

“Mr. Shacklebolt, it’s nice to see you again,” Coulson greeted steadily as he stepped in front of Black.

“Agent Coulson. It’s nice to see you, too. Can I ask why you’ve brought such a dangerous criminal here without being properly restrained?” Shacklebolt asked glancing from Black to the passed out receptionist.

“She merely fainted from the shock. She should wake up within a half hour. And Sirius Black is innocent of his crimes. He never betrayed the Potters, and did not murder any of those civilians. We’ve come here to ensure that Mr. Black receives the fair trial he always deserved. Is Amelia available? I would like to get this questioning done before the Minister catches wind of it, and tries to put a stop to it,” Coulson stated calmly.

“I trust you Agent Coulson but this is Sirius Black. He’s a murderer,” Shacklebolt eyed Black warily.
“I am aware of his supposed crimes,” Coulson replied.

“I’ll probably be fired for this but you’ve never steered us wrong before. Come with me. You’re lucky everyone else left to apprehend Black, including Madam Bones. I offered to stay behind in the event something else came up. I’m one of the few who is qualified to administer questioning under Veritaserum,” Shacklebolt sighed and started leading them towards one of the back rooms beyond the cubicles.

They entered an interrogation room. Shacklebolt sat Black in of the chairs. Handcuffs immediately sprang out to wrap themselves around his wrists and legs. Black tensed, but managed to relax a bit once Coulson placed a supportive hand on his shoulder.

“All right, let’s just get this over with,” Shacklebolt went to one of the paneled walls. He tapped it with his wand and pulled out a vial of clear liquid.

“Today is Wednesday, November 28th, 2012. I, Auror Kingsley Shacklebolt, am authorizing a Veritaserum questioning on Sirius Black, convicted mass murderer and Azkaban escapee. Also witnessing this questioning are Phillip Coulson, an American squib and an Agent of the muggle organization SHIELD. And who are you exactly?” Shacklebolt turned to Tony.

“I’m Tony, uh Anthony if you need my full name, Stark. I’m Iron Man,” Tony answered unsure of what sort of information he was looking for.

“And Anthony Stark, a muggle who is also a protector of the Earth through his use of his mechanical suit called Iron Man,” Shacklebolt continued surprising Tony with his knowledge even if it was a bit inaccurate. Tony was Iron Man with or without the suit.

“I will begin by administering three drops of Veritaserum,” Shacklebolt continued and Tony figured that there must be some sort of recording system in place.

Shacklebolt held the bottle over Black’s mouth, and Black willingly opened. Three small drops fell into his mouth. The bottle was capped and returned to its place. Tony kept his eyes on Black. His gray eyes had glazed over and a vacantness over took his features.

“What is your full name?” Shacklebolt asked.

“Sirius Orion Black,” Black replied in a monotone.

“When were you born?”

“February 14th, 1979,” Black answered.

“Were you the Secret Keeper of Lily and James Potter?”

“No.”

“Did you betray them to You-Know-Who?” Shacklebolt asked looking somewhat shocked by Black’s earlier answer.

“Never.”

“Did you employ the use of a spell, which was responsible for killing twelve muggles and Peter Pettigrew?”

“No, I didn’t cast the spell that killed them and Peter Pettigrew is still alive,” Black replied.
Shacklebolt was stunned by the revelations, and Tony was trying to think of some ways he could get his hands on some of the truth serum. It could come in handy when Barton stole his coffee and then denied it.

The questioning continued until the entire story had been told, and Shacklebolt’s curiosity had been sated. At least by the end of the lengthy questioning Shacklebolt now believed in Black’s innocence.

“We need to call for an immediate trial. I can’t believe such a gross misconduct of justice could have happened,” Shacklebolt looked a little lost. “I apologize for what’s happened Black.”

“It’s not your fault. Blame Crouch and Fudge. They’re the ones who threw me in Azkaban without a trial. Of course it’s not like anyone protested, and I didn’t make it easy with the maniacal laughter,” Black replied. The effects of the truth serum had worn off.

“How soon can we set up a trial?” Tony asked.

“Considering the notoriety and severity of it all… I would say they would call for a trial as soon as they can. They should be ready by the end of the week. With the confession on record Sirius, you should be a free man by the end of week,” Shacklebolt replied.

“I can’t believe it,” Black breathed a sigh of relief.

“I’ll take care of everything. I’ll give the report to Madam Bones, and she’ll set the trial date up. Until then I suggest you lay low. I’ll let Agent Coulson know when the trial will be,” Shacklebolt assured them.

“We’ll prepare our case,” Coulson agreed.

With that Shacklebolt escorted them back to an apparition point. Coulson pulled out an old rusted tin can, and handed it to Tony.

“This will take us back to your home in Malibu. I’ll have some friends put up some wards, and since your mansion’s address is private you should be fine for a couple of days until we can get you to the trial.”

“Will they come after him?” Tony wanted to know.

“Yes, such a failure will have the public up in arms. It will vastly affect the Minister’s popularity ratings,” Coulson replied evenly.

“The Ministry is corrupt. They’ll do anything to cover their own arses,” Black growled.

“I’m going to remain here for the time being to ensure that things run smoothly. I will make sure that you get a proper trial, and that they don’t lose that report,” Coulson informed them.

“Thank you for all your help,” Black said sincerely.

“Of course,” Coulson replied.

“Let’s get going to Malibu. I needed to get away from the cold weather anyway,” Tony said eager to get out of the magical world.

Black agreed and took hold of the can. The password for this portkey was home. Tony reluctantly said the word, and Black and he were whisked away to just outside his Malibu mansion. Black was
suitably impressed with the place as he showed him around. Tony called to let Pepper know what was going on so she wouldn’t worry. He showed Black around the place and set him up in a guestroom. Tony finally settled himself down in his workshop. The labs in the tower were great but this would always be Tony’s comfort zone. This was the place where he had built his first new and improved suit, and it stored all of his past models. Now that Tony was here he could get to work on building all of the army of suits he’d designed the last few months.

The next few days passed quickly. Black and he had been keeping their distance from one another. Coulson had let them know that the trial would take place at the end of the week. Tony wanted to get in touch with Harry but seeing as how the only way to do so was to call for the mystical, all-seeing Gate Keeper he figured he’d wait. Tony had been given the authority to call for Heimdall while Harry was on Asgard but only in the event of an emergency. Harry would be home this weekend so he could tell him all about it then. The trial had been scheduled for the following Monday meaning that Harry would get the chance to meet Black before the trial.

Tony wasn’t sure what was going to happen after the trial. Black wanted to leave England behind and stay close to Harry. Tony wasn’t sure if the dog wizard was going to become a permanent fixture in their lives. If so Tony wasn’t so sure how he felt about that. Black was further competition for Harry’s attention with the added benefit of being a wizard and having gone to school with Lily. Black could be useful with all of the magical problems that might crop up in Harry’s life. As long as Black got over his feelings of animosity towards him the two of them might get along pretty well. In fact Black’s work with incorporating magic into flying vehicles just might come in handy.

Friday night Thor arrived with Harry in tow. Black hung back in the house as Tony went to greet them.

“Dad!” Harry cried in excitement running towards him.

Tony swept him up in a tight hug.

“Hey kiddo, how’s Asgard?”

“It’s great. I’m learning a lot from Frigga and a couple of others,” Harry smiled. “Actually I wanted to talk to you about that.”

“We can talk about it later. Thanks for dropping him off Thor,” Tony nodded his thanks to the Norse god.

“Of course my friend. I am off to see my Lady Jane. I will return dear nephew on Sunday Evening,” Thor announced before taking to the air.

Harry and Tony watched him disappear into the clouds.

“Um, there’s something I need to talk to you about before we head inside,”

“Did you get me a present?” Harry asked.

Tony snorted. “Yeah, I got you a dog.”

“Really?” Harry’s eyes widened comically. “No you didn’t. You don’t like dogs or pets. You tolerate Hedwig because she takes care of herself.”

“No, I didn’t get you a dog. Well, not exactly,” Tony hedged.
“What are you on about?” Harry looked at him expectantly.

“You remember Sirius Black?”

Harry nodded his expression darkening. “He’s the one that betrayed mum and James to Voldemort.”

“No he didn’t. He’s innocent.”

“What? How do you know?” Harry demanded.

Tony told him about Black confronting him, and how Black innocence was proven beyond a doubt with the truth serum questioning.

“I can’t believe it,” Harry murmured.

“It’s all true. You can ask Agent about it,” Tony insisted.

“I trust you, dad,” Harry rolled his eyes.

“Black is actually a decent guy. He has a few screws loose. But a couple of years in person will do that to you. He’s not the dangerous criminal we thought he was. Trust me I wouldn’t have him wandering around my house otherwise. He was good friends with James and your mom. He really wants to meet you,” Tony said tilting his head towards the house.

“He’s here?” Harry gasped.

“He’s staying with us until his trial officially declares him innocent,” Tony said as he started steering Harry towards the house.

“I haven’t seen this house yet,” Harry’s gaze darted about the open interior of the mansion.

“This is my main house. I only recently started staying at the tower when we met. We’ll set up a room for you here. Maybe a different scheme than your room at the tower,” Tony offered.

“All right,” Harry said distractedly. His emerald eyes had finally located Black. The man had stepped up to greet the two of them his gray eyes flickering over Harry in disbelief.

“Merlin, you’re all grown up,” Black smiled a sad cast to his features.

Tony stepped in when Harry didn’t immediately respond. “Harry allow me to introduce Sirius Black, your godfather. Well, your other godfather.”

“Other godfather?” Black frowned in annoyance.

“Yeah, I sort of appointed someone else when we thought you were a homicidal maniac. And well he’s an actual god so I thought it would be funny…”

“Thor’s actually my uncle so you can take back the full position of godfather if you want to,” Harry offered speaking up for the first time.

“I would like that,” Black said flashing Harry the largest smile Tony had seen from the man yet.

“So you went to school with mum and James?” Harry asked timidly.

“Yeah, we were all in Gryffindor together. We used to drive McGonagall mad with some of our
pranks,” Black boasted.

“I’d love to hear about it,” Harry said eagerly.

“Well, he likes to talk about it,” Tony smirked.

Black glared at him.

The three of them settled in the living as Black started regaling Harry with all sorts of stories about his wild school days with the Marauders. There were a couple of awkward moments where Black mentioned James’s determined pursuit of Lily but Tony wasn’t bothered by it, and he made sure that Harry wasn’t either. It was a fact of life. Lily and James had been married. Tony didn’t want Harry to feel ashamed about his own birth. He deserved to know about all of the people who cared for him. James’s gave his life for Harry even after knowing the truth. Tony certainly didn’t mind him learning about the man. Tony’s obvious acceptance of Black telling Harry about James made Black visibly relax, and some of his indifference to Tony relaxed a bit. It also helped that Black wasn’t purposefully trying to get Harry to like James better than Tony. That was something Tony would have put a stop to right away, and the mutt would have quickly been out on the streets.

“So that’s why dad said he’d gotten me a dog,” Harry said grinning widely when Black told him about his shape shifting abilities.

“A dogfather,” Tony said unable to resist laughing at his own cleverness.

“I like it,” Black grinned.

The next two days passed quickly. Black and Harry, and by extension Tony spent a lot of time together. Black seemed unwilling to allow Harry out of his sight, and Tony actually liked that he now had an ally who was as obsessive as he was about Harry’s safety. Black and he may not exactly be friends but they had a common interest in keeping Harry out of harm’s way. For now that was enough to bond them together.

Black eagerly taught Harry several pranks; although, the wizard was a little disappointed to hear Harry wouldn’t be returning to Hogwarts. After hearing Harry’s tale about the Voldemort possessed professor, and the basilisk incident Black withdrew his disappointment. He was all for Harry being closer to home once he learned Voldemort wasn’t entirely gone. Black spent his Harry free moments badgering Tony about what they were going to do about Voldemort. Tony resolved to set up a meeting with Coulson to discuss the issue. Honestly, Tony didn’t have the opportunity to talk to Coulson very often. The agent had his own team to lead, and missions to go on. Tony was surprised the man had shown up for the case against Black.

The day of the trial arrived. Harry had reluctantly returned to Asgard with Thor, and the promise that he was going to bug Heimdall to provide him with a play by play of the trial. Coulson arrived with yet another portkey, and several American Aurors with him to ensure that Sirius wouldn’t just be carted off the moment that they stepped foot into the courtroom. Tony brought his suit with him once more in the event things went south. Black was trying to convince him to blast all of the pompous old windbags even if he was declared innocent.

Their small group was greeted by Shacklebolt, an older witch with short gray hair and a monocle
who introduced herself as Amelia Bones the Head of the DMLE, and a small contingent of British Aurors. Madam Bones was a no nonsense sort of woman who was on a clear mission. She also seemed to know Coulson quite well and believed in Black’s innocence thanks to truth serum questioning. Tony was glad to have her on their side. She reminded him a bit of Pepper when she was on the warpath. Watch out to any one who got in her way of seeing justice.

“The Minister is insisting on holding the trial in the old courtrooms with a full meeting of the Wizengamot,” Madam Bones huffed, annoyance clear in her tone.

“I didn’t expect anything less from Minister Fudge,” Coulson sighed.

“The Wizengamot-thing is like the Supreme Court Justices right?” Tony questioned of Coulson.

Coulson nodded.

Black had done his best to give him a rundown on the way the law worked in the British wizarding world. It was similar to non-magical law but the Wizengamot seemed to be made up of people who had inherited their positions and were allowed to keep them until death or until they willingly stepped down. Since wizards lived quite a bit longer than the average human this ended up creating a council of really old people with really outdated ideas.

They were taken deep into the bowels of the Ministry. The courtrooms were so deep that the elevators didn’t even go down that far. Their group was forced to take several flights of stairs. It made Tony curious how far beneath the ground they were, and where exactly the Ministry was located. The courtroom they entered was very different from the ones Tony was used to, and he’d seen a lot of different ones considering all of the different places he had been arrested. It looked more like an indoor arena with raised stadium seats set all around. The defendant was place in a chair in the middle of the floor, far below the row of judges or whatever they were. The defendant’s allies were allowed to remain with him on the floor, and the rest of the seats were opened to the public. The stands were completely packed. Every wizard had turned out for the chance of getting a look at the infamous Sirius Black.

Tony got his first look at the Minister of Magic as he burst into the stands and took his seat among the plum robe colored judges. He was a portly little guy who a very displeased expression on his face. A woman dressed all in pink who must have undergone some sort of human-toad transformation followed along behind the Minister. She stood out to Tony because of her hateful, superior expression. Tony was very good at recognizing kiss-ups, and he knew instantly that this woman would be one of their biggest hurdles in getting Black free.

“He came,” Black whispered in shock.

His gaze was looking off to the side towards a man dressed in shabbily patched robes, and quite a few interesting facial scars.

“Who is that?” Tony asked.

“Moony. Remus Lupin,” Black replied not looking away from his old friend.

The scars made sense now. That was Black’s werewolf friend. Lupin looked torn between hope and rage. He was no doubt hopeful that his old friend just might be innocent but angry that Black was even claiming innocence for this. Tony couldn’t think anymore of it because just then the court was called to order.

“I Cornelius Oswald Fudge, Minister of Magic, call this court to order,” the round man announced
a spell of some sort making his voice carry into the large room.

“It has come to the Ministry’s attention that Sirius Orion Black never received an initial trial, and was therefore unjustly imprisoned within Azkaban,” Madam Bones announced.

The room erupted into a bunch of whispers. Order once more had to be called before they could get any further.

“The trial for Sirius Orion Black will commence on the second of December. For the offence of betraying James and Lily Potters to He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named, and being responsible for the deaths of twelve muggles as well as Peter Pettigrew. Prosecutors for the court: Cornelius Oswald Fudge, Minister of Magic, Amelia Susan Bones, Head of the Department of Magical Law Enforcement, Dolores Jane Umbridge, Senior Undersecretary to the Minister…”

Fudge continued to drone on but Tony tuned him out. He focused on the faces of the other judges to try and gauge their reactions. The only true friendly face he saw among the wizened old wizards was Dumbledore. The headmaster caught him looking, and gave Tony a slight nod of acknowledgement.

“For the Defense: Phillip Michael Coulson, Head Liaison between SHIELD and the wizarding world, Anthony Edward Stark, Iron Man, and Avenger of the Earth, Kingsley Amis Shacklebolt, Auror for the Ministry of Magic,” Coulson announced his voice easily carrying through the courtroom with just as much authority as Fudge’s.

“Hem, hem, pardon my asking but should a muggle and a squib really be allowed to stand up in a magical court?” the pink toad woman, Umbridge, questioned, a sickly sweet smile on her face.

“There are no laws against it. As long as the muggle is already aware of the magical world. So for as long as Mr. Black wants us here we can remain,” Coulson answered.

“Yes, well let’s begin,” Fudge blustered clearly upset. “More than a dozen witness saw Sirius Black at the scene of the crime…”

The prosecution continued listing their evidence, and brought up several witnesses who claimed to have seen Black kill those people. Dumbledore was also called as a witness since he was the one person who James and Lily Potter had personally told Black was their Secret Keeper. However, Dumbledore now expressed his doubt that this was the complete truth.

Finally, after over an hour and a half of listening Fudge and his cronies drone on about all the different ways that Black was guilty it was the Defense’s turn. Between Coulson and Tony they made a very convincing team. If Tony didn’t hate lawyers he thought he and Coulson might have had a very successful career in law. Tony was charismatic and cunning. Coulson delivered no nonsense facts in a way that left little room for people to doubt him. With Shacklebolt providing the clear evidence from the truth serum test given, and Madam Bones clearly on their side Tony was fairly certain that they had this case in the bag.

“It proves nothing,” Fudge growled red in the face by the end of their report.

The rest of the council didn’t seem to feel the same way.

“I think it proves a great deal Cornelius. I can’t believe such a travesty was carried out by our Ministry. I think we should stop delaying, declare Sirius Black’s innocence, and start looking towards how this could have possibly happened. Not to mention we should start our search for Peter Pettigrew,” Madam Bones spoke up.
“It’s all lies,” Umbridge snapped.

Throughout the trial she’d been making all sorts of snide comments about Tony and Coulson’s ability to be a part of the trial. Tony had made rude comments right back, and the toad woman looked like she personally wanted to murder him. The feeling was mutual.

“Are you saying that Sirius Black was capable of lying under the effects of Veritaserum, something that no wizard or witch has ever been capable of doing before?” Madam Bones snapped. She had lost her patience with the woman as well.

“He is the first wizard to break out of Azkaban so it wouldn’t surprise me,” Umbridge simpered.

“He told us how he escaped,” Madam Bones sighed.

“Yes, an illegal animagus. The man is a criminal. He flouts the law, and disgraces his heritage,” Umbridged retorted.

“Listen hear you ugly—”

Coulson cut Black off by placing a hand on his shoulder.

“I think we can all agree that time served will more than make up for his failure to register his animagus form,” Madam sighed.

“No, it does not—”

“Enough of this arguing. We’ve heard both cases. It is time to vote,” Madam Bones cut her off sharply.

Tony listened closely as the judges began to vote. There were several votes of guilty but the vast majority sided with them. Their evidence had been enough. Black was pronounced not guilty, and was now considered a free man. The obvious sigh of relief Black loosed made Tony grin.

After the trial Tony, Coulson, Black, and Black’s friend the Wolf Man all had lunch in a small private pub. Tony and Coulson mostly left the two old friends to catch up and make amends with one another. Remus seemed like a very nice guy. He was gentle and kind but held a vicious monster beneath his skin. In a way he reminded Tony a lot of Bruce.

Tony was pleasantly surprised when Thor showed up with Harry.

“Hey kiddo, what are you doing here?” Tony questioned.

“Harry insisted on returning to Midgard to celebrate the good news of his other godfather’s triumphant release from the injustice wrought upon him,” Thor boomed.

Thor still insisted on being Harry’s other godfather, and Tony really didn’t mind. Besides he didn’t want a pouting God of Thunder on his hands.

“Well, I’m always happy to have you around,” Tony smiled as he pulled Harry into the seat beside him.

“There’s something I have to tell you dad,” Harry said.

Tony waited patiently. Harry’s statement had caught the attention of Black and Remus.

“I think I might know where Peter Pettigrew is,” Harry announced proudly.
“What!?” Tony and Black shouted at the same time.

“Ron’s rat, Scabbers. It’s missing a toe, and it’s really old. It was his brother’s before it was his. Sirius said that Pettigrew could turn into a rat. Hiding as someone’s family pet would be the prefect place to hide especially if no one knew that he could turn into one,” Harry cried excitedly.

“We have to catch that rat,” Tony announced.

“He’s at Hogwarts with Ron,” Harry informed them.

“Well, it looks like we have a mission to complete. We’ll catch the rat, and Coulson can take him to Ministry. Since I have no plans on ever stepping in that place again. Miss Piggy will need to be removed from her position before I even think about it,” Tony said.

“I’m coming with you,” Black commanded.

“Are you sure? Public sentiment towards you is still a little hostile,” Tony argued.

“It’ll be fine,” Black assured.

“If you’re sure,” Tony shrugged. Black was a grown man. Tony wasn’t going to argue with him.

“Does everyone even realize you’re innocent yet? I don’t want you to be attacked,” Harry worried.

“I’ll be fine. It’s Hogwarts, Dumbledore was at the trial and knows I’ve been declared innocent. I want to be there when that filthy little traitor is finally caught,” Black insisted a hint of his former madness flashing in his eyes.

“It’s settled then we head back to Hogwarts for some rat hunting,” Tony decided.

Thor came with them to aid them in their search. But it turned out useful. Harry’s friend said that his rat had gone missing shortly after the rumors that Black was innocent had started to circulate. This only strengthened the conviction that Scabbers was Pettigrew. Tony was not pleased that the man responsible for Lily’s death had been living in his dorm room with Harry. Harry was equally disgusted. Black was nearly inconsolable about Pettigrew escaping his grasp once more. Only Remus was able to calm him down a bit. Harry also helped out a bit by offering Black a place to live.

“Now that we know you’re not really a murderer would you like to come live with us?” Harry asked.

Black’s eyes widened. He flashed a glance towards Tony asking for acceptance.

Tony just grinned. “Sure why not? Everyone else seems to keep moving in. You’ll fit right with all the other crazies running around here. But there’s one condition, you have to have a flea bath.”

Black glared. “Just wait until I get my new wand Stark, I have a list of hexes I want to try out.”

“Bring it on, Black,” Tony smirked.

It looked like his family had gotten a little bit bigger.
A rat scurried quickly through the underbrush moving further and further away from the large castle. The rat, who wasn’t really a rat, was desperate to get as far away from Hogwarts as quickly as he could. Everything had finally fallen apart for him. Sirius Black had been acquitted. The world now knew that the man was innocent. What was worse was that they now knew it had been Peter who had framed him. They knew his animagus form, and Peter knew that it would have only been a matter of time before they realized that he had been hiding these past eleven years as the Weasley’s pet rat. Peter had caught sight of Sirius and his godson in the castle searching for him. Everyone was searching for him. There weren’t any safe havens for Peter anymore.

There was only one thing Peter could do in a situation like this, only one thing he could do in hopes of saving his own hide. If there was one thing Peter was good at, it was protecting his own hide. Peter also had a knack for seeking out powerful people and attaching himself to them. He was going to follow this instinct, and track down his Master. The Dark Lord was his only hope at freedom now. He knew the Dark Lord was alive out there somewhere after his run in with the Potter, now Stark, boy last year, and wasn’t that a shock to Peter. Although, it did fill him with vindictive glee to know that the lovely Lily Evans had cheated on the golden boy James. Sirius Black and James Potter were everything Peter had hoped to be when he’d been young. But his fascination with them soon turned to envy and hate. Seeing them both brought low had been the highlight of his life.

Now Peter would go seek out his Master. He would bring him back, and be rewarded for being his most loyal follower. He could see it now. The glory and power he would garner for helping the Dark Lord return to power. Determined the rat charged on.
Mischief Almost Managed

Several weeks had passed since Sirius had been cleared of all charges. Harry had remained on Earth since Sirius’s trial to get to know him better, and because of the looming winter holidays. This would be Harry’s first Christmas with Tony. It wouldn’t just be Tony either. Harry had an entire pseudo family now with Pepper, Sirius, and the other Avengers. Harry wanted to savor every moment of it. Of course it would only be Tony, Pepper, Sirius, and Harry for Christmas this year. The other Avengers already had other plans for their holiday celebrations. Harry was a little disappointed he wouldn’t get the chance to see them over the holiday but he wouldn’t mind a quieter holiday for the first one he spent with his dad. Any type of celebration was more than he had ever experienced before. He’d loved the ones spent at Hogwarts but this would be different. He was actually going to be spending the holiday with his dad.

He was also going to miss Frigga and Loki. Harry had admitted to Tony about Loki teaching him. Understandably he threw a fit. Only the reassurance from Frigga that Loki wasn’t going to harm him kept Tony from putting a stop to his visits to Asgard entirely. Harry likewise reassured Tony that Loki wouldn’t harm him, and Tony reluctantly accepted his judgment. Harry was happy to have Tony’s acceptance and belief in him.

Loki was different when it was just the two of them. He tried to be standoffish, and push him away but Harry could see through his defenses. Harry knew because he recognized his own worries in Loki’s eyes. Loki was just as desperate as Harry for acceptance. Loki had gone through the same shock that Harry had. His parents weren’t who they thought they were, and Harry understood how shattering that could be. Loki had acted a bit extreme but now that he had calmed down a bit Harry was certain that he could be redeemed. The only ones who seemed to share his sentiments about Loki were Thor and Frigga. Harry was resolved to figure out a way to help Loki as soon as the holidays were over, and he returned to spending his weeks in Asgard.

For now Harry was enjoying his time with Tony and Sirius. The first week Sirius had moved in had been rough. Sirius still held a bit of a grudge against Tony, and Tony was worried that Sirius was going to try and replace him in Harry’s affection. They were understandably a little hostile to one another. The only reason the two of them even attempted to build a semi-friendship was because of Harry. But after reaching some sort of agreement they now got along, and even argued like an old married couple. Harry personally enjoyed watching their little squabbles about little things like Tony’s remodeling of the Malibu mansion. Sirius had a strong opinion about colors and such, and always picked contrary colors to Tony, partly just to annoy him. To which Tony would argue about it being his house.

Sirius had finally gotten his hands on his new wand. The first thing he did was give Tony donkey ears and a tail. It backfired a bit because Tony was thrilled at being transfigured, and spent the rest of the day pestering Sirius to give him wings and gills so that he could study the new structure of his DNA. With Sirius in the house he was able to provide Harry with a little bit of the wizarding education that Harry was missing after being removed from Hogwarts. But only the bare minimum. Sirius insisted that they spend more time on pranks and having a good time than studying. Harry was only too happy to go along with it.

Harry and Sirius got along really well. To Harry it was like they had always known one another. It made him wonder if he subconsciously remembered Sirius and trusted him from when he was a baby. They tossed the quaffle back and forth, went to the beach, and practiced spells. Harry also spent a lot of time with Tony in his workshop. Tony had a whole bunch of new suit ideas, and was spending a great chunk of his time refining and building them. He was working on implantations.
that would go beneath his skin so that he could call his suit whenever he wanted to.

Harry worried Tony was working too much. He had tried to talk to him about it but he was always quick to distract him with a different project. His dad was very good at distractions. He was even capable of distracting Pepper. Of course Pepper was really busy with Stark Industries. Since the attack on New York everyone wanted to be involved with all of the leaps into technology that Tony was building. Pepper was swamped with all sorts of different companies contacting her for a chance at getting funding or just working with Stark Industries. Although, Happy was really enjoying his new job as the head of security. Pepper thought he’d gone mad with power the way he constantly insisted that everyone wear a badge in the Stark buildings.

He’d even made Harry wear one. Pepper had dragged him to the office to get him out of the house. She’d tried to get Tony to come too but he’d waved her off mumbling something about testing his new product.

“This will be good for you, Harry. One day you might be in charge of Stark Industries,” Pepper coaxed, smiling brightly as she forcibly tugged him into the building.

“I don’t know if I’m cut out for that sort of thing, Pepper. I’m like dad. I don’t think I could put up with the business side of things,” Harry hedged, wishing he was back at the mansion with Sirius trying to make all the toilet seats in the house unexpectedly belt out AC/DC songs when Tony used them.

“You should at least be familiar with it, and have the experience of being in the office, at least once,” Pepper pleaded.

Harry relented. “All right, but just today.”

Pepper smiled at him. Pepper wanted to share something with him just like Tony wanted to share his engineering, and Sirius wanted to share his magic.

Harry got the full tour of the building. This was their main base of operations, and was the center of Stark Industries; everything had to come through here before being developed further. Harry spent the day following Pepper around as she went about her daily tasks. She was easily one of the most efficient and organized people he had ever met. Pepper interacted with people firmly but politely. Harry figured he could learn a lot from social interactions.

While Harry enjoyed lunch with Happy and Pepper she mentioned it was her and Tony’s date night. Harry and Happy shared a panicked look. Harry was pretty sure that Tony had forgotten it was date night. While Happy distracted Pepper, Harry quickly called Tony to correct that mistake.

“Hi, dad,” Harry had called him from Happy’s StarkPad so he could see Tony and his workshop behind him.

“Hey, kiddo. Having a nice time with Pepper?” Tony teased.

“It’s alright. I’ll tell you about it when I get home. Right now though, I’m just calling to remind you that it’s date night,” Harry informed him.

“Oh, shugar, completely slipped my mind. Where would I be without you, kiddo?” Tony asked.

“Dead, because Pepper would have killed you,” replied Harry smartly.

“Yes, she would have. You just saved my life, Mini-Merlin. I may have to get you a few more Christmas presents for that. Although, I don’t know what else I could get you. Maybe Pepper will
let me get you that…” Tony’s voice trailed off in thought.

“Just plan something nice for her,” Harry commanded.

“I will do my best,” Tony saluted before signing off.

Harry made his way back to Pepper and Happy. Pepper appeared to be stalling by arguing with Happy before heading on to her next meeting.

“So what’s next on today’s schedule?” Harry asked as he joined them.

“It’s a meeting with someone I used to know,” Pepper said a little nervously.

“Did you two used to date or something?” Harry questioned.

“No, but he used to ask me out quite a bit. I never said yes,” Pepper replied peeking into the conference room.

“I’ll make sure he doesn’t bother you,” Harry assured her.

Pepper laughed. “Thank you, Harry.”

The two of them walked into the office. A well-dressed blonde man stood from the couch and flashed the two of them a bright, blinding smile. Harry instantly didn’t like him. His fake smile reminded him of Lockhart, and the way he was looking at Pepper just wasn’t okay with Harry.

“Aldrich, wow, I can’t believe that’s you. You look great,” Pepper greeted looking stunned as she stared at him.

“And Pepper, you are still just as beautiful,” he replied leaning forward to kiss her on the cheek.

“Thank you,” Pepper smiled.

“And who is this?” Aldrich flashed him another bright smile. But Harry noticed the tightness around his eyes that gave away his displeasure at Harry’s added company.

“This is Harry, he’s Tony’s son. He’s been shadowing me today so that he can learn a little bit about how the company is run,” Pepper smiled fondly at Harry.

“Well, bucko, I have a treat for you today. You’re about to see something very exciting,” Aldrich said in a cutesy voice as if Harry was five instead of twelve.

“Great,” Harry forced a smile.

He launched into his spiel, and Extremis was interesting. The presentation of the mapping of the brain was certainly eye-catching. But Harry and Pepper both had the same idea when it came to altering genes, and testing it on people. Pepper politely declined Aldrich’s proposition.

Pepper and Harry saw Aldrich out. Happy stood beside them muttering about how there was something up with Aldrich’s driver. Harry hadn’t seen him so he couldn’t agree or disagree about his character. Happy stayed behind while Harry and Pepper headed home. Harry and Sirius would be having a movie night with Remus tonight while Tony and Pepper had their date night, as long as Tony remembered their date night.

When they entered the mansion, it was to find Tony in the suit sitting on the couch, and there was a very large stuffed rabbit. It was the biggest stuffed animal Harry had ever seen, and he wondered if
Sirius had a hand in enlarging it. Harry went upstairs to his room so that Pepper and Tony could have a private conversation. Tony had installed the same type of ceiling in his room here as he had in his room in the tower. Harry liked Malibu but he missed the tower and the other Avengers. He understood that Tony needed a little time away from the tower and the bad memories, and Harry did enjoy the privacy of the Malibu mansion. It was nice to have access to the beach and the ocean every day, and the view from his bedroom was incredible. Harry could have stared at it all day.

“Hey, pup,” Sirius greeted from the doorway.

“Hey, Padfoot,” Harry replied smiling at the wizard.

Sirius was still a little worn looking but he looked loads better than he did a couple of weeks ago.

“How was your day with Pepper?”

“It was pretty good. I suppose the company is pretty neat but I don’t think I could ever do what Pepper does,” Harry admitted.

“Harry, I don’t think ten people could do what Pepper does. She runs a business, and keeps that barmy father of yours out of trouble. I think it would take an army to accomplish that,” Sirius grinned.

Harry laughed. Just then they both heard a loud clang.

“Should we go check on that?” Harry asked.

“I think Tony’s been working on that new project of his. He can control the suits without actually being in them now,” Sirius replied.

“Wait, so was dad not in the suit down there?” Harry could only imagine how mad Pepper would be if he pulled something like that.

Sirius smirked. “I don’t believe he was.”

“Brilliant,” Harry sighed.

“I don’t envy his position right now. Pepper is a scary, scary woman. On par with your mum when she was in a temper,” Sirius shuddered. He was no doubt remembering the time Pepper caught the two of them enchanting the mirrors in the mansion to make everyone’s appearance in the mirror become that of Chewbacca from Star Wars. Pepper had honestly thought it was funny but she’d wanted to scare Sirius to keep his pranks from escalating any further. Needless to say, Sirius had wisely decided to never pull another prank that directly affected her again.

Remus arrived by portkey around six. The three of them ordered pizza while Tony and Pepper went out to dinner. This was Remus’s third visit to the mansion. The werewolf reminded Harry a lot of Bruce. He was also a very calming presence to Sirius. Harry knew that Sirius still sometimes had flashbacks to Azkaban. Both Sirius and Tony had Harry worried with their behavior.

Harry enjoyed his movie night with Remus and Sirius. They ended up playing a game of Exploding Snap, and regaled Harry with their exploits from their school days. Remus eventually said his goodbyes and had to return home. Sirius was trying to convince him to move to America so that the two of them could buy a place together. Remus was still reluctant to make the move for reasons unknown. Of course even Sirius was nostalgic for Britain even after all he had been put through. Harry was just glad to have Sirius here with him for the time being in the event Sirius decided to move back.
Harry and Sirius headed to bed before Tony and Pepper got back from their date. There was a crash that woke Harry up in the middle of the night. Harry got up to investigate. He could hear Sirius still snoring in the room over from his, and Pepper and Tony talking. He walked over to open his door only to see an upset looking Pepper walk past him.

“Pepper, is everything all right?” Harry asked in concern.

“It’s fine, Harry. I’m just going to sleep downstairs tonight,” she answered curtly before continuing on downstairs.

Harry frowned and glanced over to see the light coming from Tony’s room. Worried about him, Harry walked over to his door and knocked.

“Come in, kiddo,” Tony called.

Harry walked in to see Tony sitting on his bed with a lost look on his face. Scattered pieces of his newest Iron Man suit lay across the floor.

“Are you all right?” Harry stood awkwardly in the doorway not really sure what to do.

“Come here,” Tony patted the bed while he flopped down on the pillows to look up at the ceiling.

Harry crossed the floor avoiding the pieces of the suit as he went, and climbed onto the bed to sit beside Tony. Harry waited patiently for Tony to speak while he stared up at the ceiling.

“I’m drowning here, kiddo,” he finally said.

“What do you mean?”

“I thought I had everything together after what happened in New York. But then seeing Asgard and the Chitauri, even wizards. Human beings are seriously outclassed in so many ways, and sometimes I just get so…”

“What?” Harry encouraged.

“Overwhelmed, terrified, and I just can’t function or I’m overworking myself just to keep myself from thinking too much about it. I’m having nightmares when I do sleep. You know how I went to lunch with Rhodey the other day? I had a panic attack. Me, Tony Stark, I had a panic attack.”

“It happens. What you went through was horrible. It takes time to get over things,” Harry tried to console him. He was pretty sure he was absolute rubbish at it.

“You were there too, Loki mind whammied you and you almost died. Then you had a fight with a man-eating snake and you’re fine. Which I’m grateful for. I just wish I was as strong as you are,” Tony whispered.

“You are strong. The strongest person I know, and the only reason I’ve been so resilient is because I’ve had you. I know you’ll protect me no matter what, and I trust you to do it. Who knows what would have happened if I didn’t? I feel safe without you, and so I guess I really don’t feel the safe feelings of panic,” Harry told him firmly.

Tony was one of the first adults he’d ever truly trusted.

Tony turned to Harry looking a little misty eyed. Of course he hadn’t slept in a couple of days so
his eyes could have been watering because of that. It just seemed so strange to think that Tony Stark could cry. Harry had seen it before but this felt different. Tony was opening up to him, and treating him and speaking to him like an adult.

“Thanks, kiddo,” Tony choked out. “I’ll try to live up to that trust.”

“You already have,” Harry assured.

He finally felt comfortable enough to flop down next to Tony, and snuggled in. It was truly peaceful moment between the two of them. Where they completely understood the other, and took comfort from their growing bond. Together they stared at the ceiling. Soon after Tony had Jarvis hit the lights, and Tony began making shadow puppets on the ceiling using the light from the Arc Reactor. He had Harry laughing, and without meaning to he drifted off to sleep.

The next morning Harry was woken up by the sunlight streaming through the windows. For a moment he was confused about where he was but memories of being woken in the middle of the night, and talking with Tony filtered back to him. Tony must have just tucked him under the covers after he had fallen asleep. Harry glanced over to the side to see Tony still asleep on the other side of the bed. Harry was relieved to see him asleep for once. Even in his sleep Tony looked anxious, and Harry wished he could have erased it.

Harry got up and decided to make a nice breakfast. Tony didn’t like him cooking or doing any of the household chores but he didn’t mind when he occasionally cooked since it was something Harry enjoyed doing from time to time. Pepper was still asleep on the couch. Harry moved quietly in the kitchen so he wouldn’t wake her. She was under nearly as much stress as Tony was. Stark Industries was still undergoing a huge switch from a weapons company to creating a clean energy source.

Tony was the first to make his way downstairs.

“What’s all this for, kiddo?” Tony asked as he accepted a plate.

“I don’t know, I just felt like it,” Harry shrugged.

“Thanks,” Tony smiled.

The two of them ate in companionable silence. They turned on the TV to watch some cartoons. They’d been watching for only a couple of minutes when their TV station was hijacked. It was the Mandarin and he was claiming a bombing that had occurred in Malibu last night.

“I have no idea why SHIELD hasn’t tried taking that guy out yet,” Tony muttered angrily once it was finally over.

“He is crazy. But maybe they just think it’s something the government should take care of by themselves? Maybe they have other things to do?” Harry offered.

“Maybe,” Tony shrugged, and had Jarvis switch to the news.

The news anchors began to list the causalities of the attack. Both Harry and Tony were stunned to discover that Happy Hogan had been identified as one of the victims. He was in critical condition in one of the local hospitals.

Harry watched the horror and rage that over took Tony’s features. Harry was extremely upset as well but Happy had been Tony’s bodyguard and friend for years. The hit was very close to home for Tony.
“Dad?” Harry asked quietly when Tony had remained staring at the TV screen for several long moments.

“I need to get to the hospital,” Tony murmured.

“I’ll go with you,” Harry said.

“No, kiddo, you stay here. The press is going to be a zoo and I want you out of the limelight for this,” Tony insisted.

“But dad… Happy. I want to know if he’s all right,” Harry sent Tony puppy eyes in hopes that it would change his mind.

“No, Harry. I’m sorry. It’s safer this way. I’ve got to go. Let Pepper know where I went when she wakes up.” Tony rushed out of the house.

Harry watched him go before turning his attention back to the news, and trying to find some hint of information on Happy. Eventually Pepper and Sirius drifted down to the kitchen, drawn by the smell of eggs and bacon.

“Good morning, Harry, thank you for making breakfast,” Pepper smiled warmly as she sat down.

“Yeah, pup, you didn’t have to go through all this trouble,” Sirius said around a mouthful of eggs.

“Is Tony still in the workshop?” Pepper asked, frowning.

“No, there was another Mandarin attack last night. He claimed responsibility for it this morning. Happy was hurt, and dad’s at hospital to see how he is,” Harry replied glumly.

“I can’t believe it. Does it say what sort of condition he’s in?” Pepper asked her hand pressed against her chest.

“Just that it was critical. He was really close to the blast. But other than that the news hasn’t mentioned anything else about him,” Harry fiddled with his fork nervously; hating that he had been left behind.

“Let’s check again. Jarvis?” Pepper called.

The AI complied quickly and brought up several different news channels before settling on one with relevant information. They were talking about the causalities and went into a bit more detail about Happy especially since it had been discovered that he was Tony Stark’s head of security. Suddenly they cut to breaking news on sight.

“Tony Stark: Iron Man, Avenger, and former CEO of Stark Industries’s head of security, Happy Hogun, was injured in last night’s explosion. Mr. Stark is reportedly just leaving the hospital now. Let’s see if we can get a word with Mr. Stark,” the newscaster announced before the screen changed.

The three of them watched in silence as Tony appeared coming out of the hospital. He looked angry, tired, and just miserable though he hid it well even as the reporters swarmed him. Harry’s heart went out to him, and wished Tony had brought him with him.

One of the reporters asked Tony about the Mandarin.

“Oh, don’t do it Tony,” Pepper whispered in distress.
Harry glanced back at the TV to watch as Tony announced his intentions to take out the Mandarin. He even went as far as to threaten him and give him his home address.

“I can’t believe he just did that,” Pepper muttered.

“He’s got madness in his eyes, and I should know considering that’s pretty close to what I looked like after getting out of Azkaban,” Sirius muttered.

“He hasn’t been sleeping. He said he has nightmares, and they make it difficult for him,” Harry defended.

“Either way, we’re not staying here after that. Harry pack a bag, we’ll head to the island. We’ll spend a nice quiet holiday there,” Pepper assured him.

“Or we could spend Christmas in England with Remus. He has a cabin out in the woods. I’m sure he wouldn’t mind a few extra guests,” Sirius offered.

“We can decide later, let’s just get out of here as quick as we can. I don’t trust this Mandarin person at all,” Pepper stated.

Harry couldn’t argue with Pepper’s logic, and quickly went upstairs to pack a bag. Pepper and Sirius did the same. Harry threw all of his important items in his trunk, and made sure Hedwig was close by. The sound of Tony, Thor, and a woman’s voice had Harry heading towards the stairs with his trunk and Hedwig. Pepper had already thrown her bags to the floor, and was stalking down the staircase. Harry was surprised to see Thor standing in the middle of the living room along with an unfamiliar brunette woman. Pepper had asked who she was.

“This is Maya Angelo, an old botanist friend,” Tony responded.

“Botanist, sure. I really need to tell you something, and no there’s not a twelve-year-old kid waiting in the car. Although, I’ve heard that’s already happened to you once,” the now named Maya informed Tony.

“Right, well, Maya would love to chat but I gave out my address to an unstable and very hostile terrorist so I really need to get my son away from here as fast as possible,” Tony explained.

“Dad, what’s going on? Is Happy okay?” Harry demanded descending the staircase.

“Everything is fine. Happy is going to pull through but he was hurt pretty bad. Thor’s going to take you to Asgard until this all blows over. So go grab your—”

“What? Dad, no. I don’t want to leave you. I’m not going to leave you. How can you just send me away like this?” Harry cut him off in outrage.

“Harry, we’re not arguing about this. You’re going. I need to know you’re somewhere this guy can’t touch you. And I’m pretty sure he can’t reach you on Asgard,” Tony insisted.

“We will have a glorious time, nephew, we can go hunting in Vanaheim,” Thor boasted.

“If you don’t want my help. Then ask Thor or Bruce to help you,” Harry suggested.

“This is personal, Merlin, and I think I can handle this whacko,” Tony replied.

“Sir, three helicopters are rapidly approaching,” Jarvis suddenly chimed.

“Dad, no!” Harry cried.

He struggled as Thor swept him up into his arms, and called for the Bifrost. The last thing Harry heard was the sounds of gunfire before being swept up into the Bifrost. The moment Thor, Harry, Hedwig, and Harry’s trunk arrived in Asgard Harry shoved his way out of Thor’s arm. He was only successful because Thor let him go.

“Bring me back, Thor. Please bring me back,” Harry demanded of the god.

“I am afraid I cannot. Your father charged me with your safety, and I will not disappoint him. You may return when your father calls for you but until then you will remain here,” Thor replied steadily.

Harry glanced to Heimdall who only looked on passively.

“Are they all right? Did they make it out of the house?” Harry demanded of the all-seeing gatekeeper.

“Your father, and all of the others successfully made it out of the house before it was destroyed,” Heimdall nodded calmly.

“Good, that’s good,” Harry was in shock.

He couldn’t believe that the mansion had been destroyed. He couldn’t believe that Happy had been hurt. So much had happened in such a short amount of time that it was difficult for him to process. Harry was great when in the middle of danger but standing on the sidelines, and worrying about others putting themselves in danger wasn’t something that he was used to.

“Come, Harry, Mother will be pleased to see you. I’m sure she will order the cooks to make your favorite meal tonight,” Thor put an arm across his shoulders and began to lead him up to the palace.

Harry allowed Thor to pull him along. There wasn’t much he could do to get back to Earth. He was stuck here if Heimdall didn’t let him through, and there was no way he could get past the gatekeeper. Unless he found someone who could tell him about a secret pathway he could use to get back to Earth. Luckily Harry knew just the person he could ask to get that information. With a plan in mind he joyfully went along with Thor to greet Frigga.

The next morning after he had settled in a bit, and enjoyed a nice breakfast with Frigga, he went to visit Loki. He descended into the dungeons of Asgard, which were much more resplendent than the dungeons of Hogwarts. The guards on duty hardly batted an eye at him. They had gotten used to seeing Harry come to visit Loki, and no longer bothered to search him when he came and went from the dungeons.

“Harry, I thought not to expect you until after your mortal holidays,” Loki greeted as he stood from his position reading while on the bed.

The god looked much the same as he had during every other visit Harry had paid to him. He’d been reduced to simple cloth clothing and his hair was in a tangle of black waves.

“Some villain is after my dad, and he sent me here to protect me,” Harry shrugged.

“Which you were not pleased with, correct?” Loki quirked an eyebrow.

“No, and I want to go back to Earth,” Harry stated.
“You want me to tell you how to accomplish this?” Loki asked.

Harry nodded.

“Returning to Midgard would put you in the direct path of danger,” Loki pointed out.

“I know, but it’s my dad. I have to know he’s all right. I have to help him,” Harry pleaded.

“Ask Heimdall to tell you what is happening. He sees all, and it will be much safer,” Loki replied.

“Please Loki, help me,” Harry begged.

“I promise I will tell you... tomorrow. Right now you are not thinking clearly. Give it a day to think things through before you rush off into unnecessary danger. You are perhaps the only mortal that I somewhat tolerate, and I don’t want anything to happen to you. Do we have a deal?” Loki offered.

Harry mulled it over and sighed. He didn’t really have any other options. “All right.”

“Good, now let’s review. You’ve been gone for over a fortnight and I want to make sure you haven’t forgotten anything while lazing away on Midgard. In fact why don’t you come inside the cell?” Loki offered.

“Inside the cell?” Harry frowned.

“Yes, inside, remember we went over this. The wards around it are keyed into my unique genetic and magical signature. Our signatures are very similar but just different enough for you to be able to move in and out. Frigga often enters my cell when she comes to speak with me. Only I am incapable of getting in and out. Unless you are uncomfortable entering,” Loki speculated.

“No, it’s not that. Why haven’t you asked me to enter before this?” Harry questioned.

Harry knew that the walls of the Asgardian prison were keyed in to a prisoner’s unique signature and allowed others to move in and out of the cell freely while the prisoner themselves couldn’t break through the wall. Loki could also perform magic inside the cell but because it was keyed into his specific magical signature he couldn’t perform magic that would affect anything outside the cell.

“Because I knew you would not be comfortable with it before now, and even now I am not sure you are entirely ready,” Loki answered.

“It’s fine, and it will definitely be easier to practice without the barrier between us,” Harry stepped into Loki’s cell.

Loki smiled.

Harry smiled back, and their lessons commenced as they always did.

The next morning he had breakfast with Frigga, which was became awkward with the addition of Odin. Thor wasn’t even there to ease some of the tension since he was off fighting in another realm. Apparently there was quite a bit of unrest that had to be quelled after the destruction of the Bifrost. Harry went out to talk with Heimdall about his dad after he spending the morning with Frigga in lessons on the Nine Realms. The Keeper of the Bifrost gave Harry a play-by-play of what had been happening down on Earth. His dad was working hard to find the Mandarin. But he didn’t have his suit with him. It had been partially destroyed when the mansion was bombed and all of the others were trapped in the rubble. At least he did have Sirius. Harry wasn’t sure if it was a good
thing or not that the two of them were working together.

After getting Heimdall to swear to contact him in the event that something happened, Harry once more made the journey down to Loki’s cell. The god greeted him and invited him inside once more.

“So, I wait a day. Will you tell me about the different pathways back to Earth?” Harry asked.

“I did promise, didn’t I?” Loki smirked.

“You did,” Harry agreed.

“Very well, I will tell you today. But not right now.”

“But you promised,” Harry cried.

“I said today, I didn’t specify a time,” Loki pointed out.

Harry rolled his eyes. “I should have known.”

“Yes, you should have. Do try to pay more attention to people’s wording. You are far too trusting, and honest for your own good,” Loki chided.

“Those are good things you know,” Harry argued.

“Are they?” Loki frowned, smiling slightly, and not looking at all convinced.

“Yes.”

“Those things allow people to take advantage of you,” Loki explained as if Harry was either very young or very stupid. Loki probably thought Harry was both in comparison with himself.

“They also allow you to have friends, and be a good person,” Harry responded.

“Being a good person is rather boring. It gets you nowhere in life. If you want something you must go after it. To achieve your goals must be willing to do whatever is necessary,” Loki argued.

“But then people get hurt, and people hate you. Then you end up alone,” Harry whispered.

Loki glared. “Who needs other people, if they just get in your way?”

“I suppose we’ll just have to agree to disagree,” Harry sighed.

Harry was certain that the only reason Loki thought this way was because he felt alone in the world. He no longer felt like he had a place to call his own. He wasn’t an Asgardian and the Frost Giants probably wouldn’t accept him after being raised in Asgard by the man they all hate. Not to mention he also killed their king, and tried to destroy them all. Loki had a right to be so defensive all of the time. But it also meant he was shuting everyone else out of his life, and Harry had seen how much it hurt Frigga.

“If you’re not going to tell me about the pathways right now, what do you suppose we do all day?” Harry questioned.

“You plan to stay here all day?” Loki frowned.

“Thor’s gone to Vanaheim or Anaheim. It was something with a heim at the end,” Harry replied.
Loki chuckled. “It doesn’t narrow it down much. Most of the realms end in heim.”

“It makes things rather confusing,” Harry grumbled.

“Yes, I suppose it does, for you mortals.”

“Oh!” Harry protested.

Loki just smirked. “Now as for what we could do. How about we play some games?”

“Too bad we don’t have any Exploding Snap cards,” Harry sighed.

“Exploding Snap? It doesn’t sound very promising,” Loki muttered.

“Wait, my trunk is here, and I have some in my trunk,” Harry cheered.

Loki frowned. “Oh joy.”

“Please, can we play?” Harry sent Loki the look that never failed to work on his dad.

“Very well, go and retrieve them, and we will see if this game is worth the time,” Loki sighed.

Harry grinned and raced up and out of the dungeons to his room to collect the game. The rest of the afternoon was spent with Loki in his cell. They started out playing games but soon it turned into Loki telling him stories he had been told in his childhood. Loki used his magic to make the stories play out like a movie before their eyes. It was extremely entertaining, and Harry was certain that the two of them were finally getting closer.

Harry was forced to leave Loki’s cell around dinnertime with the promise to return so that Loki could teach him a few of the different pathways to get to Midgard. Thor was still off fighting. There had been a lot of rebellions breaking out ever since Loki used the Bifrost to try and destroy Jotunheim. The other realms were in a bit of chaos. Now that the Bifrost had been fixed Thor and other Asgardian warriors were out trying to settle everything down again. Harry once again had dinner with just Frigga and Odin in their private chambers. Frigga and he kept up most of the conversation while Odin remained silent. Odin still hadn’t warmed up to him, and he wasn’t exactly Harry’s favorite person either.

After dinner Harry returned to Loki’s cell with the excuse to Frigga that he wanted to say goodnight to Loki. The god sat them both down on his cot.

“I will start by explaining how dangerous and unpredictable these pathways can be,” Loki regarded him sternly.

Harry nodded solemnly. He knew it would probably be dangerous but needed to get to Tony. Logically he knew Tony was a grown man capable of taking care of himself but Harry couldn’t help the fact it was ingrained in him that he needed to help. He felt useless.

“They are not to be taken lightly. These pathways can be highly unstable. Some more than others. One of the most reliable pathways is between Asgard and Jotunheim. From Jotunheim there are several pathways to various realms. One being a direct bridge between Midgard and Jotunheim. The Frost Giants took advantage of this passageway during their attempts to take control of Midgard. Odin was never able to find it to destroy making it possible for me to discover it years later. However, I am uncertain if you would be able to survive in the temperatures of Jotunheim. I suppose if you were properly bundled up you could survive long enough to find the pathway to Midgard,” Loki mused.
“I know what you’re trying to do,” Harry said.

“Good, because I do not want you to go. It is dangerous, and I doubt you would be able to survive the freezing temperatures of Jotunheim for an extending period of time,” Loki warned.

“I promise to wait one more day,” Harry offered.

“Very well,” Loki sighed.

Loki told him of several different gateways between the realms, and their locations. Loki only told him about the ones that were the most reliable to use. It worked out well because Harry feared he wouldn’t be able to remember all of the locations of the ones that Loki did tell him and where they went.

“Thank you, Loki,” Harry told him sincerely once Loki finished.

“Yes, well, appreciate the knowledge you have been given and don’t abuse it. It has taken me many years of hard work to gather all of that information,” Loki warned.

“I won’t, I’ll use it wisely,” Harry promised.

“Good,” Loki nodded.

Harry said goodnight before he went back up to bed. He wanted nothing more than to rush back down to Earth to find his dad. But he thought of Loki’s words, and about how he would probably be more in the way than a help. Harry didn’t know what to do. He felt helpless knowing that his dad was down there possibly fighting for his life while Harry was here perfectly safe and comfortable. It went against all of Harry’s instincts to just sit back and wait.

In the end all of his worrying didn’t matter. The next morning when he woke up Frigga had come to inform him that Tony had called Heimdall, and he was safe and ready for Harry to come home. Harry was thrilled to be going home. He’d missed Christmas day but he was certain that they would be able to make it up.

Harry was eager to return home, and see his dad but he had to say goodbye to Loki first. They wouldn’t be able to see one another for a while. Harry would be staying on Earth for a month or so just like he and Tony had originally planned for their holidays.

“Harry, I take it you are finally returning home,” Loki said by way of greeting.

“Yeah, and I won’t be able to come to visit for a while so I’ve come to say goodbye. I didn’t want you to be upset if I just left without telling you,” Harry told him with a cheeky grin.

“And why should this bother me?” Loki waved his hand dismissively.

“Because you like me having me around,” Harry grinned.

“Oh, don’t do that, you look like your insufferably smug father when you smile like,” Loki scowled.

“Are you talking about Tony or you?” Harry shot back without thinking, he’d been hoping to startle Loki into laughing or recognizing their connection.

Loki appeared a bit uncomfortable so Harry wisely backed off.

“I’ve gotten you a gift,” Loki said after a moment of silence.
“Really?” Harry was surprised.

“Yes, a magical text for you to study while you are away. It’s one of the few I was allowed in my cell. I hope you appreciate it. I will test you on the information when you return,” Loki warned.

“Thank you,” Harry sighed.

“You are welcome. Now, come here. There are a few pages I would like to go over with you before you leave,” Loki motioned him to enter the cell.

Harry did so without hesitation just as he had done for the past few days. Loki showed him the book on illusionary magic. They went over layering techniques, and how some illusions could be layered so thickly that they would last for days and could practically become solid. To demonstrate Loki began to layer complicated illusions over himself until finally standing before him was a perfect replica of Harry.

“That’s wicked!” Harry enthused. “Can you do it to me?”

“Of course,” Loki said with Harry’s voice.

Loki began the process until Harry was an exact copy of Loki.

“This is weird,” Harry murmured looking down at his hands. “I still feel like me. You know shorter and what not but I at the same time I’m not.”

“Yes, illusions take a little while to become accustomed to. They aren’t like actual physical transformations,” Loki agreed.

Harry nodded still looking over the illusions. He couldn’t even see the lines of magic. Harry looked up to ask Loki a question only to find Loki as him outside the cell.

“Loki?” Harry questioned in confusion.

“I’m sorry, Harry. But I cannot stay here. The illusions will wear off in a week at most and when they find out they will release you. By then I will be long gone,” Loki informed him.


“I needed to escape, and you were perfect for the part. A failsafe if you will. Our magical signature was just close enough for it to work, and confuse the cell. You could move in and out of the prison walls but with just a minor adjustment the wards could be fooled into thinking I’m you and you are me. As long as one person remains behind in the cell I would be able to escape,” Loki explained with grin.

“This was your plan all along. You were just using me and I fell for it like a fool,” Harry cried.

He ran to the side of the cell only for the shimmering yellow walls to repel him and send him stumbling back.

“Yes, well that is what you deserve for trusting a monster,” Loki mocked.

“You aren’t a monster, and I don’t care what you say you couldn’t have pretended to like me for so long,” Harry insisted.

“Why won’t you just accept that I am not the person you seem to think I am? It was all a lie you trusting, foolish boy!” Loki snarled at him.
“Because someone has to believe in you,” Harry said staring straight into his eyes.

“You will not change my mind with this pathetic, compassionate act,” Loki hissed looking away, unable to meet Harry’s sharp gaze.

“And you won’t change mine,” Harry said stubbornly.

“Goodbye, Harry,” Loki waved as he departed.

“Loki, don’t do this!” Harry called.

“You’ll see, this is for your benefit as well, Harry. In a way I’m protecting you for what’s to come. There is no safer place than Asgard,” Loki called back.

Harry watched in stunned amazement as Loki disappeared up the stairs without looking back, and he was left standing alone in the cell feeling utterly betrayed.

///

It had been a crazy few days for Sirius. Tony Stark certainly was one of the craziest, and most brilliant men he’d ever known. It had certainly brought the two of them closer together. Now, they were set up in Avengers Tower waiting for Thor to bring Harry back. Stark was on the couch healing up from their adventure, and watching a movie with his friend Bruce. He seemed like a nice guy to Sirius. When Stark mentioned the whole green monster thing Sirius thought it would be a good idea to get him and Remus together. Remus had been a werewolf for most of his life maybe he could help Bruce with his transformations.

The ever-mysterious Agent Coulson had arrived shortly after they did, and had asked to speak with Sirius out on the large balcony. Sirius was curious so he followed him.

“Thank you for all your help with the Extremis situation, Mr. Black,” Agent Coulson stated as Sirius approached him. The squib was a very no nonsense type of person, and Sirius would never admit it but he was actually a bit intimidated by the man. He was also very grateful to him for his part in getting him pronounced innocent.

“It was my pleasure,” Sirius assured.

The attack against Stark and the ensuing battle had been the most fun Sirius had experienced in ages. Not to mention he’d gotten the chance to finally prove himself to Stark. It had been invigorating and reminded him a great deal of what his life had been like when he’d been a part of the Order. He missed those times and all the trouble he and James had gotten into. Being in situations like that kept him from remembering his time spent in Azkaban.

“I have a little team. We deal with situations similar to this one. Perhaps not on such a large scale but similar. We’re also working on learning more about Voldemort,” Agent Coulson informed him.

Sirius unintentionally flinched at the name. But he felt a familiar rage stir up inside him at the mention of the dark bastard.

“You’ve fought against him before. We need an expert on him. How would you like to join my team?” Agent Coulson offered.
Sirius was shocked by the offer. He wasn’t sure he even fully understood what his team really did. But it didn’t stop him from wanting the chance to continue having adventures and being involved in dangerous situations. It helped to keep his mind from the darkness of Azkaban.

“Yes,” he said quickly.

“You’re certain?” Coulson insisted.

“Yeah, I’d love to. And if I get a chance to stick it to that snake bastard all the better,” Sirius said with a fierce grin.

“All right then welcome to SHIELD. I’ll introduce you to the rest of the team,” Coulson gave a small pleased smile.

Sirius laughed. He couldn’t wait to start. Life was certainly looking up.

When he heard Tony’s loud shout from inside he was pretty certain he’d spoken too soon. Sirius ran back into the tower. Stark was glaring at Harry and pointing one of the metal hands from his suit at Harry threateningly.

“Now, who are you?” Stark demanded.

“Tony?” Pepper frowned, understandably concerned about Stark’s mental health. Had the fight been too much and caused the man to finally snap?

“Stark, what do you think you’re doing?” Sirius worried, convinced that the man had finally lost his mind.

“Dad, I don’t know what you’re talking about,” Harry replied, looking frightened.

“I know my son and that is not Harry,” Stark insisted. “Harry’s nice but he’s not that polite or stiff.”

A smirk flashed over Harry’s feature, a smirk that seemed very out of place on Harry’s face.

“Loki!?” Stark growled.

In a shower of gold sparks Sirius got his first good look at the God of Lies as he stood before them in all his black leather and ridiculous horned glory.

“Man of Iron,” Loki greeted. “I didn’t think you would have been able to catch on so quickly.”

“Where’s my son?” Stark snarled his eyes dangerously dark.

“You have nothing to fear. He is not harmed in the least. We merely switched places. However, I have somewhere I need to be. May we not meet again,” with a jaunty wave Loki disappeared.

Stark screamed and lunged trying to catch the bastard but it was far too late. Sirius hadn’t even moved he was far too startled by the turn of events. Now he was stuck staring at the spot where Loki had been just a moment before. What was going on here? How did Loki free himself? Where was Harry? And more importantly was he all right?
Tony stared blankly at the space where Loki had just disappeared. The past two days had been crazy trying to take down Killian and AIM. Pepper had a close call with being injected with Extremis but Tony had gotten to her in time to stop Killian thanks to Black. Pepper wanted him to remove the Arc Reactor, and he had agreed figuring he didn't necessarily need it to power his suits. It would only keep him around longer for Harry and Pepper not to have little pieces of shrapnel around his heart. He scheduled to have it done after the holidays. Pepper had also wanted him to get rid of all of his suits but he had put his foot down. He was convinced now more than ever that he needed the suits to protect his loved ones. Pepper wasn't happy but she relented, understanding that he felt he needed the extra security around to protect Harry. People were going to come after Tony Stark whether he had the suits or not whether it was for him money or his knowledge. They would know he knew how to make the technology, and without the suits he would be a sitting duck.

Tony was doubly glad that he had kept the suits now. He was going to need every last one of them to hunt down the horn-wearing bastard.

"Jarvis, tap into the satellites," Tony growled.

"Already calculating, sir. It will take some time but I will find any matches to the unique signature Loki emitted while teleporting," Jarvis chimed.

"Tony," Pepper cried. "What's going on?"

"Don't worry, I'm going to drag that wannabe god back here by his ridiculous horns. I need to find out exactly what happened to my son," Tony growled.

"Loki said Harry was still safe on Asgard. We should get in touch with Thor to make sure," Black piped in.

"Right, Magical Gatekeeper? If you're there then you just saw Loki take off, after escaping your magical jail cell by pretending to be my son. So I'd really appreciate it if you could send Thor down or if that's not immediately possible then beam me up, Scotty," Tony called.

There was a pause and then Tony was experiencing the now familiar floating sensation of traveling via Rainbow Bridge.

"Mr. Stark," the gold armor wearing, Heimdall greeted.

"Heimdall," Tony nodded.

"The King and Queen have been informed of what has occurred. You are expected in the throne room."

"Thanks," Tony said already turning to head up to the palace.

He needed to see his son, and make sure that he was all right. The Asgardian guards let him pass without any trouble, and when he entered the throne room it was to find the King and Queen of Asgard having a fierce argument.

The Queen stopped when she caught sight of Tony.
"Tony, it's nice to see you," she greeted warmly despite the anger flashing in her eyes.

Odin simply glared at him.

"Hello, your majesties," Tony nodded. "Where's my son?"

"In the dungeons where he will be staying until I get Loki back," Odin informed him imperiously.

"Excuse me?" Tony growled not even caring that he was facing off against one of the most powerful beings in the known universe.

"Your son aided Loki in his escape," Odin glared.

"We do not know this for certain," Frigga argued.

"Loki could never have managed to escape without the boy's cooperation," Odin banged his staff.

"I don't care if he did help him, which I highly doubt by the way. But even if he did it still doesn't mean that you can keep my twelve-year-old son locked up in some magical dungeon!" Tony shouted.

"Careful how you speak to me, mortal," Odin snapped.

"At least now I can see where Loki got his racial bias from," Tony taunted.

"Would you like to join your son in the dungeons?" Odin demanded.

"Yeah, sure, might as well," Tony tossed his hands in the air.

"Odin, stop this!" Frigga hissed.

"Find Loki, bring him back, and I will return your son to you," Odin intoned.

"Why don't you go get your own kid, and just give me mine!?" Tony shouted.

"I'm giving you the chance to keep yourself from becoming a guest in the dungeons," Odin glared.

"I don't care about the dungeons. I'll gladly go to the dungeons if you let Harry out," Tony snapped back.

"I cannot do as you ask. Until I have Loki in my possession, your son is considered a fugitive against Asgard," Odin slammed his staff against the floor and two guards came up to grab hold of each of Tony's arms.

Tony struggled valiantly in their iron grips. But he was only a mortal and in his haste to get to Harry he hadn't thought to grab his suit. However, if his escapades against Killian had taught him anything, it had made him realize that he was capable of getting the job done without his suits. After all his mind was a formidable weapon.

"Okay, okay, wait. I promise I'll find Loki, and bring him back. At least let Harry out of the prison cell or else I will storm Asgard, and I'll show you just how much we mere mortals are capable of," Tony snarled as the guards paused in the midst of dragging him out.

"Consider it done, Mr. Stark," Frigga reassured him.

Tony relaxed marginally. Frigga would do her best to protect Harry. But it didn't mean that Tony
liked the idea of just leaving Harry here. Tony would have also preferred to see Harry in person to reassure himself that Loki hadn't harmed him his attempt to escape. Of course Odin denied him this on the grounds that Tony might help Harry escape. Tony certainly would have if he knew anything about the Asgardian prison cells. In the end he was angrier than he could ever remember being in his entire life as eh was escorted from the palace. Tony was seething as he was forcibly sent back down to Earth.


During Tony's time in Asgard Pepper, Black, and Coulson had gotten in touch with the other Avengers. They were all accounted for except Thor who couldn't have picked a better time to go missing in action.

"Coulson caught us up to speed, Loki's free?" Barton asked stoically.

"Apparently he used some sort of illusion to switch places with Harry, and All-Asshole won't give Harry back until we capture Loki because he thinks Harry helped him," Tony growled.

"What!? He can't do that!" Black cried in outrage.

Bruce nodded his agreement his eyes tingeing with green, and causing everyone to uncomfortably shift around.

"He can, and he did," Tony said darkly.

"At least we know how Loki came by his own sparkling personality," Barton muttered.

"We get Loki, we get Harry back. If we don't I'm going to rip a hole through the universe, and Odin's going to get an uncomfortable wake up call of just why he shouldn't have made an enemy of Tony Stark," Tony swore.

"Where's Thor?" Steve questioned.

"I don't know. He wasn't there in the throne room when I was talking to mommy and daddy," Tony shrugged.

"We could use him in finding Loki but we'll just have to do what we can on our own for now," Steve said determinedly.

"Jarvis, any luck in your scans?" Tony asked.

"A similar signature to the one Loki created while leaving appeared in Europe several seconds after Loki departed. Since then the same signature has been zigzagging all over the Europe," Jarvis explained.

"Looks like we're going to Europe," Tony clapped his hands.

"I'll get in touch with some Auror friends, and tell them to keep an eye out for Loki," Black offered.

"It would be easier if we knew what Loki's goal was," Natasha spoke up frowning.

"Isn't it obvious? It's the same plan as before, take over the world," Barton said.

"Thank you for your incredible insight, Brain," Tony snapped. His whole body was tense, and the longer it took to go after Loki the more anxious he became. He wanted to get his son back.
"You're welcome, Stark," Barton glared back.

"Clint's right, whatever reason Loki came back to Earth for it can't be good for the rest of us," Steve stepped in, always the mediator.

"Unless, it's a trap to distract us, and what he actually needs is in a completely different location," Natasha argued.

"No, Loki knows he won't have a lot of time before we're on his trail. He would have gone straight to whatever he needs the most, and whatever he needs most must be somewhere in Europe but he doesn't know the exact location. That's why he's crisscrossing all over the place," Bruce insisted.

"Okay, either way, let's just get going," Tony urged.

The others agreed, and they all suited up. The Avengers plus Black all climbed abroad the latest Quinjets, and set off for Europe. Jarvis had pinpointed Loki's first arrival just outside of Paris, and so they started there.

Over the next week Tony grew more and more frantic as their search for Loki continued to have no results. SHIELD and the other Avengers helped out as often as they could. Loki was their number 1 priority but there were other problems out there in the world that needed their attention, and as of right now Loki didn't seem to be causing any real harm. He just kept moving around a lot. There was no way Tony was going to stop looking, even to take care of other things. Pepper was running the company, and Tony wasn't about to stop long enough to have surgery to remove his arc reactor. Black was the only one who was as desperate to catch Loki as he was. Black was able to help track Loki with magic a little bit but the God of Magic kept finding ways to hide himself from Black's spells. Loki also seemed incapable of remaining in one place for any length of time making it impossible for them to get their hands on him.

Nearly two weeks after Loki's escape Tony and Black had managed to track Loki to London, and he didn't appear to have left yet, unless it had been on foot or another mode of transportation. Either way Tony and Black quickly made their way to the abandoned warehouses where the signal was originating from. What they found when they got there was a bit of a surprise. Thor had finally decided to make an appearance, and he and Loki were locked in some sort of epic battle. Jane Foster, Thor's kind of girlfriend, some police officers, and a couple other civilians were standing off to the side watching them with a shocked and terrified expression.

Without hesitation Tony, already wearing his latest suit, shot into the fray between the two gods. He'd been waiting for two weeks to get his hands on Loki, and his hands were itching to squeeze the life out of his skinny neck. His surprise attack was a success since he was able to slam into Loki, taking him out.

"Stark, I knew I'd see you again eventually," Loki hissed, flat on his back from Tony's hit. Tony yanked him back to his feet by his collar, and prepared to blast him into the next century.

"I'm sticking to you like glue, Reindeer Games. You'll never get rid of me until I get my son back," Tony snarled back.

"I didn't harm, Harry. Besides he is much safer in Asgard than Earth once it starts," Loki taunted.

"What's starting?" Tony questioned despite himself. It was probably all a trick to distract him so he could get away again.

"The Darkness," Loki replied as he landed a solid blast of green fire to Tony's right side.
The blow sent Tony reeling into a wall, and caused him to lose his grip on the god.

"Bombarda!" Black shouted and an invisible force slammed itself into Loki, which had the god flying in the opposite direction.

Tony grinned as he extracted himself from the wall. Black had his back.

Black and Tony converged on the spot where they had seen Loki fall. Only to find the god wasn't there. A piercing scream had them turning to see Loki grabbing hold of Jane.

"Jane!" Thor cried rushing towards them with his hammer raised and a murderous expression on his face.

Tony was terrified that Loki was about to teleport away again, and he would have to go back to his fruitless searching again. But suddenly a powerful burst of red energy shot outward from Jane. It sent all of them flying backwards. Loki especially went soaring backwards through the air being the closest to the source of the blast. Thor was the first to climb back on his feet, rushing to Jane's side. She seemed close to fainting. Tony was up next. He checked on Black whose pride was more bruised then anything else. Loki was unconscious from the force of whatever energy Jane had just expelled. Hoping that it would be all right to leave him alone for the time being Tony made his way over to Thor and Jane.

"What was that?" Tony asked flipping up his faceplate.

"I do not know. I must get her back to Asgard as soon as possible. Something is very wrong. A mortal should not be capable of such a strong blast of energy," Thor worried as he supported Jane whose head was lolling in a disturbing manner.

"Right, and maybe while you're there you could tell your dad to give me back my kid? I mean where have you been, Thor? Loki escapes from prison and your All-Pops refuses to let Harry go unless I get your crazy brother back to him. I needed your help," Tony cried.

"I apologize, Tony, my friend. War had broken out in several of the realms, and I needed to stabilize them or else all out war could have spread throughout the realms leaking over into Midgard. I only just received news of what had occurred with Loki. Before I could speak to my father about it, Heimdall informed me that Jane was in danger, and that Loki was close by. I made the choice to come after them first," Thor apologized.

"Okay, fine, whatever. I understand. I'll grab Loki, and we can all head up to Asgard to get everything sorted out," Tony sighed.

Tony went to grab Loki but was enraged when his hand went straight through the illusion.

"No!" Tony shouted.

"He can't have gotten far, Stark," Black tried to calm him down.

"I must get Jane to Asgard. I will speak to my father about Harry's release, and then I will return as soon as I am able to," Thor assured them, hesitant to leave.

"Just go," Tony sighed, beyond frustrated with the way things were turning out.

Thor nodded, and called for Heimdall. Tony watched as Thor and Jane disappeared feeling slightly helpless. It had been two weeks since he'd last seen his son, and as of right now he was no closer to getting him back. Tony tried to shake off this sudden melancholy. He was Tony Stark. He was just
crazy enough to get anything he put his mind to done. Feeling sorry for himself wasn't going to solve anything. Depression was completely not his style.

"Stark! Over here!" Black called.

Tony turned to see Black waving at him from inside the building. Tony made his way over him, and stepped inside the old warehouse.

"Is that a floating truck?" Tony frowned.

"Yup," Black nodded.

"Huh, Jarvis scan the area," Tony commanded as he moved through the area.

"There's some interference, sir, but it seems to be some sort of atmospheric anomaly. The energy saturating this particular area is not native to this planet," Jarvis answered.

"Is it some sort of portal?" Tony pondered.

"It couldn't have been here that long, wizards would have discovered it with all the foreign energy its giving off," Black commented. "Could Loki have caused this? Maybe he was trying to get back to one of the other realms?"

"I don't know. Jarvis wasn't there some sort of planetary conversion supposed to be happening sometime soon?" Tony questioned, trying to remember where he'd heard that before.

"I'm not sure, sir. I will check," Jarvis responded.

Black and Tony both whirled around when they heard a clatter. They instantly turn around to see Loki trying to right himself. The god was a little dinged up but not too bad. He was still dangerous. Black and Tony carefully blocked his exits. Although, considering he could teleport it wasn't going to really stop him.

"I didn't do this," Loki waved his hand towards the truck.

"Loki," Tony hissed aiming the repulsor beam in his direction.

Black likewise raised his wand towards Loki.

Loki lifted his hands in surrender. "I mean no harm. The force inside of the mortal woman has temporarily halted my abilities."

"Right, like we're going to believe that," Tony frowned.

"You will listen to me if want you Harry safe," Loki replied superciliously.

"Is that a threat?" Black growled.

"No, a fact. Asgard was the safest place from the coming events. However, Thor bringing the mortal woman there has made it a direct target. She has absorbed something very dangerous, something that has been lost for a very long time. I came here to find it. It is something very powerful and it can be used to spread darkness to the entire universe," Loki explained.

"Seems a little melodramatic for my tastes," Tony muttered.

"It's called the Aether, and it was a powerful weapon used by the dark elves. Bor, Odin's father
defeated the dark elves and sealed the Aether away in a forgotten place. Some of the dark elves escaped and now with the upcoming convergence between the realms they are stirring. They are coming to collect the Aether and they will use it, and the convergence to spread darkness to all the realms. I sensed the Aether as the lining between the realms has started to thin over the last fortnight, and have been trying to locate the correct path that would take me to it. I came to collect it—"

"To use it," Tony muttered.

"To collect it," Loki spoke over him. "To keep it from the hands of the dark elves. However, Jane seems to have absorbed the Aether into herself. Something that will undoubtedly kill her weak mortal form if it is not removed. But Thor should not have taken her to Asgard. The dark elves will now head straight to Asgard to try and to gain control of the Aether. Asgard will soon be under attack, and Harry will be right in the middle of it."

"I have no idea if all of this elf talk is true but in the event that it is what's your plan?" Tony asked. "I need to get to Asgard, and get the Aether far away from it," Loki answered.

"Oh, no. I'm not just going to let you go off on your merry way and trust you to do the right thing after all of the trouble you've caused," Tony shook his head.

"The pathways, I must take to get back to Asgard are too dangerous for mortals," Loki insisted.

"That's fine because I'll just call Heimdall right now and we can all just go back via the Bifrost," Tony argued.

"If you bring me back that way, Odin will just lock me up in the dungeons," Loki argued.

"Good, right where you belong," Tony nodded.

"Without me, Asgard will be destroyed," Loki glared.

"And that's my problem because?" Tony questioned. "I'll have my son back by then."

"You idiot. If Asgard falls who do you think will be next?" Loki glared.

"I think we Earthlings have proved that we are more than capable of taking care of ourselves," Tony argued.

"You won't be able to fight the type of darkness that the dark elves are going to spread," Loki argued.

"Okay, then enlighten me. Tell me what I should do," Tony said sarcastically.

"Let me get back to Asgard on my own. I will take the Aether far away from Asgard—"

"No way, Rock of Ages, you'll take this Aether thing and I'll never see you again, and then I'll never get Harry back. You're coming back with me to Asgard," Tony glared.

"Very well, Stark, if you insist," Loki snarled back. "But you are making a huge mistake."

"Scotty, we've got Loki," Tony called.

"I tried to play nice, Stark, and it seems like enough time has passed for my abilities to return," was the only warning Tony got before Loki disappeared once more.
Tony cried out in rage but it was far too late.

Harry spent two, awful days in Loki's cell. Frigga came to visit him all of the time and made sure he was well taken care of. She informed him that Tony had known almost immediately that Loki wasn't him. Tony had called to Heimdall who in turn told Odin and Frigga. His dad had apparently even stormed Asgard demanding that Odin let Harry go. Odin had refused obviously, but he offered Tony a deal to recapture Loki and Odin would let Harry go. Frigga was very, very angry with Odin over the whole situation, and Harry was pretty sure that Odin had been sentenced to the Asgardian equivalent of the doghouse for the foreseeable future.

Tony's swift actions made it so that Harry had only been in the Loki's cell for barely an hour before Odin came storming down to confront him about what had happened. Harry had related the events, and Odin had seemed to accept that Harry hadn't willingly participated in his escape. But he still blamed Harry for what happened, and so he was going to make Harry stay in Loki's cell until Tony managed to get Loki back. However, Frigga held quite a bit of power in Asgard, and she was able to get Harry out in two days. But that didn't mean that Harry was just free to leave. Oh no, Harry was confined to his room, which in the long run made his imprisonment not all that different than being in the cell. Harry wasn't allowed to leave his room. Frigga continued to come to his room during all of her free time, and she continued to be supportive to him.

As the following weeks passed, and there was no word from, Harry began to get a little worried. How long was he going to be stuck in Asgard? He really liked Frigga, and Asgard was beautiful but Harry wanted to go home. He missed his dad, Pepper, Sirius, and all of the Avengers. He missed Hermione and Ron. He missed the tower, and the Malibu mansion even if it had already been destroyed. Harry was getting restless, and he was beginning to contemplate escape. Loki had told him about the pathways between the worlds, and Harry was beginning to get desperate enough to try them. They may be dangerous but how long would Odin be willing to wait for Tony to bring Loki back? Harry had faith that his father would do his best to get Loki back but Harry was also aware of just how cunning Loki could be. It could be a while yet before Tony managed to get him back. Harry had already been here several months, and Harry didn't want to sit around here much longer.

His chance to escape came along when Thor returned with his mortal girlfriend Jane. Harry didn't have the chance to see them for himself but Frigga told Harry about Thor's encounter with both Loki and Tony. Thor hadn't been able to stay for too long because Jane was apparently very sick. She was carrying an ancient weapon inside her that Loki had been trying to get his hands on. If the weapon wasn't removed soon it was very possible that Jane could die.

There was another important fact about the Aether. It had once been used by enemies of the Asgardians, the dark elves. Everyone was concerned that they weren't completely destroyed, and soon they would start coming after the Aether. Frigga seemed worried, and secretly gave Harry a key to unlock the door to his room in the event of an emergency.

Harry waited patiently for his chance to use that key, and it came surprisingly quickly. When he heard the sounds of gunfire, and shouts Harry knew that it was time to get out of there. Asgard was under attack. It would be easy to slip away from Asgard in all of the chaos, if he was careful of course. It was very possible that he might get caught in the crosshairs of the battle.

Harry exited his room carefully. No one else seemed to be around this particular section of the palace. Harry's room was located in the royal wing of the palace. He would have to make his way through several open sections if he wanted to make it away from the city, and to the closest stable
portal. Harry wished he had access to his trunk, and to his invisibility cloak. But Odin had taken away all of his things. Harry could only hope that Hedwig was somewhere safe in all of this craziness.

Harry kept a close eye out for anyone who might sneak up on him whether they were dark elves or Asgardian soldiers it wouldn't be good for him. He felt a little bit like a ninja as he crept around corners, and ducked under windows. From the glimpses he got from the windows it was pure chaos outside. There were all sorts of flying crafts and the Asgardians were doing their best to fight them off. But by the shudders affecting the castle they weren't entirely successful.

Harry eventually made his way to the first somewhat exposed area. It was an open terrace with a domed roof over the top with a clear 360-degree view of Asgard. He paused before he attempted to cross the area to make sure that there wasn't anyone there. Harry was glad he did because in the next moment what Harry could only guess was a dark elf appeared. Jane and Frigga both stepped into sight as well. The dark elf demanded that Jane be handed over to him. In answer Frigga pulled out a dagger to fight him. Harry could only watch in awe as Frigga stood up to him without a hint of fear, and easily held her own against him. It was all happening so quickly that Harry didn't have time to decide if he should step in to help her. A second dark elf appeared this one was massive and monstrous in appearance it grabbed hold of Frigga at the orders of the first elf who Harry suspected to be Malekith so that he could go after Jane. Harry didn't think. His magic reacted without conscious thought and lashed out at the creature holding a sword to Frigga's back, sending it stumbling back a few steps.

The blast of power left Harry exhausted but it had only managed to momentarily break its hold on Frigga. However, it was enough for the Queen of Asgard to get away, and move to a safer location away from Malekith and the large dark elf. Malekith ignored Frigga and made a grab for Jane only for Jane to turn out to be an illusion. Malekith ordered the larger dark elf to go after Frigga again but Thor arrived in a burst of lightning, blasting the dark elf in the face. The damaged Malekith and the other dark elf wisely made their escape. Thor and Jane instantly made their way to Frigga to ensure that she was all right. Harry wanted to make sure that she was all right himself but he knew that now would be the perfect time for him to slip away without anyone even realizing that he had escaped.

Harry turned to leave.

"Harry," to his shock it was Odin that had called his name.

Harry reluctantly stopped and turned back to face the Allfather. Odin had joined Thor, Jane, and Frigga while Harry's back was turned.

"Thank you," Odin said, his blue eyes were full of sincerity.

"I didn't really do anything," Harry shrugged.

"The Kursed would have surely killed me had you not intervened," Frigga argued, proving that she had known Harry was there all along.

"I didn't want you to get hurt," Harry said.

"I owe you my sincerest gratitude, and I apologize for the way that I have treated you," Odin continued.

Harry remained silent. After all what was he supposed to tell him? That he forgave him? Because at the moment Harry didn't, and he was afraid if he told him so that it might cause him to go back
to hating him. Harry might not forgive him but that didn't mean he wanted Odin to hate him again. Odin's hate was kind of a scary thing.

Luckily Thor butted in. "Father we must go after them. Take the fight to them and away from Asgard while we are vulnerable."

"No, Thor, we must secure Asgard first. No one leaves without my permission," Odin commanded as swept from the room.

"But Malekith is the only who can possibly remove the Aether from Jane and spare her life," Thor cried.

"Thor, just be patient, we must take a note of the injured, and the fallen," Frigga assured, she patted Thor on the cheek and kissed Harry on the forehead before she took off after Odin.

"We must find a way to go after Malekith," Thor frowned, glancing worriedly at Jane.

"I might know a way," Harry offered.

Thor looked to him in surprise. "Truly?"

"Loki told me about some of the secret pathways to the other realms. So it depends on which realm you need to get to," Harry shrugged.

"We must get to Svartalfheim," Thor explained.

Harry thought about it. There was a portal directly to Svartalfheim close by. It would be difficult to get access to but it was one of the more reliable ones that Loki had told him about.

"I think I might know a way. But we'll need one of those flying boat things," Harry explained.

Thor grinned. "That can be arranged."

They waited until the next morning to enact their plan once Thor had gotten the chance to speak to his friends, and gotten their help with their escape plan. Harry was fairly certain that Frigga had an idea of what they were up to but she did nothing to stop them, in fact she helped by keeping Odin distracted. The next morning they enacted their plan. Several fights and a wild ride later Thor, Jane, and Harry made it into Svartalheim. The dark elves' ship was sitting in a valley with the dark elves themselves making their way towards their ship.

"Harry, Jane, remain here. I will approach them," Thor informed them.

"Are you sure that's the best idea? Harry worried.

There were quite a few dark elves down there including the large one who almost stabbed Frigga.

"We have no other option. They are the only ones who can remove the Aether from Jane, and while Malekith is vulnerable in drawing out the Aether I will strike him with Mjolnir destroying them both," Thor explained.

"Tell him you're giving Jane to him in order to save Asgard," Harry suggested.

"He'll be suspicious," Jane nodded her agreement.

"He'll be suspicious no matter what but hopefully he'll want the Aether too much to do anything else," Harry shrugged.
They honestly didn't have a lot of options in this situation. They had to get the Aether out of Jane or she would die, and the only one who could that was Malekith. Thor had to approach Malekith even if it was a suicide mission.

With that Thor went down to confront Malekith. Understandably it didn't go well. Thor's strong suit wasn't exactly smooth talking. For the first time since his betrayal Harry actually wished that Loki was here. He would have known how to handle this situation. The dark elves ended up dragging Jane and Harry out by force by threatening to shoot Thor. Harry had caught a glimpse of just what those things could do, and it wasn't pretty. It was like watching someone getting sucked into a mini black hole, and that was definitely not a fate that Harry wanted Thor to suffer. As soon as Jane was within his grasp Malekith wasted no time in pulling the Aether from her. Jane collapsed back to the ground but she was still breathing so that was certainly a plus.

Thor instantly went on the offensive and sent Mjolnir flinging at Malekith. Harry employed some of his skills learned from Frigga and Loki. He still hadn't gotten his new wand yet but he had reasonable control over his new magic. He sent blasting curses at the dark elves closest to him to give himself some space to think about his next move. The dark elves were a lot faster and stronger than himself. If it came down to a physical fight Harry would definitely lose. Thor loosed a cry of rage when Malekith started making his escape. But the Kursed dark elf stayed behind to keep Thor from going after him. The Kursed dark elf was powerful enough to require Thor's full attention, which meant that Harry was left with the couple of remaining dark elves to fend off for himself. Harry knew for certain that there was no way he would be able to hold them off for very long.

A cutting curse to the arm of one of the dark elves evened the odds a bit more. It still wasn't much help in the long run. The remaining dark elves were just playing with Harry now. Eventually one succeeded in knocking him to the ground while another lifted a staff to impale Harry. Harry glared up the dark elf defiantly, trying not to show just how terrified he was.

Out of nowhere the dark elves were sent flying. Taking their place was Loki's grinning visage.

"You," Harry glared up at Loki.

"Are you all right, Harry?" Loki asked, concern etched into his features. But Harry couldn't trust that concern any longer. Not after what had happened between them.

"I'm fine," Harry snapped as he climbed to his feet, ignoring the hand Loki offered him. "Of course I wouldn't even be here if it wasn't for you."

"Yes, things didn't quite go as planned," Loki murmured. "Wait here, I'll take care of the rest."

Harry watched as Loki moved confidently to engage the dark elves in battle. Thor was still locked in a fight with the Kursed. Harry went after Jane. She had woken up but looked slightly confused about where she was. Harry helped her move to a safer location in a cave just a small distance away. She soon discovered via a call to her mobile that there was a portal to Earth somewhere in the tunnel. Harry left her to figure it out, and went back to check on how Thor and Loki were holding up in the fight. Thor was struggling with the Kursed, and to Harry's surprise Loki went to help. Together the two of them were able to dispatch the Kursed but not before Loki was stabbed through the chest. Harry rushed to Thor and Loki's side.

"I apologize… to both of you," Loki choked out. His skin slowly lost all of its color, and his green eyes caught Harry's.

"Loki, brother," Thor cried, holding Loki tightly.
"It's all right," Loki assured.

"I will tell everyone of your noble sacrifice," Thor swore.

Loki only gave the barest of nods before his eyes closed, and he slumped to the ground. Thor gently laid him on the ground, and brushed a bit of dirt from Loki's forehead. Thor turned to Harry and embraced him. Harry awkwardly returned the hug still too shocked to really comprehend that Loki was dead.

"I am sorry, nephew, but we must get to Midgard, and stop Malekith," Thor released Harry.

"Of course," Harry nodded, his eyes kept flicking back to Loki's utterly still body.

"Where is Jane?" Thor asked gently.

"She's in the cave over there. I think she's going to be okay," Harry shrugged.

"Good, let's go find her and together the three of us will make our way back to Midgard," Thor started making his way towards the caves.

But Harry didn't follow him.

"Harry?" Thor glanced back at him, frowning.

"I'm going to stay with him," Harry looked back at Loki's body, something about this wasn't quite adding up in Harry's mind.

"Harry, I cannot leave you here unprotected," Thor argued.

"I'll be fine, all of the dark elves are on Earth now, and I can't just leave Loki's body here. What if something happens to him?" Harry demanded.

"Harry, my brother is gone. There isn't anything you can do for him," Thor told him gently.

"I know but he still doesn't deserve to just be left here," Harry argued.

Thor still hesitated.

"Go Thor, you need to save the universe. I'll be fine," Harry insisted.

Thor sighed, "I will come back once I have defeated Malekith."

Harry waited patiently until Thor had disappeared into the cave with Jane.

"I know you're not dead," Harry stated dryly.

Loki didn't so much as twitch. Harry took a deep breath. He knew he was right. Loki constantly wore a powerful illusion to hide his Jotun features, and protect others from the effects of his freezing skin. Harry thought he knew enough about illusions now to know that if Loki were to actually die he would revert back to his Jotun form without his constant stream of magic to power it anymore.

Harry sighed, and knelt down to poke Loki. Again there was no reaction. Harry had the slight panic that maybe Loki was really dead, and he was just in denial. He may have betrayed Harry but it didn't mean that Harry wanted him dead. The thought of him of really being dead was surprisingly crushing. Harry thought of something else that would get Loki to stop playing dead.
"All right you've left me with no choice. I'm going to tickle you," Harry announced.

Instead of going for the more easily accessible armpits, Harry moved around to his feet. He pulled off both of his boots. He transfigured a nearby rock into a feather, and mercilessly started to tickle his feet. It wasn't long before Loki started to twitch despite his obvious efforts not to. Finally Harry's efforts paid off, and Loki lunged upward.

"You insufferable child," Loki glared at him.

Harry grinned, and tickled Loki again for good measure. Loki yanked his feet away, glaring at him.

"Please, tickling you is the least I could have done after what you did to me," Harry snapped back.

"Be glad that I came back at all," Loki sniffed, pulling on his boots.

"You don't get to act all defensive here. You were the one who used me to break out of prison," Harry pointed out.

"It was for a good reason," Loki replied.

"And what reason would that be?" Harry asked.

"I went to collect the Aether. I briefly sensed its power while I was on Midgard last, and I thought that I would be able to collect. However, I did not imagine that Thor's Midgardian woman would unwittingly stumble upon it, ruining all of my plans," Loki huffed.

"Right, and why did you want the Aether again?"

Loki just glared.

"Perhaps world domination?" Harry suggested.

"You could not understand what I am attempting to achieve," Loki said.

"Maybe not, but if it was anything like what happened with the Chitauri it wouldn't have ended well," Harry said.

"What could you possibly know? You are a child, a mortal child. You know nothing of what I have been through. I deserve to be a king," Loki spat.

"Okay, what would you do once you were king?" Harry asked curious. "Would you make the lives of your people better or worse?"

"You're questioning my ruling abilities? I have been raised to rule Asgard since I was child, right alongside Thor," Loki declared.

"Oh, so that's why you're so upset. You thought you had a chance to be a king, and Odin took it away by naming Thor his successor," Harry mused.

Loki glared. "Insolent child, do not presume to know me or my motivations."

"It must get lonely pushing everyone away. You feel like you have to because you don't believe in yourself anymore. Instead of just being a mischief-maker you think you have to be the monster. But you don't, Loki," Harry tried to reassure him.

"This conversation is pointless. I have better things I could be doing. I need to leave," Loki
announced.

"I'm coming with you," Harry replied.

"Absolutely not," Loki growled.

"I'm not letting you get away," Harry glared at him.

"You don't have a choice," Loki smirked.

Before Loki could implement whatever escape plan he had Harry launched himself at Loki. Loki wasn't expecting the sudden attack, and his balance was thrown. The two of them went tumbling down a hill and through a portal. They ended up in another realm. Loki was hissing like a cat that had been dunked in water. He tried to shake Harry loose but Harry refused to let go. Of course if Loki really tried he could have yanked him off with his greater strength and powers. But Loki seemed unwilling to hurt him by forcefully yanking him off.

"Let go you wretched child," Loki snarled.

"No," Harry growled back. "You're coming back to Earth and turning yourself in."

"I will not," Loki growled.

"Where else are you going to go?" Harry asked.

"I had a plan," Loki hissed.

"We're making a new one," Harry announced.

"You want me to return to Midgard and become the prisoner of mortals when I could have my freedom?" Loki demanded.

"You're always going to be hunted no matter where you go. If you turn yourself in to SHIELD you could come to some sort of agreement with them. I bet they would make a deal with you for some of the information you have on the worlds beyond Asgard. You wouldn't have to run all the time," Harry explained.

Loki looked thoughtful for a moment. But then he frowned and opened his mouth to give what was probably a very scathing retort only to be interrupted by a growl.

Loki turned allowing them both a both of the giant behind them. He was about fifteen feet tall with a bunch of different horns, and a large spiked club in his hand.

"Asgardian," the creature hissed.

Loki opened his mouth to correct him but the creature didn't give the chance. He swung the club at Loki. Loki barely had enough time to spin out of the way. One of his arms came up to instinctively clutch at Harry's back while the other snapped out and fired off green fire right into the face of the giant. Harry wiggled to separate himself from Loki so that he could help fight the creature. Now that Harry wanted to let go it seemed that Loki didn't want to release him.

"Put me down!" Harry cried struggling to get free.

"You're safer right where you are," Loki announced as he dodged another swing. Dirt and grass flew all over them as the club slammed into the ground right beside them.
Several of Loki's copies suddenly popped into existence. It was enough to confuse the giant, and for Harry and Loki to slip away.

"Thank you for protecting me," Harry muttered as Loki finally released him.

"Yes, well, you are technically of my blood, and I couldn't exactly allow such a creature to kill you," Loki answered, looking highly uncomfortable.

"Oh," Harry nodded.

"There is a portal to Midgard this way," Loki announced.

He started walking, glancing back at Harry to indicate he should follow. Confused by the sudden change, Harry jogged to catch up.

Harry didn't know how long they traveled for. Both Harry and Loki were silent as they walked. Harry was thinking over why Loki had decided to stick with him, and Harry could only guess what Loki was thinking about. As they walked through the beautiful otherworldly realm Harry realized that all he wanted was to go home. He wanted to see his dad. Why should he care if Loki came back to Midgard? It wasn't his job to make sure Loki served justice. Besides Loki had saved his life twice. If he wanted to go Harry wouldn't try to pester him to change him mind.

"I will return you to your father, and then we will part ways," Loki eventually spoke up.

"Where are you going to go?" Harry questioned in concern once more.

"I don't know yet, and before you get any ideas don't think for a second that you are capable of convincing me to return with you to Midgard. I have better things to do," Loki replied stiffly.

"Right, world domination," Harry rolled his eyes.

"My plans are far too complicated for a mind as tiny as yours to comprehend," Loki sniffed.

"If my presence offends you so much why don't you just leave then?" Harry glared.

"Were you not just the one clinging to me?" Loki quirked an eyebrow at him in amusement.

"That was before," Harry answered.

"Before what?" Loki demanded.

"Before I decided I shouldn't care what you do anymore," Harry announced.

Loki frowned.

"Any why have you come to this conclusion?"

"Because I realized that I don't have the right to tell you what to do," Harry explained.

Loki looked surprised. "And suddenly you have proven yourself to be more mature than Thor."

Harry laughed. "Thanks."

"Although almost everyone is more mature than Thor. And I suppose you do have the excuse of only being twelve," Loki offered.
The rest of their trip to the portal was done in companionable silence. Once they actually reached the portal they were both awkward once more.

"I hope you accomplish whatever you want to do," Harry said awkwardly.

"Even if it is your so-called 'world domination'?” Loki smirked.

Harry shrugged and smiled back. "I guess."

Loki laughed. "I hope you have a safe trip back to your father."

"Thanks," Harry nodded, wondering if they should shake hands or something now that they were semi on good terms again.

"Tell you father and the other Avengers I hate them, and that they hold no chance of finding me unless I wish it," Loki boasted.

"I will. So I suppose this is goodbye then?" Harry asked.

Loki glanced away, and heaved a put upon sigh. "I suppose I can come visit from time to time. Keep your father and the other Avengers on their toes."

"Yes!" Harry agreed quickly with a grin.

Loki smiled at him. "Very well, I will see you soon then."

"I'll hold you to it," Harry nodded.

Loki patted him awkwardly on the shoulder. "Goodbye, Harry."

"Bye, Loki," Harry waved before stepping through the portal.

The ride through the portal was only slightly better than a portkey. It spat him out somewhere in a pasture with goats. Fortunately there was a nice farmer nearby who let him use his phone to call his dad.

"Harry!?” his dad sounded out of breath.

"It's me," Harry confirmed.

"Thank god," Tony Stark sighed in obvious relief.

Harry gave him the address of where he was from the farmer. He was apparently in Ireland. His dad promised that he was on his way. Tony was actually in England. He and Sirius had been helping Thor battle the dark elves. They'd won of course, and were just helping up with some of the clean up when Harry had called him. In the suit his dad should be there in no time at all.

"Harry!?” his dad sounded out of breath.

"It's me," Harry confirmed.

The farmer whose name was Jim. He made Harry something to eat, and the two of them sat on his front porch while they waited for his dad to come pick him up. Jim didn't even bat an eye when the slightly beat up form of Iron Man dropped down on his front lawn.

Harry on the other got up and sprinted as fast as he could into his dad's waiting arms. Tony squeezed him back. They held on to each other for a long time before Tony reluctantly dropped him back to his feet. But Tony didn't let him go too far. He kept his hands on Harry's shoulders and just stared at Harry, checking him over for injuries.
"Kiddo, you are a sight for sore eyes," Tony grinned once he realized Harry was all in one piece.

"You too, dad," Harry agreed, flashing an identical grin back.

"I was ready to storm Asgard with an army of robots? In fact I already came up with a design for one while simultaneously panicking over your capture," Tony explained.

"They didn't keep me in the dungeons. Frigga wouldn't let Odin," Harry assured him.

"Right, she seems like she's even scarier than Pepper. Oh, Pepper. Shugar. I forgot to call her and tell you're okay. She's going to kill me," Tony quickly made the call.

Of course Pepper insisted on talking to Harry, and he had to reassure her multiple times that he was all right. Once that was done Jim invited Tony in for some supper too, and Harry told Tony all about what had happened to him since Harry had been sent to Asgard.

"Wait, Loki saved you?" Tony frowned.

"Yup, twice," Harry nodded.

"Damn," Tony hissed.

"Thanks," Harry glared.

"Oh, Merlin, you know I don't mean it like that. Its just now I owe that horned jerk," Tony pouted.

"Well, he did throw you out a window so I think that means now you're sort of even," Harry offered.

Tony perked up. "Yeah, right, okay."

"He did say he might try to visit me," Harry informed him casually.

An evil grin spilt Tony's face. "Do you know what that means?"

"Do I want to know?" Harry asked warily, wondering how he'd ended up with two insane parents.

"We're going to booby trap the tower. Black knows quite a few magically pranks and with my sheer genius we'll definitely find a way to pull one over on old Rock of Ages," Tony laughed.

Harry sighed. "Great."

"Yes, it will be," Tony continued to rub his hands together like some corny movie villain.

Harry decided he was just going to have to accept the chaos that was about to begin. At least they would finally be going back to the tower. He'd missed the other Avengers.

"Also you're not going back to Asgard ever again. Or at least not until Thor is king. Frigga can come visit you on Earth. I'll even make her a special guest suite," Tony informed him.

"Agreed," Harry nodded. Odin had sort of forgiven him. But Harry decided he preferred to stay more local.

"We'll send you to that school Agent mentioned," Tony said.

"Salem Academy," Harry wondered how the school differed from Hogwarts. Maybe he'd ask
Hermione. She would probably know.

His dad and he stayed with Jim the goat farmer until SHIELD sent a jet to pick them up. The two of them made a bed on the floor in the back while Natasha piloted them home. Harry fell asleep half way across the ocean, safe in his dad's arms.

End Notes

Thanks for reading!

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!