Redeo

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Redeo

by TardisIsTheOnlyWayToTravel

Summary

Loki Odinsson died in a tragic accident centuries before Thor landed on Earth. Darcy Lewis just wanted to collect her six college credits and move on, but something about the blonde dude who fell from the sky was frighteningly familiar.
It was meant to be a friendly spar, that was all, but Thor had been more competitive lately, and Loki had noticed that his brother had started to put more effort into winning than paying due care to his opponent. Spars were often rough, of course, with participants coming out of them with bruises and the odd cut, but no one was ever supposed to be seriously injured.

Thor was certainly old enough to know better: he was almost an adult, not some stripling bearing training weapons. Thor’s weapons were deadly if not used carefully, and Thor should have been paying more attention to how he used them. But that was Thor: reckless, and too ready to throw away caution in the hope of victory.

Of course, Loki wasn’t exactly cautious himself: if he had been, perhaps he wouldn’t have sparred with his brother, knowing how careless the other young man had become.

Loki grunted as he blocked a sword-strike from Thor, grinning fiercely. Thor looked put-out.

“You have learned a cunning trick or two, brother,” Thor panted, “but I will triumph!”

“Idle words, Thor,” Loki said in reply, and parried another attempt of Thor’s to get past his guard.

Thor let out a sound of maddened frustration, and rushed Loki anew. Loki’s eyes widened as Thor swung haphazardly, no longer restraining his strength. Loki was an adept fighter, but he was too slight to combat Thor’s greater strength, and he knew it.

“Thor, stop it!” he hissed, but Thor paid him no attention, as usual. Loki was left desperately trying to block Thor’s sword-strikes, his arms aching with the force of each blow.

He could hear the laughter of Thor’s friends, none of whom seemed to have realised the seriousness of the matter yet. Or perhaps they simply didn’t care, a small, treacherous voice suggested darkly.

Loki was panting with effort, but he didn’t dare put down his sword until Thor stopped, and Thor seemed to determined to continue their bout until he won. In Thor’s current state, however, if Loki failed to block any of Thor’s moves then he was likely to be injured from Thor’s carelessness.

“Thor,” Loki said desperately, “Thor, stop –”

Thor’s sword glanced sideways off Loki’s and embedded itself in Loki’s chest. Loki made a tiny, breathless sound, and sank to his knees.

There was a moment of stunned silence, and then absolute pandemonium broke out.

“Thor! What have you done?”

“Quick, fetch a healer! Tell them that Prince Loki lies injured on the training grounds!”

“Loki!” Thor cried out, his eyes wide with horror and fear, his heightened temper cooled abruptly. “No! Brother!”

Loki tried to speak, but only gurgled, his mouth full of blood, choking on it –

Darcy awoke with a gasp as she sat bolt-upright in bed, chest heaving. Her eyes were wide, darting
about frantically. It took her a moment to realise that she was in the trailer she shared with Jane. Everything was still and quiet.

“Goddamn it,” Darcy muttered, punching her pillow, and lying back down. Her heart was still hammering, and her skin prickled with fear. “I hate it when I get these dreams.”

Reaching for her iPod, Darcy stuck her earbuds in her ears, and scrolled through her list of songs. It would take a long while for her to come down from the aftermath of her nightmare: it always did. Darcy had been having these dreams for as far back as she could remember, and the worst one was always the nightmare in which Thor stabbed her. Why she kept having these odd dreams, she didn’t know: she’d never met anyone named Thor in her life, let alone been stabbed by him.

Selecting an Adele song, Darcy closed her eyes, and let the music calm her still-panicked soul.

“What kind of a name is Thor, anyway?” she muttered.
Chapter One

It all started when they hit the guy with the van. Well, technically, it was Jane who had hit him with the van: sure, Darcy had been driving, but Jane was the one who wrenched the wheel out of her hands and sent the van sailing towards the guy, so as far as Darcy was concerned, that made it all Jane’s problem.

“I think that was legally your fault,” said Darcy, climbing out of the car. Jane was ahead of her, already kneeling by the prone body.

“Get the first aid kit,” Jane ordered, paying no attention to Darcy’s words. She stared down at the guy lying in the dirt, searching for signs of life. Darcy went around to the back of the van to fetch the first aid kit. When she came back she finally got a glimpse at the man Jane had hit with the car, and felt the hairs rise on the back of her neck.

From this distance, he looked like…

*Those are just dreams,* Darcy told herself, with a quick shake of the head to clear her mind.

“Where did he come from?” Jane asked, looking around. There was nothing around them but desert: no buildings, no car, nothing. Just endless desert.

There was a loud groan from the dude on the ground, and he sat up abruptly.

“Hammer…,” he muttered, his voice deep and familiar. Darcy stared at him, but couldn’t get a good look at him in the darkness. She probably could have seen him better if she’d moved closer, but every instinct was screaming that something hinky was going on, and getting closer was the last thing she wanted to do.

“Erik, look at this,” Jane said, shining her torch at the sand. There was a strange pattern there. Jane pulled out a camera and started taking photos, because her priorities were way skewed. Seriously: she’d just hit some poor random dude with her van, and now she was taking photos of dirt.

“We’ve got to move fast before everything changes,” Jane blathered on, already forgetting about Mr You Hit Me With Your Car. Despite feeling creeped out, Darcy couldn’t help feeling sorry for the guy.

“We need soil samples, light readings, everything,” Jane added.

Erik just stared at the guy sitting in the sand, who was staring up at the sky. Clearly, being hit with the car had rattled his brains a bit.

“Jane, we need to get him to a hospital,” Erik said, acting as the voice of reason.

“Not right now,” said Jane, scooping soil into a canister. “It’ll take too long. County’s an hour away.”

Erik and Darcy exchanged troubled glances.

“Look at him, he’s fine,” said Jane, still scooping up dirt.
It was at this point that the dude staggered to his feet, and started shouting at the sky.

“Father! Heimdall! I know you can hear me! Open the bridge!”

Darcy and Erik both looked at Jane pointedly. Jane folded.

“Okay, you and Darcy take him to the hospital. I’ll stay here.”

“You expect me to leave you alone in the middle of the desert?” Erik asked in exasperation. Darcy sympathised. When Jane was in full-on scientist mode, there was no getting her to listen to reason.

“You!” yelled the random dude, and everyone looked up to see him staggering towards them. He sounded angry. “What world is this?”

“It’s all right, my friend,” Erik soothed, watching the guy warily, “we’re going to get you some help.” He tried to give the guy a reassuring pat on the shoulder, but the guy shoved his hand away.

“Where am I?” he bellowed at Erik, his tone distinctly menacing. “Answer me!”

Yeah, no, this was going somewhere bad, fast. Darcy reached into her bag, pulling out her tazer.

“You dare threatened Thor with so puny –”

Darcy tazed him.

Thor…

Darcy stared down at the man she’d just tased, and felt a moment of vertigo.

Up close, there was no mistake. He looked like the man in her dreams – a little older, a little more muscular, but otherwise, he appeared identical. He was missing the cape and some of the armour, but… besides that, even his outfit was the same. And he had called himself Thor…

Darcy didn’t realise she was backing away until Jane said, “Darcy?”

She looked up to see Jane and Erik staring at her in shock and concern.

“What?” she asked defensively. “He was freaking me out!”

“Are you alright?” Jane asked, frowning. “You’ve gone really pale.”

“It’s just…” He looks exactly like the man in my dreams. The one I dreamed killed me. “He looks familiar, that’s all.”

“You know him?” Erik asked in surprise, and Darcy shook her head.

“Never seen him before in my life,” she said honestly, even though it felt like a lie on her lips. “He
“just reminds me of someone.”

“We should take him to the hospital,” said Erik, a second time.

“Fine, just let me get these soil samples first,” said Jane.

Darcy and Erik exchanged a look, their opinion of Jane’s priorities clear. Erik sighed.

“Help me get him into the truck,” he said, bending to grab the unconscious guy under the arms. Darcy hurried to grab the guy’s legs.

“One, two, three,” said Erik, and grunted as he tried to lift the unconscious guy. Darcy didn’t blame him: Nightmare Guy was heavy. Together, they struggled to get him into the van.

“Next time you decide to taser someone,” Erik gasped out, “do me a favour and make sure they’re already inside the truck.”

Darcy didn’t respond, too busy trying to carry the unconscious guy. It was with relief that she helped Erik dump him in the back of the van.

Erik turned his head and called to Jane. “Jane, come on…”

Reluctantly, Jane finished taking soil samples and joined Erik, Darcy, and Nightmare Guy in the van.

“So where are we heading, the county hospital?” Darcy asked, trying to sound upbeat. She still felt shaken by how much the guy in the back of their truck resembled the man from her dreams and nightmares. They’d even sounded the same, for crying out loud.

“Yeah,” said Jane. “It’s an hour away, but it’s the closest. In the meantime I can take another look at these readings.”

“Whatever,” said Darcy. “County hospital it is.”
Chapter Notes

Chapter two: less canon, more Eye of the Tiger.

Chapter Two

All through the long drive to the hospital Darcy’s thoughts churned. Her mind recalled all the dreams and nightmares she’d experienced since she was a child. By this point the recurring characters in her dreams were deeply familiar, but she’d never expected any of them to show up in real life. Thor, Darcy knew best of all: in her dreams he was her elder brother, a boy of equal courage and recklessness, and with a temper that vacillated between sunny and stormy. What did it mean, that Thor was real?

Darcy’s hands clenched on the steering wheel, and she consciously relaxed her grip. It couldn’t all be real… could it? Loki, Asgard… magic? It seemed improbable, to say the least. Darcy resisted the urge to glance over her shoulder at the guy in the back of the van to remind herself that Thor was real.

How had Darcy dreamed of being Loki? And why? Was Darcy really Loki’s reincarnation, or something? Darcy always woke up before Loki died, but she was pretty sure that was one injury Loki wouldn’t have walked away from. Her vision always greyed out so quickly, when it happened…

Darcy tried to redirect her thoughts back on track. So. Thor was real. That she knew for certain right now, and if he was real, then probably the rest of Darcy’s dreams were real, too.

Thor was older in real life – a man rather than a boy – which probably meant that it had been some time since Loki had been impaled. If Darcy’s dream-knowledge was right, and Asgardians aged a lot more slowly than humans did, then it was possible that several centuries had passed by since Loki’s death.

Centuries, and Thor’s temper was apparently as hot as ever.

Darcy felt suddenly furious. What the hell, Thor! Most people, if they accidentally killed their frigging brother because they lost their temper, would have tried to learn to control it. But oh no, the mighty Thor could do no wrong –

Darcy’s train of thought stopped abruptly. That hadn’t been a Darcy thought.

It had been Loki’s.

Okay, this is getting creepier by the second.

Darcy reached over to turn the radio on, the blare of country music a welcome distraction from her thoughts.

“I thought you hated country?” asked Jane.
“It’s better than wondering if we knocked a few of that guy’s screws loose when you hit him with the van,” Darcy replied, and concentrated on driving.

“I’m sure he’ll be fine,” said Jane, but her voice lacked conviction.

Darcy drove on, and tried not to think about the way her life had just been turned upside down.

At the hospital, Jane seemed to want to get rid of Thor as soon as possible, but Darcy was not down with that plan. Until she found out the truth about what was going on, the last thing she wanted was for Thor to disappear.

“Name?” asked the admissions nurse.

“He said it was Thor,” said Jane.

“T-H-O-R. And your relationship with him?”

“I’ve never met him before —”

“He’s my brother,” Darcy said quickly, and ignored Jane’s ‘WTF’ expression. “She hit him with her car.”

“Grazed, actually,” Jane put in.

“And then he was acting really violent, so I tazed him,” Darcy added.

“Must have been quite the spat,” said the admissions nurse sympathetically, still typing away.

“It was an accident,” Jane insisted.

The nurse kept typing, then looked up.

“I’m going to need a name and contact number,” she said.

“Darcy Lewis,” Darcy said immediately, and gave her phone number. “Will you let me know when he’s released?”

“Of course,” said the nurse.

Jane waited until she, Darcy and Erik were all outside before she turned to Darcy.

“He’s your brother now?” she asked. Erik looked equally dubious.

“What was I supposed to say?” Darcy protested. “He’s a complete stranger who appeared out of nowhere in the middle of a weird-ass magnetic storm, so I wanted to know more when he woke up? Like that would go down well. Come on, boss, he could be useful. Maybe he knows something.”

“You realise that when they release him, they’ll expect you to be there to look after him?” Jane asked.

*It’s not like that’s new,* Darcy thought.

“Darcy, this man could be dangerous,” said Erik, frowning.

“I know he was acting kind of crazy,” Darcy said defensively, “but to be fair, Jane did just hit him with her car. Who wouldn’t be a bit crazy after that?”

So do I, Darcy thought.

The next day, Darcy borrowed the van without asking and went to visit Thor in the hospital. To her frustration, however, he wasn’t where he was supposed to be.

“Dammit, Thor, where did you go?” Darcy muttered, thinking. Then an idea occurred to her, and she ducked her head into the room opposite Thor’s.

“Excuse me, hi, sorry to bother you, but I don’t suppose you saw a big blonde guy leave the room opposite yours?” Darcy asked the little old lady lying in the hospital bed.

“Why, yes, dear, he went past just a moment ago,” the little old lady said. “He was heading down the hallway.” She gestured to indicate Thor’s direction. Darcy smiled.

“Thanks,” she said, and hurried down the hallway. There was no sign of Thor, but the hallway opened out into admissions, so it was possible that Thor had simply walked out of the hospital without anyone noticing.

Sure enough, when Darcy got outside, there was a great blonde moron wandering around outside in a hospital gown.

Darcy bit back the desire to laugh: there was a slight breeze, and the back of Thor’s hospital gown kept blowing back and flashing everyone.

“Thor!” she yelled out. Thor turned, looking around for whoever had called to him, his expression hopeful, and Darcy quickly jogged over.

“Hi, Thor, right?” she said, as Thor’s eyes landed on her. “I’m Darcy Lewis, we met last night.”

Thor gave her a puzzled frown, which cleared into a look of recognition a moment later.

“You are the one who felled me with your tiny weapon,” he said, his expression cautious.

Darcy grinned.

“Yeah, that’s me. So, you want to blow this popsicle stand?” When Thor looked confused, she added, “Leave the hospital, I mean.”

“I would leave this place most gladly,” said Thor. He looked down at the hospital gown he was wearing. “What is the purpose of this garment? It is most impractical.”

“Yeah, that’s a hospital gown,” Darcy said, grinning. “We don’t usually wear them; they’re designed so that the doctors can get to any part of your body that is injured.”

“Doctors?” Thor repeated.

“Healers,” Darcy clarified. “Like I said, you’re at a hospital. It’s a place where you take people who need to be seen by a healer. After Jane hit you with her car last night and then I tazed you, we figured you should be seen by a healer, just in case you’d been hurt.”

Thor looked enlightened.

“This is a place of healing?” he exclaimed, and then frowned thoughtfully. “That weapon of yours,”
he said slowly. “It would usually cause injury to a mortal?”

“Well, yeah,” Darcy admitted. “It’s supposed to be only temporary, but you’d already been hit by a
car, so…”

“What manner of weapon is it?” Thor asked curiously. “I have never seen its like.”

“It’s a taser,” Darcy explained. “It’s for self-defense. It causes an electric shock – kind of like being
hit by a small bolt of lightning.”

“Ah.” Thor looked comprehending, then rueful. “A powerful weapon indeed, then. It seems that I
was foolish to judge its power based on its small size.”

“Hell yeah,” said Darcy. “Here on Earth you can’t judge weapons based on size. Or people,” she
added, since it was worth saying. “We fight using technology and intelligence, not with brute force.”

“I will remember your words,” Thor promised seriously, which wasn’t very like the Thor Darcy
knew from her dreams. Thor, taking advice to heart? That was different. He always used to ignore
Loki.

“Anyway,” said Darcy, pushing that thought aside, “why don’t we sneak away before any of the
healers notice you’re gone, and get you some new clothes and some breakfast?”

“I approve of this plan,” Thor agreed, with a slight grin.

“Come on, then.” Darcy started walking towards where she’d parked the van. “You’ll need to stay in
the van while I get you some clothes, or you might get arrested for public indecency or something,
but then we can stop at Isabella’s diner and you can get changed in the restroom while I order us
some breakfast.”

Thor climbed into the van obediently enough, and Darcy instructed him on how to do up his seatbelt.

It was a good half-hour’s drive back to town, so Darcy rummaged around for the cassette tapes she’d
bought at the local second-hand store. The store hadn’t had anything particularly good – most of their
cassette tapes were either country or western, which Darcy didn’t like, or old eighties stuff – but
Darcy had picked out a couple of cassettes that didn’t look too bad, and left them in the van. Now
she pulled out the Survivor cassette tape, and stuck it in the player, and started the van’s engine
before hitting ‘play.’

She pulled out of the parking lot just as the opening strains of *Eye of the Tiger* started up.

“What is this noise?” Thor asked from the passenger seat. Darcy smirked.

“It’s a noble ballad about rising to the challenge and beating your foes,” she said, pulling out onto the
road.

Thor looked like he wasn’t sure what to make of the heavy beat and electric guitar. Darcy grinned
and turned the volume up.

“Rising up, back on the street, did my time took my chances,” she sang along. “Went the distance,
now I’m back on my feet, just a man and his will to survive… So many times, it happens too fast, you
trade your passions for glory. Don’t lose your grip on the dreams of the past – you must fight just to
keep them alive… it's the-”

Darcy took a deep breath.

Darcy took another deep breath.

“Of the tiger,” Darcy finished, at a significantly lower volume.

“What is a tiger?” Thor asked, watching Darcy warily.

“It’s a ferocious beast, dude,” she told him. “Big teeth, claws, deadly predator. That’s all you need to know.”

“Ah,” said Thor.

By the end of the song, he was singing along to the chorus as well.
Breakfast and Conversations

Chapter Three

When they got back into town Darcy parked in front of the local clothing store, and turned to face Thor.

“Alright, I’m going to get you some new clothes, but I need you to stay in the van, okay?” she asked. “You can’t go wandering around in that hospital gown. Every time there’s a breeze everyone gets a good look at your butt. I’ll be back as soon as I can, just –stay in the van,” Darcy repeated.

“I shall go nowhere,” Thor promised, looking a little amused.

“Okay, great,” Darcy said, nodding.

She wound down the van window before she left so that Thor wouldn’t die from the heat or anything, and hurried inside the store, hoping that Thor kept his word.

She picked out a couple of shirts and pants, guessing at Thor’s size, and then grabbed a packet of briefs. The woman at the counter raised her eyebrows when Darcy arrived at the counter carrying nothing but two changes of men’s clothes, clearly judging her. Darcy was tempted to tell the woman to go suck it, because Darcy’s private life was none of this woman’s business, but if she did that, it would soon be all over town that The Scientist Woman’s Assistant was having an secret love affair with someone, which no.

“My brother came to visit, and the idiot didn’t think to bring any spare clothes with him,” Darcy lied, rolling her eyes eloquently. “Then he got himself hit by a car, and he was in the hospital all night. Men, right?”

“You said it,” the woman agreed, ringing up Darcy’s purchases and stuffing them into a bag. Darcy thanked her, and returned outside to the van. To her relief, Thor was where she had left him, although he looked considerably bored. He brightened visibly when he saw that Darcy was back.

“So I bought you some clothes,” said Darcy, climbing into the van and dumping the bag of clothes on Thor’s lap. “I got you some underwear, too, I don’t know if you’re a boxers or briefs guy, if Asgard even has either of those, but I got you briefs.” Darcy started the van. “Like I said, you can get changed at the diner.”

Thor looked through the bag of clothes as Darcy drove down the couple of streets it took to get to Isabella’s diner. She parked out in front, and she and Thor climbcd out of the van, Thor holding the bag of clothes, and walked into the diner.

There was a strong breeze, and to Darcy’s horror, the back of Thor’s hospital gown started to blow open in front of all the staring customers.

“Oh my God!” Darcy yelped, and made a grab for the back of the gown and yanked the two pieces of material together before everyone could get a good look at Thor’s ass. Anywhere else she might not have cared, but she ate at the diner practically every day, and the last thing she wanted was Thor’s semi-nudity getting her banned for life or something.

The back of Thor’s hospital gown once again safely covering everything, Darcy planted a hand on Thor’s back and gave him a little push.
“The restroom’s over there, it’s the door with a stylised figure of a man on it,” said Darcy, pointing. “You can get changed in there. Go.”

Thor did as he was bid, disappearing into the men’s restroom before he could flash anyone.

Darcy looked around to see that she’d acquired several curious glances.

“My dumbass brother,” she said loudly. “He just got out of the hospital.” Ignoring the eyes that were still on her, she took a seat at the table, and one of the waitresses walked over to take her order. Darcy ordered a plate of food for herself, and then, thinking of how much they always ate in Asgard according to her dreams, several plates of food for Thor.

She was just starting on her own breakfast when Thor came out of the restroom. A couple of his buttons weren’t matched with the right buttonholes, but otherwise, he looked like just another guy in jeans and flannel, albeit hotter than most guys.

“That’s all yours,” said Darcy, gesturing at the spread plates. “Figured you’d be hungry.”

Thor sat down and started eating immediately. He didn’t bother to thank Darcy, which rankled a little, but at least he made an effort to use his knife and fork as Darcy was doing, so that was something.

Thor’s expression lightened as he started to eat, and Darcy felt the urge to roll her eyes. It figured that all Thor needed to feel more cheerful about things was a good meal. Never mind that he was stuck in another realm, and all.

“Hey,” Darcy said, getting Thor’s attention. He tore his gaze away from his breakfast to look at her expectantly. “How’d you end up on Earth, anyway?”

Thor’s expression fell, and he looked mournful.

“I was banished,” he began through a mouthful of food, but Darcy said, “Don’t talk with your mouth full,” and he paused to swallow what he was eating.

“I was banished,” he began a second time. “The Allfather stripped my powers from me and rendered me mortal, before sending me to this primitive realm.”

“Hey!” Darcy said indignant. “Watch who you’re calling primitive, pal.”

Thor looked faintly abashed at the realisation that he had just inadvertently insulted his host, but unwilling to take back his words. Darcy did roll her eyes, this time.

“Okay, so you were banished,” she said. “Why?”

Thor’s chin rose proudly.

“I led an attack on Jotunheim,” he said, and Darcy stared.

“You what? Jotunheim, like we-have-an-uneasy-peace Jotunheim?” she blurted. “You attacked them? With how many men?”

Thor suddenly looked sheepish, and Darcy knew that expression – she’d seen it in her dreams, the ones that didn’t end with bloodshed and death.

“I was accompanied only by my friends,” he admitted.
“Thor, you witless oaf!” the words fell sharply from Darcy’s lips before she knew that she was about to say them, tumbling out without restraint. “What were you thinking?” And probably this wasn’t the conversation to be having in a crowded diner, but Darcy couldn’t believe Thor.

“I was thinking that the Frost Giants are monsters who deserve death!” Thor retorted, bristling with anger. “Who are you to question me, puny mortal?”

The palms of Darcy’s hands itched, and she rubbed them against her coat, glaring back at Thor.

“I’m someone with common sense, jackass,” she told him, glaring. “What did you think would happen? You and your four friends would single-handedly kill off an entire nation of warriors? Not to mention the fact that that’s called genocide, and it’s considered a dick move in most cultures!”

She took a deep breath.

“Besides, don’t you think that if your father wanted them dead, he would have done something about it, already?”

“My father is an old fool,” Thor muttered sulkily, and Darcy stared disbelievingly.

“Okay, wow, no wonder Odin banished you,” she said, the name of Asgard’s king rising easily to her lips. “First you nearly get yourselves killed, risking war with Jotunheim in the process, and then you decide your dad’s a moron? Yeah, no, you could definitely learn a thing or two, Thor.” Darcy shook her head. “But whatever. I guess if you’re stranded here in mortal form for long enough, someone will deflate your head for you. Probably me, now I think about it.”

Darcy glanced back at Thor, to see him regarding her with a half-insulted, half-wistful expression.

“You sound like my brother,” Thor told her, and Darcy froze. Breathed deeply.

“Right,” she managed, her throat suddenly dry. “Uh, Loki, right?”

“Indeed.” Thor looked like a puppy someone had kicked. “He died when I was younger. It was my fault. I was young and foolish, and did not take enough care on the training fields.”

“You mean you lost your temper because Loki wasn’t losing as easily as you wanted,” Darcy snapped, the words flying out before she could stop them.

Thor’s eyebrows lowered into a thunderous scowl.

“Watch your tongue,” he said darkly. “How do you know of my brother, and of my father, when no one else in this realm does? Neither your companions nor the healers of this world recognised me.”

Darcy tried to keep her expression steady, giving nothing away.

“I have dreams,” she said casually. “Of Asgard.”

Thor looked suddenly unnerved.

“You are a seer?” he asked, eyeing Darcy warily. She shrugged.

“I don’t know, maybe? I always thought they were just dreams, until you showed up, all big and blonde and angry. I thought maybe I was going crazy, but you’re definitely real, so. Who knows what’s going on. I don’t have a clue.”

Silence fell. Thor looked thoughtful as he dug back into his food.
Darcy continued eating her own breakfast, listening in as a bunch of townies walked in and said good morning to Isabella.

“You missed all the excitement out at the crater,” one of them said, as Isabella poured them coffee.

“What crater?” Isabella asked.

“They’re saying some kind of satellite crashed in the desert,” one of the other men put in.

“We were having a good time with it, until the feds showed up, chased us out,” the first townie complained.

“Excuse me,” Darcy leaned over and waved to get their attention, “you said a satellite crashed? What did it look like?”

“Well, I don’t know nothing about satellites,” said the second man, “but it was heavy. Real heavy. Nobody could lift it.”

Thor suddenly snapped to attention.

“Where?” he demanded. The men looked bemused at his urgent tone of voice.

“About twelve miles east of here,” said the first man.

Thor grinned, his eyes alight with excitement, and he stood and started to stride out of the diner.

“Thor?” Darcy asked in confusion.

“Thor! Thor! Wait up, dammit!” Darcy yelled, chasing after him. Thor stopped to look up at the sun, and Darcy came to a stop beside him.

“What the hell?” she demanded. “What’s so important it sent you running out without even finishing breakfast? Which was rude after I paid for it, by the way.”

Thor just grinned at her, a bright gleam in his eyes.

“It is Mjolnir,” he said, and began walking again.

“Wait – Mjolnir? Your hammer?” Darcy put it together. Of course – the hammer could only be lifted by someone worthy. A bunch of drunken townies probably didn’t meet its criteria for worthiness.

“Ódin sent it after you?”

“He must have.” Thor was smiling. “I thank you, Lady Darcy, for your hospitality, but it is needed no longer. I shall reclaim my hammer, and return to Asgard.”

“Come on, you think it’s going to be that easy?” Darcy asked incredulously, but Thor was paying no attention. She took a deep breath, filling her lungs with as much air as possible, and yelled, “Who says you’re worthy?”

Thor stopped dead, and turned to stare at her. Darcy glared, raising a pointed eyebrow.

Thor’s face crumpled with anger. He took a step forward, then checked himself. Instead of confronting Darcy he made a dismissive gesture with one hand, and turned away.

Darcy seethed.

“Don’t say I didn’t warn you when you get your stupid ass arrested!” she shouted after him.
Chapter Four

Darcy stalked back to the van, fuming. And here she’d thought that Thor had begun to grow up, and finally started listening to people! Hah. So much for that idea. What a jerk.

*He is the same blithering idiot he always was. And now he shall find himself arrested, mark my words, and this time there shall be no one to rescue him from his own folly.*

Darcy was about to start the ignition, but paused to glare at the steering wheel instead. The townies had said that the army and the feds were out at the crash site, right? If Thor tried to interfere, he’d probably get himself disappeared permanently, especially considering that, legally speaking, he didn’t exist.

“God-dammit,” Darcy muttered, thumping her head against the steering wheel. Despite all her best instincts telling her to stay out of it, something told her that she couldn’t leave Thor alone when he was about to land himself in serious trouble. Oh, sure, she knew that it would probably do him some good, maybe teach him a little humility; but while she was all for the idea of Thor losing some of his ego, she didn’t actually want anything bad to happen to him. And that was a distinct possibility.

Sighing, and muttering darkly to herself under her breath, Darcy started the van.

Thor was a couple of streets away when she caught up to him, acting like he was going to walk those twelve miles without dying of thirst or heat exhaustion on the way.

“Thor!” Darcy yelled out the window. “Don’t be an idiot! You can’t walk twelve miles! Get in the van, I’ll drive you!”

Thor paused, and Darcy stopped the van.

“Get in, Thor,” she said, and Thor walked around to the passenger side and got in.

“I appreciate your kindness, Lady Darcy,” he said.

“And yet somehow this appreciation doesn’t extend to actually listening to me,” Darcy snarked. “But whatever, your call, if you want to get yourself arrested, that’s your problem. I’ll just watch from a distance and laugh at your misfortune.”

Thor didn’t respond, only glancing at her with a thoughtful expression.

It didn’t take long to find the crash site.

“Holy shit,” Darcy breathed, as she looked at the small town that had sprung up in the distance. Buildings and trailers had been set up and the whole site was cordoned-off, and patrolled by men in black uniforms. “Thor, there is no way you can just sneak in there and make off with Mjolnir under their noses. You’ll be caught long before then.”

“You are right,” said Thor, studying the scene. “We must come back tonight.”

Darcy groaned.

“Seriously?”
Thor looked at her with grave blue eyes, and Darcy sighed in defeat.

“Fine,” she muttered. “We’ll come back tonight.”

Thor smiled.

“Where have you been?” Jane demanded, as soon as Darcy walked into the lab. “You were supposed to be tabling the results today –” She stopped abruptly as Thor walked in behind Darcy. Thor was oblivious to the sudden tension.

“You brought him here?” Jane asked, looking suddenly animated. “Good.”

“Good?” Darcy echoed. “Yesterday you were all upset because I didn’t want to just abandon him.”

“I know, but look at this.” Jane pointed to a photo. Darcy squinted at it.

“Is that…?” She stared at the human form at the centre of the funnel cloud.

“If you think it’s your ‘brother,’ then yeah,” Jane replied. She noticed that Thor was fiddling with some of her equipment, and hurried over to stop him. “Excuse me!”

She managed to get Thor’s attention, and steered him over to the photos.

“Tell me… what were you doing, in that?” She pointed to the photo. Thor glanced at it.

“What does anyone do in the Bifrost?” he responded dismissively.

“The Bifrost…” Erik sounded amused, and a little condescending.

“What exactly is the Bifrost?” Jane asked, and Darcy groaned. This was going to be trouble, she could tell. She sat down on one of the chairs, and waited resignedly.

“It is a bridge,” said Thor. Jane’s face lit up.

“Like an Einstein-Rosen Bridge?”

“He’s talking about mythology,” Erik interrupted. “Thor, the Bifrost… they’re myths, the stories I grew up with as a child. He’s delusional.”

Darcy leaned back in her seat, and watched to see how Thor took that. To her surprise, he kept his temper.

“They are more than stories,” said Thor, his voice quiet, but filled with conviction. “Once I have retrieved Mjolnir, I shall be able to show you.”


“You have made your point,” he said. “You do not think me worthy. We shall see whether Mjolnir shares your opinion.”

“Mjolnir?” Jane asked, hopelessly confused.

“Thor’s hammer, from legend,” said Erik. “I told you, he is delusional.”

“I am not,” said Thor. “Ask Lady Darcy. She has experienced visions of Asgard.”
“Whoa, leave me out of this,” Darcy interjected quickly, but too late. Erik and Jane had already turned to look at her.

“Darcy?” asked Jane.

“You’ve been encouraging him?” Erik looked disapproving. “Darcy, he could be dangerous—”

Darcy’s palms itched, and she rubbed them against her coat irritably.

“Oh my God, will you stop!” she exclaimed. “Look, I know he sounds crazy, but just put up with him until tonight, okay?”

“Why? What happens tonight?” Jane asked, and before Darcy could come up with a glib answer, Thor answered truthfully.

“We go to retrieve Mjolnir.”

“You can’t be serious,” Erik said, looking accusingly at Darcy, “You actually believe what he says? Why—”

“Because I do!” Darcy yelled, and then but her lip before she could do anything stupid, like claim to be Loki. She didn’t know for sure that she was, after all, and Thor probably wouldn’t react well to that claim, anyway. “Because I know, okay? All my life, I’ve dreamed of Asgard and Thor and Odin and Frigga and—” she stopped herself from adding Loki’s name, saying instead, “—and I thought that was all they were, dreams, until Thor showed up, looking exactly like the guy I dream about. So yeah, I believe him.”

“You are both mad,” said Erik. Darcy reigned in her temper.

“Look, believe what you want,” she said shortly. “Just let Thor stay here for the moment, and we’ll go out tonight, and hopefully, when I come back, Thor will have returned to Asgard.”

She stormed out of the lab before any of them could say another word.

Darcy climbed up onto the roof of the building where they were staying. She liked it up there. It was nice and open, with the endless sky above her and the horizon stretching out into the distance, and no one around to bother her.

Darcy understood why Erik was so disbelieving, but it still made her angry. If only there was some proof she could offer him, something he would have to believe. But Thor was mortal and without Mjolnir, and Darcy was nothing but an ordinary college student with a few memories out of place.

Wasn’t she?

Darcy closed her eyes, Loki’s thoughts coming to her easily. Thor’s presence had stirred them all up, memories and modes of thought, and Darcy was beginning to be unsure where she began and Loki ended. Loki had always been nothing more than dreams, but now, with Thor around...

Something old and long-dormant was stirring inside Darcy, and she wasn’t sure whether or not that was a good thing.

She knew exactly what Loki would say now, if she were him; knew that he would use clever, persuasive words and clever illusions to convince Erik of the truth of his words. But Darcy had lived a different life from Loki, and she didn’t make use of language like he did, and she didn’t have all his
clever tricks. She’d never needed them the way that Loki had.

She wasn’t sure she could even use them. The dreams were of what had been, and didn’t necessarily reflect the present in any way.

Darcy clenched her fists, and tried not to imagine them igniting with green fire.

It didn’t matter, anyway. She’d take Thor out there tonight, and he’d probably get himself arrested, and –

Yeah, Darcy didn’t actually have any idea of what she’d do if that happened. Hopefully Thor would be able to reach the hammer and lift it as he was so confident he would, but Darcy wasn’t counting on it.

Darcy’s musings were interrupted by the sight of an ominous black van pulling up in front of the building, and several men in black uniforms getting out.

“Oh, shit,” she breathed, and bolted for the fire escape.

By the time she got to ground level, Jane was yelling furiously at some guy in a suit, while the men in black uniforms carted her equipment away. Erik was holding her back, trying to caution her, but no one was doing the same for Thor.

“Return the Lady Jane’s equipment at once,” he said, his expression dark.

“What’s going on?” Darcy blurted out, hoping to avert catastrophe. “Hey, aren’t you the guys from the satellite crash site?”

The guy in the suit turned to look at her, and Darcy kept her expression carefully innocent. The man in front of her might look like nothing more than a paper-pusher, but his eyes were sharp and assessing, suggesting that he was a lot more than he seemed.

“My name is Agent Coulson,” the man explained. “I’m with SHIELD. We’re here investigating a security threat. We need Dr Foster’s equipment and all her atmospheric data.”

“Hey, that’s my iPod!” Darcy said indignantly, as one of the men in uniform carried it past her.

Agent Coulson smiled pleasantly.

“We’ll reimburse you.”

“I can’t just pick up replacements at Radio Shack!” Jane yelled. “I made most of that equipment myself!”

“Then I’m sure you can do it again,” said Coulson, turning to leave.

Thor opened his mouth, but Darcy grabbed his arm, leaning up on tiptoes.

“Do you want to get arrested before you can retrieve Mjolnir?” she hissed in his ear. “Once you have it you can get Jane’s stuff back yourself, but without Mjolnir you’re basically powerless, right? You need to wait until after you get the hammer back.”

Thor hesitated, but nodded.

“There is wisdom in what you say,” he said reluctantly. Darcy let go of his arm.
“Come on, bro,” she said more loudly. “Let’s leave these jackasses to do what they want. It’s not worth the trouble.”

Coulson glanced back at her, but Darcy made a show of walking back inside. She could hear Jane still yelling: distraught, impassioned pleas as the Men in Black made off with her life’s work.

Darcy wasn’t sure what exactly was going on, but she could guess – mysterious object lands in the desert, the Men in Black turn up to analyse it and try and work out if it’s a threat, or if the real threat is still coming. They probably wouldn’t believe anyone who told them that there was no threat at all.

And tonight, Thor was going to go busting into their stronghold.

Darcy sighed.

They were all totally going to end up in prison, she just knew it.
“So, I’m not going to lie, I haven’t really done anything like this before,” Darcy said, as she drove out towards the crash site, later that night.

“Then you are brave to do it,” said Thor. He was restless in his seat, a gleam of excitement in his eyes, and Darcy knew that he was looking forward to what he was about to do.

“Calm down, Rambo,” she said dryly. “You’re mortal now, remember? This might not be as easy as you think it is.”

“Then I welcome the challenge,” Thor said, grinning slightly.

“Totally missing my point, but okay. Just don’t do anything stupid, alright? Just go straight for the hammer and then get out of there.”

“I must retrieve the Lady Jane’s equipment, first,” said Thor. “I gave her my word.”

Darcy glanced at him.

“You kind of like her, don’t you?” she asked.

Thor smiled.

“She is unlike any woman of my acquaintance,” he admitted. “She is smart, and dedicated to her calling.”

“Right, because there’s no one like that on Asgard,” Darcy scoffed. “Face it, you think she’s cute, that’s all.”

“Cute?”

“Adorable and attractive,” Darcy clarified dryly. Thor ducked his head, his grin a little sheepish.

“Perhaps,” was all he said. Darcy rolled her eyes.

“That’s not going to work out, you know,” she said. “I mean, she clearly likes you too—”

“She does?” Thor looked pleased.

“But you’re from totally different realms. What’s going to happen when you go back to Asgard? You just going to leave her hanging?”

Thor frowned.

“You are pessimistic.”

“I’m realistic. Anyway, we’re almost there,” Darcy added. She stopped the van. “We’ll have to get closer on foot. The van will attract their attention.”

The pair left the van, crouching low to the ground as they made their way to the top of the ridge. Lying on the ground at the top of the ridge, Darcy leaned on her elbows and pulled out Jane’s
binoculars. Below, a massive base had been constructed. It was even bigger than it had been earlier that day. There were cars, trailers, barricades, armed guards, everything. At the centre of the base was a set of transparent plastic tunnels, and a transparent cube structure erected in the middle of the crater.

“I’m guessing Mjolnir is at the centre of that thing,” she said, passing the binoculars to Thor, who looked through them himself. A moment later he handed them back.

“Stay here,” he told Darcy. “Once I have Mjolnir, I will return with the Lady Jane’s equipment.”

“Be careful,” Darcy said, as he began to creep down the side of the ridge. There was no reply. Darcy sighed, and raised the binoculars to her eyes again.

The first spatters of rain began to fall, and Darcy cursed.

“Great. Rain.” She looked up at where large clouds had gathered in the sky above the base. “A thunderstorm? Oh, please tell me this is a good omen.”

Raising the binoculars again, Darcy tracked Thor’s progress to the bottom of the ridge, to the fence at the perimeter of the base. As she watched, Thor managed to bend back a section of the fence with his bare hands, and slip inside.

A black van pulled up nearby, and Thor approached quickly. Darcy couldn’t see exactly what happened, but Thor walked away shrugging on a rain slicker, and there was no movement from the van.

Several minutes passed, with Thor making his way towards the crater. Darcy watched intently.

Suddenly there was the sound of an alarm, and security lights sprang to light all over the base. Darcy ducked down as a spotlight swept over the top of the ridge. Once it was gone, Darcy wriggled back up to the top of the ridge, and raised the binoculars again.

What followed was an impressive fight, with Thor punching and throwing every hired goon that tried to stop him. The rain started to fall in earnest, but Darcy was too busy watching Thor’s progress to care. Thor made his way into the plastic tunnels, and Darcy swore under her breath as it became near-impossible to track what was going on.

Looking elsewhere, Darcy noticed that the base was swarming with people, most of them heading towards the tunnels and plastic cube at the centre of the base.

Movement caught her eye outside the cube structure, and Darcy focused her gaze there in time to see Thor rip a hole in the transparent plastic, and walk through.

There was an object at the centre of the crater, and Darcy recognised it from her dreams, even though she’d never seen it in real life. She adjusted the binocular’s settings, and took a closer look.

Mjolnir looked exactly as she’d dreamed it. Right now it was glowing and giving off little sparks, as though excited by Thor’s nearness.

Thor’s face split in a triumphant smile as he strode towards the hammer. It glowed brightly as he strode towards it, and Darcy held her breath, hoping, as Thor reached out to take the handle. He pulled at it.

Nothing happened.
Darcy’s heart sank, as Thor tugged on the hammer’s handle, first in confusion, then in desperation. But Mjolnir stayed where it was. Thor fell to his knees, radiating despair, and tilted his head back to let out a yell of anguish. He made no move to get away as he was surrounded by men in SHIELD uniforms.

Darcy cursed yet again, and let the binoculars fall. Thor had failed, as she’d been afraid he might.

She scrambled back as a spotlight swept over the ridge again. Down below, men with dogs and flashlights were leaving the base, no doubt to search the surrounding area. Darcy couldn’t remain here, or she’d be caught.

Staying low to the ground, Darcy ran back to where she’d left the van. It was still there, alone in the dark. Darcy quickly unlocked it, and climbed into the driver’s seat. Starting the engine, she drove away as quickly as possible.

_What did you expect?_ Darcy thought. _You know better than anyone that after everything Thor has done, he is hardly worthy. You heard him boast of invading Jotunheim, heard him call Odin an old fool. Thor’s arrogance and pride has outstripped his virtues, and see what has come of it._

Darcy parked the van outside the trailer she shared with Jane, and then sat there, her instincts warring against each other.

Thor needed her. Yes, his current situation was his own stupid fault, but… years of memories of keeping him out of trouble were rising to the fore, and Darcy kept thinking of Thor’s dejected pose as he knelt there in the dirt, uncaring that he was surrounded by men pointing guns at him. In all her memories as Loki, Darcy had never seen him brought so low.

With a jolt, Darcy realised that she’d just thought of herself as Loki, instead of just someone with Loki’s memories. The effect of Thor’s presence was becoming stronger, she realised. Seeing Mjolnir, too, had done something.

Darcy was now absolutely certain that all of this was real, any nigglng doubts gone. She had wondered before if she was Loki, but now she believed it.

The only question was, what to do now?

Getting out of the van, Darcy walked into the trailer to find Jane and Erik waiting for her.

“Why are you all wet?” Jane asked.

“There’s a thunderstorm over the crater,” Darcy said succinctly. “I guess Mjolnir’s in a snit, or something.”

“Where’s Thor?” Erik asked.

“Arrested,” said Darcy, sighing. “I was afraid that this would happen. Excuse me, I’m going to get changed into some dry clothes before these SHIELD guys come looking for me.”

“Why would they come looking for you?” Jane looked alarmed.

“Because I’ve been telling everyone in town that Thor’s my brother,” Darcy replied, shutting herself in the back room to get dressed.

“What? Darcy!” Jane exclaimed on the other side of the door, as Darcy stripped out of her wet, muddy clothes and changed into dry ones, pulling on jeans and a black shirt.
Darcy shrugged on a jacket, and opened the door to find Jane standing in front of it, looking curious.

“What do you mean you’ve been telling everyone that Thor is your brother?” Erik said, before Jane could ask.

“Well, that’s the story I gave at the hospital, so I’ve been sticking to it,” said Darcy. “And I mean, if these SHIELD people are any good, they’re going to find out that Thor doesn’t even exist, legally speaking, so they’re going to want to ask me who he is and why I was pretending he was my brother.”

“Tell them the truth,” said Erik. “Tell them that we found him in the desert, and you lied because you were curious to know more about him. These people are trouble.”

Darcy straightened her jacket, and realised that she’d absent-mindedly chosen the emerald-green one. She was wearing a black shirt and an emerald-green jacket, and she hadn’t even noticed.

Well, it looked like her subconscious knew what was up, even if Darcy hadn’t officially made any decisions yet.

She looked up to meet Erik’s eyes, and smiled with all her teeth.

“You know what, Erik? So am I.” Making a decision, Darcy walked towards the door. “Don’t wait up for me, I don’t know how long I’ll be.”

“Where are you going now?” Jane exclaimed. Darcy paused to grin at her.

“I’m going to go and ask SHIELD what they’re doing with my brother,” she said, and left the trailer.

Erik and Jane followed after her.

“Darcy, you can’t!” Jane said.

“Jane?” Darcy waited to make sure she had her boss’s attention. “I do what I want.”

Smiling, Darcy climbed into the van, and started the engine.
Chapter Six

Darcy pulled up outside the perimeter, and waited for one of the guards to approach her. She rolled down the van window as he walked over.

“Ma’am, this is a restricted area,” he said. “You’re going to have to leave.”

“Dude, I know,” Darcy told him. “But look, my idiot brother was talking about trying to break into to try and pick up the satellite, and then he didn’t come home, so I just wanted to check whether he really did try and break in.”

The guard paused.

“Excuse me a minute.” He joined the other guards manning the perimeter, and they conferred for a moment before he returned.

“Ma’am, I’m going to have to ask you to step out of the van,” he said to Darcy. “One of our agents wants to speak with you.”

“Sure,” said Darcy, climbing out of the van. A couple of guards moved forward to flank her on either side.

“Agent Coulson wants to see her,” said the first guard, and Darcy’s escorts nodded.

Darcy looked around as she was escorted through the base. She was shown into one of the temporary buildings, and Agent Coulson turned to face her as she walked into the room.

“Miss Lewis,” he said calmly. “I understand that you’re claiming that your brother attempted to break into this facility earlier tonight.”

“That’s right,” said Darcy, smiling. “Can I see him?”

“In a moment,” said Coulson. “Do you know why he might have attempted to break in?”

Darcy shrugged.

“He’s a blithering idiot? I guess he heard everyone in the diner talking about trying to lift the satellite, and wanted a try. It’s a small town, agent. People get bored, and do stupid things.”

“I see,” said Coulson blandly. Clearly he didn’t believe a word of Darcy’s reply. “Your full name is Darcy Ann Lewis, correct?”

“That’s right,” said Darcy.

“And you claim that the man I have in custody is your brother?” Coulson’s eyes never wavered from Darcy’s.

“Yeah, he’s three years older than me,” said Darcy, never blinking despite the intensity of Coulson’s stare. “You’d think keeping me out of trouble would be his job, as the eldest, but actually it’s the
other way around.”

“Hmm.” Coulson’s expression was considering. “What’s his name, again?”

“Thor Lewis,” Darcy lied, without skipping a beat. She was pretty sure from the questions Coulson asked that he knew she was lying, but for some reason he wasn’t calling her on it. It seemed pretty unlikely that he’d let Thor go, though, which meant going with the risky plan.

Risky plan it was, then.

“Fine. You can see him. He’s this way.”

Coulson opened a door on the opposite wall, and Darcy walked into what looked like an interrogation room. Darcy was acutely conscious of the one-way glass, behind which people were probably watching. Her palms itched.

Thor was sitting with his hands behind his back – cuffed, probably – and an unusually subdued expression on his face. He looked up with disinterest as Darcy walked in, only for his eyes to widen as he realised who had just entered the room.

“Lady Darcy,” he said. “Why have you come here?”

Darcy shook her head, and slipped into a voice that wasn’t entirely hers.

“Really, Thor,” she said, “your propensity for trouble has not decreased in my absence, I see.”

Thor blinked.

“Lady Darcy?” he asked uncertainly.

Darcy smiled with all her teeth.

“Well, yes and no,” she admitted. “I was not entirely honest with you. Brother,” she added.

Thor’s eyes went wide, and his expression started to darken.

“I told you about the dreams,” Darcy went on, before he could start shouting at her. “What I did not tell you was that they were memories, of a past life in which I lived in Asgard.”

“It is not possible,” said Thor, frowning angrily.

“Oh, but it is,” Darcy said, still smiling that toothy smile that was all Loki’s. “Remember, Thor, that all things are possible with magic.” Her smile broadened. “And that sometimes, others may succeed where you fail.”

Darcy took a deep breath, never losing her smile, and tried something she only knew how to do from memory.

The world flickered around her, and Darcy was standing by Mjolnir. She reached down to grab the handle before anyone could stop her. Energy ran up her hands and through her body, and Darcy gasped, feeling suddenly stronger and more energised than she had a moment ago. Hah! It had worked! Who was worthy now? She lifted the hammer easily, and teleported a second time.

She was met with the amusing sight of Thor’s gaping face as she held the hammer aloft.

His eyes moved from the hammer to her face, and his expression was filled with amazement and
uncertain hope.

“Brother?” he asked tentatively.

“Well, sister is more accurate,” Darcy said. “Do you want to leave here or not?”

Thor hurried over as best he could – his hands were handcuffed behind his back– and Darcy wrapped an arm around his waist, and teleported yet again. Suddenly they were standing outside the building, still inside the base, but out in the open air.

“Let’s see if this works,” Darcy muttered aloud, and thrust the hammer towards the sky.

It was a good thing she had a good grip on the hammer’s handle, because the next moment the hammer shot upwards, taking Darcy and Thor with it. Darcy whooped with excitement, laughing, as she soared across the desert back towards the town.

She kept an eye out for Jane’s trailer, parked near the edge of town. Spotting it, Darcy started to fly towards it. She came down just outside the trailer, landing perfectly on her feet. Thor stumbled on landing, his face rather green.

“Okay, starting to get why you enjoy that,” Darcy said, grinning. “Although apparently Mjolnir-travel disagrees with mortal digestions, if your face is any clue.”

Only then did Darcy look down at herself, noticing that she was now wearing the missing elements of Thor’s armour – except that instead of being red and silver, as they usually were, they’d taken on Loki’s colours of green and gold.

“I am awesome,” Darcy said aloud. “And so is Mjolnir.”

She glanced up to see Thor staring at her.

“Loki, is it truly you?” he asked wonderingly. “Why did you not reveal yourself to me sooner?”

“I had my reasons,” Darcy told him. “Like, for example, the fact that until you showed up, I thought they were only dreams. But yeah, it’s really me.”

Thor smiled, with a mixture of joy and heartbreak.

“Then I am glad,” he said sincerely. “Even though I have become unworthy of Mjolnir, I cannot regret it, if it means that you are once more alive. I am so sorry, Loki. All this time, I have cursed myself for losing my temper in such a way. Many times you had reprimanded me for similar incidents, and I had never paid any attention. Since then I have tried to improve my temper, but it has been a slow and difficult process.” Thor hung his head in shame.

“Come on,” was all Darcy said, uncertain of how to respond. “Let’s have this conversation inside.”

Jane and Erik were sitting at the small counter, and the look on their faces when Darcy walked in dressed in armour and with a giant hammer resting on her shoulder, Thor not far behind her in handcuffs, was absolutely priceless.

“Hey guys,” Darcy greeted them cheerfully. “Behold, I have the hammer of Thor!” She raised Mjolnir, which obligingly let off a few sparks.

“What?” Erik managed, while Jane just stared at Darcy and Thor.

“This is the hammer you guys were going on about earlier?” she asked, and Darcy nodded absently,
frowning. She needed to get Thor out of those handcuffs.

Darcy put Mjolnir down on the floor out of the way, where hopefully no one would trip over it, and started rummaging through her stuff.

“Hey, Jane, do you have a hairpin, or something?” Darcy asked, when she couldn’t find one.

“A hairpin?” Jane was still staring. “Why do you need a hairpin?”

“To pick the lock on Thor’s cuffs, duh.” Darcy frowned. “I’m pretty sure old-me used to have a spell for that, but I can’t remember it.”

“Opnask,” Thor supplied, and received several curious glances. “You have used it on my account before.”

“Right, okay, let’s try that.” Darcy walked over to Thor, and frowned down at the handcuffs. Her palms itched as she tried to access her magic, and a moment later, her hands glowed with green fire.

“Opnask,” Darcy intoned, doing her best to remember how this sort of incantation worked.

The cuffs clicked open, and Darcy smirked, wiggling her glowing fingers.

“Hah, still got it!” she crowed, as the glow of magic faded, and removed the cuffs from around Thor’s wrists.

“Thank you, sister,” he said, rubbing at the reddened marks the cuffs had left behind.

“How…?” Erik managed, his eyes wide.

“Ever heard of reincarnation?” Darcy asked.

“Of course,” said Jane. “It’s the concept of people being reborn all over again after they die. It’s a core belief of some religions.”

“Right,” Darcy agreed. “I was reborn as Darcy Lewis, but before that, I was this guy’s brother.” She jerked a thumb at Thor, who grinned happily, although his expression was still a little more subdued than usual.

“You said that we would talk,” he reminded her.

“Yeah, okay.” Darcy crossed her arms and frowned at him. “If you have been guarding your temper, Thor, explain to me how you came to attack Jotunheim.”

A look of realisation crossed Thor’s face, and for the first time he looked abashed.

“I was… angry,” he admitted. “The Frost Giants attempted to attack during my coronation as crown prince. They did not get far, of course: there was no one to show them the way. But I was furious that they dared sully such an auspicious event—”

“You mean that you got mad that someone interrupted something that was all about you and your big ego,” Darcy said flatly. “Which did you care more about, the fact that someone tried to attack your people, or that they ruined your big moment?”

Thor started to bristle, remembered who he was talking to, and deflated.

“Perhaps more of the second than I should have,” he admitted. “I… my pride and my temper drove
me to attempt to punish Jotunheim for the actions of the would-be invaders.”

Darcy glared at him.

“In other words, even though the Frost Giants attempt failed and should have just been ignored, your vanity was offended, so you went on a stupid, suicidal attack that should have gotten you killed, and which might still start exactly the kind of long and bloody war Odin has long tried to avoid. That sound about right?”

“I… yes.” Thor looked vaguely shamefaced.

Darcy smacked him over the back of the head, ignoring his yelp.

“Thor, the duty of a future king is to his people, not his own pride!” Darcy lectured. “And you wonder at the fact that Mjolnir finds you no longer worthy! Think of what you have done! Think of what your actions may cost your people! Do you begin to understand?”

“I believe that understanding has indeed begun to penetrate my skull, although that may have been due to your physical assistance,” Thor quipped ruefully, rubbing the back of his head. “I confess, I did not think of the consequences of my actions until afterwards.”

“Oh, that is the story of your life, is it not? Never do you stop to think,” Darcy muttered, pinching the bridge of her nose.

She realised that Erik and Jane were staring at her with creeped-out expressions.

“Who did you say you were, again?” Erik asked faintly.

Darcy grinned, and struck a pose.

“Loki,” she said simply. “God of Mischief.” She smirked widely, then tilted her head, listening to the sound of cars in the distance.

Lots of cars.

Darcy winced, as she realised that SHIELD was heading towards them.

“Uh-oh,” she said.

“Loki?” Thor’s brow furrowed as he noticed her mood. “What is wrong?”

“SHIELD’s about to catch up with us,” Darcy said grimly.


“We need to get out of here,” said Darcy, paying Erik's shocked exclamation no attention. “Jane, you haven’t seen me all night, okay? You too, Erik. Otherwise, tell them whatever you want.”

Darcy grabbed Thor’s arm and tugged, pulling Thor towards the door of the trailer.

“Thor, we need to go, now.”
So, I'm still deciding where the next chapter will go, so if any of you want to make suggestions on what should happen next, I'd like to hear them.
Chapter Seven

Stopping only long enough for Darcy to grab Mjolnir, Darcy and Thor ran outside. Darcy could already see the line of SHIELD cars in the distance, heading through town.

“I can do this,” she told herself aloud, calling on her magic.

A moment later and Thor was blinking at her in surprise. Then he looked down at himself, staring.

Darcy had laid a glamour over herself and Thor, so that they looked like two of her old high school classmates. It was surprisingly easy; using magic felt like something Darcy had been doing all her life.

She created one last glamour, and a moment later Mjolnir looked like a simple umbrella resting over her shoulder.

“This is one of your spells,” said Thor, looking unsurprised.

“Don’t talk to anyone but me, because the glamour’s visual only,” said Darcy. “And your voice is kind of recognisable. Come on. Let’s find somewhere to hide out until SHIELD leaves.”

The two of them wandered back through the town, ignoring the line of SHIELD vehicles that went past. Darcy felt a little bad for inadvertently siccing them on Jane and Erik, but it couldn’t be helped.

There was a stone bench outside the town’s tiny library, and Darcy led Thor there.

“Okay,” she said, taking a seat. Thor did the same. “So, to go back to our conversation, you’ve tried to control your temper better, but it hasn’t been working so well.”

Thor nodded mournfully.

“Aye.”

Darcy stared out at the street in front of them, unsure of how exactly she felt.

“I’m still pretty angry that you killed me,” she said finally. “And even angrier that you apparently haven’t changed much since then.”

She caught Thor’s wince from the corner of her eye, but didn’t look at him.

“That’s not something that’s going to heal any time soon. Dying isn’t a thing you just get over. I’m probably never going to stop having nightmares about what happened.”
“Can you ever forgive me?” Thor asked in a low voice. Darcy thought about it.

“Maybe,” she said. “If you ever finally get a handle on your temper, and learn to think things through, maybe then I can forgive you. But until I know you’ve learnt something from what happened? Your killing me isn’t something I can forgive.”

Thor lowered his head in sorrowful acknowledgement.

“But right now you need my help, so I’m not going anywhere,” Darcy added bracingly. “So you’ve still got time to show me that you can change.”

Thor gave a slight, sad smile.

“Perhaps,” was all he said. He looked up at the sky. “I find myself at a loss, for the first time in my life. Questioning all that I took for granted.” He shook his head, and looked back at Darcy gravely. “I am beginning to understand that what I have done has consequences that I cannot avoid, but I do not know what to do to repair the situation.”

“Dude,” Darcy nudged him. “That’s your problem. Mine is to keep you alive and free long enough for you to redeem yourself. In my opinion, it’ll do you good to be responsible for your actions for once. If Odin had done this earlier, maybe you would have learned some self-discipline before now.”

Thor took the criticism without protest, and Darcy thought that maybe he had changed after all, at least little. Because even if Thor was still a hothead who made bad life choices, at least he was listening to her. After a lifetime as Loki of having Thor ignore perfectly good advice, Darcy appreciated the fact that he was now paying attention, even if it was probably only out of a sense of guilt.

“What should we do now?” asked Thor, after a moment’s silence.

“Dude, I have no freaking idea,” Darcy said frankly. “I’d suggest we steal a car and head somewhere else, except that I don’t really want to be arrested and anyway, I have a feeling that whatever you’re supposed to do, it’s here.”

Darcy sighed, and looked out at the empty street in front of her.

“This is so messed-up, you know,” she added. “Like, two days ago, I was just Darcy Lewis, poli-sci student, who had weird dreams sometimes. And now I know I’m Loki reincarnated, I’m on the run from the MiB, my internship is probably cancelled, and I’m busy trying to keep you out of trouble.”

Darcy paused to yell at the sky.

“Thanks so much, Odin! I really needed this in my life!” She shook a fist at the sky for good measure.

“Why do you not call him ‘father’?” Thor asked, looking puzzled. Darcy shrugged, leaning back against the bench.

“Uh, because he’s not my father, not anymore?”

Thor opened his mouth to speak, but Darcy cut him off before he could argue with her.

“I was reborn, Thor. I have a Mom and Dad, both of whom were better parents to me than Odin and Frigga ever were. I’m not going to suddenly forget my parents just because I know that my life as Loki was real. I’m Darcy Lewis, not Loki. I was Loki once, but that’s not who I am anymore,
okay?”

Thor was frowning.

“But—”

Darcy patted him on the arm.

“Look, you can still call me Loki if you want, I don’t mind, it’s kind of nice actually, but don’t expect me to be the person I used to be. I’m Darcy Lewis of Earth, and that’s not changing.”

“I take it that you will not be returning to Asgard with me once I am no longer banished,” said Thor, a wry twist to his mouth.

Darcy snorted expressively.

“Hell no. I was never really happy there, okay? For some reason, I just never fit in. You’ve pointed it out yourself enough times, Thor.” Darcy deepened her voice, trying to mimic Thor’s. “Loki, why do you not join us in the training fields more often? Loki, why do you waste all your time reading? Magic is a coward’s way, Loki – true men of Asgard fight with honour. Loki, why do you not attend the feasting as much as you should? Fandral wouldn’t have made that joke were there not truth to it, Loki – you should learn to be less sensitive. Why can you not be more like us, Loki?”

Darcy finally stopped to catch her breath. Thor looked stunned at her venom.

“So yeah, no,” Darcy said, in her normal voice, trying to speak calmly. “I’m staying here, where people actually like me for who I am.”

Thor sat there for a moment, clearly trying to gather his thoughts.

“I did not know that my words caused you such pain, sister,” he said finally. “I am sorry.”

Darcy couldn’t restrain herself from being brutally honest.

“It wasn’t just you, Thor. It just hurt more when you did it.”

Thor flinched.

“It seems that I have much to make amends for.”

“You bet your ass,” Darcy agreed. Thor looked confused at the idiom, but Darcy didn’t enlighten him. Instead, she gave a long sigh.

“Come on. Let’s go see if we can get a couple of rooms at the local motel. It’s a good thing I’ve got my wallet with me. And remember: don’t say anything where anyone can hear you.”

Darcy stood, waiting for Thor to do the same, and began to walk down the street. The motel was only a few streets away. They could spend the night there, and figure out what to do next in the morning.
Chapter Eight

The next morning, Darcy and Thor got breakfast at Isabella’s diner, both of them wearing the glamour from the day before. Again, Mjolnir looked like nothing more than an innocuous umbrella.

Of course, Darcy thought later, the way things had been going, it figured that something else had to go wrong.

The two of them had left the diner and were walking back towards the library when Thor suddenly stopped dead.

“Thor…?” Darcy followed the direction of his gaze, and groaned inwardly.

Striding down the street, attracting stares and curious glances as they walked along in full armour, were Thor’s friends – Sif, Hogun, Volstagg, and Fandral.

*Well, isn’t that fantastic. Not.*

Loki had never been accepted by Thor’s friends as anything more than a sometimes-useful tagalong, someone they put up with because Thor wanted them to. Darcy didn’t mind Volstagg and Hogun; for the most part, they’d always been courteous towards Loki, affording him the same respect they did everyone else. But Fandral had frequently made fun of Loki, making light of his accomplishments, while Sif – well, Sif had always derided and mistrusted Loki for not fitting into the mould of the perfect Asgardian warrior. Nothing Loki had ever done for her or the others had ever been enough to change her view of him – which was pretty hypocritical of her, considering that as a warrior, she was far from Asgard’s ideal of womanly virtue.

“It is my friends!” said Thor, beaming. “Loki, you must drop the glamour!”

“Oh really?” Darcy asked darkly. “And what if SHIELD finds us?”

“Then my friends shall defend us,” Thor assured her. “Besides, do you not have your magic?”

“Well yeah, but I don’t remember *everything*,” Darcy pointed out. “Some of it’s kind of fuzzy. What I’d give for a good spell-book right now, seriously.”

Thor made an earnest, pleading face, and Darcy couldn’t help but cave under it.

“Okay, fine, I’ll drop the glamour. But be ready to move fast if anything bad happens.”

Darcy let the glamour fall, and Thor went striding forward. Darcy stayed behind.

“My friends!” he bellowed.

Sif and the Warriors Three all looked towards the sound of his voice, and broke out in beaming smiles, running towards him. Thor broke out into a run himself. The five of them collided in the street, with much back-slapping and yells of excitement.

Darcy hung back, and tried not to feel bitter. She’d enjoyed having Thor around, and liked having him rely on her, even if it was a pain in the butt. But now his friends were here, and she’d probably end up with tagalong status all over again.
Not to mention the fact that the five of them will probably cause more trouble than a rampaging bilgesnipe, and expect me to rescue them from it without so much as a thank-you.

Darcy watched as Thor and his friends talked animatedly, before Thor suddenly started looking around, clearly wondering where Darcy had gone. His eyes landed on her, and he gestured her forward with a bright grin.

Bracing herself for anything that might happen, Darcy began walking towards the group. At least she looked badass, she consoled herself. Rocking up in armour and with Mjolnir slung over her shoulder was a good look, and she knew it. So she swaggered over, while Sif and the Warriors Three stared.

“And who is this?” Fandral, the biggest flirt in Asgard, watched her approach with interest while Sif regarded Darcy dubiously and Hogun and Volstagg looked curious.

“Don’t even try, buddy,” Darcy warned Fandral, eyeing him askance. Fandral merely papered on his most charming smile, and took Darcy’s hand and went to kiss it. Darcy grabbed his arm and twisted. With a yell of pain Fandral found himself on his knees with his arm twisted up behind his back.

The others looked alarmed, but Thor roared with laughter.

“There are no words sufficient to express the depths of my feelings when I say, not interested, dude,” Darcy told Fandral.

“Be grateful, my friend, that she did not use her taser,” Thor advised, chuckling, as Darcy let Fandral go. “For though it is small in size, it is indeed a mighty weapon!”

“Yes, thank you, Thor,” Darcy said dryly. “You only say that because it generates lightning.”

Sif, Hogun, and Volstagg were all looking confused, as was Fandral, who was rubbing at his shoulder.

“Thor, who is this?” Sif asked. “And why does she wield Mjolnir?” She cast a suspicious glance at Darcy.

“Sif, you know that anyone who is sufficiently worthy may wield Mjolnir,” Thor answered, smiling.

“Yes, but who is she?” Volstagg interrupted, looking highly curious.

Thor smiled widely, and Darcy braced herself for what was coming.

“My friends, this is Darcy Lewis, who is Loki reborn in mortal form!” he announced grandly.

There was a doubtful silence as the other stared at Darcy. She offered them a smile with lots of teeth.

“Thor,” Fandral said delicately, after being nudged by Hogun’s elbow, “Loki is dead.”

“True enough,” Darcy offered casually. “But magic always complicates things. It’s not unheard of for a sorcerer to be reborn, especially if they were dissatisfied with the manner of their death.” She gave them the Loki-smile again.

“You are truly Loki?” Volstagg asked, looking uncertain. Darcy grinned at him.

“Well, yes and no,” she admitted. “I’ve led an entirely different life with different formative experiences, so I’m not precisely the Loki you used to know. I am, however, the same soul.” Darcy made a face. “And now I’m talking like Loki again, this is all your fault, Thor. But basically, guys, yeah, I’m Loki reborn, and since Mjolnir still finds me worthy, you know I’m probably not lying.”
Darcy smiled at the group, a little mockingly.

The last thing she expected was for Sif to grab hold of her in a hug. Darcy froze, nonplussed.

Sif released her a moment later, and Darcy was startled, to say the least, to see that the other woman had tears in her eyes.

“It is good that you live,” Sif declared, heartfelt. Darcy could only stare, stunned. The others noticed her shock.

“After your death, the Allfather demanded to know why we had not intervened in the fight between yourself and Thor,” Fandral stepped in, his expression earnest. “It was with shame that we were forced to confess that we enjoyed the prospect of seeing you cast down, and did not perceive the danger you were in until too late. Odin was furious.”

“He forbade us from becoming warriors until we had learnt the value of respect and humility,” said Hogun unexpectedly, his expression solemn. “You were our prince as much as Thor, and Odin made it clear that we had shamed ourselves in how we had treated you.”

“And you didn’t blame me for you guys getting in trouble?” Darcy blurted, her eyes darting between them all. She felt off-balance and bewildered. “But you guys always thought I was useless!”

Sif flushed, and the others looked ashamed and embarrassed, even Fandral.

“I blamed you for a while,” Sif admitted. “But then Queen Frigga herself spoke to me, in the most contemptuous of tones, and told me that I had behaved towards you exactly as the other warriors had behaved towards me, when I first became a warrior myself. She said that she had expected better from me.”

Darcy whistled. Frigga almost never took people to task, but when she did, she always knew exactly what to say to make it hurt like a bitch.

“I shall never forget the look of disappointment and disgust on her face when she told me that I was unworthy of being a warrior, for I had shown myself lacking in honour in the way I treated you,” Sif went on. “I have long regretted that I did not show myself in a better light.”

“Besides, we didn’t really think you were useless,” Volstagg said uncomfortably. “I know that I laughed at Fandral’s jokes as much as anyone, but I was truly grateful for the times that you got us out of trouble.”

“And I am sorry more than anyone,” said Thor, “that I did not intervene when the others were cruel to you, and that I myself did not treat you better.”

“Truly, Loki, we are all sorry,” Fandral finished. “Can you forgive us?”

Darcy stood frozen, uncertain of how to respond. Never in a million years had she expected anything like this. It had never occurred to her that Thor’s friends might feel guilt over Loki’s death, or that it might have changed their opinion of him. Well, no, she’d thought that Hogun and Volstagg might feel sorry Loki was dead, but that was about it.

This outpouring of regret, though? Darcy didn’t know how to deal with it. Her feelings were too conflicted. Seriously – she’d tried to win these guys approval her entire life, and they gave it to her only after she was dead, what the hell?

“I don’t know,” she told Fandral honestly. “You guys weren’t exactly good friends to me, you
know. But it means a lot to me that you’re apologising. I guess I’ll see how I feel once I’ve had time to think about it,” she added, shrugging a little apologetically.

“I hate to interrupt your moment,” said a calm voice from behind Darcy, “but you’re all under arrest. Please place your weapons on the ground and put your hands in the air.”

Oh, shit. Coulson.

Darcy turned to see Coulson standing in the middle of the street, a balding man in a grey suit with a bunch of armed SHIELD goons fanned out around him. Sif and the Warriors Three eyed him with confusion and amusement. Clearly, they didn’t see Coulson and his agents as a threat.

Thor, however, eyed the group of agents with caution, knowing that Earth weapons were more powerful than they looked.

“What weapon is that?” he asked Darcy in a low voice.

“It’s called a gun,” said Darcy, never taking her eyes off Coulson. “It shoots small metal projectiles at very high speed, and can penetrate both flesh and bone. The result is deadly.”

“Surely you jest,” said Fandral, looking amused and disbelieving. “Their primitive weapons–”

“Are far more deadly than you can conceive of,” Darcy snapped. Why did no one ever listen to her?

“I repeat,” said Coulson, “place your weapons on the ground and put your hands in the air.”

“We shall not surrender!” Volstagg called back, Fandral and Sif nodding in agreement.

“We have no quarrel with you,” said Thor. “Just let us be, Son of Coul.”

“Or we will be forced to teach you why Asgard is so feared in battle!” Fandral added, totally ruining Thor’s attempt at diplomacy.

“If you do not do as I say, my men will be forced to take action,” said Coulson. “But no one needs to get hurt. Just put the weapons down and put your hands in the air.”

“Never!” Volstagg bellowed, raising his weapon.

“Will you morons cool it for just one second–” Darcy began, glaring at Thor’s friends, beginning to raise her hands.

A second later Darcy was tackled from the side, at the same moment as a loud retort split the air.

Darcy hit the dirt, a familiar heavy body on top of her.

“HOLD YOUR FIRE!” Coulson bellowed, sounding furious.

Darcy scrambled to her hands and knees, eyes wide, and rolled Thor onto his back where he lay in the dirt.

“Thor!” several voices shouted at once. Sif and the Warriors Three yelled in outrage, but Darcy paid no attention.

Thor’s shoulder was bleeding copiously, his face twisted into a grimace of pain.

“Goddamit, what the hell, Thor, you imbecile!” Darcy dropped Mjolnir and pressed her hands against the wound, trying to stem the bleeding. “You saved my life!”
“It seems… adequate recompense for taking it,” Thor managed, his voice strained.

“Not when it gets you shot!” Darcy yelled angrily.

“How badly is he hurt?” Sif asked, kneeling beside Darcy.

“Knaves!” Fandral was yelling. “To attack one who was unarmed!” In the background Coulson was shouting for everyone to remain calm.

“I’m not sure,” Darcy said in worry. Thor was already looking pale. “Considering he’s mortal - Wait!”

Darcy grabbed Mjolnir again, and tried to put it into Thor’s hands.

“Thor, see if you can lift the hammer,” she ordered urgently. “You just saved my life. If that doesn’t make you worthy…”

With difficulty Thor wrapped his hands around the hammer. The moment he did, there was a visible change. Colour flowed back into his face, and the armour Darcy was wearing vanished, to reappear on Thor. Sparks of electricity crackled around the head of the hammer, and Thor gasped as his strength drained out of Darcy and back where it belonged.

Darcy felt like she was going to faint from sheer relief. She glanced around to see Sif and the Warriors Three crowded around herself and Thor, looking concerned and angry.

“How do you feel?” she asked Thor.

“Better,” he said, wincing. “Although I shall feel better once this projectile has been removed.”

“You need a healer,” Darcy said. She sat back and took a deep breath, filling her lungs with air.

“Heimdall!” she shouted. “Open the Bifrost!”

She wasn’t sure if Heimdall would listen, under the circumstances; but a moment later the small group was engulfed by the familiar shimmer of the Rainbow Bridge activating.

The last thing Darcy saw, as she took one last glance at her surroundings, was Coulson’s astounded face.
Chapter Nine

The journey to Asgard was as dazzling as ever, but a moment later, the small group found themselves in the Observatory.

“Hogun!” Darcy commanded. “Send for a healer immediately!”

“I will do so,” Hogun promised, and left the Observatory at a run.

“Calm yourself, Loki,” Thor said, sitting up despite Darcy’s attempts to stop him. He grimaced in pain. “The wound is troubling, yes, but I shall not die from it.”

“Only because Mjolnir found you worthy!” Darcy exclaimed.

Darcy vaguely remembered Thor being injured in fights in the past, but those memories were faded and foggy. Seeing Thor bleeding all over the place was a visceral shock that Darcy hadn’t been ready for. She was trying desperately not to freak out.

Sif seemed to notice, and laid a reassuring hand on Darcy’s shoulder from where was still kneeling next to Darcy and Thor.

“He will be fine,” Sif assured Darcy. “Already, the wound bleeds less than before. See?”

“Although I do hope you are not fond of your current garments, as I doubt they shall ever be the same again,” Fandral added, trying to lighten the mood.

Darcy looked down and realised that her emerald-green jacket was covered in blood, from when she’d been trying to staunch the flow of blood from Thor’s wound. She made a sound of dismay.

“Oh, great, this was my favourite jacket,” Darcy groused. “I mean, obviously, Thor’s life is more important, but still.”

Someone cleared their throat.

The entire group turned to look at Heimdall, who was standing in his usual spot, watching them all with an inscrutable expression.

“Heimdall,” Thor began.

“You banishment was rescinded the moment that Mjolnir found you worthy,” the other man rumbled. His eyes moved to Darcy. “Your companion is another matter. You are aware that mortals are not allowed to set foot on Asgard.”

There were immediate cries of protest from the others, and in spite of her lingering confusion and bitterness towards them, Darcy felt touched by their support.

“Oh, but surely –!” Fandral began.

“Really, Heimdall–” Volstagg said at the same time.

“However,” Heimdall continued, his deep voice easily cutting through their objections, “given the identity of said mortal, I am sure that Queen Frigga will allow an exception to the law.”
“Wait, Frigga?” Darcy blurted. “What about Odin?”

Golden eyes met hers with a serious expression.

“Shortly after Prince Thor was banished, the king fell into Odinsleep,” Heimdall intoned. “His queen rules in his absence.”

“Mother?” Thor sounded astonished. Darcy’s focus was on a different issue. “Is Odin okay?” she asked, concerned. She couldn’t imagine Odin going into the Odinsleep willingly at such a precarious time, with Jotunheim probably baying for blood and the heir to the throne of Asgard banished, which meant that something had probably gone wrong. Darcy might no longer view Odin as her father, but she still kind of cared about him, all the same.

“That remains to be seen,” said Heimdall. “His fall into the Odinsleep was unexpected and involuntary. He has put it off for many years, and the effects of doing so are unknown.”

Darcy frowned, while Thor’s brow furrowed in worry and the other exchanged concerned glances. Silence fell as the group contemplated what had happened.

Thor began to climb to his feet, carefully avoiding the use of his left arm, and Darcy glared at him.

“How did you know that guy was going to shoot me, anyway?” Darcy asked, after a moment.

“He raised his weapon slightly so that it was pointed in your direction,” Thor explained. “He seemed more fearful than the others, and fearful men are more likely to lash out rather than behave with reason.”

“Well.” Darcy looked at him. “Thanks. Sorry I yelled at you about it, although I still wish you’d found a way to protect me that didn’t involve getting hurt yourself.”

“That would hardly be as heroic,” Fandral said wisely. “Besides, his banishment was rescinded the moment he saved you at his own expense, so all’s well that ends well, isn’t it?”

“I guess.” Darcy’s knees were sore from kneeling on the hard marble floor. She shifted, until she was sitting with her legs crossed. She frowned down at her bloody hands, and tried to wipe them off on her jacket. The thing was already ruined anyway.

Darcy realised, distantly, that she was shaking.

“Loki?” Volstagg asked. “Are you alright?”

Darcy shook her head.

“It’s too much,” she managed. “I’m not – I’m Darcy Lewis! This isn’t the life I grew up with, okay! My life does not have magic or people being shot or – or people from a past life showing up out of nowhere. My life was normal, and then all of a sudden everything went crazy!”

“She is in shock,” Sif observed. “I take it that Loki has not been a warrior in this life?”

“Damn straight I’m not!” Darcy said, her voice edging into hysteria. “I’m a student, I study political science and sometimes go to class, I don’t get involved in stand-offs with mysterious government
agencies!

“Loki,” Thor began, and stopped, at a loss for what to say.

“Tell us of this political science,” Volstagg suggested gently.

“It’s like, diplomacy and the government and stuff,” Darcy responded, trying to keep her voice steady. “I switched my majors like, three times before I tried poli-sci. I was really good at it, so I stayed. I’d almost finished my degree when I took the internship with Jane, so I could collect my six science credits. I don’t even know why I need actual science credits. It’s a social science major. It makes no sense.”

Darcy realised that her breathing had calmed a little, and she was talking more slowly than she had been at the beginning. She took a deep breath, and let it out, then did the same again.

Slowly her breathing evened out, and Darcy felt a little less frantic.

About ten minutes later several people came striding into the observatory, wearing the robes of healers. A couple of guards trailed behind them, carrying a stretcher. Darcy was surprised she even remembered what healer’s robes looked like.

Hogun waited at the Observatory door, watching.

“We must get him to the healing rooms at once,” ordered the healer in charge, gesturing for the guards to lower the stretcher, while Darcy and Sif got to their feet and moved out of the healers’ way.

“I am perfectly able to walk by myself—” Thor began.

“Thor, get your ass on that stretcher now,” Darcy snapped, glaring at him. “Or need I render you unconscious to ensure that you comply?” She raised a hand, and allowed it to glow green with magic as a warning.

“Very well, Loki. No need to use your tricks,” Thor grumbled. There were several gasps from the healers, who stared at Darcy in astonishment.

“I beg your pardon, my prince—but did you say Loki?” queried the healer in charge.

“Aye,” Thor grunted, climbing onto the stretcher with ill-grace. “He has been reborn as a mortal woman.”

Darcy smirked at the stares she received.

“Do not stand around gawping!” said the healer in charge, when she realised that the other healers were paying more attention to Darcy than Thor. “To the healing rooms, at once!”

The pair of guards hoisted Thor’s stretcher into the air and began to walk down the Bifrost, the healers following. Before she joined the little procession, Darcy covered herself with a glamour. Instead of walking out of the Observatory looking like a girl in jeans and a bloody jacket, she now appeared to be wearing a black dress with green sleeves and gold edging around the hems. That done, Darcy hurried to catch up with Thor.

As they journeyed through the palace to the healing rooms, Sif and the Warriors Three close behind her, Darcy was aware of the curious glances she was receiving.
As soon as they arrived at the healing rooms, Thor was directed onto an examination table.

“What caused this wound?” the healer in charge asked, peering at it with a critical eye.

“A small metal projectile fired at very high speed,” Darcy answered. “You’ll need to check if he has an exit wound, otherwise the projectile’s still inside him and needs to be removed.”

The healer’s eyebrows went up in surprise and disgust.

“What sort of place uses such weapons?” she muttered. “Removing the projectile will be both difficult and painful.”

Darcy sat nearby, along with Sif and the others, as the healer examined Thor. Finally she tutted.

“It appears that the metal object ricocheted off the edge of your scapula, causing some damage to the bone,” she announced.

“That explains why it hurts,” Thor observed, managing a faint smile.

“Indeed,” the healer said dryly. “As for the metal object, it appears to have shattered on impact. We will need to remove every piece of it.”

Darcy and the others winced at the idea. The healer turned to them.

“All of you, out,” she commanded. “We shall need the space, and you are causing a distraction.”

Reluctantly Darcy and the others were ushered out of the healing rooms.

“We should see Queen Frigga,” said Sif. “She should be informed that Thor is home, and how.” She looked at Darcy meaningfully, and Darcy rolled her eyes.

“Fine, I’ll come with you,” she agreed. Sif smiled.

“Excellent. My friends,” she addressed the Warriors Three, “we should meet in the feasting halls once Loki and I have seen the queen.”

“I could use something to eat,” said Volstagg, brightening.

“That always seems to be the case, my friend,” said Fandral, smiling.

“This way,” said Sif, touching Darcy’s elbow, and beginning to walk away.

Darcy followed her through the palace, faint memories stirring as they walked. The palace was familiar, but Darcy didn’t recall the layout with any clarity – only the sweeping halls and vaulted ceilings, and the marble and gold that seemed to be everywhere.

Sif and Darcy were stopped at the door to the throne room by a pair of guards.

“State your business,” said one of the guards.

“Lady Sif, Warrior of Asgard, with important news for the queen,” said Sif, bringing her right fist to rest over her heart in salute.

“And your companion?”

“She is part of the news I bear,” said Sif smoothly. The guards exchanged glances.
“I shall accompany you,” said one of the guards, as the other guard stepped back to let them pass. Sif went striding into the throne room, and Darcy followed, trying to appear just as confident, even though she was full of nerves.

Frigga sat on the throne, Gungnir in one hand. Over her gown she was wearing golden armour, a pale blue cloak flowing from her shoulders. It was clear that this was not merely the queen of Asgard, but its ruler. At the sight of her former mother, Darcy sucked in a breath.

This was the woman who had raised her with care and affection, who had taught her magic, who had loved Loki more truly than anyone else. Darcy hadn’t expected to be so overcome by emotion, but at the sight of Frigga her heart swelled with love and longing.

Sif walked forward and kneeled before the throne, her fist over her heart. Darcy hung back, the guard standing beside her.

“My queen,” Sif said.

“Rise, Lady Sif,” said Frigga. “What tidings do you bring me of my son?”

Sif smiled.

“Good tidings, my queen,” she replied. “Thor’s banishment has been rescinded, and he is back in Asgard. He is currently in the healing rooms, being treated for injuries sustained during the protection of another.”

“Who did Thor seek to protect?” Frigga inquired.

Darcy took a deep breath, and walked forward.

“He was protecting me,” she said, unable to help the wobbly, uncertain smile on her lips. “I would that he had thought his actions through a little more, but I cannot deny that the outcome is a positive one.” She gave Frigga the kind of sweeping bow that Loki once would have. “My name is Darcy Lewis, your majesty.”

Frigga went very still on her throne.

“Darcy Lewis,” she finally said softly. “Heimdall has spoken of you at great length. He tells me that you were once my son, Loki.”

Darcy’s smile firmed a little.

“He was telling the truth,” she said, and Frigga took a deep breath. The next moment she stood, putting Gungnir aside, and descended the steps of the throne. Darcy stood where she was as Frigga approached.

“My child,” Frigga breathed, and pulled Darcy into a hug.

Darcy hugged her tightly back, tears threatening to spill down her face. A moment later Frigga stepped back, her hands on Darcy’s shoulders, looking just as teary-eyed.

“Darcy Lewis, it is good to meet you at last,” said Frigga, clearly trying to recover her composure. Darcy blinked back tears and tried to do so as well. “I must thank you for your care of my son, these past few days. Heimdall tells me that you have kept him out of trouble while he has been banished to Midgard.”
“I tried, anyway,” Darcy said, managing a grin. “I was surprised to find that most of the time, he actually listened to me.”

Frigga blinked once as Darcy slipped out of Loki’s speech patterns, but did not lose her smile. Her expression was as bittersweet as Darcy felt right now. Sure, Frigga wasn’t her mother anymore; but at the same time, that feeling of connectedness was still there, just as it had been with Thor. Frigga might not be her mother, but Darcy was still attached to her.

“Tell me,” said Frigga, “how did he come to be protecting you?”

Darcy grimaced.

“That’s kind of a long story,” she said.

“Then we must retire somewhere a little more private, and you can tell me all,” Frigga decided. She turned to Sif, who was standing a short distance away, and politely pretending that she wasn’t listening in. “Lady Sif, thank you for bringing me news of Thor. You are dismissed.”

“Yes, my queen.” Sif saluted again, and left the room.

Frigga nodded to Darcy.

“Come with me, where we may speak freely,” she said. She walked towards the door in a stately way that Darcy couldn’t replicate if she tried. Darcy followed after her, and the two of them left the throne room.
Revelations

Chapter Notes

See end of chapter notes for warnings.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Chapter Ten

Frigga showed Darcy into a private sitting room. As the older woman sat down, Darcy noticed something.

“You have – um–” Darcy gestured, “some blood–”

Frigga looked down and noticed the blood smeared on her armour. She frowned at Darcy, putting two and two together.

“Lower your glamour,” she commanded. With a shrug Darcy did so, revealing her bloodstained clothes.

“Is that your blood?” Frigga asked, with a look of concern.

“Thor’s, actually,” Darcy replied apologetically. “I was trying to staunch the bleeding.”

Frigga sighed, and pulled out a handkerchief to wipe the blood from her armour.

“You had best restore your glamour before you leave this room,” she said dryly, “lest you alarm anyone who sees you.”

“Right,” said Darcy, settling gingerly down on the couch nearest Frigga’s, trying not to get any blood on it in the process, and wondered where to put her bloody hands.

Frigga reached out and took Darcy’s hands.

“Hladhqnd,” she said, and suddenly Darcy’s hands were clean.

“You have a spell just for cleaning hands?” Darcy asked, looking down at her clean hands.

“It’s a healer’s spell,” said Frigga. “As you might imagine, they use it rather frequently. There’s one for sterilising wounds, as well.”

“Sounds useful,” said Darcy thoughtfully.

Frigga sat with her hands in her lap, the picture of queenly grace, and looked at Darcy.

“Tell me of Thor’s time on Midgard,” she said. “I have heard Heimdall’s side of things, of course, but I would hear it from your point of view.”

So Darcy rested her hands on her knees, and told the story from the beginning, starting with the dreams she’d had all her life and how confused she’d had been when Thor first showed up, and finishing with the stand-off with Coulson and calling for Heimdall to open the Bifrost.
“It has been a busy few days for you, hasn’t it?” asked Frigga, once Darcy finally finished. “It cannot have been easy, trying to adjust to all of Loki’s memories and realising that they were real.”

Darcy shrugged, and smiled at her former mother.

“Well, yeah, but at the same time, I’ve had these memories all my life,” she said. “I just didn’t know they were real, until I met Thor.” Darcy shook her head. “He made such a poor first impression.”

Frigga laughed. It was a rich, warm sound that triggered a number of Loki’s memories inside Darcy’s head.

“My son does not always act with the grace due his station,” she agreed. “His temper sometimes gets the better of him, although he does try.” She sighed a little, the mirth draining from her features. “This mess with Jotunheim is the first incident in some years.”

“So the rest of the time, he’s better at keeping his cool?” Darcy questioned.

“Yes, although his arrogance has only grown with time, much to my dismay: his father has always favoured him too much. I think his time on Midgard has humbled him a little, however.”

“Oh-huh. What’s happening with Jotunheim, anyway?” Darcy wanted to know. “Is there going to be another war?”

“At this point, it seems unlikely, although the situation is uncertain,” said Frigga. “Jotunheim is not in the position to win another war – they are still recovering from the last one – and Laufey knows it. As long as no one does anything to make things worse, hopefully the situation will resolve itself.”

“Well, that’s a relief,” said Darcy. “From what Thor told me, things sounded pretty dire.”

“Oh, they are,” said Frigga dryly, “but hopefully diplomacy and caution shall win the day.” She shook her head, and looked back at Darcy. “What of you? Do you intend to stay in Asgard?”

“No offence, but definitely not,” Darcy replied. “Asgard… I never really fitted in here, you know? I never measured up. On Earth, no one expects me to meet some kind of impossible standard. They there accept me the way I am.”

Frigga reached out to rest her hand over Darcy’s, meeting Darcy’s eyes.

“I understand,” she said. “Thor and Odin cast large shadows. It’s why I taught Loki magic: so that he might have a little sun of his own.”

“I’m not sure that worked out the way you wanted it to,” Darcy said ruefully, “but thanks, all the same. I don’t remember everything you taught me, but I do remember some of it.” A thought struck her, and she suddenly sat upright. “Hey, are my rooms still…?”

“Loki’s rooms are exactly as they were when he died,” said Frigga, a wry twist to her lips. “I insisted, although Odin thought me foolish. But I had a feeling that they would one day be of use.”

Darcy looked at Frigga sharply, narrowing her eyes in sudden suspicion.

“Wait a minute,” she said slowly. “You wouldn’t happen to know anything about how I was reborn, would you?”

Frigga hesitated, then lowered her head in acknowledgement, something pained yet defiant in her eyes.
“I came to an agreement with the Fates,” she said, and Darcy sucked in a startled breath. Dealing with the Fates was dangerous as hell – you had to be either mad or seriously desperate to do it. “I brought them to admit that you were too potentially useful to be allowed to slip out of reach in death, and they agreed to perform a new weaving for your soul.”

“At what price?” Darcy demanded, a chill running down her spine. Deals with the Fates were never for free.

Frigga looked Darcy squarely in the eyes, no regret in her own.

“A son, Baldur. He was yet unborn, and now he never shall be.”

Darcy could only stare, torn between gratitude and horror. Frigga had sacrificed one son for another? She’d cared enough for Loki to exchange him for a son that hadn’t even been born yet? Darcy’s head whirled with shock and incredulity.

“Does Odin know?” she asked finally. Frigga shook her head.

“He does not,” she said. “He never even knew I was with child.”

Darcy swallowed.

“Thank you,” she said quietly, her voice wobbling a little. Frigga smiled, and there was something fierce and unforgiving in her expression.

“There is nothing I would not do for my sons,” she said, and Darcy knew that it was the absolute truth. “Loki lives in some form, free of all that burdened him before, and that is all that matters to me.”

“All the same,” said Darcy, “thank you. For everything.”

“You are most welcome,” said Frigga. “Now,” she added, in a lighter tone, “Why do I not call for some refreshment? I do not suppose you’ve inherited Loki’s sweet tooth?”

In spite of everything that they’d just talked about, Darcy couldn’t help but smile slightly.

“You bet I have,” she responded.

Some time later Darcy finally left the private sitting room, trying not to think of what Frigga had done for her, as Frigga returned to her duties as regent. Frigga informed the guards that Darcy was to have free reign through the palace, and would be staying in Prince Loki’s rooms for the time being. The guards couldn’t quite hide their expressions at that. Darcy was willing to bet that by tomorrow, between the guards and the healers, everyone in the palace was going to know that Loki had been reborn.

Darcy found that she didn’t mind all that much. After all, it wasn’t like she had to stay here, was it? She could put up with everyone’s attitude towards her for the length of a visit.

Walking through the palace on her own, Darcy approached the door to Loki’s rooms. She hesitated for a moment outside the door, feeling weirdly nervous.

“You are being foolish,” she finally muttered to herself, and opened the door.

Inside, a sense of familiarity hit her with full force. Loki’s rooms were exactly as he had left them, all those centuries ago, save that someone had made the bed. Darcy could feel the strong tingle of magic
throughout the room, preserving everything as it was and keeping the room dust-free. Looking around, Darcy felt a strong sense of nostalgia.

She started going through Loki’s belongings. His more important stuff was hidden away where no one could find it easily, but Darcy found the memories coming back to her as she searched the room. Some of the stuff she left where it was, but other things she dumped on the bed, to take back with her to Earth later. Included in the pile on the bed were several of Loki’s throwing knives – Darcy had every intention of re-learning that particular skill as soon as possible – some of Loki’s more useful spell-books and scrolls, and some small objects which had been enchanted for various purposes.

Loki’s armour was on a stand in the corner of the room, and Darcy snorted at the helmet. To Asgardian eyes it was very impressive, sure, but to someone from modern-day Earth, it looked kind of stupid.

Pulling off her bloodstained jacket and leaving it on the stone floor, Darcy stepped forward, hesitantly taking the black-and-gold breast-plate and back-plate off the stand and fitting them on. The moment she did, the magical armour shrank and reformed slightly, taking on Darcy’s proportions as it recognised her magic as Loki’s.

Grinning, Darcy started to put on the rest of the armour.

When she was done, Darcy looked at herself in the large full-length mirror that adorned one wall. Like the breast-plate and back-plate, the golden shoulder-guards and gauntlets had changed shape and size so that they fit perfectly. The green cape still hung from the armour stand, and Darcy removed it, attaching it to her armour. She stood in front of the mirror to admire the effect.

“Looking good,” she said aloud. The only down-side was that the jeans and sneakers she was wearing looked kind of out-of-place next to the armour, although the long-sleeved black shirt matched the armour surprisingly well. Grabbing a thin strip of leather that had been previously been used to string an amulet on, Darcy plaited her hair and used the strip of leather to tie the end of the plait in place.

Darcy grinned at the mirror, her expression full of teeth, and left to go join Sif and the Warriors Three in the feasting hall.

She might not be Loki anymore, but she looked pretty damn badass wearing his armour.

Chapter End Notes

So, there is mention in this chapter of a magical abortion/miscarriage that happened in exchange for Loki’s reincarnation. Just FYI.
Further Revelations

Chapter Eleven

By the time that Darcy joined the others in the feasting hall, Thor was already with them, his arm resting in a complicated sling. Darcy could see the group sitting in their customary spot, laughing and talking as they ate.

While the hall was nowhere near full, it wasn’t empty, either; here and there were nobles of Odin’s court, sitting at the long tables and eating.

As Darcy walked into the hall wearing Loki’s armour, several people stared, attracting the attention of their neighbours. It started a ripple effect, and as Darcy walked through the hall, more and more people turned to stare at her. Darcy ignored them, joining Thor and the others at their table.

“I see that the healers have finished with you,” said Darcy, drawing their attention.

“Loki!” Thor said gladly. “You have finished talking to Mother and been to visit your rooms.”

“I have,” Darcy agreed, taking a seat as the others shuffled aside to make space for her next to Thor.

“You’re wearing your armour,” said Sif. “I thought you weren’t a warrior in this life?”

“I am not,” Darcy agreed, “but I may yet need to become one, if Agent Coulson pursues me when I return to Earth.”

“Return?” chorused everyone but Thor. Darcy blinked at them.

“What, did you expect me to just leave my life and my family behind?” she asked. “Hell no. I am so heading back to Earth the first chance that I get.”

“But Father is still in the Odinsleep,” said Thor, his eyebrows drawing together. “Do you not wish to see him?”

Darcy hesitated. Her feelings about Odin were conflicted, to say the least. As Loki she had adored him and craved his approval, but Darcy had gained some perspective since then, and she knew that Odin had been far from an ideal father.

“To be honest, I don’t know,” she said. “Father always favoured you over me, Thor, and I don’t think he’d be too impressed to discover that I’ve been reborn as a mortal woman, even if I am totally awesome.”

Thor looked troubled.

“But you cannot intend to go already,” said Fandral. “Why, you have only just arrived!”

“Can and do,” replied Darcy. “Look, no offence, but this isn’t my place, okay? Like I said to Frigga, I don’t fit in here. Earth suits me. I’ll visit sometimes, if Odin doesn’t mind, but I’m not staying here.”

Sif and the Warriors Three exchanged dismayed glances.

“If that is what you want,” said Volstagg slowly, “then we must respect your wishes.”

“But are you sure?” Fandral put in.
“Very sure,” said Darcy. “Look, I’m not the same person I was as Loki, okay? I have lived an entire life since then, and I’m going to go on living it. Now change the subject.”

“Very well,” said Fandral. “Will you join us on the training grounds later?”

Darcy froze as the very idea brought the memory of Loki’s death vividly to mind.

Sif whacked Fandral on the arm.

“Of course she does not wish to return to the place where she died. Think before you speak, Fandral!”

“But she is wearing her armour this time, she will be fine!” Fandral protested.


Darcy swallowed, and made herself nod.

“I’m fine,” she said, and if her voice came out a little strained, no one commented on it.

“Here, you should eat some of this venison,” said Volstagg, pushing the platter in her direction. Darcy managed a smile.

“I thank you, Volstagg, but I have already eaten my fill of sweetmeats with the queen. My hunger is quite sated.”

“Sweetmeats are no substitute for a hearty meal,” Volstagg grumbled, but didn’t press further.

At that point a guard came striding into the hall, making a beeline for Thor.

“My prince,” said the guard, and gave a respectful bow.

“What is it?” Thor asked.

“The king is awake,” said the guard, and silence fell over the table. “The queen calls for your presence at his bedside.”

“I shall be there immediately,” said Thor, after a moment’s surprised silence. The guard nodded, and left the hall.

Thor looked at Darcy.

“Will you come?” he asked.

Darcy managed a smile.

“Better not. I think I should wait until Odin has had time to deal with more important matters, before this surprise is sprung on him.”

“You are important,” Thor said sternly. “I know Father would agree.”

“Maybe,” Darcy agreed, “but I’m still going to wait until I’m called to his presence.”

“Very well.” Thor stood. “My friends, I shall see you later.”

Darcy stood as well.
“I’m going to go back to my rooms,” she said. “I need to find a satchel or something that I can put some stuff in for when I leave.”

“Then we shall see you when you are done,” Sif said.

Thor and Darcy left the feasting hall together. Their paths would diverge a hallway away, but until then, their route through the palace was the same.

Thor glanced at Darcy.

“Father will be glad to see you,” he said. “Never doubt that.”

“We’ll see,” said Darcy.

Thor sighed a little.

“Believe what you will, then. But do not leave Asgard without saying your farewells first.”

“I won’t, I promise,” Darcy assured him, just before they parted ways.

Finding a bag that Darcy could put Loki’s stuff in was harder than she expected, but eventually, after asking the servants (and wasn’t that weird, servants), she was given a large satchel which was usually used for storing provisions on long journeys. Darcy filled it with the items she’d set aside earlier, then cast a spell designed to make the satchel lighter to carry. With several of Loki’s books and scrolls inside, it was rather heavy.

Darcy finished casting her spell on the satchel in time to hear the door creak behind her. She turned around, and there, standing in the doorway, was Odin.

For a long moment they just stared at each other.

“My queen and Heimdall tell me that you are Loki reborn,” said Odin.

“Yup,” Darcy agreed, looking at him watchfully.

“You will understand if I find that quite hard to believe, even if you have helped my son during his banishment,” said Odin. “A banishment which I expected to last longer than a few days,” he added severely.

Darcy shrugged, and offered, “Well, he did seem to learn what he’d done wrong, if that helps.”

Odin ignored her observation, his one fierce eye fixed firmly on hers.

“If you are Loki, where is your proof?”

Darcy frowned at him, but she supposed that it was a reasonable enough question.

“You are quite familiar with Loki’s magic, correct?” she asked, slipping back into Loki’s intonation.

“He was my son,” said Odin in answer. Darcy took that as a yes.

Calling on her magic, Darcy cupped her hands together, and watched as they filled with fiery green magic.

“I assume that this is looking pretty familiar to you?” she asked, but Odin’s eye was unseeing, his
senses fixed on something beyond mere vision. Then his eye snapped to hers, bright and hard and full of something that Darcy couldn’t define.

“Loki,” he said, his voice full of realisation. Then: “What have you done?”

“It was none of my doing,” Darcy told him, bristling. “So do not take that tone with me, Odin Allfather.”

Odin passed a hand across his eyes.

“Frigga,” he murmured. “It must be. She was always so certain…” He looked back at Darcy, appearing suddenly old.

“If you are truly Loki, then there is a secret which you should be made privy to,” Odin said heavily. “Your mother and I have kept it long enough.”

“I’m not actually Loki anymore, in case you hadn’t noticed, but okay,” said Darcy. “What secret?”

Odin appeared to gather himself.

“You are not of my blood.”


“You are aware, of course, of the war that Asgard fought against the Jotun, when you were only a babe,” he said.

“Well, duh,” said Darcy. “It’s only, like, the biggest historical event in recent Asgardian history.”

“When Jotunheim was defeated,” said Odin wearily, “its men lying dead and its forces demolished, I went into their temple. I found a baby, small for a giant’s offspring – abandoned, suffering, left to die. Laufey’s son.”

Laufey’s son. That meant…

“No…” Darcy breathed, and for a moment she was all Loki, reeling with the horror of that revelation. Her nails dug painfully into her palms. “I am… I mean, I was…”

“Jotun,” Odin finished. “You were an innocent child, and I thought that enough Jotun blood had been shed that day. I took you home, and raised you as my own son.”

“Why?” asked Darcy. “You were knee-deep in Jotun blood. Why would you take me? For what purpose?”

Odin hesitated.

“Tell me!” Darcy shouted.

“I thought we could unite our kingdoms one day, bring about an alliance, bring about a permanent peace… through you. But those plans no longer matter.”

Darcy laughed slightly hysterically.

“Because I died.”

“Because you were my son, and that mattered to me more than half-formed plans,” Odin corrected.
“Loki –”

Hearing Loki’s name spoken snapped her out of Loki’s horror, and suddenly she was only Darcy: still furious and hurt, but all Darcy. And Darcy was human and mortal, and Odin wasn’t her father anymore, and that put things into a different perspective.

“I was Jotun and you didn’t tell me?” Darcy exclaimed. “You know what, no, it doesn’t even matter. That was a lifetime ago. I’m human now, mortal, and I don’t give a damn if I used to be Jotun. That was Loki, not me.”

“You cannot have it both ways,” said Odin steadily. “Either you are Loki, or you are not.”

“Fine then,” said Darcy, smiling a dangerous smile. “In that case, I repudiate all claim to being Loki.”

“My child–” Odin began.

“I am not your child!” Darcy’s voice rang out. “My name is Darcy Lewis, and I’m a goddamn mortal, and I don’t need Asgard for shit!”

Before Odin could speak, Darcy began tearing off Loki’s armour and throwing the pieces at Odin’s feet.

“You can take this armour,” she started, “and shove it up your–”


Darcy paused halfway through stripping off her shoulder-guards, and watched him warily.

“For what?”

Odin let out a gusty sigh.

“For everything that I have done wrong.”

“That’s a pretty long list,” Darcy observed. “Do you even know how long it is?”

“I suspect not, if you feel the need to ask me that question,” Odin replied. “But I ask that you do not leave Asgard in haste and anger. For one, I doubt my wife would ever forgive me if she believed that I drove you from Asgard.”

Darcy thought of what Frigga had sacrificed so that Darcy was born, and snorted.

“Damn straight.”

Odin sighed again.

“I am an old man,” he said, “and I have made many mistakes. I did not begin to perceive how many I had made with Loki until his death at the hands of my elder son. Since then I have had time to reflect, and to understand some of what I did wrong.”

“I’m not Loki,” said Darcy. “I mean, I have the same soul, but you can’t expect me to be him, because I’m not. I’ve lived a totally different life – I’m not even the same species as your son. I meant it when I said I wasn’t Loki, but I don’t want to cut all my ties to Asgard unless I have to.”
“Understood,” said Odin. “Again, I am sorry. You are welcome in Asgard at any time. I am sure that both Frigga and Thor shall welcome you.”

“What about you?” Darcy asked shrewdly, eyeing Odin sideways.

Odin grimaced slightly.

“I confess, you remind me too much of my failures with Loki for me to be entirely comfortable in your presence,” he said. “But you may consider Asgard your home, if that is what you wish.”

“Thanks, but no thanks,” said Darcy. “I’ll totally visit, though.” She hesitated, and then asked, “Why didn’t you ever tell Loki that he was an adopted Jotun?”

“Because he was my son,” Odin said simply, as though that explained everything.

Which, what the hell, maybe it did. Darcy’s temper cooled a little.

“Didn’t want him freaking out on you and declaring that you weren’t his real dad, huh?” Darcy asked knowingly.

“Loki was always more sensitive than Thor,” said Odin, which Darcy took as a yes.

“I’ll assume that’s a yes,” said Darcy. “But if you think that if you’d told Thor that he was adopted and a Jotun and he wouldn’t have at least flipped a few tables, then you’re crazy.”

Odin smiled thinly.

“I suppose you are right,” he agreed. “Thor has always had a temper.”

“So did Loki,” Darcy pointed out. “It’s just that his was more likely to fester than see the light of day.”

Odin looked at Darcy for a long time.

“Can you forgive me?” he asked finally. “For all that I did not do right by you, through oversight or misapprehension?”

Somehow, even though Odin was responsible for more than Sif and the Warriors Three were, his question was easier to answer than theirs, despite the fact that Darcy was still kind of angry with him.

“Of course,” Darcy said. “I believe you did the best job you knew how to do, being Loki’s father. Maybe you could have done a better one, but the fact that you didn’t know how isn’t your fault.”

Odin straightened at her words, as though a heavy burden had been lifted from him. Darcy felt suddenly sorry for him.

“So, where’s Thor and Frigga?” Darcy asked.

“I believe that Thor is filling in his mother on what happened during his absence,” said Odin. “Shall we go join them?” There was a touch of hesitancy in his voice.

“Sure,” said Darcy. “Why not?”
Back on Earth

Chapter Twelve

Darcy returned to Earth two days later.

She’d said her farewells to Thor and Frigga, and to Sif and the Warriors Three, and even Odin had wished her a brief “Fare thee well, Darcy Lewis,” before she left Asgard.

Darcy had changed out of her borrowed dresses and back into her jeans and black shirt, and was wearing Loki’s armour over it. She’d left the helmet behind, on the grounds that it was heavy and looked ridiculous, but she was wearing everything else – even the bright green cape.

The Bifrost left Darcy standing in the middle of the main street, which was less inconspicuous than Darcy would have liked, but oh well.

The first thing Darcy did was head to the diner, because pancakes. She had missed them.

Isabella stared at Darcy’s armour, as did the rest of the diner’s occupants, but whatever: Darcy was so past caring by now.

Darcy was halfway through her stack of pancakes when a familiar suit-clad figure walked through the diner door. She tensed as Coulson sat down in the seat opposite hers.

“Should I expect your goons to show up any minute now, guns blazing?” Darcy snapped.

“No, no goons,” said Coulson. “It’s just me, this time.”

“Great.” Darcy stabbed her pancakes with more force than was necessary.

“I want to apologise for what happened to Thor,” said Coulson. “It shouldn’t have happened. The man responsible is being sent back to basic training. Since the incident we’ve spoken to Dr Foster, who has explained some of the circumstances, although I admit they were a little difficult to believe.”

“So what now?” Darcy asked. “Are you going to try and arrest me, again?”

Coulson smiled pleasantly.

“Actually, I’m here to offer you a job.”

“Wait, wait,” Darcy waved her fork in his direction, “your organisation tried to arrest me and my brother, shot my brother, and now you’re trying to recruit me?”

“We ran a background check on Darcy Lewis,” said Coulson. “Based on that evidence, and your behaviour while dealing with us, we believe that you are not a threat. Even after your brother was shot you didn't retaliate, which is usually a sign of good intentions. And SHIELD believes in building positive relationships with unusual people wherever possible.”

Darcy gaped at him in disbelief.

“After everything that’s happened, you expect me to believe you?”

“Call it a misunderstanding,” suggested Coulson. “SHIELD’s primary directive is the protection of the Earth from serious threats. We believe that you could be an asset to our organisation.”
“And Thor?” Darcy asked, raising an eyebrow.

“And SHIELD wishes to apologise for what happened to Thor,” Coulson replied. “We wish for nothing but peaceful contact with extraterrestrial cultures.”

Darcy finally got it.

“Oho,” she crowed, pointing at Coulson. “I get it. You guys finally worked out what you were dealing with and got spooked, am I right? You realised you weren’t just dealing with a couple of random weird people, but an alien civilisation that’s totally out of your league. This is damage control.”

Coulson was too much of a professional to wince, but his expression was suspiciously bland.

“You’re perceptive,” he said. “Just for the record, what powerful alien civilisation are we talking about?”

“Asgard,” said Darcy, grinning cheerfully now that she understood what was up. “About a thousand years ago, humanity worshipped them as gods.”

“I see,” said Coulson. “I assume, based on his position in the Norse pantheon, that Thor is someone of importance?”

“Dude,” said Darcy conspiratorially, leaning forward, “he’s the crown prince. And you guys shot him.” She sat back. “Are we done here?”

“Certainly,” said Coulson, standing. “But we’d appreciate it if you would come in at some point to give us a briefing on Asgard and what we need to know. And don’t forget about our offer. A career at SHIELD can be very rewarding.”

He held out a business card, which Darcy took reluctantly.

“And what’s happening to my boss, huh?” she sniped suspiciously.

“Dr Foster will be receiving funding from SHIELD for her current and future projects,” said Coulson. “After what happened here, we decided that it’s best if we’re not caught unawares like that again. Dr Foster’s research seemed like an intelligent avenue to explore. Good day, Miss Lewis.”

Coulson left the diner, leaving Darcy sitting alone at her table with half a plate of pancakes.

Grumbling to herself, Darcy resumed eating.

Had Jane really sold out to the MiB? Well, it probably wasn’t that surprising, really – if it was a choice between losing her life’s work, and receiving actual funding instead of just cobbling things together from whatever spare parts she could afford, it wasn’t exactly astounding that Jane had picked the option with full funding.

But where did that leave Darcy? Would Jane let her finish her internship?

Darcy sighed, and resolved to find Jane as soon as she had finished breakfast.

Jane proved to be in the lab. Darcy hovered uncertainly in the doorway, unsure of how her reappearance would be greeted.

“Um, hi?” she said aloud.
Jane and Erik whipped around from where they were looking at readings on Jane’s computer, their eyes widening as they saw Darcy standing there in her Asgardian armour.

“Darcy!” Jane exclaimed. “You’re back!”

“I totally am,” said Darcy. “Agent Coulson tells me you’re going to work for SHIELD.”

Jane made a face.

“I’m not working for them,” she said. “I’m just… receiving funding from them.” She stared at Darcy. “What about you?”

Darcy shifted.

“Well, I was hoping I could finish my internship,” she said in a rush, “although I totally understand if you don’t want me to after everything that’s happened—”

“Are you kidding me?” Jane blurted. “This is amazing! You can do magic, actual magic, which I’m assuming follows some set of scientific laws that I’m just not familiar with—”

“Kind of,” said Darcy, because magic was complicated and strongly affected by the observer effect.

“—and if SHIELD is right, you can tell me all about a functional Einstein-Rosen bridge,” Jane finished without pausing, her eyes gleaming with excitement. “Forget the internship, I’d like to hire you as a consultant to my project.”

Darcy was floored.

“A consultant?” she asked. “Really?” She looked at Erik, who was silent. “What do you think about this?”

Erik cleared his throat, looking uneasy.

“I cannot explain how you do your ‘magic,’” he said. “It is clear to me that there is much out there that cannot be explained by current science. If you understand the mechanisms behind what you do, then your understanding can only be an asset to Jane’s project.”

Darcy smiled, pleased. She looked back at Jane.

“I don’t remember everything about how magic works – not that I knew everything to begin with, obviously – but I’ve brought back some books to refresh my memory,” Darcy said, patting her satchel. “Also, some of it might be kind of hard to reconcile with modern science, because I’m pretty sure some modern science is wrong.”

“I can deal with that,” said Jane resolutely.

“Can you deal with Thor and his friends dropping by to visit? Because that’s likely to happen, too,” Darcy added.

“That’s fine,” said Jane, pinking slightly. Darcy noticed. She glanced at Erik, who looked resigned at the fact that Jane clearly had a thing for Thor. Darcy decided not to mention it.

“What are you going to do?” Darcy asked Erik. “Are you going to stick around and help out?”

“Actually, SHIELD has approached me about working on a different project, one of theirs,” said Erik. “It’s top-secret, so I can’t talk about it, and I don’t have many details yet, but it sounds like it
might be interesting."

“What? You didn’t tell me that,” said Jane, her eyebrows rising. Her expression was a little judgemental.

“I’m telling you now,” said Erik. “If I’m right, this could be a tremendous opportunity to work on something that could change the world.”

“I’m always wary of anything that might change the world,” said Darcy. “There’s always some little thing someone’s overlooked. But good for you. As the former God of Mischief, I approve.”

“Are you really the God of Mischief?” Erik asked, his voice a little pleading, like he was hoping Darcy would say no.

“Sort of,” said Darcy. “I’m Loki’s reincarnation, so I used to be Loki although I’m not now, and he was the God of Mischief. Although I guess whether you believe that depends on, like, how you define a god.”

Erik slumped a little.

“Gods and magic,” he muttered.

“It’s a whole new world,” Darcy agreed cheerfully. “If it helps, instead of thinking of them as actual gods, you can think of the Asgardians as aliens with god-like powers?”

“It does,” said Erik. “Thank you.”

“So Thor’s an alien?” Jane asked. “What about you?”

“Technically, I’m human, I just have the memories of being an Asgardian,” said Darcy. “Although I also have magic, so I don’t know how that works. Maybe my DNA is a little different from normal, or something. I have no clue. Actually, no, I have several clues, I just don’t know what they mean.”

“Maybe SHIELD can help?” Jane suggested doubtfully. Darcy scoffed.

“Like I want to give the Men in Black my DNA. I can deal with not knowing.” Darcy shook her head. “So. Consultant, huh? It’s a deal.”

Darcy held out a hand to shake Jane’s, and Jane took it.

They shook on it.

“Take a look at these readings and tell me what you think,” said Jane, dragging Darcy over to the laptop.

“Whoa, whoa, just let me get out of my armour first, okay?” said Darcy. “I’ll be back in five, but I want to get out of my armour and change into some clean clothes, first.”

“Fine,” said Jane. “But as soon as you get back–”

“I’ll look at your readings,” Darcy promised. Before Jane could think of anything else to ask her, Darcy teleported out of the building.

She landed outside the trailer she shared with Jane, which sat barely within the range of her teleportation range.
As she walked into the trailer and began taking off her satchel and her armour, Darcy wondered what would happen next.

She had a gut feeling that all of this – Thor, finding out that she was once Loki, everything – was only a precursor to something big. Something else was coming, Darcy could almost feel it. She just didn’t know what.

Looking pensive, Darcy picked out a green shirt and black jacket – the urge to dress in green, black and gold was too strong to resist, now – and a clean pair of jeans, and got changed out of her dirty clothes.

Whatever was coming, well, time would tell. And in the meantime, Darcy had some consulting to do.

Darcy smiled, and teleported out of the trailer.

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