On Punching Gods and Absentee Dads

by Enigmaris

Summary

Harry finds out that his dad is alive, has been the whole time. Instead of being overjoyed, Harry’s disgusted. His dad left earth and abandoned his friends. Every painful thing he's ever gone through can be traced back to one man. Now Harry's got super strength he can't control and an almost unnecessary amount of magical power. His dad might be living it up with the Avengers now but not for long. With the help of his friends, Harry comes up with a plan for revenge. Get ready Avengers, Harry's out to punch a god.

Notes

Settle in folks, it's time for angst and drama. Only the good stuff.
It's Obvious Really

The thing was that if Harry had just taken the time to think objectively about it he would have expected it. He wasn’t an idiot. The facts were all there. Anyone who had the knowledge and looked at his life objectively would have made the connection. He just hadn’t taken the time to think about it. Which, he thought somewhat bitterly, was sort of what he always did. If he thought about anything like Hermione, Sirius would still be alive.

He shook his head forcing himself not to think about Sirius. He was going to focus on the book that had appeared on his bed just a few minutes before. The book that would change his world and had woken him from the stupor he’d fallen into since the battle at the Ministry. After Sirius’ death and finding out about the prophecy Harry hadn’t really, felt anything at all. There were three more weeks of class and after that he was to return to the Dursleys. For a week after the battle he’d done nothing but lay in bed. He didn’t even sleep.

His friends had tried to get him to eat and talk about what had happened but he refused. That was of course until the book had arrived. It had come from Sirius of all people. Sirius had found the book in a box of things from his parents and he’d sent it to Harry right before that night at the Ministry. It had taken a week to get there because Sirius had sent in a way so that nobody but Harry would know. When the book had appeared in a beam of light right on his bed his friends had been pushing him to go down to dinner. After checking to see if the book was jinxed he’d pulled off the letter on the front and opened it to see it was from Sirius. His friends had left him alone to read after that telling him they’d be downstairs and they’d keep everyone out of the dorm for as long as they could.

Sirius had written a letter explaining where he’d found the box of things that belonged to his parents. He told Harry where the box was in Grimmauld Place and then sent this book for Harry to have. Harry tore open the book and his heart had stopped at seeing the inscription on the first page.

To my beloved Lily

Write your story and let it be filled with love.

From James

This was his mom’s diary? According to the letter from Sirius he hadn’t been able to open it. There was an enchantment that meant only certain people could read it. He didn’t even know what was in it. Knowing this was a gift from his dad to his mom made his eyes tear up. He caressed the side of the journal wondering what his mother had written inside. He took in a deep breath and turned the page.

The writing was careful. The letters were large and slightly angular. It was written with a quill Harry thought. His fingers trailed the letters not even taking in what it was saying. He just wanted to take in the essence of his parents for a moment. Then he finally started to read.

Tonight was not what I’d planned for my wedding night. I suppose knowing my husband I should have rid myself of any ideas of a traditional night. But still tonight was way more than just surprising. James gave me this book so I could write down how I felt. Finding out that he’d been lying to me, lying to everyone… I don’t know how to feel about it.

I know I love him. I married him and I don’t regret it. That means I must love him even if he did lie to me. Which he did. I’m not going to forget that. Forgive? Probably. Forget? Never. The fact is that
James Potter is not even human and he didn’t tell me that until our wedding night. So now I’m sitting here outside on the porch of this beach house angrily writing instead of spending time in the bedroom with my new husband.

I’m angry. I’m scared. I’m confused. I understand why he lied. I do. I even understand why he came to earth in the first place. But I just don’t know what that means for me. What do you do when you marry an Asgardian?

Harry stopped reading immediately. Asgardian? Like Asgardian Asgardian? Like from Asgard the realm eternal Asgardian? The wizarding world of course knew of the gods. How could they forget? When Asgard had cut off communication with Earth centuries ago the wizards had not forgotten their old allies. When Thor had returned to earth to help stop Loki’s invasion the wizarding world had erupted into excitement. Would Asgard return entirely? Would old trade routes and old practices be renewed?

So far all that had happened was that Loki had returned to earth to repay his debts to the people he’d invaded. He stayed with the Avengers and worked with them to protect the world he’d tried to harm. No contact had been made by either Asgardian with the wizarding world. All of this was interesting but it wasn’t the reason he was so shocked.

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The reason he was shocked was because of what it meant that his dad was from Asgard. It meant he was half-Asgardian. Which he couldn’t be. Half-Asgardians or demi-gods as they were more commonly known as were...more than he was. They were stronger, more powerful, and better.

Harry had crappy eyesight and could barely pass his classes let alone lift heavy weights. There was no way he was a demi-god. It couldn’t be possible. Harry shook his head. He needed to keep reading, he needed to know more before he jumped to crazy conclusions. He took a deep breath and went back down to the writing.

James had left his home in Asgard many years before. There aren’t many magic users there now and he felt lonely, isolated. So he’d gone to earth to live for a while as a human magic user. At first he’d planned on just making up an adult identity but then he ran into the Potters. They still worshipped the old gods and they were praying for a child. So James had given them one, himself.

He let them raise him again, a new baby and he grew up as a human. The magic he used to make himself their child had locked away his memories of his past until he grew to be old enough to understand it. The original plan was for him to remember that he was actually Asgardian and return home. Except...he had me and he had Sirius and Remus and Peter. He couldn’t leave us.

So he stayed. He stayed with us, immortal and powerful and lying. I don’t know how to feel. I know I’d be devastated if he left me. But at the same time won’t it hurt him when I start getting old and he doesn’t? It’s not fair to either of us. And what about children? I always wanted a huge family but any children I have with James will be demi-gods. They’ll be powerful and I don’t know how I feel about that. What with the war being like it is I don’t want my children dragged into that war while they’re still young just because they have power.

I can hear James walking around the house. After he’d told me the truth I stormed out of the house. We’re at an old family beach house for our honeymoon. I almost left the house entirely but I decided to stay. I’ve never been to France and I didn’t want to get lost. Now James is fretting in the house
clearly trying to decide whether or not to come out and talk to me. I don’t know what I want him to do.

To talk or not to talk? To stay or not to stay? I don’t want to leave. I want to love James Potter for the rest of my life. But will my love hurt him? Will I be strong enough to stay with someone who will outlive me by thousands of years? I don’t know what to do.

The entry ended there. Harry ran a hand through his hair and quickly flipped the page. He needed to know more. So much more. He shifted on his bed trying to get comfortable. He swallowed and dived right back into the story.

James eventually came out and we talked some more. By some more I mean we talked all night. We talked until the sun started rising over the Mediterranean. James begged for me to listen and forgive him. I told him that wasn’t the problem and explained how worried I was. Which of course gave him the opportunity to explain them away. I won’t tell him that was what I wanted but I think he already knew.

He insisted that it didn’t matter about our different lifespans. If I wanted to become immortal like him I could. He was important enough in Asgard that he could get me an apple of immortality. Which was not something I had considered. He promised that if I decided to stay mortal then he would stay with me throughout my life and he’d never begrudge me that. He knew what he was getting into when he married me, he’d already accepted the risk.

I don’t know how to feel about it but at least I know how he feels. We talked about children next and he swore to me that no matter what he’d keep his children safe. He wanted a family too. That made me happy. He told me about his mother in Asgard, a fierce woman who would no doubt love our children demi-god or not.

There is some stigma against demi-gods in Asgard. Apparently the reason Asgard stopped talking with earth all those years ago was because of the danger demi-gods posed. They had the power of an Asgardian and often something more because of their human ancestry. They didn’t make demi-gods illegal but cutting down on the interactions with our two worlds lessened the danger.

James insisted that I shouldn’t worry though. He’d protect any of our children. I believe him as much as I can. The final part of our conversation that night was about him. Who was he before he was my James? A god that’s what. The god of mischief and magic which is so James it made me laugh. He had a brother that he had a complicated relationship with as well as a father and a mother.

The most shocking thing about his whole identity was the fact that he was (or rather is) a prince. Prince Loki Odinson of Asgard. Which makes me, as his wife, a princess. Take that Petunia.

Harry was torn between laughing about his mother’s spiteful words to his aunt and screaming at the revelation. He was the son of the guy who tried to invade earth a year ago? Well maybe not. He still wasn’t convinced of his status as a demi-god, he needed to read more. So he did. For the next three hours he read through his mother’s journal. He read as she decided that she would join her husband in Asgard when she was a little older, she didn’t want to start being immortal as a 19-year old.

He read about her pregnancy with him and how excited both of his parents were for him to be born. He read about the journeys James took to Asgard to get things for Lily that would help her with her pregnancy. The spells his dad cast on her to keep them both healthy and to ensure that Harry had the best chance at life. It made him warm inside even if he couldn’t exactly deal with the fact that his dad had also tried to take over earth.
The page of his mother’s journal talking about the day he was born made Harry actually cry. To read how happy his mother was for him. How much she loved him. It was almost too much. It didn’t really become real in his mind until he read about his true name.

Apparently his father had been so concerned for his health and safety that he decided to hide his true identity as a demigod. A series of spells placed on him right at birth that limited his strength and magic, made him seem like a normal baby wizard. The only way to break the spells and release his true potential was to speak the name that his mother had written with hearts doodled around it.

Haraldr Lokison.

It sunk in that this could be real. He could really be the son of a god. Haraldr Lokison. What would happen to him if he said it out loud? Did he want to? His dad had clearly abandoned him and Remus and Sirius after his mother’s death. He should be mad! He was mad! But he was also curious. What could he do now? Could this be the power the dark lord knew not? Did he need to break the spell on him in order to save the world and his friends?

He wasn’t surprised when there was a knock on the door to the dorm.

“Harry?” Ron said. “The other guys want to get to bed.”

“Let’s go to the room of requirement.” Harry said. “I need to tell you guys what was in this book.”

It was the first time he’d suggested going anywhere but this room. Ron was quick to agree. Soon they were in the room of requirement the book heavy in his arms. The room provided them with a single couch. Harry settled in the middle with his head in Hermione’s lap. Hermione instantly started carding his hair while Ron petted his side. Physical comfort was still so new to him in a lot of ways and it helped.

“So what was in the book?”

“It was my mum’s diary from my dad. A gift for their wedding day. Mum really loved me. She wrote about me and…”

He trailed off and licked his lips.

“Dad wasn’t human.”

Silence. His friends don’t say anything. They didn’t even stop with their petting. Harry took in another deep breath and he started talking. He told them everything he’d read but stopped just short of saying the name out loud. His friends had questions but they waited until he was finished.

“What’s the name?” Ron asked.

“Don’t want to say. Not sure if I should.” Harry admitted. “That berk that was once my dad he left me. He abandoned Sirius and Remus. Then he comes back to earth not for me but to take the place over.”

“Oh okay so your dad is an arse.” Ron surmised. “But bloody hell Harry you’re a demigod. Voldemort wouldn’t stand a chance.”

“Ron’s right.” Hermione said. “You should tell us your name, see if it’s true. It doesn’t mean you have to do anything with Loki. All it means is that you’re giving yourself the best chance to fulfill the prophecy. I’m honestly not surprised that you’re a demi-god Harry.”
“What?” Harry demanded. “How in Merlin’s name aren’t you surprised?”

“Harry when we were eleven you wrestled a troll. When we were twelve you slew a basilisk. When we were thirteen you cast a patronous so powerful you drove off over a hundred dementors right as they were about to perform a kiss,” Hermione said. “That’s not even including all of the other amazing things you do on a yearly basis. Honestly only a demi-god would get into as many adventures as you do.”

That made him huff a laugh.

“Blimey.” Ron said. “If you’re a demi-god does that make us your…side kicks?”

“No.” Hermione said. “Obviously we’re his adventurous companions. Oh what’s the word the Asgardians used. I read it once in a book. Shield brethren! We’re his shield brother and sister.”

“Shield brother? What does that mean?”

“It means that we guard each other’s backs.” Harry said softly. “It means we’ll be with each other through anything. It’s a bond stronger than blood because it’s a bond forged through trial. A bond you choose.”

He didn’t know how he knew that. Had he read it somewhere? That didn’t sound like him.

“Sounds like us.” Ron said. “I don’t know about you guys but I have a lot of family and I’m closer to you two than any of them. Not that I don’t love my family but…”

“I get it.” Hermione said. “I feel closer to you two than I do my parents.”

“I imagine if I ever had a family it’d feel like what I feel with you guys.” Harry admitted.

“Then that’s settled. I’m Hermione Jean Granger and I am a shield sister to Ronald Weasley and Harry Potter.”

She said this very officially even raising one hand up like it was a magical vow. Harry sat up between his two friends wondering what was going to happen next. There was stillness in the air, anticipation was growing. Ron raised his hand next almost transfixed.

“I’m Ronald Billius Weasley and I’m a shield brother to Hermione Granger and Harry Potter.”

Ron and Hermione’s hands started glow, snakes of light circling their fingers, palm and wrist. A promise built in magic. Harry knew if he wanted to do this then he needed to use his real name. Or it wouldn’t count as much as it could, as much as it should. He lifted up his own hand and took a deep breath.

“I am Haraldr Lokison and I am a shield brother to Ronald Weasley and Hermione Granger.”

The light sparked along his own hand but it was much brighter than his friends. In fact it was burning. The burning spread down along his entire body circling and heating him up from the inside out. He closed his eyes against the pain and felt his friends grabbing him. The pain increased around his forehead burning like only Voldemort had only ever been able to do to him. The pain was so much that Harry couldn’t even scream, his breath has been stolen away. The last thing he recognized before he gave into unconsciousness was his friends touching his skin and calling his name.

He woke hours later still in the room of requirement. His entire body felt sore and leaden. He forced his eyelids open with a great force of will.
“Harry?” Hermione asked. “Are you awake?”

“Yeah.”

“Oh, thank Merlin. One more hour and I was going to drag you to Madam Pomphrey no matter what Ron thought.”

His mouth felt like it had been stuffed with cotton and his tongue was numb. No sooner had he thought about than a glass of water appeared in mid-air. Hermione caught the glass and then carefully helped him sit up and gave him a few sips.

“Ron went out to get food with the cloak a few minutes ago. You’ve been out for 5 hours. It’s well past midnight now. How do you feel?”

“Sore.” He said lifting up a hand to rub his face.

Only to pause when he saw the mark on his wrist. It wasn’t all that noticeable really, it looked like just a small tattoo. He blinked and brought it closer to his face. It looked like a Celtic knot with three main knots intertwined.

“We all got them the moment you said your name.” Hermione said. “It’s evidence of the bond we formed. Don’t worry I’ve read about these. I knew what I was doing.”

“Really?”

“Of course. It’s just a basic bond. Nothing complicated like a marriage or adoption bond.” Hermione said clinically, almost offended that he doubted her. “All it is, is a magical manifestation of our friendship, our being shield brothers and sisters. Each node represents something. Here.”

She took his wrist in her hand gently and pointed to the first node. It had a zig zag pattern that reminded Harry a little bit of his scar.

“I learnt about this in Runes.” She said. “This one is a sōwilō node. It means literally sun but in runes like this it stands for protection, strength and guidance. It’s the line of a leader.”

“Isn’t that sort of like my…”

“Your scar? The rune sōwilō is the exact shape of your scar actually. Probably more evidence of your demi-god-ness.” She said.

“So is that my line? I don’t feel like a leader.”

“Harry the DA may have been my idea but you are definitely the leader of it.”

There was no denying that. Harry may not have felt like much of a leader but he was the head of the DA. He nodded and so Hermione moved to the next knot. It sort of looked like a bunch of triangles.

“This is the berkanan. Literally it means ‘birch tree’ but birches stand for wisdom and hope.”

Harry almost wanted to say that this was for Hermione but that didn’t feel right. Mostly because he knew his friends better than that. If this was about hope then Ron was their best bet. Ron was the one who could be optimistic. Ron was the one who looked on the bright side. Ron was the one who kept Harry and Hermione from falling into anxiety. Ron distracted them with jokes, stories and chess games.

“Ron?”
“That’s what I thought too.” She said wryly. “Ron thinks I’m crazy but then again I don’t think he knows himself very well.”

“What’s yours then?”

“The laguz. It means lake but usually refers to seer water. In this case I’m assuming it means someone clear minded and intelligent who can see many possible paths and possibilities. Someone who knows more than most but like many seers doesn’t know what to do with it.” She explained.

“Sounds like you but you always know what to do.”

“I really don’t Harry.” She sighed. “When you fainted, I had no idea what to do. I just…try to plan for every worst case scenario. That’s why I always seem so prepared.”

“You still get us through.”

“No don’t you see Harry. We get each other through.” Hermione said. “Look at how the three nodes interlock in the center and the overall circular shape of the image. We’re all equal partners in this. Together we are at our strongest. I’m the brains, you’re the brawn and Ron’s the heart. Together we make one round, never ending and in balance.”

That was actually rather poignant. Harry touched the mark on his wrist. It was silvery in the light and it would be barely noticeable. It felt nice to have it there.

“Why’d you have us bond Hermione?”

“You told me you didn’t have a family.” She said.

“You knew that though.”

“Of course, I did.” She said. “But…I don’t know it just hit me how unfair all of it was. You’re one of the kindest people I’ve ever met Harry and it…I know you never had a good time at the Dursleys but I just tried not to think about why because it made me so angry and upset that you were suffering and I couldn’t do anything. Now with Sirius gone our one chance at getting you out of there before your 17th birthday is gone. I just wanted to make sure you knew we were with you all the way. Have been from the beginning.”

He sniffed and rubbed his eyes. It was then that he noticed his glasses were gone.

“Where are my glasses?”

“Do you need them? I’m sorry I forgot to hand them to you. We took them off when you passed out.”

Harry shook his head and looked around him. The room was crystal clear. He could see the individual gray stones of the castle wall. The grain on the wood of the torches that light the room.

“I don’t need them.”

“What?”

“I think that spell Loki used on me messed with my eyesight. It’s gone and I can see.” Harry said in awe. “I can see.”

“That’s wonderful Harry. How does your head feel?”
“My head?”

“Any headache?” She asked.

That was when Harry realized he didn’t have a headache. For over a year he had had a constant ache in his head. Ever since that night in the graveyard after Voldemort had touched his skin. But it was gone. No pain lingered in his head. He rubbed his scar expecting it to prickle but to his surprise it felt like…a scar. Nothing special.

“No. It doesn’t hurt. Why?”

“Well you’re scar glowed a few hours ago. You screamed a lot and said it was burning but then you sort of switched into Parseltongue and we didn’t understand.” She said wringing her hands.

Hermione was seated on the floor next to the couch while Harry’s body took up its entire length stretched out.

“Did anything else happen?”

“Well…you grew.”

“Grew?”

“Yes. You’re only a bit shorter than Ron now. You used to be shorter than me. I think Loki’s spell kept your body looking like James instead of like his real Aesir body. But now that you’ve broken it you grew to your proper height.”

“Blimey. No wonder I’m so sore.”

“Your hair’s the same and so are your eyes and nose.” She said. “You just got a bit taller. Most people won’t notice since you slouch all the time.”

“A slouching demi-god. What will the history books say?” Ron said from the entrance.

Harry and Hermione giggled while Ron brought over his basket of food from the kitchens.

“Good to see you mate. How are you?”

“Sore but alive. Don’t really feel much different really.”

“Well there’s one way to test if you are.” Ron said.

Ron reached into his basket and pulled out a fork.

“Bend it. You should be strong now yeah?”

Harry took the fork but before he could even attempt to bend the fork it mangled itself in his hand under what he had thought had been a gentle grip. He moved the fork in his hand. It still felt like metal to him of course but soft and malleable in a way that it never had before. He swallowed and looked up at his friends.

“That was easy.”

“It might also be a bit harder to hide.”

“Bloody hell mate. You’ll break any door knobs you touch with strength like that.”
“Or people.” Harry added.

“Stay calm.” Hermione said. “I’ll look up in the library what we should do and I’ll make up a few plans…”

“Don’t sweat it Hermione.” Ron said. “It’s just going to take practice. Here.”

He took the mangled fork from Harry and cast a repairing spell on it. Then he held it out to Harry again.

“Try again.”

He took the fork with as gentle a grip as he could and found that it only bent a little.

“See practice.” Ron said smiling. “Harry’ll get used to it. It’s just like how we had to learn to control our magic as first years. He can do it again with this. And if he breaks anything we can fix it. We do have magic after all.”

“What about when I go back to the Dursleys?” Harry asked, stories of tragic greek demi-gods filling up his head.

That made Ron pause even Hermione looked stumped. Harry sighed and leaned forward to sneak out a bite of food out of the basket. Of course he crushed the soft cake he pulled out in his hand. He played it cool but dumping all of the crushed mess in his mouth like he’d meant to do that. Which made his two friends giggle at him.

They for a while, all of them thinking about what had happened. The longer Harry had to think about it, the angrier he got.

“I just…I can’t believe it.”

“What?”

“He left everything behind.” Harry said.

“Harry.” Ron said. “Maybe he thought you died.”

“What?”

“I’ve been thinking about it.” Ron said. “I don’t know why you survived the killing curse. But some of the stories my mum’s told me about demigods…well even that curse could kill them.”

Harry swallowed at more evidence that he was freakish somehow.

“It’s true. The spell would work on a god if you could hit them with one powerful enough.” Hermione added. “Maybe he thought you died and so he went home because his family was dead. And when he came back to earth maybe he wanted to get revenge…I’m not saying it’s right but it does make sense.”

Harry clenched his fists, the skin turning white. He had to admit it did make sense. If Loki had thought Harry was dead then why would he ever go looking for him at the Dursleys? But something about it didn’t sit right.

“But what about Remus?”

“What?” Ron asked.
“Remus! His best friend! Even if he thought everyone was dead. Even if he was right and I was dead and Sirius and Peter and Mom were all dead, he still left Remus behind, all alone. We saw him in our third year. Do you think he was doing well?”

That made his two friends scowl because it was true. No matter what the explanation was that Loki had, no matter what had happened, short of being obliviated, he had left Remus Lupin behind. Harry wanted answers, but more importantly he wanted justice.

“All I want to do is just…use all of this new strength I can’t control and punch him in his rat face!”

Hermione smile a little at Harry’s declaration while Ron only looked more thoughtful.

“What is it Ron?”

“Why don’t you Harry?”

“Why don’t I what?”

“Punch him.”
How to Throw a Punch

Chapter Summary

The Golden Trio makes a plan and Harry travels to New York without a passport, its almost too easy.

Chapter Notes

Heyyyy, I'm back at you with a new 5k word chapter. Please forgive my inability to update regularly. I am but a humble graduate student trying to learn about Martian volcanism.

Harry blinked stupidly at his best friend and Ron grinned.

“Think about it mate. Everyone knows that the gods are living in New York City. You could get a portkey there, go to his house, punch him and leave.”

“He lives with superheroes. They’re not gonna let me get near him without a fight.” Harry pointed out.

“Then use magic and stun ‘em.” Ron said as if it was obvious.


“Half of my dad’s job is finding ways to explain away magic to muggles.” Ron told them. “And Harry won’t be breaking the statute if he can explain his magic as something else, something alien.”

“So, if I do a spell and say hey my name is Haraldr Lokison then they’ll just think I’m Asgardian.” Harry said. “That’s genius.”

“But what about the underage magic laws? Harry could get his wand snapped…I mean unless of course he did his magic wandless making it impossible for any government to track…” Hermione said thoughtfully. “But that’s impossible…”

“Why’s it impossible?” Ron asked. “Harry’s a demigod.”

They stayed up the rest of the night talking about if it would be possible for Harry to punch the god of mischief in the face. The more they talked and planned the more likely it seemed. At first Harry brought up his friends going but Ron told him it wouldn’t be a smart idea.

“We need to be here to make sure people believe you’re with the Dursleys. Hermione and I can cover you so you can spend as much time as you need in New York.”

“It’s true. I want to be there with Harry, really I do. I know a few spells that would be perfect to cast on your dad.” Hermione said. “But if we get caught trying to sneak out, we’ll never get there.”
Harry nodded in understanding. Part of him hurt that his friends couldn’t go, but another part of him felt glad. This was dangerous and his friends couldn’t be hurt by Avengers or gods if they weren’t there.

“Alright so…all I need to do is learn how to make portkeys and how to do wandless magic, all before the school year ends.” Harry said. “So that I can go punch my dad in the face.”

“Don’t worry mate.” Ron promised. “We’ll help you. I’ll even go to the library.”

“Well come on. We need to get some sleep.” Hermione said. “Then we’ll get down to the library and get to work.”

Which is exactly what they did. For the next week Harry was constantly active. He practiced controlling his strength and he tried wandless magic. Surprisingly, the last was easier than the first. The increase in magical strength had really only made magic easier. Which was good since he broke things constantly when he wasn’t thinking. His magic was able to hide the damage.

Hermione had replaced the lenses in his glasses with regular window glass so he could still wear them without anyone knowing his eyes were better. He also took to slouching more than he had before, sure it was bad for his back, but he only had to do it until the end of the school year. Then over the summer he could have a ‘growth spurt’ and no one would be any wiser that he was actually half alien.

It turned out that planning a way to get into New York City just to punch a god was easier than originally believed. There was a place in Diagon Alley that sold international portkeys. Harry could buy one to get to New York and from there Harry could camp out in the wizarding district while he got everything else together. Ron and Hermione helped him practice every spell he’d need whenever they had free time. They explained it away by saying they were helping Harry grieve.

By the time the school year ended they had a plan. Harry felt confident that he’d be able to knock Loki down. He’d even had Ginny show him how to properly punch. He’d mentioned to her that he was finally tired of getting beat up by his cousin and she’d shown him where to put his thumb so he didn’t break it. The 4th year girl was terrifying but now Harry was sure he could properly punch out the god of lies.

Which was all that really mattered anyway.

“So, we’re all clear on the plan?” Ron asked as he pulled the train compartment door shut.

“We been through it a dozen times.” Hermione said. “Of course, we’re clear on what we’re doing.”

“I just want to make sure we’ve figured everything out. It isn’t every day you make a plan to punch a god.”

“You know we really need a better name for this plan.” Harry pointed out. “Something…with more subtlety”

“Harry, you’re going to a different country for the first time to punch a god.” Hermione told him. “There’s nothing subtle about this.”

“We still could have come up with a plan name.”

Hermione sighed in despair which made Harry grin. His mom’s journal had revitalized him in a way. It wasn’t just finding out he was a demi-god, really it was finding out how loved he was. His soul still hurt when he thought about Sirius or the prophecy but now he didn’t feel as if he was drowning
Ron sat down next to Harry and placed his feet on the bench right next to where Hermione was sitting. Hermione lifted an eyebrow up at Ron’s invasion of her space. When he didn’t move his feet away, she merely sighed and placed the heavy book she had in her lap onto his calves. The title read *Compendium of Wandless Magic Spells*.

“Ouch.” Ron complained, it probably didn’t hurt that much since he didn’t move.

“What’s that for?” Harry asked. “I thought I’d gotten wandless magic down.”

“It’s true you can do it.” Hermione admitted. “A lot better than I thought.”

“Wow thanks.” Hermione gave him a look and Harry mimed zipping his lips shut.

“Anyway.” She said. “I noticed that some spells were easier for you than others and I wondered why.”

“I’ve always been better at some stuff.” Harry said. “I don’t think my demigoddness is gonna make me good at potions.”

“I looked it up.” Hermione said. “Apparently some spells actually work better wandless than others. If the spell is older, like the summoning spell or the cutting charm and invented before wands became mainstream then they’re easier to cast. If the spell is newer and made with a wand in mind then it’s harder.”

“Oh.” Harry said.

I didn’t even think about that.” Ron admitted, blushing a little. “So what sort of spells should Harry use?”

“I…borrowed this book from the library.” Hermione said patting the heavy tome.

“We’re not allowed to take books over the summer.” Harry said grinning. “Hermione Granger did you steal something from the library?”

“It was for a good cause!” Hermione said. “Besides we’re going to bring it back. No one will notice it’s gone.”

“What’s so good about it?” Ron asked.

“Harry can use this to figure out what spells to use on his break in attempt. The last thing we want is Harry trying to break in and using a spell designed for wand magic and having a false start.”

“Gimme the book.” Harry said after a momentary pause.

Hermione smirked but did hand him the book. He opened it up and flipped through the pages. This really would help him pick the right spells to use. He sent a grateful smile to Hermione. The cart lady came by a moment later asking if they wanted anything. Harry pulled out some galleons and ordered sweets for all of them.

While they chewed on sugar quills and chocolate frogs Harry read through a few spells that seemed useful. He wondered if he could do them wordlessly too.

“I suppose there is one thing we forgot.” Hermione said.
“What?” Ron asked, his voice panicked. “I swear I thought of everything!”

“No, not like that. It’s just…after the punch.” Hermione said gently. “Are you going to talk to your dad about the war? Now that the ministry is admitting that You-Know-Who is back there’s nothing keeping him from acting openly against the world.”

Harry honestly didn’t know. He didn’t want to think about it. He knew he probably should. That if his dad could help end the war, save more lives, then Harry should tell him. But at the same time he didn’t want to have anything to do with someone who could abandon his friends so easily. He got a stubborn look on his face that his friends easily interpreted.

“If you don’t want to talk to your dad about it maybe Thor would help. He’s your uncle isn’t he? Plus he’s a superhero so it’s sort of his job.” Ron suggested.

“I dunno. He doesn’t have any magic and the rest of the Avengers are muggles. Would it be safe?” Harry asked.

“If it feels right.” Hermione said. “Give them the option. Our side needs as much help as it can get.”

“Alright. I’ll keep an open mind.”

“Good. Now we’ve done enough planning. Harry let’s play some chess.”

Harry grinned but agreed to play chess with Ron. The other teen soundly defeated him three times while Hermione read through another book, this one on the Norse gods and the history of demigods. Harry didn’t want to know what was in that book because he had a feeling it wasn’t good based on Hermione’s look.

By the time they pulled into London Harry had almost forgotten that there was anything wrong in his life. No one had come by their compartment to bother them and his friends kept him pretty distracted. But when the train slowed down and Harry realized he had to actually go to New York and punch his dad, the nerves came back.

“It’s going to be okay Harry.”

“Yeah.” Harry said looking at his friends. “Come on. Let’s go.”

“It’s show time.” Ron said grinning.

Show time involved getting their trunks, avoiding Malfoy and his goons, and going over to where the Weasleys were waiting. Harry received the hug from Mrs. Weasley very carefully, even so she must have thought he was squeezing her a bit too hard because she got a little teary and told him that it was going to be alright. He was just glad he hadn’t hurt her. Harry didn’t know if things were going to be alright, all he did know was that he had answers and justice to get.

Once he’d said goodbye to all of the Weasleys, Fred and George included. He made his excuses and quickly stole away. He heard Ron explaining to his mum and dad that the Dursleys were anxious to get Harry home safely to the blood wards. The last thing Harry heard before going through the barrier was Mr. Weasley saying he was glad that the muggles had gotten their heads on right.

Harry made his way through the crowds of the station, keeping his eye out for his relatives. He saw Uncle Vernon, angrily standing near one of the exits. Harry knew that if he didn’t go over there in 15 minutes or less then the man would leave him there. Which was just fine by him. Harry had no plans on speaking to his relatives at all. Instead he snuck over to the nearest men’s restroom and stuffed himself into the empty handicap stall.
He needed the space to do the magic he had to do. He looked at the empty owl cage on the top of his trunk for a moment in sadness. He’d sent Hedwig to the Burrow. His bird would be safer there. She’d assured him in her own way that she could make it and Hermione had confirmed that Hedwig would be just fine on her own for a while. It didn’t mean he didn’t miss his bird. He opened the trunk and pulled out some clothing.

Getting the right clothing had been easier than expected. He’d just asked Dobby for help and the elf had happily gotten him what he needed. It wasn’t that Harry didn’t have muggle clothing, he did. It was just that the muggle clothing was either a Weasley sweater or some of Dudley’s hand-me-downs. If Harry was honest with himself, he didn’t want to see his dad wearing either. He wanted to look like he was strong, like the world wasn’t spiraling out of control around him. At least when he punched him.

He quickly changed into the clothing, thankfully Dobby had listened very carefully about what Harry wanted and hadn’t purchased anything too…Dobby-ish for lack of a better term. The shirt was a dark green and the jeans fit him, without any holes or tears. Dobby had even gotten him new trainers that fit his feet (which had grown with the rest of him). Once he was dressed he cast a few spells, wandlessly, on himself. The first was a notice-me-not charm to make sure that no muggles bothered him. The next was a small glamor to cover up the lightning bolt scar. The final one was a hair changing spell, this was actually a pranking spell but it still worked.

Harry shrunk his trunk and left the bathroom looking like a brunette with straight, thin hair and a clear complexion. He walked confidently through the crowds that magically parted for him. Everyone in the station sensed he was there even though their eyes slid right over him. It made getting through and out the door pretty easy.

From the station Harry walked to the Leaky Cauldron. It wasn’t a quick walk but that was fine. With his enhanced endurance he wasn’t tired and it gave him time to really think through his plan. His friends had really helped shape the plan, but now that Harry was on his own there were things to think about. Things like how hard to punch Loki and where. Should he punch him in the face? The face that was so similar to his own, the face that had cursed him to be constantly compared to a trouble making dad? Or maybe he should punch him in the gut? That was Dudley’s favorite place to punch people so Harry knew exactly how much it hurt.

Every time he thought about his dad in any real way he felt nothing but anger. Anger for the little boy in the cupboard who had constantly wished that someone would save him. Anger for the 11 year old wizard who nearly lost himself to a mirror that promised family. Fury for the man who had lost his youth to Azkaban and his life to a war that should never have gone on this long. Rage for a man ravaged by a curse and left alone by the people he thought he could trust. There was just so much hurt in him. His dad was alive, and he had left everyone alone for 14 years! Nothing could justify that! Nothing ever would.

Harry was familiar with rage. He was a long time friend of pushing down all of your anger and hiding it away. This past year he’d snapped left and right. Umbridge and Voldemort’s visions had destroyed his ability to pretend that he wasn’t constantly frustrated and upset with the world. Sometimes it scared him, this darkness inside. It made him wonder late at night if he was just like Voldemort after all. Harry didn’t want to feel like this, he didn’t want to feel monstrous. But sometimes he did. Like right then as he walked through the busy streets of London. Because as much as he called punching Loki justice, wasn’t it really revenge? Yes, that’s what it was. He was avenging his destroyed childhood, he was avenging Sirius’s painful life, he was avenging Remus’ loneliness and pain.
With just one punch Harry reminded himself. He didn’t want to go overboard, no need to become the next Hercules and accidentally kill all of his family. That’s not a good look on anyone. He didn’t want to kill Loki, he didn’t want the man to die. Harry just wanted to take all of this anger and hurt and blame someone for it. He wanted someone else to take responsibility for all the shitty things that had happened. But Loki wasn’t doing that, he wasn’t coming back into the world and saving the day. Hence the punch.

By the time Harry had gotten to the Leaky Cauldron he’d reigned in his temper. He made his way inside, unlike every other time he’d gone in there people didn’t crowd him. In fact, no one even really bothered to give him more than a glance. He walked past Tom and out into the entrance. Pulling out his wand he carefully tapped the right brick and went inside. As Ron said, it was show time.

Getting the portkey turned out to be easy. They’d all been worried that there would be some sort of restrictions on who could buy them. Like the restrictions Dumbledore had placed around the goblet of fire. But no, Harry had just walked in, asked for a portkey to New York City, paid the man 20 galleons and then walked out of the store with a rope that would take him to New York City when he said the word ‘hopscotch’. Which was just the funniest thing. Could Harry have purchased a portkey as a first year? Would the tired attendant at the desk have even batted an eye?

It didn’t matter. He had a way to get to Loki now. Harry swung over to Gringotts and withdrew enough galleons to pay for the trip, then he exchanged about half of it for muggle American money. Once he was sure he had everything he needed, he took the portkey in hand and said the word.

“Hopscotch.”

The sensation of being hooked by the navel and spun around was one that was all too familiar. Harry didn’t even realize how much he hated it until he had already landed flat on his face in a terminal in New York City. He shivered and tried to clamp down on the instinctual panic.

“Sir.” A tired voice in an American accent said. “Please stand up and move out of the way for any other incoming travelers.”

Harry groaned but pushed himself up. He looked around to see a man in a muggle uniform looking at him with what could really only be described as apathy.

“You alright?” Harry asked.

“Long day.” The man admitted with a snort. “First time to New York?”

“Uhh…yes?”

“Go down that hallway. Walk through the red arches. They’ll take off any spells you’ve got on you that would hide your identity, glamors and Polyjuice, things like that. It’s a security thing.” The man said pointing to a hallway to the right of the terminal Harry had ended up in. “Then wait in line and when an attendant becomes free go up, state your name and your purpose. Produce your wand to prove you are who you say you are, and then you’re free to go. If you need any help finding a hotel or anything else there are information elves inside the station.”

“Right.” Harry said. “Thanks.”

The man had already tuned him out. Harry straightened out his clothing and made his way quickly towards the arches. He didn’t mind that his glamor would be removed, he’d only done it so that no one in London would see him and alert the headmaster. He walked through the arches and felt the
glamors fall off.

The entire place reminded Harry of an airport. He’d never actually been to a muggle one but he’d seen it in movies that Dudley watched sometimes. There were magical moving advertisements on the walls, telling him about the different things, both magical and mundane, that he should be sure to visit. The carpet was short and thick with a weird geometric pattern in dark blue. The hallways were lit with mage lights stuck inside glass boxes. It was all very modern compared to Diagon Alley and Hogwarts.

Once he got to the end of the hallway he walked into a wider room that had multiple lines of people waiting between floating ropes. Each line led up to a human behind a desk. It really was like an airport. Harry grinned and made his way to the line that looked the shortest, which turned out to be the third one from the right.

To his left there was a woman with eyes that didn’t look human, she had long blonde hair and she smelled like flowers. Something about her made Harry’s head feel dizzy and disoriented. He shook his head and closed his eyes, it took a moment but his head cleared. He called on his magic to help him not lose his head and he opened his eyes again. Was she part veela? Harry didn’t know but it didn’t matter.

The line moved forward and so Harry stepped past the pretty woman. There was a family to his right, complete with crying toddler. The only difference was that this crying toddler clearly had magic. Harry watched in fascination as every time the toddler kicked the ground, the carpeted floor started sporting little spots of char. Where the pudgy fists hit, little puffs of flames erupted. The toddler’s mum was trying to calm the young boy but to no avail. The dad was just putting the flames out if they got too big.

The family’s line moved forward, and the mum dragged the toddler further along, with a protective spell on her skin giving it a blue tint. Harry watched them go with wide eyes. Someone came up behind him and he glanced back to see a man wearing invisible clothing. By invisible, Harry meant that it worked just the same way his invisibility cloak did. His jacket and trousers made a clear image of what was behind him, the only thing visible was his neck, face and hands.

“Nice clothes.” Harry said to the man.

“Thanks.” The man said in an American accent. “It’s all the rage in Cali.”

“Really?” Harry said.

“Oh yeah. I like it but it’s not nearly as cool as what you British wizards have. Your robes are so slimming.”

Harry nodded, he hadn’t really noticed his robes as slimming, but then again it wasn’t like he wore his school uniform for the style of it all.

“What are you coming to the US for?” The guy asked.

“Tourist stuff.” Harry evaded. “Never been outside of Britain, wanted to experience something new.”

If by something new, Harry meant punching a god in the throat.

“Nice. I just got back from France. I ended my vacation early. Now that the war’s back on it’s safer here than in Europe.”
Harry grimaced and made a sound of agreement. He didn’t know how famous he was outside of Britain but since the man hadn’t recognized him it might not be that big of a deal.

“I’m Brian, Brian Freeze by the way.” The man said sending out a hand to shake.

“Harry.” There was no need to push his luck by giving a last name.

“Word of advice Harry?” Brian said. “Talk to the elves about getting a hotel in the muggle part. It’s much cheaper and there’s less likelihood of someone drunkenly using an unlocking charm on your door because they thought it was their room.”

“Thanks.”

“And it might help with…that.” He motioned to Harry’s forehead. “That is if you didn’t want to be noticed.”

Harry blushed and awkwardly tried to cover up the scar.

“noticed that did you?”

“Can’t help but notice. Your face has been everywhere, ever since last year when you got put in the Tri-Wizard Tournament against your will.”

“Really? I mean… the papers here said it was against my will?”

“Wasn’t it?”

“Course it was.”

“Well, the papers have been covering you since.”

“Maybe I should get a hat.”

“Might help.” Brian agreed sounding more amused than he had any right to.

Their line moved forward and Harry realized it was nearly his turn. He was at the front now and the large woman in front of him was in the middle of handing her wand over. When she started to waddle away, Brian spoke.

“Good luck Harry.”

“Thanks Brian.”

Harry strode up to the attendant, a woman with bright purple hair and lips that were stained the same color. She was looking at a magical screen that reminded Harry of a hologram.

“Name and Country of Origin please.”

“Uhh… Harry Potter and Britain.”

The woman snorted.

“Right and I’m Elvi- Holy shit it really is.”

Harry blushed bright red as the woman stared gobsmacked at him. That seemed to shake her and she cleared her throat.
“Sorry…Why are you coming to New York City, Mr. Potter?”

“I want to see some sites, be a tourist.” Harry lied as best he could.

“Of course. Wand please.”

He pulled his wand out of his pocket and placed it on the desk. The desk glowed white for a moment and then the light turned green and Harry heard a dinging sound.

“That’s all cleared up, feel free to go on to the left and into the station.”

“Thanks.”

Harry pretended like he couldn’t feel the woman’s eyes boring holes into the back of his head and he hurried away. Turns out he was just famous everywhere. The first thing he did was replace his glamors once he was free to. The station was huge, there were shops selling everything from novelty t-shirts to potion ingredients to magical snacks. People were milling in and out of the shops. There were food stores selling pizzas and burgers and all sorts of things Harry had only ever dreamed of eating.

He weaved through the crowds of people until he got to the information desk. It figured they’d leave the house elves to work the most demeaning job. He shook his head and walked up to a house elf wearing clothing that was similar to the uniforms the rest of the works had.

“How can Figsie help you today?”

“Can you help me get a hotel room in the muggle part of New York?” Harry asked.

“Of course sirs.” Figsie snapped his fingers and produced a brochure. “What sorts of hotel did sirs want?”

Harry took the brochure and opened it up. He quickly realized he had more than enough to pay for any hotel he wanted.

“Could I get one near Avengers Tower? It’s in Midtown…I think.”

“There’s a very nice one. Would you like a view of the tower sirs?”

“Yeah, and could I get a balcony or something?”

Figsie nodded and soon Harry had a hotel room. According to the brochure most muggle hotels had rooms that were placed on hold for magical clients. It was a law that magical government in the United States passed to mitigate the risk of drunken tourists doing magic in front of muggles. He read about the spells put in place on hotels to ensure that there were always rooms available and so that the muggles working there didn’t notice.

Harry would have disliked the morals of that if he still wasn’t paying the people who owned the hotel. They did get money, and it didn’t seem like they lost a lot of revenue. In fact, after this decision magical tourism to New York actually increased. So…maybe it was good for them? Harry shook his head and decided not to think about it too much.

Figsie helped him set up the payment so that the bill was charged directly to his Gringotts vault and then gave him a hotel room key that would magically transport him to his room. New York City had really done a lot to ensure that witches and wizards interacted with muggles as little as possible. It was almost funny. How many incidents had almost destroyed the statute of secrecy before the
government was forced to go to these lengths?

“Thanks Figsie. Are there any pamphlets that can tell me what rules I should follow? I don’t want to break the statute accidentally.”

“Of course sirs. Here you are.”

Harry thanked the elf again, taking the pamphlets that the elf had provided. He knew he was going to be skirting the magical secrecy laws but there was no reason to spit on them too. He wandered around the station a little longer, window shopping and reading through the pamphlets. Once he’d seen enough and even purchased some small trinkets for Ron and Hermione, he decided to call it a day and head to the hotel.

It might have been closer to lunch time here in New York but Harry had had a full day. Tomorrow he could start planning. He used his key card and it portkeyed him right into his hotel. This time instead of landing on a hard surface. He landed with a bounce on a large bed. The bed was probably the most comfortable he’d ever laid in. The entire room was almost too nice.

The walls were a very pale gold and the lights in the room were warm. Carefully Harry got off the bed and walked over to the large balcony. He pushed open the glass door and walked into the hot summer air. Gleaming right in front of him, only a few blocks away was Avengers Tower. Even Harry, entrenched as he was in his own life and the wizarding world, knew about Tony Stark and the rest of the Avengers. The tower was impressive, made up of beautiful, elegant lines. It looked like the pinnacle of futurism, the promise of a better tomorrow.

“I’m gonna feel bad breaking into it.”

Hopefully he wouldn’t wreck the tower. If the plan went well the worst that would happen were a few windows broken and maybe some dents in a wall or two. Nothing that couldn’t be fixed. Unless lost control of his strength…then there might be more damage. He promised himself to be careful as he stared at the silver tower. The Avengers were nice people, even if they were hanging out with his deadbeat, world invading dad.
Harry stared at the tower for a little bit longer, plans circulating in his head. There was so much to do, so many things to plan out. As flippant as Ron had been even he had understood that it wasn’t as easy as knocking on the door and then punching Loki in the jaw. No this had to be done correctly. Elegantly, even. Harry wasn’t much of a Slytherin no matter what the hat thought but he would have to be cunning if he was going to get close enough to Loki to punch him, without then immediately being locked up forever.

Eventually Harry went back inside and ordered a pizza using the phone in his room. He figured he deserved that much. He ordered an extra large pizza, he’d found that his appetite had increased so much after the spells Loki had placed on him fell. He was almost always hungry. Another reason to be mad at Loki Harry supposed. Thanks to him now Harry always wanted to eat. If he went back to the Dursleys he might literally die.

Wait if? What was he thinking, of course he was going to go back. There were the blood wards to consider. He couldn’t be without that protection. Why not? You’re a demigod aren’t you? What Death Eater is going to give you a problem? Plenty actually. Harry might be way more powerful but that didn’t mean he had the knowledge. He needed the blood wards. Do you? Why not just go live in Grimmauld Place? It’s not like the blood wards protected you this year. Voldemort was still able to get into your mind, still able to possess you. He has your blood in him now.

Harry had to admit that the voice in his head had a point. It was something to consider. After he confronted his dad, what would he do next? Could he really go back to the Dursleys? Was he willing to risk his safety completely by going without the blood wards? After thinking about it for a long time Harry decided that was yet another decision that could be made post-punching.

When the pizza showed up Harry happily distracted himself by consuming all of it at a rapid enough pace to make Ron look polite. He threw the empty box in the trash can, only one corner of it really fit, so he was forced to bend the cardboard, not at all a difficult task. With his stomach full of food and his mind of thoughts, Harry went to sleep.

That night, like most nights, Harry was plagued by dreams. Sirius falling through the veil, a bright green light engulfing Cedric’s chest. They danced across his mind and kept him tossing and turning. By the time the morning broke Harry was covered in sweat and he had a headache. Which was really not the proper way to start his first day in New York.
Harry stumbled into the overly large bathroom and took a long hot shower. When he stepped out of the shower his skin was pinked from the heat and steam. Carefully he wrapped a towel around his waist and stopped in front of the mirror. Staring back at him with bags under his eyes was a boy covered in scars. There was the one on his face, the large puncture wound from the basilisk, plenty of scars from Vernon and Dudley that he’d acquired over the years, some of the scars he’d gotten from the Tri-wizard tournament, and not to mention the one on the back of his hand.

Harry didn’t normally think about it. He didn’t like to. Normally when someone thought about a person being covered in scars it was a soldier or maybe a criminal. Someone who’d lived a tough life. No one thought about a kid. Because that’s all he was really at the end of the day. A kid with too many scars and too many memories. Harry sighed, his head hitting the mirror. It was okay. Or maybe, it was going to be.

He glanced down at the tattoo on his wrist and felt better. His friends didn’t care that his skin was made up of more red lines than pale white. He rubbed the mark and left the bathroom to go get dressed. As he dressed he reminded himself of the plan that he and his friends concocted. The plan was to spy on Avengers tower and find a way to break in and out. He needed to determine if there were magical wards on the building, or muggle cameras.

Once he knew, he’d come up with a plan, and then he’d punch Loki. After Harry was dressed he started prepping for the day. He put a glamor on that made him a blonde, tanned his skin, and covered his scars. Once he was sure that most people wouldn’t recognize him, he packed his backpack and started the first day of surveillance.

For the next three days Harry spent his time under different disguises trying to figure out the best way to get into the tower. He couldn’t find any magical protection but it wasn’t like the tower needed it. There were cameras everywhere, electronic locks on the doors, and Harry was pretty sure there were muggle weapons hidden in the walls. He couldn’t think of a way to sneak in other than going under the invisibility cloak and hoping for the best. Or totally wrecking the place.

When he called his friends on the hotel phone, they both told him that he’d figure something out. He hadn’t come all this way for nothing. Which Harry agreed with. There was no way he was going to leave New York without confronting his dad. But that didn’t help with the fact that his dad was making that almost impossible. Was it on purpose? Harry couldn’t say. He didn’t want to believe that his dad knew he was alive and was actively avoiding him. But a part of him feared it.

The days passed and the longer Harry went without an idea the more frustrated he grew. Who knew revenge was so hard to get? By the time the first week had ended Harry kept tugging at his hair in agitation as he glared at the tower. He knew he wasn’t much of a planner. Harry preferred to move on instinct, go head first into trouble and work with what he had in that moment. It got him hurt (and others too) but trying it this way didn’t seem to be working either.

The sun was starting to set over the city, combined with the skyline it made a beautiful sight. Not that Harry really cared about that right then. The first day he might have appreciated the sight, now it represented everything wrong in the world. Things that he couldn’t overcome or figure out.

“It’s like if Draco Malfoy got transfigured into a building.” Harry decided.

Before he could ruminate further on the description part of the tower blew up. Harry flinched and covered his head as debris flew up and right towards the various buildings surrounding the tower. When the debris had finished falling Harry looked back at the tower. There was a woman she was wearing green leather and a black cape. From the distance Harry could see that she was blonde but not much else.
The important thing about this scene was that she was dragging Thor, the god of thunder, the Asgardian, the powerhouse, by the hair. The man was trying to grab at something and struggle but something about his movement seemed sluggish. Harry didn’t even hesitate. He rushed into his room and pulled his broom right out of his trunk. There wasn’t time to waste putting on a glamor or doing anything else. He had to get down there now.

He sprinted to the balcony and jumped off the edge, broom in hand. He immediately used the broom to control his descent. He flew towards the street that was right below Avengers tower. Below him hundreds of New Yorkers were rushing towards buildings, seeking shelter. In the time he’d taken to get his broom the other Avengers had gotten out into the street too. Thor was bound behind the fighting, looking pretty beat up. Harry’s eyes scanned around and saw that his dad was dueling with the blonde woman, both of them using magic.

He stopped his descent for a moment watching, almost enchanted at the sheer skill his dad had. He was teleporting and using illusions and spells Harry had never even dreamed of. Harry wandlessly cast a powerful notice-me-not charm on himself and flew until he was as close to the Avengers and the fighting as he dared. He hovered behind them as the muggles discussed the villain.

“How long do we wait before we jump her?” Iron Man asked.

“Loki told us to be careful.” Captain America said. “We don’t have any protection against Amora’s mind control magic.”

So that was her name. Amora. Why was she attacking New York? For that matter why did everyone attack New York? There were other cities in the world!

“I don’t like this.” Hawkeye said, his hands flexing on a black complicated looking bow.

There was a huge explosion of green magic, Harry looked over to see that his dad had been thrown back and was now being tied up with ropes of bright red fire. He looked like he was in pain, his jaw clenched and his body jerking.

“You know.” Amora said, stepping towards his dad. “Finding out about your heritage made this almost too easy.”

The Avengers all moved to defend Loki but Amora waved her glove covered hand. The asphalt on the street transfigured into fingers of stone that reached up and trapped all of the Avengers. Some of them even reached up and covered weapons, keeping them from being trapped against the Avengers’ bodies.

“Don’t interrupt your betters, mortals.” Amora spat. “This is between me and the princes.”

The Avengers all struggled. Harry could see that stone was cracking under Captain America’s strength and the Iron Man suit. But every time a bit of stone broke off more grew over it, strengthening the trap. This was bad. Really bad. He watched as Black Widow managed to get a knife free and throw it. Only for Amora to bat it out of the way like it was nothing. Amora stood in front of his writhing father, a smirk on her pretty face.

“Do you like the spell work? I stole it from an old Vanir man, right before I slit his throat.” She said. “Never thought I’d need it, but it looks like it’s my lucky day.”

His dad jerked, testing the fire burning into his armor and skin.

“Don’t be silly, it’ll take you much longer than that to break through, this was designed to cage monsters like you after all. It’s plenty of time for me to take what’s mine and get away from this
She looked over at Thor with something dark in her eyes. Thor looked terrified even though he couldn’t seem to move his limbs. Maybe he was under some sort of super powered perfectus totalis? Harry looked around for the famous hammer, and saw it sitting innocently on its side a few feet from Amora and Loki. It must have fallen off of Thor’s belt.

Amora turned back and glared down at Loki.

“This is your fault you know. If you’d just let me have Thor when I wanted all those centuries ago I wouldn’t be here now, ready to destroy everything you know. I’d be queen and you’d be a loyal servant. Wouldn’t that have been better?”

“As if I’d ever be loyal to someone so similar to a hag.”

The woman snarled at the insult, her hands glowing with deadly green fire.

“You know for that I think I’ll kill you. I was going to let you live, perhaps as a slave, but I think death might be more appropriate for a creature like you. Who knows the mortals might even thank me.”

The magic glowed brighter and Harry was moving before he could even stop himself. Harry landed with a thud right in front of his dad and threw his hands up. Calling on every bit of his magic he could grab at he cast a wordless protego. A translucent blue shield appeared right in front of him a moment before green fire engulfed his vision. The flames licked at the sides of the shield but none of them touched him or his dad. When the spell ended, Harry dropped his shield and used his hands to shoot a bombarda at the woman. She flew back and crashed into the asphalt a few meters away. Harry’s chest heaved as he focused on the woman.

He knew that if he tried to duel this woman he would lose. Just shielding against one of her spells had made him shake with effort. She knew way more magic than him. He might have been a demi-god but he didn’t have the training to take on a fully realized god. The longer the fight went on the more likely he’d die. Which would suck, to say the least.

Amora jumped up with a snarl, her hands dripping with malicious magic.

“Who would dare interrupt me?”

“Literally anyone who had ears would want to interrupt you. Your voice is very shrill.”

Had Harry ever once, in his short sad life, filtered what came out of his mouth? Had there ever been a time where he’d stopped himself and thought, maybe I shouldn’t say this right now? If the current situation was any proof. Probably not.

“You ugly little magic user.” She snarled stepping forward.

“Hey. That’s no way to talk about yourself.”

A wave of flame rolled right towards him. Harry threw up another shield, this time an ice based one that he’d learnt while studying for DA meetings. The ice sizzled but held strong. Once the flame died, Harry started to walk to the left, towards the hammer and away from his still tied up dad. He didn’t want his dad or the Avengers to get hit by a stray spell.

“I mean really.” Harry continued. “You might be an awful woman whose body is really only a husk housing a hole where your heart used to be but that’s no reason to resort to calling yourself ugly.
You are a lady after all.”

No, Harry really didn’t have a brain to mouth filter, did he? Had Dudley hit him too hard in the head when they were smaller? Was that why he was like this? Amora was focused entirely on him. Which was good, really good actually. If he could keep distracting her then her focus on the spells holding the Avengers and her dad would waver. Harry could be a distraction for a few minutes, couldn’t he?

Amora fired another spell at him, this time it was a magically conjured metal spike, Harry knew that if he tried to block it, he’d fail. It was too bright, too much. A memory of Professor McGonagall explaining the power of transfiguration for problem solving echoed through his head.

*Remember students. Sometimes we are not powerful enough to stop something, but we can always change it.*

Harry spread out his hands and focused on the incoming projectile and twisted it. The bright silver spike began to wiggle and transform, Harry reached out as it neared him and snatched a silver rose out of the air like a snitch.

“Aw. Look, it’s prettier than you’ll ever be,” Harry said waving the flower at her.

And so it started. Amora fired everything she had at him and Harry transfigured it as quickly as he could and dodged what he couldn’t change. A spell designed to blind him was turned into a spray of glitter. A wave of water made to drown was turned into bubbles. Ropes sent to tie up were turned into snakes that listened when he hissed at them to go away. Rocks that were lifted up from the earth and thrown with great force were transfigured into pillows.

The more Harry defended himself, the angrier Amora got. With her anger her magic turned sharper, and became harder to change. Harry’s feet were becoming unsteady as sweat dripped down his face and neck. The woman flung a spell that looked like it was made of air, Harry moved to dodge and ended up tripping. He landed on his side with a painful thud. He looked over and saw that he’d tripped on his uncle’s hammer.

He rolled over and grabbed the hammer. He tucked himself up and jumped into the air. The hammer hummed like static in his hand. It felt like he’d put his hand inside an electrical socket. Amora actually paused in her relentless attack.

“Impossible. A mere mortal couldn’t…”

Harry didn’t let her finish. Instead he flung the hammer as hard as he could right towards her. Harry might have not had a lot of experience throwing hammers, or really throwing anything, that didn’t stop the hammer’s aim from being true. Harry was pretty sure it was because it was magic. The hammer hit her dead in the chest, an awful crunching sound echoing down the street. The breath was knocked out of her and she landed on the ground, her head and back slamming into the street with a slap. Harry waited for her to get up, but she didn’t.

Slowly Harry edged forward, he saw that she was breathing but based on the sounds he heard and the fact that she wasn’t moving he was pretty sure she was unconscious. His limbs suddenly felt like noodles, he’d won. How in Merlin’s name had he won? Harry could remember losing duels to fourth years during DA lessons. It didn’t make sense. Nothing made sense. He blinked rapidly trying to make the world stop spinning. His body swayed back and forth and his head felt too light.

“Hey kid!” Iron Man yelled, the face plate on his suit removed so that his voice was clearer. “You okay?”
“I should be dead. She should’ve killed me.” Harry said, loud enough for the other humans to hear. “How am I not dead?”

“Think about that after you’ve helped us!” Hawkeye yelled.

“Hawkeye.” Captain America chastised. “Not appropriate. He’s just a kid.”

Harry lifted a hand over to his mouth to stifle the practically hysteric giggles that were trying to escape. He took in a deep breath and tried to clear his mind. Right. Helping the Avengers.

“Just… Just a minute.” He said.

Harry bent down and picked up the hammer. If the lady woke up he’d need it so he could throw it at her again. Harry felt like he was maybe forgetting something about the hammer that was still sending pleasant tingles down his arm. He looked around and decided to go help Thor first, if he could. After all it was the man’s hammer that meant he was alive at all right then. He stumbled over to the man, still feeling dizzy and weird.

“Thank you, brave warrior.” Thor rumbled.

“What’d she do to you?” Harry asked, ignoring that really weird greeting.

“The bands on my wrists. They’ve taken my strength.”

Sure enough there were golden bands digging tightly into the god’s skin. Harry knelt down and tried to tug them off. When that didn’t work he looked over at the hammer, and then at Thor. The question obvious. Thor looked thoughtful for a moment before speaking.

“It should work. Just don’t hit too hard. I don’t need broken wrists.”

“You sure you’re not the god of not-at-all comforting words?”

“I could be that too.”

Harry snorted as he moved the hammer right above one of the bands. Carefully as he could he swung down, pleased to see that it caused the band to crack. Harry quickly used his fingers to tear and rip the metal apart. Apparently, this super strength was good for something after all. He did it for the other band. Once he was free Thor sat up, looking more unsteady than Harry did. Thor kept looking at Harry like he recognized him from somewhere. Apparently, his resemblance to Loki was more than skin deep.

“Here.” Harry said standing up and holding out his hand.

“I don’t know…” Thor clearly thought he was as weak and scrawny as he looked.

“Just take my hand.”

Thor did, and Harry then pulled him up. Harry used his second hand to stabilize the man. Once Thor looked like he wasn’t going to fall, Harry let go. He walked slowly, right past Loki, and towards the other Avengers. He heard Thor follow him after a moment. The humans were already working at getting out. Now that Amora was unconscious her spellwork on them was failing. It was also failing for Loki as he heard the man slowly getting up on his own.

“Kid you look like you’re about to throw up.”

“I’m fine.” Harry said in a voice that wasn’t at all convincing.
“Of course, he’s fine.” Loki said. “Any magic user with power like that can handle anything.”

“Like you handled it?” Harry asked before he could stop himself. Not that he had tried all that hard.

“Oh snap.” Hawkeye said. “You tell him.”

“I hadn’t expected her to have spells like that.” Loki defended, tense and annoyed at being called out. “But we all know that your win was down more to luck than any actual skill.”

A muscle in his face twitched violently from his position facing the Avengers. He still hadn’t looked his dad full in the face. He knew that the moment he turned to face Loki the man would know. He turned on his heel and glared at the man.

“You know I wonder whose fault that is.”

A gasp tore its way out of Loki’s lips. His eyes widened as he took in his features.

“Harry?” The voice was quiet almost hushed.

“So glad to know you recognize me.”

“No…You’re…You can’t be…”

“Obviously I can. Shows what you know.” Harry folded his arms over his chest, hammer held carelessly in one hand.

“Harry.”

Loki looked like he was about to cry. For some reason it made Harry irrationally angry. What right did this man have to cry? He wasn’t the one who’d been orphaned and abused. He wasn’t the one who’d had to fight Voldemort, the one who had a prophecy over his head. Before he quite realized what he was doing, he was walking forward. His fist formed the shape Ginny had carefully taught him, with the thumb out.

BAM!

Loki’s back arched back as the force of Harry’s punch sent him tumbling to the ground. Harry’s hand smarted from the pain, and there was some blood on his hand from Loki’s now broken nose. Behind him he heard Thor and the others make noises of shock.

“That’s for…everything!” Harry said.

Loki started to sit up, a hand covering his bleeding nose. His blue eyes were wide with shock. Harry didn’t let him say anything.

“I’m…I’m done.”

He turned on his heel. Carefully he lifted up his hand and wandlessly summoned his broom. He looked over at the Avengers who looked like they were trying to decide what to do. Harry looked down at the hammer in his hand. He threw it at Thor who caught it easily. Harry wondered if Loki would even tell them who he was. He decided in that moment not to give him a choice. He reached into his pocket and fingered the card to his hotel room. If he pressed the top in a certain spot it would portkey him home.

“By the way, nice hammer, Uncle Thor.”
He pressed the key and disappeared without even a crack to announce he was leaving. A moment later Harry found himself back in his hotel room. His stomach rolled and he threw himself off the bed. He rushed towards the bathroom and planted himself firmly in front of the toilet. It took a few minutes of dry and not so dry heaving until he let himself fall onto his side. The cool of the tile felt like ice on his sweaty skin. Wasn’t punching Loki supposed to make him feel better?
Loki’s side of the story is finally revealed with the help of some tricky jewelry but is it the whole truth?

Hey everyone! Thanks for the great comments for the last update. I enjoyed talking with a bunch of you, you had some great ideas and scenes to share! I hope this update lives up to your expectations.

“UNCLE?”

Thor’s voice boomed down the empty street. Loki didn’t react, the man had one hand outreached trying to grab at the air where his son used to be. His son. Oh Odin, his son was alive. His beautiful baby boy. The light of his universe. The thing that made life worth living. The reason he’d gotten up in the morning, and the reason he’d gone to bed. His everything. His child. The child he thought lost to death, along with his beloved wife.

He stood there, trying to will the boy back into the street, so he could pull him into a hug and never let go.

“Loki.” Thor said. “What was that human talking about?”

Loki kept staring blankly ahead. His son was alive. But that meant...he’d been alone. Loki had left his precious star alone on this planet, he’d grown up without his father to guide him. His face twisted painfully at the thought. No wonder his son had punched him. Loki rather deserved it.

“Loki!” Thor grabbed Loki by the shoulders and shook him.

“What are you doing?”

“A human just called me uncle. I think I’m allowed to panic.”

“He isn’t a human.” Loki denied. “Well he is half.”

Thor made a choking sound as the implication hit him full in the face.

“Reindeer games, are you telling me you got freaky with a human? Did the horizontal monster mash? That kid didn’t look older than 18.” Tony asked.

Thor made another pained noise.

“Your trip to Alfheim! You were gone for decades!”
“Alfheim, Midgard. What’s the difference really?”

“EVERYTHING!” Thor yelled. “Alfheim is the magical capital of the nine realms. You told father you were going there to study magic. What were you doing instead? Pranking humans?”

“Well sometimes.” Loki admitted before lifting up two hands. “In my defense, I did also study magic.”

“Because that makes this so much better! Don’t you know what you’ve done? A demi-god hasn’t been born in centuries!”

“Okay.” Steve said. “What’s a demi-god and why is Thor freaking out about it?”

“A demi-god is a child that’s born with one parent from this planet and one parent who is a god.” Loki defined, as if Steve was an idiot for asking.

“Demi-gods.” Thor said, his voice growling. “Are either extreme forces for good or bringers of destruction. Mixing humans and gods somehow produces a child that is more powerful than both parents combined. If a demi-god decides to be a hero then no evil can defeat them but if they decided to go rogue? Nothing can stop them.”

Thor sent a glare at Loki that Loki ignored. Nothing could destroy his buoyant mood. His son was alive!

“So, Loki’s kid is going to be the ultimate evil?” Natasha asked, her voice questioning.

That snapped Loki out his giddiness almost immediately.

“You all are forgetting that he just saved our lives and he did it wielding that!” Loki said dramatically gesturing at Mjolnir. “Don’t you dare speak poorly of my son. You will regret it.”

“Did he or did he not just break your nose?” Tony asked.

“Oh, he did.” Loki said. “And from his perspective I certainly deserved it.”

Thor pinched the bridge of his nose for a moment, a move that was so similar to their mother, enough that Loki almost felt like apologizing.

“Could you please, for once in your life, give me a clear explanation?”

Loki considered that, and he thought about the hurt in his son’s voice. He was going to need help if he was going to bridge the gap.

“I suppose since I’m in such a good mood I’ll tell you the truth.” Loki decided. “but first we should imprison Amora.”

“As agreed.” Thor said. “I’ll take her back to Asgard. Our cells will be able to hold her.”

Loki frowned for a moment, thoughtful.

“Thor don’t tell anyone there about my son. Please. You know the…prejudice against people like him.” Loki said. “He can lift Mjolnir we know he’s a good child. I’ve always known it but you can’t deny that.”

Thor looked at him for a moment before nodding in agreement.
“I want the full story.” He said. “Nothing left out just because you want to be tricky.”

“Deal. You’ll get every nitty gritty detail. You can even borrow one of those bracelets from mother if you’re so concerned about the truth.”

Thor’s eyes widened at that, but the fact was that there was nothing shameful about his life as James Potter. There were things he regretted, things he had cursed himself over, but that had been perhaps the happiest time of his life. If Thor required honesty, then Loki was going to ensure he had it. Anything for his son.

“Very well.” Thor said. “I’ll be back soon.”

“What bracelets are you talking about?” Steve asked.

“Mother’s specially enchanted bracelets ensure the wearer must tell the complete truth. While wearing them I couldn’t even say things that are technically true but deliberately misleading.”

“So no brain to mouth filter, got it.”

“Do be careful about what you ask me.” Loki told them. “I’ll be obliged to tell you in excruciatingly honest detail.”

Thor grimaced, he was doing that a lot lately, as he moved towards Amora, who was still knocked out cold. He picked her up and slung her body over his shoulder, almost carelessly. Loki smirked at the fear in Thor’s eyes. His brother would learn not to ask for the truth from him. They all told Thor goodbye as he lifted his hammer up to call for the Bifrost. Once all that was left was burnt runes in the street, Loki turned back to the tower.

“You know Stark. I’ll make you a deal.”

“What?”

“I fix your tower by the time Thor gets back if you use your skills to destroy all the footage of my son’s actions today.”

“What? Why?”

“Do you not think a small child deserves some privacy and the right not to be chased down by SHIELD like a criminal?”

The man rolled his eyes but agreed, before swearing that it wouldn’t happen if his tower didn’t look brand new. Loki rolled his eyes. Brand new his ass.

“Just watch this.”

Thirty minutes later Loki was sitting inside the penthouse of a perfectly intact tower with a now healed nose. He was drinking pumpkin juice, he had some stored somewhere and he felt like it was appropriate. Stark was staring stupidly at the newly repaired walls, touching them to make sure they weren’t illusions. Loki was amused by the stupefaction, but it was getting a little old.
“Don’t you have something to be doing Stark?”

“How did you do this?”

“Magic obviously.”

“But I thought magic was just a fighting technique!” The man whined.

“In Asgard that’s certainly true. Part of the reason I wasn’t wanted around was because I dared to use magic for something more than killing people.”

“Like pranks.” Clint added.

“Well yes.” Loki said. “To be honest I wouldn’t have done so many of them if they weren’t so very funny. Now, please would you mind fulfilling your end of the deal.”

“Why the hell haven’t you done this before?”

“Never do something for nothing.”

Tony made a very upset noise but did finally get started on clearing away any incriminating footage. By the time Thor returned, golden bracelets of truth in hand, Tony was nearly done. Thor looked around at the completely fixed tower and then gave Loki a surprised look.

“Have you finally decided to be a good team member, Loki?”

“The very idea is making me break out into hives.”

“You know father won’t end your punishment until you’ve proven that you regret what you did and that you love humanity for what it is.”

“No proof I could give Odin will mean anything.” Loki said airily.

“Are you really going to put those on?” Natasha asked. “We could ask you anything.”

“You could.” Loki allowed, thinking about the various uncomfortable topics they could interrogate him on. “But you’ll also get answers on anything you ask.”

That warning made her nod after a moment. Loki might have been the god of lies but that also meant he was the god of truth. One had to know the truth completely in order to lie as well as he did. Thor told them that Amora was locked up tightly and awaiting trial. Loki knew she’d probably escape but he hardly cared what she did as long as she didn’t bother him or his son. Everyone gathered on the couches in what Loki was beginning to consider the story time circle. Thor held out the bracelets with a slightly stunned look on his face.

“Before I put these on.” Loki said. “I’d suggest you let me tell my story with as few interruptions as you can manage. If you ask me a question I’ll have to answer it completely. We’ll be here for the next thousand years if you interrupt as often as you normally do. Can you do that?”

“I’ll keep Tony quiet.” Bruce promised.

The man had been knocked out almost immediately when Amora arrived, before he could even transform. He’d recovered by the time Harry had finished defeating Amora, punched Loki and disappeared. Tony made a betrayed noise, but Loki only snorted and then snapped the bracelets onto his bare wrists. He immediately felt the magic flooding his mind. He waited for a few moments before beginning.
“It started out as a trip to Alfheim, this would have been about 40 years ago. I’d convinced father it would be better for everyone if I left for a time to study magic somewhere else.” Loki told them. “The first few years I really was in Alfheim studying, but I got bored. I heard a rumor that some of the light elves were sensing magic on Midgard but couldn’t find any magic users to explain the surges.”

“There are human magic users?” Tony demanded before Bruce was able to slap his hand over his mouth.

“Licking on my hand won’t make me move it Tony.”

“Yes, there are millions of human magic users.” Loki answered, glaring at Tony for asking a question he was literally about to answer. “They’re all over the world, they’ve always been there from the beginning. Your ignorance on the subject is due to the fact that 400 years ago nonmagical humans began hunting magic users, primarily children who couldn’t defend themselves. The witches and wizards at the time decided to protect themselves and future generations. They used powerful magic to rip the knowledge of their existence out of everyone’s minds, in all the realms, and even more magic to hide their cities, towns, and homes. They’ve lived in complete secrecy on this planet ever since. If anyone who isn’t magical, or directly related to someone magical, finds out about this world their memories are erased through magic. Magic users have their own governments and cultures. Everything is based on magic and anyone without isn’t allowed.”

“Holy fuck.” Stark interrupted again.

“Language.” Steve chastised.

“It’s a 400 year old secret society and you’re telling me to watch my language?”

“What about us?” Clint asked. “Are our minds going to get erased?”

“As long as you pretend not to know, then no one will bother you.” Loki answered. “I could possibly fill out the proper government forms to gain you access but that would take time. In that time, you’d need to keep your lips zipped.”

“Why would you be able to fill out forms? You’re not a citizen.” Natasha asked.

Loki groaned at their complete incapability to not ask questions.

“I was a citizen for 22 years, I was born as James Charlus Potter 38 years ago. I lived solely as James for 22 years. I had parents, friends, a job, a family, a human education. I lived in Britain during that time which is why my All-Speak is accented in the way that it is compared to Thor’s. Now would you idiot humans please let me tell you this in order? I will use magic to silence you if I have to.”

They agreed again to being quiet and Loki sighed and continued. He told them about traveling to earth to discover why there was magic but no magic users. He literally stumbled upon the magical world and was metaphorically enchanted. Everything there was magical. It was chaotic and unpredictable. Humans so entrenched in magic that they couldn’t imagine a life without it. It was everything Loki had ever wanted, this was what paradise was.

It didn’t take Loki long at all to decide he had to join this world. Alfheim and Asgard could go hang themselves.

“Brother.” Thor said. “That’s not very kind.”

“And yet it’s true. Asgard can go hang itself.”
Thor rolled his eyes but didn’t argue the point further. Loki smirked. The story moved on. He decided to take on a human form and as he planned it out soon stumbled upon a magical couple who wanted a child but couldn’t have one. Loki decided to answer their prayers. He told them about his plan to become human, to learn what it was to be fully immersed in magic.

“So, you actually wanted to be human?” Steve asked. “What happened to us being ants?”

Loki glared at him.

“Humans aren’t ants.” Loki answered. “Your lives are more like fireflies. So very very short compared to my own but bright and vibrant in a way I can’t often compete with. Humanity experiences the full gambit of existence in a way that is so visceral and true that I cannot help but feel nothing but awe when I consider it. It is true that you often lack foresight, you are quick to anger and capable of true atrocities. Evil lives in your hearts just as much as goodness does. Humanity is greedy and cruel, selfish and violent. But it is also kind and loving. I learnt more from my time being a human than I did as my entire centuries as a god. In my time as James Potter I experienced love, loyalty and joy that is incomparable to my time as Loki.”

All of the humans were looking at him with some sort of awe or perhaps even disbelief. Loki wanted to stop speaking he wanted to pull the words back but it was too late. They’d already been said.

“But it was during that time that I also experienced pain, regret, and rage unlike any other. Humanity taught me what it was to truly hate, to loathe with every fiber of my being. It was here that I learnt to despise humanity and everything that you are. Because for everyone one purely good person you produce, you also create thousands of evil little rats who try to extinguish everything good in your world.” Loki continued his voice becoming absolutely scathing. “Even now you humans prove your cruelty. After explaining to you clearly that this would be difficult enough you purposefully ask questions. Not to gain knowledge but to see me suffer. Even the so-called greatest heroes of earth feel pleasure at seeing me talk about my own suffering. You haven’t even asked questions to learn, no it is only for your own short-sighted pointless amusement. You will comfort yourselves, justifying what you’re doing by saying that I was the one who invaded your planet. But it doesn’t justify this. It never will. Nothing can justify joy at another’s suffering.”

“Stop.” Thor ordered, finally silencing Loki’s tirade. “Loki. Did you invade Midgard for revenge against the pain you felt as James Potter?”

“No.” Loki said.

“Was it to gain revenge against me or father?”

“It wasn’t about revenge!” Loki shouted. “It had nothing to do with me!”

He stood up, the words poured out of his mouth.

“I am a 2000 year old master strategist! I have won hundreds of battles for Asgard with nothing but my cunning! And yet! When given the opportunity to invade an entire planet with a near infinite army what do I do? I actively alert the only people who could stop me, blatantly revealed my plans and allowed Selvig to put in an off switch to the portal! Then to top off this brilliant fucking plan I purposefully bottlenecked my military force to the point that 6 individuals could hold them off! What a genius plan! Truly my greatest work yet!”

The others looked shocked but now that it was out, Loki was going to let them know.

“I tried to kill myself when I let go of Odin’s spear.” Loki told Thor. “I wanted to die. Everything in
my mind at that point was begging for an end to it all. Jokes on me though because I didn’t die as I fell through the void of space, instead I was found.”

Loki ran a hand through his carefully styled hair, messing it up like he used to do as James all the time. The hair started to stand up in a mess. The longer he talked freely, the more like James he began to act. Free with his movements and looser.

“I mean fuck Thor.” Loki said, his voice twisting. “What do you even think happened to me? You’ve never asked. I was found by a monster. The Mad Titan. He wants to destroy half of all life in the universe in some idiotic demented plan for balance. He travels now from planet to distant planet committing genocide! He halves the population at random and makes one half watch while he drenches the other half in their own blood.”

No one interrupted him now as he started to pace rapidly and talk with his hands. It was the same way he’d describe the newest quidditch maneuver to his team.

“Thanos needs the tesseract if he was going to complete his goal. Going from planet to planet isn’t efficient, he needed more fire power, he needed the ability to destroy all life with a snap of his fingers. The tesseract was a part of that. I knew what destruction he could cause with them. Despite what you may think I am a god of chaos not destruction, not death. This wasn’t what I wanted.”

Loki flipped around, he knew he must have looked like a madman but he couldn’t stop, the bracelets made him, compelled him.

“Thanos wanted the tesseract. He knew I could get it for him. I could travel the energy pathways of the universe from his home to earth. I knew earth intimately. I had lived there for 22 years! I could get the tesseract quicker and faster than any of his loyal servants. He told me to get it for him or suffer. I told him to fuck off. He tortured me. I told him to fuck off harder. I wasn’t going to decimate the planet where I spent the best years of my life! The planet my wife lived on! Even if it was the planet my wife was brutally murdered on.”

Someone, probably Thor, made a choking noise but Loki paid them no mind.

“Ever since my wife’s murder I’ve felt so much rage. Thanos saw that rage, rage at humanity, at this planet for taking away the most perfect woman in the universe.” Loki said. “All these years I thought that the man who’d murdered my wife had destroyed my son too. I hated this world so much for taking my family from me. Thanos saw that rage, he saw that thirst for vengeance. He promised me revenge. I told him to choke. Then he…he used that scepter. He didn’t put me under mind control, no I know how to throw that off. He did something much worse. He made me forget. He made me forget my wife and child. He made me forget my friends, my human loved ones. He only left the pain and rage behind. Then he gave me that scepter and an army and told me to go. Get my revenge and bring him the tesseract.”

Loki finally turned back. Thor looked absolutely devastated and horrified. The rest of the humans were in a similar state. Loki scoffed and continued.

“Remember Thor, when you first met with these humans and they called me crazy? What was it you said? Oh right ‘his mind is far afiel’d.’ That’s what it was. Then what did you do after that? Did you decide to investigate? Figure out why I was attacking a planet in a way that was so different to my normal patterns? Or did you decide that obviously the only reason I do anything is because of you.”

Loki growled and continued. His pacing was getting more erratic. He stepped up onto the armchair he had been sitting and then down on the other side.
“Nothing made sense once I got to earth. I knew I wanted revenge but why? What had the humans done to me? Why was I serving Thanos? Was I serving Thanos? Whose side was I on? If I was on Thanos’ side, then I didn’t want to fail but what if I wasn’t? Why didn’t anything make sense? I stalled, I tricked, I waited trying, to make sense of anything. I made the plan as porous as I dared. Something told me the invasion was wrong, but I still wanted the world to burn. Rage pushed me past the quiet voice in my mind that begged me to stop.” Loki admitted. “It wasn’t until Banner threw me into the floor multiple times that I remembered. The voice in my head was my wife and I had ignored her. I failed to protect her world, the world she loved so much.”

“Why didn’t you tell us after you got sent here for your punishment?” Steve asked.

“I never admit to failure. Doesn’t look good for the image. Besides what would it have changed? I wasn’t mind controlled like Barton. I did all that I did under my own will.” Loki said. “I chose to invade the earth. I chose to kill those people. It was my fault! I didn’t listen to my instincts. I knew something was wrong, but I let my rage control me anyway. The truth does nothing but make you pity me. I hate pity.”

“Were you ever going to mention this Mad Titan?” Natasha asked.

“I suppose once he got here, I’d have told you yes. He will come here for the tesseract eventually after all.”

“He’s coming here?”

“Almost certainly.”

“Putting that aside for later.” Steve said. “Loki would you please finish telling us about your son? Then we can get those bracelets off of you. You mentioned you thought he was dead?”

Loki nodded and finally retook his seat. The Avengers had finally decided to stop interrupting him. So, Loki was able to finish the entire thing. Starting from being reborn in a human body, this was done by injecting his soul into an empty fetus while storing his real body in Alfheim. That way if Heimdall looked for him he’d see Loki’s body in Alfheim, not on Midgard. Loki had placed spells on his soul that would hide his previous memories of being Loki up until he was an adult human, that way he could truly immerse himself.

He continued telling them about his three best friends and the group of troublemakers they formed in magic school. He spoke fondly of his human parents. He even mentioned his bitter childhood rivalry with Severus Snape. Eventually he got to Lily, the girl who had stolen his heart at first glance. He monologued for a good five minutes about her numerous qualities, her beauty, her poise, her laugh, her eyes, her kindness, her compassion, her empathy, her temper, the way she always smelt like roses and white chocolate. He would have continued if Tony hadn’t pulled him back on track with a joke and another question.

He spoke of growing up, finally becoming mature enough to be worthy of Lily’s friendship and eventually romantic affection. He told them about Hogwarts and learning magic and mischief. He painted the perfect picture of his life. Then he painted the down turn. He told them of the war, of Voldemort’s plan. He told them that he wouldn’t say the name unless they forced him because it was jinxed, any still living followers of the man would be alerted to their location if he said it out loud. Thankfully they didn’t ask.

He described in great detail the atrocities Voldemort and his Death Eaters committed. The homes burned, the children murdered, the women raped. Voldemort and his forces had a 50 year stranglehold on the magical world. His voice broke when he told them that his parents, who had
always stood up against him, were murdered for it when he was 17. By the time he graduated Loki, his friends and Lily had all signed up to fight against him.

He told them about fighting a guerilla war for the next five years. His childhood stolen away both by the returning memories of being a god but also the war that filled his every waking moment. With the added knowledge of being Loki, his disgust and anger at Voldemort grew. How dare this man attempt to destroy what was possibly the most perfect place in all the nine realms?

The story continued with his wedding, done in secret with only a few people attending. He nearly cried when he mentioned his promise to Lily to give her a spectacle when it was all over. Then he got to the baby, his lovely, perfect Harry. They went into hiding before he was born, desperate to protect their son. Loki’s use of his increased magical power and knowledge and Lily’s own skill had made them targets. Dumbledore had advised them to go into hiding and so they did.

The story ended with the Halloween night that destroyed everything. Voldemort finding them somehow.

“I died first. I tried to get my wife and son to safety. Tried my best. But truly, by my own design, I was only human.” Loki said, looking hard at the wall. “When he hit me with the killing curse my soul left my human body and fled straight back to this one, still waiting in stasis. I woke up in Alfheim and I hurried as fast as I could home, praying to the norns, to Odin, to anyone that my wife was able to hold You-Know-Who off long enough for me to get back. But I failed.”

“What happened?” Thor asked, his voice heavy with grief. The sky outside was gray and dark, thunder rumbled in the distance. Loki swallowed and began to describe the destroyed home. The cottage he’d built himself just for his family, now just a husk almost beyond recognition. His own dead body on the stairs, Lily’s still corpse inside a destroyed nursery. A devastatingly empty crib. The smell of the killing curse ripe in the air.

“I searched for days on my own trying to find my son, trying to find my friends. But I couldn’t. Finally, I went to Albus, my leader, the man I had followed to the end and I begged him to tell me. He had to know where my son was. I wanted to take Harry home to Asgard, mourn in peace there with what family I had left.” Loki said. “Albus told me that my friends had been killed by You-Know-Who, that he’d done it before going to my home. He told me that Lily had managed to destroy You-Know-Who but at the cost of her life and our son’s life. Everything was gone.”

Loki felt weak, empty, thinking about those horrible days.

“Shit.” Tony said. “From Harry’s perspective, once he figured out you were his dad and alive, you abandoned him. No wonder he punched you on sight.”

“Seeing him alive is the greatest gift I’ve ever been given. I don’t know how but I’m too afraid to question it.” Loki admitted. “I’m going to find him and tell him the truth, gain his forgiveness in any way I can. If I can’t get it, then I’ll protect him from afar. I’m not going to fail him ever again.”

And that was that. Loki looked at all of them and quickly popped the truth bracelets off. Immediately he felt more like himself, with the magic messing with his mind gone.

“It’s late and story time with Loki is over.”

“Wait.” Tony said. “How are you going to find your son? Last time you tried magic and it didn’t work. What if whatever’s hiding him is still there?”

Loki didn’t want to consider that. He frowned for a moment. What had kept him from magically
finding Harry the first time? Who had hidden him away?

“I’m sure I’ll be able to find him.”

“Let me help. I already have his face from about a thousand different angles thanks to Jarvis’ cleaning. If he walks in front of a security camera, I can find him.”

“That would be appreciated.” Loki said after a moment. “Thank you.”

“Hey, I just want to know if he’s going to punch you again. You all saw that punch, right? It was perfect.”

Suddenly the tension broke, half of the humans started to laugh. Loki grinned and rubbed the ridge of his nose to chase away phantom pains. It had been a spectacular punch. Once the laughter died down Loki spoke again, thoughtfully.

“I might actually need your help Thor, for something else. I really doubt my son is going to want to talk to me.”

“Then what do you need me for?” Thor asked.

“He called you uncle, didn’t he?”
Trip to the Arcade

Chapter Summary

Harry decides to do some exploring of New York City before heading back to Britain and facing whatever consequences await him there. Too bad he didn't plan on facing consequences on this continent.

Chapter Notes

Thank you all so much for the amazing comments on this story! I've really enjoyed responding to the ones that I've managed to find the time to do so, you're reactions have been amazing and every time I get an email letting me know I have a comment it brightens my day! I hope you enjoy this extra long chapter.

Harry spent the next few days just recovering. He'd used so much more magic than he'd thought fighting Amora and it had taken its toll. He was pretty sure Hermione would have made him go to see a healer. Ron might have let him get away with sleeping it off, but not without some Weasley styled mothering. Neither of them were with him so it was rather easy to just lay in bed, unconscious, for a full day. The next day he pulled himself out of the bed to consume two full meals in the same number of hours, only to then pass out again.

It wasn't until the third day post god-punching incident that he felt human enough to move. He showered, brushed his teeth, and tried to get his hair under control. Was it just him or had his hair become even more untameable after he broke the spells Loki had placed on him? Harry couldn't prove that, it might have just been that now that he had perfect eyesight the eyesore that was his hair was more obvious.

Slowly, as if he'd been placed under a time spell, he dressed. His brain felt like mush. He wasn't sure what to do now. Hermione had mentioned on the train that he should consider asking the Avengers for help with the Voldemort issue. But he'd seen them against a magic user. It hadn't been good. Maybe if it was a human magic user then they'd have a better shot but the last thing he wanted was to get any of them killed.

So maybe he should just go back to Britain. At the same time the very idea made his stomach twist. Harry glanced at the bed. Maybe it would be better to just lay down and melt into the mattress. Forget about everything and become nothing. Even as the thought entered his head he knew it was stupid. He felt guilty for even considering it. He couldn't abandon the world to Voldemort. Not when he was the only one who could save anyone from him.

Harry shuffled over to the balcony and looked out on the city. Most everything had been repaired from what he could see. Maybe his dad had used magic. Or maybe being a billionaire meant that you could get your tower fixed instantaneously. Harry wouldn't know, thanks to all the money his parents and Sirius had left him he was only a millionaire. Harry huffed a laugh and ran a hand through his hair. He might as well be a tourist for a bit. It couldn't hurt anything to take time to think...
Harry left the hotel and started wandering, he didn’t want to use magic and went by foot around the city. His magic still felt a bit shaky. He went into the muggle side of the city to explore instead of the magical. It was hot outside, much hotter than Harry was used to. Within 30 minutes he realized that just wandering was liable to make him die of heatstroke. So, Harry snuck into the nearest place that looked interesting. An arcade.

He’d heard Dudley talk about arcades before, when his cousin turned 7 that had been his birthday party. Harry had, of course, spent the entire day in the cupboard. Dudley had crowed about how fun it had been for weeks after, making Harry seethe with want. And now here was an arcade. It was a huge building, mostly lit by all the games and consoles. The first thing Harry found was an exchange desk where he could exchange muggle money for coins.

Everything about the place was so different from anything he’d experienced that he decided he might as well go crazy. A few minutes later Harry had a gigantic plastic cup full of golden coins. It didn’t take long to find a game he wanted to try. It was a whole set up where you sat in a motorcycle seat and pretended to drive against other computer players. Sitting on it reminded Harry vaguely of riding a broom so he put in the required number of coins and off he went.

It really was rather easy compared to flying a broom. Not that it was any less fun. He played a few races, getting lost in the digital raceways. It was mind numbing but not in the way he’d been before this whole thing started. Not like how he’d laid in bed and thought of nothing at all. His mind was still working, and it wasn’t thinking about anything but the game. It was nice. No wonder Dudley liked it so much.

Within an hour Harry had played about 20 different games. Games of chance, shooting games, fighting games, reflex games, and puzzle games. He had to use magic a few times to fix the handles on the controller where he bent them in his excitement but other than that the entire thing was smooth sailing.

It was when Harry was in the middle of playing a street fighter game that he was sure he’d seen Dudley playing before that someone interrupted his fun time.

“Do you know how hard you are to find kid?”

Harry froze and looked to the side to see Tony Stark standing in the arcade, like this was something he did every day. He wasn’t wearing a suit, or even the ironman armor, instead he was wearing what Harry was sure he deemed ‘casual’. It was comprised of sunglasses worth as much as his Hogwarts tuition and clothing that was just too nice to be considered normal. The man was looking at him as if he was the source of all the world’s problems, but in a way that was so different from Uncle Vernon that it made Harry’s shoulders relax.

Harry turned back to the game and spoke softly.

“Didn’t realize I was hiding.”

“Trust me kid you were and really, it was starting to annoy me. I’m Tony Stark, people don’t just hide from me.”

“That’s not creepy at all.”

“You’re sassy. I like that.”

“What can I say?” Harry asked. “I just love goading bullies into throwing me into rubbish bins. My
favorite hobby.”

“You have bullies?” The man asked sounding genuinely confused.

“Ha. When haven’t I had those?” Harry asked him, pressing on some of the buttons a little too hard.

“But you’re like…super strong. Plus, we saw you against Amora, you can defend yourself.”

Harry rolled his eyes at the sheer idiocy of that statement.

“What was I supposed to do then Mr. Stark? Anytime anyone bullied me I punch them so hard they died? Thanks for the advice I always did want to be the second incarnation of Hercules.”

“Right.” The man agreed. “Why not tell an adult?”

“Why do you assume my bullies were my age?”

Silence. Harry turned a little to see Tony Stark in the middle of a grimace. Harry snorted and turned back to the console.

“Why are you here anyway? This doesn’t seem like your sort of place.”

“I’m here for you, obviously. Your dad-”

“Go away.” Harry said cutting the man off completely. “I’m not talking about him or with him.”

“Look.”

“I said no.”

“You don’t have the full story.”

“I know enough.”

“He didn’t know-”

Harry flipped around letting the game play out behind him.

“He didn’t know I was alive yeah?” Harry asked. “That’s what you’re here to tell me. He thought I was dead which justifies what he did to everyone else right?”

“I…”

“He had friends! Loved ones! People who cared about him and he left them all thinking he was dead! He abandoned his home and his people, deserting everything that mattered. Who gives a fuck about me! That’s not the issue here. The issue is that he’s a selfish, self-absorbed git.”

There was a single pause before Stark whistled in appreciation.

“So, let me get this straight. You’re not made because your dad wasn’t there for you or that you’ve been alone your whole life. You’re upset because Loki left the rest of the people he cared about to go back to Asgard.”

Harry gave the man a curt nod, leaning his back against the console. There were noises behind him letting him know his character had died.

“No shit you can lift that hammer.” The man muttered to himself.
“What’s that supposed to mean?” The man’s eyes widened behind his sunglasses.

“You don’t know about Thor’s hammer?”

“It’s a big magic hammer, what else is there to know?”

Before Tony could explain whatever it was that he wanted to tell Harry about the hammer, Harry saw something that made his stomach fill with ice. Three figures in dark robes and white masks. Terrifying skull like faces that reflected the lights of the arcade games in grotesque ways. No one seemed to notice them as they walked between the aisles. They were looking for something. Or rather, someone. Harry reached over and slapped a hand over Tony’s mouth. He dragged the struggling man into a corner.

“What the hell?”

“Shut up.” Harry whispered. “I need you to do what I say. Everyone here is in a lot of danger.”

The man stilled and listened.

“Look over there.” Harry pointed, hoping this would work. “You might not be able to see them but there are three people in dark robes and white masks.”

The man squinted before speaking.

“I can see these shadows.”

“They’re using magic to hide.” Harry explained. “They’re looking for me and they will kill or torture everyone in here just for the fun of it. I need your help to get everyone out of here safely.”

“What? Who are these people?”

“Death Eaters.”

“But…”

“The war didn’t just end because my mom died, and Loki got sad about it.” Harry spat, his frustration with his dad seeping through his voice. “Look please help me? I can distract them and keep their magic from hurting anyone but only if you start an evacuation. Can you do that?”

“Are you insane? I’m not leaving a kid to fight magical terrorists!”

“So, you’re going to let a bunch of innocent people die?”

The man groaned which Harry took as an agreement.

“Good. Now pull a fire alarm or something while I act as a distraction.”

“I’m calling for help from your dad.”

“Fine. Get everyone out of here first.” Harry said standing up and looking around. He hoped to be long gone before his dad decided he was worth the effort of showing up for. “Also, one more thing. If you see a beam of green light coming towards you dodge. If it hits you, you’ll die.”

“That’s some great need to know info there, kid.” Tony said, sounding just a little strained. “Stay alive. Your dad will kill me if you get hurt.”
Harry rolled his eyes at the thought that the man gave two shits about him. What adult actually cared about Harry Potter?

“Just go. Hurry please.”

Tony nodded and soon the Avenger was moving through the crowd. Harry waited a few moments before deciding just to go with it. He walked directly towards the group of Death Eaters. It didn’t take long for them to notice him.

“It’s Potter!”

Harry did the only thing he could do. He stuck his tongue out and ran in the opposite direction. The three people chased after him, pushing gamers out of their way with angry grunts. Moments later the fire alarms went off and water started spraying down on everything. People screamed and started running towards the entrance. The Death Eaters and Harry were the only ones making their way deeper into the maze of games.

The first spell was a cutting hex that nearly hit Harry in the back of the neck. It was so powerful it made the hair on his skin stand up. Alright. They weren’t playing around. Harry could do this.

“It’s just like the DA.” Harry told himself.

Because it was. This wasn’t like with Amora where he was totally outgunned and had to win through sheer dumb luck. Harry had trained for this. He flipped around and shot a disarming spell right at the first death eater. It missed and hit a console, causing it to explode in a shower of angry sparks. Soon the spells really started flying. Dueling against three death eaters was really beyond his current level of experience, so Harry focused more on ducking and dodging.

Harry used spells when he could, but these Death Eaters had years of dueling experience compared to him. He did manage to protect fleeing muggles which was really the most important part. A cracking noise broke his concentration and he flipped around to see more Death Eaters arrive. He cursed and cast a protego to block the incoming blasting hex. The longer he fought the more Death Eaters arrived. The magic was totally destroying the arcade, pieces of machinery were in smoking pieces along the floor. Water was still raining down, making his hair stick to his face and block his eyesight.

Harry cursed and pulled the wet strands out of the way, just in time to see an incoming killing curse that he dropped to the floor to dodge. From his position on the ground one of the Death Eaters managed to hit him with a bruising hex that sent him rolling across the floor. Harry instinctively cast a cushioning charm that protected his head from banging too hard against one of the still standing arcade machines.

Harry used a levitation charm to wrench the machine off the ground and throw it right towards the Death Eaters. This gave him time to jump up and get some cover. The console threw a group of Death Eaters to the ground and the commotion distracted a few others. Harry ducked behind an old pinball machine and tried to breathe. The break in the action didn’t last long as a melting jinx hit the pinball machine and Harry was forced to jump away.

After that it was constant moving and running. Spells danced from his fingertips, sometimes they worked and sometimes they sputtered into nothing. With each failed spell the Death Eaters seemed to be getting better at hitting him. Harry was only lucky that being a demigod offered a lot of protection against low level spells.

The smell of magic was acrid against his nose, it made his eyes water. Not that he could tell with all
of the ice cold water stinging his skin. Blood was running down his arms and chest from various wounds. The bright red blood looked obscene on his pale skin while it splattered itself all over the strangely patterned carpet. The air sliced through his lungs with each heave of his chest. His stomach was rolling and protesting against the strain. He really hadn’t recovered from Amora’s attack.

*Stupefy!* *Protego!* *Filipendo!* *Ventus!* *Oppungo!*

Spells kept coming, Harry desperately trying to keep up with the assault flying at him from what seemed like all directions. A few Death Eaters were pushing Harry back towards a corner, which Harry knew from experience with his cousin was a recipe for trouble. He quickly formed a plan to get out as the corner neared. Once Harry was close enough, he shot out a blinding spell, jumped up so his feet were planted high against the wall. Then with his hands facing behind him, he cast a spell.

“*Ascendio!*”

Just like his fourth year he shot forward at high speeds, up and over the Death Eaters. It wasn’t until gravity started pulling him down that Harry realized he had no idea on how he was going to land without knocking himself unconscious. He closed his eyes and prepared for a hard hit. Only to land safely in two wide arms.

“Nephew!” Thor boomed causing Harry to open his eyes.

The god of thunder had managed to catch Harry perfectly so that he was cradled in the man’s arms. It was way more comfortable than Harry thought it would be.

“Are you sure now is the time to try flying?”

“Any time is the right time if you don’t worry about the landing.”

Thor laughed while the rest of the Avengers rushed in and started fighting the Death Eaters in a way Harry couldn’t. Loki, in particular, was like a man possessed. Harry watched for a moment in awe as the man dispatched Death Eaters in a way Harry could never have replicated. For all his anger he couldn’t ignore how amazing the man was at dueling.

“Woah.”

“He’s very good, isn’t he?” Thor asked.

“Don’t tell him.” Harry told Thor. “His fat head probably doesn’t need the ego boost.”

“It’ll stay between us.”

They grinned at each other, and Harry realized that Thor still hadn’t put him down. Harry wriggled a little but that only made Thor lift him up higher to steady his grip.

“You can put me down now.”

“My job is to keep you safe.”

“Which you’re going to do with both of your arms out of commission?” Thor shifted but didn’t relent, so Harry tried again. Comfortable or not he was not staying like this, it was undignified. “If I swear to stay right next to you for the entire fight so that you can protect me, will you put me down?”

“Yes.” Thor said after a moment. “But you’ve got to promise.”

“I promise.” Harry said.
Thor nodded and finally let his feet touch the ground again. Harry carefully moved so that he was standing next to Thor. The god nodded pleased that Harry hadn’t immediately run off. Like Harry would do that. He looked out and saw a Death Eater getting ready to hit Captain America with a crucio. Harry lifted his hand and shot a blasting hex right at him. The Death Eater went flying and the Captain was safe.

Thor gave him a disapproving look and Harry only lifted an eyebrow.

I promised I’d stay right here, and I will.” A wordless stunning spell fired from his hands right towards another Death Eater, sending them tumbling to the ground.

“You’re not supposed to draw attention to yourself.” Thor hissed.

Harry lifted up both hands in surrender and turned to stand there next to Thor. The man looked menacing and was watching like a hawk for potential dangers. It was a little weird. No one had ever really been that focused on his safety like this. He didn’t really know how to feel about it.

“You will die Harry Potter!” A Death Eater bum rushed them, before Thor could even lift his hammer Harry shot a wind blasting spell at the man sending him flying into a nearby wall.

“I’m afraid,” Harry said. “that I don’t really have to do anything to draw attention.”

“Why are they trying to kill a child?”

Harry licked his lips and spoke, knowing even as he did that he should really learn to shut up.

“I think it might be dick envy.”

Thor boggled at him, his eyes wide and his jaw dropped. Harry was able to keep his face serious for about three seconds before he started to howl with laughter. He knew he was in the middle of a fight with Death Eaters and that he was soaking wet with water and his own blood, but he couldn’t help it. Thor’s face was just too funny.

“You should have seen your face!”

Thor frowned and pulled Harry over to his side, telling him very sternly to stay there. Harry continued to giggle but did as he was told. He also ignored Thor’s frowns whenever he used magic to take pot shots at Death Eaters. Within fifteen minutes of intense fighting the Avengers had downed the last Death Eater, Loki had then used magic to tie them all up quite tightly so that they couldn’t escape. At some point in the fighting the fire alarm had turned off and the water had stopped raining down everywhere. That didn’t mean that everyone wasn’t drenched anyway.

Once Loki finished hog-tying criminals, he turned and started making a bee line towards him and Thor. Harry just knew the man expected to have some sort of a conversation which he wasn’t interested.

“Well Thor.” Harry said. “This has been fun, but I really should be go-”

Thor grabbed his shoulder, keeping him in place. Harry sent a very heated glare towards the man that Thor ignored entirely.

“Harry.” Loki said, his voice cracking. “Are you okay? I came as soon as I could.”

Harry’s bewilderment must have shown because Loki actually stopped trying to catalog his multiple injuries to look at him.
“I know you’re angry with me right now, but you can’t honestly expect I wouldn’t be worried about you.”

That was exactly what Harry had thought. He lifted up a disbelieving eyebrow while crossing his arms over his chest.

“Harry.” Loki repeated sounding very lost. “I didn’t just abandon you here. I thought you were-”

“Which makes everything else better yeah? I was dead so leaving everyone else behind was just fine?”

Now Loki looked even more confused.

“Who did I leave behind?” He asked. “Albus told me that you and the rest of the Marauders had been killed. Did you expect me to stay behind for my teachers? Or the other Order Members?”

Harry’s brain whited out, he opened his mouth to speak but nothing could come out. He just stood there stupidly, his look of outrage still thinly painted on his face.

“Really Harry.” Loki said. “I can’t think of whose honor you are trying to defend. All of my friends were dead, my wife was dead, and you were missing. Who did I abandon?”

Slowly things started to start moving around in his mind. Dumbledore had told Loki that he was dead? That Sirius, Remus and Peter were dead? Why would he have done that? Dumbledore was the one who had hidden Harry at the Dursleys. Hagrid had told him so. But then…why would he lie about it? Why would he lie to the one person who could have gotten Sirius out of Azkaban, helped Remus, and taken care of him? And Dumbledore had known that his dad was alive this whole time? When Harry had begged to go someplace else other than the Dursleys…why had Dumbledore told him that there was nowhere else?

Harry forced his eyes, that were beginning to dry out, to blink. His dad was still talking, explaining to Harry that he had searched for him and his friends for weeks before going to Dumbledore for help. The words washed over him like water over a duck, not a single bit of sticking in his head.

Dumbledore was the one who had put him with the Dursleys. The cupboard under the stairs, the dirty and worn clothing, the starving nights, the beatings, all of it was because of his headmaster. He kept sending him back. Why? For the blood wards, to protect him from Voldemort. But his dad could have. His dad is a god. And Dumbledore knew that.

But Dumbledore also knew the prophecy.

Suddenly it all slapped him in the face. All of it. The reason Hermione had read that book about demi-gods and refused to share details. The years of suffering at the Dursleys. Dumbledore’s lies. Sirius never getting a trial. Remus being isolated. Harry’s limited visits to the Weasleys. The reason the stupid philosopher’s stone was at the school. No one recognizing that Professor Moody was actually a Death Eater. The fucking sham that was the tri-wizard tournament.

It was the damn prophecy.

Harry’s face twisted painfully as something cracked in him. All of the rage he’d been holding back, burying deep down inside of him, all of it from the first time his uncle had hit him to being told the prophecy in the worst possible way. All of that itching burning emotion that had been clawing at his soul for years. All of it just flooded out.

The walls of the destroyed arcade began to tremble and groan. The ground shook as tiny localized
earthquakes rocked from his feet. The water that had pooled everywhere started to ripple and violently bubble as Harry’s magic ran away from his control. He felt hot, like he was burning from the inside out.

All of the Avengers were holding onto something to avoid falling from the tremors and quakes. Loki pushed Thor out of the way and placed both hands on Harry’s shoulders. He was saying something, but Harry couldn’t hear, not over the roaring in his ears. Harry felt as if he was choking on something, he couldn’t breathe. The earth shook harder, to his left a glass window exploded outwards.

His hands were starting to glow and spark. Uncontrolled magic manifesting itself in anyway it could. It hurt, everything hurt. Over the tsunami waves of rage Harry started to panic. There wasn’t enough air and he couldn’t stop. He couldn’t control anything. In front of him Loki was starting to look frantic. Harry stared at him with wide eyes, begging him for help. He couldn’t do this. It just kept getting worse and worse.

Another huge tremor rocked the earth sending most everyone to the floor. Only Loki and Harry remained standing. Stop, stop, stop. He tried to grab onto the magic, pull it back, but it slipped through his control every single time. Loki grabbed his hands, Harry gripped right back, trying to ask for help, any help. He knew he was probably holding the man too tight, but Loki didn’t flinch. Instead he pulled Harry to his chest.

Abruptly everything became quiet, almost as if Harry had gone deaf. Harry blinked and looked, he saw that Loki’s hands were glow green, some sort of spell was keeping everything back.

“Harry.” Loki said.

“I couldn’t…I don’t…”

“No. It’s okay.” Loki said, soothing. “This happens sometimes when you have a lot of magical power and you’re put under a lot of stress.”

“I just…I can’t pull it back.” Harry explained his voice cracking.

“Yes, you can.” Loki insisted. “It’s your magic, it’s you. Just breathe, in and out. Follow me. Feel how I’m breathing, copy me and the magic will settle. Slow down your heart, feel my chest, my heart is steady and slow. Match me.”

It took longer than Harry liked, trying and failing to copy Loki. The rage didn’t settle, didn’t want to. Now that it was out, it wanted to stay out. But eventually his heart stopped racing and his lungs stopped heaving. The magic began to follow his body’s lead. Slowly it trickled back into him, flowing over the cracks and tears it had formed on its way out. It hurt, and it made Harry cringe a little, but Loki only soothed him more.

Harry’s limbs felt like rubber, all of his weight was leaning onto Loki because he was pretty sure that if he tried to move, he’d just collapse.


“Did I hurt anyone?”

“No. No it’s alright.” Loki soothed. “You did really well keeping anyone from getting hurt.”

“What?”
“You might not have noticed but your magic protected everyone in here from falling debris.” Loki said. “It’s okay. You lost control but nothing terrible happened.”

Harry nodded, he still felt way too weak. Not to mention sore. The wounds he’d gotten from the fight earlier were stinging, reminding Harry that he’d pushed himself way too far in the past few days. Loki didn’t seem to mind holding him up.

“Could you tell me exactly what caused that?” Loki asked. “I’m not asking to judge I just need to understand to help it not happen again. We might not be so lucky next time.”

Part of Harry didn’t want to talk about it. The very thought of his realization made his magic rumble dangerously under his skin. Loki noticed and immediately started rubbing his back. It was odd. No one had ever done that and yet Harry recognized the touch.

“I…You said that Dumbledore told you that everyone was dead.”

“Yes. He did.” Loki confirmed. “I don’t know how you survived out of everyone, but I am so grateful. I’m sure if Albus had known…”

“He was the one who hid me.”

The hands on his back froze, the arms holding him up felt like stone. Harry swallowed and kept going.

“Everyone but mum survived that night. Sirius gave me to Dumbledore for my safety and he went after Peter to…to get revenge for revealing where you and mum were. Peter framed Sirius for his betrayal and went into hiding. Sirius went to Azkaban. No one would let Remus take care of me and so Dumbledore was my guardian. Dumbledore sent me someplace where no one could ever find me.” Harry said, his voice almost a pained whine. “Dumbledore told you I was dead and…and he told me that I had to keep living where I was because no one else could take care of me.”

Loki’s entire posture was the epitome of tense. He couldn’t even tell if the man holding him was breathing. Harry held himself still waiting for some sort of reaction. After what felt like a small eternity, Loki let out a breath and spoke.

“You thought I’d left Remus and Sirius to suffer.” Loki said. “That’s why you confronted me.”

“Remus was alone for so long. I didn’t even know he existed until I was 13. It wasn’t right you’d left him but…but it wasn’t your fault. I thought it was. And Sirius was in jail for being the secret keeper only he wasn’t and you knew that but you left him in Azkaban. Except you didn’t you thought he’d died. Because Dumbledore lied.”

“I don’t understand why he did all of this.” Loki admitted. “He was my friend, my leader.”

“It was to keep me.” Harry said. “Dumbledore knew that Voldemort wasn’t dead. He knew the war wasn’t over. There was this prophecy that he heard, and everyone thinks it’s about me. Dumbledore is certain that I’m the key to ending the war. Because I survived that day, because I have this stupid scar on my forehead. He couldn’t risk you taking me away.”

Loki stiffened again but not for as long this time. Harry had a feeling he was trying to keep himself under control. At the very least he was probably trying not to lose it like Harry did. Slowly the man forced himself to breathe in and out until his body lost some of its stiffness.

“I see.”
There was something very dangerous in his voice then. Something that reminded him of Tom Riddle. The way a smooth undercurrent of threat threaded itself into his voice. Harry swallowed.

“Harry, dear.” Loki spoke again this time in a different tone entirely. “Would you mind going back to the tower with the Avengers? Dr. Banner can look at your injuries and make sure there’s nothing broken. Then you’re going to eat as much food as you can possibly stomach. After that I’d like you to get some sleep. You’ve used up too much of your magic, if we’re not careful you could get sick.”

“What about you?”

“I’m going to call the American aurors and have them clean up this mess so that the statute isn’t broken. I’m also going to work out the details so that no one gets obliviated.” Loki said.

“Then you’ll come back?” Harry asked.

“I…”

“Because I’d like to be there when you beat the snot out of Dumbledore.”

Harry could feel the man smile.

“Alright, I’ll come right back to the tower once this place is cleaned up. I promise. I’ll need your help planning a proper revenge anyway.”

“Okay.” Harry agreed.

“Good. Thor! Get over here.”

From behind him he heard some footsteps. It occurred to him that the others might have heard that entire conversation. He couldn’t bring himself to be bothered by that.

“I’ll take him back to the tower.” Thor said, stopping right behind them. “He’ll be safe with me.”

“Make sure he eats.” Loki said. “A lot of food. Not the pitiful amount humans call a meal. He needs rest too. Magical Exhaustion isn’t a joke.”

“I know brother. I’m not an idiot.”

“Debatable.” Loki said while gently pushing Harry away from him and into Thor’s waiting arms. Harry just went with it, he didn’t even know if he could hold up his head anymore. Thor held him up with a surprisingly gentle touch.

“Is the kid okay?” Tony Stark asked.

“He used too much magic.” Loki said. “It can be very dangerous if left untreated, but he should be alright as long as we’re careful for the next few days.”

“Bruce is waiting for us.” Captain America said. “He’s ready to look over Harry.”

“Good. Go, I’ve got to call the magical authorities.”

“Come on. There’s a car waiting for us.”

Harry didn’t really take in the trip from the arcade, now completely destroyed, to Avengers Tower. Mostly he just let himself be practically carried around until he ended up sitting on a table with Bruce Banner carefully trying to check to see if his ribs were bruised or broken. Around him he listened as
Tony and Thor ordered a mountain of food from various different places. They might have, at one point, asked him what he liked since most of the food they were ordering were his favorites, but he couldn’t remember it. Captain America and the Black Widow were talking to each other to his left, they were, unsurprisingly, talking about Dumbledore and the war. Harry wanted to answer some of their questions, but his tongue felt like it was glued to the bottom of his mouth.

“No broken bones, which is really great news I think. You’re going to have some terrible bruises but those’ll pass. You’ve got a pretty deep cut on your arm. I’m going to clean it and bandage it up. I don’t think it’ll need stitches. Okay Harry?” Bruce told him.

He forced himself to nod even though it made his head swim. Bruce smiled, and Harry let his mind start to wander into exhausted numbness. The next time he was aware of anything, he was seated at another table with literal piles of food surrounding him. Thor was placing a pile of pizza slices right in front of him, telling him to start eating up. The other Avengers were eating too but it was pretty obvious most of the food was meant for him.

So, Harry ate. And he ate. And he ate. Every time he cleared his plate, Thor was there to put more food on it. Harry was sure at some point his stomach was supposed to tell him to stop but the sign never came. He just kept eating. Had he been a little more aware he would have known that his magic was nearly instantly turning most of the food he ate into magical energy because he was so dangerously low. He wasn’t aware enough for that, he wasn’t even aware enough to realize just how much food he ate.

Eventually the table was cleared of food. Harry sat there, feeling very heavy and lethargic. He considered just laying his right down on the dirty plate. No one would mind that would they? But Thor seemed to have a different idea. Despite the fact that Harry was totally out of energy at this point, Thor still thought it was a good idea to get him clean.

So, Thor carried Harry, yes carried, like he was some sort of baby or swooning bride, to a bathroom. Harry didn’t even have the energy to complain more than once about the manhandling and Thor took his clothes off and rinsed all the blood off of him in the shower.

“Trust me nephew, it’s better to get the blood out now before it mats in your hair.”

So, Harry let the man clean him up. Thor was gentle and thorough without making it weird. Other than the sheer embarrassment he felt that he couldn’t stand up in the shower by himself, his uncle made the whole thing as bearable as possible.

For most of the time Harry compared the way Thor helped him clean up and the various ways Aunt Petunia had done the same. From the boiling hot water, she’d forcibly hold him in the bath tub to the terribly scratchy sponge she’d used that had left red marks in his skin for days afterward. When he’d gotten older, she’d tended to just start the hose on him if she thought he wasn’t clean. Then she’d make him wait outside until he’d dried so that he wouldn’t drip in her nice clean kitchen.

Thor was totally different. He didn’t hold Harry tightly, just enough to keep him upright. He never tugged on his hair like Aunt Petunia used to do making him tear up with pain. Instead the man was patient as he carefully worked blood and debris out of the knots in his hair. To keep it from getting too awkward Thor told Harry about the multiple times in his younger years when he’d had to do this for Loki when the man had over done it with magic. Apparently, it ran in the family.

“The first time was when we’d finished a hunt, he was so magically exhausted he couldn’t even ride his horse. He had to ride with me, so I could hold him up. I didn’t know what the problem was, I thought he’d been poisoned. He was too exhausted to explain so I just raced through the woods like there were dragons chasing us.” Thor told him. “Imagine it, two princes of Asgard riding through a
dark forest on one horse. One of them looking green enough to vomit and the other worried enough to faint.”

It was a funny image and it made Harry giggle even as Thor put his head under the stream of water to wash out the shampoo. Once all of the blood was gone, Thor carefully dried him off and dressed him in some sweatpants and an over large t-shirt. Harry found himself being tucked in by a god. Which was just bizarre. Harry had never once been tucked in. He wasn’t sure if he liked it.

“Now.” Thor said. “You’ve had a great feast, worthy of a warrior such as yourself.”

“Ha.” Thor continued as if he hadn’t heard Harry’s sarcastic noise.

“You’re clean of the blood of your enemies.”

“It was my blood.”

“Now.” Thor said, his voice raising just a little. “It’s time to sleep. It’s as all the greatest warriors in Asgard do. Fight, Eat, and Sleep.”

“This the part where you tell me a bed time story?”

“Is that what you need?”

“I need you to make sure Loki actually comes back here.” Harry said seriously, more alert than he’d been in some time. “A lot’s happened in the wizarding world since he left. I don’t want him…want him getting hurt or anything until I can tell him everything.”

Thor gave him a gentle smile and nodded.

“I’ll keep him in the tower until you wake up. I promise. It might be difficult, but I promise it will be done.”

“If you’ve got to, to tell him I’m scared.” Harry told him, making a face at the very idea. “I’m not but tell him I’m right terrified of Death Eaters and I don’t think I can handle being by myself.”

“Very manipulative. That should work perfectly.” Thor told him. “Now get some rest. If you need help just call out. Tony has an excellent servant in his house called Jarvis. He’s a computer and he’ll hear you.”

“A computer?”

“You can get an explanation later.”

“Right. Yeah…”

Harry yawned and let his eyes fall shut. Exhaustion pulled at his limbs keeping them pinned to the bed beneath him. Everything seemed designed to make him fall asleep. From the fluffiness of the pillows to the weight of the comforter on top of him. The last thing he felt was Thor pulled the blankets over him just a little more before he was totally gone to the world.
Dense Cores and Prophecies

Chapter Summary

Thor makes sure Harry is comfortable before going back to make sure Loki doesn't do something he'll regret. The last thing he wants to deal with is Loki's pouting if his son grows upset with him.

Chapter Notes

Slightly shorter chapter this time around. I've got a lot of projects coming up due this week and next! I'm actually writing up a proposal so I can go on a NASA volcanology trip this summer. I wish writing proposals was as easy as writing about the Avengers. Wouldn't life be sweet then?

Thor carefully stood once he was sure that Harry was completely asleep and made his way out of the room. He didn’t mind that his clothing was wet, again. Most everyone had changed out of their wet things from the fight, Thor included. But he’d gotten wet again while trying to make sure Harry didn’t fall asleep for three days while covered in blood. That wasn’t a good look on anyone.

Now at least the young demi-god would sleep off his exhaustion clean and warm. Thor had never seen anyone lose control of their abilities in that way before. Loki had said it was normal, expected. But he was pretty sure that was a lie. There was something unsettling about the way the very earth had trembled and shook. Not that it made Thor fear the young man. No. It made him fear for Harry. It must have been absolutely frightening to lose all control, to risk harming everyone around him without being about to stop it.

It was obvious to him that Harry was kind, if a bit too witty for his own good. He’d confronted Loki, not for his own abandonment but for the others that Loki had left behind. Thor had watched as Harry had lost more and more control of his magic, even with all of the destruction he caused his magic had kept any of them from being hurt. Windows shattering sending glass over them but then magic shielding them.

Thor emerged from the elevator to hear that his brother had already returned. Loki was ranting to the rafters about what exactly he was going to do to Albus Dumbledore for this. It was rather explicit and violent, much more than Loki normally was. As he walked into the main living area he saw all of the Avengers, including the newly returned Clint, watching in horrified fascination as Loki yelled continuously, not stopping for breath.

“I am going to rip out his nails one by one and then I’ll use them to scoop out his-”

Loki was pacing violently around the room. Everywhere he stepped ice spiked out dangerously. Green flames were curled from his clenched fists. Thor leaned against the doorway and just watched for a while. It had been ages since he’d seen his brother this…alive about anything. Even the whole mess with his coronation and Loki discovering his adoption had been done with less flare than this. This was the old Loki who twisted words so perfectly, making them sharp tools. The Loki who used
flamboyant movements and had tones of voice different from deadpan.

How he had missed it.

“What are you doing there?” Loki demanded. “Aren’t you supposed to be getting my son to bed?”

“He is in bed.” Thor said evenly. “We fed him enough food to feed about three Volstags. I kept waiting for him to tell me he was full, but he never did. I think he would have kept eating if we hadn’t run out. I cleaned all of the blood off of him and then tucked him in. He’s dead to the world now.”

“The kid packed away more than a family of 20 would on Thanksgiving Day.” Tony added.

“I have to admit.” Steve said from his position on the couch. “It was a little disturbing that someone so small could eat so much.”

“Yes.” Loki said, the magic draining from his hands. “That’s to be expected. His magical core was severely depleted. His magic was instantly transforming most of that food into magical energy, I’d be surprised if most of it even hit his stomach.”

“Okay…what is a magical core?” Bruce asked.

“It’s just the area where magic pools in your body.” Loki said. “The larger and denser the core the more powerful the magic user.”

“Denser?” Thor asked.

“Oh yes. I never did tell Asgard about that.” Loki said offhandedly. “I figured out why demigods are more powerful than us. Well, Lily figured it out, but I helped.”

“And you never thought to mention this?”

“Didn’t seem relevant.”

“The answer to a mystery that had boggled our scholars for millennia wasn’t relevant?” Had Thor really missed this? Loki opened his mouth to give an unhelpful answer, but Bruce cut in.

“Okay tell us. Why is your son more powerful than you?”

“It all comes down to biology really.” Loki answered. “Human magic users are weaker than gods yes this is because the human tissue can’t handle a lot of magic passing through it. If too much magic passes through them, they essentially get cancer. The magical version of it in any case. This means that their core needs to be smaller in order to limit the danger the magic possesses to them.”

“So, magic is cancerous?”

Loki made a face that seemed to imply ‘sort of’, which wasn’t comforting. Thor knew what the man meant though. It was true, even gods who bathed in too much magic seemed to change.

“It changes humans in terrifying ways. You-Know-Who had immersed himself in so much magic that he no longer looked human. His skin was bone white, his eyes were red sacs and his nose had fallen off, only to be replaced by two snake-like slits. The magic had changed him, deformed him. It’ll happen to any human who goes too far.” Loki explained. “Humans with naturally large cores tend to go a bit…round the bend. Their natural magic literally changing their brains so that most of the time they don’t seem quite all there.”
“Right so a lot of magic makes us either monsters or a bit kooky.” Tony drawled. “What does that make the magical world like?”

“Chaotic. The most powerful tend to become the leaders which means that the most lunatic of the bunch tend to make the law.” Loki answered sounding so damn fond of the very concept. “Don’t expect the magical world to make sense. It very rarely does. I don’t think it was meant to. Common sense isn’t as important when everyone can just spell away a problem.”

“That actually sounds really fun.” Clint decided.

“Of course, you’d think that.” Natasha said. Loki quickly continued to explain his findings.

“Now since humans are so fragile to large amounts of magic, but they still have the ability to use it, a solution had to be found. And you did. Humans evolved a method of storing magic in their bodies in a more efficient manner. Essentially their cores are very dense. Every inch of the core is packed with magic. This increases their power while decreasing the likelihood that they’ll go mad.”

“So, we’ve got a more efficient battery.” Bruce surmised.

“Yes. Gods like Thor and I don’t need to have efficiency. While our bodies can be changed by magic it generally takes astronomically higher amounts of magic. Our cores can grow and grow without really posing a threat to our health.”

Loki turned around and continued to speak. His hands shaping the words that his mouth produced.

“A demigod retains humanities efficient magical cores while gaining the gods’ ability to handle large core sizes. Essentially he’s got a magical core my size while it’s about five times as dense.”

“Well shit.”

“How well summarized.”

“How’d you know his core is five times as dense as yours?” Steve asked.

“That’s how dense Lily’s was compared to mine.” Loki answered. “I checked when Harry was very young. He had his mother’s density, but it was growing quickly. I imagine if I checked it now, it’d be much closer to my size. It’s why I placed a spell on him to limit his power. The plan had been to protect his body from the strain until it was better able to handle it. I didn’t want my son going mad you know.”

“And is his body ready for that sort of strain? Or was that…episode from earlier part of the problem?” Tony asked gently.

“No.” Loki said. “Harry had a momentary lapse of control. Which is to be expected when he’s under that amount of pressure. Not only has he discovered that his long dead father is alive, but it’s me, the man who failed to invade earth. His entire world is at war and thanks to a crazy old man and a prophecy everyone thinks it’s his job to end it. On top of all of that he’s learnt that the leader of the light, the man he’s supposed to follow has betrayed him in the worse way possible. Harry is expected to deal with this all while going through the throws of puberty.”

“When you put it like that.” Clint said. “I’m surprised there’s still a New York.”

Even Thor had to admit that the damage done was minimal compared to what it could have been.

“So, you’re sure he’s asleep?”
“He almost passed out on me while I was getting the blood out of his hair.” Thor said. “I promise you, he won’t be moving for some time.”

“Good.” Loki said. “Magical exhaustion is very serious. We need to make sure he doesn’t strain himself at all for at least a week. If he does he could make himself very ill.”

“Why are you telling us this?” Thor asked. “Aren’t you going to be here?”

Loki got a very shifty look in his eye and Thor sighed.

“I’m only going to be gone for a little bit. Have a chat with Albus. Harry won’t even know it’s happened.”

“I see you’ve learned so much from Odin.”

“Don’t you dare compare…”

“So, you didn’t just admit to planning on lying to your son hours within getting him back?”

Loki looked as if he’d been slapped.

“Well…I…”

“No. I don’t want to hear it. I refuse to allow you to ruin your relationship with Harry. I won’t deal with your sulking when he kicks you to the curb because you refuse to grow up.”

“If you’re suggesting that I just let Dumbledore get away with this then…”

“I’m not. I’m telling you that I won’t let you leave this tower until Harry’s awake and able to go with you. He’s the one who’s been truly hurt by all of this,” Thor reminded the man. “I know, I got a look at him while cleaning him up. The boy’s body is littered with scars.”

“What?” Tony asked. “You mean other than the weird one on his forehead?”

“He has puncture wounds, burn scars, scars from knives, scars from spells. A scar on the back of his hand that looks as if someone’s carved words into it.” Thor listed. “There’s a huge one on his arm that looks like he’d been stabbed clean through with a pike. Other’s still that look like handprints burned into his legs. There’s no part of his body that isn’t marked with something.”

Thor didn’t mention the small tattoo on his wrist. That looked like something special, something private. As he described what he’d seen each of the heroes got more and more upset. Outside clouds were beginning to stir. The anger he’d held back in favor of being as gentle as he could with his nephew was leaking out of him. He tried to be careful, no one liked it when the gods were angry.

Loki looked devastated, which wasn’t surprising. When his brother considered something ‘his’, he was always distraught when any harm came to it. Granted, a son was a bit more important than a toy or magical trinket, but the principle was the same. Loki could oftentimes be overprotective of that which he cared for. Knowing that his failure had been so great would pretty much gut him. But it would be better for Loki to work through that now, rather than when Harry was awake and needed him.

“What were the words? On the back of his hand.” Loki asked.

“I must not tell lies.”

Loki’s fists clenched together.
“Who would do that to a little kid?” Tony asked. “Carve that into his hand?”

In the distance thunder rumbled. It felt like those words were an attack on Loki, on Harry’s heritage. It felt pointed and ugly. Mark the son of the god of lies with a command for truth. There was no way Loki hadn’t taken it personally. Even if whomever had done it couldn’t have even fathomed the slight they were making.

“I don’t know.” Loki said. “But I intend to find out.”

“Do you see why I want you here?” Loki sighed but nodded at his brother. “Good, wait a week before getting revenge. It’ll be good practice.”

“Practice?”

“Of course.” Clint said. “You’re a dad now. Everything you want comes second to Harry.”

“Including any revenge you want to get.” Tony added with a smirk. “I mean really you won’t even be able to prank someone if it would upset him.”

Loki rolled his eyes at that.

“While that is true you all are forgetting that this is my son. He might be even worse than I am when it comes to trouble. By the end of the week your entire tower could be booby trapped.”

“No way a kid who can lift Thor’s hammer is ever going to prank us.” Steve said.

“Well, we’ll just have to see if blood comes through, won’t we?”

“Are you honestly asking for your son to be a troublemaker?” Natasha asked, amused.

“Of course, then we’ll have something in common.”

Everyone rolled their eyes at the tone. It was odd being in a synchronized eyeroll but Loki made it happen so frequently. Thor finally decided to move out from the doorway and into the room proper. His clothing hadn’t really dried at all but that was hardly the point anyway.

“Why are you so wet?”

“Because your son was covered in his own blood and letting that sit in his hair for the next three days while he’s unconscious isn’t the best plan. I gave him a bath.” Thor said.

“That was nice of you.” Steve said.

“I also used it as an excuse to see why he weighed practically nothing. Demi-god or not, the boy should have some weight to him.”

“I noticed that too.” Loki admitted. “I don’t think he knows how much he has to eat now that the spells I put on him are gone. He’d need to nearly triple what a normal teen would need.”

“Explains why he’s so skinny at least.” Thor said.

“Are you telling me that I’ve got a super-powered teenager getting ready to eat me out of house and home?” Tony asked in a way that was clearly joking.

“If it helps I could start paying rent. I did have money as James Potter. Although, I am technically dead so that would mean Harry has all my money. He could pay rent.”
“I’m not asking a 12 year old for rent.”

“Then don’t complain about the costs of feeding him.”

“Do you even have a sense of humor?”

“Not that I’m aware of.”

“Back onto the more important topic.” Natasha cut in. “Now that Thor is here, can we discuss the fact that the magical war isn’t over? And what we’re going to do about it.”

A somber silence fell over all of them. Ever since learning about You-Know-Who and the war he’d waged they’d all been silently grateful that he was gone. That sort of evil wasn’t something you wanted to face. Loki’s family might be gone but at least the monster who’d destroyed them was gone too. Except now apparently, he was alive.

“How serious are prophecies?” Bruce asked.

And that was the question wasn’t it? How serious was a prophecy? Loki got a stormy look on his face as he considered how best to answer that. Thor decided to start.

“It depends if it’s a true prophecy or not. Anyone can predict the future, but only a select few can give real prophecies.”

“If Albus was willing to lie to a god about his son over a prophecy, it’s very likely a real one.” Loki said. “The man may be an idiot but he’s not stupid.”

“A real prophecy,” Thor said carefully. “is unavoidable. Its wording is exact if misleading. Trying to circumvent it will only lead to ruin, trying to control it will cause destruction. It will happen no matter what you do. Most real prophecies don’t even make sense until they’ve already been played out.”

“Then how could anyone be sure that Harry’s part of it?” Bruce asked. “Are they just assuming it’s him because of who his dad is?”

“I don’t know the wording.” Loki said. “It could be any reason at all. But we’ve got to assume that Albus was right in identifying my son. If we assume he isn’t then Harry might not be prepared for the final confrontation, if we assume he is and he isn’t, then at least he’ll be overprepared.”

“You don’t mean to imply that you’d let your son face that monster?” Thor demanded.

“That’s insane Loki.” Steve said. “We should keep Harry here until the war is over. If that many Death Eaters are willing to swarm over him, he needs a guard at all times.”

“We could set up some sort of schedule.” Clint offered.

Before Thor could add on his support to that idea Loki cut in looking rather ferocious.

“Stop. Stop right there.” Loki told them. “No one is putting my son under guard. We’re not treating him like a child.”

“Loki, he’s not even 16.”

“I know that. I know that much better than you. All of this hurts me more than it will any of you but these are the facts. Harry isn’t a child anymore. The trauma he’s undergone has aged him well past his years. You saw him fight Amora and those Death Eaters, that’s not the sort of experience a child has. If we treat him like a little baby who can’t defend himself instead of an equal he will leave so
quickly the windows will shatter.”

And Thor knew Loki was right. No body with scars like that could be called a child’s body.

“I plan on keeping him safe, protecting him with all that I have,” Loki said. “But no matter how much I hate it, I can’t treat him like the baby I loved so much. With a prophecy in play I can’t follow my first instinct and hide him away on some distant planet. Trying to trick fate will only hurt him further. I have to be smart.”

More silence as they digested that. It was true. Locking Harry up like a princess in a tower would only in the end hurt him. Because if the prophecy was about him, then nothing would keep him from that final confrontation.

“So we need to know the wording then. This Dumbledore guy obviously knows it.” Tony said. “Any other way we can get our hands on it?”

“All true prophecies given on earth are recorded magically.” Loki said. “If it was given in Britain then that means that the British Magical Government will have it stored somewhere. Probably in the Department of Mysteries.”

“So, can we just go and pick it up?” Steve asked.

“No. There are protections on those orbs.” Loki said. “If you touch one that isn’t about you, the magic will backlash so hard you’re likely to either go completely mad or die.”

“Why would they do that?” Bruce asked.

“To keep people from messing with fate. In Asgard, seers often won’t even reveal the prophecies they give for the same reason.” Thor guessed.

“So, what? Have we got to threaten it out of Dumbledore?” Natasha asked. “I’m good with threats.”

“It might be our only option.” Steve said.

“Harry could know it.” Thor said. “He was the one who told us about it in the first place.”

“Then we’ll wait for him to wake up.” Natasha said. “When me and Steve were talking about it earlier while Bruce was checking him out, Harry kept trying to answer our questions but it kept coming out as gibberish.”

“Yes.” Thor said. “I think Harry’s going to be our best source of information on the current status of the war. He told me before he went to sleep that he wanted me to make sure Loki stayed here because a lot had changed since he’d left. But we’ll have to wait a few days until he’s coherent.”

“So, what do we do till now? I mean, we’re all fighting this You-Know-Who guy right?” Bruce said. “Cause we’re the Avengers.”

“I think fighting magical terrorists is in our job description, yeah.” Clint agreed. “What do you say Cap? Wanna take a break fighting Hydra?”

“I think this might be a bit more pressing.” Steve said wryly. “You up for it Tony?”

“You kidding? This is going to be my chance to finally test out some of my different suits!”

“What about you Nat?” Steve asked. “You in?”
She lifted an eyebrow up at the question, which really, form her was about a declaration of undying support to the cause. Loki was looking a little…stunned at the show of support.

“I…You…thank you.” He said. “But if you’re going to be fighting Death Eaters. You’re going to need some training. A magic war is very different from anything you’ve experienced, even you Thor. On earth, during a magic fight, it’s considered ill form to actually touch your opponent. You all will need to learn how to identify human spells, know what can be blocked and what can’t.”

“Well we’ve got at least a few days until Harry’s up and about. How about you get us started Obi-wan?”

Thor smiled as Loki took a moment to pull himself together. Then there was a determined gleam in his eye. He clasped his hands together, lacing his fingers together with both of his pointer fingers still pointed straight up. The tips of those two fingers touched his lips for just a moment.

“Let’s go to the training room then. No time like the present.” Then Loki’s hands were free as he strode over to the elevator. “Come on! This is no time to procrastinate! Thor! I’ll need you to be my test dummy!”

Thor rolled his eyes.

“Why did I miss him so much?”

“That is one of the world’s greatest mysteries.”

“Come on.” Steve said. “Let’s go.”
Hermione's Genius

Chapter Summary

Harry wakes up from a three day coma with a new vision and a determination to call his friends. After all, they need to know what he's learned and he knows they're bound to be worried sick. Things between him and Loki are still awkward at best.

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! Guess who's in her last week of classes?? Me. Guess who caught some sort of flu due to stress?? Also Me. This weekend I'm going to do nothing but sleep, it's going to be so good to relax with the ending of the semester. Thanks for the great comments! I hope you all enjoy this update!

The room was dark, filled with some sort of fetid stench that reminded one of an ancient rotting basement, but he knew the stench was new. White fingers tapped staccato beats onto the table seated in the center of the room. It was a long oak table, able to fit many bodies, perhaps for a nice party or family reunion, not that it was used for anything pleasurable anymore. There were dark spots staining the wood, dark brown with smaller spots of not quite yet dried red.

A fire crackled and popped, providing the only other noise in the oppressive room. It was attempting and failing to light the entire room. Instead long shadows were painted along the floors and walls. More finger tapping, it was getting quicker, sharper. Then, a knock.

"Enter."

The door at the far end of the room opened to reveal a round shaking figure with a silver hand. Said silver hand was the only thing steady about the person. His face was covered in sweat, his hair greasy and knotted.

"What is it?" A voice hissed out.

"My…My Lord. There is n…news from the Americans."

The hand stopped, that was unexpected news. The expectation had been that any news would be from the Europeans. The one person who could ruin the entire operation had disappeared, somehow. The Order had hidden him somewhere new, had somehow blocked the connection. Every attempt to get into that boy’s mind had failed. Ever since the abrupt severing of the connection a few weeks ago.

“And?"

“Ha…Harry Potter has been spo…spotted in Ne…New York City."

“Send orders out for his capture.”
The fat, cowardly figure flinched at the order. Flinches meant that the message wasn’t finished. Flinches meant pain.

“Wormtail.”

“The…The Death Eaters tried to…to capture him but…but the American Aurors got in the way.”

The tapping hand fisted. Harry Potter was working with the Americans now? The Order was hindered by the corrupt British Ministry. Potter had been hurt by them just as much as his forces had hurt him. But if Potter allied with someone new? Bright red eyes narrowed.

“Crucio!”

***

Harry woke with a scream. He tried to fight and push off the thick blankets that seemed to try and suffocate him. His flailing eventually sent him tumbling to the floor. The cool of the carpet felt like pure relief on his fevered skin.

“Mr. Potter are you well?”

Harry blinked at the strange British voice. He carefully pushed the blanket away from his face and tried to see who was speaking. Before he could his stomach violently started to protest. Harry forced himself up and rushed towards the bathroom. He fell to his knees and slid the rest of the way to the toilet. His face fell forward as he started to cough and gag. His stomach heaved and bright drops of red dripped from his scar, landing on the porcelain around him.

“Do you want me to call for your father, Mr. Potter?” The same voice hesitantly asked from somewhere near the ceiling.

He finally stopped attempting to vomit and fell back onto his butt. His scar was still bleeding, he lifted a hand up to the hot pulsing wound. He hissed in pain and let his hand drop. He couldn’t see anyone in the room.

“Who’s there?” He cringed at how shrill his voice sounded.

“Apologies. I am Jarvis.”

“Where are you?”

“I am a computer system integrated into the tower. Mr. Stark created me to help him with his work as well as help anyone living within Avengers Tower. As you are currently a guest I am here to help you. Would you like me to call for help? You are currently bleeding from your face.”

Normally Ron would be here helping Harry with the bleeding, or maybe Hermione depending on when the vision had happened. Once he’d had a vision while they were walking along the lake and Ron and Hermione had just laid down next to him to make it look like they were all taking a cat nap. The idea of asking for help from anyone else wasn’t pleasant but neither was all of this bleeding.

“Yeah.”

“One moment please.” Jarvis said.

Harry slowly leaned against the bathroom wall behind him. He focused on breathing, trying to make sense of what he’d seen.
“He’s on his way.” Jarvis told him, a moment later he heard a door in the other room slam open, then the pounding of footsteps.

Loki appeared, looking frantic and out of breath a moment later. His eyes landed on Harry who was huddled against a wall with a face full of blood.

“Harry.”

“Could you get me some ice and a towel?”

“You’re hurt. What happened?”

“Please?”

Loki pulled himself together and conjured a small towel and a glass of ice. He knelt down next to Harry. Harry took them both with shaking hands. He dumped the ice into the towel and then made a little bag with it. Then he gently placed the now cooled towel to his bleeding face. He sighed in relief.

“I could spell that closed.”

“No. No magic on it hurts.” Harry said forcing himself not to shake his head. “Madam Pomphrey’s tried everything.”

“It happens that frequently?”

“Yeah. Can’t really…predict when it will. Nobody really understands the scar at all.”

“Curse scars can be complicated but surely you’ve got some idea.”

“It’s a curse scar from a killing curse.”

Harry looked up to see that Loki was clearly trying not to freak out or panic. He swallowed carefully and waited.

“You got hit with a killing curse?” He asked. “How are you…?”

“I don’t know. Nobody does. I was a baby the night mom died, and I got hit. I don’t remember anything that would explain it. Dumbledore…he told me it was mum who did something to save me, but I don’t know if I want to believe anything he says anymore.”

The man hummed in understanding.

“Come on. Let’s get up. You’ve been asleep for three days now, you’re probably hungry?”

“Three days?” Harry yelped. “Oh Merlin. I need a phone!”

“A phone?”

“Yes a phone, please?”

“I’m sure there’s one, come on. Are you strong enough to stand?”

“Course. It’s just a small head wound.”

Slowly Harry pushed himself onto his feet, while keeping the towel that was now turning a not so
great shade of pink on his face. Loki helped him up all the way and then, gently led him from the
bathroom.

“We’ve got some food ready for you. We knew you’d be getting up sometime today. Are you
hungry?”

“I mean…yeah I guess.” Harry said shrugging. When wasn’t he hungry?

“Good, we’ll just be going up a few floors to the penthouse, that’s where we eat together most days.
I’m sure most of the team will be there too. They’ve wanted to get to know you outside of a fight.”

“Right. And we can get me to a phone?”

“Who do you need to call so badly?”

“My friends. They’re probably worried sick about me.”

“Of course. They know you’re in New York, right now?”

“How do you think I got here without Dumbledore knowing?”

“I see. Well then let’s find you a phone.”

Harry smiled at little, which was about as big as he could considering the bleeding face. They got
into an elevator and fell into silence. It was a little awkward. Harry wasn’t sure what he was
supposed to say. Loki seemed just as lost. Harry swallowed and decided to try.

“So you…played quidditch?”

“What?” Loki said stupidly before blinking. “I yes…I did. I was a Chaser for four years and the
captain for two. How did you know?”

“You were in the yearbook. As the captain. It was part of the reason I…stayed on the team at first
when McGonagall put me on.”

“You didn’t try out? She just put you on?”

“I think it was either get on the team and squash Slytherin or go to detention for the stunt I pulled.”

“Which stunt was that?”

“Well…”

Loki gave him a hopeful grin and so as the elevator took them up Harry told the story of Neville’s
remembrall and Draco Malfoy trying to go for the world’s biggest bully award for the first time on
Hogwart’s grounds. Loki listened with something like glee on his face as Harry told him about flying
against the rules all to get back Neville’s gift from his gran.

“A seeker as a first year? You must be extraordinary.”

“I’m alright yeah.”

“What happened to your face?” Thor demanded.

“Well you see.” Harry said. “When human teenagers reach a certain age they just start randomly
bleeding from their face. It’s a rite of passage.”
All of the humans in the room looked a little too amused for Thor to believe Harry’s claim. Harry rolled his eyes and spoke again.

“Right. No, the bleeding scar thing is just me. Long story. Not much anyone can do for it.” Harry answered. “Does anyone have a phone I can borrow? I need to call my friends and let them know I’m okay.”

“Since your face is you know…bleeding, do you mind if Jarvis just calls them and puts it on the speaker?”

Harry figured that was fair. No need to get blood all over someone’s phone.

“Sure. We’ll call Hermione.”

“Hermione?” Loki asked his tone inquisitive and playful. Harry knew that tone.

Harry made a very disgusted face at the thought of dating Hermione…that’d be like dating Ron. Why did everyone think that? Hermione was great, but she was like sister great. Which, after that horrible incident with Cho at Madam Puddifoots, Harry was pretty sure it was better that way.

“She’s like my sister. No way.”

“Really?” Loki asked. “Is she pretty? Does she make your heart race? You know if you’re having a hard time…”

Harry pursed his lips. He’d had a long time to think about dating Hermione in his fourth year. When all the newspapers were screaming that they were an item. At first, he’d been upset because it was Rite Skeeter lying, again. But then…then he saw how it made people treat Hermione. People told her she wasn’t pretty enough for him, people told him that it was good he’d finally made a move. One boy from Ravenclaw had basically told him that there was no other reason to be friends with a girl like her.

“So, the first thing you’re going to do to me as a dad is call me a liar then?” Loki’s mouth snapped shut and he looked like Harry had punched him again. Harry didn’t apologize. He was tired of people not believing him when he said things. “Can we please call her?”

“Of course, Mr. Potter. What is the number please?”

Harry listed out Hermione’s number and soon the entire room was filled the sound of ringing. Loki was looking a little put out that Harry wasn’t even willing to entertain his nonsense.

“Granger Residence.” Hermione’s voice said. “This is Hermione speaking.”

“Hullo.” Harry said, it took less than half a second for Hermione to know who she was talking to.

“HARRY JAMES POTTER! I HAVE BEEN SO WORRIED!”

Harry winced at her shrill tone. He deserved that he really did. He should have called them before he passed out, or asked Thor to call them. He’d forgotten, and he’d left them worrying for three days. Before Hermione could go on a full blown rant, he broke in.

“Hermione you’re on speaker phone.”

The wind blew out of her sails, Harry could feel it over the line.

“What?”
“I’m at Avengers Tower, have been for the last three days. I’ve been unconscious. I’m sorry, I should have gotten a message to you guys before I fell asleep.”

“What happened Harry?” Hermione asked. “You only pass out for three days if you get into a fight with You-Know-Who.”

“Are you ever going to let that one go?” Harry asked, a little irked at the mention of the incident in their first year.

“No. Now what happened?”

“I was exploring New York, I wanted to see a bit of the city before I headed home.” Harry told her. She and Ron already knew that he’d punched his dad and fought off an Asgardian. He’d called them days ago about that. “I got attacked by Death Eaters. They swarmed this arcade I was at.”

“Are you okay?”

“Yeah, I’m fine. I mean other than the magical exhaustion. I’m like…way more durable now. I got hit with a low powered blasting hex and it barely hurt.”

“That’s very interesting. I do wonder what exactly those spells Loki put on you did. I didn’t expect you’d become stronger like that. This is going to take more research if we’re going to ever understand what you’re capable of.” Hermione said, her mind already wandering towards what books she wanted to read.

“Plus.” Harry added. “Think of what it’ll mean for quidditch.”

Loki actually smiled at that while the others looked a little confused.

“Harry.” Hermione said. “There is more to life than that game of high speed death ball.”

“Is there really? Name a better game, Hermione. You can’t.”

She made a very annoyed noise before pushing the conversation forward by asking him what happened in the fight. Harry quickly told her that Tony Stark had been there at the arcade too, trying to find him and when the Death Eaters showed up, he helped evacuate the muggles and then went to get help.

“Did they all come to help?” Hermione asked.

“If you’re asking, Miss Granger, whether I came to help my son.” Loki said. “Then yes I did.”

Harry gave the man an unimpressed look for interrupting. Loki looked almost hurt that Harry wasn’t impressed. But how could the man think that? The rest of the Avengers had been silent.

“Harry?”

“Yes, he helped.” Harry confirmed. “But then he wanted to talk. Which is why I ended up passing out for three days. The conversation was so…enlightening that I lost control of my magic for a moment.”

It was embarrassing to admit but he knew Hermione would understand once he told her why.

“Enlightening? Do I need to come down there Harry? I’m not sure how but if you…”

“No. No you need to stay there. Stick to the plan.” Harry told her. “Are you alone right now?”
“My parents are at the dentistry right now, it’s just me here. I don’t see why that would matter, they’re muggles you know.” She said. “What’s wrong?”

“Dumbledore lied.” Harry told her. “Dumbledore told Loki that I was dead, that Sirius and Remus were dead. That’s why he wasn’t there.”

There was a moment of silence, Hermione only really ever needed a moment to understand anything. Where Harry had needed more than a few to figure out the cause of this betrayal, Hermione figured it out in a heartbeat.

“That…THAT FU-”

A terrible crackling sound cut off Hermione’s rant and then there was the silence of a disconnected to call. Harry winced at that. Her parents were not going to be pleased.

“What happened?” Tony asked. “Is she okay?”

“She’s fine.” Harry said. “It’s just that magic and technology don’t tend to…play well together. Most witches and wizards don’t use it because if you get upset even a little it tends to break it. It’s why I don’t have a phone myself. She’ll call back once she’s calmed down. It only sucks cause I’ve never heard her swear before. I probably never will.”

Harry moved the now dripping towel from his face. His scar was probably really bright red and inflamed but it was no longer burning or bleeding.

“Give me those.” Loki said. “Is it done bleeding now?”

“Should be. At least until the next time it happens.”

“How often does that scar just start spurting blood?” Hawkeye asked.

“I dunno? Sometimes. It’s not like I keep track.” Hermione would have though.

“Could you explain what causes it?” Captain America asked.

“The night my mom was murdered, Voldemort tried to kill me too.”

“You said his name.” Loki hissed.

“Lokes I thought you said that name was cursed.” Tony said.

“It is. It alerts him to your location when you say it.”

Harry thought about it and realized the blood wards probably kept that from happening. He’d said it plenty of times while in New York and the monster still didn’t know where he was.

“I didn’t know about the curse. Dumbledore never told me. In fact, he encouraged me to start using it.” Harry told them with a disgruntled expression. “Sorry. I’ll call him by his real name from now on.”

“That’s not his real name?” Loki asked.

“What sort of mum would name their kid that? It’s a made up french name that means ‘flee from death’.” Harry told him. He’d learnt that from Fleur. “His real name is Tom Riddle. Fair warning if you call him that he will get so pissed off you should be ready to dodge a killing curse.”
“Riddle…” Loki said. “Where have I seen that name before? It’s so…familiar.”

“Did you ever get a detention where you had to polish all the school trophies by hand?” Harry asked.

“Only about 500 times…” The man snapped his fingers. “Tom Riddle, he got an award for special services to the school in the 1930s!”

Harry nodded a little.

“That was for when he framed Hagrid for the murder of a 12 year old girl that he committed.”

“Oh Odin.” Loki said. “He’s the reason that kind man can’t use magic?”

Harry nodded, his jaw hardening.

“Loki.” Thor said. “Who is Hagrid?”

“He’s the groundskeeper at Hogwarts. A very kind man with a love for dangerous magical creatures.” Loki said. “If you ever have a problem with a magical creature he’s the man to call, there isn’t a single one he can’t tame. He can’t use magic but he never talks about why. I hadn’t realized that he’d been framed for murder. If you’re convicted of a crime that serious, either your wand is snapped and you’re not allowed to use magic anymore or you’re put in prison.”

“He’s my friend.” Harry added. “A great friend. He got me my first birthday present. He even made me a cake.”

Loki frowned, which Harry had expected. He didn’t expect Thor to step forward and look at him with a pensive look on his eye.

“How old were you?”

“11.”

“And you hadn’t received a present for your birthday before that?”

“I’d never gotten a present for any reason before that.” Harry told him slowly. How thick was the man? “I’m an orphan. People don’t give us…gifts.”

Before Thor, or rather anyone, could say anything to that Jarvis spoke.

“Excuse me I am receiving a video call from Miss Granger. If you would please go over to the tv I can connect the call.”

“Sure.” Tony said. “Come on kid. This way.”

Harry quickly stepped around a frowning Thor and followed Tony. Out of the corner of his eye he could see dark clouds forming outside. The other Avengers followed them to the area where a TV was mounted on the wall. The screen turned on a moment later. Hermione looked like she was still in a rage. Her hair was the bushiest it had ever been, and her cheeks were red.

“I cannot believe this! I am OUTRAGED!”

“Herm-”

“Don’t you try and calm me down Harry James Potter!”
Using his middle name twice? She really did mean it. The girl in the screen stepped away from the computer and started to pace rapidly back and forth, muttering to herself. Harry felt the need to defend his friend.

“She’s…passionate.” Harry whispered.

“I can see that.” Tony said.

“It all makes sense now!” Hermione shouted, not having heard them. She strode right back to the camera. “Everything about the last five years finally make sense!”

“I’m not…following.” Harry admitted.

“Just think about it, Harry.” Hermione said. “Think of it like you’re Dumbledore. It makes sense, all of it. The stone, the chamber of secrets, the dementors, the tournament!”

“Hermione.” Harry said. “You’re the genius here. Not me. What makes sense?”

She sighed and then took in a deep breath, obviously trying to calm herself down so she doesn’t break her computer.

“Just imagine, you’re the leader of a rebellion against a Dark Lord.” She started, still sounding a little to close to rabid for Harry’s liking. “And you’re losing. Every account I’ve read of the war before we were born was bad. Our side was losing. I mean just think of it. Your entire side of the war is being decimated by Death Eaters. By the time James and Lily Potter joined the Order, an entire generation of witches and wizards had been destroyed by the war. The Potters were gone, the Longbottoms, the Bones families, everyone like them. An entire generation. There’s a reason most of the Order was made up of teenagers and young adults. You’ve been fighting a 50-year war and it’s clear now you can’t win. You’re not even slowing The Dark Lord down.”

She looked almost rabid as she laid out her description. Harry didn’t like to think about the war. Loki spoke up.

“She’s right. As hopeful as your mother and I were, I knew that unless something big changed, we probably wouldn’t win. For a long time, I heavily debated sending a message to Asgard and begging for help. I didn’t think one god would be enough, especially as weakened as I was.”

“Thank you, Mr. Potter.” Hermione said politely, glancing over at his dad with interest in her brown eyes. “I’m glad to know my research has been accurate. The teachers at Hogwarts make it so difficult to get information. Something about war crimes not being appropriate reading.”

Harry snorted while a few of the other Avengers chuckled. Hermione ran a hand through her hair and continued.

“No, back to what I was saying. Dumbledore was losing. The lauded leader of the light, the defeater of Grindewald, supposedly the greatest wizard alive and he can’t do anything. Then! Right when everything seems lost, he hears a prophecy. A prophecy about a baby that’s going to be born that can do what Dumbledore can’t, end the war.”

“Me.” Harry said, his voice sounding just a tad hoarse.

“Exactly.” She said. “He just needs to keep one family safe until you’re old enough to be the savior the world needs. He warns your family, tells them to go into hiding because Voldemort’s put them on his hit list. He doesn’t tell them about the prophecy because if they knew they might do something stupid or dangerous. Your family goes into hiding, trusting only their closest friends with their secret
hiding place. It’s fool proof now. He just has to last long enough. It’s just a waiting game, gathering enough intel on You-Know-Who that when you are old enough you can take him down.”

“But it goes wrong.” Tony breaks in. “The parents are betrayed and killed and he’s left with the baby.”

“That night Harry survived a killing curse, something no one ever has in the history of the spell. No one knows how it happened, the only survivor of the night is him and he was only 15 months old. The killing curse rebounded off of Harry and hit You-Know-Who dead on, destroying his body.”

“So, the prophecy is fulfilled then?” Steve asked hopefully.

“I’m afraid not. His body was destroyed but he wasn’t. Dumbledore knew that, he told Harry as much in our first year. Even though Harry had survived the first confrontation, he knew this was only a break in the war. They were incredibly lucky that Harry lived. Without him there isn’t any hope of the war ending. Dumbledore realized that he’d left too much up to chance. He’d trusted your parents to keep you safe and they failed. He couldn’t trust anyone to make sure you were in the right place to win the war.”

“So, he lied. I got that Hermione.” Harry said. “He told Loki that I was dead and so was everyone else so that he wouldn’t take me to Asgard, away from Tom and the war.”

“It’s more than that. So much more than that. I’ve thought of this all just now. If Dumbledore decided that he needed to control everything to make sure that the prophecy was fulfilled in the way he wanted, then…there’s no stopping what he’d do to you.”

“What do you mean?” Thor asked. “What did he do?”

“Dumbledore was the head of the wizengamot, that’s the governmental body that did the Death Eater trials. Sirius Black was framed for betraying the Potters, it would have been Dumbledore’s duty to get the man a trial. But he didn’t, there was no investigation, nothing. Sirius was just thrown in Azkaban. Dumbledore knew the truth, but it didn’t matter. If Sirius was a free man then Sirius would have control of you, not him. Sirius had already failed to keep you safe once. He wasn’t getting a second chance.”

Harry felt frozen as Hermione continued.

“He could have raised you at Hogwarts. It’s safe there, one of the best warded places in the world. And you would have been with people like Professor McGonagall and Professor Flitwick who knew your parents and were close with them. But he didn’t. He didn’t want anyone to influence you, anyone other than him. So, he isolated you from everyone for ten years. He left you with those monsters so that when you did come back from the wizarding world you wouldn’t have any sense of worth. That way you’d see him as the perfect leader, the perfect mentor.”

Outside the clouds were thickening. The air felt hot. Harry focused on breathing. He couldn’t lose control, he wouldn’t. Suddenly Loki reached out and took Harry’s hand. Without thinking it through Harry squeezed as hard as he could. Loki didn’t flinch at what had to be a painful grip. Instead, he squeezed back for just a second. The anger dwindled a little with the pressure he was exerting. Hermione had gone back to pacing now.

“Then you show up at Hogwarts but you’re not the Chosen One he imagined. You’re not a prodigy in any of your classes. The only thing you really seem to care about is quidditch and having fun with your new friends.”
“Quidditch is fun.” Harry interrupted stubbornly. “And was I not supposed to want to spend time with you?”

“Dumbledore had to know if you could do it. He knew you were a demi-god but you didn’t seem like it. You weren’t stronger or faster, your magical power was good but nothing extraordinary. He’d been expecting a young Achilles and he got a skinny half-starved kid who almost got caught helping Fred and George with a prank.” Hermione continued as if he hadn’t interrupted.

“I didn’t get caught though.” Harry interrupted because he still had his pride thank you very much. Hermione paused in her pacing and gave him a very stern look for interrupting.

“So, he tests you. He puts the philosophers stone in the school to lure You-Know-Who here with the promise of a new immortal body. He sets up traps that first years could get through and he waits. He gives you your dad’s cloak for Christmas so that you can sneak around better and makes it easy for you to stumble on clues about everything.” Hermione said. “The whole thing was a test to see if you were the Chosen One! And you passed Harry! As an 11 year old you fought off You-Know-Who by yourself and saved the school.”

“What about the year after that?” Harry asked. “You mentioned the chamber. Do you think he didn’t do anything about the petrifications because he knew You-Know-Who was behind it and wanted to see if I could stop him again?”

“And you did. You did it with nothing but an old hat and a bird.” Hermione continued. “But you still weren’t all-powerful. All records of demi-gods show them as pure powerhouses of magical energy, but you weren’t. Dumbledore knew you were the chosen one and that you had the heart and bravery to do what needed to be done, but you didn’t have the power. Something was holding you back.”

Finally, Harry truly understood.

“He’s just been letting worse and worse things happen to me so that eventually I’ll…I’ll jumpstart into a whole new power level.”

“Exactly. He’s pushing you as hard as he can so that you can fulfill the prophecy and save the world. I think he’s getting desperate Harry. Think about it. The last time you spoke with him was just after Sirius had been murdered right in front of you. You were grieving and desperate and so angry. He took you to his office and he chose that moment in time to tell you the prophecy.”

Harry choked on nothing. The grip he had on Loki’s hand was the only thing keeping him from breaking down. Lightning crashed outside their window and a moment later a huge clap of thunder reverberated around the room.

“It was cruel, Harry. So cruel of him to do that to you. Sirius had just died and then he told you that you had to save the whole world. He wanted to destroy you emotionally, because maybe that was what you needed.” Hermione said. “But that didn’t work. All that happened was you fell apart. After a year of him ignoring you and putting you in emotionally and mentally painful situations that he did nothing to fix, and then delivering the killing blow you still didn’t...power up.”

“It’s escalating.” The Black Widow jumped in. “He won’t stop until he gets the powerful weapon, he wants to end this war. The longer it goes before Harry becomes powerful enough the more people around him will get hurt. You might even be next Miss Granger.”

“I’ve thought of that.” Hermione admitted. “But Harry don’t think this means I’m not with you till the end I am. I knew from the moment we became friends that it was going to be dangerous. Back
when we were 11 and you saved me from a troll. Ron and I aren’t abandoning you for anything. We’re with you till the end.”

“I know, ‘Mione. I know.” He blinked rapidly at her show of support.

“Hey Hermione.” Tony Stark said, speaking up. “Harry said you’re a genius. That true?”

It seemed like a really weird change of topic. Hermione turned her head a little and walked back towards the computer.

“I’m the brightest witch of my age, Mr. Stark.” Hermione said seriously.

“It’s true.” Harry said. “When we were third years she was so smart she convinced the government to let her use a time travel device, so she could take every class offered at Hogwarts.”

“Time turners are heavily regulated.” Loki said. “It would have been a trial to get one for that.”

“I was very adamant.” Hermione said.

“More like terrifying. That’s a compliment by the way Hermione.”

“I know.” She said with a small smile.

“Well I’ve got to admit.” Tony said. “That’s pretty convincing stuff.”

“Convincing for what?”

“You see I’ve just learnt about the magical world and the fact that witches and wizards can’t use my tech. Honestly it just…breaks my heart that I can’t make money by selling to magical people.”

“What?” Harry asked at the same time Hermione did.

“Yeah.” Tony said his fingers rubbing the sides of his chin. “I was thinking of asking Lokes here to help but honestly I don’t think he’d be much good. You on the other hand, you might just do.”

“I think I have more important things to do than…”

“Of course, you don’t. I know you’re young and its summer which means you’ve got at least a couple of months you could work here. Although…since you are so young I suppose I can’t just take you without your parents being in the know.”

“That’s called kidnapping.” Hermione said.

“Right. I guess there’s only one solution. I pay for you and your parents to move out here into my super secure and safe tower. Of course, since they’re dentists I don’t see why they couldn’t just set up shop here, maybe even be my dentist. Jarvis when’s the last time I saw a dentist?”

“It has been at least 8 years.”

“See!” Tony said. “This is the only solution that works best for me and my wants.”

Hermione was staring at Tony with watery eyes. Even Harry was staring at the man who had just offered an unbelievable opportunity for Hermione and her parents. Her parents were going to be safe here. Harry couldn’t believe it.

“I…Can’t believe this.” She said. “I’m getting an…an internship with the Tony Stark. This is…
Harry do you know what this means?"

“I do. You’re going into nerd mode. I’m going to lose you again. I don’t…I don’t know if I can survive it a second time.” Harry dramatically lifted a hand to his eyes while Hermione started to shake herself out of her star struck stupor. “It’s just…every time I think about our second year I get so…frightened. Just imagining that you’d ever start.”

“Harry James Potter if you finish that sentence I will do to you what You-Know-Who never managed to.”

Hermione really hated being reminded of her Lockhart phase. The other Avengers were all started to crack up at Hermione’s sheer embarrassment. Harry mimed zipping his lips to keep Hermione from considering going through with her threat. She took in a deep breath and then spoke very calmly.

“Thank you so much for the offer Mr. Stark. I’ll need to talk to my parents about it, it’ll take a few hours since I’ve…broken our house phone. I’ll call back once I know if we’re able to accept.”

The call continued a little while longer after that, but it was mostly filled with Tony heaping more things to ‘sweeten’ the deal. By the time Hermione managed to get off the call she looked too star struck for Harry’s liking. But that couldn’t be helped. Genius was Hermione’s…thing. Loki tried to get him to eat after she hung up, but Harry refused to do anything that wasn’t calling Ron and telling him next. Tony settled the argument by giving Harry his cellphone and telling him to just get the phone calls over with.

Telling Ron was…simpler in some ways. Once Harry told Ron to make sure no one was listening he quickly outlined everything. Ron broke about fifteen cups and plates from his position hiding out in the kitchen while he listened. He also violently swore to punch Dumbledore out and to tell all of his brothers so that they’d help him beat up Dumbledore too. The Weasleys were always ready to throw down it seemed.

The hard part was getting Ron to swear himself to secrecy. That took at least ten minutes. Which was generally how long it took for Ron’s temper to simmer down. During the entire phone call his stomach started to make more complaints. The Avengers also enjoyed watching Harry respond to Ron’s various threats with increasingly desperate pleas for peace. Thor had disappeared at some point and about halfway through the conversation it started pouring rain. The violence of the storm was unlike anything he’d ever seen.

He hoped Thor was okay. The man had been so nice to him and Harry didn’t want anything terrible to happen to him.
Ah Miscommunication, My Old Friend

Chapter Summary

Harry reveals the prophecy to a group of serious Avengers and then manages to calm the raging godly storm that is Thor. Of course, things seem to go even further south between him and his dad.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys! Sorry the chapter's a bit shorter. Finals are next week and I'm a bit busy finishing up all of my final projects/assignments. Who knew Grad school would be so time consuming? Thanks for all the great comments last week!

Once Harry finished his call to Ron and he was free to eat, he found himself being mothered into a seat by Loki, who then put the largest plate full of food he’d ever seen in front of him and told him to eat. It was a little weird, the way the man hovered. He didn’t say anything for a few minutes more focused on eating but eventually all of the staring, not just from Loki but from the others was getting to be too much.

“I’m not a painting.”

“I’m sorry what?”

“You don’t have to stare. I’m just eating breakfast.”

“Right. Of course.” Loki looked away but every few moments he’d glance back.

“That’s almost worse somehow.” Then Harry made a face. “You didn’t watch me while I was sleeping did you?”

“I wouldn’t do that.”

Harry looked over at the other Avengers and finally Hawkeye broke.

“It was sort of cute. He pet your hair.”

Harry made a small anguished noise at the very thought while Loki called Clint a betrayer. A huge clap of thunder made Harry duck his head over his food for a moment. He looked outside with a frown.

“Does it normally rain like this here?”

“When you have the god of thunder living here, yeah it does.” Captain America told him. “It gets like this whenever something gets him angry.”

“What’s he got to be angry about?”
“Well we all just listened to the same thing right? Your friend telling us just how much of a scumbag Dumbledore is? How he lied and manipulated you for your entire life all for this prophecy. You didn’t forget that did you?” Tony asked.

“I didn’t forget. I just don’t see why he’s mad about it.”

“How could he not be?” Loki asked him. “I’m furious about it! We all are!”

Harry could understand Loki’s anger, after all the man had been lied to by his leader. But…the rest of them didn’t make sense. Harry took a moment to consider what reasons they’d have to truly be angry about this situation. It wasn’t like they cared about Harry’s misfortune, it wouldn’t make sense for them too. Maybe he was just too tired to figure it out.

“Okay.” Harry said slowly before going back to eating. “When’s the storm going to end then?”

“No, you don’t just get to change the topic.” Tony said. “You do understand that we are all outraged about this right?”

“I…do.” All of the Avengers looked very offended and Harry decided to drop it. “Sorry, sorry. I’m just a bit…overwhelmed today. Nothing on you guys.”

Loki didn’t look like he believed Harry but Harry decided he was done talking about it. So, he forcibly changed the subject.

“What happened while I was dead to the world?”

“Well.” Loki said. “The others volunteered to help defeat Tom Riddle, since it seems we can’t rely on the Order for help I’m glad to have a team I can trust. I’ve been training them to take on Death Eaters and teaching them how to recognize lethal spells.”

Harry froze over his large plate of food. The Avengers wanted to help? Why would they risk themselves like that? Harry couldn’t let them, he wouldn’t let anyone else die for him. Before any of those words could spew out of his mouth, Captain America continued.

“This is our job Harry, helping to protect people who can’t defend themselves. We’re glad to do it, if you’d be willing to tell us anything you know so that we can be better prepared we’d be grateful.”

The arguments drained out of him. They weren’t fighting for him, they were fighting for the world. That he could accept. But he would never, ever accept someone dying for him, fighting in his name. Savior of the world or not, it wouldn’t happen. He nodded slowly, wondering what exactly they wanted to know. Slowly he lifted up another forkful of his breakfast.

Where to start? What to say?

“I have a question.” Black Widow said, Harry looked at her and she said simply. “Would you mind telling us the prophecy? Loki told us it could be dangerous but…”

“Sure.” Harry cut her off. “I mean if you think it’ll help. It’s pretty straightforward.”

“Straightforward?” His dad demanded. “Prophecies are very complicated.”

Harry snorted at the idea. He took a drink of water and then spoke in the steadiest voice he could. It turned out to be not that steady at all, but he felt he should get credit for trying.

“The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches. Born to those who have thrice
defied him, born as the seventh month dies. And the Dark Lord will mark him as his equal, but he will have power the Dark Lord knows not. And either must die at the hand of the other for neither can live while the other survives. The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord will be born as the seventh month dies.”

Silence. Harry lifted another forkful of food up to his mouth. He knew this was a serious occasion and honestly those words still haunted him but that didn’t stop him from being so hungry. It took about five bites of food for Harry to decide to continue.

“Born to those who have thrice defied him. How many times did you fight Tom before you died?”

“Three.”

“And mom?”

“Three.” He answered sounding mutinous. Harry rolled his eyes and continued.

“Born as the seventh month dies. Easy my birthday’s July 31st.”

“You were born at 11:59 at night.” Loki closed his eyes.

“What a coincidence.” Harry said in his most sarcastic voice which made Hawkeye and Stark snort in near unison. “The Dark Lord will mark him as his equal.”

Carefully he lifted up his hair to show off the awful lightning bolt beneath. At the same time there was a huge crash of thunder.

“The night my mom was murdered I got this mark from Tom. Before that point there were other babies that could have been…I’m not the only kid who was born on July 31st with parents who fought Tom. But Tom decided in his twisted brain that I was the threat, making me his equal when I was just 15 months old. So you know…there’s that.”

He finished the whole thing lamely, not even sure if he’d won the argument for how straightforward the prophecy was.

“Neither can live while the other survives?” Hawkeye asked.

“Ron reckons it means that I can’t have a life outside of Tom and well…neither can Tom.” Harry said. “Tom’s obsessed with killing me, he tries it constantly. Which means I’m obsessed with not getting murdered. Until one of us dies it’s always going to be like that. I mean…Tom’s gotten so good at ruining my life, he made me fail an OWL. The history one and I studied for that!”

“An OWL?”

“Sorry. Think of them like…big final exams. You take them at the end of your fifth year of magic school and if you fail them, it limits what magic classes you can take in the last two years.” Harry explained. “And I know I failed my history one. Not to mention astronomy.”

“How did you fail?” Loki asked.

Harry groaned at the suspicion his voice. Was this really his life right now? His hunger pushed him to eat some more of his food while the other Avengers laughed. Outside the storm was still raging. Was Thor okay?

“How long do these storms last?” Harry asked, looking out the window.
“Your uncle is fine.” Loki said almost carelessly.

“He doesn’t look fine!” Harry motioned at the storm outside.

“Thor does this. He won’t be harmed by a storm of his own making.”

But other people, innocent people will. A dramatic huge lightning bolt strike flashed right outside the window painting everything in the room in a bright light. The clash of noise made Harry wince.

“Where is he?”

“The roof.” Tony said. “He’ll calm down soon kid.”

Harry’s jaw set stubbornly, and he saw something like a dawning horror in Loki’s eyes as he stood up.

“How do I get to the roof?”

“Are you crazy kid?” Hawkeye demanded. “The roof is a death zone when Thor is like this.”

“*How* do I get on the roof?”

“We’re not going to let you go up there! You’ll die.” Harry gave Tony a very sharp look and he looked a little stunned. “It’s not safe kid.”

“I’ll be fine.” Harry said seriously. “Is it that way?”

He pointed at two doors that suspiciously looked like they’d hold a set of stairs.

“Harry.” Loki said. “I’d really suggest letting your uncle work through this on his own.”

That was good enough for him. He strode past the group towards the door, of course the others moved to follow him, but no one actually stopped him. He took the stairs two at a time and soon enough he found himself using more of his strength than he expected to kick the door open. Sure, enough there was Thor. The man was standing there, the center of an insane storm. Rain stabbed into Harry’s skin from the force of the wind.

Harry didn’t even flinch at the water or the sound of roaring wind that seemed to destroy any other noise it came into contact with. Instead he kept walking, his feet steady on the wet slippery roof.

Harry had a suspicion about his life that he was testing, a suspicion Hermione would never consider because she didn’t like divination. He should be slipping, the wind should pick up his light body and fling him unforgivably into a building. He shouldn’t have won in the fight against Amora. Those Death Eaters in the arcade should have been able to take him down.

Some sort of metal debris was flying right at Harry but Harry didn’t stop his march. The metal veered wildly to the left, missing his hair by inches. He heard someone choke behind him, but he didn’t bother to check who. Didn’t matter.

“THOR!”

The god heard him, thankfully. He turned, his eyes glowing an unearthly blue before flickering off. Immediately whatever rage Thor had been venting was replaced with horror. The storm raged on around them, the wind howling and lightning searing its way across the storm.

“What the hell are you doing?” Thor actually balked at Harry’s voice, who felt some sort of righteous indignation he normally only saved for Severus Snape and Draco Malfoy.
"I…"

"I DON’T WANT TO HEAR IT! STOP THIS STORM THIS INSTANT!"

Immediately the storm clouds began to thin and the wind died as Harry trembled with rage and upset.

"I can’t believe this! You’re flooding the streets! People live here you know! You can’t just go around…throwing a tantrum when things don’t go right! Honestly! You’re over 2000 years old! Act like it!"

Thor switched between looking at the flooded streets far below and Harry’s face looking rather embarrassed. Harry began to feel a bit pink in the cheeks himself and he cleared his throat.

"I’m just saying. You can’t be hanging out with me if you’re going to make storms like this anytime something unpleasant happens. I don’t think Mr. Stark should have to pay for water damages on the 93rd floor a few days from now because you flooded the city."

"Is your life really so tragic?" Thor asked, his voice sounding fragile.

"It was a joke." Harry said defensively. He waited for Thor to relax in relief and then added. “But yeah.”

Thor gave him a look that made Harry laugh and then jerk his thumb behind him.

"Come on. Let’s go back inside and see who can clean out the kitchen of food faster."

"A contest?" Thor asked a smile finally breaking over his face. “A perfect way to brighten the morning."

The sun was shining on the puddles left over from Thor’s fit and the sky was a painfully blinding blue as they made their way back inside. Harry’s hair was dripping wet and his pajamas were sopping too. Thor was a lot worse off since he’d been inside the storm since the beginning of it.

"We should umm dry off first."

"No need." Loki said waving his hand. Immediately they were both dry and crisp thanks to the spell. Thor clapped the other man on the back thanking him and Harry made a noise that sounded like he was mumbling the words thank you.

Most of the other Avengers were looking at Harry like they couldn’t believe he existed and he decided abruptly that he hated that look. He hunched his shoulders in and walked past the group.

"Nephew." Thor said, right behind him. “I’m sorry for losing my temper. You’re right. Flooding this city wasn’t helping anything."

"It’s fine." Harry said.

"But you shouldn’t have gone out there. My storms can be very dangerous." Harry finally turned to look at the man, Harry lifted up his eyebrows in shock at the man.

"Trust me, mate. I’ve had worse. I should tell you about the chamber of secrets. That was way stupider than this."

"Oh?"

So, Harry started telling Thor about the Chamber of Secrets. To his surprise, and pleasure. Thor
didn’t act like any adult he’d ever known before. He wasn’t patronizing like Snape or Dumbledore. Nor was he overprotective like Mrs. Weasley. He also didn’t take the time to compare everything Harry did to people he didn’t know like Remus and Sirius. Instead Thor was excited and awed and treated Harry like he could handle himself.

It was brilliant.

So, Harry told him everything, from the aborted Dueling Club to the Death day party that had been still one of the weirdest events he’d ever been too. Thor was delighted to know that Harry could talk to snakes and he lacked any sort of apprehension over it being evil. He also agreed that the Headless Hunt was being ridiculous for not letting Nearly Headless Nick join them.

Loki made choking pained noises from the other side of the breakfast table as Harry told them about the basilisk and finding a way into the chamber of secrets to save Ron’s little sister. He had to spend a little time explaining exactly what a basilisk was to the other Avengers who hadn’t had to take a class on dangerous magical creatures like Harry, Thor, and Loki.

Thor cheered at all the right times as Harry described the fight with Tom Riddle (the diary version) and the basilisk. He looked concerned but eager when Harry described losing his wand and discovering that the journal was actually a memory of Voldemort’s. But then when Fawkes appeared with the hat and Harry removed a sword from it, Thor whooped so loudly that the windows vibrated in their frames.

“So here I am, running through the chamber of secrets, the now blinded Basilisk chasing after me, listening.” Harry said, his voice turning hushed. “I held my breath and hid in a alcove, watching as the giant snake sniffed and then slithered past.”

Thor was literally on the edge of his seat. Harry described getting back into the main chamber and climbing up the statue of Slytherin, sword drawn and ready to defend himself.

“And then I jumped.”

“Jumped?”

“Into the basilisk’s mouth.” Harry said. “And I used the sword and pushed it right up into its brain.”

Thor actually cheered as Harry described the basilisk’s death throes and how Harry ended up at the feet of the ghostly Tom Riddle, having destroyed his most powerful weapon before he could release it on the school. Then he gasped when Harry described the realization that he was dying, that he’d been bitten. Out of the corner of his eye he thought that Loki looked a little green.

“You okay?”

“You were bitten by a basilisk?” Loki nearly shrieked.

“Er…impaled is probably a better…”

Harry’s good mood immediately drained away from him as Loki jumped up and started ranting about how he couldn’t believe this had happened. Harry felt himself get a little smaller as he watched his dad get more and more upset about something that Harry didn’t even think of in negative terms. Sure, being bitten had hurt but Fawkes had fixed him quite quickly. There wasn’t any reason to get all upset about it. Besides he’d managed to save Ginny too.

He lifted up his arms and hugged himself around the chest and fell back into his chair, waiting for Loki to start demanding that he let him wrap Harry up in bubble wrap from now on because he can’t
“Loki.” Thor said. “Harry wasn’t finished with his story. This is a tale worthy of the mead halls of Asgard I think, and you’ve interrupted it.”

Loki froze mid-rant and turned to look at them. He looked first at Thor, upset for the interruption and then at Harry. The fight seemed to drain out of Loki at whatever he saw there and Harry looked away and back down at his food.

“Right. Of course. Finish your story, Harry.”

It wasn’t as fun that time but he did as he was bid and thankfully Thor acted like nothing was the matter at all. When it was over and their food had been eaten entirely, Thor clapped Harry on the shoulder and told him he was a brave warrior for facing such odds to save Ginny. Harry pretended that he didn’t blush and mumbled out that it wasn’t a big deal.

“It is a big deal.” Thor said his voice rumbling as he peered down at Harry. “You shouldn’t dismiss your abilities, Harry.”

Harry decided then and there that he really liked Thor.

“Mjolnir, only chooses the best to let her weild her.” Harry assumed that was Thor’s hammer.

“So, it’s like a wand then? It only likes to work with certain people?” He asked.

“Yes exactly. You’re the only other person I’ve met who can weild her.”

“What all can she do then?” Harry asked.

Thor immediately talked about all of the aspects of his beloved hammer and Harry didn’t interrupt until Thor said something really interesting.

“You can fly? What’s your speed like? What about your turning ability? Maneuverability?”

Thor looked a little bemused but thankfully someone else had sense. Harry found himself immersed in a conversation about different flight techniques employed by the team with Tony Stark. Loki would just turn into a bird, Thor used his hammer and Tony used his suit. Tony insisted his suit had the best capabilities out of all of them, which Thor, Loki and Harry took offense too.

Loki on the grounds that Tony’s suit was eye catching and impossible to miss, which made it terribly for aerial fights. Thor because Mjolnir was always the best at everything. Harry insisted that Tony only thought so because he hadn’t seen a Firebolt in action yet. Pretty soon people were making claims about who could outfly who and Harry didn’t care that his body was still sore. He’d not lost a flying contest yet and he wasn’t about to start now.

“I’ll get my broom and we’ll prove it then.” Harry said. “Because if you think you’re suit can outfly the greatest flying broom ever, you’re delusional.”

“Mjolnir was created in the heart of a dying star. She won’t be defeated by mere wood or metal, no matter how clever.”

“You’re both on.” Tony Stark said. “Loki, where’s a good place I can show these you losers how it’s done without breaking all those laws you were talking about?”

“I’m not sure if…”
“Come on.” Harry said. “You’re not just going to let him show us up are you?”

He looked pleadingly at Loki and the man instantly crumbled telling them exactly where they could go to have a flying contest. The other Avengers started planning out exactly what sort of course they’d need to see what method of flying, and more importantly who was the best flyer.

Harry felt almost lightheaded by the fact that Loki had just given in. Done something that he thought might be silly just because Harry had asked. He didn’t know what to make of it at all.

“I need to go get my broom.” Harry said, looking over at Loki. “And the rest of my stuff…I mean if you want me to stay here with you that is…”

“Of course, I want you to stay.” He said. “Where are your things?”

“At my hotel? My key card was in my pocket of the clothing I was wearing before, it’s a portal key that can take me there…”

“Ah yes. One moment, we’ll go together and once you’ve got your things and checked out, we’ll come back here.”

Harry nodded in understanding feeling abruptly rather nervous about having Loki come with him. Had he left the hotel room a mess? Did it matter? Loki left him for a few minutes and returned with Harry’s new shoes, some clean socks, and the key card. Harry quickly put those things on and then took the key card.

“I’m not…”

“It’s best if we’re close.” Loki said. “Since it’s a single person…”

“Right. Um.” Harry shifted awkwardly and snuck a look up at Loki to see him looking just as uncertain.

Screw it.

Harry reached out and grabbed Loki’s hand, tugged him so that he was right next to Harry. At the same time Harry pressed the top of the card and felt the familiar tugging sensation around his navel. Loki reached out and latched onto Harry in a weird mockery of a hug. Something about it made Harry’s skin feel wrong so the moment they landed with a thud on Harry’s hotel bed he was rolling out of the hug and getting onto his feet despite the dizziness of the situation.

Loki looked a little confused from his position of half standing and crouching on the bed.

“I’m gonna…get out of my pajamas.” Harry said stumbling over to his school trunk and quickly grabbing whatever clothing he’d stuffed inside most recently. It didn’t take long at all for Harry to get dressed and pack everything up. Loki spent most of that time looking out the window up at Stark, Harry thought he almost looked stupefied that Harry had been so close. “I was…well I knew you lived there but I didn’t know how to get inside without…”

“So, you were what? Stalking me?”

“I was determined.” Harry sniffed. “I’m going to check out real quick and then we can get back.”

It took him all of about 30 seconds to use the magical pamphlet he’d been given upon checking in to check out. Once that was done, he picked up his broom while Loki picked up the trunk and shrunk it so it could fit in his pocket.
“Harry, are you sure you’re up for flying? You were…”

“I’m fine. It’s going to be fun.”

“It’s just you can’t be using too much magic for the next few days. Flying shouldn’t be a problem because the magic’s in the broom not in you but you need to rest your magic, or you could really hurt yourself.”

“I know.” Harry said. “I’m not stupid.”

“I didn’t say you were. I’m just trying…”

“Can we just go back before they have this contest without me?”

He hadn’t meant to sound so curt. Harry winced a little but Loki didn’t see that. He was looking out the window instead of at Harry. Harry struggled trying to come up with an apology but he couldn’t before Loki acted. The man nodded and held out a hand. Harry took it and prepared himself for the hug that Loki would pull him into. Only for the man to surprise him again but teleporting them in a ring of green fire, while just lightly holding Harry’s hand. They arrived back right where they’d left, although now a lot of the Avengers were gone.

“You’re back!” Thor said. “Come on. Clint’s gotten the Quinjet ready, time to prove ourselves nephew.”

“You’re going to lose.” Harry said easily stepping away from Loki while brandishing his broom. “Nothing outflies a Firebolt.”

He didn’t look back at Loki as they went to the Quinjet, which Harry assumed was some sort of plane based on the name. Apparently, the hug thing had been a one-off sort of thing. Loki hadn’t wanted to hug him, it was an instinct thing because of the portkey. That was fine. Wasn’t like Harry needed a hug from his dad, he’d gotten on just fine before. He ignored the disappointment in his gut that he’d been too shocked and weirded out to actually enjoy the hug. The first one, back at the arcade had been just as awkward but for different reasons. Maybe Harry just wasn’t good at it? The quintjet turned out to be an actual jet that had enough seats for all of them. Harry listened as Tony, now in his Iron Man suit, explained exactly how the competition was going to work. It was meant to be a trial that tested speed and versatility in the air. Which wasn’t going to be a problem for Harry at all. Tony helped him get buckled into a seat with his broomo safely nearby and Thor sat down right next to him.

As they flew, with Clint at the helm, Harry snuck looks at his dad. This morning things had seemed a lot…smoother. Loki had been worried about the scar and had held his hand during the call with Hermione. He’d been nice and the conversation about Quidditch had been really good. But now Loki wasn’t sitting near him on the jet, wasn’t even looking at him. How had Harry ruined it already?

Harry had no doubt it was his fault somehow. Maybe he’d been too weird for Loki, or too difficult. Lots of adults found Harry difficult. Or perhaps it was the fact that he had his mum’s eyes that bothered the man. So many people had reacted similarly to Harry in the past, why would Loki be any different? Was it the prophecy? Did Loki blame him for the prophecy? Did he blame Harry for his mum’s death? His mom would still be alive if it weren’t for Harry after all.

Whatever. That was fine. Harry hadn’t come here expecting to get along with Loki. The fact that Thor was cool was just an unexpected bonus. If Loki didn’t want him, then Harry could easily spend
time with the god of thunder. Harry slid closer to Thor and asked him a question about his ability to call storms out of nothing and didn’t look at Loki while Thor answered.

He pretended it didn’t hurt.
Ron Weasley and the Midnight Excursion

Chapter Summary

Harry competes in a flying contest and Loki realizes just how little prepared he is to talk to his own son.

Chapter Notes

Hey guys sorry the update’s a bit later than normal. It’s finals week and things are busy. I’ll get back into the groove of things soon enough.

Loki’s teeth were about to crack. He didn’t care as he watched his son, Thor and Tony get ready to fly against one another. They were setting up a track, the idea being that each person would fly through it one at a time to prove their prowess. Loki’s jaw clenched as Thor ruffled Harry’s hair and the boy didn’t push him off.

“So we need to prove that we’re the fastest and who can move the best.” Tony said.

“I’ve got the paintball guns.” Clint said.

“Paintball guns?” Loki asked, finally stepping forward.

“Well yeah. We’re going to see who can dodge the best.”

“By firing projectiles at them?”

“It’s just paint it won’t even bruise. Tony’s in his armor and Thor’s a god.” Harry said, giving him a look as if to dare him to argue. Loki’s tongue pushed against the back of his teeth. Everything in him begged to pull his son to his chest and declare that his son wasn’t yet fit for this kind of activity and even if he was there was no way that he would allow anyone to fire a paintball gun in his direction. But then Loki remembered Harry’s face when Loki had started his rant about the basilisk.

Right. He wouldn’t treat him like a child. He could do this.

“Fine.” He said as if it didn’t matter. Loki looked away, missing the look of frustration and disappointment coming from his son. “Who’s starting?”

“I will.” Thor said his voice serious.

“Alright Thor, you’ll start here.” Clint said. “You have to fly through these trees without hitting any of them as well as dodge the paintballs that Nat and I will be firing at you. Follow the red flags that I set up, that’s the course. Don’t go above the tree line. Bruce’ll be at the finish line with the timer. Each time you hit or are hit with something we’ll add five seconds to your time.”

“A fine race.” Thor declared stepping forward.
Everyone got into position while Loki stared at the back of his son’s messy head. How was Thor interacting with him so seamlessly? Thor could touch Harry on the arm or head and the boy didn’t jump away as if he’d been touched by acid. Thor could laugh and joke and Harry didn’t respond with a caustic, judgmental tongue. Meanwhile Loki couldn’t even do one thing around his son without it ending in shambles.

It was just like Asgard all over again. Thor the favored one while Loki was the disparaged. No. No Loki wouldn’t allow it. Thor would suffer if he thought he could steal his son away from him. Thor was going to back off after this. Loki was Harry’s father. Loki was the one who was supposed to help him and make him laugh and protect him. He could do this. The difficulty of the challenge meant little. Loki was a master of strategy.

He’d gotten Lily Evans to fall in love with him. He could gain his son’s affection.

Thor stepped up to the start. Everyone counted down and when Tony made a bell ring from his suit, Thor rushed off. Almost immediately Thor broke a branch off of a tree. Thor had many skills, but dodging had never been one of them, Mjolnir as a tool for flight was fast. That was about it though. It was a hammer designed to hit things and block blows. It was more inclined to break through an obstacle than move around it. Which perfectly matched Thor, in the end.

Thor followed the red flags and attempted to zip in between the trees, often clipping off branches on his way. He also had no sense of warning meaning that he got hit with the bright purple paint a far few times. Halfway through the flight Thor realized he’d never win on maneuverability so he poured all of his energy into speed. Probably banking on the fact that if he was the absolute fastest, even the hits he took wouldn’t matter. A not terrible plan but he didn’t account The Hawk’s absolutely phenomenal aim.

By the end of his run Thor was covered in spots of bright purple paint. He looked like Barney. Harry and Tony were both jeering at him from the other end of the race while Thor dared them to do better.

“Well, kid.”

“Oh no. Age before beauty. I insist.”

“Are you calling me old?”

“You’re the one who used those words not me.”

“You’re going down Potter.”

“Brave words for a guy in a metal suit.”

Tony lowered his face mask and told everyone to start the countdown. He rushed off right as the bell rang, his suit taking him quickly into the air. Stark’s programming on the suit allowed him a greater range of movement. He had to go much slower lest he ram into any trees but he was able to flit between the trunks and thicker branches. Loki didn’t pay as much attention to the flight as he would have liked, far more fascinated with the sight of his son.

It was just the two of them standing in the clearing, watching Tony follow the bright red flags. This would be the time to say something, anything to his son. ‘Hello’ seemed too simple. ‘How are you’ was ridiculous. ‘Congratulations on slaying a basilisk if we were on Asgard Odin himself would honor you with a feast for your bravery. I’m sorry if I made you feel poorly, I’m just worried’. No, no that was far too honest for him.

Maybe Loki tell Harry about how much like his mother he was. Just that morning when Harry had
dressed down Thor in the middle of one of his tantrums. The fire and the kindness in his green eyes, his sheer indignation. It was like Lily was standing before him. He could see all the love and kindness in his eyes that Lily’s had once held. Would it be odd if Loki told Harry that? If Loki admitted how glad he was that Harry had inherited his mother’s heart and fire? It would serve his son far better than Loki’s own.

No, no that would be odd wouldn’t it? Harry hardly even knew his mother. Perhaps he didn’t want to be reminded of her. Did he? Loki had no clue.

Why was this so difficult?

“So.” Loki said breaking the silence.

“Yeah?”

“You mentioned the history OWL. Are there any classes you did well in?” He tried to sound nonjudgmental and only interested. He wanted to know what parts of magic fascinated his son. He needed to know. Harry shifted awkwardly and looked at his feet.

“I’m not sure? I don’t really do well on tests.”

“That’s fine.” Loki said, trying to find a way to comfort the young man without it being odd. “Not everyone can excel.”

Ahead of them Stark was getting hit by Natasha and Clint both. His suit glistening in the afternoon sun making it easy for him to be spotted. With the narrow space left to maneuver Stark had little chance to dodge but he managed until Hawkeye started aiming at the armor’s legs and feet. Apparently, his suit couldn’t sense things from that angle and Stark couldn’t feel the hits from the balls of paint. When Stark burst out from the trees and landed at the end of the race track, he immediately started to crow about having a perfect run. Bruce had quietly pointed at the man’s now purple feet and the man had howled in outrage.

Next to him Harry laughed a little, the awkwardness from their stilted conversation falling away.

“Guess it’s my turn.” He said making Loki desperately want to conjure a helmet for him. “I’ll see you on the other side. START THE COUNT DOWN!”

Harry straddled his broom, a newer design that looked so different from the Comet series brooms Loki had used back in the day. When the bell rang Harry blasted off. Unlike his competitors Harry flew insanely low to the ground, his feet tucked up against the broom so that he could be mere inches from the grassy forest floor. It allowed him to entirely miss the branches. He only raised himself up when a bush or bramble got in his way.

Loki’s mouth dropped open as he watched his son fly. Harry moved with a grace that would’ve made professional quidditch players drool. He took sharp turns that had him flying along the curves of the tree trunks, missing the bark of them by a hair’s breadth. Clint and Natasha tried to aim at him, but with the branches in between them and him acting as a cover he was much safer than the other two competitors had been.

It meant that he was covered from Natasha but Clint wasn’t earth’s best archer for no reason. His abilities were far beyond a normal man. He aimed in between the branches and summer foliage. Loki’s heart leapt up as the paint ball moved towards his son’s head. Harry without even turning his head flattened his body along the shaft of his broom and the ball flew right above his head, splattering on a trunk behind him.
He heard Clint curse and fire again. Harry, still laying on his broom, roughly pulled the broom so that he took a nearly right angle turn upwards, dodging both the paintball and a tree in front of him. He turned again before he broke the tree line, having managed to move between outstretching branches and then flew straight down again in a perfect Wronski Feint. He pulled up moments before the ground, his feet dragging along the grass. Clint kept firing but Harry had a supernatural ability to know when they were coming. His magic reaching out around him and warning him with enough time to dodge.

Harry flew out from the mix of trees free of paint and with a huge grin on his face. Loki teleported to the finish line right as Harry arrived. Loki knew immediately what he had to do. The James Potter in him rushed up ready to babble about how fantastic a quidditch player his son had to be. Ideas about seeker’s matches and games they could play on brooms together filled his brain. This was the way to do it. Loki knew.

Before he could Thor bellowed his laughter and pulled Harry into a back breaking hug.

“I can’t believe it.” Stark said looking down at Bruce’s time. “That shouldn’t have been possible. My suit is…”

“Not as good as a wooden broom.”

“Shut it.”

Clint and Natasha came out of the trees. Clint shouting about how he’d never before missed in his life and he can’t believe he’d been shown up. Natasha kept listing times she’d seen him miss which didn’t help his case. Bruce was looking far too amused as he tried to comfort Tony. Thor took up all of Harry’s attention. Loki knew he could steal it back but based on the glowing look on his son’s face it wouldn’t be appreciated.

The words died in his throat as he watched everyone congratulate his son on the amazing flying. Somewhere in Valhalla Loki had no doubt Lily was shaking her head at him for being a coward. But what was he to do? Lily would know what to do wouldn’t she? Granted Loki doubted that Harry would be as fractious around his mother. There was no one in the nine realms who’d feel ill at ease around the woman.

He wished he could talk to her.

Everyone moved back to the Quinjet, with Harry the uncontested winner. Chatter filled Loki’s ears as he tried to imagine what Lily would do. Well Lily wouldn’t have allowed the contest in the first place. He still remembered how she’d scolded him for letting their baby on a training broom when Harry was barely a year old. But if the flying contest had happened, what would Lily have done? His wife would be able to reach their son. Loki didn’t notice the looks that Harry was sending him, too focused on finding a way to reach out to Harry.

When they settled down in the Quinjet Harry had somehow managed to snag a seat farthest away from Loki. The flight back to the Tower was spent with Loki glaring at Thor for taking the seat next to his son and wishing that he knew what he was doing wrong. Harry had to like him, right? Loki didn’t know how he’d react if Harry didn’t want a thing to do with him.

They got back to the tower in short order and had lunch. Thankfully the others took the cue to make themselves scarce so that it was only Loki and Harry eating together.

“So. The flying, it was good.”
“You think so?”

“Yes. It’s not surprising you must have gotten it from me. I remember, I used to fly all the time.” Harry’s face was warming up to the conversation. All was not lost. “I used to practice in the hallways. Not flying but quidditch skills. I had this snitch I used to carry around and catch while me and the others were looking for trouble.”

Then abruptly something shuttered down in his son’s expression.

“What sort of trouble?” He asked.

“Oh you know. Pranks, mischief.”

“And you’d just prank anyone?” Harry pushed.

“Well yes. We had a few people we liked to target especially but no one was really safe.”

“Right.” And with that Harry turned back to poking at his lunch.

“What does that mean?” Loki asked.

“Nothing.”

“It doesn’t sound like nothing.”

“I just don’t get it!” Harry said looking at him, eyes blazing. “Why do you sound so proud of that?”

“Having fun with my friends?”

“Terrorizing people!” Loki knew at the moment that they were talking about something very different. Was this Harry’s way of taking him to task over the invasion? Loki prepared to explain himself.

“Harry, I don’t take pride in that. I’ve never been proud of the mistakes I’ve…”

“You sounded proud of them.”

“What…?”

“I saw you!” Harry said. “A memory of you go up to a student and use magic to lift him up by his ankle! He wasn’t even doing anything and you just humiliated him in front of everybody!”

Loki knew immediately what memory that was. It wasn’t one of his proudest moments. It was something that looking back he could feel nothing but disgust about. Snape might have been an absolutely awful sniveling fool but that had been cruel.

“And then when mum told you to stop you just said you would if she went out with you!” Harry said, his tone filled with hurt. “I just…how could you do that?”

“I can’t defend that Harry I was…” Loki realized that saying he’d been trying to impress Lily wouldn’t go well. “How did you even see that memory?”

That wasn’t something that Sirius or Remus or Peter would’ve shown Harry was it?

“Is that what all your pranks were like?” Harry asked. Is that what you were like?
“I promise you that we weren’t always so awful.” Loki said trying to salvage anything from this sinking ship.

“Is that all you can say?” Harry demanded. “That you weren’t so awful?”

His silver tongue left him while Harry looked at him like the world was falling down around him. The pain in his green eyes was devastating. Harry got up from his chair before Loki could marshal up a defense. Loki found himself sitting alone in the penthouse wondering why he couldn’t even get along with his own flesh and blood. Perhaps it was better if Thor took the reigns. It was obvious Loki wasn’t good enough for Harry.

Thor could wield Mjolnir. Thor had a good heart.

Loki didn’t know how long he sat there stewing in his upset, the mid-afternoon turning to evening. Jarvis let him know that his son was in his room and wasn’t taking visitors. Eventually Thor came to find him. Loki was torn between stabbing the thunderer, yelling at him, and pretending that he wasn’t even there.

“I take it that the conversation didn’t go well?”

“Well deduced.”

“Don’t be like that.” Thor said. “What happened?”

“He thinks I’m a monster, a bully.” Loki said after a few moments of silence. “And he hates me. He doesn’t want me to be worried about me, he doesn’t want me to hug him. He doesn’t want to talk about school or quidditch or anything. He feels far more at ease with you than he ever will me and I ought to…How did you not explode when he told you about that basilisk?”

Basilisks were the one creature that even the ever confident Thor would balk at facing alone. Odin had demanded their extinction when Loki was but a small boy. He could still remember the warriors who went out to slay a basilisk and never came home, either eaten alive or turned to stone. Thor sat down in the seat Harry had vacated, a half eaten plate of food still there, now cold.

“I admit I almost lost my composure.” Thor said. “Just the idea of him having been bitten? I know I almost broke the arm rest I was holding.”

Loki snorted while Thor continued.

“I knew that he needed me to be excited and so I just…forced it.”

“But how?”

“He’s like you.”

“He’s nothing like me. He’s just like Lily. It took me over six years to get Lily to even be my friend.”

The fact that he didn’t have six years of time for his son was left unsaid. The war was on and there was danger everywhere. He needed his son to trust him now before another tragedy struck.

“He’s your son and I have a lot of experience dealing with you.” Thor insisted. “I remember the first time you tried sky-walking.”

“What does that have to do with it? You freaked out.” It was pretty funny in retrospect.

“I did and then you didn’t talk to me for three months because I was treating you like a baby.” Loki
laughed, his mind marveling over that. Thor reached out and placed a hand on his arm. “We need to find someone who knows Harry and we need to talk to them. I was lucky today that treating him like I did you all those years ago worked. That won’t last forever.”

“He’s got so many scars, so many secrets.” It’s impossible was what Loki didn’t say.

“And so you’re going to give up on your son? No. I won’t allow it. Now think, there must have been someone he mentioned. Someone you know.”

His first thought was of Hermione but he had no clue where she lived. He couldn’t turn to any of his own friends, they all thought him dead and that would eventually get back to Dumbledore. But then who?

“Ron.” Loki said. “He’s a Weasley. I know where Molly and Arthur live. I can see Harry’s friend Ron.”

“We’ll go together.” Thor said. “Hopefully we can convince Ron to help us. He seemed quite defensive of Harry on the phone.”

“He did, didn’t he?” Loki got up. “Jarvis, ask Tony to bring Harry some food.”

“Of course sir.”

“Come on Thor. Let’s go get some answers.”

Thor easily took Loki’s outstretched hand and within moments a plume of green fi had taken them from New York to the outside of a very odd magical house. It looked larger than Loki remembered, new parts had been added since the last he’d been there. But it still had the same charm and feeling of home.

“It’s…unique.” Thor said trying to muster up a polite compliment.

“It’s The Burrow and trust me, when we’re actually invited inside you’ll love it. At least for Molly’s cooking.”

“I’ll take your word for it.”

It was late here. Well past dinner time and probably around the time that normal people would retire for bed.

“Stay here.” Loki said. “I’m going to find Ron.”

“Be careful.”

Loki carefully cast a spell, his magic searching for the people living in the home. He recognized the magic signatures of Molly and Arthur. As well as the magical markings of the children he’d met before going into hiding. The twins, who’d been mere babes at the time as well as Percy. There were two he didn’t know. A girl and a boy. The girl must be Ginny, the one Harry had saved from the basilisk.

“Gotcha.” Loki looked up to the tallest part of the house where there was a slightly open window. That had to be Ron’s room. Loki conjured up some small flat stones and began to toss them with unerring accuracy. They landed on the windows with a clatter before falling back to earth. It took four hits before there was noise and the window swung open wider.
A young man who looked almost exactly like a younger Arthur had as a fifth year stuck his head out.

“I swear to Merlin, Fred if that’s…” He trailed off and looked down at Loki. “Mr. Potter?”

“It’s me.” Loki said nodding. “Come down here. We need to talk.”

Ron frowned and looked at him very suspiciously.

“What’s the password to the Maurader’s Map?”

“I solemnly swear I’m up to no good.” Ron nodded and the suspicion melted from his face.

“What do you want?”

“I’m having problems with Harry. Look, can we please talk in the backyard?” Loki begged.

“I’ll be down in a tic.” Ron’s head disappeared and Loki quickly got Thor and led him to the backyard. Within a minute they were joined by the sleepy freckled face of his son’s best friend.

Ron was carrying one of Arthur’s old mage lights that the man had stuck to the end of a stick. Ron plunged the bottom end of the stick into the ground so that they had a better light source than the stars.

“It is an honor to meet you.” Thor said.

“Yeah, you too sir.” Ron said holding out his hand. Thor immediately shook it and the boy mostly hid his grimace at the strong grip. “Now what’s this about Harry?”

“I keep…offending him.” Ron nodded thoughtfully and crossed his arms over his white and blue pajamas.

“You were right to come to me. Tell me exactly what happened. Don’t leave anything out.”

Ron settled down on the slightly wet ground and insisted the rest of them did too as Loki told the story of what had happened today since the phone call that morning. During most of it Ron looked thoughtful, sometimes he gave Loki a dirty look but thankfully the red head refrained from saying anything until he was done.

“Well no wonder Harry’s so angry with you.” Loki opened his mouth to defend himself but Ron waved him off. “It’s not your fault. You’ve not been here. It’s Dumbledore’s fault. Speaking of which, when you go after him leave a piece big enough for me to kick.”

“Will do.” Loki promised.

“Good. Now, about Harry.” Ron said. “What I’m about to tell you, you’ve got to swear you won’t tell a single soul that you know. Especially not Harry. He’ll kill me if he finds out I told you anything. But if you want to help him you’ve got to know and I know he’ll never tell you anything.”

“I swear on my hammer never to tell a single soul.” Thor said.

“And I swear on my wife’s grave.”

“Good.” Ron said. “The first thing you gotta know is that Harry doesn’t…know how to do touch.”

“Touch?”
“Hugs, handshakes, high fives. All of it. He’s not good with ‘em. He likes being hugged and stuff but if you give him one when he’s not expecting it he’ll act like he’s a cat that got sprayed with water. Best time to give him a hug is after a big quidditch win. Like when Thor hugged him after the flying contest. He takes those best.”

“But why?” Thor asked.

“He never got touched as a kid.” Ron said, his voice turning dark and frustrated. “I know I was the first person to ever give him a hug when we were 11, I gave him one just right after Halloween and he was spooked for three days after.”

“Where did Dumbledore leave him after that night?” Loki demanded.

“With his Aunt Petunia.” Ron said. “You know his mum’s sister.”

“Tuni? That vile, hateful woman?”

“Yeah, she’s gotten worse with age.” Ron admitted. “And her husband is even worse. Once I had to rescue Harry from their house before they starved him to death.”

“What?”

And so the story of the flying car incident was revealed. Harry’s mortal uncle had locked Harry up in a prison like room for days at a time because of magic that Harry hadn’t actually done, only feeding him one can of uncooked soup a day. Vernon had even put bars on the window in an attempt to keep Harry inside. Ron and the twins had freed Harry and taken him to the burrow for the rest of the summer.

The longer Ron spoke the angrier all of them grew. Thor had to grip Mjolnir very tightly to keep another storm from dumping right on their heads.

“I’ve tried to be there for him as much as I can.” Ron finished. “I send him food now over the summers so that he gets enough. Hermione does too.”

“I will kill them.” Thor said. “I’m going to…”

“Later.” Loki said. “We’ll punish them later.”

Thor nodded his expression thunderous.

“I’ve got some advice for you.” Ron said. “About Harry at least.”

“Any wisdom you can give.”

“Never say he’s lying. People have done that way too often and it always pisses him off. Harry only lies when he thinks he has to so that he can protect the people he loves.” Ron said. “If you make a mistake, apologize as soon as you can. Harry can’t hold a grudge to save his life. We once had this huge fight in our fourth year and I apologized eventually and things were just fine after. He wants to get along with you, you just have to be willing to work with him.”

Loki nodded. He could apologize, he could.

“Tell him how you feel.” Ron said. “Be honest as you can. Harry doesn’t read the subtle stuff right. His relatives taught him to always think the worse of everything. If there’s anything not clear about what you say then Harry’s going to think the worst. Every time. When McGonagall tried to put him
on the quidditch team she wasn’t clear about it and he thought he was being expelled for like thirty whole minutes. I promise you the reason Harry’s acting like that is because he thinks you hate him.”

“What? No I don’t…”

“You didn’t make him wear a helmet.” Ron said. “In the flying contest. My mum makes me wear a helmet, even when we’re just playing the backyard. He’s probably thinks that you didn’t say anything about him begin safe because you don’t care if he is or not.”

“I didn’t want to suffocate him!” Ron just shrugged.

“So, we should be honest.” Thor said. “I can do that. What else?”

“Don’t freak out when he tells you bad stuff? I mean you can get mad but if you’re not careful he’ll never tell you anything ever again. Harry’s told me practically nothing about his relatives and I know that the little stuff he does drop is just a fraction of the truth. If I freak out when he shares he won’t ever again.”


“Tell him about his mum.” Ron said. “And about you too. Harry’s always been curious about his parents.”

“When I tried we argued.”

“That’s cause of Snape.”

“Severus Snape?”

Ron scowled and muttered about the greasy potions master. It took very little prompting for the passionate Gryffindor to rant about the head of Slytherin who liked to bully everyone, especially Harry. Apparently for the last 5 years Snape had been going after Harry as a way to get revenge for all of the pranks and bullying that Loki had done to Snape in their youth. It was childish and awful and Loki suddenly understood exactly why Harry had been so angry at him.

“You get it now, right?”

“Yes. Yes I do. Thank you so much, you’ve no idea how much I owe you.”

“Just make sure he’s happy. I don’t care what you have to do but make sure my friend is happy. Please.”

“We have a similar goal.” Thor said.

“Good. When you guys get ready to come back to Britain you can come here. I know my parents’ll side with you. They see Harry as one of theirs and no one crosses a Weasley like that.”

“Thank you. I knew your parents well before all of this. I’m glad to know I can trust them.” Loki said honestly. “Don’t tell anyone we were here. Once Harry’s recovered from his magical exhaustion we’ll be coming back. Tom Riddle will not live to see this year end if I’ve anything to say about it.”

Ron took his leave looking pleased with himself, the night having truly fallen. Thor and Loki, despite desperately wanting to take a detour to Little Winging, went back to the tower. Thor clapped his hand on Loki’s shoulder.

“Go to Harry. Leaving him alone any longer won’t do anyone any good.”
“Yes, you’re right.”

It was very easy to teleport down a few floors so that he was right outside the guest bedroom that Tony had set aside for Harry. Carefully Loki knocked on the door.

“Go away Tony!”

“It’s me.” Silence met his declaration. Loki laid his head on the door and spoke as calmly as he could. “Can I come in?”

“I don’t want to talk to you!” Harry’s voice sounded closer to the door.

“Please, Starlight, I really need to talk to you.”

“What’d you call me?”

“Starlight. I called you Starlight. It’s what I used to call you when you were a baby because you were my bright spot of happiness.” Silence. Loki wondered and feared if that had been too honest. The door opened just a crack. A bit of his son’s hair and one of his eyes stuck out through the opening.

“What?”

“Can I please come in and talk to you? I want to apologize for today, I didn’t handle anything well.”

“You want to apologize?”

“Please Starlight?”

It was a small eternity of waiting but eventually Harry closed his eyes and let the door fall open entirely. Loki swallowed and took a step inside. He could do this. He had to be honest, no more miscommunication.
A Veil around the Starlight

Chapter Summary

Harry and Loki finally begin to clear the air over Asgardian tea and biscuits.

Chapter Notes

Hey everybody! Thanks so much to everyone who commented last week! I felt a lot of love and appreciation for Ron.

Harry shuffled away from the door, letting it swing open so that his dad could come in. He knew he’d been acting like a big baby since their fight just after the flying contest. Tony had tried to bring food over and despite being absolutely ravenous Harry had declined, again and again. He didn’t know why but the thought of eating right then in his self-exile made his stomach threaten violent protest. So he’d laid in bed and he’d glared at the too soft sheets.

And now his dad was here. Probably to yell at him for being rude to Tony, even though he hadn’t been…at least not very much. And Harry was going to yell right back because his dad was a bully and maybe Snape had been right all along. Harry ignored how fond Loki sounded when he called him Starlight. That was just an anomaly. A trick. Harry looked down at his bare feet and wondered how long Loki was going to make him wait.

“Starlight?” Loki asked, his voice soft. “Are you okay? Is your scar hurting you?”

Harry looked up a little and felt almost scalded by the naked concern in Loki’s eyes. He shook his head. No, his scar was fine. It had only hurt this morning because of the vision. The headaches he’d been dealing with for the past year had pretty much passed which was probably the best thing about removing the spells Loki had placed on him.

“I’m fine.” He lied, ignoring the hunger pains in his stomach. Loki nodded and didn’t push him.

“Would it be alright if we sat down then? Maybe we could talk over some tea?”

Tea sounded nice. Harry nodded and he found himself sitting back on the large bed. The room didn’t have any chairs and Loki didn’t offer to conjure any. Harry leaned up against the solid oak headboard with his legs crossed carefully. Across from him his dad sat, conjuring up some tea and biscuits from somewhere. At least Harry thought they were biscuits, they looked different from anything he’d ever had. Carefully Loki pushed a plate of the biscuits towards him with magic so that they floated perfectly towards him. The cup of tea came next and Harry grabbed it and cradled it in his hands, careful not to crush the delicate ceramic. The tea smelt oddly spicy and aromatic; unlike anything he’d ever sniffed before.

“It’s from Asgard.” Loki told him. “From a plant that your grandmother grows in her personal gardens. It’s supposed to be calming.”
“Oh.” Harry took a sip and made a small humming noise at the lightly spicy sweet taste. “It’s good.”

“I had hoped you’d like it. Your mother did as well.” Loki said. “She really grew a taste for it when she was pregnant with you. Begged me for a cup every thirty minutes it felt like.”

Harry looked back down at the light brown liquid, almost trying to read the settling tea leaves to find more evidence of his mum.

“You remind me of her.”

“I do?” Harry asked, looking up from the tea and then regretting it when he remembered what exactly his eyes looked like.

“It’s not just your eyes.” Loki said as if he was reading his mind. “You have her heart. Your mother was kind and brave and fiery. I know that you are your own person but it’s still nice to see that you took after her.”

There was a naked kind of longing in the man’s voice. Harry took another sip of the tea.

“You miss her?”

“Constantly. Today I couldn’t help but wish she was here because I know she’d be able to help you better than I ever could. I’m afraid out of the two of us you might have gotten the shorter end of the stick.” Loki gave him a soft sad smile and then picked up one of the biscuits. “You should try these. They’re from Asgard too, one of my favorite treats. Don’t tell Thor I have any, he always tries to steal them from me.”

Harry took his advice and picked up a biscuit from the floating plate. He took a small bite and understood immediately why Thor would steal them. It was a flavor entirely alien to his tongue, but the soft, buttery texture combined with the combination of sweet and salty was delightful. Harry’s next bite was significantly larger. Loki grinned and took a bite of his own.

“When you were very young.” Loki said after swallowing his mouthful. “I had plans on how I was going to introduce everything from Asgard to you. I’d even gone so far as to write out the order of things so that every new step would be an exciting discovery. I know that things are different now but I do want to share everything that I can with you. Magic, Asgard, everything.”

“Even if I’m bad at magic?” Harry asked, the few bites of his biscuit curdling in his stomach at the reminder of their conversation earlier that day.

“What?”

“You told me not everyone can excel.” The man’s face twisted for a moment before he took in a deep breath and spoke.

“I meant that not everyone can excel at tests.” Loki corrected. “Sometimes written exams are the worst way to tell how well someone knows a subject.”

“Oh.” Harry took an awkward sip of his tea.

“Harry, you’re an excellent magic user.” Loki said. “And I’m not saying that just to say it. I saw you flying today, that takes a lot of skill.”

“Flying isn’t…it’s just flying. It’s not like potions or…or charms.” Harry argued.
“Harry you used your magic today. When Clint was firing at you with those paintballs you were able to sense them coming well before what your mundane senses would’ve allowed you to. You were listening to your magic and reacting accordingly.” Loki told him. “That takes skill and it is the mark of a true sorcerer. That same skill is what I use in my own battles.”

Harry thought back to that and wondered if it was true. He couldn’t recall casting a spell or anything. But if Loki was being honest then apparently he had done some sort of magic.

“I didn’t cast a spell.”

“No. It’s a passive magic. It means you listen with your…” Loki trailed off at Harry’s face and then he tried again. “Here let me show you.”

The man put down his cup, it started floating in the air and spinning slowly on its axis, and held out his hands. It took a moment for Harry to follow suit, mostly because he didn’t know if his cup was going to float too or not. Loki took his hands gently in his own and then asked him to close his eyes. Harry did a little reluctantly. Abruptly he felt something tingling in his fingers and he opened his eyes again to find that nothing had happened. He looked up at Loki who was smiling at him.

“Tingling?”

“Yes? What is that?”

“It’s my magic. You’re sensing my magic with your own.” Loki said. “Later I can teach you more. This sort of skill is a gift Harry. With training you could sense dark magic in objects, and you could even be able to identify what sorts of enchantments are on an object. You’ll be able to tell if something is hexed or potioned. Not everyone can do this and the fact that you figured out how to do it naturally, probably just so that you could better dodge bludgers is nothing short of phenomenal.”

Harry suspected it wasn’t bludgers but rather Dudley’s fat fists that had facilitated that. But Harry didn’t say so.

“You think?”

“I know.” Loki insisted. “You are already very good at magic for your age but you have so much potential and that doesn’t have anything to do with being a demi-god, you were talented before that.”

Harry pulled his hands away and picked up the warm cup of tea. He wasn’t sure how to respond to that at all so he just didn’t. Loki didn’t seem to mind.

“What did you want to talk to me about?” Harry asked.

“I wanted to apologize for today. I wasn’t very...clear about some things.” Loki said. “I’m not naturally very open about how I feel and what I think. I also didn’t want to overwhelm you or make you feel poorly and so I hid even more than I should have.”

“I don’t understand.”

“I didn’t want you to do the flying contest.” Loki said. “You’re recovering from a serious case of magical exhaustion not to mention your healing wounds from the fight at the arcade. It was an unnecessary, stupid thing to risk your health on and I wanted nothing more than to pull you into a hug and tell Thor and Tony to go endanger someone else’s child.”

Loki’s tone pushed a giggle out of Harry right at the end. He’d thought that Loki hadn’t cared one way or another. Loki looked almost desperate as he continued.
“I know you’ve been on your own and I know you can handle danger.” Loki said. “But that doesn’t change that I’m your father, that it’s my job to keep you safe and that you’re 16. I want, desperately, to live in a world where you need me Harry. I know that you don’t but…”

“I do.” Harry said surprising himself and Loki.

“What?”

“I do need you.” Harry said and then thought better of it. When he’d come out to New York it hadn’t been because he thought he needed Loki. “Or maybe I just really want you? I’m not…”

“I want you in my life too.” Loki finished for him reaching out and placing his hand over Harry’s and giving it a squeeze. The man’s voice was warm and relieved. “I’m stuck between trying to give you the independence you deserve and wanting to wrap you up so that you’re warm and safe and happy. I imagine it’s the same struggle a lot of parents face, our circumstances are just a bit more extravagant than most.”

“No kidding.” Harry huffed. He picked up another biscuit and ate half of it in one bite. “Is it normal to be hungry all the time?”

“I’m afraid so.” Loki said, sounding very sympathetic. “You need to eat about triple what you were before. Asgardian bodies are much denser than a human’s, you’re putting on a lot of weight even if it doesn’t look like it. Not to mention the amount of magic you have requires a lot of fuel.”

That explained not only why his broom had felt different flying on as well as the constant hunger.

“Did you have dinner?” Loki asked.

“Uhmm…”

“Let me get something then, for both of us. I skipped dinner too I’m afraid.” Loki said. “I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

Loki was true to his word, he apparated out of the room and came back in less than five minutes with two large plates of pasta. Harry didn’t ask where he’d gotten the food. He gratefully took his own plate, the tightness from his stomach having mostly disappeared. They didn’t talk until Harry had gotten through about half of his plate. Harry broke the silence this time.

“You bullied Snape.” Harry said.

“Yes, I did.” Loki admitted. “I know I sounded proud of that Harry but I’m not. I’m proud of many things I did as James Potter and those were what I was referencing, not my past with Snape.”

“But why?”

“Why? He was a Slytherin and he studied dark magic for one. The war was terrible by that point and everyone was distrustful of everyone else. I saw Snape and I thought he was the enemy. A Death Eater in Training.” Loki said.

“That doesn’t mean you can just…”

“I know.” Loki said his voice somehow both firm and tired. “It was wrong. That took me a long time to learn and your mother wouldn’t have a thing to do with me until I got it through my thick head. Even though she wasn’t talking to him anymore she still didn’t like what I was doing to Snape. I grew up. I promise you I did.”
“Why would mum talk to Snape?” Harry asked.

“They were childhood friends.” Loki answered. “They grew up in the same neighborhood, Snape was the one who introduced Lily to magic.”

“What?” Harry demanded flabbergasted.

“Oh yes. They knew each other before Hogwarts. Lily told me once they met when they were 9.”

“But he’s so…why would mum want to talk to him?”

“I take it you’re familiar with Snape then?”

“He’s my potions professor.” Harry said. “And I can’t believe he was friends with my mum.”

“He was best friends with her for many years. They stopped speaking to one another after that memory you saw. Lily couldn’t handle being friends with someone who would call her words like that anymore. He broke her heart.”

Harry felt something like indignation rise up in his chest. No, it wasn’t just like indignation it was exactly that. He slammed his cup down on the table.

“You mean to tell me he was best friends with my mum and he became a Death Eater anyway? What a prick!” And everything he’d done after? Snape was such an asshole! “That’d be like me becoming a Death Eater even though I’m friends with Hermione! How could he do that?”

“I don’t know.” Loki said, shrugging. “I never took the time to learn why the dark arts interested him so much, I didn’t care. For me it was very black and white, he was leaning towards being a Death Eater and so he wasn’t worth my time.”

“Was it because of…”

“I would find it hard to believe that my pranks and bullying was what pushed Snape to it, but if it was then it changes little. He still chose to become a fascist. He still betrayed Lily. I assume since he works for Dumbledore that he’s changed alliances if only a little.”

“He’s Dumbledore’s spy for the Order. At least that’s what I was told.”

“Hmm. Well is he at least a good professor?”

Harry snorted at the very idea.

“He hates me because of you.” Harry said. “So, he picks on me in class.”

“I think he might hate you because of Lily too.”

Harry lifted up an eyebrow and Loki leaned forward as if he was going to share a very funny joke.

“Snape and I saw each other as competition for Lily’s affection, we both loved her in our own way. I know it’s childish but it’s the truth. If Snape hasn’t grown up much he probably still sees it that way. Which means you signify that he lost Lily. Every time he looks at your eyes he sees Lily and it reminds him of his failures.”

“Well…I don’t know what I’m supposed to do about that.”

“Nothing I imagine. It’s his issue with you.”
“All this time.” Harry said shaking his head. “You know it’s funny.”

“What’s funny?”

“He likes to call me Prince Potter.”

They both started laughing at the same time at the very idea. Loki told him between laughs that technically he was a prince which just made Harry laugh harder. Maybe Harry should start wearing a crown? Did Asgardian princes have crowns? Harry decided to ask. His dad gleefully told him that they did indeed. He then conjured one for Harry to put on. It looked ridiculous sitting in his messy hair but that made it all the more perfect.

When they finally calmed down Harry found that he didn’t feel as terrible as he had just an hour before. He gave his dad a smile and the man reached out and readjusted the crown so it fit better on his head.

“It looks good.” Loki promised.

“It’s silly.”

“Yes, but you could work with it. Just pretend that it isn’t and walk like a peacock.” Harry made a face at the very idea which made his dad giggle just a little. “Not your style?”

“No way.” His dad smiled a little and then sighed.

“I am sorry for today Harry, and well pretty much all of our interactions since Amora. I’m not as practiced as this as I need to be. Please forgive me for upsetting you.”

“I upset you too.” Harry said.

“Yes but I’m a nearly 2000 year old god who should know better by now.”

“Do you often find out that your dead son is alive because he punched you in the face?”

“What? No of course not.”

“Then how are you supposed to have known what to do with me?”

“Well I don’t know I just should have.”

“It’s fine d-” Harry cut himself off. Loki caught the first part of the word and he frowned.

“You don’t have to call me dad if you don’t want.”

“Do you want me too?” Harry asked. He wasn’t going to call the man dad unless he said so.

“What do you want me to call you?” Harry asked. He wasn’t going to call the man dad unless he said so.

“Whatever you want.” Harry gave the man a look which caused him to spasm a little before sighing. “Sorry, Harry. I meant to say that what you want and what makes you most comfortable is very important to me, but if I had to pick I’d want you to call me dad.”
It sounded like that had been hard for the man to say, not that Harry could blame him. Harry was only good at saying what he really thought when he was angry at someone. Harry swallowed a little and decided to try it out.

“Okay, dad.” The word felt very odd coming out of his mouth, like a slug was crawling out of his throat but the smile his dad gave him in response made it worth it. Harry smiled back a little and then grabbed his still floating cup of tea. He wasn’t thinking of anything but the fact that he was allowed to call someone dad, a thought that was immediately dashed when the cup burst into a thousand tiny pieces from his grip.

Harry blushed and immediately began to apologize. Loki shushed him and snapped his fingers. The warm tea immediately floated off of his hand and the bed below and back into the reassembled cup.

“Still not used to the strength?”

“No.” Harry said. “Everything feels so…soft now.”

“I am sorry. I didn’t even think about how jarring this transition would be for you, I cursed you with the worst kind of puberty.” That made Harry snort which Loki, correctly, took as his forgiveness. “The best way to control strength like ours is to use it. For now, I know a few spells that’ll protect things against breakage, I also know Stark has been looking for people to test his new inventions that are supposed to be able to withstand super strength. What I’m trying to say is that it’s going to be fine. No one here is going to care if you break some things, or even tens of things.”

“Okay.” Harry said, feeling only slightly better about the fact that he could break bones if he wasn’t careful. As daintily as he could he picked up his fork and scooped up more food.

“Are there…any other problems you’ve been experiencing with this change?” Loki asked. “I want to help you with this in whatever way I can.”

“I…My magic’s a bit more reactive.” Harry said. “I’m kind of afraid of doing magic accidentally like I did at the arcade. I almost took out that whole building! What if I…”

Loki reached out and placed a hand on Harry’s shoulder, it was an odd but still comforting weight.

“Starlight. I promise you that’s not going to happen.”

“How do you know that?”

“I know that because you are your mother’s son. You won’t hurt anyone that doesn’t deserve it. Your magic isn’t some foreign entity within you, it is you. It won’t do anything that you would find horrific. I promise.” Harry sniffed a little, wondering why his throat felt tight. Loki squeezed his shoulder a little. “Besides, once you’re better you and I are going to do so much training together.”

“Training?”

“Don’t sound like that. Harry, you’re facing a war.” Loki said seriously. “And for that you need the training of a warrior. You have come so far on your own but I can help you build on what you already have. Starlight, the prophecy says you have to be the one to defeat Tom Riddle but it doesn’t say you have to do everything alone. Please let me help you. I can teach you so much about magic and anything else you want to learn.”

It was so different from Dumbledore. Dumbledore who had hidden things from him, who had kept the distance between them, had refused to help Harry learn everything. With Dumbledore is was just test after test. With Dumbledore Harry was constantly being ping ponged back and forth between life
threatening adventures and wallowing with the Dursleys. Every piece of information Harry had ever
gotten he’d had to fight tooth and nail for.

But here Loki was just offering anything Harry wanted like it was simple.

Was it that simple?

Could Harry just ask?

Would Loki just tell him?

It was a novel idea, really. The idea that an adult would just tell him what he wanted to know if he
asked. He didn’t need to break into the forbidden section of the library and flip through screaming
books beneath his invisibility cloak. He didn’t have to sneak around after hours and eavesdrop on
conversations just to find out who was trying to kill him that year. NO more sticking his face in a
pensive because he was just so desperate for a clue. He didn’t even have to go down and trick
Hagrid into revealing more than he intended.

How was he supposed to handle this? Part of him wanted to jump up and shake Loki until all of the
answers to the thousands of mysteries he’d faced fell out of him. Another part of him felt like he
could actually go on a Hermione styled rant, the one’s she only produced when talking to adults she
actually respected. Emotions roiled around him and he tried to force his mouth to work, Loki stared
at him as Harry had an internal meltdown at the offer.

“Are you…”?

“Do you know anything about The Veil?” His voice cut over Loki’s almost too loud in the quiet
room.

Out of all the questions he could have asked, was it any surprise that he asked about Sirius first? Loki
blacked a little before speaking.

“That name isn’t familiar but! I might know it by another name. Can you tell me what it is, maybe
what it does?”

“It killed Sirius.” Harry said. “He fell into it when Bellatrix hit him with a spell and…he didn’t come
out again.”

Loki’s face looked pained for a mere moment before he swallowed it back, when he spoke again his
voice was soft.

“If you want me to be able to tell you anything, I need to know what happened. I know it’ll be hard
but that’s the only way.”

Loki was right. It was hard. Harry told Loki the whole story while drinking copious amounts of the
delicious calming tea. From their first meeting in Harry’s third year to the disastrous ‘rescue’ in the
department of mysteries. For Sirius’ sake he also managed to briefly describe the connection he had
with Tom Riddle through his scar. Loki listened to the whole story without interrupting, his face a
study in compassion and empathy. Although at the description of his curse scar the man looked
tempted to interrogate him. Occasionally as Harry revealed something particularly horrendous there
was a shadow of rage but that was quickly hidden in favor of getting to the end.

By the time he finished Harry felt as if he’d run a mile through one of Thor’s storms. He couldn’t
look at anything, but the tea leaves left over at the bottom of his cup. He thought he saw a bird and a
mountain.
“Starlight.” Loki said his voice serious. “Do you remember how to get to the veil?”

“Course. Why?”

“Because, there’s a chance that Sirius is alive. If I’m right, the veil is a natural tear between two places, two realms. The only way to know is for me to see this veil myself.”

“I’m coming.” Harry said scrambling out of his bed. He prepared for the man to argue with him. Harry was still too weak to use his magic. Loki looked torn for a moment before nodding and getting off the bed as well.

“Okay, but we stick together and you’re wearing some armor.”

Before Harry quite realized what he was doing, he’d already rushed forward and pulled his dad into a hug. The man stiffened, probably due to Harry’s strength but didn’t hesitate to hug him right back. It felt much nicer this time around, being hugged by his dad.

“Thank you.” Harry whispered.

“Of course, Starlight. Come on, Let’s go save Sirius.”
A Trip Down the Rabbit Hole

Chapter Summary

Loki and Harry go back to the Ministry of Magic and try to discover what truly happened to Sirius Black.

Chapter Notes

Hey ya'll this chapter was so much fun to write! Thank you so much for the great comments and I'm sorry if I haven't responded. Grad school keeps me busy you know?

There were traditions associated with this, Loki knew. Traditions and coming of age rites that they were skipping over in their haste. A father in Asgard would gift their son their old armor when they were leaving for warrior training, an important coming of age moment. Usually there was a feast, parties, speeches made in honor of the event. But now, here they were standing in a slightly dim room, with Loki carefully showing his son how to put on the armor. Both of them with shaking fingers as they thought about Sirius.

Loki wondered if he should tell Harry about those parties and feasts. If it would matter to him that in that moment they were doing the one thing that would be required for most of Asgard to see him as an adult, or at least an adult in training. His son wasn’t even 16 yet and most Aesir waited centuries upon centuries to be given a set of their father’s old armor. He knew that Harry wouldn’t care about it right at that moment, after all Sirius was far more important to him.

But there was still some level of bitter regret Loki felt as he readjusted the chest plate and showed Harry the correct way to fasten his vambraces. Harry looked just like Loki had all those centuries ago when Odin had told him it was time to put magic aside and learn the way of a warrior, except his son was perhaps paler and a bit more gaunt than Loki had been. Loki had started training early, one of Odin’s first open attempts to get his 2nd son to stop practicing magic.

It hadn’t worked.


“It’s not stupid.” Loki said. “You look quite handsome, for an Asgardian at least. This is my armor from when I was a much younger man first learning how to fight. Normally this armor set is passed down through multiple generations.”

“Normally?”

“Well you see Thor got Odin’s old armor.” Loki said. “And while I could have been given another one of Odin’s sets as is common, it was decided that a new set would be commissioned for me on account of my…my size.”

Harry looked at him and Loki could see the teen mentally comparing Loki and Thor and coming to a
few conclusions about what Loki’s growing up experience was like.

“Be grateful it was in your size.” Harry said. “Really. Wearing stuff made for someone three times as
big as you all the time sucks. Even if it meant you weren’t wearing something of Odin’s. Besides it’s
better this way isn’t it? Now I’m wearing something of yours.”

Do not cry. Do not cry. Loki had to be strong, he couldn’t cry. Harry was making it exceedingly
difficult for Loki not to burst into tears with how earnestly he’d asked his last question. He
swallowed back the rising knot of emotion that threatening to escape his throat and smiled.

“Yes, you’re right of course. Now, we need to get you a weapon of some sort.” Loki said. “Just in
case the worst happens. You can’t use your magic for a few days yet. How do you feel about
knives?”

“I…Not great?” He asked.

“That’s fine. Spears? Bow and arrow?”

“I don’t know how to use either of those.” Of course he didn’t. Why would he? That wasn’t taught
to children on earth anymore. He wracked his brain trying to think of something. “I could probably
use a sword.”

“What?”

“A sword. I used one to kill the basilisk.” Harry repeated. “I won’t be good with it but at least I
know which end is the sharp one.”

That made Loki giggle a little, what a strange Asgardian Harry was going to be. He almost couldn’t
wait to bring him to Asgard and introduce the realm to the oddest prince yet.

“Alright. I think I’ve got a sword stored somewhere that’ll fit you.” Loki said. “Keep it stashed in it’s
scabbard unless I say something. Without proper training you could be more harm than hinderance in
a sword fight.”

Part of Harry looked a little mulish at the order, but he nodded anyway and Loki conjured the sword.
He showed Harry how to tie the belt and scabbard to his back so that Harry could easily reach back
and draw the sword. Once that was done, Loki thought that they could leave. His heart raced as he
thought about the trouble Sirius could be in right at that moment.

“Let’s go, there’s no time to waste.”

“Uhh dad?”

“Yes?”

“Maybe we should put on shoes first?”

Loki paused and looked down, sure enough they were both barefoot. Harry grinned at him, they’d
both taken their shoes off when they’d climbed onto the bed to have their talk and Loki had
forgotten. He rolled his eyes and snapped his fingers conjuring shoes and socks on both of them.

“There.” He said. “Anything else?”

“Do you have stuff just in case he’s hurt?” Harry asked. “Or hungry?”

“I do. Now. Hold on closely, I’ll teleport us to London, near one of the entrances of the Ministry.
From there you’ll have to direct me.” Loki said opening his arms wide. He waited patiently as Harry steeled himself and stepped into his arms for a hug. Knowing why his son was uncomfortable around touch made things much simpler. He truly owed Ron a debt. He focused his magic and in moments a plume of green flame had taken them from Stark Tower to an alleyway in London.

It was well past midnight now, probably closer to three in the morning than any other time. Which was for the best. No one would notice them. Just to make sure Loki quickly cast a spell that would keep anyone from even seeing them. Harry took his hand and started walking, unerringly in his direction. He led Loki into a phonebooth and got it taking them down into the depths of the ministry. When the voice asked for their names Harry gave them.

“Harry Potter and James Potter. To see the Veil of Death.”

Of course, the automated system spit out the two name tags and with two matching grins the Potter men put them on. When the magical elevator let them out into the atrium of the ministry, Harry kept walking and Loki followed without hesitation. But then he paused as he looked at the golden statue that had been in the ministry longer than he could remember. The wizard was missing its head and appeared to have sustained quite a bit of damage recently.

Loki saw the look on his son’s face and decided it was better not to ask.

He was a little disturbed about how easily and confidently his son moved towards their destination. The Department of Mysteries was aptly named and no one but the most hardened of Unspeakables should be able to navigate it. And yet Harry never faltered. Not when they ended up in a room with 12 spinning doors, not when they walked through a room with huge brains in jars. Harry seemed to notice Loki’s confusion.

“My scar connects me and Tom, I told you he sent me a vision that he was torturing Sirius right?”

“Yes.”

“Well before that he sent me a vision of this place night after night so that I’d no where to go to get to the prophecies.” Harry explained. “I know this place like the back of my hand it feels like.”

“When we get back and things have calmed down, I’d like to look at your scar. There’s got to be a way to block this connection. If there’s not then I’m going to teach you Legilimency.”

“Not Occulmency?”

Loki was surprised his son had even heard of that branch of magic. He shook his head.

“No, I wouldn’t start with it anyway. You can’t learn Occulmency until you learn Legilimency for one. And anyway, Legilimency would be far more useful to you. If Tom is sending you visions through a mental connection then being able to read those thoughts for their intent will help you tell if they’re real.”

Harry froze mid-step, he swayed slightly and then turned around to look seriously at Loki. Loki misread the look of horror on his son’s face.

“I know that mind reading might seem distasteful but unless you’re born naturally doing it then learning how to do it with a spell won’t mean you’ll be invading people’s privacy. I promise Harry, you’ll be in complete control of it.”

“What? No. What do you mean that you have to learn Legilimency first?”
“Occulmency is the art of defending a mind from mental attack.” Loki said.

“Yes, I know.”

“How can you defend against a magic you don’t understand?” Loki asked him. “That’s how magic
works. If you want to build a shield against a hex, you have to know how the hex works. If you tried
to learn Occulmency first without ever having used Legilimency, you’d never get anywhere.”

Harry’s eyes were wet in a way that made Loki wonder what he’d done wrong.

“You’re serious?” Harry asked. “You’re not messing with me?”

Loki didn’t have context for the shaky quality of his son’s voice, but he found he didn’t need it. He
bent down a little so that he and his son were at eye level. Carefully he placed his hands on his son’s
armored shoulders.

“Starlight. I promise you, on the love I hold for your mother, that I would never lie to you about
something like this. I might pull a small trick or hide the truth to surprise you with a gift, but I will
never, ever deceive you, not when it matters.”

Harry closed his eyes and took in a deep breath. When he opened them again, he saw that tears were
forming in the corner of Harry’s eyes.

“When the visions started…Dumbledore said I needed to learn to stop them.” He said. “But he…he
didn’t help me.”


“He told Snape to teach me.”

“Snape? He hates you.” Loki said. “And at the very least you don’t like him. That sort of magic is
best learnt from someone you trust.”

“I didn’t have a choice. I just went to his office and…and…” Harry started crying and Loki carefully
rubbed the tears away with his thumbs. Harry got himself under control and after a moment revealed
what had gone on in those lessons. Snape constantly shouting ‘Legilimens’ and attacking his son
while telling him to concentrate and clear his mind. The very idea that anyone would constantly
violate a mind already under attack made something in Loki shake. He had to forcefully suppress his
vitriol, now was not the time.

Carefully he placed his hands on either side of his son’s head cradling the skull as if it were the most
delicate thing he’d ever touched. Harry’s messy hair stuck stubbornly out in between his fingers.

“Darling.” Loki said. “We don’t have time for it now, not when Sirius needs us but once we get back
to the tower, I need to check your mind. Snape may have done real damage to you in his idiocy. For
now, would it be alright if I put a few spells on you?”

“What for?”

“Think of them like cushions for your mind.” Loki said. “Something soft to cover it and keep any
injuries from being stretched or worsened. It won’t fix anything but it’ll keep it from getting worse.”

Harry nodded easily and carefully Loki whispered out a few spells in the language of the aesir. His
hands glowed green for a moment before that energy carefully seeped through his son’s skin and into
his mind. Even with the spells he was casting he could tell that the damage was severe in his son’s
mind. Thankfully it seemed that Harry’s innate magic, now free from the bonds Loki had put on it, was attempting to repair it, even now as weakened as it was. With a little help from Loki there would hopefully be no permanent damage.

When Loki finished, he carefully removed his hands from his son’s head and let them slide down to rest on his shoulders once again.

“I thought it was my fault that I couldn’t learn…if I’d just done better then I wouldn’t have been tricked and Sirius wouldn’t…”

“We don’t know if Sirius is dead.” Loki said sternly. “And, Odin forbid, even if he is then my son, I promise you that he wouldn’t blame you for it. Sirius was my brother in all but blood and I knew his heart. I swear to you Starlight that if Sirius has moved onto Valhalla then he watches us with your mother with nothing but love and hope. It was not your fault. Bellatrix Lestrange was the one who shot that spell at him and Snape was the one who refused to actually teach you. You might have been rash my son but the guilt should not rest fully on your shoulders. Do you understand?”

“Yeah.” He said with a sniff. “Yeah I do. Come on, the veil is close.”

Loki straightened out and followed his son once again, his hands ready to conjure knives or a spell as needed. Loki felt the veil before he saw it. He could feel it pulling on him trying to stabilize. The magic trapped there was fractured and unbalanced, like a chemical equation that was kept from reacting for too long, just waiting for a chance to explode. When they turned the corner, Loki heard the strange whispers, words that might have been English and might not have been any language at all.

“Fascinating.”

“What?”

“I’ve never seen a tear like this.” Loki said stepping towards the veil, the torn black corner ruffled in a nonexistent wind. The closer he got the stronger the pull. “Someone moved this.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Tears between realms happen naturally, Starlight. The Yggdrasil’s branches and roots reaching out and forming natural magic bridges between one place and another.” Loki said. “When I was much younger I spent years learning how to crawl and climb them, falling and flying between realms. Once a tear forms it remains in place until the Yggdrasil shifts.”

“What’s the ee- igdr-?”

“Yggdrasil.” Loki corrected simply. “Another name for it is the World Tree, essentially it is the energy that formed the nine realms, it was here before us and it will endure after. Magic users get their power directly from the world tree and true seers are connected to its center where the fates live. Your prophecy came from the Yggdrasil.”

“Oh.” Harry said in a way that made it clear that he didn’t get what Loki was saying.

“Think of the universe as if it is a tree. Each planet is a fruit that grows on it.” Loki said simply. “The tree sustains the fruit by providing energy and water to grow right?”

“Yeah I guess.”

“That is what the Yggdrasil is to each of us. It provides the energy planets need to exist. There’s
much more too it but I don’t think you want a lecture on deep magical theory yet.”

“Save it for when you meet Hermione.”

Loki chuckled and continued to study the veil.

“Some crazy wizard figured out how to move a tear. They built this…stone arch and everything to contain it and then they moved it here. It was very stupid of them. Moving a tear could have resulted in the destruction of earth or a permanent and painful distortion of reality.”

“Really?” Harry squeaked.

“Yes.” Loki said. “After we find Sirius I need to undo this. The longer this thing remains here the more likely it is to break something that no one alive knows how to fix.”

“What happens when you undo it?”

“Likely the tear will disappear altogether. The reason the veil is like this is because the original connection has been broken.” Loki said. “Come here and touch the stone, right there.”

Harry did so a little worried. His face immediately twisted in disgust as his fingers touched the smoother gray stone.

“That’s awful!”

“I know. What you’re feeling is disequilibrium in the Yggdrasil. Think of it like a poisoned branch in the tree, the longer it remains without being cut the more likely it is to damage the entire thing.” Loki said. “It should likely take us through safely to wherever Sirius went but just in case we should go together and hold on, it might be bumpy, we don’t want to get separated.”

“Right.” Harry said stepping closer to Loki. “Will Sirius have gotten through okay?”

“He’s clever and good with his wand, I’m sure he was fine.” Loki said forcing more confidence into his voice than he necessarily felt.

“What are those voices? You’re hearing them, right?”

“The norns I think. The three sisters of fate that voice the past, the present and the future.” Loki said. “Starlight if you can help it, never have any direct dealings with them. It never ends well.”

“That’s not going to be a problem.” Harry said. “Do you know where this goes?”

“No clue. It’s been moved and that means it’s impossible to predict.”

“Okay.” His son held out his hand, Loki took it and carefully linked their fingers together so that it would be more difficult for them to be separated. “Together then?”

“Together.”

They stepped towards the veil, their steps matching one another. There was a brief pause on the last step, the curtain slipping over their boots, Harry’s hand tightened almost painfully on his and then he leapt forward.

Immediately they were doused in blackness. The smothering darkness muted every one of their senses. Loki just held on tightly to the hand that he knew had to still be in his. His magic spread out of him trying to read the nothingness around him in a way that his body couldn’t. He sensed his
son’s panic and pulled his hand closer to him. He thought he might have felt Harry’s arm circle his waist in an attempt to hold on.

Loki knew somehow that they were falling.

Faster and faster.

The ground never came.

He couldn’t tell if there was air around them, he tried to breathe. Was it working?

Abruptly he felt himself being flipped, he held on tightly to the body clinging to his chest as they were tossed violently around. Left, right, right, left, up. Each sickening lurch threatened to tear them apart. Loki was reminded of his fall from the Bifrost. His magic scrambled frantically trying to stabilize them.

Still they fell.

And fell.

And fell.

And fell.

And

**Thud.**

Loki knew the millisecond before it happened what was happened, and he turned so that he was cradling his son’s body. They were spit out on the other end of the tear and Loki landed on his back. They slid along something slick for a few seconds before coming to a stop. Loki’s chest was heaving violently now that he could finally breathe. It didn’t matter that the air tasted stale. He could finally feel Harry’s frantic grip on him, bruising his ribs. His son was also gasping for air.

Carefully Loki opened his eyes. He hadn’t realized he’d closed them.

He was greeted with an unfamiliar sky. There was no moon, nor was there a sun. In fact, Loki couldn’t even be sure that there were stars in that sky because all he could see was a thick grey fog. The fog seemed to carry with it some light that it spread around as best it could, but it left everything around them looking dull and dark. Loki was laying on some sort of strange slimy mold, his palms couldn’t get purchase on the stuff for a moment as he tried to push them both up into the sitting position.

Eventually he sat up, Harry wasn’t moving quite yet which meant that the boy was in his lap. Thankfully his breathing had slowed, and he was also looking out at the world around them. To his left he could hear what sounded like a babbling brook but the fog that surrounded them kept it from view. Occasionally Loki’s eyes would pick up a strange shape in the slowly swirling gray mass, what could have been a rock or a tree.

Or a monster.

“Where are we?”
“I don’t know.” Loki said. “But I don’t like it. Get up and draw your sword.”

“Really?” His son squeaked.

“We can’t hardly see in front of our faces, anything could be hiding in there. I know you can handle yourself.” Loki said. His son got up, looking slightly more confident now. Loki got up and ignored the unpleasant wetness on his clothing. Now wasn’t the time.

“What do I do if something comes?” Harry asked as he carefully reached back and pulled out his borrowed sword from his scabbard.

“First.” Loki said reaching out and readjusting his son’s grip. “Don’t hold it like a wand, hold it like that, less likely to go flying like that. Second, yell or something if I don’t notice and then move so that your back is to mine.”

“Why?”

“One’s back is their most unprotected place since they can’t see anything coming. If we have our backs to each other, then together we can see from all directions. We’ll be strong together. Plus, you’re less likely to stab me by accident if you’re not facing me.”

Harry gave him a look at the last point which made Loki grin. His son nodded and then looked at the fog.

“Can’t we just magic this fog away?”

“Best not risk it yet. The fog covers us too you know, with it we won’t be spotted by anything too big and with too many teeth as easily.” Loki said. “Let’s just walk together and keep talking, that way we always know we’re close by, no matter what.”

“What should we talk about?”

“Something that Sirius would hear and be intrigued by, I imagine. How about I tell you about some of the good things my friends and I did over the years?”

“Yeah, that sounds great.”

Loki smiled and began to walk in the direction of the stream he thought he heard. If he was Sirius then he would have gone looking for fresh water first and foremost, so this is the direction he would have gone. Loki sent his magic out looking for any trace of his friend, any left behind spell work or his magical signature. As his magic searched, he talked. Harry asked about the Marauder’s Map and that was as good a place to start as any.

He spoke of afternoons spent exploring every nook and cranny of the castle, trying each statue and portrait for a secret passage. Harry laughed and even at one point told him that they should add the Chamber of Secrets to the map since apparently, he had missed it all those years ago. Loki told him they’d do it once they found Sirius and brought him back to the tower to recover.

Harry agreed with him and Loki could taste his hesitation in the air. They were both thinking the same thing.

Would he have even survived the trip?

The longer they walked towards the stream, the thicker the fog seemed to grow. Harry and Loki were standing almost side by side as they traveled and the distance between Loki and Harry’s face
was still too long to allow Loki to clearly see his son’s face. The fog muted their voices keeping them from carrying far. A few more steps and his lungs began to feel heavy, each breath seemed to take more and more effort.

“Dad?” Loki stopped his story about discovering their third secret passageway and turned around. There was nothing.

“Harry?” He yelled. “Starlight!”

The fog pushed down into him, clogging his nose and eyes. Loki spun around staying in place and trying to spot anything. There was nothing to see.

“HARRY!”

Nothing, not even an echo to greet his ears.

Loki summons his magic, casting a spell that would latch onto his son and pull him to his side. The green fire spread out from his hands and then dissipated in the fog. No. No. No. Loki tried the spell, again and again.

Nothing.

He made an anguished noise and yelled for his son again, yelled for Sirius, for anyone.

*What’s wrong James?* An unfamiliar voice asked.

Loki turned on his heel at the sound that might not have been a sound at all. He spun in a full circle trying to see anything at all but the stifling grey.

“Who’s there?”

*Don’t you recognize me? Have you forgotten already?*

Loki twisted harshly to the right, he swore he heard that voice coming from that direction. It was still strange and yet part of him seemed to recognize it.

*It’ll come back to you, I know it will.* It couldn’t be.

“Lily?” He breathed turning slowly, hoping to see something that matched what his ears were picking up.

*Just stay here a little longer, my love.*

“Of course.” Loki said standing still. “Of course. Where are you?”

*I’m here, In the fog, you just need to stay still and I’ll come to you.*

“Lily, can you see Harry? He’s here with me. Find him first.”

*Shhh dear, just stay right where you are. Harry’s not important.*

That wasn’t right was it? Of course, Harry was important. Wasn’t he? Lily wouldn’t…unless perhaps…they had been apart for so long. Harry could wait a few moments. Yes, he could. All Loki needed to do was stay right where he was. He’d see his beloved wife once again.
The fog began to thicken and Loki knew he was choking on it. It swirled around him, pushing and clinging on him like a physical force. He felt as if he were trying to stand still in syrup.

*Yes my love, just a few moments longer and we’ll be together. Forever.*

That was all he wanted, to be with his wife. Yes. He forced himself not to move, ignoring anything that tried to get him to move, to run. He fought against his own body. He would stay still no matter what. He knew if he moved, he risked Lily not finding him. His head felt faint and his limbs shook.

**SLAM**

Loki landed on the ground with a slap and suddenly the fog disappeared. He looked up to see a glowing silver stag standing on his chest and waving its horns around. The air was suddenly clear and fresh in his lungs.

He could think!

“HARRY!” He shouted.

“I’m right here!” Harry said appeared right next to him on his knees. “It’s fine dad.”

“What…what happened?” He asked. “I thought I heard…”

“I don’t know, it’s this fog. I saw someone really weird in it.” Harry said. “They kept saying really weird stuff and when I asked about you, they told me that you wouldn’t be a concern any longer. I tried to get away but…I had to cast a patronous to get the fog to go away.”

The glowing stag, moved off of Loki but remained, standing guard. The patronous’ presence was pushing the fog farther and farther away.

“A patronous?” Loki said. “That…that was brilliant Starlight.”

Harry beamed in pride and Loki smiled right back. He stared at the stag for a moment before it finally clicked in his head.

*Prongs.*

“Dad are you crying?”

“No.” He lied. “Just got some of the fog in my eyes.”

“Right.” He said. “Can you cast one too? Might help us see farther?”

“I haven’t really managed one since your mother died.” The truth sat bitter on his tongue.

“It’s okay if you can’t.” Harry said. “Mine is fine and I’m not using much magic at all.”

Loki nodded his acceptance, still staring at the beautiful stag his son managed to cast. Carefully he rubbed his eyes clear. Harry stood up and held out a hand, Loki took it and allowed himself to be pulled to his feet. Once standing he realized how threatening the fog had been, how it had threatened to swallow them both up. The stag shook its antlers and pawed at the slightly slimy ground.

Then it began to walk.

“Where’s it going?” Loki asked.
“I dunno, I cast it trying to find you and it did.” Harry said.

“So its meant to find people in the fog?” Loki asked with a small smile.

The penny dropped and Harry grabbed Loki’s hand and rushed after his patronous. Loki followed still trying to get over the sensation of being able to truly breathe. The air felt crisp and with each heave of his lungs his mind felt clearer.

Why the hell hadn’t he gotten rid of the fog right when they arrived?

With the stag leading the way, the path was clear. Loki could clearly see large black and grey trees, occasional spots of drying brown grass and large hulking boulders. The stag led them through the woods they’d arrived in, taking them along paths clear of slime and between the trees. It felt like a very circuitous route, but Loki didn’t complain. He just held tightly onto his son and thanked the norn he could breathe. He forced himself to forget his wife’s voice and told himself that it wasn’t real. There was no way Lily had been there.

Guilt settled oddly in his gut.

After fifteen minutes of running, it was clear Harry was growing tired but unwilling to stop. Thankfully it seemed that the patronous was done. It had led them to the stream, and more importantly a clearing. The stream wrapped around the right side of the clearing and in the center of it was a makeshift tent. There was a fire, burning pink of all colors, in front of the tent with a slowing spinning stick on top of it that a strange animal had been skewered on. Sitting next to the tent was a silver large dog that Loki would know anywhere.

“Sirius!” Harry yelled out jumping over the stream. “Sirius! It’s me!”

“DAMN BLASTED FOG!” yelled a voice that Loki knew almost better than his own.

Sirius burst out from the tent, his wand drawn and he froze when he saw Harry there.

Loki felt bile rise as he looked at how wrecked his friend looked. Sirius Black had been the most attractive of their group, something he had taken great pride in. Constantly adjusting his hair and wearing a leather jacket just to enhance his looks. Now his friend’s scraggly hair and sunken cheeks made Loki want to scream. He knew this wasn’t his fault.

Dumbledore had been the one to lie.

But all the same he blamed himself. Sirius wouldn’t have spent all those years in Azkaban if Loki had just kept looking.

Harry didn’t seem to notice how awful Sirius truly looked, or perhaps this was the Sirius Black that Harry knew. His son rushed towards Sirius, uncaring of the wand pointing his way and pulled Sirius into a hug.

“I’m so sorry.” He said. “I didn’t know it was a trap! I swear!”

Sirius immediately hugged him back making comforting noises.

“Pup, its fine. It’s okay. I know you didn’t.” Sirius said his voice sounding very hoarse. “But maybe don’t crush me with your arms?”

Harry immediately let go and pulled back, Loki could just imagine his look of horror.
“Sorry!”

“It’s fine. I had no idea you were so strong, kiddo.”

“Long story.” He said causing Sirius to frown.

“I can’t believe you’re here! What were you thinking coming through the veil like that? How long have you been down here? You didn’t come out at the same time I did so someone must have stopped you in the Ministry! What happened in the Ministry? Is Remus okay? What about your friends?”

“Everyone’s fine.” Harry said, taking Sirius’ hands in his own. “You…you were the only…”

“Oh pup. I’m okay.” Sirius said. “It’s been weird down here, but I’ve got my wand and the fog stays back as long as I have a patronous up. I see you figured out the same thing. Now how long have you been down here? For that matter how long have I been here?”

“Over a month. You fell in at the end of April and it’s almost June now.”

“Good to know time passes the same way here.” The man said. “Now honestly, what were you thinking Pup? For all you knew I died going into that thing! Now we’re both stuck here!”

Sirius looked very frustrated with his son but Harry didn’t seem to care, the boy was just relieved Sirius was alive. So was Loki. He wasn’t sure what held him back until that moment, just standing on the edge close enough to be protected by the two patronouses but far enough away not to intrude. He wanted nothing more than to hug his brother, his partner and crime and beg for forgiveness.

Loki carefully pushed himself forward, stepping over the stream and closer to the two most important people in his life.

“I didn’t come alone.” Harry told Sirius. “We’ll get back to earth, I promise.”

Sirius’ sensitive ears picked up Loki’s footsteps and he looked up from Harry right at him. His face showed shock and fear. He immediately pushed Harry behind him and brought his wand up.

“Stay back!”

“Sirius. It’s f-”

“No, kiddo. This fog tricks you, makes you see things that aren’t real. Don’t get near it.”

“Padfoot. It’s really dad, he’s been alive the whole time. I found him on earth not here.” Very quickly, Sirius’ face went from shock and fear, to relief, and then to anger.

Which is how Loki got his nose broken for the second time in just as many weeks.
Loki tells Sirius the truth without the help of truth bracelets and Harry gets a chance to test his dad's armor.

Chapter Notes

Hey ya'll! Thank you so much for the hilarious comments last week! Everyone in the comments section talking about Loki getting punched made me laugh so hard! I hope you enjoy this update, rife with James and Sirius interactions. Just as a warning if anyone reading is squeamish there is a fight scene in this, so if that's a concern for you just be warned! It's not too graphic, this is rated T after all.

Harry had to pull his godfather off of his father. Sirius managed to get three or four punches into the god’s face before Harry got his wits together and managed to wrap his arms around Sirius and pull him back. Sirius was shouting abuse at his dad while waving his hands arms wildly.

“Sirius.” Harry grunted before trying louder. “PADFOOT STOP!”

His dad sat up while Sirius froze, there was blood running down Loki’s face and his nose was a painful red.

“Harry, let me go. That bastard needs to…” The amount of rage Harry heard in the man’s voice made him glad that Sirius had dropped his wand.

“No. You don’t know the full story. Sirius, come on, remember when we first met? I listened to you didn’t I? Let us tell you the truth? Please?”

Sirius’ body was rigid in his arms but all at once the tension leaked out of his with a sigh. Harry loosened his grip and fell back so that Sirius could move comfortably.

“Merlin kid, your grip is insane.” Sirius said rubbing his stomach. “You taking strength potions now? Those things’ll destroy your testi-”

“I’m afraid the strength is my fault.” Loki said, before waving a hand in front of his face. Green magic sparked from his fingers and his nose realigned itself, another wave and the blood was gone too. Sirius made a noise of shock and Loki stood up. “Please, my friend, let me tell you the truth and beg for your forgiveness.”

Sirius got up and walked over to the fire, while grunting out a command for Loki to start talking. Harry moved to sit down at the fire too. He felt a little lightheaded. Just the excitement of traveling here and then casting a patronous had taxed him. The fire, a terribly odd pink color, sent out a meager amount of warmth which Harry tried to focus on instead of the hunger that had returned to his stomach and the dizziness that had taken control of his head. He needed to keep the patronous up.
It was the only way to protect them from the fog and more importantly keep that creepy lady away from him.

“Starlight.” His dad said. “Do you need food? Water? What am I saying of course you do. One moment, let’s get you settled, there’s no telling how long we’ll be sitting here.”

Harry watched, just a little consternated, as his dad started conjuring things out of nowhere. He gave Harry another cup of the delicious Asgardian tea, as well as conjuring one for Sirius who looked at it with a very sour expression. Of course, his dad had more aesir biscuits and some heartier food for them. He conjured them onto floating plates that waited by each of them at a good height so that it was easy to grab at the finger food and eat it.

Loki being the man he apparently was had also conjured things for comfort. He put a thick blanket around Harry’s shoulders and somehow managed to magic a cushion for him that appeared where Harry was already sitting. When he moved to do the same for Sirius, the man’s glare kept him off. Of course, that didn’t stop Loki from casting mage lights, filling the clearing with a warm glow.

Harry looked up at the mage lights and then gasped at what he saw. It was like the very cosmos had been painted by a meticulous artist in the sky. Vivid purples, blues and greens contrasted beautifully with the black night, broken only by the stars.

“I have to admit.” Sirius said looking up at the same brilliant sight. “It is one hell of a view.”

Loki was still waltzing around seemingly trying to perfect the entire camp.

“Dad.” Harry said. “Sit down, and let’s start already.”

“Right yes of course.” He fluttered nervously to the other side of the fire, onto his own cushion. “Harry eat. You’re looking a little too pale.”

“Only if you start talking.” His dad gave him a look but did start talking. Harry true to his word started munching on the strange rolls of spicy meat and other items of food he couldn’t quite identify. The plate next to his arm must have had a never-ending spell on it since every time he picked up a piece of food another one appeared to take its place. It was probably for the best because he felt starving. Which wasn’t a hyperbole, Harry knew what starving felt like.

Thanks Uncle Vernon.

Harry listened as quietly as he could as Loki told his story. The only interruption came from the crackling fire and Sirius’ various reactions. Which were…very empathetic at times. It was strange hearing the story from Loki’s perspective. Harry only knew what had been in his mum’s journal. There hadn’t yet been time for Harry to get the story from his dad as to why he’d come to earth in the first place.

It was a story of loneliness and curiosity. It was one Harry found he could empathize with. So too could Sirius. At first Sirius had been derisive with the noises that escaped his throat and the sneer that had settled on his face, but the longer Loki spoke the more Sirius seemed to sympathize. When Loki revealed his decision to become James Potter, to attempt to be a part of the magical world Sirius spoke.

“We really were just a group of losers, weren’t we?” He asked. “An insecure werewolf, a runaway pureblood, a socially anxious nerd and you, supposedly the normal one.”

His dad laughed just a little before shaking his head.
“I was exactly what I appeared to be when we were children Sirius. Before I became James Potter, I locked away a lot of my magic as well as my memories. Everything that we did together, everything that we were to each other. All of that was true. The truest thing I’ve ever been a part of.”

“So what, you were James until you got offed?”

“I remembered the truth when I turned 18.” Loki said, he lifted up a finger to quiet Sirius’ strangled noise of offense. “I didn’t tell you because I was…happy.”

“Happy?” Sirius screeched into the night. “We were at war! We needed all the fire power we could get! How could you…”

“I know. I know.” Loki said. “Not a day goes by that I don’t regret not giving up my humanity sooner. So many things would be different now, better, if I hadn’t been so selfish. I am sorry Sirius, but I was afraid. Afraid to lose you.”

“Lose me? You couldn’t think that we’d deny you? Shit man, you’re the god of mischief that’s brilliant.”

“It wasn’t you or any of the others. I was afraid of Asgard taking me away.”

They listened as Loki explained the laws against gods traveling to earth and how Loki would have been taken away by force from the home he’d made if his family found out where he was hiding himself. Loki had taken great pains not to be discovered one earth and he feared that even his name being spoken out loud too many times would have ended in his capture. Loki had thought the return of his memories would have been enough to win the war against Voldemort, that he wouldn’t need the body or power of a god.

He’d been wrong and they’d all paid the price.

Loki spoke of the attack on his home, how he’d tried to get back before Harry’s mum died but being too late.

“By the time I arrived back on earth…everything was gone our house was destroyed and I s…saw Lily and the crib was empty.”

“I’d gotten Harry out of there.” Sirius said. “The warning system on the house got me there too late to help…I was right outside when the house exploded from the ricocheted killing curse.”

Together the two men put together the true timeline of those chaotic days. Sirius told Loki what had happened to various Order members. Friends his dad had had, people he had worked with as an auror too. Harry hadn’t even realized his dad had known so many people. He was as still as a mouse learning more about the war against Voldemort in that conversation than he had in the past five years. Sirius and Loki both dropped names and locations of importance that Harry normally would have had to fight tooth and nail to be told as if they were nothing. And it wasn’t because they’d forgotten he was there. Both of the men checked with him to make sure he was eating enough and to ask if he was following along.

It was nice. Really nice.

Harry focused on remaining calm as Loki told Sirius about the meeting with Dumbledore. As it turned out Harry didn’t need to even bother hiding his outrage about that. Sirius upon being told that Dumbledore had lied, had known this whole time, had exploded. The man jumped up and started ranting, using more swear words than Harry even knew existed. At the same time, the magic fire that Sirius had created had doubled in size and become a raging inferno. Harry had been thankfully far
enough from the fire to avoid getting burnt.

Sirius uttered oaths, vulgar oaths for revenge. He swore on the slimy ground, the looming trees, the sky of this cursed realm and even the fog that he would make Dumbledore pay. Harry listened with wide eyes as he was given a crash course in how to swear like a wizard, a sailor, and a parolee all at once. It took close to ten minutes to get Sirius to calm down, it only happened eventually because Loki had promised Sirius that they’d have their revenge together.

“Good.”

From there the rest of the story was easier to piece together. Finally, it was Harry’s turn to speak, telling the two men how he discovered the truth of who his dad was and how Harry had decided to get revenge. He described the plan he and his friends had come up with. Namely punching a god in the face.

That made Sirius laugh so hard he nearly passed out.

“You…you punched him too?” Harry nodded making the man burst into more peals of laughter.

“Yes, yes it’s very funny. Calm down before you piss yourself.”

“I can’t help it!” Sirius squealed. “He…He…He snuck out from under the nose of the entire Order just to punch you in the face! An Entire squadron of wizards all dedicated to keeping him alive and he just…popped over to America!”

Harry couldn’t keep the grin off his face which made his dad scowl while Sirius laughed even harder. Before Loki got upset enough to prank Sirius to get him to shut up, which probably would have resulted in a prank war they shouldn’t be having in this strange place Harry interrupted.

“Sirius, what happened to you? After the battle?”

“Honestly? Not as much as what’s happened to you, kiddo.” Sirius said. “This place is pretty desolate all things considered.”

“Tell us anyway.” Loki asked. “And Pads? Please eat something. There’s more than enough to go around. I’m used to carrying enough to feed five gods.”

Loki wasn’t kidding. Harry had eaten at least six platefuls of food and there was still more to go. His stomach now felt comfortably full and since Sirius’ pink flame had calmed back down to a good size, Harry felt his body beginning to relax. Sirius took a bite of some of the food and complimented the taste. Both of them listened as Loki named each food and explained that he’d long grown used to magically storing literal pounds of food because Thor had a habit of dragging Loki on a quest without warning or time to plan.

Once Sirius had eaten a little of the food, he cleared his throat and told his story.

“Bellatrix hit me with a spell that locked my limbs up. It was probably the only thing that saved me while falling through the veil. I was totally frozen which meant that I couldn’t freak out and end up slipping out of the magical path and get myself scrambled in the universe’s guts.” Sirius explained. “Instead I just fell for what felt like an eternity and hit my head a few times.”

Sirius continued describing his rough landing that ended with him getting knocked unconscious. When he’d woken up the first thing he noticed, aside from his raging headache, was a zombie trying to eat his face.
An inferi like creature the color of the fog that surrounded them had been stooped over Sirius’ body. The creature had long limbs, arms twice the length of its torso and legs just as long. It had black teeth that dripped a foul smelling liquid. The naked creature hadn’t had any protection from Sirius’ punch to the gut and later the spell that decapitated it. Apparently, the blood was an off white milky color.

The killing of the first creature and summoned more of them, some who came to feast on the corpse of their fellow but more that were far more interested in Sirius as live prey. Sirius had done what came most naturally to him at that point and turned into Padfoot. On all fours he was able to outrun the creatures for a while. They weren’t like dementors, they could still sense and hunt him just as well as a dog but Sirius was very quick at least.

Sirius had run for as long as he was able to dashing about here and there in between trees and bushes trying to lose his captors. Eventually he found a small hole in the wall of a canyon, just wide enough to wiggle his dog body through and long enough that he was able to crawl deep enough that the creatures couldn’t reach in and drag him out. Sirius had cowered in the darkness as the creatures scrabbled and tried to rip out the stones that protected him. Eventually they gave up trying to force their way out and they tried something else.

Tricking him.

Sirius described the horror of first hearing James’ voice and then Lily’s. Both of them begging him to come out. When he didn’t, he heard their screams of pain as the creatures ate them. That had made Sirius begin to scramble out of the hole. Thankfully he saw the boney legs of one of the creatures and the illusion was broken. James and Lily were dead, not here. Sirius knew that.

“How did you get out of there?” Harry asked, fear trickling down his spine.

“I tried dozens of things once I got the courage to shift back into a human.” Sirius said. “All of the spells I tried to banish them didn’t work and when I killed one, more just took its place. After hours I figured I could try casting a patronous to call for help. I had no idea where I was but maybe someone could find me. Thankfully the patronous’ aura was enough to drive those fuckers off deep into the fog.”

“So, they’re still here?” Harry asked.

“As far as I can tell they live in this fog. Maybe they create it.” Sirius said shrugging. “They tried a few more times to get me before I figured out that I needed to keep the patronous up at all times. Figuring out how to keep the spell on when I slept wasn’t easy but I managed.”

“And after that?”

“Mostly I’ve been focused on finding food, shelter, water and a way out of here.” Sirius said. “This place has little creatures that taste like shit but are easy enough to hunt. They’re attracted to the clear air here so they’ll just crawl in from the fog to explore. I settled here since it was close to where I’d arrived and had a clean water source. I knew I’d fallen into the veil of death which meant everyone probably thought I was dead. There weren’t going to be any search parties.”

“We came for you.” Harry said.

“I know you did, pup. Which brings us to the most important question of all. Where the fuck are we?”

“I’m not sure.” Loki said, frowning at the world around them. “I have never been to this planet. If
we’re even on a planet and not some strange…dimension.”

“Can you get us home?”

“Of course, I can. It’ll take some time to open a pathway between here and earth, but I can do it.”

“Now there’s a look I’d never thought I’d see again.” Sirius said. “You’ve offended his poor sensibilities pup. He’s going to be all hurt if you don’t apologize for doubting his magical skill.”

“Sensibilities?” Loki asked. “Are we really going to go there, Mister I can’t leave the dorm until my hair shines like sunlight?”

Immediately the two grown men began to bicker and joke with one another. It reminded Harry of how the Weasleys would joke around with one another, jokes full of love and affection. Sirius looked like a totally different man, full of joy and free of a burden he’d been carrying for far too long. It reminded Harry of how happy Sirius had been around Christmas last year how the man had sung carols and decorated.

Harry lifted a hand to cover his mouth as a yawn broke out. He was getting tired, from the full meal and the warmth of the fire. But no matter how tired he was, he refused to sleep here if he could help it. Out of the corner his eye he spotted pale skin and smirking lips. His head whipped around but the woman disappeared into the fog. Sirius and Loki didn’t notice as Harry stared into the fog.

He knew she was still there. Not a creature like the one’s Sirius had described but something far more insidious. She’d been the one to confront him in the fog, to taunt him about his dad, to whisper cryptic words about the prophecy.

Do you mean to tell me you haven’t figured it out?

It’s obvious isn’t it? What the prophecy means?

Oh, you’re so simple, I never thought someone so slow would be the next one chosen.

It’s adorable.

If I tell you, you’ll owe me little godling.

You belong here, can’t you tell? Don’t ignore what your senses are telling you.

Your father?

Oh, he won’t be able to hold you back for much longer, I’ll make sure of it.

“Are you alright Starlight?”

“I’m fine.” Harry said. “Just thinking.”

“About what?”

“Remus.” Harry said, making something up. “Do you think we could find him before going back to the tower?”

“That’s a great idea pup. Let’s get all of your dad’s punches to the face over with.” Sirius said with a giggle.

“Very funny, Padfoot.”
“I always am. Come on, Prongs. How are we getting out of here?”

“I just need to open a path along the Yggdrasil. It’ll take me a few moments. Pack up whatever you wish to keep and Starlight, don’t forget your sword.”

It didn’t take long to clean up the things Loki had conjured and pack away what they wanted to keep. Sirius wanted very little from the realm at all. Harry in a fit of fancy broke off a small branch from one of the trees, it was thin and about a foot in length. The wood swished around when he swung it. He stuffed it next to where his wand had been stored for safe keeping. He saw the woman standing in the distance.

She was wearing black leather with green accents, her long black hair shifting in the fog. He knew she knew something about the prophecy. She probably knew some strange magic that could destroy Voldemort once and for all. Harry decided he didn’t care. He’d figure it out on his own. He lifted up an eyebrow at her and gave her a cheeky wave goodbye while Sirius and his dad had their backs turned. Her lips curled into something too cruel to be called a smile and then she snapped her fingers. Harry heard a screech and knew without a doubt that she wasn’t going to let Harry leave.

Harry drew his sword.

“Dad. Hurry it up, they’re coming.”

“What?” The man asked.

Sure enough, a chorus of unholy shrieks rent the night sky and from the fog burst the horrific creatures Sirius had described. Their bodies were white with sickly blue undertones, nothing more than papery skin wrapped tight around bones. Their emaciated bodies combined with their long limbs and sharp fingers screamed hunger and desperation.

“Cover me!” His dad said. “I need two minutes to get the portal stable.”

“Two?” Sirius asked drawing his wand. “Actually, challenge us next time Prongs! We’ll give you ten!”

Sirius gave Harry a grin that lit a fire in his blood and the grip on his sword became sure. He and Sirius stood back to back and once the creatures neared, they jumped forward. In truth Harry planned to rely on the fact that his sword was sharp and that he was super strong. Both, unsurprisingly worked to his favor. So did the armor his dad insisted on him wearing. The first creature tried to swipe at him and the pitch black nails just scraped angrily across his chest plate.

Harry grit his teeth and swung down, the attacking arm was chopped off at the elbow. Harry got splattered with milky blood, the spray covering his face and neck. Some of it even landed in his mouth. He didn’t have time to gag because the creature roared and jumped at him, obviously trying to tackle him to the ground. Harry ducked low and lifted the sword up, the creature impaled itself onto the blade. The squelching sound was something Harry didn’t think he’d ever forget.

Another creature tackled him from the side, hitting the body of the dead creature still stuck on his sword. They tumbled over each other, getting tangled in each other’s limbs. The dead creature kept spilling blood over both of them and the stench made Harry’s eyes water. He tried to tug his sword free, but the angle made it impossible. The creature shrieked and swiped at his face.

“HARRY! DO NOT HOLD BACK!”

His dad’s voice reached him and without thinking Harry let go of his sword, reached back and punched the creature right in the face. There was a sickening crack and then a slopping noise as the
creature’s head fell back, almost completely detached from its neck. The only thing connected it was a bit of skin and muscle.

*Just like Nearly Headless Nick.*

Harry pushed the dead creature off of him and jumped up, finally able to free his sword. His hands were wet with white blood but his grip was firm. He flipped around just in time to swing at another one of the creatures. His sword moved true and cut right through the torso of the third creature, both halves plopping to the ground. Harry took in a deep breath and coughed at the taste of blood.

Sirius was dispatching each creature that came close to him with a mixture of cutting and blasting hexes and seemed to be having the time of his life. His dad was muttering rapidly under his breath, his hands glowing bright with magic. Loki’s brow was dotted with sweat. A creature slipped between the trees and made its way towards the sorcerer. Harry leapt forward with more strength in his legs than he’d been expecting and nearly tripped on the landing.

He managed to find his balance a moment too late, the creature slashing at him and sending him stumbling to the ground. Harry swung the sword and cut off the legs of the creature, right at the knees. It shrieked again and lost its balance. It tried to attack him again, but Harry clumsily rolled away. The creature landed next to him with an awful thud and grabbed at him, it latched onto his arm and dragged him along the slippery ground towards it’s gaping maw.

Harry smashed his free hand down on the arm, the bone breaking with an audible snap. The creature loosened its grip enough for Harry to wrench himself free and swing the sword at its neck. Another spray of blood got into his hair as Harry pulled the sword out and scrambled away. Harry jumped up and shook his head trying to get his blood drenched hair out of his eyes.

“How much longer?” Sirius shouted.

“Just another minute!”

It had only been a minute? Harry must have made a noise of disbelief because as he moved past his dad to attack the next creature, he saw the man smirk. Harry managed to take that creature out with a single swing at the hips. The vibrations caused by the blade passing through flesh and bone traveled up through his arm and made his stomach lurch. Three creatures ganged up on him at once. Harry ducked their swipes and punched out with his left hand. He felt his hand connected with a chest and heard a terrible crunching noise.

The second creature hopped onto his back and its hands wrapped around Harry’s neck like vines. Harry dropped his sword and choked on the lack of air. He fell to his knees and tried to wiggle the creature off. The creature squeezed harder and Harry elbowed it right in the chest. He felt the rib cage break inwards and the creature let go. Harry fell forward and gasped for air while scrabbling for his sword. He managed to get it up in time to stab one of the creatures in the chest. He swung the impaled creature into the other two sending all three tumbling to the ground. Harry jerked his sword free and then slung it down again decapitating the last two creatures.

“James you better hurry the fu-”

“I’ve got it!” His dad shouted triumphantly. “Come on now! The portal will close quickly!”

Harry spotted two more creatures lunging for him but turned tail and ran towards his dad instead. Sirius had the same idea, except he kept taking potshots at the creatures. Sirius got to the portal first and Loki pushed the man in. Harry was nearly there when one of the creatures jumped and grabbed him by the foot. His dad shot fire over Harry’s head and killing the creature. Harry shook his foot
free, jumped up and started sprinting.

The portal was beginning to shrink.

“Go!” Harry shouted. “I’m right behind you!”

It wasn’t even a lie. Harry was mere seconds from the portal. His dad hesitated for a moment more before stepping inside. Harry jumped inside half a moment later. Harry felt huge boney hands seize hold of his hair. He pulled the creature in with him as he fell into blackness. It was the same awful suffocating blackness that had taken him there and yet Harry preferred it to the foggy world he’d run from. Harry tried to pull himself free from the dangerous grip, but the creature was relentless, its other hand struck his side, in between the two pieces of metal that covered his chest and back. He felt the sharp claws dig into his side.

The creature tried to yank open his armor and Harry managed to swing his sword and chop off the hand holding his hair hostage. He shot forward abruptly and found himself flying face first out of the portal. He brought his hands up to break his fall and managed to roll onto a thick fluffy rug. Right behind him came out his unwanted passenger. Harry sat up and lifted the sword, the creature’s head imbedded itself on the blade a moment later.

Harry could see brain matter.

He dropped the sword and fell on his back with a thud right as the portal closed. He looked over to the left to see that Sirius and Loki were also laying on the floor, although they were covered in a lot less white blood. Loki looked like he’d run a marathon, probably because he’d opened up a magical portal that traversed planets and Sirius’ cheeks were red from the exertion of the fight.

They were safe.

Safe!

A giggle escaped his throat, and then another, and another.

“Harry?” His dad asked. “Are you alright?”

“I’m fine!” He promised in between laughs. “It's just…Let’s never do that again.”

A pause and then Sirius was giggling, after a moment Loki joined as well. Harry laughed until his gut threatened violence against him. He wondered why he was laughing. What was funny about this? Eventually he calmed himself down, thankfully right around the time that a door opened. Harry looked to see a very beautiful woman. She had long smooth golden hair, some of which was styled around her head like a crown. She was wearing a flowing blue dress and what looked like a stylized chest plate over the top.

She looked very regal, especially with the sword she had drawn as she pointed at them. Loki sat up and Harry recognized the look in his eyes. It was the exact same look that Fred, Ron, and George had had after they’d gotten caught rescuing Harry with the flying car by their mum. A strange mixture of fear, guilt and shock at having been found out. Harry looked around the ornate room they were in. It was filled with golden decorations, light by mage lights, and unlike anything Harry had ever seen.

“What is going on here?” She demanded sounding so much like Molly Weasley that Harry couldn’t help but gape a little. Connections snapped together in his brain.

“You’re my grandmother!”
He slapped a hand over his own mouth. *Oops.*

Queen Frigga looked at him and then back at Loki, her eyes wide with something fearsome. Her grip tightened on her sword as she sent a glare at Loki getting ready to demand an explanation.


Not helping Padfoot.
Chapter Summary

Frigga is a very affectionate woman and Harry is a very confused boy.

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! So sorry this is a day late. I've been so busy getting ready for my two weeks of field research. I'm leaving for two weeks to hike through mountains to study basalt flows. I've had to do a lot of work to get ready. Also! Since I'm going to be hiking all the time I won't have internet access that means no update next week and the update after will probably be a day or two late!
Thanks for the amazing comments last week, they made me laugh so hard!

“I believe.” Frigga said, her voice deceptively calm. “That you owe me an explanation, my son.”

Harry saw his dad swallow, his throat bobbing up and down. He looked at Sirius and they both seemed to realize the same thing. His dad was blanking. In the face of that much motherly rage he was choking. Harry looked at Sirius, urging him to do something. Sirius lightly kicked Loki which did nothing. He then looked back at Harry and shrugged as if to say that was all he could do. Harry sent a sterner look at his godfather who sent him a look that clearly said ‘you do it, she’ll kill me’.

“Loki.” Frigga said. “There is a dead monster in my sitting room.”

Oh no. She was stating the obvious in a way too calm tone. That was really bad, even Harry knew that. Loki’s body flinched a little and Harry knew he had to do something. He scrambled up to his feet so that he was standing between his dad and his grandmother.

“Uhm…” He said. “Hello, I’m Harry, Harry Potter. Un…Uncle Thor told me a little bit about you, you’re… you’re Queen Frigga right?”

Her rage abated as she looked at him, her face abruptly turned from frightening Queen with unimaginable power to a soft unbearably fond woman that Harry didn’t think had ever actually seen, especially directed at him. Let alone when he was covered in monster blood.

“I am.” She said, her voice filled with affection and warmth. “But you should call me grandmother, I think. Tell me, Harry from what realm are you from?”

“I…uh…Earth? Or it’s Midgard! Yes, you call it Midgard.” Harry said nodding to himself, he decided that the truth was probably important to share here too. He wrung his hands together as he spoke. “I’m…I’m a demigod.”

Frigga’s face twitched as she looked over at his dad who had also gotten up and was hiding behind Harry like a frightened boy. Harry saw a snap of fiery rage in her eyes before it was forcibly doused. She looked back at Harry.
“You are so young.” She cooed, stepping forward and lifted her free hand to gently touch the left side of his head. She was inspecting him, almost like someone would a horse they were thinking of buying. “Oh, you’re terribly handsome beneath all this blood, I’m sure. You must steal the heart of every maiden you meet with eyes like those.”

“No, uhm not really. I don’t…I’m not very good with…”

“And so humble as well.” She smiled at him before a worried frown came over her face as she looked down at his armor. “Oh one of those creatures got a bit too close didn’t they? Let’s see here what the wound looks like.”

Frigga waved her hand and Harry found all of the blood on him vanished with a blue flame. She clicked her tongue and pushed Harry into a soft chair all the while muttering about how much of a crime it was that such a beautiful face had been marred by wounds. She ordered Loki in a very cold voice to call for some healers and guards to come look at Harry and take the corpse out of her sitting room.

Loki literally jumped to do something while Sirius got up to look over at Harry just as worried.

“That thing tried to tear your armor off. Did it get through?” He asked.

“Uhm. Maybe?”

“Help me take the chest plate off.” Frigga said to Sirius who nodded and started working on the buckles on one side. “What is your name?”

“Sirius Black ma’am. I’m James’, or rather Loki’s, best friend.” Harry blinked stupidly at Sirius, he hadn’t even known that the man could be polite. Sirius gave him a look telling him to play along.

“You’ve known my son long?” Frigga asked.

“Oh yes, for over 20 years now.” He said smiling. “There’s no one I trust more than Loki.”

“20 years?” She asked. “Oh I see, his trip to Alfheim, I suppose he spent very little time there.”

Loki made a pained noise that was only half suppressed while Frigga carefully removed the armor from Harry’s body. Frigga looked at the small puncture wounds on Harry’s side with worry. A moment later the door opened and a bunch of people swarmed into the room. Frigga immediately straightened and began to command them with a calm voice that cut through the noise like an arrow.

She ordered healers to her side and told them to look at Harry and treat him. She ordered the guards to remove the corpse and the servants to clean up the blood. People scurried around and did exactly as they were told. Harry’s wounds were cleaned and healed up as if they’d never been and the room was cleaned up, the only thing left behind was the sword his dad had given him which had been handed to Loki, shiny as if Harry hadn’t even used it.

“There.” Frigga said. “Now you and Sirius just sit right there while I speak to my son.”

Harry exchanged another look with Sirius as Frigga turned her back to them and started interrogating Loki. Thankfully his dad seemed to have gathered his wits because he was actually answering her questions, even if he did look like his stomach had dropped down to his feet. Frigga was very, very angry with Loki. Harry had known on some level that his existence was taboo to Asgardians. Demi-gods had a bit of a reputation after all. But since Thor had been so nice to him he had just sort of forgotten about it.
On top of all of that there was the fact that Loki had kept so many secrets about his time on earth from his family, for decades. That wasn’t something easily forgiven, unless you were Thor apparently, who took most everything Loki did in stride. Even Sirius had been more upset with Harry’s dad than Thor had seemed to be. Frigga wasn’t Thor though. Frigga was a mother, and mothers had the special ability to keep you in place with nothing but a stern look.

Frigga after learning the basics of what she wanted to know, who Harry was, who Loki had had a child with and when, and where they’d just come from and why, she began to lecture his dad. Harry looked over at Sirius and leaned to the side.

“What do we do?”

“Hope she runs out of energy before remembering we’re here.”

“Dad’s in trouble.”

“Trust me, pup. He’s used to that.” Harry gave Sirius an unimpressed look and Sirius sighed. “Okay fine, here’s what you need to do. Turn on the water works.”

“What?”


“In what world would that help?”

“In Asgard.” He joked. “I’m serious. Just pretend to be upset about the fact that Frigga is threatening to punish your dad for creating you. If you cry she probably won’t have the heart to go through with it.”

And suddenly Harry realized that he was upset. Here he was, sitting in a chair on a planet he’d never once been interested in seeing, exhausted beyond all belief with the taste of monster blood still on his tongue. He hadn’t slept in probably close to 20 hours and his body was sore and his magic weak. He was being ignored and sidelined by Frigga in favor of lecturing his dad. And for what? For finding a home and people who loved him when Asgard had made him feel so isolated?

Every protective instinct in Harry’s body reared up as he listened to Frigga’s lecture and looked at his father’s pained face. He knew that Frigga had a right to be upset. Anyone would be if they found out that their child had lied to them about having a wife and son, having a whole secret life.

“I cannot believe that you would be so irresponsible as to…”

“To what?” Harry interrupted. “To find someone who loved him?”

Frigga froze and turned around to look at him. Harry was standing up looking hurt and upset and defensive. Her face immediately went from ferocious to sad, Harry swallowed.

“He was curious when he came to earth but he stayed because he found people who loved him for who he was.” Harry said. “He met my mum and they loved each other so much and you’re upset by that?”

“No, of course I’m not upset that he found love. That is what I want for both my children.” She said. “But…”

“But what?” Harry asked. “He was happy and you’re upset with him for trying to stay that way? Or…is it that you’re upset that I’m half human?”
Frigga immediately looked regretful and stepped forward cupping his cheeks with her soft hands.

“Oh darling I could never regret a grandchild, no matter their origins. I’m sorry, I got carried away. I was so shocked but that doesn’t make it better. I shouldn’t have lost my temper.”

That…that had worked? Harry almost couldn’t believe it. He’d acted almost like Dudley sans the stomping feet and Frigga had just done what he wanted. Frigga looked at him for a long moment, her eyes fond.

Sirius was a genius.

“Loki.” Frigga said, still looking at Harry. “I cannot keep this from Odin.”

“Mother.” Loki said. “Please. Harry isn’t a threat to anyone, I won’t see him brought before Odin as if he were a criminal.”

“Do not worry about that.” Frigga said smiling. “This is my grandson. I do not believe I will allow anyone to say a word against him. Let’s get all of you cleaned up and looking proper, it won’t do to visit the King of Asgard covered in blood.”

Which is how Harry found himself taking a bath in Frigga’s giant golden bathtub. He had refused help with the bathing but his dad had explained what each of the various bottles he’d been given did. Harry had to wash his entire body from head to toe. Frigga’s spell had removed the most visible blood but the stuff had gotten into nearly every nook and cranny of his body. That wasn’t even to mention how awful his hair was.

Somewhere nearby Sirius was also bathing. Frigga had immediately called for seamstresses and had started designing the proper clothing for Harry to wear. She looked delighted every time she spoke about Harry, like he was her new dress up doll but worse somehow. Harry got a sinking suspicion that by taking Frigga’s censure away from Loki he’d taken the brunt of it for himself.

That fear was proven when he got of the bathtub and was accosted by the Queen of Asgard. She clicked her tongue and muttered about how skinny he was. Which…to be fair he might have been a bit on the thin side but it wasn’t like he was starving. She kept telling him that he was a growing boy and that Loki must have been starving him, which was the exact opposite of the truth. Loki was the first adult who actively made him eat more than he thought he needed. Molly Weasley had tried but Harry, guilty about the burden he would be to an already struggling family, had resisted her attempts.

Frigga’s forced Harry into three dozen different Asgardian outfits, and had him model each of them, until she decided on the very first one he’d put on as the appropriate one. Harry could hear Sirius snickering about that as Loki helped him get into something nice with far less pain. Frigga then tried to tame his hair despite Harry promising her it was impossible to get under control.

She kept patting and rubbing it down and when she turned her back it sprung up again.

The woman was free with her affection in a way Harry had never experienced before. Kisses on his forehead, cheeks, and hair were par for the course. Added onto that were the hugs, the cooing, the soft arm clasps, and her propensity for cupping his face and telling him he was adorable. Harry found the whole thing to be very disorienting. Touch was not something he was accustomed to and even though he knew to expect Frigga’s affectionate touches they still made him feel like he’d been hit by a confundus spell.

It was obvious she liked him Harry just didn’t understand why.

As Frigga dressed him up, she asked about his interests and his life on earth. He skipped over...
anything to do with Voldemort and told her about his friends and his magic studies. She praised him for his skills and talents and complimented his choice of friends. She called him brave and kind for defending her father and going out to save Sirius in that dangerous realm. It was weird, almost as if he could do no wrong in her eyes. He realized abruptly that maybe that was because he couldn’t.

What did a boy like him do with knowledge like that?

When, after what felt like an exhausting eternity, Frigga declared him fit to be seen they all left to go to the throne room together. Harry finally managed to reunite with his dad who looked at him with gratitude and amusement. Frigga walked ahead of them, leaving them with a bit of privacy to talk.

“She’s a force of nature.” He said as an apology before Harry could say a word.

“Did you have to freeze like that?” He hissed. “I’m not a dress up doll.”

“I will make it up to you.” Loki swore. “Thank you for saving me.”

“That’s what family is for.”

“The pup’s right.” Sirius said. “Now buck up James, your dear old dad isn’t going to scare either of us off.”

“You don’t know Odin.”

“Do you or do you not remember my mother?” Sirius asked causing Harry to giggle a little as he remembered that awful portrait in Grimmauld Place. “Trust me, we can handle it.”

“I hope you’re right.” He said.

“Is there anything we should know?” Harry asked. “That you haven’t told us?”

“Odin isn’t the hugest fan of mortals.” His dad said. “He protects Midgard because that is his job as the All-Father, to offer protection for all the nine realms but there is no love for earth.”

“Job? I thought he was just king of Asgard.” Sirius said.

“He is, and while he isn’t technically king of any other realm, they all do answer to him in one way or another. It’s all very complicated but to quickly summarize, as King of Asgard due to various treaties and alliances it is his job to use Asgard’s might to protect the nine realms.”

“Even the one we just left?”

“Yes, even that one.” Harry shivered at the very idea and then a thought occurred to him.

Well earth wasn’t very protected right now was it. Voldemort threatened to destroy the entire world! Loki seemed to read the thoughts off of Harry’s face.

“Odin doesn’t know about the magical world but, honestly, even if he did I doubt he’d involve himself. He’s of the opinion that the mortals should solve their own problems. He only stepped in when the Jontuns invaded because he had a grudge against their king.”

“What a tosser.” Sirius said a sentiment that Harry had a hard time not agreeing with. If Frigga heard them she made no mention of it.

“Anything else we need to know?”
“The last time Odin and I spoke he told me that he thought I was rotten to the core and that I would never redeem myself in his eyes.” Loki said.

“Classic Walburga move, what’d you hit him back with?” Sirius asked.

“I told him that I only acted as I was raised to be.”

Harry lifted a hand up to his mouth to partially hide his smile. Sirius slapped Loki on the back in congratulations.

“There is one more thing.” Loki said. “Harry, Demigods were outlawed long before I was born. You being here is unprecedented and you need to be careful. We have Frigga on our side but there’s no telling what the people might try to do to you.”

“Dad don’t worry about it. Nothing bad’s gonna happen to me.”

“You can’t know that.”

“The prophecy says that I have to be the one to kill or be killed by Tom.” Harry whispered. “He’s not here, is he?”

“Are you seriously trying to convince me that you won’t die here because you think the only person who can kill you is back on earth?”

“Yep.”

“You know, it kind of makes sense Pads. Harry’s survived a lot of shit he shouldn’t have because of sheer dumb luck. Who’s to say Fate isn’t at work here?”

“You’re both insane! There’s no way to prove this inane idea without risking Harry.”

“I kinda already tested it.” Harry admitted.

“What?” He hissed.

“Remember when Thor was throwing a fit on the roof and I went out there? I should have gotten hurt or blown off the roof or something. I knew that and I did it anyway. I didn’t even try to dodge anything.”

Harry watched as Loki remembered the huge piece of flying debris that had missed Harry’s head by centimeters. The man’s mouth opened a little as realization trickled in.

“Dad. I just fought off a bunch of face eating creatures with a sword I didn’t know how to use and all I got were a couple of cuts. I defeated Amora without problem.” Harry said. “Asgard isn’t a threat to me, not until the prophecy is fulfilled.”

“Oh Merlin.” He said. “You…you…”

“I’m going to be fine.” Harry promised with more surety than he felt. It was probably dangerous taunting fate like this. Telling the Fates themselves that if they wanted him to fulfill this prophecy so much then they had better put in some work was probably a one trip ticket to pain. But Harry didn’t care. Fate had dealt him the shittiest hand possible and Harry was tired of being beaten down. He was going to defeat Voldemort and he expected Fate to help him.

His dad relaxed a little and nodded, they were nearing the throne room now Harry thought. At least there were more guards dressed in fancy gold armor standing around looking formidable. The whole
palace screamed of wealth and power in a way that reminded Harry vaguely of Lucius Malfoy. Frigga stopped outside two large and golden doors and turned to look at them. She reached out and straightened out Harry’s hair again.

“I will go in first and you will wait for me to call for you. I promise you my son, Odin will not let his grandson be hurt.”

Loki didn’t seem to believe her, but he nodded anyway. Frigga pushed open the door and walked into an ornate throne room. They stood there as the door swung shut again.

“So,” Sirius began. “Bets on who’ll annoy the old man first?”

“Oh me definitely.” Harry said. “I’m literally illegal.”

“No. It’ll be me. I’m a mortal, at least you’re only half!”

“I was banished to earth for an unspecified amount of time. I’m pretty sure he’ll be more annoyed by me.”

They argued about it good naturedly as they waited. It was a good distraction and their insistence that they would be the most unacceptable to what appeared to be the universe’s ultimate authority figure was mostly a point of pride. None of them really liked ‘The Man’ very much. Rebels to the very core they were. It only took three minutes for them to be called in. Of course, they were called in by an angry shout.

“LOKI!”

But really, that was to be expected.

The three of them, troublemakers and lovers of pranks, moved together as one unit. They walked flanking Loki on both sides so that he didn’t feel alone facing Odin. Harry even went so far as to catch his dad’s hand with his own and squeeze it a little. Frigga looked at the action with such warmth and love that Harry feared she’d actually said ‘aww’ out loud. Harry looked at the fuming man sitting on the large throne and blinked.

He was old.

Harry hadn’t even known Asgardians could look old! He just assumed they looked like young adults forever! Frigga must be around the same age as Odin and she didn’t look old! Granted she looked a bit older than Loki but it wasn’t too noticeable. Odin had bright white hair and wrinkles on his face. He also had a golden eyepatch. Why was everything in this palace gold? Had they not learnt about the other colors of the rainbow or had they just discovered yellow and decided that was just fine for them?

“All-Father.” Loki said inclining his head the barest amount. “You called for me?”

“Is it true? Did you lay with a mortal woman?”

All three of them clenched their fists at Odin’s tone. No one should ever talk about Lily Evans Potter that way.

“I married the woman I love and began a family with her.” Loki said. “As is my right.”

“Your right?” Odin seethed. “You have no right to illegally travel to a realm and create a being capable of destroying worlds.”
Harry didn’t flinch, not even a little. If he’d found Frigga’s open adoration disconcerting it was nothing on his emotions when facing Odin. The man was sneering at him in the same way Vernon always did. He hated it. He hated the man before him. He was angry and tired and frustrated. He glanced over at his dad and saw the same frustration in his eyes. Harry hadn’t done anything to Odin! Nothing at all! The man had no idea who he was!

“Was this your plan all along? To create something with the power to overthrow me?” Odin asked. “You will find that a pitiful waif like that will not last long against me, Laufeyson.”

Harry felt his dad flinch and he saw red. His first thought was that he should let Odin put his claim to the test. Even magically exhausted as he was he was willing to try and take Odin down. He stepped forward ignoring the way Frigga placed a hand on Odin to quiet him and that guards in the room had readied their weapons. To his right he felt Sirius step forward too. Harry glared up at the king, the man who had driven his dad to near madness and suicide. Who made his dad feel so isolated that he ran away to earth. Who lied to him for centuries.

“Step back.” Odin ordered. “Or you will be seen as threats to the throne of Asgard!”

Just like that moment with Amora when Harry had wondered why he never knew when to shut up, Harry found his mouth making a decision for him.

“Have you ever, once in your life, not been a gigantic bag of dicks?”
Chapter Summary

Odin has a few important realizations and Harry really, really needs to figure out how to keep his mouth shut. It's going to get him in trouble at some point.

Chapter Notes

I'm back!!!! The field work was amazing! I got nearly eaten alive by mosquitoes, it snowed at one of our campsites, we camped next to a forest fire a week after that. And! at the last place I almost got bitten by a Rattlesnake! Thankfully I didn't get sunburned tho.

Thanks so much for the amazing comments the past two weeks every time I got signal the emails from AO3 made me grin with delight!

His first reaction would have been rage. It should have been. An upstart demi-god that looked so weak that a stiff breeze could send him tumbling to the marble floor was telling him off. It should have been nothing but enraged. Odin should have slammed Gungnir on the floor and forced him to the floor. The utter gall of the child to look up at the most powerful man in the nine realms, on whose good graces he was relying on to get him and his family back to earth safely, and call him a bag of dicks. It should have ended in a rage.

To his left he saw Frigga stiffen and almost reach for her own sword. Loki had the most naked expression of emotion Odin had ever seen. Not even the painful scene on the broken Bifrost compared to the sheer terror that Loki displaying. The unknown human was holding his magical focus ready to jump to the demigod’s defense.

It was all entirely unnecessary.

Odin wasn’t enraged. He should have been but he wasn’t. He looked at the young half human and saw the exhaustion in him. That boy had been ground down to near dust by his short life. Trauma had settled itself on the boy’s shoulders like a cloak. For all the pain, the boy wasn’t cowed. He looked at Odin as if he were nothing but an inconvenience, as if he were just one more ridiculous problem that the boy would deal with because no one else had the guts. His green eyes sparked, not with magic or madness, but with indignation.

If there was one thing that Odin could respect it was someone with mettle.

“I do not honestly believe so.” The tension in the room snapped with his words. The young man blinked a little stupidly at him. “That is the answer to your question.”

Loki looked so very lost while the unknown human looked absolutely delighted. Frigga had lowered her hand away from her sword. He should probably be bothered that his beloved wife had been willing to threaten him over the boy.
“I…right.” The boy said, looking at him with slightly less tenacity in his eyes.

“Will you answer a question of my own?” The boy nodded a little. “Your mother, who is she?”

“My mother is dead. Her name was Lily, she died protecting me from a dark magic user when I was a baby.”

“And where was your father?”

“Doing the same.”

“I see. Faking his death once again to run from the consequences of his actions.”

“No. You’re not listening to me.” The demi-god said in a tone that made it clear that he would be listened to. “My dad, Loki, had placed himself in a human body with a lock on his magic. That body, the person he was, was murdered the same night my mum was. He thought I’d been killed too. For the past 14 years he’s been mourning the loss of a wife and son.”

Odin glanced over at Loki to see flashes of half suppressed grief. The same flashes that Odin had assumed were jealousy and bitterness. Flashes that had been as common as a cloud in the sky. The past decade came into focus for him in a way that was less than pleasant.

“I find it hard to believe that Loki would ever willingly play human.”

“As a human he found people who loved him.” The demi-god spat making it clear what he thought Odin had felt for Loki. “He had friends, a family that choose him because of who he was not despite it.”

“A pretty lie.”

“I don’t lie.” The boy shot back. “And you can have that promise in my blood.”

The demi-god lifted his right hand up so that Odin could read the words written in scars on the back of it. He recognized the cause of it immediately. A blood quill. No one sane would ever willingly use something like that enough for a mark to sink in so deeply. The hand dropped when Loki literally growled when he saw it.

“I don’t lie.” I can’t lie.

“Who did that to you?” Odin asked.

“A teacher who didn’t like the truth.” He said like it was nothing, perhaps it wasn’t to him.

“Midgard is far more depraved than I previously thought.”

“Funny. I was about to say the same for this place.”

“You have no idea what…”

“Do you even know my name? Did you even listen to your wife when she told you?” He was chagrined to realize that he hadn’t. A huge breech in protocol. “That’s what I thought.”

“Perhaps this isn’t a conversation to have in the throne room.” Frigga suggested. “We should retire to a private room, and clear the air.”

“As always, dear wife, you have impeccable advice. Come, we will speak in my study.”
All of them moved as Odin stood and he lifted up a hand.

“Only the boy.”

“No.” Loki said. “He will not-”

“Dad. It’s fine. How about you find us some food while I talk to him?” When Loki looked doubtful, and even tempted to make a run for it the boy tried again. “He’s no Tom Riddle.”

“Fine.” He said before sending Odin a very murderous look. Loki didn’t trust Odin with his son but he had very little choice in the matter, Odin had made sure of that. Frigga sent a very similar look to Odin that he did his best to ignore.

He had no plans on hurting the child.

The demi-god followed him, head held high out of the throne room and into his private study. Odin motioned for the boy, who was swaying with exhaustion to sit, and was firmly rebuffed. He sighed, not even Hela as a child had been this willful and Odin had had to banish her to keep her from destroying the universe.

“You are tired.” He said. “If we’re to get through the conversation we must have, then you must sit.”

“I’ve had worse.”

“Sit or I will order that your father and the other mortal not be given food or shelter until you have.”

The boy’s eyes narrowed, frustration and anger in his posture. Stiffly he plunked himself down onto the very edge of the chair. Good, they might actually get somewhere.

“I want you to tell me why Loki became a human instead of studying magic in Alfheim.”

“Why don’t you ask him? He’s the one who did it.”

“I cannot trust his word.”

“He’s your son.”

“He is lost to me.”

“Maybe, you’d be able to find him if you didn’t act like a dick all the time.”

Odin narrowed his one eye in anger at the boy. Once was forgivable if only for the shock value but the boy was pushing it.

“You should not question me.”

“You still haven’t even asked my name. I’ve been in the same room as you for less than 10 minutes and I already know you that you don’t know how to apologize or admit you were wrong. You spent the first half of me knowing you yelling at my dad without having any real context as to the situation and then you took me in here and you’re going to do the same to me.”

The boy’s hand had words of warning on them. He didn’t speak lies he spoke harsh truths. The boy had crossed his arms over his chest as if daring Odin to try and argue it. Odin found that he didn’t want to. The words had struck true, there was very little Odin could do to deny them.

“I was a king first, a warrior second, and a father third.” Odin said. “Kings don’t have the luxury of
"being wrong."

"So, you just made all of your mistakes at home then?"

"None of my children turned out the way I hoped they would." He wouldn’t mention Hela but he had tried to teach her to be a warrior like him, it hadn’t turned out well. Thor he tried to teach to be soft and kind and while Thor was that he was also far too trusting and Odin had instilled in him a sense of arrogance. Loki? Odin had tried to do something in between how he’d raised Hela and how he’d raised Thor and that compromise had just resulted in bitterness.

"Do you think you were the father they’d hoped you’d be? You seemed really focused on how they’ve disappointed you."

"Must you always speak so bitingly?"

"When someone attacks my family and still hasn’t apologized for it? Yeah I think I do."

Silence. Odin couldn’t deny that he had the same protective instincts. If something were to happen to Frigga for instance, Odin knew he would have no limits when getting revenge. In comparison the boy was showing a great deal of restraint, far more than Odin had had at his age.

"What is your name?"

"It’s Harry. Harry Potter."

"And your father’s?"

"James Potter."

"Why did Loki become James?"

"There is a hidden community of magic users on earth." He said. "They went into hiding 400 years ago because they were being attacked for having magic. They used powerful spells to hide their existence and remove knowledge of them from the nine realms. My dad discovered the magical world and fell in love with it."

Of course, he had. Odin had no doubt that a magic only world would appeal to Loki in the way few things did.

"So, he stayed?"

"He wanted to experience it." Harry corrected. "He wanted to know what it was like to feel normal, to be normal. So he gave himself a human body that he entered as a baby, locking away his memories and keeping a lot of his magic back, so that he could know."

"So he lived fully as James then."

"Until he turned 18. But by that point he’d fallen in love with my mother and found friends so amazing he couldn’t even think about leaving them."

The boy, Harry Odin corrected, looked almost comically dwarfed in the large chair he was in. Were all humans so small and frail looking? His limbs looked thin as sticks, with hardly any meat to them. Weren’t demi-gods meant to be formidable?

"If he loved her, why not bring her here? Gain permission to marry her?"
“Would you have given it?” The boy shot right back. “Travel to earth was illegal, because of accidents like me. Loki feared he’d lose everything important and you’d keep him from the one place he truly felt happy.”

The truth was that Odin would have been furious had Loki come to him. He wanted to deny it, to pretend he would have been reasonable. But Odin knew the truth. If Loki had told him the truth then Odin would have done something very drastic, he would have done everything in his power to tear Loki from that world before a demi-god, a force of destruction could be born. Odin could still remember the chaos and pain that the last one had brought to them. He had been a young child then, hiding behind his father’s shield and trembling with fear.

So much death and corruption had spread out from that one man. His eyes had been flames of madness and with every sweep of his hand more of Asgard’s foundations had been torn asunder. Even after Bor had beheaded the demi-god Odin hadn’t stopped fearing him. His dreams had been haunted by the being that was neither mortal nor god but an unholy combination between the two. The very idea that Loki had helped create a being like that?

It should have been too terrifying to consider.

But Harry wasn’t terrifying. He was annoying.

The boy was glaring at him, looking so tiny that he wondered if Frigga hadn’t been mistaken. There was no madness, no thirst for innocent blood, no malice in the boy. He looked upset, angry and most importantly sane.

“You must understand.” Odin said. “Demi-gods are not…”

“I am the only demi-god in the universe.” The boy interrupted. “That means I get to decide what they are and what they’re not. Not you and definitely not some asshole who died 4000 years ago.”

Well. That was difficult to argue with.

“Then what are you?” Odin asked looking at the boy with his one eye, wishing he could see things like his wife could.

The boy looked…lost. Gone was the righteous indignation and the spunk that had kept Odin’s rage from boiling over. Odin’s question had blown the wind out of his sails. Now there was not even a single hint that this boy was anything but exactly what he appeared. A half-starved exhausted child. Harry said nothing for a while but slowly his hands began to curl into fists.

“I…I don’t know.” He said, looking up at Odin with the greenest eyes Odin had ever seen.

It was an answer that no one in the House of Odin would have ever uttered. Frigga always knew who she was even in the most confusing of times. Odin knew he was a king, and anything else was secondary. His children were all like him, prideful and stubborn to a fault. To admit to ignorance was too mortifying a thing to even consider. They were gods, they were meant to know who they were.

And yet while there was fear in Harry’s eyes, there was no shame.

“Tell me about the man who murdered your mother.”

And that was when the conversation went from humbling and revealing to shocking and painful. The boy, even when he wasn’t trying to actively attack someone with his words, was blunt to a fault. For the next hour Harry laid down the ruin of Loki’s family and the war in the magical world at Odin’s feet. He spoke of murders, tortures, and dark magic that thwarted death. He spoke of 50 years of pain.
that Loki had tried to stop, all on his own, ultimately paying the price of everything he cared for.

Tom Riddle, an evil monster of a man. A man who had given up his very humanity in the name of power and destruction. A man who was now running around in a magically constructed body powered by the blood of a demi-god.

“I don’t know if dad’s realized that yet.” Harry said. “That Tom took my blood to make his new body. But you know what that means don’t you?”

“I do.”

“There’s a prophecy.”

“Of course, there is.”

“Don’t sound so upset, you’re not the one with the safety of the universe on his shoulders.”

“I have born the weight of that responsibility for millennia.”

“No, you haven’t. You dropped it as soon as you could.” Harry snapped out. “I don’t know about the other realms but if you call the exactly zero number of things you’ve done in the last 2000 years for earth ‘protection’ then I shudder to think about the state of the realms who actually know you’re in charge of them.”

“Earth has not been attacked by outside forces for the entirety of…”

“You had 50 years to do something about Tom. And now there’s a snake faced monster getting ready to not only reduce my planet to rubble but every other one.” The boy said, his voice as final as the downward slice of a guillotine. “If I fail to…to kill him, nothing will stop him. He’ll come here and every other realm and he’ll destroy.”

And the fear was back. The very first fear he’d known as a child struck his heart again and he found no comfort in the boy’s eyes as he had in his father’s all those millennia ago. He found no comfort there because the child was just as frightened. He looked even smaller now, the bravado long forgotten.

The enormity of his crime, of his failure, finally became real to him. His deliberate ignorance, his hands-off policy, his decision to leave every realm but his own to suffer while still claiming to rule them all. It was all coming to fruition now, in the form of a monster that was too powerful for him to slay. A monster that would swallow his kingdom whole as if it were nothing but a tiny morsel on the world tree. And unlike his father, he wouldn’t be able to do anything but die along with his people.

Odin had tried to make peace. He had finished his father’s mission and conquered every realm, corrupting his first-born daughter in the process. He hadn’t realized until he looked at Hela’s mad face just what he had become. He was a warrior, just as cruel and merciless as his father. So, he had attempted peace. But Odin didn’t know peace, he never had. He had thought that doing nothing would be the same as making peace.

What a fool he had been.

He had lost his eldest to the madness of war, his youngest to apathy, and now he would lose his home. He closed his eyes and let his chin dip down, shame and guilt and horror threatening to drown him.

“I’m sorry.”
The words weren’t enough, they never would be. But Odin never apologized, and those two words were all he had to give. A mealy offering to a demi-god who had every reason to strike him down for it, like a disobedient acolyte. He should be struck down. There would be no absolution for him. Not for his failings as a father, not for his cruelty as a king. And still he offered up two stupid, pointless words. Words that when offered to him in the past had been rebuffed for the useless things they were.

“I forgive you.”

Odin’s head snapped up to look at the boy. He looked surprised for a moment at the words that had left his mouth.

“What?”

“I forgive you.” The boy said sounding much surer than he had the first time.

“Don’t jest, child. My pride and apathy led to your mother’s murder.” If Odin had been better, Loki would have come to him and asked for help. If Odin had been better then Lily would have lived and Odin would have killed that monstrous viper before he could do one more evil thing.

“I know.” The boy said.

“I contributed to your father’s madness. My failings led him to invade your planet.”

“That’s true.”

“The entirety of the nine realms is on the brink of destruction because of me.”

“And I forgive you.” Harry’s voice was firm but still so kind.

“But I don’t deserve...”

“Don’t you get it?” The boy interrupted again. “Nobody deserves forgiveness.”

Oh.

Odin didn’t know what to say. He didn’t know how to react. So he just sat there, not acting like a king with 5000 years of life experience under his belt. No, he acted like a child younger than the one before him.

“Look, do you promise to try and not be a dick all the time?”

“I...I’m not sure...how?” The enormity of what the boy was offering him had tied his tongue and made his words trip stupidly out of him.

“You could try listening to people?” The boy offered. “And offering to help instead of yelling at people when they do things you don’t agree with. I dunno. Your wife seems pretty nice, try to be like her.”

He finished that with a shrug. Odin wondered if he could. Change seemed impossible. And yet... hadn’t he already begun? Instead of striking the boy down where he stood when he spoke today, Odin had...Odin had chosen something different.

“I’ll try.”

“Then I forgive you.” He said simply, as if he hadn’t done something so impossible that it defied
comprehension. The boy looked at him, and Odin knew he wasn’t lying or even twisting the truth anymore. He had been forgiven. “So…what do you want to do now?”

Fly perhaps? The sheer relief from the boy’s words made him feel as if he were flying. His head was too light for his shoulders. He shook his head just slightly.

“I imagine your father is crawling the walls with worry for you.” His words caused the boy to snort.

“Yeah no kidding. You should have seen him when he found out about the basilisk I killed.”

“A basilisk?”

“Yeah I killed it like…three years ago and he freaked out like it was in the room with us! Can you believe?”

Laughter escaped Odin before he quite knew it. He started to laugh, harder and harder. Odin had been quite wrong about this demi-god.

He was insane.

“What did I say?”

“Nothing.” Odin said getting himself under control. He stood up from his seat and straightened his back. “Come on, let’s go find your father and discuss how Asgard can help you with this Tom Riddle problem.”

“Really?” The boy squeaked.

“Yes. It’s high time Asgard…It’s high time I answered the call of those I’ve sworn to protect.”

“Cool.” The boy said getting up from his chair and then looking at the door. He looked back at Odin slightly sheepish. “I don’t actually know where anything is here…er All-Father.”

“Follow me.” Odin said leading the boy back to the door. “Tell me about this basilisk?”

“It’s kind of a long story.”

“Trust me, Harry. I’ve got the time.”

“Well, it all started with a diary…”
The One Thing Harry Learned From Sirius

Chapter Summary

James and Sirius have a conversation about what to do when they get back to earth. When Odin and Harry finally show up from their private meeting, things get weird.

Chapter Notes

Guess who's back on schedule?? That's right! It's me! The Grad Student who wrote this instead of the methodology section of her thesis! Lol jk. Seriously though, thanks so much for the great comments last chapter. I was a little unsure about that one and the comments made me feel a lot better! I'm thinking of moving my update day to Saturday. I haven't decided yet, what do you guys think? Is Wednesday still good?

“James calm down.” Sirius said for the 15\textsuperscript{th} time in the last ten minutes.

“Calm down? Calm down!?! They’ve been in there for an eternity!”

“It’s not even been an hour.” Sirius argued. “Aren’t you like a billion years old? This should be a piece of cake.”

“I’m only a little over 2000.”

“Oh well excuse me for mixing that up. Of course, 43 minutes of time is an eternity to someone who’s only barely over 2000.”

James shot Sirius a look, it was such a familiar one that Sirius had to ignore the pang in his heart. That was the look James always gave him when he teased him about Lily back when they were students. His best friend did so like blowing things out of proportion. He ignored the Remus in his head that reminded him that he did the exact same thing.

“You don’t understand.”

“Do you remember my mother? Trust me, I get it. The pup’ll be fine, isn’t that what Frigga said? I don’t think she’d let Odin do anything too bad to him.”

“Odin listens to no one. He’s the king of the entire universe.”

“I’m very convinced that his wife could kick his ass if she needed to.” That actually made James laugh a little. Good. “Now come on, help me eat all this stuff. I’ve not really had the best meals in the past decade you know.”

“Don’t remind me.” James begged. “I don’t know how I could have let it…”

“Stop. This isn’t your fault.” Sirius said motioning to his less than stellar good looks. “I’ll get better
now that I’m out of Grimmauld Place.”

“Why in Merlin’s left tit did you go back there?”

“Dumbledore.” That was the only word of explanation they needed really.

James looked very sour, now totally distracted from their current problem with another far stickier one. At least in Sirius’ opinion. Odin looked like a few good kicks in between the legs was all he needed to get his head on straight. Dumbledore was far more problematic. Dumbledore ran the Order and they needed the Order if they stood half a chance at winning this damn war.

Sure potentially they could just kill the old bastard but Sirius saw two problems with that simple solution. First was that it would likely upset Harry. The kid had begged Sirius not to kill Peter, the very idea of murder went against most everything that kid believed in. Harry didn’t deserve to be put through any more upset than the world had already thrust on him. The second problem was that Dumbledore knew things that no one in the Order did.

His secrets had secrets.

What if they killed him and with Dumbledore’s death they lost that one key bit of information that Harry needed to win? The ass was always hoarding knowledge away, only dropping tidbits to key people once every decade so that they’d all be forced to keep listening to him blow farts out of his mouth.

“How loyal is the Order?” James asked. “Is it…like it was?”

“Most of the original members are dead or insane.” Sirius admitted. “Of the original there’s Shaklebolt, Mad-Eye, Me, Remus, Hagrid, Dumbledore, Molly, and Arthur. Oh and Snape of course but he hardly counts for anything.”

“So few…”

“James. We’ve got some new blood too, besides we were always a small group. That’s not what mattered.”

“You’re right. Of course you are.” James said. “And…will they follow Dumbledore or…or me?”

“Honestly I don’t think they should be following you.”

“What?”

“James. I love you, you’re my brother in everything but just trust me on this one. If you go in there and spill out every dirty thing Dumbledore’s done then the Order will literally splinter apart.”

“You can’t possibly be suggesting that we let him continue?”

“Dementors made me depressed not stupid.” James rolled his eyes at the quip and picked up a large golden goblet filled with honeyed mead. He took a sip of it and then looked at Sirius obviously expecting an idea. That was how they worked back in the day, one of them presenting a problem and being dramatic about it while the others in the group came up with something reasonable to do. “Like it or not, we need Dumbledore right now.”

“I am a god I don’t need…”

“James.”
“Alright fine. So, the old goat might have information I don’t.”

“Exactly. The original order members are going to be mostly loyal to Dumbledore, he kept them afloat through the first war. Most people believe Dumbledore is the only thing old Voldy fears.”

“Getting rid of Dumbledore will split loyalties.”

“At least at first. I know if we told them the truth plenty of them would be enraged and refuse to work with the old man but we can’t take the risk of splitting up our already diminished forces.”

“So, we can’t tell anyone? I just come back to the Order and spin a lie about not knowing that Harry was alive, leave his betrayal out of it?”

“It’ll come out eventually of course.” Sirius said calmly grabbing for his own goblet. He took a thoughtful sip before placing it back down, the heavy metal clinking against the table. “But I think the Marauders can plan something a bit better than just yelling it out like toddlers, right?”

A gleam, a comforting and wonderfully mischievous gleam, entered James’ eyes. He leaned forward.

“Oh Padfoot. I hope you’re going where I think you’re going with this.”

“I don’t see why we can’t play with it a little, is all.” Sirius said a grin over taking his face that was far too devious to match with his calm tone. “Stretch it out. I mean, if you were to go back to the Order, all apologies and explanations, you’d be welcome back again. Especially if you brought along your wall of a muscle for a brother as extra firepower. Then you could explain Harry’s heritage and of course, it’d only be natural that the kid will need training to control his strength and power.”

“And, well I can’t take him out of Hogwarts and away from Dumbledore’s ‘protection’ can I?” James added on his voice manic. “So, I suppose I’ll just have to go to school with him. As a teacher of course. Under cover as it were. No one but Harry and his friends will know the truth. To the school I’ll just be a humble god of magic reconnecting with the magical world after a few centuries of absence.”

“It only makes sense!” Sirius said wagging his finger dramatically. “Besides everyone knows that the defense position is cursed. It’ll surely be open for you, even if Snape’s been gunning for it for years.”

“Has he really?” James asked his face a masterpiece of delight. “I hope he’ll understand why I’ll have to steal it from him, it’s for the war effort you know.”

“Of course, he will! He’s such a graceful and giving fellow.” Sirius did everything in his power not to laugh at that, James looked like he was facing a similar struggle.

“So…so I’ll teach defense against the dark arts.” He said stumbling a little as the laughter tried to break through from where it was trapped behind his teeth. “Which means I’ll spend time with Dumbledore not reminding and threatening him at every turn about what he did and most certainly not making Snape’s life a living hell for teaching Harry Occulmency the way he did.”

“That’s exactly what you’d do. You’ll be far too busy pretending to be the nicest, most approachable man on the entire staff. Besides, I imagine that a certain You-Know-Who will send a message to his spy on the inside about trying to woo you to their side.”

And finally. The very idea that Voldemort would make Snape try to befriend James, that idea made them both look once at each other and burst into laughter. It was absolutely ludicrous and Sirius found that he couldn’t stop laughing. He visualized Snape’s face as he tried to be nice to James, to act convincing enough for everyone to see that Snape wanted to be friends with him. Every time he
even tried to picture that face more loud bellows escaped his throat.

James was going to be so delightfully wicked at Hogwarts. Filling Dumbledore with fear over a very powerful and very vengeful god while torturing anyone else who they felt had done Harry wrong over the years. Then once Dumbledore had finally shared everything they needed to know or Voldemort was dead as a doornail revenge could truly be theirs. Sirius only wished he could be there to see all that mischief.

“You could.” James said when Sirius told him after the laughter had quieted a little. “Just…be my pet dog, a friendly thing that’ll calm down the first years or something. You could even do a bit of mischief on your own that way couldn’t you?”

“James…”

“Are you telling me you don’t want to piss on Snape’s shoes when he can’t do anything about it?”

Another flurry of giggles. Oh, how he had missed his friend. Sirius washed down his laughter with some more mead and then leaned back in the insanely comfortable chair Frigga had placed him in before taking her leave about an hour before. He looked up at the golden ceiling and swallowed back any remaining joy. He thought about the little kid, the pup, who was facing down Odin of all things for them while they giggled like the children they’d never really stopped being.

“We really messed up, didn’t we?” Sirius asked. “With Harry?”

“I…Yes I think we did.”

“I mean I just…I gave him to Hagrid without a second thought, didn’t I? I choose going after that pustule for revenge and he…oh James you have no idea where Dumbledore left him and that’s all my fault.”

“I do.” James said his hands wrapping around the solid metal goblet so hard that the stem literally bent like it was made of putty. “I do know, and don’t you dare think that Tunie is getting away with it.”

“I…I promised you and Lily I’d look out for him but I wasn’t there James. I wasn’t.”

“You were suffering in Azkaban. I was dining on the finest fare in the golden realm. Neither of us are innocent.” He pushed the guilt he felt down. James looked at him, his now blue eyes had the same look of comfort that the old brown ones had had. “All we can do is be better for him now.”

“You’re right. Just like always James.”

“Are you kidding me? I’m never right. That was Moony’s job.”

“True. Too true!”

“Poor sod, being friends with two of the biggest idiots this side of the sun.”

“Remus is going to be so pissed off when he sees us.” Sirius giggled.

“Oh Merlin. He’s going to do worse to me than just a broken nose. Sirius you’ve got to protect me.”

“And get in the way of an angry Moony? No way. You are on your own!”

“Padfoot! How dare you betray me like this!”
“What are you scared of? You’re a god!”

“It’s Remus!” Sirius winced at the truth of that.

“I’ll make sure they decorate your funeral with Lilies.”

“Oh well that makes me feel so much better.”

“Good.” Sirius laughed a little. “Hate for you to feel bad before you die. That’d be a downer.”

Maybe it was the fact that in the last hour he’d been drinking heavenly honeyed mead that was strong enough to leave him feel tipsy with only five or six sips of it. Maybe it was the fact that everything in Asgard felt warm and safe compared to where he’d been living in the past decade; Azkaban, Grimmauld Place, and then that awful fog world. Maybe it was the fact that Sirius had just joked about a funeral and dying.

Sirius started to cry. Big fat tears escaped his eyes and rolled down his cheeks. He sniffled a little.

“Pads?”

“I…I didn’t go to your funeral. I wasn’t…I never got to say goodbye to you. James I never got to say goodbye. You were just gone! Poof! You and Lily and then I was all alone and…and…”

James hugged him, reaching out from the other side of the couch and pulling Sirius in with his godly strength carefully tempered, muttering about how they should never drink together. They always got teary when they did. Sirius only hugged him back knowing the other man was probably crying too.

“It was a nice funeral.” He said, his voice partially muffled by James’ shoulder. “Remus went, he said that…that the only thing that was missing was a bit of mischief. Most people just talked about how…how much you and Lily loved each other.”

“I can’t think of a better way to be remembered.” He said, voice trembling in a way that Sirius knew meant he was crying. “Oh Padfoot I missed you, and her and everything. I’m sorry. I never once had the courage to visit your grave, never brought you flowers you’d hate, just to annoy your immortal soul.”

Sirius clung to his best friend who still somehow managed to still smell like that same stupid cologne he started using when they were 18. What idiots they were. What stupid blind idiots. Remus really did deserve smarter friends, didn’t he? They were just two fools who started to cry whenever they had a drink together and who had both made stupid choices that hurt the people they cared for the most.

He didn’t tell James he forgave him. He didn’t really have to.

“We’re lucky.” Sirius said. “Remus is easier to deal with than Lily was at least. Remus is only going to chew you up the once.”

James shivered and then laughed. He loosened his grip on Sirius and pulled back slightly. He told him that they needed to sober up.

“Who knows what Odin is going to do. We need to be…sharp!”

“Right.” Sirius said pulling his wand out of his sleeve. “Ugh I hate this spell.”

He cast a spell that removed every trace of alcohol from his body and placed it back into his goblet. It
felt awful. He grimaced at the weird sucking sensation while James did the same. Their cups were
now totally full and his mind felt very clear and sober.

Sobriety.

Ugh.

“There.” Sirius said. “Now, how long do you think this is going to take with the All-Daddy?”

James made a pained choking noise while Sirius smirked.

“Never call him that again!”

“Fine fine!” Sirius said in a tone that made it clear he was definitely going to call him that again.

“Seriously though. How long? Harry needs his rest doesn’t he? We were in that fog world for a
pretty long time and I doubt you’d come there straight after a good night’s rest.”

“No.” Loki said with a grimace. “It was late actually, and we’d had a long…tense day.”

“Tense?”

“Apparently, I’m not very skilled at immediately getting along with my estranged son. Do you want
to know what the first thing he did when he found out who I was?”

“What?”

“He snuck out from under Dumbledore’s eyes, entered the United States illegally, and punched me
right in the face.” Sirius stared at James in shock. “I’m serious. He saved my life against the
Enchantress Amora then he punched me in the face and portkeyed away before we could even talk.”

“James.” Sirius said his voice helpless against the surging joy coming from somewhere deep his
chest. “I love that boy so much.”

Just as James was going to no doubt return that with a witty quip, the door to the room they’d been
shoved into opened. Both men sat up and blinked to see Harry and Odin walking side by side
together into the room. Odin’s face no longer held the malice and disdain it had in the throne room.
Instead he was listening to Harry tell a story with something like awe in his one eye.

It was without a doubt one of the weirdest things Sirius had ever seen. Because in the few seconds
they had before Harry and Odin were close enough to greet them, it had looked like Odin was
following Harry’s lead.

“So, then I jumped into it’s mouth and stabbed up through into it’s brain.” Harry finished. “Of
course, it also bit me in the shoulder at the same time but luckily, there was a phoenix there to cry on
the bite so I was just fine, not even a scratch on me.”

Sirius really needed to teach the kid how to tell better stories. How did he manage making a story
about slaying a basilisk sound as boring as going grocery shopping? Surely the kid knew better than
that right? Although based on the look on his face probably not. Pitiful.

“And that’s it?” Odin asked.

“That’s it. Like I said, not even a big deal.” Of course, it was a big deal! Sirius had seen the kid show
more excitement and pride over a quidditch win than slaying a deadly mythical beast. “Hey dad,
Sirius! Sorry it took so long. Have you guys been alright here?”
Poor James was looking between Odin and Harry like his brain was frying.

“It’s been fine. The food’s good.” Sirius said. “And you?”

“Oh, it’s been just…great.” Harry said shifting a little to look better at Odin. “And I think the All-Father has something he’d like to say?”

Odin suddenly looked awkward of all things. A god, the god of gods, looked awkward. Harry had a look on his face that was eerily similar to a mother who was trying to get a rowdy child to do something polite in front of company.

“Yes. Tom Riddle poses a threat far too great. He stole the blood of a demi-god to power his new form and as such is a danger to all nine realms. It is my duty—” Harry cleared his throat just slightly at the word duty and Odin paused before correcting himself. “It is my honor to offer whatever aid Asgard can give to defeat this monster.”

“And?” Harry pushed, his tone so similar to Molly Weasley that Sirius almost wondered if she was in the room with them.

“And.” Odin said, his voice almost pained. “I am sorry Loki. I should have allowed you to explain the truth today without immediately passing judgement.”

What. The. Fuck.

Harry had now turned his gaze back to James, his face expectant. Sirius lightly kicked his best friend which got him to sit forward a little, his face painted in something like condemnation.

“I don’t see why I should—” Harry’s face turned from expectant to almost threatening, a ‘don’t you dare’ look that Sirius hadn’t seen since the last time he’d had dinner with Lily. “—not forgive you. Learning about a demi-god must have been very shocking. Let’s leave it in the past, where it belongs.”

“Right, yes.” Odin said. “We should sit and discuss…things.”

“Great idea.” Harry said brightly all trace of Molly Weasley and Lily Evans gone from his countenance as if they’d never even been there at all. Harry plopped himself down onto one of the free chairs and immediately started grabbing for food.

Sirius found he couldn’t blame the boy for being hungry. Since the last time he’d ate they’d been attacked by weird fog zombies, traveled to a new realm, been forcibly bathed by a stubborn queen, and interrogated by a prickish king. Although the king looked now more cowed than prickish. No wonder the kid was starved. Odin sat down in another chair, stiff, his one eye switching between looking at the table full of food and at James.

It was unfortunate that the kid was focused on his food though. Without him there was nothing to stop the room from becoming so awkward it was bordering on suffocating. Sirius’ personal brand of tension breaking (making fun of James) really wasn’t appropriate for the setting. After about thirty seconds, a literal eternity, of silence the moment was broken when Harry reached for a goblet.

“Not that one.” James said. “Trust me, you don’t want the mead. I’ll get you some tea.”

“You don’t let him drink mead?” Odin asked, his voice almost bewildered.

James didn’t respond immediately, too busy conjuring some tea out of nowhere for Harry who took it with ease, giving the mugs of mead a look of consternation.
“Thanks.” He said before sipping at the tea.

“He’s not even 16 yet.” James said to Odin as if the man was daft. “I hardly want him drinking something that’ll addle his brains, they’re not even done developing yet.”

It was just like James wasn’t it? To get all fussy over things like that, no matter the situation. Even Lily had been calmer about their baby’s safety than James had been. Although looking back on it that was probably because Lily knew Harry was a demi-god and figured he was pretty much invincible to most things while James just liked to panic.

“It’s just mead.” Odin said. “You were drinking that when you were much younger than him.”

“And look how that turned out.” James snarled. “Clearly your parenting style lacks in any number of ways!”

Oh shit. Sirius hadn’t been a part of this much drama since he ran away from home at 16. He looked between the two gods and then at Harry who was doing much the same. Sirius settled back a little to get out of the crossfire that was no doubt about to come about and watched.

He had to get his entertainment somehow.

Odin looked offended enough to combust, far more than when Harry had called him a bag of dicks earlier, he looked furious in fact. Before he could snarl back what would have no doubt been inflammatory, Harry interrupted.

“All-Father.”

Immediately Odin’s strings were cut, indignation and rage blown away by just two words, and he looked away from James.

“I suppose you are right James.” Holy shit. Holy flying balls of shit. What was going on? Sirius couldn’t believe what he was seeing. “You were right about a great many things.”

James looked a little…frightened now. It was the same fright that he’d had when Lily had actually agreed to go on that date with him. After so many years of her saying no and him knowing what to expect from her, the change and the unknown future had frightened him. And here was that same fright, the fear of facing the unknown. Sirius reached out and placed a hand over James’, one quick squeeze to remind him he wasn’t alone.

“Like what?” His voice was only slightly shaky.

“Thor’s coronation.” Odin said after a moment, his voice decisive. “You were right about him not being ready.”

Sirius only knew bits and pieces of that story, what James had shared back in that fog world. Merlin, he needed a better name for it than ‘fog world’ if he was going to keep having to think about it. James’ hand was tense beneath Sirius’ own.

“Is that all?”

“Did you want an entire list, Loki?” Odin demanded, frustrating and almost cornered. “Is that what this conversation is to become? A laundry list over a thousand years old? No, Loki.”

“You don’t get to say that!” James shouted, slamming his hand on the table. All of the goblets and plates of the food rattled from the force of it. “Don’t tell me no! Not now, not ever!”
Odin looked pained then and Sirius didn’t understand why. Neither did Harry but the kid had obviously decided he shouldn’t interrupt whatever this conversation was becoming.

“Loki.”

“Remove my punishment from me.” James demanded ignoring the pleading tone in Odin’s voice. “I need to be free to move and act on earth and the other realms to defeat Riddle.”

“Yes, of course.”

“I want Hiemdall’s eyes on earth, looking for information, anything on the Death Eater movements and I want to be told directly about it.”

“It will be done.”

“In a few months I want some warriors, the best you can spare, to guard the castle my son will be living in. He’s the only one who can kill Riddle and Riddle knows it. He’ll be under constant attack and I want more security.”

“I will send them when you call.”

“I need free use of the Bifrost as well as access to Asgard’s resources.”

“You will have it.”

“Good.”

“Is that all?” Odin asked in a tone that made it clear he expected to offer much more.

“For now. Harry, Sirius, let’s go.”

“You’re leaving?” Odin asked as James stood up and began to sweep out of the room. The old man looked helpless and lost as Sirius got up to follow his friend. He was never one to turn down the chance at a dramatic exit. Harry’s eyes switched between Odin and James for a moment before he swallowed and spoke, his voice slightly nervous

“Um, Dad?” James paused and turned slightly.

“Harry, come on, let’s go.”

“Could we stay? Just for the night?” Harry asked, rubbing his arm awkwardly. “It’s just that I haven’t slept in like 24 hours and the first two times we’ve traveled to a different planet has been… well exhausting. Plus, well, it might be nice to sleep here?”

“Nice?” James asked.

“Well, it’s not like Riddle’s going to be able to pop out from under my bed here like he does on earth. It might be safe?”

James immediately melted, having totally forgotten his rage and dramatics in the face of his tired and slightly frightened looking son. Sirius stared at Harry from a point where James couldn’t see his face.

“There are guest rooms.” Odin said. “For both your son and your…friend. They are ready for them now.”

“I suppose. One night wouldn’t hurt.” James said. “But we are leaving in the morning.”
“Thank you, dad.” Harry said as if he hadn’t just pulled the biggest manipulation stunt of his life. Odin stood up, almost eager to get them to a bed.

“Come. I’ll show you the way.”

Odin walked out the door, James only a moment behind him. Harry jumped up, picking up a last bite of food, before hopping over to Sirius.

“Sirius, you were right.”

“What?”

“You told me to act all sad! It works! This is brilliant! Come on, let’s go catch up with them.”

Sirius watched the kid go, slowly lifting a hand, horrified at what he’d just learnt.

“What have I done?”

But the empty room had no answer for him.
Harry Potter's Perfectly Wonderful Day

Chapter Summary

Harry wakes up finally recovered from his magical exhaustion and attempts to explore the royal city of Asgard.

Chapter Notes

Ya'll this chapter was a struggle to write. I dunno, I think my brain just wanted to complain. But I got it done and hopefully next week will be easier. Thanks for the great comments though! I'm glad you all enjoyed Harry's manipulations lol.

Harry actually slept well in Asgard. He’d been mostly bluffing about believing that sleeping on a different planet, far away from Voldemort, would help him sleep. But oddly enough, it had. He’d fallen asleep almost immediately after Odin had shown him where his guest room was. He’d managed to wish his dad and Sirius a goodnight and get into some strange pajamas before face planting into the most comfortable bed in the universe.

His guest room was more accurately described as a suite. It had a large bedroom, complete with a lovely deck he could stand on and look over the entire city. There was also a walk-in closet, an ostentatious bathroom, and a sitting room. Harry had taken all of that knowledge in absently before falling asleep. Now upon waking up several hours later Harry had the mental capacity to actually appreciate the room Odin had given him.

He got up feeling very refreshed. The exhaustion that had dogged him since his fight with Amora had finally ceased. Probably due to both being seen by Asgard’s healers and the uninterrupted night’s sleep. It was good to finally feel rested. The first thing Harry noticed upon waking was the set of clean clothing folded at the foot of the bed. There was a roll of parchment right at the top. Harry sat up, rubbing at his eyes a little before picking up the parchment and unrolling it.

Pup!

I managed to convince your dad to let you sleep in by reminding him about your scar and how we need to research ways to block your connection to the Dark Pastry. Who knows how long he’s going to be in the library looking through books now? Doesn’t matter, should be worth it if we find something to help. Odin and Frigga both seemed really keen to keep us here too so there’s that.

(What did you do to Odin anyway? One minute he’s spitting venom and the next he’s a docile as a puppy!)

Anyway, we’ll be in the library when you wake up. Odin declared you and me honored guests which means we can do whatever we want! Feel free to join us for our research party if you’d like. If not, well then do what people like us do best!
Sow Chaos. Cause Trouble. Practice Mischief and Craft Pranks!

-Solemnly up to no good,

Sirius

Below Sirius’ scrawl was a second note. This one was slightly more legible.

Starlight,

Please do not cause chaos if you can manage it. Normally I’d be all for it but we need to be able to leave easily once I find the books we need. I love you, starlight and I don’t want to have to pull you out of the arms of the royal guard anytime soon. Save the mischief for earth yes?

Once you’re dressed go to the feasting hall and eat up. If you want you can come to the library but if you’d like to explore I won’t stop you. Asgard is very safe from danger, safer than New York. There shouldn’t be any problem with you having fun. Frigga pointed out that since we probably won’t be coming back you might like to do some site-seeing before we go.

I put some money in your clothes if you want to buy anything. (Perhaps some souvenirs for Ron and Hermione?) The small bronze coins (Liras) are basically a single pound note. The silver coins (Helcs) are worth 20 of the bronze ones and the gold coins (Gull) are worth 50 of the silver ones. You shouldn’t be spending the gull much. Most good quality trinkets cost 10-20 helcs. If they’re asking for gull they’re likely overcharging you.

Don’t worry about money too much. I’m a prince, we have more than enough.

I love you, don’t forget to eat!

-Your dad.

P.S. Your armor and sword are at the royal smithy getting repaired and sharpened. I gave the smith your measurements to get things properly fitted but we might need to stop by there before we leave to do one last fitting, that creature only got you because the chest plate was slightly too big.

P.P.S Don’t ask how I know your measurements.

Harry rolled his eyes but smiled at the warmth his dad’s words caused in him. He carefully dressed in the strange Asgardian clothing, glad that he sort of knew how to put it on thanks to Frigga’s mothering the day before. Once he was dressed he put the note into one of the pockets. He found the money pocket and tried to pull out the money to see how much his dad had given him. However, he found that with each handful he pulled out there was one more just sitting inside.

Enchanted money pocket.

Nice.

Harry left the guest room after finding his boots and putting them on. He got lost in the palace for a good ten minutes before his nose smelt food and he found the feasting hall. It reminded him a lot of the Great Hall back in Hogwarts. It was a huge cavernous room filled with long tables that were nearly bowed down with plates of food. There were hundreds of Asgardians sitting around, yelling and laughing and eating in the morning light.

Harry spotted some Asgardian boys that looked to be his age. They were wearing simple white tunics and golden trousers. If they hadn’t been eating like animals Harry would have called them
almost angelically dressed. When he got close enough, he spotted the myriad of weapons the boys all had on their persons and he rethought the angelic thing. One of the boys, a dark skinned teen with golden brown eyes, looked up as Harry got close.

“Hey!” He shouted. “What are you doing here?”

“I erm…got lost?” Harry stuttered.

“Hemrod?” One of the boys asked. “Do you think he’s a new recruit?”

“He must be, too young to be an apprentice and too skinny to be finished with training.” The boy decided. Hemrod stood up and held out a hand for Harry to shake. “I’m Hemrod Aegerson, you’re a new warrior trainee right? Don’t worry about getting lost, Tyr isn’t going to get after you on the first day.”

“I’m not…”

“Seriously. I’ll vouch for you. What’s your name?”

“Haraldr.” Harry said as the larger boy tugged Harry into the seat.

“Well Haraldr. It’s good to meet you.” Hemrod said. “This is Afkarr, he’s training to be an archer. There’s also Heimir with the axe and his brother Herdic who’s training with a staff.”

Hemrod continued introducing the other boys he was sitting by with their names and then what weapon they were using. Harry couldn’t get a word in edgewise to explain that he wasn’t a new trainee and that he had been just looking for a place to sit.

“So what weapon do you use?” One of the boys asked when Hemrod finished.

“Uhm…a sword.” Harry said. “I’m really new so it’s not like I’ve had much practice yet though.”

“A sword huh? We all learn to use them of course but only some people specialize in it.” Hemrod said. “Baldur’s the only one in our group who does.”


“Is he really that bad?” Harry asked.

“He’s only the top trainee in our group, he wins every fight he gets into and he won’t shut up about it.”

“Sounds annoying.”

“You’ve got no idea. He’s not going to be nice to you at all since you’re so scrawny.”

“Hey.” Harry said.

“Don’t be like that.” Hemrod said slapping him on the back far harder than necessary. “Surely you know you’re small.”

“Well yeah but that’s not a bad thing.” Harry told them. “Just means I’m quicker than most people.”

“That’s the spirit!” Afkarr said.

“Come on everyone, let’s finish eating. We’re supposed to be at the training yards in thirty minutes!”
So, Harry found himself scarfing down food surrounded by a bunch of warriors in training. It was similar to how it felt to eat with his quidditch team. They were nice boys and besides the occasional joke about his stature they were pretty welcoming. Harry planned on sneaking away when the boys all got up but Hemrod grabbed him by the arm and dragged him to the training yards. The entire walk over he told him about what training was like and what to do to avoid getting Tyr upset with you.

Which would be useful information if Harry had any idea who Tyr was.

When they got to the training yard Hemrod pulled Harry right up to an older man who was missing his left hand. Hemrod explained for Harry in a very Hermione-esque way who Harry was and how he’d gotten lost which is why he hadn’t reported to Tyr himself before breakfast. Tyr listened to the fast paced monologue with a look of practiced patience in his eyes.

“Yes, yes boy I see.” Tyr said cutting across Hemrod asking Tyr to understand that Haraldr hadn’t meant any disrespect. “Haraldr is it? I’ll cut you some slack but you best be here on time tomorrow, in uniform and with your weapon. Got it?”

“Uhm…yes sir.” Harry said, having no intention of ever coming back to this place again. Wasn’t he supposed to be getting souvenirs?

“Good. Now go sit down, the lesson’s starting soon and then after you’ll be doing practicals.”

Harry had no idea what practicals were and he found that he definitely didn’t want to know. Hemrod dragged him over to the benches anyway. Tyr moved to the front of the benches so that all the young warriors in training were facing him. In the hand that wasn’t missing, the man held a broad sword. Probably the hugest sword Harry had ever seen in his life. He started talking and demonstrating certain holds and sets of movements. He explained in intricate detail how to disarm your opponent if they were wielding an axe or a sword or a spear and so on.

Harry, despite not actually wanting to be there, found the lesson very informative. It clarified in many ways the few things his dad had attempted to explain back in that fog world. Harry paid close attention to how Tyr stood and held his weapon. It reminded him of how Remus and Sirius held their wands and moved during a duel. He had a fair amount of practice getting a stance on the ground that was good enough to keep you from getting knocked over from a spell. Still he thought the way Tyr was standing was a bit steadier than Harry had figured out how to do on his own.

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His mind went back to the DA and he realized that some of what Tyr was sharing he could share with his friends. With that in mind he paid even closer attention. He had the insane urge to take notes. Hermione would be pleased no doubt while Ron would be in despair. Or maybe not. Ron might like the idea of sword fighting too. There was a lot to the hour long lecture but Harry did his best to commit all of it to memory.

Some of the other warriors in training were not as eager. 15 minutes into the lecture they all started to get twitchy. Some of them started elbowing and whispering to each other. Others started drawing doodles in the dirt with their feet. Tyr had the same sharp eyes as Professor Snape and suddenly Harry knew why Hemrod had tried to calm Harry down over upsetting the man. No doubt Tyr knew who was messing about and would punish them all appropriately for the noise.

Harry knew how to deal with Snapes so he sat perfectly still and attentive. He didn’t even twiddle his thumbs.

Sure, enough when the lecture ended Tyr called up warriors one by one to test out the moves he’d demonstrated. He stood in the center of the fighting ring, designated by white paint on the dirt. The
trainees who’d been messing about always ended up flat on their back with at least three new bruises forming on their body. Slowly Tyr worked his way down to the warriors who’d at least acted like they’d been paying attention. These warriors still ended up flat on their back but at least they didn’t accrue black eyes. Harry watched Tyr’s movements, analyzing them like he’d analyzed quidditch strategies.

Despite lacking a hand on his right side, Tyr was by no means weak. In fact he had trained to the point that his right side was his best defended side. He wielded a broad sword with one hand and managed to defend his right side, sometimes at the cost of his left. But no one ever went for the left side. All of the younger warriors went straight for the side missing the hand, working under the assumption that a lack of a limb meant weakness.

Harry knew better than that. He’d met Mad-Eye Moody after all.

Tyr was probably really good. Harry got the feeling he was holding back so that the trainees could have a chance at actually succeeding. That combined with the fact that Tyr would expect a brand new recruit to go for his right side helped hatch a plan in Harry’s head. He couldn’t get injured doing this, his dad would **freak out**. Harry didn’t need a freaked out dad. A freaked out dad wouldn’t be calm enough to work out his issues with Odin and certainly wouldn’t be calm enough to not attack Tyr on sight.

“Baldur!” Tyr called. “You’re next!”

The largest of the teens stood up. He had long flowing blonde hair and muscles the thickness of Harry’s head. He reminded Harry of Thor, a shorter teen version of Thor. The only thing that was unlike Thor was the very arrogant look on his face. Thor had never looked so boastful in all the time Harry had known the man. Granted that had been less than a week by this point but his opinion still stood. Baldur had Thor’s body with Draco Malfoy’s face.

Baldur walked up to the center of the circle where Tyr was waiting for him. He unsheathed his giant sword from his hip and took his stance. Tyr counted down from three and on the word one, Baldur sprung forward. Baldur, like all of the other warriors before him, went to the right but he went slightly lower, just as Tyr had instructed. Tyr seemed to expect Baldur’s speed and parried. Soon the two of them were swinging back and forth, swords clanging against each other, the blades glinting in the sun.

Harry had to admit that Baldur was good, not great. But good. Without magic Harry would certainly have a really hard time defeating him, if only because the guy was **huge**. Harry’d probably ask Thor to borrow his hammer if he had to fight Baldur without any magic.

Who cared if that would be slightly cheating?

Harry was broken out of his thoughts by Baldur being sent tumbling to the ground, his sword flying out of his hand and landing on the dirt a few meters away.

“Good job, Baldur. Another century or two of practice and you might actually be close to winning.” Tyr said in a way that made it clear he was genuinely complimenting the guy. Tyr stabbed the tip of his broad sword into the dirt and then held out his hand to help Baldur up off the ground. Something he hadn’t done with any other student.

“Yeah whatever.” Baldur said getting up without Tyr’s help and stomping over to his own sword. Tyr frowned at the disrespect and then looked over at Harry.

“Haraldr? Do you think you can do better than Baldur?”
“I…I’ll try.” Harry said standing up.

Baldur froze mid-step before turning to look at Harry. The guy had a murderous look on his face until he saw Harry and then it turned into a very condescending one.

“Here.” Hemrod said holding out his sword. “You can borrow mine until you get your own.”

“Thanks.” Harry said.

“Come out here Haraldr and test your strength.”

“Right yeah. I mean yes sir.” Harry said taking the sword from Hemrod and stepping around the other trainees. He moved slowly giving himself time to go over the plan in his head one last time. Wordlessly he cast a sticking spell on the sword handle to make sure that Tyr couldn’t send his borrowed sword flying and then readjusted his grip, so it was just like his dad had shown him. “So, I just…try to disarm you?”

“You should attempt not to get your spine broken, you runt.” Baldur muttered as he walked away from the ring.

“Yes.” Tyr said pretending he hadn’t heard Baldur’s words. “The point is to attempt to disarm me in anyway you can but preferably with the techniques I just demonstrated.”

“Okay.” Harry said shifting his stance into nearly the same position he used in DA meetings. “I’ll do my best.”

Tyr gave him a look that might have been encouraging at the beginning of the lesson but really only looked menacing after Harry had seen him down 25 Asgardian teens like it was nothing. Harry swallowed and lifted up his sword as Tyr counted down from three. Unlike Baldur Harry didn’t immediately jump into action when Tyr finished counting. Instead he began to walk in a slight circle to the left. Tyr lifted up an eyebrow surprised at what looked like hesitation from Harry.

Tyr seemed to shrug without actually doing so and he made the first swing. He swung at Harry’s midsection and Harry with all of the strength his quidditch trained legs could muster jumped up into the air. He managed to clear the broad sword and fall right back down onto the flat part of the blade. His boots skidded down the length of the blade as Tyr let the sword dip under the weight of his body. Tyr’s eyes widened as Harry made a slight shocked noise at having landed on the sword instead of on the other side of it.

Recovering quickly Harry sprung off of the still swinging blade and into the air to Tyr’s left. Using his elbow, he reached out and hit the man in the side as he turned to face him. Tyr fell back a bit but still swung at Harry, who dropped like a stone to the ground and rolled out of the way. This fight wasn’t like the fight with the zombie creatures. Tyr wasn’t out to kill him, and Harry wasn’t afraid for his life. This was similar to Remus teaching him dueling spells. Harry felt calm and level-headed as he ducked and weaved around Tyr’s huge sword.

The trainees watched the fight in silence at first but quickly started cheering and shouting when it became clear that Harry was lasting longer than any of them had. Harry stuck to Tyr’s left, moving into weak spots and staying there until Tyr fixed that weak spot. Harry moved to yet another, a systematic approach to not getting the snot beaten out of him.

Harry had been right about Tyr outclassing him in pretty much every way when it came to hand to hand combat. Not that that meant he was going to give up. That wasn’t his style when he was dealing with Dudley and his gang and it wouldn’t be his style in Asgard. Tyr managed to get Harry
into position within a few minutes and used his own sword to attempt to disarm Harry. His sticking charm held even as his hand spasmed in it’s grip from the forced extension of his arm.

Harry was leaning back from the force of Tyr’s sword, his back nearly parallel with the ground and his knees bent very uncomfortably. Harry used Tyr’s momentary shock to drop down and sweep out Tyr’s legs out from under him, from the left to the right. Tyr stumbled back as Harry jumped up and used the same move that Tyr had done sending Tyr’s huge broad sword tumbling to the ground. Not very far, only mere inches from Tyr’s hands since it was so bloody huge but still, it was on the ground.

The entire training yard was silent.

“I…” Harry said. “I don’t think I did that right did I? My form was off right?”

Luck. Harry knew that it was luck that had let him win. A combination of Tyr underestimating him, his spell, and sheer dumb luck. Harry cursed himself for talking about his form being off even though he’d won. Tyr blinked a few times before straightening up and speaking.

“You’ll need to practice if you don’t want to get your wrist broken.” He said. “But your form was essentially correct for a first try.”

“Oh.” Harry said. “That’s…good right?”

“Good?” Hemrod shouted. “That was brilliant!”

The other trainees started cheering as Tyr picked up his sword and Harry stepped back to give the man room. When the trainees quieted down Tyr looked Harry up and down.

“You’ve got combat experience.”

“Uhm…yeah a little. Not much with a sword, not used to using something this heavy.” Tyr glanced at his thin arms with something like half-suppressed amusement sparkling in his eyes.

“You should have said you had experience in fighting. I would’ve given you an actual challenge.”

“That wasn’t the challenge?” Harry asked stupidly.

Which is how Harry found himself flat on his back within three seconds with Tyr grinning down at him. Harry grinned right back and took the hand Tyr offered him and also weathered the heavy handed pat on the back.

Training continued with everyone trying out the disarming technique on other trainees with some actual success. Harry gave Hemrod’s sword back to him and they switched off back and forth whenever one of them was called up. All of the other trainees were giving Harry very awed looks. Like the ones Colin used to give him when he was younger and desperate to take pictures of Harry. Except this was different because these people had no idea who he was and were only awed because of something he’d actually done.

It was rather nice all things considered.

Training ended after four hours and Harry felt very sore and hungry. Thankfully all of the other trainees felt the same as they all led him back to the feasting hall where they had a very filling late lunch. Hemrod and the other boys were gushing about how great Harry was and why hadn’t he told them he already had fighting experience? Harry did his best to stutter through an answer that didn’t have to do with him being a demi-god and child of prophesy.
The boys seemed to buy it even if Baldur was glaring at him very fiercely.

“Uhm…Hemrod?” Harry asked. “Since I’m new here, my dad suggested I go explore the city. Maybe buy some souvenirs? Would you mind showing me around?”

“You’re from one of the colonies right? That’s must have been where you got your experience from, fighting bandits and pirates.” Harry didn’t deny it and Hemrod wouldn’t have heard him even if he had. “Course me and the others’ll show you around. We’ll take you to the best spots!”

And that was what they did. All of the trainees, except Baldur, took Harry out of the palace and into the city proper. So this is what being popular was like. Not popular because of a thing that happened to you when you were a baby, but just the normal sort of popular. The sort of popular that came with quidditch wins and funny stories. Harry decided he really liked it and threw himself fully into the persona he’d accidentally created.

He, with the money his dad had gifted him, found a bunch of gifts for each of his friends. The other trainees had excellent suggestions when he told them about his friends and what they liked. He also bought a bunch of sweets, enough for everyone, whenever they passed something that smelled delicious. They all wanted to know about his colony and so without telling them any names he talked about Hogwarts and his friends.

He even told them about quidditch.

The trainees were absolutely fascinated by quidditch, especially the bludgers. Harry described the game in great detail and then when asked started telling stories about the games he’d played back home. By the time they got back to the castle all of the trainees were practically squealing with excitement about the idea of a game you played 50 feet in the air with balls enchanted to try and throw you to the ground.

He managed to free himself from the others when they got back to the palace saying he had to go find his dad to tell him about his first day of training. So Harry, carrying a leather bag filled with asgardian trinkets, made his way through the palace until he found the door to the library. (He might have cheated with a spell or two.)

The entire walk Harry felt buoyant. He had had an absolutely perfect day. He’d gotten to sleep in after a night free of terrors and visions. He’d been free to wander around and had ended up learning some new sword tricks and making some great new friends who were mad about quidditch. He’d tried new Asgardian foods in the city and gotten to buy a bunch of fun things for his friends. No one had attacked him or treated him poorly. Even the merchants they visited treated him and the loud trainees with amusement instead of disdain. He’d been safe and happy for the whole day. The weather had even cooperated giving him a bright blue sky and warm sunlight.

Harry felt happy and bubbly and…he didn’t know if he had ever felt like this before in his whole life. Even good days at Hogwarts had always been tainted by something or other. Draco Malfoy or Voldemort or whoever the Defense Teacher was that year. A constant sense of foreboding had filled Harry ever since Hagrid had told him about his parents’ murder. Even before that Harry knew to always keep an eye out for trouble.

But in Asgard it was different. Things were safe, there was no danger lurking around the corner. Just friendly trainees and talented teachers and delicious food and warm weather. Harry wondered if he was glowing, he felt so happy he must’ve been. When Harry got to the library he pushed open the door already bubbling to tell his dad and Sirius all about how amazing the day had been. The door swung open quietly to reveal Sirius and his dad hunched over books. Sirius still looked a bit haggard and his dad looked stressed as he read from four books at once.
Harry’s perfect day shattered around him as he looked at his dad and godfather. He remembered the war and the prophecy. With perfect clarity he recalled what he had left and what he would be returning too. Something cracked in his chest. He could go up and tell his dad how wonderful the day had been, he could beg to stay a few more days, or weeks, or the rest of the summer. Maybe even stay for the rest of the year. His dad would let him too, his dad would probably be happy because Harry was happy.

And Harry knew without a doubt he would be happy here. Happy and safe and…at peace.

But he couldn’t.

Not when Ron, Hermione and Remus and everyone else was still there on earth. Not when Voldemort still haunted the world. Harry couldn’t and wouldn’t leave anyone else to die or suffer. Not even if it meant never coming back here, never being truly safe again, never knowing this simple happiness.

“Starlight?” His dad asked looking up from his book. “We wondered when you’d show up. Did you have a good day?”

Harry blinked, once, twice and then a third time.

“It was fine.” Harry said shrugging. “A little boring. When are we going back home?”

“After dinner with Odin.” Sirius said looking at Harry. “Was the city really that bad? It looked pretty neat.”

“I found some cool stuff but honestly it’s not worth the time.” Harry lied.

“Hmm.” His dad said. “I’m sorry I couldn’t take you out and show you some of the more interesting sites, Starlight.”

“It’s whatever.” Harry said. “What books are you looking at?”

Harry walked over to his dad and listened as he started talking about dark magic and painful spells that could have caused his connection to Voldemort. Harry did his best to forget what he’d done that day. That life, the life of a carefree kid, wasn’t his life.

And that was fine.

Just fine.
Thor's nephew and brother have been missing for over two days and he is in full panic mode. He needs to find them now!

Hey everyone! Thanks for the amazing comments! I didn't respond to some of them as I've been busy but I really appreciated them! Next week's update is going to be late. I'm flying out for a NASA Volcanology Workshop tomorrow and I'll be busy and without reliable access to the internet for the next 8 days. I'll be way too busy learning about volcanoes to write or edit anything. That being said, since I have no idea when I will be updating Follow me on Twitter if you want to know more! I'm serious, if you're anxious to know when I'm updating, just go there. It's the best place for it.

Thor’s brother was missing.

Even worse, his nephew was also missing.

Two days! It had been over two days since Thor and Loki had returned from their trip to The Burrow and it had been two days since Loki had shoved Harry into some armor and teleported the two of them away to places unknown.

Thor didn’t want to admit he was panicking but he was totally panicking.

At first Thor had been certain that Loki had just gone to London. Loki and Harry had to still be on earth. Loki’s punishment from Odin forbade Loki from leaving the planet. Loki would come back with his son, both of them still uninjured, and perhaps with a new friend, Sirius Black. It was all going to be just fine. They’d come back within a day with a new story to tell and Thor would scold them for not inviting him.

They didn’t come back.

By day two Thor was in full on panic mode. Despite his team telling him that they were sure everything was okay, even if Tony couldn’t find anything, Thor knew something was wrong. Thor was loathe to go to Asgard to ask for help because if Loki had left the planet then that would put him in trouble. But at the same time? What if Loki was dying? What if Harry was dying? Thor only hoped Loki would forgive him.

Thor went to the roof and he called for the Bifrost before anyone could stop him. If Loki and Harry were in danger, then time was of the essence. The beam of rainbow light slammed down onto the
roofing and Thor found himself flying up into its blinding light. He gripped his hammer tightly and prepared for battle. First he had to convince Hiemdall to help him without telling his father and then he had to go rescue his baby brother and his nephew from whatever trouble they’d landed themselves.

Thor skidded to a stop inside the Bifrost chamber.

“Hiemdall. I need a favor.”

“You are here to ask me about the location of your nephew and Prince Loki.” Hiemdall said.

“Yes. Please don’t tell my father about this. I am sure that Loki didn’t mean to break his parole.”

“Don’t worry. Odin is already aware of Haraldr and Loki. They’ve been in Asgard since yesterday.”

“Since yesterday?”

“Yes. They arrived in Frigga’s sitting room covered in blood along with a human.” Hiemdall said.

“Odin has since made them welcome.”

Thor nearly collapsed in relief.

“Even Harry?”

“Especially Harry. I do not think the All-Mother would have allowed anything else.”

“Oh thank the norns.” Thor breathed. “I have been so worried. Thank you Hiemdall for telling me such excellent news.”

“Of course.” Hiemdall said a slight smile on his face. “If you are looking for more I would suggest going to the training yards.”

“The training yards?” Thor asked, Hiemdall nodded his golden eyes sparkling. “Very well, then that is where I will go. Wait, before I go…how are Loki and my father…getting on?”

“About as well as you’d expect.”

Thor grimaced and then gave Hiemdall another nod of thanks. Perhaps it was too much to ask that Odin and Loki could work out their differences but Thor had still been hopeful. Thor hefted his hammer and flew out of the golden domed building and towards the palace. Asgard looked as perfect as it ever did. The evening sun illuminated the entire floating city in warmth, the golden and silver spires of his home gleamed in welcome. Below him he could see the citizens going about their business, laughing and eating their dinner in the warm evening air.

Knowing now that his brother and nephew were safe made it so much easier for Thor to smile and wave at the Aesir he flew past. Some of them looked up as he flew and cheered up at him and Thor beamed. He loved earth and all of its wonders but there was nothing quite like home. He hoped Harry had had fun in Asgard. Perhaps he’d even had the chance to see the city. If he hadn’t then Thor would insist that they take Harry on a tour before going back to earth.

Thor angled the hammer a bit better and moved towards the training yards. He looked around trying to spot either his brother or his nephew but couldn’t find either of them. He did however spot his old trainer Tyr. Tyr noticed him of course and waved his sword up in greeting. Thor landed right next to the man and slapped Tyr’s back in hello.
“Prince Thor.”

“Lord Tyr! It’s been far too long.”

“I have my duties to the newest recruits, I haven’t had the time for feasting lately.” Tyr pointed out. “Besides you have been on Midgard haven’t you?”

“Yes. My work there keeps me busy, but I’m here now!” Thor said excitedly. “Tell me, how is the newest batch? I’ve heard from my mother that Baldur began his training with you, right? With all of his father’s boasts I’m sure Baldur exceeds expectations.”

Tyr had been the man who had taught Thor how to wield a sword. He had been the man who had trained with his hammer. Tyr had been training every man and the few women who wished to be a part of Asgard’s army for a very long time indeed. Thor didn’t honestly think there was a common man more respected among the people. Everyone knew him as their favorite teacher, as a beloved mentor. And Tyr took it all in stride, producing the greatest warriors and gods every century like it was his norns given duty.

“Baldur.” Tyr said. “He’s stubborn certainly, too stubborn to listen, too sure of himself.”

Thor grimaced, he could tell that wasn’t a complement because it was the same way Tyr had described Thor all those centuries ago. Tyr grinned and punched Thor’s arm as he remembered the same exact thing.

“Don’t be too hard on yourself, Thor. I was able to wear you down eventually.”

“Aye that you were.” Thor agreed.

“Baldur will be a fine warrior by the time I’m done with him. His biggest weakness is his pride, something his father gave him no doubt.” Tyr said. “There’s actually a new trainee that I’m very interested in. It’s been centuries since I even considered taking on an apprentice but this boy truly impressed me today.”

Thor’s jaw dropped a little. Tyr never took on apprentices. It just wasn’t done. No one met the man’s impossibly high standards for what an apprentice should be. Tyr considered all the young trainees too immature to handle the rigor of a personal apprenticeship with him. That didn’t stop everyone from wanting to be his apprentice. Tyr was so well connected and respected amongst the realms that any apprentice of his would have their pick of future jobs and opportunities. Only an apprenticeship from someone like Thor’s parents would be considered more desirable.

“Really?” Thor asked.

“Yes, truly.” Tyr said. “It was the boy’s first day, he was late and didn’t even have a weapon on him. Normally that sort of incompetence would have me making a lesson out of the boy for the rest of them but the boy was also ridiculously small.”

“Small?”

“Tiniest Asgardian I’ve ever seen. Arms as thin as sticks, shorter than any of his peers.” Tyr said. “It was almost comical the way his hair stuck out everywhere, made him look like a mop.”

Something in Thor’s mind shifted around but he knocked the suspicion away and focused on his old friend. Tyr was leaning on the hilt of his broad sword, the weapon’s tip slightly buried in the ground.

“He doesn’t sound very impressive.”
“See that’s what I thought!” Tyr said. “But then this boy was just...he was perfect Thor. He listened for my entire lecture and I could just tell he was paying attention, trying to actually learn what I was showing. I’ve never seen a trainee that young sit still for that long. Most of them start roughhousing immediately and you know how I hate that.”

“So he sat still.”

“He disarmed me, Thor!” Tyr said his voice nearly gleeful. “The boy went last, and borrowed another trainee's sword. Of course I was going easy on him since he was so damn small I thought a stiff breeze would snap him in half but the boy was smart. At the beginning he literally jumped onto my sword to avoid getting chopped and then after that he kept finding new openings to keep from getting hit. Day 1 and the boy actually succeeded! I’ve never seen the like!”

Tyr continued to expound on the boy’s skill. His agility, his fasting thinking, and his determination. Tyr was apparently enamored with the trainee and had just been waiting on pins and needles to tell anyone about him. Thor himself was rather shocked, it had taken Thor a full decade of training before he managed to disarm Tyr in training. It wasn’t a common thing. Thor was pretty sure that if they were to spar now, it would be a very difficult fight to win.

“What’s this young man’s name?” Thor found himself asking. “Where is he from?”

“Haraldr. I haven’t gotten his information yet from the palace but I’m sure it’ll be coming in tomorrow.”

Haraldr. That was Harry’s name, his Asgardian name. The nebulous suspicions that had been floating around Thor’s brain finally solidified and slammed into him. His nephew had somehow managed to sneak into training and in one day impressed THE Tyr in a way no trainee had in literally millennia. A huge smiled broke out on his face, he was literally brimming with pride.

Of course, his nephew would be worthy to be Tyr’s apprentice! Hadn’t Thor seen his fight against Amora? Tyr continued to talk about how it was obvious the boy had very little skill with weapons but that was something that could be learnt.

“Mark my words Thor. That boy has the potential to the greatest warrior Asgard has ever seen!”

“Oh don’t worry, Tyr. I believe you.” Thor said.

His mind raced with plans. Harry could be come Tyr’s apprentice, even if only for a short time. No one could teach him how to fight better than Tyr. Besides there was no place safer than Asgard. Harry could rest and recuperate here, free of worry or strife. The prophecy would keep, the war would keep, until Harry was truly ready to fight it wouldn’t it? Maybe the power the Dark Lord knew not was Harry’s skill with a sword!

Thor and Loki could stay in Asgard too, Loki could teach Harry more magic and Thor could help with training on Mjolnir. Within a few years Harry would be strong and skilled and ready to face whatever dangers this Voldemort could pose. That’s exactly how it should be. Yes, Thor could see it now. Harry strong and well fed, glowing in the Asgardian sun a sword in one hand and his magic glowing in the other. Harry would be brilliant and happy and Thor couldn’t wait to see it happen.

It was perfect!

“Thank you, Tyr. You’ve given me some wonderful news. I must go speak to my father now.”

“About the boy?”
“Of course, about the boy! Thank you again Tyr! Truly!” Thor rushed off leaving a slightly confused Tyr behind.

There was so much to do! He had to go find Loki and tell Loki all about what Tyr had said, then he had to explain his idea to his father and get it approved. Then he could present the opportunity to Harry, he was sure his nephew would jump at the chance. He could live here in Asgard, in safety and in luxury and learn how to be the hero the world needed.

Thor rushed through the palace a huge beaming grin on his face. Outside the palace a brisk breeze had picked up in response to Thor’s absolutely stupendously good mood. His family was all safe and Harry was the most wonderful, talented nephew a man could ask for. He decided to check for Loki in the library first, surely his brother was there doing some sort of research. Thor burst into the library and beamed when he saw Loki, Harry and another human all gathered around a table.

“Loki!” Thor boomed. “Harry! I’ve been so worried about you two!”

“Thor?” Harry asked turning around from the table. Thor resisted the urge to pull the boy into a hug knowing that he didn’t like being touched without permission. Instead he smiled as loudly as he could.

“Yes! You two disappeared days ago and I was afraid something had happened!”

“We’re fine.” Loki said. “Honestly Thor, I wasn’t even gone three days.”

“That’s way too long now that I know there’s some sort of Dark Lord on earth! You should have taken me along with you!”

“We were fine.” Loki said easily. “Isn’t that right, Starlight?”

“Oh yeah.” Harry said. “Totally fine dad. We didn’t almost get eaten by zombie fog creatures or anything.”

“Zombie fog creatures?”

“You know.” Said the unknown human. “We should really come up with a name for those things. Maybe Rancers? They smelt rancid enough.”

“Draugrs.” Loki said. “We should call them Draugrs. They’re as close to a real Draugr as I’ve ever seen. Wouldn’t be surprised if that’s what they actually were come to think of it.”

“You fought Draugrs?” Thor asked, his voice cracking on the word.

“We did.” Loki said.

“I can’t believe this!” Thor said. “This is terrible news!”

“Okay I’m lost now.” The human said.

“Me too.”

“He’s just upset that he didn’t get to come.” Loki said. “Come on Thor. It’s not like I knew there’d be Draugrs there. I swear if I’d known I would’ve invited you.”

Thor was partly appeased. Fighting a Draugr would have been a fantastic adventure. Loki would never had kept him from something that dangerous, especially if he was willingly bringing his son along.
“Fine.” Thor said trying to stop the pout that was attempting to form on his face.

“So, you’re Thor. James’ adopted brother right?” The human asked motioning towards Loki. Thor nodded and the guy smiled. ‘Cool, I’m Sirius Black, I’m James’…”

“He’s my shield brother.” Loki cut in. “Harry and I left earth to go rescue him from the draugrs. We couldn’t wait as we didn’t know if he was injured or not.”

Thor looked at Sirius in a new light. Even if the man looked slightly sickly there was no doubt that the man was worthy of respect if Loki was willing to call him a shield brother.

“It is an honor to meet you.” Thor said. “And Loki I understand why you left I am just surprised that father didn’t grow angry with you for leaving Earth.”

“Oh don’t worry about Odin.” Sirius said. “Harry took care of that.”

Thor looked curiously at his nephew who now had a slight blush on his cheeks.

“It’s not that big a deal…”

“You got Odin All-Father to back down.” Sirius said. “The guy’s practically docile when you’re in the room.”

“You’re…” Harry said before turning to look at Thor’s shocked face. “Sirius is exaggerating. I didn’t do anything to Odin.”

“I’ve certainly never seen him act like that.”

“Dad.”

“It appears that I’ve missed a lot.” Thor said. “Brother would you mind catching me up?”

And thankfully Loki did.

Apparently, there was a highly dangerous tear between Midgard and another unknown planet that likely housed real draugrs inside of it. Loki and Harry had gone through the tear to rescue Sirius and managed to find him in the dense fog of the world using magic. Sirius added in there that he punched Loki in face upon first seeing him making both Harry and Sirius giggle while Loki waited in long suffering silence.

Sirius and Loki then described the fight with the draugrs while Harry kept insisting that the amazing fight wasn’t that big of a deal. Even though it definitely was. Thor couldn’t believe his nephew was trying to be humble about it! There wasn’t any warrior in all of Asgard that wouldn’t leap at the chance to fight against such beasts. Loki finished the fight by describing how in his stress to get them the hell out of there, he accidentally opened a portal, not to Midgard but to Asgard.

Harry took the story up there describing his first introduction to his grandmother as ‘overwhelming’. It appeared that his beloved mother had gone into full Mother Hen mode and had come off a bit too strong for his nephew. Thor decided he’d talk to his mother about what he knew so that she didn’t make Harry any more uncomfortable. It was their job to be better for Harry so that he could be happy with them, despite his past.

Sirius then described the tense scene in the courtroom while Harry blushed and mumbled about the fact that it wasn’t that bad. Yes, Harry admitted, he had called the most politically powerful man in the universe a bag of dicks but really Sirius was being dramatic about it. Thor literally couldn’t even
imagine the exchange in his mind because every time he tried he just saw his father going into a rage and trying to chop off Harry’s head for his disrespect.

Apparently, that isn’t what happened. Odin took Harry to his private office and they had a conversation. Harry was very vague about what exactly that conversation was but insisted that the important part was that Odin had agreed to lend support for their fight against Tom Riddle. Thor desperately wished Harry would give more details about how he managed to evade Odin’s ire but Harry was tight lipped about the situation.

“So you stayed the night.” Thor said.

“I was really tired, we were going come back to earth after dinner today.” Harry said.

“It looks like you came all the way here for nothing.” Loki said.

“Oh not nothing.” Sirius said. “I mean at least it’s a chance for me to size up the competition. Honestly, James I’m feeling pretty good about my odds.”

“Competition?” Thor asked.

“Yeah obviously. For best adopted brother.” Sirius said. “James’ parents adopted me when I was a teenager making me just as much James’ brother as you are.”

Thor was about to deny that there was even going to be a competition at all because it was obvious that Thor was the favorite but he saw the look of sheer fondness in Loki’s eyes and reconsidered. Odin he’d never had to compete to be Loki’s favorite sibling before. Some of his dismay must have shown on his face because Harry lightly patted his arm.

“Don’t worry, you might still win best uncle.”

“Oh no, pup. I’m winning that one too.”

Now that was just unfair! Thor wasn’t going to lose both best brother and best uncle competitions. No way!

“I look forward to the challenge.” Thor said narrowing his eyes at the human. Sirius wiggled his eyebrows right back, making Loki snort and Harry hide a smile behind his hand. Damn.

“We should go to dinner.” Loki said. “I’ve got the books I need now to solve this scar problem and I doubt I can get away with keeping Odin waiting any longer.”

“Odin’s waiting for us?” Harry asked.

“Yes we were supposed to be at dinner over thirty minutes ago.”

“What?” Thor boomed. “Come on brother, we have to go now! What were you thinking?”

Thor started pulling Loki out of his chair and ushering everyone out of the library. He couldn’t believe this! Just because father had, quite miraculously, forgiven Harry for his disrespect the other day didn’t mean he’d do it a second time!

“I was thinking that I didn’t want to go.”

“Honestly.” Thor complained. “Father wouldn’t have planned the dinner if it wasn’t important.”

“Yeah yeah yeah.” Sirius said. “Give it a rest. We were just having a bit of fun!”
Thor had the vaguely horrified feeling that he had somehow become the uncool older brother overnight.

“Yeah Thor.” Loki said. “Just some fun, a tiny bit of mischief.”

“Microscopic!” Sirius agreed.

How had this happened so quickly? When had Thor become…lame?

“You’re freaking out over nothing.” Harry promised him. “Odin won’t mind once we explain, I’m sure.”

Great! Not only was he lame he was also so anxious the child in the group felt like he had to comfort him. Good job Thor. They left the library and got to the private royal dining room. His parents were already there, sitting in front of a full table and looking rather cross for having been kept waiting. Thor prepared for one of Odin’s signature rants about being courteous princes when Harry spoke.

“Sorry All-Father. We got caught up in the library and then Thor showed up and we had to tell him what happened since we sort of left earth without much warning.” Harry said. “I didn’t mean to be late.”

To Thor’s eternal surprise Odin’s upset literally melted away to be replaced by an expression that had never once been seen on Odin’s face before.

“It’s fine. Just try not to let it happen again.”

“Course.” Harry said brightly. “You mind if we start eating now? I’m sort of hungry.”

Odin insisted that they all sit, ignoring the set way these private dinners had gone for centuries, and eat. Normally Odin would have these dinners as a way to take Thor and Loki to task for whatever it was that they’d done that week. Which meant sitting in front of well made food and not being able to eat until Odin had said his piece. This time Harry just sat down and started serving himself while asking Odin what he’d done that day.

Like a family.

A normal family dinner.

Thor looked over at Loki who gave him a very helpless confused look to match Thor’s own. Thor sat down and started to eat. What else was he supposed to do? On one side was his mother who looked very pleased and on the other was Sirius, who also looked pleased but for very different reasons. Mainly, Thor supposed, the fact that Thor had wanted to sit next to Loki but Loki had chosen to sit next to Sirius instead.

Damn.

Dinner was a bizarre event. Bizarre because anytime an argument would erupt from Odin or Loki, Harry would quell it with merely a look. Frigga spent most of the dinner staring at her only grandson with adoration in her eyes. Sirius kept saying things to Loki that would make Loki grin while remembering something which made Thor seethe with jealousy. It didn’t help that most of the stories Sirius told were quite funny and made Harry laugh in delight as he learnt more about his parents. Thor couldn’t in good conscience interrupt.

When they had desert, Thor remembered Tyr and Harry’s brilliant day of training. He opened his
mouth and began to say that he’d run into Tyr when he’d arrived but then he felt someone kick him from under the table. He coughed in shock and looked over at Harry who was giving him a death glare. Thor reached for his goblet and drank a huge gulp to cover up the shocked coughing.

“And how is Tyr, dear?” Frigga asked as Thor cleared his throat again.

“He is well. The new recruits are working hard.” Thor said. “He thinks there is a lot of promise in them.”

“Of course, there is.” Odin said. “They’re men of Asgard, they could be nothing but great.”

Which is how Thor ended up talking about Tyr’s opinion about Baldur while wondering why Harry hadn’t wanted him to talk about his own great achievements. There was no doubt in Thor’s mind that Odin and Frigga wouldn’t be anything but proud of Harry. Loki would also love the opportunity to ooze smug pride over his son’s talent. It didn’t make any sense.

Thor got the opportunity to ask when the dinner ended. It ended smoothly with Harry saying that they needed to head back to earth to prepare for the fight against Voldemort. Odin, in yet another out of character action, merely nodded and told them that they were welcome to visit at any time, for any reason. They all stood to leave when Odin spoke again.

“Loki, might I speak with you, in private for a moment?”

Loki’s jaw clenched for a moment before he sighed.

“Oh yes fine.”

“Don’t worry James.” Sirius whispered. “I’ll go get our stuff and we’ll be ready to run the moment you step outside.”

“Thank you Padfoot.” He whispered.

So, they all left the private dining room except for Odin and Loki. Frigga gave Thor a hug and a kiss on the cheek and then did the same to Harry despite his awkward look. She also hugged Sirius who took that with much more grace.

“Thank you for helping to keep the peace.” She said. “Now I must go, I have some visions I must weave.”

“I’m gonna go too.” Sirius said. “I’ll get the books we need and everything else. Pup are you cool staying here for your dad?”

“Me and Thor can handle it.”

And that was that. Once they were finally alone, Thor turned to his nephew. Harry didn’t even bother to pretend to be confused about why Thor was giving him a look.

“Don’t tell anyone about the Tyr stuff. Please.” He begged.

“You have nothing to be ashamed of. I’ve never seen Tyr be that impressed with anyone, not even your father and I did half as well as you did today.”

“I’m not ashamed. I just don’t want anyone to know.”

“How is that not being ashamed?”
“Thor, Please. You can’t tell anyone, especially not my dad. If dad asks you’ve got to tell him that I thought Asgard was boring. Please.”

“Why are you asking me to lie to Loki? Harry I don’t like doing that, he deserves the truth. Especially since this is such good news. Tyr wants to make you his apprentice! That’s a great honor, your father would be so happy to know you’re so talented.”

“It’s not good news Thor!” Harry denied his voice cracking a little. “It’s awful.”

“I don’t understand.”

“I can’t stay here Thor. I can’t…It’s not right.” He said. “Don’t you see, Asgard’s everything and I can’t have it! I can’t spend my mornings learning how to swing a sword and then my afternoons having fun without people who don’t think I’m weird or anything. I don’t get to be popular and be safe. It’s not…I’m not ever going to have that.”

“But you could!” Thor argued. “All you’d have to do is ask. You could stay for as long as you wanted, learning about anything you’d like. In a few years you’d be a great swordsman!”

“A few years! I can’t even stay for a few days Thor!” Harry snapped. “Think about it! Every hour, every minute I spend away from earth is another minute that Tom Riddle is going to go around and kill innocent people.”

“It’s not your responsibility to…”

“It is! It is my responsibility! It’s not anyone else’s! No one but me can kill him and if I stay here just so that I can…can be normal and have fun then that’s selfish isn’t it? Since when is me being happy more important than the entire world? It’s not Thor. It’s just not. You can’t say it is because it’s a lie. I’m just one person and everyday Riddle hurts hundreds of people, thousands even…I can’t stay here.”

Thor’s heart felt like it was breaking a little at the sheer desolation in Harry’s voice. Harry was leaning against the wall, slowly sinking down so that he was sitting on the floor, his head bowed between his knees. Thor settled down next to him. He didn’t know what to say. What was there to say? Harry was sacrificing safety, a promise of happiness, for a world that had been so cruel to him. Harry was being more heroic than Thor had ever been and something in him hurt.

“But surely there’s no harm in telling Loki about your skill?” Thor asked.

“No harm?” He asked. “Tell me. How do you think dad would react if I told him I loved it here? That I loved learning how to fight, that I loved spending time with the trainees. That I can’t remember ever being happier because even though I’m far away from my best friends I almost don’t care because I’m safe here?”

Thor tried to imagine it. Thor telling Loki how brilliant his son was, and how much his son loved Asgard. Loki’s smiling face as he cooed about how talented his son was, talking about how good a safe, warm place would be for Harry. Then he imagined telling Loki that they couldn’t stay.

“Oh.”

“Yeah.” Harry said. “Now you get it. I can’t let dad know. I can’t. Even if I have to lie to him.”

“I understand.” Thor said placing a hand on Harry’s shoulder and giving it a comforting squeeze. Harry shuddered a little under his grip but then tilted slightly to the side to lean against Thor’s body.
“I’m just…It was a really good day Thor.”

“I imagine so.”

“And it’s not fair.” Harry said slamming his fist against the marble floor. A circle of cracks appeared in the stone from the force of it.

“No. No it isn’t.”

“I hate that it was so good. Because I didn’t know before and now, I do and it…it hurts.”

The sun was setting completely over Asgard and on the roof of the palace Thor could hear drops of rain. The sky crying for Thor when he couldn’t. Thor kept back the brunt of the huge storm he wanted to create. Now wasn’t the time. He didn’t know what to say. He wished that he could make it better but there was nothing to do. This was Harry’s choice. He took in a deep breath and spoke.

“You’ll return to Asgard Harry, one day.” Thor promised his voice thick. “This war won’t last forever and when it’s over you’ll be able to come back here. Things change slowly in this realm, it’ll be the same here I promise. Once it’s all over you can come back and rest for as long as you’d like. You can even bring your friends.”

“That…that sounds nice.” Harry said before rubbing his eyes with the back of his hand.

In that moment Thor swore to himself that he’d do everything in his power to make that promise real. He didn’t care what it cost. Harry would get to have days like the one he’d had today for as long as he wanted. They sat there for a while in silence the two of them both wondered how long it would be until they’d be back here. Thor had no idea how long it would take to win a magic war and fulfill that prophecy but he knew he’d be by his nephew’s side every step of the way.

The door to the private room opened and Harry scrambled up, at the same time Sirius turned around the corner with a bag over his shoulder filled with books. Thor got up slowly as Loki stepped out of the room. Loki’s face was white and his jaw was tight.

“Let’s go home.” Loki said.

“Yeah dad.” Harry said easily pretending like he was eager to leave Asgard. “I’m ready to go back where I belong.”

Chapter End Notes

Remember! No update next wednesday! I'll be in Hawaii getting my legs cut up by sharp lava rock!

Follow me on Twitter if you want to know when I'm updating next!
Loki Really Should Stop Making Plans

Chapter Summary

Remus punches Loki in the face and Thor calls Loki an idiot. A normal day really.

Chapter Notes

It's alright everyone! I'm back. I'm alive! It's all good. We should be having regular updates for the rest of the summer unless something unplanned comes up. Thanks for the great comments I enjoyed reading everyone of them! Have fun with this update!

Remus punched him in the face.

Not once, not twice, but thrice.

And it was closer to the full moon that Loki would’ve liked based on the strength in Remus’ limbs. Remus would’ve gone for a fourth and a fifth if Harry hadn’t come to his rescue and pulled Remus away. He wondered where Sirius and Thor were.

This was not necessarily the welcome he’d wanted from Remus but it was certainly the one he’d expected. Thor helped him up off the ground while Sirius and Harry explained things to Remus. Remus was staring at Sirius in disbelief, joy shining out of his golden brown eyes. Loki healed his two rapidly bruising eyes and his rebroken nose, hoping against hope that it wasn’t going to be permanently deformed from all the strain it’d been put under the last week.

Thor accurately read his look and gave his shoulder a pat.

“You’re just as handsome as always.”

“Why didn’t you stop him?” Loki asked. “Are you my brother or aren’t you?”

“Of course I’m your brother.” Thor said. “But that human looked a bit…feral.”

“Don’t make those jokes where he can hear you.” Loki warned. “Remus has an ability much like Banner’s.”

“Ah.” Thor said as he looked back over at the group. “It looks as if this will take some time.”

“It’s quite a story to tell.” There’s a faraway look in Thor’s eyes, something was troubling the man. “Are you alright?”

“I had a conversation with Harry.” Thor said. “And its contents…disturbed me. I’m afraid I promised him I would not tell you more than that and I wish to keep my word. I don’t want you to feel as if I’m purposefully hiding things.”
“Is it dangerous?” Loki asked, his eyebrows furrowing together in concern.

“Not really.” Thor said. “Harry is in no more danger than he was yesterday or the day before.”

Loki sighed at that. It hurt something in him to know that his son lived such a dangerous life. Loki often had to fight back the urge just to scoop the boy up into his arms and hold him to his chest in same way he did when the boy was small. He decided he wouldn’t push Thor any further. He appreciated that Thor told him something at all and understood why Thor wasn’t telling him everything.

“Thor.” Loki said. “Can you keep a secret?”

“Did I not just show that I’m capable of that?”

“Will you then?” Thor rolled his eyes.

“Yes. What is it?”

“I wanted Harry to like Asgard.”

“What?”

“You mustn’t tell him. I don’t want him to feel as if he’s disappointed me.”

“Why would you want him to like Asgard? You hate it there!”

“That’s true but…It’s safe isn’t it?” Loki asked. “No one poses any threat to him there. He could have wandered the city freely, perhaps made some friends. I would’ve dealt with a thousand awkward conversations with Odin if it meant Harry could have had some peace.”

His last conversation with Odin had been…less than stellar. If it hadn’t been for Sirius immediately distracting him after he left that room, Loki probably would’ve tried to break something just to relieve the tension. Thor was staring at Loki like he couldn’t believe what he was hearing.

“And you saw how Odin treated Harry!” Loki pointed out. “I don’t understand why he’s doing it but having Odin on our side would’ve only made Harry’s time in Asgard smoother, if he’d wanted that. It was Sirius’ idea actually, to give Harry the day to wander Asgard and test the waters. We’d both hoped that he’d come back to us brimming with excitement but he just…seemed disinterested. I shouldn’t be surprised, Asgard isn’t much like Hogwarts and it doesn’t have his friends in it.”

Thor looks like he was recently punched in the gut and was trying very hard to hide it. Loki supposed it would be surprising to hear him admit that he was willing to endure Odin of all people for any reason at all.

“Did you not think to tell Harry about this?”

“I told you. I don’t want him to feel like he has to be one way or another.” Loki said. “If I told him that while I hate Odin and don’t want anything to do with him, I would willingly endure him if Harry liked Asgard enough to stay for the rest of the summer. Harry would feel torn wouldn’t he? Because he wouldn’t want to ask me to suffer for him. I wanted Harry to decide for himself what he liked without taking my emotions into it at all.”

“I can’t believe this.” Thor said.

“Oh shut up. I’m capable of empathy and kindness.”
“That’s not it! Loki, in what world would that boy not take into account your feelings?”

“I…what are you talking about Thor?”

“I can’t believe this. You’re both so…” Thor made a frustrated noise then and actually ran a hand through his hair messing up the perfectly styled locks. “Please tell me Lily had common sense. Please tell me your wife was intelligent.”

“What? Of course Lily was smart. Why are you bringing her up?”

“Because you’re-! Loki, Harry loved Asgard!” Loki blinked stupidly at his brother for a moment. The others hadn’t noticed what they were talking about yet and Loki quickly cast a spell to ensure that they wouldn’t.

“Harry told me it was boring.”

“Because he didn’t want to hurt your feelings!” Thor said. “Harry believes he couldn’t stay in Asgard because of the prophecy. And he thought if he told you that he had a great day and that he enjoyed being safe for once in his life that you’d feel bad. So maybe! Next time you decide to come up with a plan for your son you don’t and you tell him what you want instead!”

“Don’t put this on me! He’s the one who lied!”

“He’s the boy who’d just experienced what a normal day should be for the first time in his life!” Thor said. “You purposefully engineered a situation where Harry could experience a good day, safe and free from violence while knowing that he would be unable to continue to have days like that! What was your plan brother? To let him have five good days? Ten? A month’s worth? He wasn’t going to be able to stay forever.”

Loki’s mind raced and he was coming to about fifty different and equally upsetting conclusions about the faults in his and Sirius’ plan. Harry was honest and loyal. He felt a duty to his friends and to earth because of the prophecy. Harry would’ve never, ever agreed to stay in Asgard long, no matter how nice, because of Voldemort’s influence. He was just like his mother, the woman who had denied herself a real wedding party because she felt she had a responsibility to the Order and wouldn’t want to waste their time on something frivolous.

And now Loki had dangled something in front of his son that he would truly want but ultimately decide to deny himself because he was too selfless and good. Loki hadn’t even thought to explain himself. To tell Harry that he could stay in Asgard for the rest of the summer, that Loki would make sure his friends and loved ones were safe while Harry recovered and learnt how to control his strength and magic amongst a people who could handle his outbursts.

Of course, Harry had lied to him. How could the boy have even explained the truth to him? Could Loki even truly understand that pain, his burden? Harry had never known a place like Asgard. He’d only known the abuse of his relatives and the dangers of war. And Harry had had a taste of paradise, a taste Loki had arranged as part of a convoluted plot to give him more than just a taste. That small taste was meant to whet his appetite not leave him constantly starved for a meal that would never come.

A pit opened up deep in his stomach. Could he do nothing right?

“I’m an idiot.”

“A little yes.”
“I hadn’t realized it would be…I just wanted to give him the opportunity to enjoy something.” Loki said. “I wanted him to decide free of anything where he’d like to spend his time. I thought if I didn’t tell him what I felt that he’d...he’d be free to do what he wanted.”

“Harry’s own heart will keep him from freedom for a while.” Thor said. “He’ll keep sacrificing himself time and time again.”

“But he shouldn’t have to! A single summer of fun isn’t going to destroy the world.”

“Harry would never see it that way.” Loki groaned knowing Thor was right.


“He met Tyr.”

“What?”

“I don’t know how exactly but he ended up in training with the other trainees. You’ll never guess what he did.” Thor said. “Tyr told me that Harry disarmed him. On the first try!”

“No.”

“Yes! Tyr told me that he was considering making Harry his apprentice!”

“What!” Loki’s voice was literally bursting with pride. He listened as Thor told him nearly word for word what Tyr had told him. His smile kept growing wider and wider. It was almost easy to forget what Loki had just learnt about his son.

“I’m so proud of him!”

“He’s brilliant! My son is absolutely brilliant!” Loki grabbed Thor’s hands and jumped up and down a little.

“I know!” Thor squealed.

“Are you two done behind that privacy ward?” Sirius asked.

Thor and Loki both jumped like spiders had been conjured to crawl down their spines. Remus, Sirius, and Harry were both standing there grinning at the two of them. Harry a slight look of suspicion on his face and Loki remembered that Thor had promised to keep the Tyr thing a secret. He probably looked a bit silly. Loki dropped Thor’s hands and the privacy ward at the same time. He let his face slide into something close to neutrality.

“Are you going to punch me again Moony?”

“No.” Remus said smiling, the man held out his arms. “I missed you Prongs.”

“Oh so I’m just supposed to give you a hug.”

“Yes.”

“You didn’t even apologize for breaking my nose! Or for calling me those rude names!”

“James.”

Loki gave a really fake sigh to show how put upon he was and stepped forward. He pulled his friend
into a hug, appreciating the familiar scent of chocolate and old books. Remus hugged him back. Some part of his heart felt healed and well in a way it didn’t the moment before. His family felt almost complete with his son, his two best friends, and even Thor. There was still a piece missing, no red hair and tinkling laughter, but for the moment it felt like enough.

“Thank you.” Remus whispered. “Thank you for coming back.”

Oh and the despair Loki could hear in those words. The pain. He pulled his friend a little closer to his chest, wishing he could push away the years of solitude and painful transformations away.

“Thank you for being here.”

There would be time for them to talk privately later. Loki desperately wanted to know what life Remus had lived in the last decade. He wanted to offer comfort and support in anyway his friend required. He tried to imagine the loneliness and pain, the suffering Remus had gone through alone with his condition. But he couldn’t. Loki pulled back from the hug a little.

“We need to talk about the Order and Dumbledore. But not here, can you come back to New York right now? There are plans we must make.” Remus’ eyes hardened at the mention of Albus but then there was an old grief that Loki knew so well.

“It’s tonight.” He said. “It won’t be safe for…”

“Remus.” Loki said. “We are together now. I promise you, like I promised you over a decade ago, I won’t let you hurt anyone. I’m a god, I’m quite sure your teeth won’t be able to pierce my skin.”

“That a risk you want to take?”

“Not a risk, you’re my friend. Come with us.”

“It’ll be okay Remus.” Harry said placing a hand on the man’s shoulder. “We want you around, full moon or not.”

“Harry last time you and I were close on the full moon I almost…”

“You didn’t.” Harry said simply, stepping over a story that Loki had yet to hear. “Sirius was there to protect me and now there’s dad here too. Besides, I’m a demi-god. Pretty sure I’ll be fine.”

Remus smiled a little and Loki decided they’d dithered enough.

“Thor. Come on, let’s get back to the tower.”

“How are we getting there?”

“Portkey?” Sirius suggested.

“Good as anything else.”

So, Loki made a portkey, pulling his son close to his side. The portkey was just a ribbon he conjured out of nothing. He enchanted in the coordinates for the top of Avenger’s Tower and had everyone grab onto the strand. Everyone took it, even Thor who had no idea what the ribbon was going to do.

“Mischief Managed.”

The familiar sensation of being picked up by the navel and flung through space and time overwhelmed Loki for a moment. He held his son tightly and was gratified when he was held right
back. They arrived with a thud, Thor being the only one who didn’t manage a graceful landing.

“Thor a portkey isn’t as bad as the Bifrost. I expected better from you.”

“Yeah.” Sirius said. “Aren’t you supposed be a god or something?”

“Oh shut up.” Loki grinned at his brother annoyed face.

“Let’s go and introduce you two to the Avengers. My wily adversaries.”

“I would like nothing more James.” Sirius said. “Time to show these humans who’s boss.”

“Padfoot.” Remus chided. “They’re heroes not Snape.”

“Ehh. They fought against one of our own, Moony. Have you no loyalty?”

“When the ‘one of our own’ in question was being mind controlled? Not really.”

“You break my heart, Moony. You really do. You should’ve joined me in my fight against the Avengers, mind control or not.”

“If James had come and broken me out of jail I would’ve joined him.”

“Clearly, Padfoot is my true friend.”

“Prongs.” Remus said. “Obviously I’m not your true friend. I was Lily’s. Which meant I would’ve knocked some sense into you in her place.”

All three of them laughed and began their trek into the tower. Loki kept his son at his side. His mind kept going back to what Thor had told him. To what he had planned. Clearly Loki needed to be better at this. If he wanted to support his son he had to be direct about it. Harry wouldn’t do what he expected of him. Loki had expected that if Harry liked Asgard then the boy would tell him. Loki had expected that Harry would enjoy spending a month or two in Asgard.

Harry had done neither of these things and was probably under a lot of emotional duress because of Loki’s poor planning. Who knew trying to give someone a nice day could be so fraught with pitfalls?

“Welcome back.” Jarvis said. “I have alerted the other Avengers to your arrival and Mr. Stark requests your presence in the penthouse to and I quote ‘explain what the hell you two were thinking’.”

Sirius and Remus both jumped a little in shock but Harry was quick to explain that Mr. Stark had a computer butler, or rather an invisible butler that wasn’t a person or a house-elf but was in fact very polite and knew a lot of things. Sirius and Remus accepted this explanation with the skill of two men used to far weirder things. While Harry explained that Loki and Thor led them to the stairs and down to the penthouse.

All of the Avengers were there waiting for them.

None of them looked particularly pleased.

Then again, Loki and Harry had disappeared without so much as a ‘how do you do’. Perhaps a little upset was acceptable.

“You know Loki.” Tony said. “This isn’t a Frat House where you can just bring whoever you want to stay.”
“Isn’t that a halfway house?” Remus asked.

“No it’s a halfway house if you’re using it to house ex-cons. And as I escaped prison I’m currently just a regular con instead of an ex-con.”

“So it’s not a halfway house it’s a bolt hole.”

“Weird bolt hole since it’s so big.” Sirius muttered before looking over at Tony. “You compensating for something mate?”

Tony’s mouth opened in shock while the other Avengers tried to hold back their laughter. Sirius strode forward in complete confidence and threw an arm around Tony’s shoulders.

“Oh don’t be embarrassed. It’s just biology you know.” Sirius confided. “I heard once that Muggles had smaller equipment than wizards just naturally so you shouldn’t feel too poorly.”

“You really want to be talking about equipment Sirius?” Remus asked lifting up an eyebrow. “Because I seem to recall a certain incident in fifth year when you…”

“Oi! Not in front of the kid! He’s got delicate ears!” Sirius interrupted.

“What’d he do, Remus?” Harry asked his voice deceptively innocent.

“Well you see Harry, sometimes when a boy is very stupid and has a crush on a very pretty girl he tends to…”

Sirius jumped forward and slapped his hand over Remus’ mouth, then he yelped.

“You licked me!”

“You put your hand on my tongue in the middle of a word.”

The two started to argue in the same way they had when they were young and Loki soon found himself being dragged in, both of his friends declaring that James would surely agree with them and not the other. The Avengers watched all of this in silent bafflement.

“They’ve been like this all day.” Thor complained. “It’s nearly insufferable.”

“Did you replace Loki with a pod person?” Tony demanded.

“No.” Harry said. “He’s just being himself.”

Those words were said with a sort of pride and joy in them. They made something in Loki’s gut burn because yes, this was who he was, wasn’t it? He enjoyed jokes and teasing and laughter. He hadn’t been himself in a long time and suddenly it felt perfectly normal to be James Potter. Loki had been a mask, a mask that he felt comfortable retiring for the time being.

“Where did you two go?” Steve asked, deciding smartly to leave the three magic users to their good natured ribbing.

“Well first we went to London, then we went to a fog world where we found Sirius and fought some zombies called Draugr. Then we accidentally went to Asgard and I met the King and Queen. Then we came back to London to find Remus and then we came here.”

“What?”
“That was an awful story pup! You totally forgot to mention how handsome and brave I was.”

“Nor did you mention the fact that James got punched in the face five times”

“It was only four!”

Things devolved from there. Loki was content to let everything be chaotic for the foreseeable future. Unfortunately, Remus actually had some sense, and also a time limit. It took him fifteen minutes to wrangle Sirius and Loki into order and from there directed the conversation to explain everything to the Avenger’s satisfaction. Remus had forced everyone to sit down and conducted the explanation like a maestro. This gave the Avengers the very mistaken impression that Remus was reasonable and mature. Which of course couldn’t be further from the truth.

This was proven true when Remus started telling stories designed to embarrassed Sirius and Loki with little to no prompting. The man took on the role of beleaguered friend being dragged into trouble as if he were trying for an Oscar. Sirius and Loki both disagreed vehemently with Remus’ description of events and started piling on evidence of Remus being just as much a bastard as the rest of them.

This evidence included every prank Remus had pulled on their xenophobic defense teacher in their 4th year. 15 different examples of him lying to the headmaster while being a prefect in the name of a prank. His spell ideas for protecting the Marauders Map. And of course, the pranks he’d pulled on Sirius whenever they got into a fight.

(There were a lot of that last one.)

The air was filled with good humor and fun. At some point someone had gotten out drinks and food and there were snacks being passed around between the group. Sirius, when he chose to be, was a master at keeping control of a crowd. There had been many times in their youth that it had been Sirius’ penchant for humor and drama that had brightened up a dull, rainy afternoon. Sirius used this to his advantage now, charming the Avengers into seeing him and Remus as friends instead of strangers.

The end result of this entire conversation was of course laughter. The Avengers were laughing. Thor was booming. Sirius and Remus looked as if their stomachs were hurting. Harry’s eyes were red from the tears. Remus desperately tried to defend his honor as the mature one of the group. But it didn’t look like it was working.

As the stories continued, this time expanding out to the Avengers sharing stories of their own moments of tomfoolery, Loki let his mind wander back to his son. Part of him wanted to confront the boy on his lying. Telling him that he should always be honest. Another part of him didn’t care about the lie and was more concerned with the pain his son was no doubt it. Another part of him just wanted to scream at the universe. Eventually he found some words to share. A quick privacy spell blocked out some of the laughter and Harry looked over at him in question.

“Starlight.” Loki said. “I want to…that is…you should know that I am very proud of you.”

“Thanks.” Harry said. “But…”

“I know things have been hard for you and I…well I can’t imagine what it’s been like. You’ve been faced with some very tough decisions recently.”

“What did Thor tell you?” The boy asked suspiciously. “He promised he wouldn’t…”
Loki wasn’t surprised that Harry had figured it out so quickly.

“He told me that I have an amazing brilliant son who loves me and this world very much.” Loki said. “And I want to tell you that the feeling is mutual. I love you so much Starlight and I want you to be happy, more than anything. And I’m sorry that you feel like you can’t be happy right now.”

“It’s not…It’s not that bad, dad.”

“It is, darling.” Loki said pulling his son into a soft hug. “But it won’t always be. I understand why you said what you said and I…I don’t blame you.”

“You don’t?”

“No.”

“I don’t like lying, you know.”

“Sometimes…sometimes a lie feels necessary.” Loki said. “I’m the god of lies, I can hardly get after you for spouting one or two.”

“Asgard was really nice.” Harry admitted, his voice slightly muffled against Loki’s shoulder. “But earth needs me and…and Thor said I could come back later.”

“Starlight.” Loki said. “Whenever you want, I will take you any place you wish to go. You say the word and I’ll take you to the peaks in Vanaheim or the forges of the dwarves. We can take your friends, we can do whatever you want, whenever you want. I promise you, this war will not last forever and when it’s over you are going to truly live. You are going to explore and laugh and love, and there won’t be a bit of danger I’ll let come your way until you’re ready for it again. I swear it.”

Harry hugged him back, his arms convulsing a little.

“And while this war rages, I’ll promise you something else.”

“What?”

“You’re still going to have pockets of joy.” Loki swore. “Like right now telling funny stories and laughing with all of us. Tom Riddle will not take away what makes you happy, not anymore.”

“Thanks dad.”

“Don’t thank me Starlight. It’s my pleasure.”
How many wizards does it take to run a washing machine?

Chapter Summary

Four, but one of them has to have more than one brain cell.

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone!!! Thanks for all the wholesome comments last chapter. I enjoyed reading all of them!!!

Living with the Avengers was...weird. In fact, living with Remus and Sirius was weird but at least Harry had some sort of idea of how those two acted. At least Harry had thought he’d had an idea. He hadn’t. Sirius and Remus had been put under a strict ‘Do not use magic at all’ rule. The same rule that his dad was under. This was because the tower could only handle so much magic before all of the electronics burst into a shower of sparks. At least that’s what Tony claimed.

Harry was allowed to use magic. Tony had put his hands on his shoulders and said in a very grave tone that Harry had given him the greatest gift of all when he’d punched his dad in such a spectacular fashion.

“Kid. You’re allowed to do whatever the hell you want in my tower. Want to have a rave? We can have a rave.”

“What’s a rave?”

“Oh kid.”

Of course, Loki and Sirius still used magic. They had to during the first few days to help Remus with his transformations. But if the magic didn’t fall under the ‘absolutely have to do’ category then magic was outlawed until Tony could magic proof his Jarvis and his arc reactor. Which meant that Sirius and Remus were both...rather helpless. They’d both been raised in fully magic households. Granted apparently Remus’ mother had been a muggle, a nice Welsh woman Harry learnt, Remus had still spent his entire adult life living as a magic user. Neither man knew how to go totally muggle.

No matter what Sirius claimed.

This resulted in Tony Stark almost pulling out his hair trying to explain basic concepts to wizards whose general understanding of the world could be melted down to ‘have a problem, point your wand at it, and will it better’. Sirius wanted tea but didn’t know how to use an electric kettle, he also didn’t like having to wait the few minutes it took to heat the tea when Tony had explained how to use it. This resulted in a very dramatic (and funny) monologue about how much suffering muggles must live through. Sirius had similar problems with Tony’s fancy shower, the tv, the electronic doors that opened on their own but didn’t require pleasantries like the doors at Hogwarts did, and much more.
He and Jarvis did not get along.

Remus had destroyed the little Roomba robots that had been vacuuming his floor because he’d thought they were some strange spy device. Harry almost wanted to forgive Remus that but watching Remus endure Tony’s ‘lecture’ with a small smile on his face and Harry began to suspect that Remus deserved whatever he had coming to him. Remus also blatantly refused to use the elevator alone, claimed it was too dodgy. Which was probably another blatant lie because the ministry used elevators. When Harry had pointed that out, Remus had said that the ministry elevators ran on magic which was far more trustworthy.

Right.

In the end it was hard to tell how much Remus actually knew some days.

Harry’s dad had similar problems. Apparently before Harry’s arrival, the man had been using magic to get away with most daily tasks. This was how Harry found out his dad didn’t know how to do laundry. Really. The man didn’t even know where the laundry room in the tower was. (Granted neither did Remus or Sirius but they hadn’t been living here for months.) His dad also didn’t know how to use a non-magical oven or the coffee machine. Even though it was one of the really fancy ones that just required you to press a button or two to get a perfectly pressed cup.

So, all of that was weird. Harry had found out his dad didn’t know how to do laundry about the time that he realized he needed to do his. Which is to say the day after they got back from their trip to Asgard. Harry didn’t have that many muggle clothes that actually fit him and so he needed to do laundry pretty quickly. It had been simple to ask his dad who had looked a little sheepish and explained that he rather...didn’t know.

Harry had then asked Thor who also looked sheepish and admitted that he’d been putting his dirty clothes with Steve who had either not noticed the extra load or was doing Thor’s laundry for him out of the kindness of his heart.

Honestly.

Harry had then asked Steve who had given him directions to the laundry room a few floors down. Then when Harry had gotten his wad of dirty clothing ready his dad had appeared holding his own pile with a blush on his face. Harry had brought the man down there and proceeded to teach him how to use the machines and how much detergent to put in. It wasn’t complicated but his dad had the same look on his face that Harry normally had in Snape’s class.

Harry had tried the same explanation with Sirius and Remus and found that both of them were dubious that the machine would actually clean anything at all. But at least they agreed to try it out for themselves. This resulted in Sirius pranking the machines to dye clothing into new and often painfully vibrant colors. (The permanent banning of magic for everyone but Harry followed closely after and was not a coincidence.) This also resulted in all magic users but Harry being banned from the laundry room.

Harry in his infinite kindness then volunteered to do their laundry for them. But they were folding it themselves and Harry extracted a promise of exemptions from any future pranks. Harry was not the only person non-gratis when it came to the mischief that was going on in the tower. And boy was there mischief. Even without magic those three men would stop at nothing to cause trouble.

So yeah. His dad didn’t know how to do laundry and was unlikely to learn anytime soon. Sirius and Remus were both different kinds of helpless in the muggle world which only worsened with time. Thor got being helpless by playing the ‘I’m an alien’ card which Harry thought was rather ridiculous.
He’d learnt how to cook, clean, and do laundry by the time he was five, Thor had no excuse.

Maybe he wasn’t the best example.

If Harry had hoped that the Avengers would be easier to live with then he would have been very disappointed. Because as it turned out all of the Avengers were just as helpless as the other adults in his life. Steve was still trying to catch up on over 70 years of history, along with pretty much all pop culture which left him in much the same boat as the magic users who were unfamiliar with the muggle world. Bruce and Tony both had the worst sleeping schedules Harry had ever seen, and Harry had a scar that gave him painful blood-filled visions when he slept. Both men practically lived off of their preferred caffeinated drinks and sheer stubbornness.

Clint was just a kid in an adults body and had the outlook and self-control as such. Natasha seemed like she could have been the adult of the group but Harry quickly discovered she was pretty much just like Remus. A cool, mature exterior, hiding a mess underneath.

And none of them. Not a single one of them, knew how to cook.

That wasn’t exactly true. Steve still had his great grandmother’s famous apple pie recipe memorized. Bruce knew how to cook curry but it was too spicy for anyone but him to want to eat. Tony knew how to boil noodles, not that he could do anything with them once they were done, but still. It was knowledge. Harry assumed they all had the skill to put a sandwich together but hadn’t checked for confirmation because he feared being wrong.

Thor was a prince who’d had his meals prepared by servants for his entire life. Clint preferred to live off of things that only required the ability to open a package to eat. The magic users had all used magic to cook. Harry had asked if Natasha knew how to cook and she’d told him ‘only things that will kill you’.

Harry had found out that none of them knew how to cook when he’d asked Jarvis if he was allowed to use the well-stocked kitchen. Tony had stocked it with everything a chef could want under the assumption that someone on the team would know or want to use it. He’d been wrong and the entire team had begun to live off of food deliveries and packaged products like savages.

“You wish to use the kitchen?” Jarvis asked.

“Yeah. Its breakfast, and I’m feeling hungry. Is it free for me to use?”

“Yes, would you like me to pull up some recipes or perhaps instructional videos for you to use?” Jarvis asked. “I could also order you whatever foods you would like.”

“No thanks.” Harry said, unaware of the havoc he would be bringing into his life. “I’ve got it.”

So he went to the kitchen. He grabbed flour and sugar and eggs and milk and measuring cups and placed them on a gleaming (and never before used) granite countertop. Harry’s newly discovered godly appetite meant that he planned on making a lot of food. He paused a moment wondering if he should make enough for his dad and then decided he might as well. His dad would probably even be nice about his less than stellar cooking skills.

Harry knew he wasn’t much of a cook. The Dursleys had made that clear. He knew that they ate it still but he’d always imagined it was because they were too lazy to do anything else. So, Harry knew he wasn’t a good cook, but he believed himself to be passable. (Why Harry still believed anything the Dursleys told him would remain a mystery for some time yet but the misunderstanding about his cooking proficiency was about to be cleared up very quickly.)
Harry had done some quick math in his head and determined that most people in this tower could probably eat as much, if not more than a Dudley sized portion. A Dudley-celebrating-something-vile sized portion was about what Harry ate now a few times a day to keep up with his appetite, after all. So if Harry made enough food to feed Dudley five times then there should be enough for himself, his dad, Remus, Sirius, and even Thor.

He put together a meal in his head based on what he saw was available to him and got to work. Harry was up rather early that morning which meant that when he first started there was no one awake to notice what he was doing, or more importantly smell it. However soon enough Harry had filled the kitchen and subsequently the entire open area of the penthouse of the tower with the delicious smells of omelets, bacon, sausages, and pancakes. Harry was, at this point in his life, quite an expert at multitasking in the kitchen. When his relatives weren’t breathing down his neck or outright sabotaging him, he was capable of doing quite a bit at once in the name of a meal.

The smell alerted the person living in the penthouse first. Harry lived in a lower floor with the other magic users and Thor. Only Tony Stark lived in the master suite on the top floor. Which meant that Tony Stark was the first being to waft into the kitchen, led there by a breeze of warm scents. The man, messy haired and oil stained from a night in his lab, stumbled in and paused at the sight Harry presented.

“What?”

“Jarvis said it was okay for me to use the kitchen.”

“That’s not it…kid you know how to cook?” Tony asked as Harry reached out and put a pinch of salt into the egg mixture he was stirring up for his omelet.

“Umm. Yeah.” Harry said. “I’m not very good but…”

“At this point you could be the worst cook in existence and I wouldn’t care, I am so tired of frozen waffles in the morning.” The man said. “Can I have some?”

Harry motioned freely to the food he’d already made that was still steaming on the various plates he’d pulled out. Tony walked forward and pulled one of the plates, this one with a large golden fluffy omelet on it with a side of bacon. Harry produced a fork for him and pretended not to watch as the man took his first bite. He expected to see that look of disdain that always accompanied his aunt.

Instead the man froze, his brown eyes widening as he chewed. Harry winced.

“It’s awful isn’t it? Oh this was a terrible idea I shouldn’t have even…”

“Kid.” Tony said, his voice hushed. “Please give up on the hero business.”

“What?”

“I will pay you any amount of money if you will live here and make me food like this for the rest of my life.”

“I don’t…”

“This is delicious! You should have mentioned this way earlier! Are the demi-god of food or something? Never mind. Doesn’t matter. Jarvis! Tell Clint to get his ass up here and try this.”

Harry allowed himself to be bewildered by Tony Stark for a moment longer before he turned back to
his cooking. In the meantime Tony continued to eat his breakfast. Clint did indeed come up and when he was there, Tony just shoved another full plate at him. Clint had nearly the same reaction as Tony had. Which was highly unexpected. In all honesty he wasn’t sure how to deal with it. Except by making more food whenever a new Avenger wandered in.

One by one they all appeared and as they did, they all got a plate. Harry managed to sneak his own meal in as he cooked and he found he didn’t mind. Thor and his dad had both been very loud and proud in their compliments of his cooking. As had Sirius and Remus. Sirius had even gone so far as to ruffle his hair and call him gifted. There was a warmth bursting in his heart as he watched everyone enjoy his cooking. All the adults in the room were settled around the penthouse in whatever chairs they could scrounge up, laughing and joking. They were all so excited and happy and Harry liked that.

At least he did until he learnt the truth.

“None of you know how to cook?!”

He’d never been so disappointed in his life.

They were the Avengers and heroes, not to mention grown adults. How did none of them know how to take care of themselves? Harry listened to their justifications and defenses in a stupor. He couldn’t believe it. He didn’t want to believe it.

And yet it was true. It was a startling comparison to the Dursleys. The only difference being that Aunt Petunia knew how to cook and just refused to when Harry was around. Tony had not been the only person to ask him to cook more often for the group. His mind abruptly created an image of him chained to the oven constantly pushing out mountains of food for the gods and super-soldiers of the team. Inwardly he shook himself.

“I dunno.” Harry said. “That’s a lot of work…”

“Obviously we’d help out.” Clint said. “Anytime you feel like cooking just let us know and a couple of us will help with the prep and the rest of us will do clean up. Right guys?”

“Only when I feel like it?” Harry asked dubiously. He didn’t fail to notice the looks some of the Avengers exchanged with each other.

“Course kid.” Tony said. “We’re not going to make you do anything you don’t want to.”

And that was the weirdest part about living with the Avengers. When they said things like that, they meant it.

True to their word they did not ask him to cook, they did not bother him about it. They didn’t even subtly bring up anything. Harry watched them around meal times with hawk eyes looking for any sort of resentment or frustration, but there was nothing. It was weird. It was incomprehensible. For three days Harry watched and wondered, trying to understand this odd turn of events. The Avengers treated him as they always had. Inviting him to play video games, or to train his strength with them. Sirius, Remus, and his dad still researched his scar and other magic things for him and invited him to help if he wanted. They all smiled at him and greeted him with friendliness. They did all this despite the fact that Harry wasn’t giving them what they wanted.

They had wanted his food, right? Harry couldn’t have possibly misinterpreted their appreciation of that breakfast. They’d even asked him to cook again and Harry had deferred. They didn’t even complain about it. Harry even went so far as to ask Jarvis if any of the Avengers had been heard
talking about his lack of cooking behind his back. Jarvis told him that they hadn’t complained.

It was unfathomable.

In the end he decided to test it. He decided to cook dinner, when he walked into the kitchen with a purpose it only took three minutes for Thor and Steve to show up. Both men insisted that they be allowed to help.

“Just tell us what to do, Harry.”

And Harry, unable to argue with them, did exactly that. He watched, mystified, as the god of thunder learned how to mince and Captain America tried his hand and peeling onions and garlic. Harry took pity on the captain eventually and showed him the trick of how to peel garlic quickly by pressing on it with the flat part of the knife to break the skin. The desired part of the garlic would slide right out free of it’s confines. Steve had looked at him like he was some sort of wizard. Which he was but this was different.

Neither of them complained about the tasks they were given, they just did them as best they could and took correction from Harry when necessary.

It was sort of freaking Harry out.

“So Harry.” Steve asked. “Where did you learn to cook?”

“Taught myself mostly.” Harry shrugged, trying to seem nonchalant. “Picked up a few cookbooks from the library and did my best.”

“Really? That’s interesting.” Steve said without a hint of condescension. “What caused all the interest in it?”

His uncle had slapped him upside the head one too many times for burning breakfast and Harry had decided to do something about it. Not that Harry was going to say that out loud. He licked his lips and side-stepped the question.

“It was just…something I thought I should know.”

“Right.” Steve said. “Well either way you should be proud, you’re really good at this.”

Harry hummed in a way that implied he agreed without him actually having to agree with anything. The conversation moved on from there to Thor talking about his favorite Asgardian foods. Some of which Harry had actually had, some of which he’d not yet tried. Steve added on talking about his favorite foods, things that had since fallen out of style in the past 70 years or had changed so drastically it wasn’t fair to call them the same at all.

When dinner was ready and served Harry wasn’t allowed to do any of the clean up, instead Clint, Natasha, and Remus did it while Tony set up a movie for them all to watch. Tony had made the executive decision to educate the magic users in modern muggle media, and he was doing it with movies. Harry found himself snuggled up on a couch, his dad’s arm around him and Sirius as a dog with his head in Harry’s lap receiving head scratches with an action movie he’d never seen playing on the screen.

It became a tradition after that. Anytime Harry decided to make a dinner they’d have a movie night after. It was nice if worryingly impossible to understand. Harry explained this all to Hermione who was busy helping her parents pack and get ready to move to New York. She told him that it seemed normal to her. Her parents never made her do things she didn’t want to do, unless it was something
like getting her vaccines. Ron gave a similar answer although he also thought it was sort of weird that Harry didn’t have any chores at all.

There was a strange feeling in the air for him now. He was afraid to ask any questions because what if that destroyed the peaceful balance? So he didn’t ask. He just cooked whenever he felt like it and spent his days learning to control his strength and learning some interesting magic from his family. He did his best not to bring up the war or the prophecy. The knowledge of it hung around him like a fog. He did his best to ignore it, even when his scar twinged in pain or someone asked about Death Eaters.

Harry knew that this moment of peace would end soon enough. Hermione was on her way and she was never one to let things rest. Once she was here it would be time to work. Beyond that Remus needed to return to the Order and begin the plan to get one over Dumbledore. And yet he found himself trying his best to revel in what his dad called pockets of joy. Things like learning how to play Mario Kart or watching Sirius and Remus prank Thor’s things.

He wondered how long he’d have before Voldemort would rear his ugly head again. He wondered if he’d be ready. But whenever he wondered about it too hard his dad would throw his arm around his shoulders and tell him how proud he was, and the thoughts would fade.

It was weird here. But Harry could get used to weird.
Hermione the Ruthless

Chapter Summary

Hermione finally arrives in New York, with her careful parents in tow.

Chapter Notes

I’m so glad all of us want to protect Harry so much. I really felt the love for him last week in all the comments. The poor boy deserves so many hugs. Thanks for the great comments! I hope you all like this week's update!

The airport was loud. Of course, Hermione had known it would be. She’d flown plenty of times before on different vacations with her parents, but she’d never been to America before and this place… was much louder than expected. She huffed and readjusted her grip on her book. She’d managed to get her hands on some good magical theory books that she was certain would help her with the project Tony Stark had invited her to help with and she was almost finished with this one.

In front of her, her parents walked, hand in hand. Her mum was pulling the carry-on that her parents always shared. Her dad was carefully holding Crookshank’s carrier. In between paragraphs, Hermione always looked up to make sure she was still following her parents as they moved from their gate and towards customs and baggage claim. Her dad pulled out his phone and said that their ride was already waiting for them.

“Oh, how exciting!” Her mother gushed. “I always knew our little Hermie would do great things but I never thought it’d be an internship with The Tony Stark.”

Hermione rolled her eyes a little at the nickname. It was one of the things that had haunted her before Hogwarts. The kids at her old school had heard her mum call her that and had started making fun of her. Hermione had been very careful to ensure people called her by her name at Hogwarts. Although Ron and Harry sometimes shortened her name, it didn’t bother her. They were her friends. Her family.

She discreetly pulled on the long sleeve of her shirt, the cuff had slid down some and was now revealing a peak of her newest form of what her mother would call ‘rebellion’. Her parents had yet to see the mark on her wrist from when she’d magically declared herself Harry’s sister and she would like to keep it that way until she was 18, at least. She hoped Harry would be willing to cast some sort of glamor over it soon so that she wouldn’t have to keep wearing jackets in this heat.

Carefully she turned the page of her book, her mind wandering back down paths that were far easier for her to comprehend than her parents had ever been. Not to say that she didn’t love them. She did. But her parents frankly, did not understand her and she did not understand them. It wasn’t even the magic that was the problem, her parents loved magic. No the problem was that Hermione was what her father had always called an ‘odd duck’.

Hermione had been entirely nonverbal until she was 3. She had broken that streak of silent treatment
after her parents had taken her to numerous doctors all of which had found that there was nothing wrong with her. Her mother had despaired, wondering what she’d done wrong and Hermione had hugged her mother around the neck, sniffed at her rose scented soap and said quite clearly.

“Don’t worry mummy, I was just looking for the right thing to say.”

Hermione was not the sort of girl to bother with only having one first word. No her first words had to be strung beautifully together into a good proper sentence. She could still remember her frustration as a child, she hadn’t like speaking until she knew she had just the right words to use. Sometimes it felt like she never ever had the right words no matter how hard she tried. Her parents had done their best, giving her books upon books upon books, letting her collect as many words and definitions as she could. If she needed to have the right words in order to speak then they would make sure she had them.

Hermione had grown up into a bookworm who preferred the structure of books and a never-ending quest for knowledge over interacting with people. She had tried a few times as a younger girl, stepping forward to share what she’d learnt about whatever her new interest was but people always just called her a know-it-all. Her parents tried to keep up, but they were dentists. Just normal people with normal interests.

They didn’t understand half of what Hermione talked about by the time she was 7. At first it had been that Hermione didn’t speak enough and then she spoke too much. Her parents adjusted best they could and they always got her the books she wanted. They tried to support her in her quest to make friends and they always comforted her when she inevitably failed. But they simply did not understand.

Going to Hogwarts had transformed Hermione in more ways than one. Discovering magic, and all that that entailed had given her the longest lasting obsession she’d ever had in her life. Before she would jump from subject to subject, picking up a book or two and devouring it before moving on. Now at Hogwarts, she couldn’t even think about moving on. Magic was just too fascinating.

She’d hoped that Hogwarts would be filled with people like her. Perhaps magic was what made her this way. Perhaps she was like the birds she’d read about. How different birds had different calls and birds of different species couldn’t understand the calls from each other. Maybe all her life she’d been calling out for her own flock, a call that fell on uncomprehending ears. It wouldn’t be anyone’s fault then that she hadn’t made friends. They’d been speaking in different languages this whole time.

She had been, of course, disappointed. That became clear on the train ride over and her disastrous first conversation with Harry and Ron. Ron where she insulted his spell and told him about his dirty nose and then Harry where she pointed out that she’d read all about him like some creepy stalker. Hermione had called out an awkward birdsong full of enthusiasm about magic and the houses and the two boys she’d hoped would answer had stared at her, laps covered in candy wrappers and dirt on their noses.

She could still remember the exact words she’d read about Harry. The historians had wrote his birthday, his ancestry, and a bunch of incorrect assumptions about what had happened that night with You-Know-Who. Then again she remembered every word she’d ever read in her entire life. Up to and including her very first book, a Websters dictionary she’d found on her father’s desk at the age of 3 and ¾.

The first words she’d ever read had, in fact, been a definition for the word ‘a’.

It was clear then that it was not magic that made Hermione different. It was simply who she was. By Halloween of her first year she had resigned herself to loneliness. Ron had been right, she was a
know-it-all. A bird with a flock of one. That knowledge was far more crushing at Hogwarts than it
had been before because now she didn’t even have her mother’s rose scented soap and her father’s
soft hands to comfort her.

And then she’d been almost crushed by a troll’s club.

She’d also told her first lie to an authority figure about five minutes after that, and for some reason
that struck her as a far more significant occurrence. Perhaps because she’d only been attacked by a
troll the once and she’d found herself lying to adults with far more frequency after that.

Either way. The most important thing from that night was that as she stood there, her 11 year old
body shaking with adrenaline, two boys had stood by her side. (She could draw the chemical shape
of the bonds of that hormone in her sleep still. She’d memorized all the hormones in the human body
when she was 9.) Then once the adults had left, Ron had apologized for calling her a name and told
her that she’d been right.

“And if I hadn’t listened to you, we would’ve never defeated that troll!”

Hermione had, quite accidentally, made two friends. Friends who had, within a few weeks, learnt
how to sing the same bird call as her. Harry had figured out quite quickly that Hermione never meant
any harm when she corrected them. She just loved magic ever so much and she wanted to share what
she knew with anyone who would listen. Ron grew to be able to tell the difference between when
Hermione was just being herself and when she was genuinely annoyed. And she grew too. She
learnt how to repeat the birdsong of her peers, Ron and Harry acting as her guides.

Her parents always remarked about how much she changed every time she went to school.
Hermione couldn’t bring herself to regret it. She was much happier now than she’d ever been before.
Even with the war going on. She readjusted her sleeve one more time, her fingers brushing over the
tattoo.

“Hermie?” Her mother called. “I need your passport.”

“Here.” Hermione said reaching into her pocket and pulling out the booklet. Her mother took it and
handed it to the woman behind the custom’s desk. Around them conversations from various muggles
ebbled and flowed and Hermione wished she could cast a spell to muffle the noise. Crowds always
grated against her ears.

“There we go.” Her mother said.

They made it through customs easily enough. Crookshanks had passed inspection with minimal
fussing. Her cat had been very polite in his carrier, she was very proud of him. Then they went
towards the baggage claim. A majority of their things were being shipped over separately but
Hermione had packed her most precious books in her trunk and insisted on having it flown over with
them. Her parents had also insisted she pack clothes and they’d done the same in their own bags.

They went down a very long escalator and went to the left, her parents were looking for the right
baggage carousel from which their things would be spit out. Hermione turned another page on her
book.

“Hermione!”

Hermione’s head snapped up from her book and she saw Harry standing there by the carousel
labeled ‘9’. He was wearing clothing that fit and he looked well fed and rested. In fact, Hermione
was quite sure, that Harry looked healthier and happier than she had ever seen him. And since she’d
never forgotten what her friend had looked like each day she’d known him, not since the first time she saw him on that train, she knew exactly how important that was.

“HARRY!”

She rushed in between her parents and towards her best friend. Harry grinned, his bright green eyes literally glowing in the fluorescent lighting of the airport. She flung herself into her best friend’s waiting arms, the pages of her book getting bent and wrinkled. Harry lifted her up effortlessly and hugged her, huffing a little as her very bushy hair covered his entire face. Harry spun them around slightly before lowering her so that her feet could touch the floor. She wasn’t quite used to his new height yet.

“Your book.” Harry said looking at the now slightly damaged pages in concern. “Here let me fix that.”

He gently reached out and used a bit of magic to straighten out the pages. Hermione beamed at her friend.

“How are you?” Hermione asked, closing the book and sticking it under her arm for safekeeping.

“Good.” Harry said and she could tell he meant it. “How about you? Was the flight okay?”

“It was loud.” She said and Harry nodded needing no more explanation from her on her opinion of the flight.

“I hope you had a few good books at least.” He said.

“Of course I did.” What did he take her for? Harry grinned at her.

“Hermione?” Her father said. “Would you care to introduce us?”

“Right.” Hermione said. “Mum, Dad. This is Harry Potter. Harry these are my parents. Dr. and Dr. Granger.”

“Hullo.” Harry said holding out his hand to shake her dad’s hand. “It’s nice to finally meet you.”

Her dad took Harry’s hand and shook it. His parents were studying Harry, the source of all the danger Hermione had ever been in for her entire life, with consternation. They were doing their best to be open minded she knew and she hoped Harry wouldn’t take it personally.

“You’re…uh dentists right?” Harry asked. “That’s what Hermione told me.”

“We are.” Her mother said. “We’ve been running our practice for over 20 years now. Although we’ve had to shut down because of this…situation.”

In another universe Hermione would have a very large argument about what her mother had called ‘the situation’ with her parents. Her parents had always been supportive of her friendship with Harry, even if they didn’t understand it. Supportive until the war became real, until people started dying. They’d wanted her to stay home, to stay safe. They simply didn’t understand why she had to be the one to stand against Voldemort. And Hermione would have refused to stay because she knew where she was meant to be. In that other world that argument would end with Hermione deciding to move her parents to Australia, memories hidden away, and running to the Burrow, ready to save the world with her two best friends.

But in this world, her mother’s words only caused Hermione to frown a little as Harry shifted
awkwardly on his feet.

“Right. Well, we should get our bags.” Her dad said. “Who came to pick us up?”

“Uhm, me, my dad and Tony.” Harry said. “They’re outside, didn’t want to cause a scene or anything. Once we get your bags, we’ll head out to the car and then to the tower.”

“How is your dad?” Hermione asked pulling her friend away from the awkward tension her parents had caused. “I know over the phone you said things were weird and if he’s doing something you don’t like then…”

“He’s…it’s really good, ‘Mione. Even if it’s weird sometimes, I still like it. He- He uh…” Harry cleared his throat a little and then spoke. “He calls me Starlight sometimes and it’s nice. He always answers my questions no matter what they are and he never gets annoyed with me.”

Hermione could have danced for joy. In all her wildest dreams she’d never even hoped that Loki would be good for Harry. She had just prayed that the god wouldn’t hurt him. This was better, much better. Her friend sounded so happy, so at peace with himself as he talked about his dad. In front of them the carousel’s conveyor belt began to move and suitcases slid down from a chute onto the belt. Her trunk appeared quite quickly and Harry grabbed it for her, not even wincing at the incredible weight of all of her favorite books.

Super strength would obviously come in handy when they went shopping for their school supplies in a month or so.

Once her parents found their suitcases and Hermione had taken Crookshanks from her dad, Harry led them out of the airport and towards where a limo was waiting. An actual limo.

“I’ll get this into the back.” Harry said.

“Let me help you there son. That trunk is a bit…” Her dad stopped talking when Harry easily hefted up the entire trunk, balancing it on one hand so that it was being held up at Harry’s shoulder.

The door to the limo opened up and out slid the one and only god of mischief. He was wearing, not the customary armor leather she’d always seen him wearing on the telly, but instead a pair of jeans and a soft t-shirt. He looked like the pictures Hermione had seen of James Potter, wearing casual muggle clothing. The only difference being the hair style and eye color.

“Hello, you must be the Grangers.” Loki said. “It’s an honor, please, come on in. There are drinks and snacks inside if you need anything before we arrive at the tower.”

It was all very fancy, Hermione blinked a little and made her way into the limo. She didn’t expect to see Tony Stark just sitting there in an Armani suit, tapping away on his expensive phone. She kept her cool and carefully sat on the other bench, leaving room for Harry on one side of her. Her parents followed inside and immediately Tony put his phone down and started talking to her parents, welcoming them and explaining where they’d be staying and what he’d prepared for them.

Harry and Loki got in and Harry immediately took the seat Hermione had left for him. He grinned at her and then whispered.

“So what’s so cool about your book?”

Hermione grinned and started talking, rapid-fire, about everything she’d learnt in the book. The words, excitedly spilling out of her and towards her eager audience. Harry listened easily, interrupting only when he didn’t understand something, and she happily redefined and explained the
concept. It wasn’t often that they had time for Hermione to talk like this, but sometimes on a free
Sunday at school, when there wasn’t quidditch practice or something evil to thwart she got to lecture
her friends to her heart’s content.

Ron sometimes complained, but that was usually only in good fun. Ron and Hermione did so enjoy
having a good, rousing argument with each other. He was only serious when they didn’t have
something for him to snack on. Harry only ever got annoyed when something was trying to kill him
or otherwise destroy something he loved. But right then? Harry was relaxed, almost basking in
Hermione’s excited babbling. It was the perfect sort of day. The only thing that would make it better
was if Ron were here.

“Hermione.” Her mother said interrupting her almost mid-word. “Slow down, you’re talking far too
much. I’m sure your friend here is a bit overwhelmed. I’m sorry about her, sometimes she just gets
into these zones where she…”

“There’s nothing wrong with what she was doing.” Harry interrupted, his eyes narrowing. “I asked
Hermione about her book and I like listening to what she has to say.”

“Well, but she can get a bit-”

“She has nothing to apologize for.” Harry said very sternly. “She’s my best friend and she’s great
just the way she is.”

Her mother’s lip wobbled a little and even her dad looked a bit teary. Hermione realized in that
moment that her parents had been afraid that Harry wasn’t really her friend. That Harry, like so many
before him, was only using Hermione for her brain and didn’t actually like her. They’d been trying to
protect her.

“Oh…yes of course you’re right.” Her mum said, in a tone that made it clear she might as well have
been saying ‘oh what a darling boy this is’.

“Well.” Loki said, interrupting them. “We’re here. Let’s get you all settled.”

“Come on. ‘Mione.” Harry said. “I’ll get your trunk and then I’ll show you around, this place has a
pool.”

“It does?” Hermione asked.

“Yeah, it’s great!”

“Go on, Hermie.” Her mum said. “We’ll find you later. I want to talk to Mr. Stark about what your
internship is going to entail.”

Hermione nodded and followed her friend. Ignoring the amused look on Harry’s face as he mouthed
the word ‘Hermie’. He took her up an elevator and to a floor that had been designated for her and her
parents. Apparently, Harry’s room was a few floors up from her’s.

“I stay with my dad and uncle. I’ve got my own room and everything. Jarvis can you show us a map
of the tower so I can point things out to Hermione?”

“Of course sir.” A smooth slightly robotic voice said from nowhere, Hermione jumped a little.

“Who is that?”

“It’s Jarvis.”
“I am Mr. Stark’s personal AI. It is my job to meet the daily needs of the inhabitants of Avengers tower.”

“An AI?” Hermione squealed. Before spouting out fifteen different questions to Jarvis about his capabilities and programming.

(She’d had an obsession with AIs when she was 10 for about 5 months.)

“Perhaps you should direct these queries to Mr. Stark?” Jarvis suggested. “He is with your parents in the penthouse.”

“Let’s go Harry! I can’t believe this! A real Artificial Intelligence! Don’t you know what this means Harry?”

“I imagine you’re going to tell me.” Hermione rolled her eyes and told him about the wonderful implications for the world of science as they went back into the elevator and up to the penthouse. The elevator opened up silently and Harry led her down a hallway towards the living room. They paused at the sound of arguing.

“My daughter is not going to have anything to do with this damn war!” Her dad said. “She’s a child.”

“I understand that and I’m not suggesting we put her in the front lines.” Loki said. “But you cannot ignore reality.”

“The reality,” Her mother snapped. “is that my baby girl has been put in near death situation after situation because of her association with your son. And now you’re suggesting that we put her into further harms way? This is a job for adults, for trained wizards and witches. Not a child, not my dear sweet Hermie.”

Hermione frowned. She wasn’t a dear sweet Hermie. Not anymore. No she was the girl who’d lit teachers on fire, who’d locked a reporter in a glass jar for months, who’d started an illegal underground fighting club/army, who’d gotten a corrupt ministry official trampled by centaurs. Dear sweet Hermie wouldn’t have broken Draco Malfoy’s nose and she wouldn’t have broken into a government building to fight terrorists.

That was not who Hermione was. It wasn’t who she’d ever been. Her parents still didn’t understand. She listened as both her mother and father argued that Hermione was too delicate to fight, too kind. Hermione wasn’t kind. She was proactive. If she saw an injustice in the world then she did everything in her power to stand up against it. Whether it was the unfair execution of a hippogriff or the enslavement of house elves. And when it came to defending the people she loved? Hermione wasn’t kind, no Hermione was ruthless.

She stomped into the room, Harry at her heels like a protective shadow.

“I absolutely forbid my daughter from fighting.” Her mother said.

“Mum.” Hermione said causing everyone to look at them.

“Hermie!” Her mother greeted before seeing her glower. “What’s wrong sweetheart?”

“What’s wrong?” She asked. “What’s wrong is that you think you can choose this for me!”

“Now, Hermione.” Her dad began.
“No dad.” She said. “This is my choice and I can’t not fight. I have to.”

“We need to trust in the adults now darling.” Her mother said. “The magical government will…”

“There’s nobody to trust but ourselves!” Hermione cried, entirely disillusioned. “Dumbledore is a manipulator who will lie and abuse anyone he can in the name of the Greater Good. The Minister of Magic lied to the public for an entire year just so that he wouldn’t have to deal with the war. Professor Umbridge tortured my best friend for months because he was brave enough to tell the truth! The adults were the one who let all of the Death Eaters off after the end of the first war. It was them that let corruption and evil fester! And I am tired of lying to myself about it!”

Her parents were staring at her as if they’d never seen her before in their lives and perhaps they hadn’t, not really. Loki and Tony Stark were both looking at her too, but with something more like awe than fear in their eyes.

“All this time I’ve been telling myself that I can trust the adults, the professors at my school and the minister but I can’t! I can’t! No one can! They only serve themselves, they don’t care about who they hurt to get what they want! You raised me to believe in the law and in authority but you were wrong! I need to fight, I need to stand up for this world because the adults never will. They had over a decade to make a change, they had four years of warning that Tom Riddle was reactivating and they did nothing! The government is corrupt! The Order is useless! All we have to hope for is right there!”

She motioned dramatically to her friend, to Harry. The person who’d wrestled a troll and stuck his wand up its nose for her on Halloween night. The friend she’d follow anywhere, no matter what.

“I know what I need to do, mom dad. I know that I met Harry all those years ago because…because we needed each other and because the world needs us. I’ve been fighting in this war for a year now! Training and studying for it!”

“Hermione Jean Granger. You’ve done no such thing!”

“I have!” She said. “And I used magic to shrink and straighten my teeth. I got a tattoo. I formed an illegal army of children with Harry as it’s general! I’ve broken into the Forbidden Section of the library more times than I can count! I’ve lied and broken every school rule I can think of because if no one else is going to stand up for this world then I will!”

Hermione’s hair stood up on end, like a lion’s mane. That’s what she felt like right then, like a lion. She was finally the Gryffindor she’d claimed to be for all these years.

“But you’re just a child.”

“But you’re just a child.”

“I’m needed.” Hermione said simply. “I have brains and an encyclopedic knowledge of everything I’ve ever read. I have a wand and I know where I’m meant to be and what I’m meant to do. It doesn’t matter that I’m young. I’d rather fight now, young and with my friends by my side than wait and lose anyone else to this war. You can’t choose this for me, I already did.”

“But Hermie. How can you know that you…”

“You raised me to know right from wrong mum.” Hermione said. “And I did the math. Harry needs me to end this war, I know he does. If I don’t help him, if I hide? That’d be wrong.”

“You did math?” Harry interrupted.

She’d done the math again and again and again as a 13 year old. Sitting in Arithmancy and
determining how likely it would be that her friends would survive without her.

“It’s not important.” Hermione said. “Just know that your odds aren’t great without me.”

“Oh I already knew that.”

Her parents looked heartbroken and so, so very frightened. Hermione stepped forward and took their hands in her own.

“It’s the right thing to do and I’m not going to hesitate.” Hermione said. “I promise you, I’m not going to let myself get killed. I’ll train and study and practice whatever I have to. No matter what happens, I’m going to be okay.”

It wasn’t a promise she could actually keep, and she’d never been one for divination but she still meant it with all her heart. Her mother sobbed and her dad pulled her into a hug. Hermione hugged them back, whispering that she loved them, and she knew they worried but they had to trust her. Eventually she pulled back from the hug and her parents looked at one another. It was the same look they’d had when she’d begged to go to Hogwarts.

“Fine.” Her dad said looking over at Loki. “But you’d better get her some armor or something. A helmet at least.”

“That.” Loki said, sizing Hermione up and down. “I can do.”
Harry stood next to Hermione. His friend was wearing some exercise clothing that he’d never seen in his life. Granted for the most part he saw Hermione in her school uniform but still the purple stretchy fabric was new. He’d opened his mouth to ask about it and she gave him a look.

Right.

“You’re the one who’s wearing jeans.”

“They work.” Harry shrugged. “Besides when I train dad has me in armor.”

“And you’re not wearing that now because?”

Harry shrugged, suddenly embarrassed about how he looked in the Asgardian clothes.

“I’ll put it on later.”

“You should put it on now. Your dad and the others are going to be here soon.” Hermione said. “Oh I can’t believe my parents agreed to let me get some training. I never thought…”

Personally, Harry was of the opinion that her parents hadn’t agreed so much as been forced but he wasn’t stupid enough to say that out loud. For one, Harry didn’t want to anger Hermione by pointing out how terrifying she could be. And for two? Well he didn’t think her parents would appreciate that either. Granted her parents didn’t seem to like him much at all. Her mother switched between appraising him as her daughter’s friend and condemning him for being such a danger magnet. Her dad glared at him whenever he hugged Hermione.

He tried not to be offended. He knew deep down that they were right to not like him. Most adults didn’t and besides, Hermione would be safe if she hadn’t been his friend. She could safely read her books and she’d never have been in that fight in the Ministry. If Harry wasn’t in Hermione’s life she’d be safe. But that wasn’t reality and now Hermione was going to be joining him for training every day.

Wearing tight purple exercise clothing that she looked less than comfortable in.

“Harry.” Hermione said. “Why are you looking like that?”
“What? I’m not looking like anything.”

“You are.” She said. “You’ve got that…crease on your forehead you get when you’re worried.”

Harry reached up to rub at the wrinkle in his skin, the wrinkle he didn’t even know was there.

“It’s nothing.” He said. Hermione gave him a look and he grimaced a little. “Can I teach you the sword moves I learnt in Asgard?”

“The ones you picked up from Tyr?” She asked eagerly. Both of them had come down to the gym early before the adults were meant to show up because Hermione wanted to ‘warm-up’. She was eager and perhaps a bit nervous. Both of them had been training under the cover of night without any adults present. Who knew if they’d even been teaching themselves the right thing? Harry figured they were both pretty average at this sort of thing, they’d need as much training and help as they could get.

Harry didn’t know when his dad and the others were going to come down. His dad had gone back to Asgard to pick up a few things. Books, Harry assumed, as his dad had worked through the majority that he’d first picked up. It was strange to think that his dad was going to Asgard for an hour two as an errand as if Asgard wasn’t an entirely different planet.

“Yeah.” He said motioning to the two training swords that his dad had brought back from Asgard. “Come on, grab the smaller one and I’ll show you.”

She rushed forward and grabbed the smaller sword. He asked to see if it felt okay in her hand and she nodded.

“Just show me already.”

“Okay. So basically it’s this block.” Harry began. “You hold the sword like this.”

He started showing Hermione exactly what he’d learnt in Asgard and she followed him. He corrected her stance, having her spread her feet out a bit wider so she was more stable, and then rearranged her hold on the sword handle. Once that was done, he had her repeat the movements he’d learnt with the other trainees. It took about fifteen minutes until she insisted they try it out on each other.

“Alright.” Harry said. “Let’s have a sword fight I guess. I’m gonna be as careful as I can. I think I’ve got my strength under control…I hope.”

“It’ll be fine.” Hermione said sounding far more confident than Harry actually felt.

The two of them moved so that they were facing each other, about 4 feet apart. Harry counted down to three and once he reached one, his friend stepped forward with a swing. Harry lifted his sword and blocked the blow. It felt too light compared to what the trainees had done, and Harry immediately tempered his strength, trying to match his friend’s. Hermione stepped back and began to circle him. Harry did the same to her.

Clang!

Crash!

Crack!

The two swords filled the room with a cacophony of noise as Hermione tried multiple different
attacks with Harry merely defending against each of them. They continued to circle each other.

“Are you going to tell me what your problem is?” Hermione asked causing Harry to stumble a little. She took that opportunity to slash at him. Harry forced himself onto the ground and rolled out of the way. He jumped up, sword at the ready and Hermione swung at him again.

“There’s no problem.”

“Harry.” She said sternly. Harry looked away and then sighed for a moment.

“Your parents don’t like me.”

“I think they’re more upset with me than you.” Hermione said blocking Harry’s swing, her face grimacing at the force.

“Sorry. Too much?”

“Maybe just a bit.” She admitted, they both stepped back and Hermione shook her right hand trying to get rid of the ringing pain. “Let’s try it again.”

Harry gave her a look and she pursed her lips. Right. She lifted her sword again and Harry swung down, trying to be as gentle as possible. Their swords clanged together and Hermione didn’t even looked pained. That was good.

“So you’re upset about my parents?”

“Well they’re right to hate me, aren’t they?” Harry asked. “I’m no good for you.”

“What are you talking about? Harry you’re my best friend.” Hermione told him as she attempted to stab him right in the stomach.

“Yeah. Exactly.” Harry said as he jumped out of the way and moved his sword almost perpendicular to the floor to push Hermione’s sword away. “If it weren’t for me you’d…”

“I’d what?” She interrupted then jumped forward and swung down towards his shoulder. Harry lifted up his sword and blocked, doing his best not to leave his side too open. “I’d be miserable and lonely?”

“You’ve got other friends.” He argued.

“Yeah you would’ve.” Harry told her. “You’re great, it just took people a while to see it.”

Hermione gave him a look as she blocked his counter blow and thrust out her sword again. Harry parried her thrust and continued the sword fight.

“Harry. What is this really about?” Hermione asked.

“You could die cause of me.” Harry said as he dodged another one of Hermione’s swings. His friend was starting to sweat and get frustrated. “If we weren’t friends then you wouldn’t be…you know fighting this war.”

“Not everything is about you.” She snapped swinging her sword extra hard. Harry blanched at her tone and blocked the swing again.
“Hermione. I’m serious.”

“So am I. Do you really think that I wouldn’t be fighting if it weren’t for you? Do you honestly believe that everything I do is because of you?”

“Well I…” Harry knew based on the look in her eye that nothing he said would be the right answer. He jumped to the left and made a half hearted slash at Hermione’s side. She blocked it.

“The Death Eaters want to kill my parents and enslave me.” She said. “They’ll probably kill me because I’m too smart to fit in with their beliefs of blood superiority. I am fighting because they are wrong. I want to defend the world just as much as you do Harry and it’s got nothing to do with you.”

She finished that with an angry slash at his neck that Harry barely dodged. He gulped feeling a little bit embarrassed at his friend’s censure.

“I’m sorry.” He said blocking Hermione’s next swing. “I just…what if He comes after you because of me?”

“Then he chose to do that. You didn’t make him.” Hermione said stepping to the right and swinging at Harry’s partially unguarded midsection. Harry yelped as the sword came close to cleaving him in two. Fear swamped his system and he stiffened. He closed his eyes, something sparked in his chest, and then he felt very suddenly as if he were being compressed into the size of a nail head. Then he felt himself falling flat on his back.

“Harry?” Hermione shouted, dropping her sword with a clatter.

Harry opened his eyes to see that he was on the other side of the room from Hermione, where he’d been standing there were now two spots of bright purple flame. His friend jumped over the flames and rushed over to him.

“Did I just…teleport?” He asked, his head spinning. Hermione knelt next to him looking for any injuries or missing limbs. “I didn’t know I could do that.”

“Harry, are you okay?”

“’M fine.” He said. “Really. Why is there fire over there?”

“I don’t know.” She said. “You disappeared in a big plume of it right before I hit you with my sword. Oh I’m so sorry.

“No. I was too focused on not hitting you too hard. I should’ve been better at blocking. Besides. I didn’t get hurt.”

After a bit Hermione let Harry get up and go over to the slowly dwindling flames. The purple color was mesmerizing. Had this come from him? Carefully he placed his feet over the flames trying to stamp them out before the fire alarms went off. He kept his feet over the ground, it felt strange even through his shoes, once the flames were out and looked over at his friend.

“So. Apparently I light on fire sometimes now?”

“I don’t think it’s that.” Hermoine said. “Maybe it’s some sort of Asgardian thing? Have you seen your dad do anything with fire?”

“Uhm. I think he’s the god of fire actually.”
“I thought he was the god of mischief?”

“He’s the god of lots of things.”

“Well, maybe you inherited some sort of elemental power from him then.”

“But fire that makes me teleport?”

“Well I don’t know!” She said. “One moment you were about to get cut in half and then you were on fire!”

“What’s this about fire?” Thor asked.

Hermione and Harry both made little ‘eeping’ noises and turned around to see his dad, uncle, Remus, and Sirius standing in the doorway looking suspicious. His dad looked at the sword in Harry’s hand and the one at Hermione’s feet and frowned.

“What were you two doing?”

“I was just trying to show Hermione the sword move I learnt in Asgard.” Harry said. “No one got hurt or anything.”

“Yes. But then why were you talking about fire?”

“I almost hit Harry.” She said. “And then he…teleported? But it didn’t look at all like how I’ve seen other magic users do it. There was this fire…”

Hermione trailed off at the look of absolute devastation on his dad’s face. Even Thor looked upset.

“Dad?”

“I missed it?” He asked.

“Missed what?”

“Did you do magic that caused some fire?” He asked.

“Uhm. Yes?”

“What’s wrong Prongs?” Sirius asked.

“That’s…it’s his first flame! I missed his first flame! That’s…it’s one of the most important milestones for an Asgardian magic user and I didn’t get to see it! It’s like missing his first steps or…or not being there for his first day of school! I can’t believe I missed it!” His dad whined stepping towards Harry. “I’m so sorry Starlight. I should’ve been here.”

“It’s…fine? I mean it was a little weird but I didn’t get hurt or anything.” Harry said trying to comfort his dad.

“Where is it?” Loki asked. “The flame? Don’t tell me it’s gone out yet! I couldn’t have been gone that long.”

“You mean the left-over flames?” Hermione asked looking down at where Harry’s feet were. His dad followed the look and made an agonized sound.

“You stomped out your flame?”
“I…the ground was on fire! What was I supposed to do?” His dad made another pained noise and Harry wondered what he’d done wrong. Thor stepped forward and placed a comforting hand on Loki’s shoulder.

“Harry.” He said. “When an Asgardian magic user uses their magic for the first time it creates a flame of a unique color. This flame, called the first flame, is considered a nearly sacred thing for the sorcerer. Traditionally your flame would have burned for hours on its own power while we feasted and celebrated in your honor. The longer the flame burns on its own the more powerful you are. Your father’s own flame burnt for more than a week before sputtering out.”

“You’re not supposed to put it out.” Loki said.

“Well I didn’t know!”

“No. I know you didn’t. I’m sorry I should have told you… explained…”

Harry stepped forward towards his dad, wondering how to comfort him over something that he still didn’t quite understand. Behind him Hermione gasped and he turned a little to see that the two pools of flame had sputtered back to life now that his feet were no longer directly on top of them. His dad gave a cry of triumph and jumped forward so that he was kneeling right next to the flames.

“Oh Starlight. It’s beautiful.”

“It’s nice.” Sirius decided. “Don’t you think Moony?”

“Why is it purple?” Harry asked while Remus started to nod along and compliment Harry on something none of the humans in the room actually understood.

“It’s not just purple.” His dad said as if Harry had said something insulting. “Look at it.”

Sure, enough when Harry looked at it again he noticed there were other colors that appeared on the flickering tongues of the fire. Carefully he knelt down next to his dad. Hermione fell next to him, her face open in wonder.

“Is this a manifestation of Harry’s magical core?”

“Just so.” His dad answered sounding pleased Hermione had spotted it.

“So that’s…me?” Harry asked.

“It’s your magic, a pure form of it.” Hermione corrected. “I imagine that each color inside of it reflect a part of your personality or maybe what sort of magic you’re best suited for.”

His friend continued to talk about what she’d read about magical cores and color symbolism and Harry did his best to follow along. But most of his mind was focused on the two foot-print shaped pools of fire. It was primarily an attractive royal purple but there were twisting tips of greens, golds, and whites within it. Harry thought it was very pretty. Hermione clearly had much loftier ideas.

“You’re correct of course.” His dad said to Hermione. “Each color does have its own unique symbolism but this is Asgardian magic and I’m afraid that the human books you’ve read won’t have covered the Asgardian meanings accurately.”

“Well then what do they mean?” Remus asked.

“Every color corresponds to a branch of magic.” His dad answered. “For instance, green which is
my own main color is connected to transfigurations and shapeshifting. I’m quite good at all manner of transfigurations as you two well know.”

Sirius and Remus both grinned. His dad continued.

“My magic also tends to have gold and blue colors within it. Gold is connected to charms and blue is more elemental type magic.” His dad said.

“So, I’ve got green and gold too.” Harry said. “What about the purple and white?”

“White is enchantment magic. You know the sort of magic that goes into that broom you’re so fond of.” His dad said grinning at him. “But it’s the purple that’s truly special.”

“Well what is it?”

“The last time someone had purple as their main color was Indunn, goddess of life.” Loki said. “This is soul magic.”

“Isn’t that…dark magic?” Hermione asked.

“Dark magic?”

“Like necromancy.” She clarified making Harry blanch.

“It’s not like that.” His dad denied. “Or well it is, but there’s more to it than that. Harry, Starlight, this is likely why you were able to survive the killing curse.”

“What?”

“That spell is a form of soul magic. In essence the spell forcibly separates the soul from the body. The reason it’s unblockable is that very few people in the universe have a magical ability to counter its power. I can’t believe this didn’t occur to me before.” His dad said.

“So, I can do magic with souls? How is that not dark magic?”

“Harry.” Sirius said, placing a hand on his shoulder. “Think about it for a minute. If you can use magic to hurt then what else can you do with it?”

“But I…”

“You can heal. Hell kid, I bet you could stop Dementors.” He said. “Remember? You already did it once.”

Harry started to smile while his dad demanded to know when his son had faced dementors. Sirius and Remus both told him not to worry about it, which of course made him worry more. Harry decided to focus back on the flames.

“So, do were just leave this here?” Harry asked.

“No. We’ll carefully move it to a sconce where we’ll count down the days until it burns out.” His dad said. “Don’t think I’ve forgotten that apparently you’ve fought off dementors.”

“Dad you saw me cast a patronous. Why do you think I know how to do that?”

“Extra Credit?”
Harry snorted at the very idea while Remus laughed and ruffled both his and his dad’s hair.

“Nope. I was his professor that year and I can tell you with full confidence that Harry has never nor will he ever, do extra credit.”

“It’s true.” Hermione confirmed.

“Well…Either way we should have a celebration.”

Harry grimaced at the idea of a party being thrown in his honor. He didn’t even like to go to the quidditch win parties if people made a big deal out of what he did for too long.

“I…well we don’t have to.” He started. “It’s not that big of a deal and besides we were gonna train today.”

His dad sighed and looked back down at the purple flame for a moment.

“Starlight. Your mother and I never had a proper wedding celebration because she kept putting it off in the name of the war effort. I regret every day not having made sure she was given the celebration she deserved. I do not want to allow Tom Riddle to take away any sort of happiness we can have.”

“Harry.” Hermione said seriously. “It’ll be fine. We can start training tomorrow.”

Harry swallowed a little as he thought about that and finally made a decision.

“We can’t have a party without Ron.”

“Then let’s go get him!” Thor declared. “Come on brother. We’ve a party to plan and a guest to retrieve!”

Sirius whooped in excitement and even Remus grinned.

“You hear that pup? It’s PARTY TIME!”
Ron the Remarkable

Chapter Summary

Back in Britain things are heating up and Ron is left alone to face the entire Order.

Chapter Notes

Eyyy! Another update! This is the last one before school starts up again. Next week, your girl has classes again. Hopefully I should be able to keep the update schedule the same as what I had in the summer but who knows? I might need to change things up just make sure I don't go crazy. I'll let you all know.

Ron sighed as he chased down yet another garden gnome. Degnoming the garden was only fun when there was someone else around to do it with him. But of course, Fred and George had run away to their new shop in Diagon Alley. Percy had caused that huge giant rift in the family and was currently living on his own as well. And Ginny? Ginny never had to degnome the garden. Forget Bill and Charlie, even if they were in town, which they weren’t, then they’d have gotten out of doing the work too.

Aside from the phone calls he got from Harry and the owls he got from Hermione, Ron was mostly left alone. His parents were both busy with Order work and Ginny was spending a lot of her summer time with Luna. It had just ended up that Ron was mostly forgotten in all the commotion. It didn’t bother Ron as much as it perhaps should have. He was used to being the last thing thought of at home.

It wasn’t that his parents didn’t love him. Ron, after meeting Harry’s uncle and aunt, knew very well that his parents loved him. His mum always made him a sweater for Christmas and made sure he had enough to eat. She’d give him a hug anytime he wanted (and often enough when he didn’t). His dad was always willing to help him with his homework or play chess with him. His dad gave excellent advice and did his best to make sure Ron knew that he was proud of him.

So yes. Ron’s parents loved him. They understood him as best they could too. His mother knew what would annoy him and what wouldn’t. She’d finally stopped making him maroon jumpers when she’d gotten the money to buy a different yarn. They knew his favorite foods and activities. They asked about his grades and his friends, although that was partially because he knew that his parents loved Harry and Hermione, but also because they loved him and cared about what he cared about.

But his parents also tended to forget about him. Ron wasn’t the oldest boy, Bill, who’d done everything first and done it well. He wasn’t the second oldest, who’d spent his time at Hogwarts outdoing everything Bill had done and then gone on to take a job that stressed his mum out so much that she still fretted thinking about it at times. Ron certainly wasn’t Percy, who even before this whole family drama, had been the smartest and most studious. Percy managed to bring home the best grades every year and every year it allowed his parents to gush about him. Ron wasn’t much like Fred and George either, the twins who’d taken one look at mischief and had never looked back.
Ron wasn’t even like Ginny, the girl and the youngest.

Ron was just Ron.

Not particularly gifted in school. Not on the quidditch team. He didn’t go out of his way to make trouble (although he did manage to get into quite a bit of it courtesy of Harry). Ron wasn’t loud at home or all that noticeable. It was impossible to be. He’d been competing for his parents’ attention for his whole life and he’d always come in dead last. It didn’t mean his parents loved him any less, it just meant that Ron got less of them. Their love was constant but sporadically expressed.

The only thing that allowed Ron to stick out was his friendship with Harry and Hermione. Harry was world famous and drew attention to him wherever he went like he was cursed with an attention charm. Hermione was probably the smartest person in the whole world. (And the prettiest his mind reminded him). Even in his own friend group Ron was the least noticed, the most forgotten.

It bothered him. It had bothered him as an 11 year old when he’d looked into the Mirror of Erised, it bothered him when he was 13 and the attempt on his life by Sirius Black had been brushed over in favor of Harry, it had bothered him when Harry had his name come out of the goblet of fire. It bothered him now as he worked in the garden alone. Ron knew he shouldn’t be bothered. In comparison to so many people his life was quite ideal. He had a loving family and while things had been tight money wise for most of his life he had never gone without things he needed.

Ron should be grateful.

And he was! And yet…

Ron picked up a gnome and flung it as hard as he could out of the garden. He heard the whooshing of the floo system and then the footsteps of his parents.

“I can’t believe this!” His mother cried, her voice breaking and frantic.

“I’m sure it’s going to be just fine.” His dad tried to comfort. “They’ll find him.

“RON!” His mother called. “RONALD WEASLEY GET IN HERE RIGHT NOW!”

“Coming!” Ron answered, his heart sinking as he correctly guessed what he was being called in for. He froze at the sight of Albus Dumbledore standing next to his parents.

Ron had to stop himself form flinging himself at the old man. A tide of rage washed through him and he wanted to punch Dumbledore. But he couldn’t, not in front of his mum.

“What’s wrong?” He asked.

“Oh it’s terrible!” His mother said. “Harry’s gone missing!”

“What?” Ron asked doing his best to look shocked and horrified. To be honest he was a little shocked, he hadn’t thought anyone would bother to check up on his friend at all. Not like they’d done it in the past, checking up on Harry had always been Ron’s job.

“The headmaster noticed a problem with the Blood Wards.” His dad explained. “They’re weakened to the point of being basically nothing. He went to Harry’s home to investigate and discovered that Harry hadn’t come home from the train station.”
“Mr. Weasley.” Dumbledore said his blue eyes twinkling in the way that Ron had previously thought was cool and not at all devious. “Please tell me if you’ve heard from Harry.”

Ron had been careful not to take calls from Harry when his parents weren’t around. He inwardly flailed a little before speaking.

“I…It’s only been a few weeks, I figured he hadn’t owled back because of the whole Sirius thing.” Ron scrambled around trying to justify not having spoken to his best friend in that long. “Besides. I wasn’t sure if I was allowed to talk to him much, after what you told me last summer and all…”

His parents’ faces broke and Ron wanted to apologize, to tell them the truth. Even Dumbledore looked disappointed.

“He’s not dead.” He argued, sounding desperate. “If he was dead wouldn’t the wards be totally broken?”

“You’re right.” His dad said trying to give him a comforting look. “But we don’t know where he is.”

“Nobody?” Ron asked. “Wouldn’t Snape know if Harry got kidnapped?”

“Professor Snape” His mum corrected. “is certain that You-Know-Who hasn’t taken Harry. But that doesn’t mean that someone else hasn’t! Oh he could be anywhere! Being tortured or starved.”

Ron cringed at his mother’s agony which his parents read as him cringing at the idea of Harry being in pain. Ron knew Harry was fine, better than fine. But he couldn’t say that. He couldn’t. Not when Dumbledore was here. Not when it was the headmaster’s fault that his best friend had ever been anything less than fine.

“Molly. Would you and Arthur mind giving me some privacy? Perhaps I can help young Mr. Weasley here remember any important details about the last time he spoke with Harry.”

“Of course!” His mother said. “We’ll…we’ll just get some tea together, you two come into the kitchen whenever you’re ready.”

And then his mother bustled off with his father in tow, neither of them even thinking for once that Ron would rather claw his own eyes out than be left alone in a room with Albus Dumbledore. Ron shifted a little awkwardly and coughed into his hand. The headmaster just looked at him.

“Let’s take a seat.” The headmaster suggested, motioning to the well loved couches Ron had spent his childhood crawling over. In that moment those golden memories of childhood seemed far away. When had he stopped seeing himself as a child? Ron sat down in one couch across from Dumbledore and did his best to suppress his anger, his hate, for the man in front of him.

“Would you indulge me in a game of chess? I so rarely get the chance to play.” Dumbledore said motioning to the hand-me-down set his dad had gifted him on his eleventh birthday, the set he’d taught Harry and Hermione how to play on.

“Okay.” Ron said. Dumbledore smiled and waved a hand, wandlessly conjuring a table between the two of them. Ron grabbed the box and carefully set up the game, focusing on the grumbling of his pieces instead of Dumbledore’s piercing stare. “You’re white.”

He offered the opening salvo to the man before him. Ron didn’t need the advantage. Dumbledore smiled and ordered the movement of a pawn. At first they didn’t talk, just looked at the board and made their moves. Ron had never played against Dumbledore. The closest he had ever come to playing against someone like him was when he was eleven. Granted he had technically been playing
against McGonagall at the time but he had a feeling Dumbledore had had a hand in that giant chess room.

Ron had won then and as frightened and angry as he was at the man in front him, he didn’t doubt he couldn’t win now.

“I know that you might be feeling frightened.”

“What?”

“The attack on the ministry was frightening, you were hurt quite badly.” The headmaster said motioning a little to the scars on Ron’s arms he’d gotten from those freaky brain tentacle things in the Department of Mysteries.

“I guess.” Ron shrugged choosing not to think about that.

“And poor Sirius was killed, when you and the others went through so much effort to save him. You’re young and I can’t imagine how difficult dealing with all of this must be.”

Ron wanted to ask Dumbledore where his compassionate voice had been when he’d told Harry the prophecy. Ron didn’t want his compassion, he didn’t need it. And now neither did Harry.

“I’m alright.” Ron said instead. “I’m worried about Harry.”

“Of course you are.” He said before ordering a knight to move. Ron looked down at the board his eyebrows furrowed before he guessed at the man’s potential strategy. He made his own move, sending a bishop forward just a bit. “Which is why I’m sure you’d tell me if you knew anything.”

“I don’t.” Ron lied not looking the man in the eye, suddenly very aware that the headmaster knew legilmency.

“What did you and Harry last talk about?”

“His dad.” Ron said truthfully. “and his mum too I guess.”

Something flashed in the headmaster’s visage a little and Ron swallowed.

“I mean.” Ron continued. “He was just sad that he didn’t know them and it was about Sirius too, he just keeps losing people.”

Dumbledore’s face cleared up immediately and Ron inwardly sighed in relief. A few more moves passed in a tense silence before Dumbledore tried again.

“So his parents. Was there anything else? Anything at all, it doesn’t matter how silly you think it is.”

“Well we talked about the prophecy a bit.” Ron said shifting in his seat. “But you already know about that.”

“He told you?”

“Me and Hermione, he was scared.” Ron hoped Harry would forgive him for revealing that little tidbit to Dumbledore. “Me and ‘Mione promised to be with him till the very end, no matter what.”

“That’s very good of you, Ron.” Dumbledore said. “Truly, you are a credit to your family.”

Ron flushed a little, feeling awkward at the compliment that he knew he shouldn’t want because of
“I’m being honest, dear boy.” Dumbledore pushed. “I’ve noticed how loyal you are to your friends, I’m sure your parents are proud of you. I know I am.”

“Thanks headmaster.” Ron said right before having another one of his pieces move. The game was progressing as Ron expected. Now that he knew what sort of man Dumbledore was, it was a lot easier to see the sorts of plans he’d make on a chess board. Ron knew what sort of things Dumbledore would do to a pawn now.

“I know this doesn’t have much to do with the topic at hand but I can’t help myself.” He said happily. “You know I had a conversation with Minerva recently about how well you did as a prefect last year.”

“What?”

“She was very impressed with you.” He confided. “And so am I. You’re a loyal, level headed young man. We both think you’d make a good Head Boy, of course that’s years away now but I’ve been doing this job for quite a long time and I’m good at predicting these sorts of things.”

Looking back at last summer Ron could remember how happy the prefect badge had made him. How it had made him glow and his chest puff out with pride. He’d gotten new robes, new everything from his parents to celebrate. For awhile things had been about him and how well he was doing. It had been brilliant. His mind flashed to the vision he’d seen in the Mirror of Erised.

_I’m the head boy! And the quidditch captain!_

“Do you mean it?” Ron asked trying to inject that same excitement he’d felt five years ago at the idea. Dumbledore beamed and Ron knew he’d managed it.

“I can’t think of any young man in your year who could do it better. Not even Harry, the poor boy isn’t much of a leader, not like you.”

“Harry’s a great leader.” Ron said, only slightly snappish.

“Part of being a good leader is being willing to listen to others, to follow orders.” Dumbledore said. “I’m not being cruel, no one loves Harry more than I, but I think you’re a far better fit for a position like Head Boy.”

“Thanks.” Ron said trying not to feel awkward or anything. Wasn’t this conversation the sort of thing he’d always wanted? To be noticed? To stand out from anyone else in his life?

“Of course.” Dumbledore said. “Now don’t go telling anyone, this is just between you and I for now. We’re not supposed to be making decisions about Head Boy and Girl until much later.”

“Right. I won’t tell, not even Harry.”

“Good boy.”

Dumbledore made another move. The game was progressing quite quickly. Normally Ron would take his time, drag a game out because it was fun, but it had only been 15 minutes of playing and Ron just wanted to put the man in front of him into check. Ron could hear his father and mother talking, comforting each other over their worry for Harry. He glanced over at the hallway that led to the kitchen and Dumbledore followed his eyes.
“I know you must be feeling quite forgotten these past few weeks.”

“Huh?”

“You’re parents have been ever so busy with the Order and your brothers have all left The Burrow. And Harry’s been ignoring you too.” Dumbledore told him. “I imagine it must be very lonely.”

“It’s fine.” Ron said. “It’s all important stuff you know? I can handle myself.”

“Of course, you can. I just want you to know that I notice you, I know how talented you are, how loyal.” Dumbledore told him. “You’ll be a great asset to the Order when you’re of age. You practically already are! I trust you implicitly dear boy.”

A year ago, hell even a month ago, Ron would have jumped at the chance to be spoken to like this. Dumbledore was looking at him like he mattered, like he was important and useful, just because of who he was, not because of his brothers or because of Harry. He’d be squirming in his seat to do anything the headmaster asked him to do. It was that same devotion that had kept Ron from writing to Harry last summer. It was the devotion that had died the moment Harry had called him and told him the truth.

Now all Dumbledore’s words did was leave a rotten taste in his mouth.

Ron looked down and ordered another move. The chess board was already littered with the stone bodies of crushed pieces, both his and the headmaster’ss. From an outside perspective it was clear that Ron had lost more pieces, in fact it looked as if Dumbledore would be putting him into check within three moves. Ron knew better.

“I’m sorry headmaster.” Ron said. “I wish I could help you find Harry but I don’t know. He didn’t say he wasn’t going home. On the train we just talked about how scary it all was and how much he missed Sirius and his parents.”

Dumbledore barely hid his frown as he ordered another move, he moved his queen exactly where Ron suspected he would. Ron held back a grin.

“Are you certain dear boy? There’s nothing at all you can tell me?”

Ron ordered his knight forward. The little horse riding soldier galloped forward across the board and stopped right in front of the king. The king looked around at the board, removed his sword and knelt down in surrender.

“No sir.” Ron said firmly before holding out his hand. “Good game though.”

Dumbledore took his hand and shook it, a brittle smile on his face.

“Yes. Good game.” He agreed, letting go of Ron’s hand and standing up. “I must be going, I need to start the search for young Harry as quickly as possible. Do apologize to your parents for my leaving without having some tea.”

“Course.” Ron said. Dumbledore disappeared from Ron’s living room with a crack. Almost immediately Ron fell back into the couch, his face pale and his limbs shaking. “Blimey. That was bad.”

That evening Ron’s parents left right after dinner for another Order meeting. Ron was only grateful his mum had charmed the dishes to do themselves. He considered calling his friend to tell him what had happened now that he was alone but he decided against it. He had no idea if he was being
watched or spied on now. He had to be very, very careful on how he contacted his friends.

The next two days were stressful around The Burrow. His parents came back from that meeting suspicious and strained. They were worried sick about Harry and Ron had no doubt that Dumbledore had talked to his parents personally about him. Suddenly he seemed to have his parents’ full attention. No longer was his mum spending her free evenings bemoaning Percy’s betrayal or the twins’ silliness. His dad didn’t spend his time tinkering in the garage.

Both of them were watching him now, focused as hard as they could, to see if Ron would give up the game. His mum asked frequently if he’d heard from Harry and his dad told him that no matter what they’d always forgive him.

“You’re our son and I know you always do what you think is right. You can trust us, son.”

But could he? Could he truly? Were his parents more loyal to Dumbledore or to Harry? His parents never let Harry stay with them at the Burrow as much as they should have because of Dumbledore. His parents knew that the Dursleys were mean to Harry, that they didn’t feed him enough, that they locked him up and they supported Dumbledore leaving Harry there anyway. His mum had known about the prophecy, had known it was about Harry, even if she didn’t know the wording, and decided to follow Dumbledore’s edict on secrecy instead of trusting Harry.

Ron had never wondered if he could trust his parents. The doubt, the fear, ate at him. At night he’d lay in his bed and wonder if he was really choosing his family, the people who had raised him, clothed him, and loved him from birth, for Harry. The tattoo he’d kept hidden on his wrist itched and reminded him that Harry was just as much his family as any other Weasley. But if they were both family how could he possibly choose one over the other?

His parents weren’t bad people! They were doing what they thought was right! They’d joined the Order, risked their lives and everything else to stop You-Know-Who! His parents had defied hundreds of years of Pureblood tradition to stand for muggle and squib rights. They’d been labeled blood traitors and ostracized for it. Ron knew his parents were good people and he loved them.

But Harry? Harry was his best mate. A brother unlike the five he actually had. Even with the fights and disagreements they’d had over the years, there was no one Ron trusted more. And in the end that meant that Ron couldn’t ever betray Harry. Not when he knew Harry was happy with his dad, that he was finally getting to eat as much as he needed every day. Not when Harry was finally getting the hugs and support that Ron had taken for granted his entire life.

Being firm in his choice of loyalty didn’t mean he still didn’t feel guilt. As the days passed his family grew more worried and frantic. The entire Order was being run amok trying to find a single hint as to where Harry Potter was. There were plenty Order members who came by to ask Ron if he had any ideas, any clues. Ron denied them all.

Well he denied them all up until Fred and George knocked on his bedroom door.

Ron had been writing out a letter to Hermione, one he knew he wouldn’t send, when the twins rushed up the stairs. Ron frantically shoved the letter under his pillow and managed to get it hidden right as George burst in, Fred not a moment behind.

“Well if it isn’t Ickle Ronnikins!”

“Our Ittle Baby Brother seems to be growing up!”

“What do you two want?”
“We’ve heard on the grape vine.”

“Or perhaps it’s a birdy we heard it from.”

“That you dear brother.”

“Have been causing some trouble.”

Ron scowled at the two brothers and folded his arms over chest.

“Never thought I’d see the day.”

“Truly. Almost started to think you were a lost cause.”

“What with that prefect thing.”

“And all the studying you do.”

“But no! You proved us wrong!”

“You got that right! Our Little Ron is finally coming into his own.”

“What are you two on about?” Ron demanded. “Because if you’re here to be annoying then go away.”

“Oh, don’t be like that.” Fred said sitting down on the foot of Ron’s bed.

“Really, we’re happy for you.” George added sitting down on Ron’s chair.

“Mum came by the shop! Actually, stepped foot inside the doors.”

“Thought it’d take her at least a decade to even look at the place, if I’m honest.”

“She came in to talk to us of all things!”

“Not to nag us, or beg us to change our minds about our NEWTS.”

“Nope! She wanted to talk about you.”

“Apparently she thinks you’re lying, up to no good.”

“Keeping secrets even!”

“Dangerous things secrets.”

“Will you two just get to the point?” Ron interrupted. He didn’t want to deal with their nonsense right then. He was tired and hungry and feeling more alone than he’d ever felt in his life. His tone made the twins pause. Carefully they looked at him and then at each other.

“You okay Ron?”

“My best friend is…is missing. What do you think?”

“Don’t try and lie to us.” George said. “Remember the last time you tried that? When you tried to take dad’s car on your own to go save Harry?”

“We saw through it.”
“I’m not lying.”

“Ron.” Ron closed his eyes against that tone. He was leaning up against the wall, his legs splayed out on the bed. Above them the ghoul rattled, perhaps in sympathy.

“I can’t tell you.”

“Harry could be in trouble, we’ll go save him with you. Just like we did last time.” Fred promised. “Just tell us.”

“No.” Ron said.

“Oh come on. Don’t make us bring out the spiders.”

“Go ahead! I don’t care. I’m not telling.”

That made the twins seriously pause to consider things. Never before had the threat of conjuring spiders not made Ron cave and tell them whatever it was that was bothering him. It was a foolproof method of getting Ron to open up. But not this time. No. Ron wouldn’t betray Harry for anything. The twins were starting to look concerned and Ron swallowed.

“We rescued him.” Ron said. “And we found him locked up and hungry and dirty and…it was awful!”

“Yeah, yeah it was.”

“And they just sent him back again! And again! Even though we told them it was bad.”

“I know. We hate it too.” George said.

“I’m not letting him go back.” Ron said stubbornly. “Never. If I tell then Dumbledore will find out and…It’s just not happening.”

“So you do know where he is?”

Ron hardened his jaw and looked away. He didn’t want to cry. To admit that keeping this from his parents, making his family worry themselves sick, had been eating him alive. Fred carefully reached out and placed a hand on Ron’s knee. Ron sniffed and ran his arm over his eyes, rubbing them clear.

“Just go away.”

“He’s our friend too you know.” George said. “We don’t want him to go back to the Dursleys either, not if he’s found someplace better.”

“Yeah.” Fred agreed seriously. “I know we joke a lot Ron but we’re not messing with you. We won’t tell a soul, not even mum and dad if that’s what it takes to keep Harry safe.”

“You’d choose Harry over mum and dad?” Ron asked his voice shaking.

“Course.” George said easily.

“The way we see it?”

“Harry needs us way more than mum does.”

Ron’s will wavered, he looked at his brothers, their brown eyes sincere in a way they rarely were.
He swallowed the knot that had formed in his throat and spoke.

“He’s in New York City.”

“That’s pretty far away.” Fred said.

“Why’d he go there?”

Before Ron could answer the question he heard a rock being flung against his window. Ron yelped and jumped up, his brothers not far behind. His brothers gasped in shock at the sight of Loki, god of mischief, standing in their backyard with a grin on his face, Harry right next to him.

“Uhm.” Ron said. “That’s why.”
The twins apparated down from Ron’s room directly in front of Harry and his dad. Harry only jumped a little, far too used to the twins antics to be even a little bit shocked. Of course he was shocked a second later when Fred pulled him from his dad’s side and into a hug while George bodily moved between them and pulled his wand on his dad.

“Harry, stay back. We got this.” George said, eyes narrow. His dad had lifted up both hands in a show of peace and surrender but Harry knew better than to be fooled. His dad was still just as armed as he had been a moment before.

“I don’t know who you are but you’ve got a lot of nerve coming here.” Fred said.

“Guys?” Harry said. “He’s with me.”

Both twins froze for a moment and then immediately the tension eased. Harry was no longer being shoved into Fred’s chest and George immediately pocketed his wand.

“Well why didn’t you say so?”

“Yeah it’s almost like you wanted us to make idiots of ourselves?”

“Oh cruelty thy name is Harry.”

“I’ve never been so embarrassed.”

Harry rolled his eyes and walked back over to his dad’s side. His dad quirked an eyebrow at him and Harry just nodded a little to promise that this was normal.

“And who is he then?” George asked.

“Honestly Harry don’t you have any manners?”

“I’m sure our mum taught you better than that.”

“Or perhaps not.”
“This.” Harry interrupted the twins, he had been planning on saying it was his dad but the look on the twins’ faces made him abruptly reconsider. “is Prongs.”

“Did he just say?”

“I think he must have.”

“It couldn’t be.”

The twins looked up at his dad with awe in their faces. His dad, thankfully caught on, and he spoke in a very regal and serious tone.

“I solemnly swear I am up to no good.”

Fred fell to his knees while George gasped and reached out. Both of them, of course they did, had tear in their eyes.

“We are not worthy.”

“Sir, we are but humble acolytes.”

Harry grinned as the twins continued to practically prostrate themselves at his dad’s feet.

“They found the Marauder’s Map when they were first years. Stole it out of Filch’s office and everything.”

“Ah. Two boys after my own heart I see.” His dad said. “I do hope you put it to good use?”

The twins nodded and started talking over each other to explain exactly how good a use they put that map too. The door to the backyard burst open and out came Ron, red faced. He stopped when he saw there wasn’t any fighting going on and leaned forward to catch his breathe. He then made his way over to their group at a more sedate place. He stopped right in front of his dad and held out his hand.

“Nice to finally meet you, Loki.” He said before faltering. “Or did you want to be called...”

“Mr. Potter is just fine, Ron.” His dad said taking Ron’s hand. “And it is an honor to meet you.”

“Wait, did you say Loki?” George said.

“Did you say Potter?” Fred said, at the same time.

Loki grinned and straightened himself out.

“I am Loki, god of mischief.” He said. “I am also James Potter, Harry’s dad.”

Needless to say the twins needed a few moments to get their heads on straight after that reveal. Harry and Ron both laughed at their shocked faces, he didn’t think he’d ever seen the twins at a loss for words but here they were. Gaping like fish and staring at Loki like they couldn’t believe it.

“What” Fred eventually began.

“The fuck?” George finished.

“It’s a long story.” Harry started.
“I’ll tell you later.” Ron said. “Mate you can’t be here.”

“Why?”

“Dumbledore knows.” Ron said gravely. “He noticed that the Blood Wards were failing and went to your relatives. The Entire Order is searching for you now to get you back to Surrey before the wards break all the way.”

Harry’s stomach dropped and he clenched his jaw just a little. Before he could say anything his dad placed a gentle hand on his shoulder and spoke seriously.

“They are not taking my son from me.” Loki said. “Not again. But you are right, Ron. Remaining here is not in our best interest. Your parents are still in the Order right?”

“Yeah.”

“Then we should leave, at least for now.”

“We can go to the shop.” George offered.

“Yeah! It’s where we live now, it’s not open yet so it should be safe.” Fred added.

“It’s going to be a joke shop.” Harry told his dad. “The twins are brilliant with pranking supplies and stuff. You’ll love it.”

“Well then how could I possibly refuse?”

“It’s 93 Diagon Alley.” Fred said. “We’ll take Ron and meet you there, yeah?”

“Do we need to get anything else?” Ron asked. Is there going to be a fight?

“Just your wand.” Harry said shaking his head. “And your broom if you want. It’s good news. Well at least our stuff is.”

“But we need to know what’s been going on here.”

“I’ll tell you everything I know.” Ron promised.

Ten minutes later they were all inside the not yet open joke shop. Products lined the walls and shelves and Fred and George were admirably showing off all their wonderful inventions to a delighted Loki. Harry didn’t think he’d ever seen his dad this childishly delighted by anything in his life before. The three pranksters were now talking about the various uses of the Insta-swamp balls and Harry decided to leave them to it for a while.

“Ron. What’s been happening? You haven’t called me in a few days and I don’t want to call you when your parents are around unless I have to.”

“Dumbledore came by. He knows I know where you are.” Ron said. “I didn’t tell him! Didn’t give him a single clue, but he’s not stupid. There’s no way you’d go someplace without telling me.”

“Skiving Snack Boxes! That’s brilliant!”

Harry rolled his eyes at his dad’s interjection and then looked back at his friend. Ron looked stressed, sort of like he did before their OWLs but worse somehow.

“What did Dumbledore do?”
And Ron told him. Harry listened as his friend revealed what the last few days had been like and the full details of his one on one confrontation with Dumbledore. The description of the chess match and Dumbledore’s attempted manipulation with the Head Boy promise chilled Harry to the bone.

“He was there.”

“What?”

“That night when I showed you the mirror. He had to have been there.” Harry hissed. “How else would he have known to bring you being Head Boy up?”

Ron grimaced and looked down at his feet.

“I’m sorry about that.”

“About what?”

“About wanting to be Quidditch Captain and Head Boy.”

“What’s wrong with that?”

“Harry you were standing there wanting to not be an orphan and all I wanted was some stupid titles that don’t mean anything. It was stupid.”

“It wasn’t!” Harry denied. “You don’t need to feel bad for wanting that Ron. I only wanted my parents because I didn’t want to be with my relatives anymore. When I found out my dad was alive, the first thing I did was punch him. Neither of us really knew what we wanted.”

Ron huffed a laugh and then sniffed, rubbing his nose on the sleeve of his shirt.

“I just realized talking to Dumbledore that I don’t want to be Head Boy anymore. It’s not…what I thought it was. And I’ve made a lot of…I’ve said things and done things to you and ‘Mione cause of what I thought I wanted. And I’m sorry. I don’t really deserve being…I promise I’m not going to do that again.”

Harry thought back to their fight in his fourth year and the other small tiffs they’d had over the years due to Harry’s fame and fluctuating popularity. Harry also thought about how he’d also lashed out at times, especially in the last year.

“Ron. Have you forgiven me for all the stupid stuff I said to you in the last year?”

“Course I have.” Ron said. “You were under a lot of pressure with your scar and Umbridge.”

“So if you can forgive me for being stupid and not trusting you as much as I should have, then why can’t I forgive you for being a little jealous sometimes?”

That made Ron crack a grin.

“We were both pretty dumb huh?”

“Yeah. I don’t know what Hermione sees in either of us.”

They both giggled. In front of them his dad and the twins were looking at the various pranked candies that the twins had invented and discussing new iterations that could be made on the existing recipes.
“Why do I have a feeling introducing them was a mistake?”

“He’s already got Remus and Sirius.” Harry said. “It was already too late, unfair to keep the twins from the party.”

“Sort of sad I’m not going to be your dad’s favorite Weasley.” Ron said in a joking wistful tone. Harry elbowed him lightly in the side and grinned.

“You’re my favorite though.”

“Well that’s something at least.”

“Dad!” Harry called out. “We need to start talking business. Dumbledore’s bothering Ron.”

“What? What’s the old fool done now?”

Ron explained what he’d told Harry, although in slightly less detail, and Harry’s dad listened seriously.

“Alright then. I suppose that means moving up the time table some. I had planned on waiting a few more weeks before revealing myself to Dumbledore but I won’t have you suffer any longer Ron.”

“Can you explain why we don’t like Dumbledore anymore?”

“I’m all for it but having a reason is nice.”

Harry was the one to explain, telling them that Dumbledore had known his dad was alive and had lied to the world about it while also lying to his dad about Harry, Sirius, and Remus being alive. The twins took it with all the dramatics expected. They switched between cursing out Dumbledore and promising revenge on the old man and listening to Harry raptly as he told them that Sirius was alive and back on earth.

“Dumbledore wanted to make sure I stayed on earth and under his control because of the prophecy. Ron’s been covering for me, I’m not going to go back to the Dursleys and I’m not going to let Dumbledore control me anymore.” Harry finished.

“I, or should I say the Marauders, have a plan.” His dad said. “I need to return to The Order. If we reveal immediately the truth, then Dumbledore will be disgraced and what few forces we do have on earth will scatter. Until we have all the information Dumbledore’s been hiding, I can’t remove him from our lives.”

“We’re in.” Fred said.

“Oh definitely. What do you need from us?”

“I’m going to return to the Order soon, within the week. I’d like you to help me drum up support. People are bound to be suspicious of me, of the story I’ll concoct. The more people I have on my side the less Dumbledore can do against me.” Loki said. “I already have Remus on my side of course, Sirius too once he reveals he’s alive, but there are more and more Order members and they’ve been following Dumbledore for a long time.” Loki said. “I’m sure you two can handle that though.”

Fred and George immediately both saluted to their god and swore to do exactly that. Harry had no doubt in his mind that’s what they saw his dad as. He was their god, the representation of what they valued most. Harry grinned and stepped forward.
“So dad. What do you think of the shop?”

“It’s absolutely lovely.”

“It is pretty great.” Harry agreed. “It’s been a long time since you’ve had a temple yeah?”

His dad rolled his eyes while the twins both lit up in unholy glee.

“Forge!”

“Gred!”

“We need a shrine!”

“A shrine to our god!”

“A sacrificial fire to burn rubber chickens in!”

“Oh Your Grace, please forgive us for not preparing for your arrival.”

“Your highness! We meant no disrespect! We have built this humble store in thy name!”

“Silence!” His dad commanded, his voice solemn and serious. “I have seen thine works and I am pleased by thine sacrifice. This place shall be my temple and you two my prophets. Ye shall preach my gospel of mischief and trouble making with your moderately priced wares, this I so command.”

“We solemnly swear on all things no good that we will follow your word.”

“We will speak of you and we will teach of you.”

Harry and Ron were both holding their hands over their mouths trying not to laugh as Fred and George swore their undying service and devotion to the god of mischief. Ron’s shoulders were shaking with suppressed laughter. Unsurprisingly the three tricksters were taking the entire thing as seriously as if it were a funeral. His dad even went so far as to place his hands on the twins’ foreheads and bless them. His hands glowed a bright green and the magic settled itself into the twins. Harry had no idea what magic his dad had just done but he looked pleased with himself.

Once the prostrating and praying and blessing was done, Harry mentioned the fact that he had a party to get to.

“That’s why we came to The Burrow, to invite you to my First Flame Party. It’s like an Asgardian coming of age thing I guess.”

“Yes. Today is a day for celebration.” His dad declared. “We knew we couldn’t celebrate anything for Harry without you there Ron.”

“I don’t know if I can go. Mum isn’t going to let me sneak out, especially not with the whole Dumbledore thing.”

“We’ll cover for you.”

“Yeah Ickle Ronnikins, go have fun. As far as mummy knows.”

“You’ll be here with us!”

“Spilling your guts.”
Ron beamed and punched one of the twins in the arm as thanks. Harry grinned at the scene. He felt clear headed as he stood in the joke shop. Not only had he and Ron had a good talk (those were rare enough) but he’d had some time to think about what Hermione had been trying to tell him before she’d almost chopped him in half. Some of the guilt that had taken hold of his heart since Cedric’s death had lessened.

It wasn’t his fault.

*But it was your idea to both take the cup.*

Peter Pettigrew killed Cedric, he is the one to blame.

*Cedric is only the beginning. Who will be killed next because of your ideas?*

Harry hadn’t made Cedric take the cup and he wasn’t making his friends follow his ideas.

It wasn’t his fault.

He knew that tomorrow this argument might not be so easy to make. Merlin even a few hours from now he might fall back into blaming himself and trying to pull away from his friends to protect them. But thankfully his friends wouldn’t let him get away with it and Hermione was obviously more than willing to lecture him on it repeatedly until it stuck in his head.

This war was not his fault. The people who had died, who were going to die in fact, were not his burden to bear. Voldemort had begun this war, he was the one who had chosen to start it again. None of this was on Harry. His chest felt as if it were expanding as he thought those words a few more times. His shoulders straightened just a tad and he lifted himself to his full height.

“What are you smiling about?” His dad asked.

“I…I’m just happy.”

Of course the moment he admitted that, a searing pain ripped through his scar. Harry’s face spasmed and his knees buckled. Ron recognized the attack for what it was immediately and jumped forward helping lower him to the ground.

“Harry!”

His mind filled with flashes of rage and he held back the scream that was gurgling in his throat. He felt hands slowly lowering him to the floor as his limbs started twitching wildly. Even though he knew his eyes were screwed shut he still saw things. A bone white hand, a flashing wand, a mass of dark robed figures. His ears filled with a cacophony of noises, his dad and Ron telling him to calm down were mixing with snarled orders and plans.

Then, just as quickly as it started, it stopped.

“What?”

Harry opened his eyes to see that his dad had a hand on his scar, green magic sandwiched between his hand and Harry’s forehead.

“Mate, you okay?”

“The…did you stop the vision?”

“I believe so.” His dad said. “I modified a spell designed to cease divination magic. Your situation is
not at all the same but it muted your connection at the very least.”

“What did you see?” Ron asked.

“Tom…He’s ordering an attack on…” Harry blinked a few times trying to make sense of the swirling unclear vision. It was clear that Voldemort’s rage had opened up a small connection between them, one that was highly accidental and unplanned. The whole thing had been disjointed but eventually Harry seized upon the memory of a particularly silvery modern building. “On New York!”

“What?” His dad asked. “Why?”

“In my last vision…He’d found out I’d been spotted in New York? Remember those Death Eaters you took down for me?” Harry said. “He…he thought I was there to contact the American Ministry.”

“Oh Odin.” His dad said. “We need to move, now. Fred, George. Contact the Order. Tell them that New York is about to be attacked by Death Eaters and perhaps You-Know-Who himself.”

“Tell them I told you.” Harry said. “They’ll believe you and besides… It’s time to stop hiding.”

He’d had a few weeks of calm. Well not necessarily calm but he’d had time to recover. His magic was at full strength and he’d been doing some training. More than that he had his dad. Everyone scrambled to get ready to go. Ron made it clear he would be going with them to New York and Harry didn’t argue. It was his friend’s choice. Of course the twins also volunteered to go.

“Here.” His dad said producing a portkey made out of a ribbon for the twins. “Once you’ve sent out the message use this. It’ll take you to Avengers Tower and you can join us. Harry how long do you think we have?”

“He’s in New York. So not long.” Harry said.

“Then there’s no time to waste. Ron, come here. I’ll take us back now and get both of you suited up.”

“Suited up?” Ron asked as he took his place on his dad’s other side.

“I ordered some armor for Hermione and you.” His dad said. “I knew both of you would be fighting alongside my son and it’s best to be safe about these things.”

“I’m getting armor?”

“And a sword.”

And with that his dad teleported the three of them away from the joke shop and to New York in a pillar of green flame. They were in his dad’s bedroom Harry knew, Ron was looking at the room in awe.

“Jarvis! Sound the alarm! There’s going to be an attack from Tom Riddle! Here in New York!”

Immediately the room was filled with flashing red lights and an alarm noise. Harry and Ron both winced at the shrill tone.

“Harry.” His dad said. “Do you know where he’s going to attack?”

Harry shook his head. The vision hadn’t been that clear. His dad cursed but nodded anyway. He waved his hand producing three sets of armor, one set that Harry knew because he’d already worn it.
“Get into that and help Ron into his. It’s enchanted to size to him once it’s on so don’t worry about
the fit.” He ordered. “I’ll send Hermione in here and tell the others what’s going on. Hurry.”

Harry nodded and tugged his friend over. Ron was ogling the armor sets. Each set was a light forest
green, the same color as his dad’s. They looked fearsome and serious enough that Ron didn’t wrinkle
his nose at the slightly Slytherin color scheme.

“Come on let’s get into this.”

“I thought you only said I’d need my wand.”

“Well it’s a good thing you brought it right?” Harry joked.

“Yeah. Good thing.” Ron said. The door then burst open and Hermione rushed in.

“Oh! Ron you’re here!”

“Course I am. Wouldn’t miss it.” He said. “Come on, let’s suit up.”

With Harry’s help and instruction they were all able to get into the armor. True to his dad’s word the
armor on his two friends changed shape to fight them properly. Once their boots were on and their
swords were sheathed, they rushed out of the room. The alarms were still blaring painfully. Harry led
them out of the room and up to the elevator. He knew the Avengers would be in the penthouse.

The three teens ran in, wands drawn to see that everyone else was ready too. Iron Man’s armor
gleamed, Captain America’s shield shined, and Bruce Banner’s eyes were much greener than
normal.

“Good.” His dad said. “You’re here. Anything new from the scar?”

Harry focused for a moment and closed his eyes. His scar was twinge with a bit of pain.

“He’s close,” Harry said. “Coming closer I think. It hurts whenever we get near each other.”

“We think he’s going to attack the Ministry building here.” Sirius said. “The magical president works
there so it’ll make a big statement especially since they’re not prepared for a full scale attack.”

“I’m going to go warn them.” Remus said. “Hopefully they’ll listen to me despite my… condition.”

“I can’t go and neither can Sirius for obvious reasons. While Remus warns them the rest of us are
going to get into position to stand guard for the arrival.”

“Let me go.” Harry said. “Warn the ministry.”

“Harry.” Remus said.

“No. I can do that. They’ll listen to me. You know they will.” Harry said before turning to his
friends. “Guys stick together, once I’ve given them warning I’ll find you and we’ll fight together.”

“Why will they listen to you?” Thor asked. Harry stood tall and looked his uncle dead in the eye.

“Cause I’m Harry Potter.”
Fight! Fight! Fight!
The Magical American Government

Chapter Summary

In which the author never actually saw Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them and has no intentions of changing that fact. So instead writes her own headcanons about magical relations in America. Also, Voldemort is there.

Chapter Notes

Hey! Thanks for the great comments! School has started and I already wish for more time for naps! Seriously though this is not compliant with anything that wasn't in the books, so like...Pottermore and Fantastic Beast Stuff is out. If I add anything in from either of those then it's probably a coincidence.

The American Magical Government was founded in its original form shortly after the Statute of Secrecy went into effect in 1692. Prior to this point most European magic users living in the Americas had been beholden to no one. They left their countries of origin and traveled to America for the lawlessness of the land. Here there were no traditional conventions for magic users, no schools and no laws to keep anyone from studying or doing anything. Places like New York and Salem became hotspots for young enterprising magic users, both light and dark, to try new things and be bold.

When the statute went up the newly formed European Magical governments acted as if they already owned the magical portions of the Americas. It made little sense in the end, there were hundreds of nationalities represented in the magical American communities at this point and none of the European powers could lay claim to it all without causing a fuss. Not to mention, the native magic users of the land would have rather slit their throats than bow down to European rule, their magic had already been forcibly hidden and their way of life ravaged, they would not give up their sovereignty as well.

Combined with that most European magic users didn’t find the idea of listening to a government on the other side of the ocean all that appealing. In a rare form of solidarity the two groups worked together and established themselves as a unified body. This meant of course that the Magical government in the Americas formed well before the muggle one did. Most every other country in the world had the exact opposite history meaning that the Americans had a rather strange…view of things.

Rather than basing their government on muggle maps, they made their own. The population of magic users in the Americas was so scattered in the beginning that frankly it seemed pointless to have a government for each of the 13 colonies and then another for the northern territories and then more and more of them for everything to the west. The muggles were constantly changing the borders anyway and none of them had really agreed upon anything. So the American Magical Government decided just to span the entire continent.
They split the government up into offices of equal power, based on geography. There was of course the Canadian branch that dealt with all things icy and northern. A branch for the European colonies. As well as multiple branches for the native countries and tribes both to the west and to the south. Each Branch was unified under the same constitution and elected leaders that would travel and work together to ensure that all magical people on the North American continent were free and protected.

Each branch was in charge of providing education to the magical users in their geographic area, either through schools or some sort of apprenticeship program. They were required to maintain the statute of secrecy to the upmost of their ability (although it was well known that in the native branches that this rule was bent to the point of being almost non-existent within the tribes themselves). The branches also had to maintain some sort of military force for the purpose of protecting magical lands and people. They also had a duty to the magical flora and fauna that called their geographic location home.

How these tasks were done varied from branch to branch based on cultural and geographic means. Branches in the more colonized portions of the continent found it more efficient to build schools and governmental buildings to do their work while the branches that went into not yet attacked native territory relied more on sending out government workers to tribes and peoples to provide aid as was requested.

This remained largely the same even as muggles changed, although eventually each branch succumbed and built a building to represent their headquarters. The United States formed and began their manifest destiny. In response the Magical Government did what they could to protect magical lands from muggle destruction. They were somewhat successful. Muggle actions changed consistently across the continent, stealing land and starting wars. Through it all the Magical Government remained as unified as ever.

That isn’t to say that the branches of the government got along perfectly. There was a historic (and semi-friendly) rivalry between the New York Branch and the Inuit Branch that had been going on since 1774. There was also the well known annual dueling competition between the Cherokee branch and the Yucatán branch that normally ended in at least 10 duelers from both sides in the hospital for wounds never before seen by magical healers.

To keep the peace between the branches the presidents of each branch would meet annually in order to discuss on going needs and concerns across the continent. The meeting place was randomly decided by an enchanted goblet that would spit out the name of a branch. The annual meeting would often become a chance for the hosting branch to show off and attempt to prove their superiority but in theory actual work got done at some point.

In the modern day the Magical American Government was a complex beast of a government that was often nothing more than a headache for other countries to work with. The muggle leaders of the continent were often blindsided by the insane differences between the governmental styles and history. Things were so different that magical Americans used different maps than the muggle ones. It wasn’t until 2013 that the magical government started producing maps that displayed both the traditional map that showed the magical branches as well as the more boring muggle map.

All of this is to say that on that day in June, Harry James Potter entered the New York Branch of the Magical Government expecting it to be like the British Ministry.

He, of course, couldn’t have been more wrong.

Harry had asked his dad to put a glamor over his armor so it looked like he was wearing robes, thinking to himself that it wouldn’t be good to walk into a government building looking like he was dressed for war. This would be the one correct thing he did that wasn’t actually a mistake. He
walked into the large ornate stone building that wouldn’t have looked out of place in the very historic parts of London.

The first thing that greeted Harry was a map. It floated in front of him flapping a little to get his attention. He saw other versions of the same map doing it to everyone else who entered the building. Most people just grabbed the map and stuffed it rudely into their pocket while walking towards wherever they were going while others grabbed the map and actually read it. Harry grabbed his own and looked it over. It was just a map of the building, different colors highlighting departments within it.

Words flashed on the top of the map

What do you need?

“Uhm…I need to report an attack.” Harry said. The map helpfully produced a red dot to show where he was at the entrance and then a red line drew itself across the map towards the Department of Defense. When he didn’t start moving the map helpfully told him to take ten steps forward and then take a left.

Right.

Harry used the map as sparingly as possible and hustled towards his destination. He wondered if maybe he should have let Remus go. Harry wasn’t even sure what had pushed him to volunteer. It wasn’t like he had a whole lot of experience talking to authority figures. He had, after all, called Odin a big bag of dicks at one point. Not to mention all of the trouble he’d gotten into last summer with the trial and Minister Fudge. Harry scowled at the very thought. This wouldn’t be like that, would it? Surely the American President won’t be rude.

He was partially correct.

When Harry got to the department of defense he found himself walking towards what appeared to be a receptionist’s desk. The man sitting behind it looked stressed out of his mind. Which was not a good sign at all. Before Harry could get close another man rushed up to the desk carrying a paper cup full of some steaming liquid.

“Here Barry.” The man said. “Some coffee for you.”

“David. Do you know how much I love you?” The man behind the desk asked as he grabbed at the coffee cup.

“Not enough to buy me coffee that’s for sure.”

“I’ve been busy! This emergency meeting has kept me up night after night.”

“I know.” The other man said. “I just wish upper management would get their head out of their asses and make a decision. We were literally attacked a few weeks ago and they’re still dithering about an appropriate response.”

“Well we weren’t attacked. It was a muggle arcade.”

“As if that makes a lick of difference.”

Harry walked over to the men and cleared his throat awkwardly.

“Uhm…excuse me I’m sorry to interrupt but…”
“You’re Harry Potter.” Barry said, dropping his cup of coffee in shock. The cup landed on the desk, perfectly flat, and sent a splash of boiling hot brown liquid into the air that landed safely back inside the cup. Huh. An anti-spill spell.

“Yes?” Harry said.

“Are you actually him?” David asked causing Harry to roll his eyes and lift up his hair to reveal the bright red scar. Both men gasped again and Harry let his hair drop back down.

“I came to talk to…”

“I bet you’re here for the meeting. My boss was talking about calling in an expert for the president.” Barry decided interrupting Harry a second time. “Who better to ask than the Boy-Who-Lived?”

“What meeting?” Harry asked.

“Yeah the Presidential meeting that got pulled together after the arcade attack. You are here for that right?”

“Well I do have information for…” Those words would prove to be the next correct thing that Harry did but this time it was entirely a mistake.

“Great. David, would you pretty please watch my desk for me. Five minutes. I just have to get this guy to the meeting room.”

“Sure sure.” David said. “But you owe me, like two dinners.”

“Done and done.” Barry stood up and placed a kiss onto David’s cheek before shuffling around and motioning for Harry to follow. Harry did so. He had to tell someone about this attack soon and perhaps wherever Barry was taking him would be good for that. The slightly overworked man looked back at Harry and gave him a small smile. “So how are you liking America? Your trip over was good right?”

“Uhm. Yeah.” Harry said wondering if small talk was really appropriate at a time like this. “The trip was fine, I’ve been here for a while already. Sightseeing.”

“Doing the whole tourist thing? In the middle of the war? It must not be as serious over in Europe as I thought.”

“It is really bad.” Harry said. “But coming here was important.”

“You know you’re kind of fighting an uphill battle here kid.” Barry told him. “We Americans have kept ourselves out of European business as much as possible over the years. Sure, we’re a part of the IWC but that’s mostly because not being a part of it would’ve been totally stupid.”

Harry was literally about to be fighting a battle. In the middle of their streets. He was having a hard time even comprehending what Barry meant.

“Why?” Harry asked instead. “I mean isn’t You-Know-Who a threat to all of us?”

“It was before your time I guess but back during the major part of the war You-Know-Who didn’t really cause too much trouble here. Oh, don’t get me wrong. I remember back in the day we had Death Eaters but mostly they just hung around and said messed up shit. Most of the fighting and killing was done in Europe. So we don’t really see it as a threat to us. Besides, You-Know-Who is a European problem. They made him, they can get rid of him.”
“That’s not really how the world works.” Harry said.

“What?” Barry asked.

“I mean the world is based off of the idea of passing on responsibility to other people.” Harry pointed out. “Our parents made the world we live in and we have to deal with their mistakes just like our parents had to deal with their parents’. And so on. Just because you didn’t make the problem doesn’t mean it’s not your problem.”

“Still.” Barry mused. “I don’t see why we should care about You-Know-Who.”

“Maybe because he’ll kill you and everyone you love without a second thought?”

That actually shut Barry up. Harry smirked a little and let Barry lead him through the hallways. He rubbed his scar a little as it prickled. Ever since he’d broken the spells his dad had placed on him his head had been clear and free of scar pain. To have it return now made him feel irritable. He could feel some sort of pressure on the scar, as if someone had taken a hot knife and pressed the flat part to his head.

How close was Voldemort now? Or was this another attack? Harry took in a deep breath and forced himself to be calm.

“Alright Mr. Potter. The presidents are right through there. Just go in and introduce yourself. I’m sure they’re expecting you.”

They weren’t. And what did the man mean presidents? Shouldn’t there only be one? Harry was left alone before he could ask. He looked at the large ornate oak doors in front of him and sighed. The entire building felt old and well taken care of. Not Hogwarts old of course but still old. Harry pushed open the door with one hand and stepped inside. He didn’t know what he expected but a huge round table that seated 25 men and women who were arguing at the top of their lungs was not it.

“As if The Almighty Dumbledore gives a shit about us!”

“And don’t you dare imply that my Branch doesn’t care about muggles! Your branch has been a festering pool for Death Eater Activity since the 80s!”

“You-Know-Who isn’t going to attack us again!”

“You-Know-Who could be attacking us right now! We need to be vigilant!”

“Starting a war on a foreign entity is going to increase taxes and frankly I think our constituents deserve better!”

“There’s nothing to gain in fighting this war!”

“We have the ability to help! That should be enough!”

Harry listened to the cacophony of noise as arguments overlapped one another. He realized very abruptly that this was not a room he was meant to be in. He’d been hoping to find an auror or something to warn but now it looked like he was in the middle of a very angry parliament meeting. The itch in his scar increased and he knew he didn’t have a lot of time.

“Uhm. Excuse me?” Of course no one heard him. Harry swallowed and spoke louder. “HELLO!”

His voice boomed through the room, helped along by a bit of quite accidental magic. All of the
politicians stopped talking, and as one turned to look at the rude interruption. Harry blanched a little and cleared his throat.

“Uhm…I have something to say.”

“Young man this is a closed meeting.” An elderly woman with warm brown skin said. “I don’t know how you got in here but…”

“That’s Harry Potter!”

Whispers went through the room as people recognized him, Harry blushed a little and shifted his feet.

“What are you doing here?” Another man asked with a very thick southern accent.

“I’m…I’m here to warn you.” Harry said. “I came here because I found out that You-Know-Who is going to be attacking this place soon, probably today but if not today then tomorrow.”

Shock rippled through the crowd. People demanded to know how he knew and for him to share everything he knew. Eventually another one of the politicians demanded quiet. Harry felt slightly overwhelmed but forced himself not to panic.

“I…well I…My scar connects me to You-Know-Who. Whenever he gets close to me it hurts, I know he’s in the city right now.” Harry said firmly. “Sometimes I get visions of what he’s doing and I know he’s gathering forces for an attack. My best guess is that it will be here because…well you all are here.”

“But why would he attack us?” A woman asked. “We were neutral in the war before his resurrection.”

“No one is neutral to him.” Harry said. “He just didn’t care about you, now he does. He thinks that I’m here to gather an army too. He believes I’m going to ally myself with your country and he wants to destroy you before you can.”

“We have no plans on allying with Albus Dumbledore.” One of the politicians, a Mexican woman if Harry had to guess based on her accent, said. “We made that clear decades ago and our stance has not changed.”

“I’m not with Dumbledore.” Harry said sternly. “I don’t want to work with someone who manipulates people like that. He’s been messing with me my whole life, it’s why I left Britain in the first place. But…I am sorry. I thought I was careful enough not to be seen but You-Know-Who figured out I was here.”

“So this is your fault?” One of the men spat.

“No.” Harry said. “He would have attacked you eventually. There are Death Eaters here and they won’t be peaceful forever. Besides blaming me for the actions of an insane man who wants to kill me isn’t fair. I’m fifteen, not a war criminal.”

Harry wasn’t going to take the blame for this attack. He wasn’t. He refused to do it. Not in front of these people he didn’t know.

“Look. You have to believe me. He is coming right now.”

“This building is warded to hell and back. We are safe in the event of this attack.” One of the men said almost sarcastically.
“But your people aren’t. And that’s what matters!” Harry said. “The only reason I’m here is because there are kids and normal regular people who are gonna get killed just because they live here. Shouldn’t you be doing something?”

“Yes that is the question.” One of the women said. “I am president of the New York Branch of the Magical American Government. We are all here trying to decide how best to defend our people. Some of us believe that organizing the army and invading Britain to destroy Voldemort is our best option. Others wish to remain neutral and others still argue that we should be shoring up our defenses. We cannot however act on your word alone, Mr. Potter.”

Of course they didn’t believe him. Harry took in a deep breath to keep his temper in check.

“You’re not going by my word alone. There was a Death Eater attack two weeks ago at an arcade. You have proof that things are happening don’t you?”

“The boy is right. We know that this is a threat, we cannot continue to bury our heads in the sand!”

“If we make it clear that we are not affiliated with Mr. Potter then You-Know-Who will have no reason to attack!”

“What about the fact that he wants to?” Harry asked. “You’ve got to understand, everything he’s done since he’s been resurrected has been designed to cause the most pain and the most destruction possible. This isn’t something you can just wish away. He doesn’t keep promises and he can’t be reasoned with I promise you that.”

“So what? You want us to ally ourselves with the Europeans? To fight against a threat they created? To save them in all the ways they’ve blatantly refused to save us?”

“We are not going to offer our resources to those savages. It is their fault they are in this situation. They should fix it.”

“Savages?” Harry asked.

“Young man. I don’t know what they teach you over there in Hogwarts but frankly the sheer amount of anti-magic sentiment in Europe is not our concern. European cultures allowed anti-magic sentiment to rise to a point that children were being murdered and instead of defending their children they destroyed our culture with their statute of secrecy.”

“Yes! Our tribes, our nations, we were at peace with our magic. Our culture, our religions were intertwined with our magic and the Europeans just severed it. Without our consent they created that damn statute of secrecy and forced us to live under it. Ignorant and uncaring of our pain.” Another leader added. “Even today we have not recovered, separating magic from our tribes meant cutting the body of our nations in half. We bleed even still.”

“That’s terrible.” Harry said softly. He tried to imagine it but couldn’t, not truly. He’d grown up in the muggle world, in a culture that didn’t put any stock into magic. But for a culture that did place importance on it? Wouldn’t the statute of secrecy have made a mockery of their religion? Of their culture? “I’m sorry that happened.”

A bunch of politicians paused and actually looked at him. Harry straightened his back and spoke.

“I’m not asking you to save Europe, or to ally yourself with me. I’m only a kid and it’d be pretty crazy to put all of your hope on me.” Harry said shuffling awkwardly. “What I am asking is that you act, that you stand up and defend your people because they need you to. I am going to do what I can, I have people I trust to help me.”
“You’re offering to protect us for nothing in return?” One of the men asked suspiciously. Harry resisted the urge to growl at the man. What sort of compensation would there even be? Harry just wanted the war to end! Wasn’t that enough? What sort of person would expect compensation?

“You-Know-Who isn’t my fault. It’s the fault of the generations before me who made poor decisions.” Harry said. “But if I want to live in this world, if I want to live in a peaceful world, then it’s my responsibility to fight him. I’m going to do that no matter what. I want to make sure that You-Know-Who hurts as few as possible from now on. That’s what I’m working for. Not fame. Not money. Not power. I want peace.”

A ripping pain came through his scar and he had to resist the urge to scream. He took in a deep breath and ignored the pain. He missed the looks of contemplation that he was being given by a majority of the politicians.

“I have to go.” Harry said. “You have your warning. Listen to it or don’t.”

Then Harry turned and left. Adults were stupid. All of them, Harry decided. Either they didn’t know how to do laundry or they couldn’t even listen for a few seconds and do their jobs like they were supposed to. Stupid politicians. Stupid Voldemort. Stupid everything. The pain in his scar increased as he made his way out of the building. Voldemort was close. Harry reached to his side and removed his sword. His glamor dropped at the same time, changing from his school robes to the Asgardian armor his father had given him.

Harry rushed past the desk that Barry was still sitting behind, ignoring the man’s calls and confusion. He exited through the building using the same path he’d taken to get into it. He stepped outside the building and into the magical district at large. He expected to see a smoking ruin but it was just the same as it had been when he’d gotten there. Witches and Wizards mingling around, going in and out of buildings and doing their business.

Had he gotten it wrong? Was the scar just messing with him? The pain he was feeling was undeniable but maybe Voldemort had just sent him a fake vision to mess with him. Harry swallowed back the panic he felt at being wrong about these visions again. He reached into his pocket and pulled out the communicator Tony had given him. He stuffed it into his ear and pressed the on button.

“Anything?” Harry asked, flicking his wand into his hand from its holster.

“Harry?” His dad asked.

“My scar is on fire. Does anyone see anything?” Harry asked again. Before anyone could say anything, the world exploded.

Harry instinctively cast a shield spell with his wand. Around him he could feel fire and smoke and hear nothing but screams, both from the com in his ear and from the people around him. A cutting hex slammed into his shield and Harry stumbled back. He let the shield spell drop and looked around at the smoking ruins. He could see Death Eaters dressed in black attacking people and destroying buildings. People who needed his help.

He rushed down the stairs, sword in one hand and wand in the other. It didn’t feel as awkward as it had the first time, he’d done it. His dad and Thor had both helped him immensely with that.

“Harry! Are you okay?” Ron shouted over the com right as Harry finished casting a few stunning spells right at a death eater who was trying to kill a woman trapped beneath some rubble.
“The attack is here! Right on the steps of the administration building.” Harry shouted.

“There are attacks all over kid!” Tony said. “This thing was coordinated to hell and back. Did the government listen?”

“I don’t know. I don’t think they wanted to believe me.” Harry said.

“Well, that doesn’t mean we stop. Stick to the plan.” His dad said.

Harry nodded and rushed over to the woman. He used his hands to lift up the rubble and she crawled out of the way.

“Can you get into the Administration building? It’s well warded.” Harry said. “It’ll be safe.”

“Yes.” She said. “Thank you.”

Harry nodded. He decided to stay there and help everyone in the square to safety as best he could. Then he’d go find Ron and Hermione. All of his senses were going haywire as the world descended further into chaos. Spells were flying everywhere and it was impossible to tell who had cast what. Bright streaks of light that cut through the ash filled air. There was the sound of shouted spells and screams of pain. It was enough to make Harry want to vomit.

He didn’t though.

Instead he moved.

He spotted Death Eaters and attacked as many as he could find while looking for survivors and injured people. Over the comms people were shouting at one another, asking for back up or informing the others about where squadrons of Death Eaters were moving. Harry tried to listen to it but it distracted him too much and so he decided to focus solely on defending the entrance to the administration building.

*Bombarda!*

*Deprimo!*

*Expulso!*

*Reducto!*

*Protego!*

Harry ducked and dodged and cast spells as fast as he could. He used his sword mostly as a way to block incoming spells and redirect them. The metal in his hand felt almost boiling hot from all of the spells it was taking in, he ignored the burns and gripped tighter. His lungs heaved as he jumped over the cobbled streets that were littered with debris from the destroyed store fronts. Not to mention the bodies of those who weren’t lucky enough to have survived the first attack. Harry forced himself not to look at those. His skin started to itch as ash and smoke stuck to his sweaty skin.

His armor protected him far more than he expected. These Death Eaters weren’t holding back and often Harry felt himself being flung to the side or to his back from a spell he failed to dodge that hit the metal of his chest plate. Bruises and lacerations formed along his arms and chest from the repeated hits. Harry kept a weather eye out for killing curses and for the cruciatus. He did not want to get hit by one of those.
Harry wasn’t the only one fighting against the Death Eaters. Plenty of adults who either worked in the buildings or had been in the area when the attack started were fighting back as best they could. None of them were wearing protective clothing and some of them seemed quite old and out of practice. Despite this, it seemed to Harry, that together they were able to keep the Death Eaters from descending into the administration building and the injured inside.

The world was spinning too fast and everything seemed out of focus for Harry. He just kept firing spells and dodging and jumping. Time meant nothing as he stunned and tied up Death Eaters. Without quite realizing it Harry had ended up back on the white marble steps that led up to the Administration Building. He wasn’t sure what it was actually called, he assumed it had a name. Why was he thinking about building names?

Harry hefted up the little girl who was crying in his arms and rushed up the stairs. He handed her to one of the other survivors he’d helped. To his surprise he saw men and women in dueling clothes exiting the building. He spotted one of the politicians in the group. The man grinned at Harry as he passed and Harry smiled faintly back. From his ear piece he heard the rest of the team sound off that they spotted armored magic users appearing to fight off the Death Eaters.

Harry could have collapsed from relief. He wanted to.

Then he collapsed from pain. The scar screamed and split sending blood down his forehead and onto his nose and cheeks. Harry almost fell to his knees, but someone kept him up.

“Harry Potter.”

Immediately the entire battle silenced itself. Harry couldn’t say if that was from magic or from fear. Harry turned around to see Voldemort standing there in all his glory. The bone white skin glinted in the afternoon sun and his red eyes seemed to glow with malice. The man was wearing a dark robe that whipped about in the breeze.

“I had wondered if you would be here.” Voldemort said.

Harry stood up and blinked trying to clear his eyes of the blood. He gripped his sword a bit tighter than normal. Everyone was moving as far to either side of him and Voldemort as they could. Like the parting of the red sea except much worse. Harry lifted his sword and tried to look brave.

“Tom.” Harry said. “Fancy seeing you here.”

Voldemort immediately cast a killing curse at Harry. Harry summoned a piece of concrete that intercepted the curse and exploded into a shower of rock and dust.

“That is Lord Voldemort to you boy!”

“But that’s not your name.” Harry said. “Your name is Tom Riddle.”

Voldemort fired a bright yellow spell that Harry didn’t recognize. Harry cast the most powerful shield spell he could, the shield shattered upon impact and sent Harry stumbling back. He jumped up again and fired a cutting hex right at Voldemort that the dark lord just batted away like it was nothing.

“Stand aside, Potter.” Voldemort ordered.

“Piss off.” Harry said. “You’re not getting inside this building.”

“They are not your allies Potter. They are nothing to you, you need not die for them.”
I am going to protect everyone, no matter who they are, against you.” Harry said. “You have spent my entire life haunting me. You’ve ruined everything I’ve ever been a part of. I’m going to do the same to you, Tom. I promise. As long as I live you are not going to take one single step towards victory.”

Neither can live while the other survives.

Voldemort snarled and cast a crucio. Harry lifted up his sword and let the Asgardian metal take in the spell like some sort of radiation. The heat from the cruse traveled down the metal and added onto the burn on his palms. Harry fired a bombarda spell right at the Dark Lord’s feet and forced him to apparate away. Harry jumped forward down the steps and the duel began in earnest.

If fighting Death Eaters had been overwhelming then it was nothing on the sheer terror that was fighting Voldemort one on one. Harry was outclassed in almost every capacity. He relied mostly on dodging, shield spells, and sheer dumb luck. He managed to hit the Dark Lord only twice, the first with a cutting hex and the second with an expulso. In comparison, Voldemort hit him about ten times. Eventually he got hit by another cruciatus that sent him to the ground, writhing and screaming in pain. Voldemort stalked forward, holding the curse over Harry to keep him immobile.

He got within feet of Harry, causing the blood that was still bleeding from his scar to pour out of him like a flood. Before he could get further Voldemort was hit by a wall of green fire. The cruciatus ended as Voldemort’s concentration broke.

“Step away from him.”

“Dad.” Harry coughed, he couldn’t tell if he was relieved for the rescue or terrified about his dad facing Voldemort.

“Loki, god of magic. It is an honor”

“Funny, I can't really say the same.”

His dad immediately started dueling against Voldemort in a way that Harry had frankly been unable to. Harry’s limbs spasmed painfully and he tried to sit up. He saw other Avengers and Marauders making their way towards them. Tony Stark flew in and fired an energy beam right at Voldemort. Sirius and Remus both apparated in and began to attack from the left and right. His dad kept a majority of Voldemort’s attention on him using illusions and other Asgardian spells.

When Thor landed so hard that he cratered the street around him, his entire body lit up with lightning and a storm brewing in the sky. Voldemort seemed to do an assessment of the situation.

He ran.

Harry collapsed in relief again, falling back onto the street when Voldemort apparated away. The pain on his scar lessened to an almost nonexistent ache telling him that the Dark Lord was far, far away.

“Coward!” Sirius shouted.

“We almost had him, Loki.” Thor said.

“That would have been too easy.” His dad said, not even looking at Thor but instead looking around for Harry. Ron and Hermione spotted him first, laying on some rubble and groaning.

“Harry!” Ron shouted, his best friend’s voice sounded distorted and weird. Harry closed his eyes and
opened them again only to see five Rons kneeling at his side. Harry’s body spasmed through aftershocks of the curse. “Come on mate! Tell me you’re okay.”

Harry tried. He really did. But all that came out was the word ‘FSenkg’. Which arguably was not a word at all. Then Harry lost consciousness.
Loki: 1, Albus: 0

Chapter Summary

The Order arrives a bit too late to the action in New York, and Loki finally makes his debut to the Order.

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone! Thanks so much for all the brilliant comments last week! I enjoyed reading them!
I'm leaving for a field trip tomorrow and I won't get back until Sunday. I should be able to update normally next Wednesday, but in the event of like...exhaustion or some other unforeseen circumstance, I might update a day late on Thursday instead. I swear there will be an update next week though!

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Voldemort’s attack had been quick and well planned. That much Loki could admit. Squadrons of Death Eaters had arrived spells blasting from their wands in five different sectors of the Manhattan Magical Section, commonly known among the locals as Downtown. Thankfully Loki, with the help of Stark, Sirius, and Remus had been able to properly guess which sectors would be attacked.

They’d forgotten the administration building.

It was the most heavily warded place in the state of New York. The very idea of Voldemort, or anyone, doing a frontal assault on that building had been ludicrous. Secretly Loki had been pleased when Harry had volunteered to go there. It would probably be safer for him if he was near such a bastion of security.

Of course, he’d been wrong on all counts on that. Loki had barely been able to fight through the crowds and get to his son before it was too late. Loki had been careful fighting Voldemort, to a point. He was aware that he couldn’t kill Voldemort, trying to usurp the prophecy would not end well for him and he refused to die in front of his son.

But the prophecy never said anything about someone else maiming the Dark Lord. Perhaps Loki could just start removing limbs and skin, nothing fatal, but certainly painful. He’d learnt plenty of torturing techniques from his time under Thanos’ care and honestly who better to share that knowledge with than the monster who’d murdered his wife? Sirius and Remus had been right behind him, wands blazing with the promise of revenge and justice.

Loki managed to hit the snake eyed monster with a few delightful hexes that would leave the monster in pain for weeks, as well as a jinx that ensured every 51st step he took would result in him tripping face first into the ground. Not to mention the curse he’d specially designed that would give the monster a blistering headache anytime he thought about Harry. Turn about was fair play after all.

Sirius and Remus had also gotten in their own shots while firing at the Dark Lord from behind,
something Loki thoroughly approved of.

Loki was only sad that Voldemort had fled before Thor could give the man a traditional Asgardian war greeting. Thor looked equally as disappointed as the barbarian like rage drained from his features, the storm in the sky calming to something far more manageable. In the distance, he saw Ron and Hermione rushing towards his son and Loki felt the swell of victory in his chest turn to ice.

“Move.” Loki ordered right after he teleported to Ron’s side.

“He just went out.” Ron said. “He tried to talk to me but he couldn’t.”

His son’s limbs were filled with tremors, and even unconscious his face was filled with pain. And also covered with blood. Loki reached out, ever so careful and let his hands began to glow. He wasn’t a trained healer, but over the centuries of doing inadvisable things with Thor, he’d picked up enough that he could do what needed to be done here.

“Is he okay?” Thor asked.

“He will be.” Loki said before he even knew the true extent of the damage. His son would be nothing but okay, there was no alternative. “Sirius! Go back to the tower and get the potions kit. Remus with me.”

“Got it Prongs.” Sirius said at the same time that Remus knelt down on Harry’s other side.

“What do you need?”

“Monitor him for me, let me know if he wakes up or if his vitals change?” Loki requested. “Asgardian healing methods can be a bit rough on the body.”

“I thought he saw the Asgardian healers when you saved Padfoot?”

“He did but they limited themselves to human methods, but with the amount of damage from the cruciatus, I need a bit more fire power.” Remus nodded and used his wand to cast a monitoring charm on Harry.

“Is there anything we can do?” Hermione asked, her voice nervous and unsure as if she hadn’t been one of the most terrifying things Loki had seen today. Seriously, that fifteen year old girl had shown about as much hesitation in a fight that Natasha did, which is to say none whatsoever. The only difference being was that she had the mind of Tony Stark. A combination that Loki could have never foreseen.

“Lady Hermione.” Thor said. “You are a grand and frightening warrior like myself. The best thing we can do now is give space to those who are trained in this.”

“Oh. I knew I should have started studying healing spells.”

“We’ll learn ‘em together.” Ron said, giving Hermione’s armored shoulder a pat. Ron hadn’t been anything to laugh at either. While his range of spells was not as broad as Hermione’s he had more magical power than she did and his wand form was excellent.

Loki’s hand glowed bright green, flames licking out of his palms and he reached out for his son’s left hand. He began to murmur spells, ordering the damaged and destroyed nerves to repair themselves, in a language none of them knew. An ancient language that had been written and forgotten long before even Odin was born. A language that only magic users with too much time on their hands ever bothered to learn. His magic seeped into his son, green power seeking out damage and forcing it
The amount of damage to his son’s nervous system was severe and extensive. Voldemort had held the cruciatus for far longer than any normal human would have survived under. His son’s godly heritage had given him just enough endurance to keep him from being ruined forever by the curse. As it was now, Loki worked slowly, using his magic as precisely as a scalpel to repair his son’s hand and arm inch by inch.

He got all the way up to his son’s shoulder, a ring of green magic circling around the joint between his arm and shoulder before he let go and switched to his son’s left foot. He repeated the same process, quelling the tremors in his son’s body with a healing flame. Around him the Avengers were gathering from their stations and comparing injuries and battle stories. When Voldemort had retreated, all of the Death Eaters who were able to, followed after with their tails between their legs. There were of course plenty of Death Eaters who were dead, unconscious, or tied up ready for the authorities to take them away.

Loki ignored the chatter, only paying enough attention to do a cursory head count of everyone in their team, before putting his full attention on his spells. He knew that if his son was awake he’d likely be causing him just as much pain, if not more pain than what the cruciatus had caused. Magical healing, be it human or divine, was generally painful. In essence this sort of magic instantly repaired whatever had been broken in the body. Human magic was akin to a gentle suggestion, a ‘how would you feel about sticking back together, dear friend?’. In contrast Asgardian healing magic was more like a drill sergeant that put the fear of god into an injury and forced it to repair itself out of sheer self-preservation.

He forced himself to ignore his son’s other injuries, the nerve damage was his priority. Everything else could be seen to by a human healer in a hospital instead of a war-torn city street. Loki finished his son’s left leg, stopping the healing right where his thigh met his hip and then moved to the right. This required him to bend awkwardly over his son’s body, but he didn’t waste time moving into a more comfortable position. The sooner this was healed, the less likely there would be any lingering damage or pain.

“James. He’s waking.”

“Put him back to sleep.”

Remus nodded, although Loki didn’t see that, instead he heard Remus cast a sleeping spell over his son, pushing him back into unconsciousness. The ring of green light traveled over his son’s right knee cap that appeared to be heavily bruised and inflamed, Harry must have fallen on it at some point and then kept running around on it, heedless of the pain it must have been causing him. The magic continued up and up his thigh, forcing nerves back into working order and quelling the pain responses.

He was at his son’s right elbow, gently realigning and reattaching nerves when the sound of multiple teleportations happened all at once behind him. It took all of his will power not to look up or flinch from his work.

“We’re here!” Fred called out.

“We brought the Calvary!”

“A bit too late for that!” Ron shouted. “You-Know-Who’s come and gone already.”

“Ronald Billius Weasley! When your brothers told me what you were doing, I couldn’t believe it!
And what on earth are you wearing?” Molly shouted.

Loki rolled his eyes as the argument between the entire Weasley clan seemed to explode around him. He also heard other familiar voices. Alastor, telling everyone to be cautious because these muggles could be anyone at all. Shacklebolt demanding to speak to any of the American aurors about potential containment plans. And of course, Severus Snape, telling Ron and Hermione that they didn’t belong here and that they were insolent annoying little children.

Was that how he talked to all his students?

Loki moved from his son’s now healed right arm to his torso. The damage wasn’t as bad here and so he was able to move quicker than he had before. The arguments continued as Loki worked through his son’s intestines and pancreas. Ron explained that he was wearing armor so that he’d be better protected, Hermione was defended her choice with the same veracity that she’d declared it to her parents. Loki worked up through his son’s lungs, and then spent some special attention on his son’s, thankfully, still beating heart.

Up the shoulders and into the neck. Harry’s tremors had stopped by this point. His face was lax under the sleeping spell. Remus, or someone else perhaps, had cleaned off the blood from Harry’s face and neck. Revealing the painfully inflamed scar. Loki placed his hands on both of his son’s temples and repeated the spell for a sixth time. Surprisingly, there was little damage from the cruciatus at all. Loki’s magic reached out and touched protections that had a familiar twinge to them.

Lily.

Harry had spoken of his mother’s protection, of Lily’s sacrifice and now he could see what he meant. Lily’s last remaining bit of magic in this realm had gathered in their son’s mind and provided protection for it against an unforgivable. Loki frowned a bit as his magic brushed over the scar. There was some sort of…thing inside it. It wasn’t a curse or an object. It wasn’t anything Loki had ever seen before in fact.

There was a wall of magic, organically grown, that stood as a barrier between his son’s mind and this dark, writhing thing. He could see the framework of the wall had been built by Lily’s love and protection and his son’s magic had bolstered it and filled most of the holes. Carefully Loki reached out and used his own magic to cover up the one’s that Harry had missed. It was a temporary protection, but at least Loki had an idea of what he needed to do now.

Whatever was in his son’s scar needed to go.

“I don’t see why these muggles are even here.” Severus sneered. Loki opened his eyes and rolled them at Remus, who looked relieved beyond all measure to see Loki had finally stopped healing Harry.

“Really? You can’t think of a single reason?” Loki asked, standing up and turning around.

It was something out of a soap opera. Two sides forming a circle. The Order on one side, with the Avengers on the others. Ron and Hermione were of course standing by the Avengers, bold against the adults they were meant to be respecting. At his words the entire Order, including Dumbledore all stopped to look at him. Dumfounded. Loki forced himself not to immediately rushed Dumbledore and stab him. Instead he looked Severus Snape dead in the eye, a smirk on his face he hadn’t worn in over 15 years.

Snape looked like he’d seen a ghost. His greasy hair outlining a paler than usual face. It was ironic since the man worked in a castle frequented by ghosts.
“It can’t be.” Arthur breathed out.

“Arthur!” Loki called, a genuine smile forming on his face upon seeing the red headed man. “It’s so good to see you! Harry’s been telling me so much about you. You really got the job as the head of the Muggle Artifacts Department? Congratulations! I can’t think of a better fit for you. You know I really should introduce you to my friend Tony. You two would get along swimmingly. Just tell him about that flying car of yours.”

“A flying car?” Tony asked.

“…uh yes. A Ford Angela.” Arthur said still looking at Loki and blinking stupidly.

“It’s not…” Kingsley said stepping forward.

“Shacklebolt!” Loki shouted. “It’s been an age hasn’t it? Did you get that promotion you were after? Harry didn’t know what your position in the Auror Corps was when I asked him about it. And Mad-Eye! You’re still here, although with a few new accessories I can see. Nice peg leg.”

And Loki meant that sincerely. It did look rather nice and if Loki knew Mad-Eye at all then it was probably enchanted to hell and back.

“James?” Molly asked, her voice trembling. “Is that you?”

“Molly.” Loki said beaming at the woman. “Thank you. Harry told me about how you welcomed him into your home, I cannot express my gratitude to you. Not only for being so compassionate to my son but for raising Ron so wonderfully. He’s been such an excellent friend for my son, a brother in all but blood and I can’t help but be grateful to both you and Arthur for it.”

“Now hold up right there!” Mad-Eye shouted before Molly could step forward and either hug Loki or slap him across the face. “James Potter is dead! This is clearly an imposter!”

“Mad-Eye, the first time you and I met, you helped me detangle myself from a cursed rose bush when I was 16. I swore you to secrecy and as far as I know, you never told anyone.”

“You could have guessed that!” The man said, his magical blue eye whirring around looking for enchantments on him. Loki rolled his eyes and lifted up his right hand. He let it glow green with magic again, two tongues of magic swirling down his wrist and curling around his forearm.

“I swear on my magic, and on my life, that I am the James Potter you knew. I am not a spy sent by You-Know-Who or any other enemy force. So mote it be.”

“Well.” Mad-Eye said. “He’s not fibbing!”

“Not this time.” Thor muttered causing Loki to giggle just a little.

“James.” Arthur said. “Where have you been? What happened? Why do you look like that?”

“Do you have any idea what Harry’s has been through?” Molly shouted, clearly having chosen to try and smack Loki across the cheek.

“I thought him dead.” Loki said, his voice cracking. “I thought You-Know-Who killed him along with my wife and Sirius and Remus and Peter. I thought they were all dead and I was left alone. I went back to my home to mourn, never even imagining that I was abandoning so many people.”

“Your home?” Shaklebolt asked.
“I am not only James.” Loki said. “My true name, the one I have known for 2000 years is Loki of Asgard, god of magic and mischief.”

Before anyone could react to that truth bomb, Sirius finally returned.

“James! I got the potions kit! Did you really have to hide it under that many hexes?”

Molly screamed. Then Sirius screamed, but that was mostly because Arthur, Shaklebolt, Mad-Eye, Severus, and Dumbledore all fired spells right at him. Loki immediately cast a shield spell, a thick wall of translucent green magic that took in all of the spells like it was nothing, protecting his friend.

“I hid it under that many spells because I didn’t want you or Remus pranking it.”

“Come on! I wouldn’t have done that.” Sirius defended before frowning. “Well maybe just a little.”

“Go over and help Remus. I’ve done what I can for Harry, he just needs a few pain potions and some basic healing before we let him wake up.”

“On it!” Loki let the shield spell drop and Sirius hopped past the entire confrontation and towards Remus who had transfigured the rocks around him into a floating cot that he’d moved Harry onto. The boy looked better already which brought Loki an incalculable amount of relief.

“I suppose I should do introductions right?” Loki asked. “I’ll start on this side and work my way around. This is Thor, my brother, god of thunder and lightning.”

“Hello!” Thor boomed happily, waving his hammer around like the golden retriever he often was.

“And this is Captain Steve Rodgers, or as he is more famously known, Captain America. He’s a famous muggle hero with a body enhanced by a permanent strength potion. He’s also the leader of this motley crew.

“It’s going to be an honor to work with you all. Loki’s told us plenty about the Order and I can tell you’re a tight operation.”

This made Mad-Eye scowl and mutter about being vigilant, but Loki ignored that. He continued down the line introducing each Avenger, with both their real names, as well as their hero names. He explained their abilities and skill sets as needed to ensure his magical audience understood perfectly. He did everything in his power not to look at Dumbledore, he could feel his gaze boring into his skin, probing for the truth and preparing for a confrontation.

A confrontation Loki didn’t plan to give.

At least not so openly.

When he finished he introduced the Order members he knew, and was introduced to a shapeshifter named Tonks. Then he got to Dumbledore.

“And this is of course Albus Dumbledore, leader of the Order.” Loki said, his voice only slightly brittle. “He’s the man I worked under when I was James as well as Harry’s headmaster at his magic school.”

The Avengers to their credit hid their disgust well, Thor even managed to keep the sky clear of any incriminating lightning strikes.

“James. You owe us an explanation.” Albus said. “Where have you been?”
“I’ll tell you everything, under veritaserum if necessary, but I want to check on my son again as well as ensure the captured Death Eaters are taken into custody. If Tony is willing, we can have a meeting in his tower and hash everything out after the clean up?”

“That’s fine with me. I’ll have Jarvis get a room together.”

“Very well.” Albus said. “Everyone, let’s get to work!”

The Avengers didn’t move until Loki gave them a nod. They then followed the Order and did as Albus commanded. Which Loki appreciated. Loki saw Severus give him a fearsome glare as the man stalked away to begin looking for survivors.


Thor walked over and Loki pointed out the black cloak of Severus.

“That’s Severus Snape. He’s Harry’s teacher at Hogwarts, he bullies him.”

“Really.” Thor growled.

“Yes. Go over there and be as friendly and bright as possible. Do not go away no matter what hints he gives. Be the annoying man I know you are deep down.”

Thor grinned, his blue eyes glinting with excitement at the task. He gave Loki a pat on the back and then strolled directly towards Snape, calling him a wizard very loudly. All Loki needed was one peak at Severus’ pained face as he turned to look at Thor to know he’d made the right choice. Loki went over to his son next, unsurprised to find Albus already there looking over the work that had been done.

They’d been left largely alone but for Remus and Sirius. Ron and Hermione had been herded away by Molly, who was only slightly mollified by Loki’s words. He could hear her still lecturing her son and Hermione quietly for being reckless. Loki knelt by Sirius, and noted the tenseness of his posture.

“How is he?”

“Better than I thought he’d be. Honestly he’ll probably need a day of bed rest.” Sirius decided.

“We really should pick up his training.” Remus added. “He held his own decently well against Him but he can be better.”

“I agree.” Loki said. “Once he’s well I’ll work out a new schedule with him.”

“I don’t think it’s necessary for the boy to be going under training.” Albus said. “He’s not even 16.”

“That, is not your call to make.” Loki said, his voice as cold as the peaks in Jontunheim. “In fact Albus, I’d like it if you fucked off completely when it came to choices I make about my son. Have you not done enough?”

“James I…” Albus said, his voice only slightly pained. He reached out a bit and Loki spotted his blackened left hand. Loki reached out and snatched the cursed limb. Albus hissed in pain at the tight grip Loki was exerting.

“A nasty curse that is.” Loki said, examining it and the large ugly stone the man was wearing as a ring. “It’ll be fatal to you within a year I suspect.”

“Severus is working on a cure.” Albus lied, trying and failing to pull his hand back. Loki snarled and
let his magic burst to life again. His sheer power burned into the man’s skin making him cry out in pain. Sirius already ahead of the game cast a silencing ward around them so that no one could hear. Loki’s magic seared up Albus’ hand burning away the cursed flesh.

“Don’t lie to me Albus.” Loki hissed.

“James…I…thank you.” Albus said looking at his healed hand, his voice was hoarse from the lingering pain. The man’s entire body was shaking from the roughness of Asgardian healing methods in fact.

“This was not a gift.” Loki warned standing up to glare at the old man head on. He let go of Albus’ hand. “You don’t get to die so easily old man, not after what you did to me. What you *cost* me. When the time is right I’m going to make you suffer. Truly suffer. Your betrayal will not go unpunished.”

“Why not just punish me now then? Why not tell the truth?”

“Because, I still have need of you.” Loki told him. “The merciful James you knew died the moment you lied to him in the name of the Greater Good, Albus. Every moment that you live from now on will be filled with pain and suffering and when you finally outlive your usefulness I am going to do to you what should have been done decades ago.”

Loki saw the calculations going on in the old man’s eyes and he leaned forward, letting his eyes turn red and his teeth grow into fangs.

“If you do anything against me or mine I will destroy everything you’ve ever touched. I will raze Hogwarts to the ground. I will ruin anything you’ve ever known or loved and I will make you watch. I am an ancient deity Albus, you will not outsmart me. You are not going to win. It would be in your best interests to give me everything I demand because every time you fight me that adds one more log to the stake I’m going to burn you on. Is that understood?”

“Perfectly.” Albus said.

“Good. Now get away from my son.” He waved his hand, a wave of magic forcibly teleporting Albus away from them. Loki stood there, rage sending tremors through his body.

“Shit James.” Sirius said. “Who knew you could be so terrifying?”

Chapter End Notes

Next week's update might be a day late. If it's not up on Wednesday then check in again on Thursday.
Harry wakes up feeling a lot better than he expected he would and his dad gives him a lot to think about.

“Starlight? How are you feeling?”

Harry hadn’t even realized he was awake until his dad’s voice hit his ears. He licked his dry lips and let his eyes open. They were still in the Magical District, although he was now laying in a floating cot.

“Uh…fine?” Harry said, surprise turning his answer into a question.

He did feel fine. Hadn’t he just been hit with the cruciatus?

“Are you asking me or telling me?” His dad asked.

“Both? I thought…”

“Asgardian healing spells can heal the damage from the cruciatus.” His dad explained. “You’re going to be sore and weak for a day or so but you’ll be fine. It could have been worse but your mother’s protection worked like a charm.”

“Really?”

“Yes, she kept your mind safe.” His dad said fondly, lifting a hand to run his fingers through Harry’s hair. “It was nice to feel her magic again. If you’d like, I can teach you how to sense it yourself that way you can…feel her too.”

“Yeah…I’d like that.” Harry said swallowing past the lump in his throat.

“Later then.” His dad promised. “Come on up, we’re done here. The Order is here and they want answers. I thought perhaps we could tell the story together this time?”

“They’re here?” Harry forced his body up, ignoring the loud complaints of his muscles. His dad reached out and stabilized him so he didn’t fall back down. He looked around and to his surprise he saw a bunch of Order members walking around, helping survivors of the attack or talking with the American authorities. “Did anyone punch you?”
His dad gave him a look before scoffing.

“Not yet at least. I think they’re a bit too shocked. Although I wouldn’t be surprised if Molly tries to slap me.” His dad admitted. “She’s a bit too busy telling off Ron and Hermione to turn her ire to me but I’m certain that won’t last long.”

“Yeah the sounds about right.” Harry said, he looked around again and frowned. “Is Dumbledore…”

“He’s here.” His dad said curtly. “We spoke briefly.”

“Spoke?”

“I didn’t hurt him, just made it clear that he was not to meddle in our life any longer.” His dad wasn’t looking at him anymore, instead he was looking at the middle distance with a glare. A tiny shiver ran down his spine. Looking at his dad’s harsh eyes he could finally see the man who’d invaded New York with an army of aliens. His dad shook himself a little and looked back at Harry, and like magic the coldness in his face melted away to reveal the man who hugged Harry while they watched movies together.

“Right.” Harry said. “And he…agreed to that?”

“Time will tell.” His dad decided. “He seemed shocked to see me, which was stupid, he knew I was alive this entire time. Did he assume I’d never check in on the magical world?”

Now that was a question. Why had Dumbledore done nothing when his dad had returned to earth, or even when he started living with the Avengers? Surely there would have been better ways to manipulate the situation than just ignoring it?

“Maybe he was scared?” Harry asked. “I mean you did invade New York.”

“If he wasn’t, he should be now.”

“I thought you said you didn’t hurt him?”

“I didn’t. In fact, I healed him. The daft fool had gotten a terrible curse cast on him that was slowly killing him. I got rid of it.”

“Oh.” Harry said, he wasn’t sure how to feel about that. On one hand he was incredibly angry with Dumbledore. Even now, weeks after learning about his betrayal, there was a mass of rage and vexation that writhed around in his gut. Sometimes when he was happy and calm with the world, that loathing would rise up and remind him that everything he’d ever suffered had all been part of Dumbledore’s plan.

But.

Harry thought about how he’d tried to curse Bellatrix with the cruciatus after she’d killed Sirius. He remembered her lesson, her telling him that his righteous anger wasn’t enough to really cause pain. That he had to want them to hurt. Even after watching that awful terrible woman kill his godfather and laugh about it, he still hadn’t wanted her to hurt. Was that wrong? Was something wrong with him? He tried to imagine torturing Dumbledore, or trying to get revenge and it made him wince inwardly.

When he’d punched his dad, he’d felt awful about it. Granted part of that had been the magical exhaustion talking, but that one bit of revenge against the man he’d thought had abandoned him had left him feeling empty and cold. Maybe Harry just wasn’t built for revenge. Sure there were times
when the opportunity came. Hermione tricking Umbridge into the forbidden forest and then her being trampled by centaurs came to mind. But even still, that felt different somehow. Umbridge had done that to herself really, insulting the centaurs right in front of their faces. It was unlikely that even if Harry had spoken on her behalf that it would have made any difference at all.

So what then? What did Harry want? He was so angry at Dumbledore that he trembled with it at times. He could still remember that anger escaping out of him at the arcade, how it had nearly suffocated him. How frightened that rage, the anger that he’d been pushing down deep inside of himself, made him feel. But at the same time he balked at the very idea of hurting Dumbledore.

Did he want Dumbledore to go to jail? He remembered the Dementors and how they made him feel and he decided against it. Nobody deserved living with those things, nobody. Yet part of him whispered that Dumbledore had sent Sirius to be stuck with them for 12 years without even blinking. Wouldn’t it be fair that Dumbledore suffered the same? The memory of the chill of dementors made him swallow back the thought.

What did Harry want?

“Harry?” His dad asked. “Is everything okay?”

“It’s…I was just thinking about Dumbledore.” Harry said. “It’s not going to be easy.”

“Don’t worry about him. I will make sure he pays for what he’s done.”

But what did that even mean? Would revenge get rid of the years of hardship? Would it make Harry’s heart feel light again? Would making Dumbledore pay remove Harry’s nightmares and trauma? Would it help Sirius and Remus heal? What about his dad? Wouldn’t it be easier to just leave it alone?

Leave it alone? Harry didn’t want to leave it alone! He was angry and hurt and Dumbledore would just keep hurting and hurting and hurting people if Harry left it alone.

What should they do then?

“Is it weird that I’m angrier at Dumbledore than I am at Tom?” Harry asked suddenly, the thought forming in his mind at the same time his mouth made the words. “I mean…Tom killed my mum and you, sorta. And he killed Cedric and tortured me and he’s done so much evil. I should hate him. But I just…don’t? Not like I think I should I guess.”

His dad hummed, then he snapped his fingers, conjuring a chair to sit in. Once seated his dad gave Harry a thoughtful look, something contemplative.

“Harry I can’t tell you how to feel about anyone.” Loki said. “I hate Tom very much. I hate him for killing your grandparents and for killing Lily and so many other humans that I loved. I hate him for tainting my human childhood with his war and I hate him for ruining yours. It’s difficult to imagine not loathing that monster with every fiber of my immortal being.”

“Oh.” Harry said, suddenly feeling very small for reasons he didn’t quite understand.

“Harry I can’t tell you how to feel about anyone.” Loki continued. “I hate Tom very much. I hate him for killing your grandparents and for killing Lily and so many other humans that I loved. I hate him for tainting my human childhood with his war and I hate him for ruining yours. It’s difficult to imagine not loathing that monster with every fiber of my immortal being.”

“Oh.” Harry said, suddenly feeling very small for reasons he didn’t quite understand.

“How I feel about Albus is very different.” His dad continued. “I trusted him, loved him. For much of my human life there was a time where I would have died for him without regret. No one else in my entire life has ever inspired that much loyalty within me, except for my family. Albus’ betrayal cuts far deeper for me than Tom’s ever will. Tom is a being of pure evil and malice, he did what a monster like that is bound to do. I hate him for it and if given the chance I will make him suffer for it. But Albus? Albus was supposed to be a good man, a leader I could trust. What he did to me hurts all
the more because of who he was to me.”

“I…I thought he was the only person keeping me safe.” Harry sniffed. “But he…he never did. Not really.”

Harry remembered his dad bursting in to save him from Voldemort. How different it had been from Dumbledore fighting Tom in the Department of Mysteries. Albus had tried to talk sense into Tom, had only done enough fighting to keep Tom from killing him, he hadn’t even done anything to try and stop Harry from being possessed. His dad had jumped forward, frantic and holding nothing back. Harry had no doubt that if Tom had tried to possess him again his dad would have been right by his side, holding him and trying to comfort him even if he couldn’t stop it.

“Oh Starlight, I’ll keep you safe.” His dad promised, before wincing. “Well as safe as I can. I’m not going to pretend the prophecy doesn’t exist, no matter how much I’d like too.”

“Excuse me?” A voice said, breaking them out of their intense conversation. Harry looked over to see one of the politicians that had been in that room who hadn’t wanted to listen to Harry. He was pretty sure she was the one who’d said she was the president of the New York Branch.

“Hello.” His dad said standing up and vanishing the chair. He held out a hand and shook the woman’s. “I’m Loki Odinson.”

“I know who you are.” She said. “You lead an invasion on my city.”

“I…was not myself at the time.” His dad said delicately. “If you would like I can provide proof of magical compulsion spells on my person. I would even submit to a veritaserum test to prove that if I had been under my own control, I would have never invaded this world.”

“I will keep that in mind.” She said shrewdly, even as some of the suspicion bled from her face. “I’m Adriana Sanchez, President of the New York Branch of the American Magical Union.”

“It is an honor to meet you. I am sorry about all this mess, we’d hoped to give enough warning time for…”

“We were given a warning and we chose to ignore it.” President Sanchez said, her face tight. “Despite this, the damage is much less than it could have been. Of which I believe I have Mr. Potter to thank.”

She turned to him then, she held out her hand to him and Harry forced himself to stand up and take it. He stumbled only a little and his dad reached out to steady him.

“If you hadn’t of held the barrier here in front of the Administration building we would have been in a true crisis.” She said. “Shortly after you left us, the wards went off and we discovered Death Eaters had broken into the building and were attacking our security system from the inside. It took all of our efforts to quell the attack on the inside. If you hadn’t have been out here Mr. Potter then You-Know-Who would have walked right in the front doors and taken over the place.”

“I…I didn’t realize there were Death Eaters inside.” Harry said thinking about the hurt people he’d sent into the building thinking it’d be safe.

“They were mostly in the lower floors.” She said, somehow guessing what he was thinking about. “You did exactly the right thing and we all owe you a huge debt for it. You gave us the time we needed to marshal our forces and we’ve now got the largest group of Death Eaters ever captured sitting in cells and waiting for their trials.”
“I promised I’d help.” His words caused the woman to give him a rueful smile, the dark brown lipstick she was wearing stretching and cracking a little over her lips.

“That you did.” She said. “I will of course have to speak to the other Presidents but I think that working with you, Mr. Potter would be in our best interest. I don’t know yet what military forces we can offer you but…”

“I’m not asking you to do that.” Harry rushed to say, interrupting the woman in his haste. “I just wanted you all to prepare yourselves and defend your people.”

“I know.” She said. “Which is precisely why I’m offering it. It’s time we stop putting our heads in the sand. You-Know-Who brought the war literally to our doorstep and we will not take that lying down.”

“I don’t understand.”

“Your concern Mr. Potter is with ending this war, to create peace.” She said. “You want to preserve life, liberty, and happiness. That is something we can get behind. It’s clear to me that you would never ask us to risk lives to prove a point or to throw away our forces on a slim chance of success. You would choose to protect people first, over anything else. In that we share a common goal.”

Something glinted in her eye as she looked around at the destruction of her city. This was the place she lived, worked, and served in. The people who had died today had been her people. Just like Harry had glimpsed his dad’s rage, he could see Sanchez’s. She wanted to get involved, she wanted to get revenge for the people who’d been hurt today. But she didn’t want to risk having more of her people hurt.

Harry looked over at his dad for advice and thankfully the man stepped in.

“Madam President.” He said. “We would be honored to work with you in anyway you and your colleagues deem best.”

“We?” She asked. “I’m offering an alliance with Mr. Potter.”

“I am working with him.” His dad said. “As are the Avengers. Mr. Potter has also secured an alliance with King Odin, who has offered us the use of his Asgardian warriors when the time comes. We didn’t have time to call them for this attack but now that we know You-Know-Who is willing to go this far, we plan on creating a system to call for help from Asgard.”

“You’ve been building an army then, Potter?” The president asked.

“Sort of?” He said. “I didn’t ask Odin to do that he just…”

“Offered?” She finished for him. “I can see why he would. Very well Mr. Potter. If it works for you, would you be willing to meet with us and discuss this potential alliance?”

“You want to meet with me?” Harry asked. “But I’m…”

“The leader of the rebellion.” She finished. “At least the one I’m willing to work with.”

“I…uhmm…” Harry swallowed, his tongue felt too big for his mouth for some reason. “Maybe we could meet in a week? Just so you and all the others can talk out what you want to do?”

And so he could have a panic attack in privacy.
The woman smiled at him and nodded.

“That sounds like an excellent plan.” She said. “Where are you staying?”

“With the Avengers.” Harry said. “You can send me an owl with the details there and I’ll come to you.”

“Wonderful.” She said holding out a hand again. Harry took it and hoped his palms weren’t too sweaty. “It is going to be pleasure working with you, Mr. Potter.”

“Yeah, I totally…yes.” Harry said stupidly causing the woman to smile just a little wider before letting go of his hand. She took her leave after promising to send that owl with the meeting details as soon as she could but that it might be a few days before things were calm enough for her to do so. She did after all, have to repair a seriously damaged city center. Harry nodded along to all of this and wished her luck.

When they were finally alone Harry collapsed a little, his knees going weak. His dad wrapped his arm around his waist and kept him upright, taking all of Harry’s weight off of his feet.

“I…I don’t know what just happened.”

“Politics.” His dad said. “You did very well actually. Did you plan on being that bashful because that was an inspired move. She was eating that up.”

“I wasn’t…” Harry trailed off when his dad’s words finally sunk in. “bashful?”

“Oh Starlight.” His dad sighed. “You’ve got so much to learn and only a week to do it in.”

“Why do I have to do it?” Harry asked, his voice a half whine.

“Because you’re the leader of the rebellion.” His dad said gleefully. “You’re the person that Asgard will follow, that the Avengers will follow, that I will follow.”

His dad finally looked at him and Harry wasn’t sure what he saw but it made the pride and glee fade from his face. It was replaced with something far sadder and more somber.

“It’s going to be okay.” His dad promised. “Whatever happens, I’ll be right by your side. I’m a prince and so are you. We can handle the politics of this together, I swear it. Just trust me?”

“Yeah, okay.” Harry said. “I trust you.”

“Good. Now, let’s get back to the tower. We have the Order to appease now and I suspect that is going to be far more difficult than any number of American Presidents.”

“They have like 50 of ‘em.” Harry whispered causing his dad to shudder a little.

“My statement still stands.”

Harry looked around the square and noticed that the Order Members had disappeared. Probably to the tower.

“Okay. Let’s get to the tower.” Harry said, right before his stomach grumbled. He blushed a little at his dad’s grin.

“We’ll eat while we talk.”
And with that promise they were whisked away in a plume of his dad’s magic. They landed moments later in the tower, just as his dad had promised. They were in his dad’s room, and his dad carefully helped Harry out of his armor and into some comfortable sweat pants. From there they walked to the conference room that Jarvis told them to go to. The room had been transformed from a boring if functional space to hold meetings in, to something akin to a gigantic living room.

Someone, Harry assumed it had been Sirius and Remus, had transfigured everything into comfortable chairs and couches. The Avengers and the Order were all mingled throughout the room.

“You’re finally here!” Thor shouted. “What took so long?”

“We got held up by the Americans.” His dad said. “President Sanchez is interested in an alliance between us and the American Magical Union.”

“She’s interested in an alliance with me.” Harry said. “She didn’t like you at all.”

“Yes well I did do my best to level her city a few years ago.” His dad said with a roll of his eyes. “Anyway, she wants to set up a meeting with our illustrious leader in the next week or so.”

“Our leader?” Tony asked motioning to Captain America.

“No. Me.” Harry said. “Sorry Steve?”

“Honestly I’m more than happy to let you take the reins kid.” Steve said. “Congrats you’re the new captain.”

“Yeah.” Sirius added. “From now on he’ll just be Mr. America.”

“That makes him sound like a beauty pageant winner.” Clint complained.

“Are you saying I couldn’t win a beauty pageant?”

“Oh don’t worry Steve, you’re the prettiest boy here.” Natasha said patting the man’s arm in a faux comforting manner.

“As amusing as I’m sure you find this.” Snape interrupted; a sneer firmly painted on his face. “We have things to discuss do we not?”

“Right.” His dad said. “Of course we do. Tony please tell me you ordered food?”

“An army’s worth is on it’s way now.” The man said. “Figured your little tyke would be starved after the fight.”

“I’m taller than you.” Harry pointed out.

“You’re a little baby.” Tony told him which made Harry roll his eyes.

“Come on.” His dad ushered Harry over to the one couch that was still empty. Ron was seated with his parents and the twins while Hermione was with her own parents. The Grangers looked slightly unnerved by the amount of wizards in the room, or perhaps that was because Hermione had just went out and fought terrorists. Mrs. Weasley had her patented look of righteous frustration as she held Ron to her side, he was still in his armor.

His dad situated them onto the couch before conjuring a few snacks for Harry to eat. Harry knew the man wouldn’t start talking until Harry was taken care of so he let the man conjure blankets and pillows from somewhere so that he was cradled in a way the put the least amount of strain on his
pained body,

“There.” He said. “Now we can start.”

“Finally.” Sirius said. “Are you sure you don’t want to give him a crown?”

“Harry decided he doesn’t like how Asgardian crowns look.” His dad sniffed. “Although they do make him look very handsome.”

“Dad.”

“Right.” He said. “Now where to begin…I suppose I could begin with my decision to become James and go from there? Yes that seems appropriate.”

It was a story Harry had heard before, a story he had already told before. His dad spoke of his decision to become human and then everything that happened after, including Harry’s arrival and their saving of Sirius. During his story the Order listened and managed to keep their reactions mostly to themselves. Harry spent most of his dad’s monologue drinking the Asgardian tea his dad had conjured for him and studying Dumbledore. The older man looked strangely shaken, and his eyes were tense in the way that Harry knew meant he was suppressing physical pain.

He also wasn’t looking at Harry.

No one else seemed to notice at how careful the headmaster was to look at Loki but not at Harry. Harry wanted the man to look at him. He wanted to look into those twinkling blue eyes and discover if there was any guilt in them. Did the man feel regret? Did he even care what Harry had gone through? But Dumbledore didn’t give him that.

His mind went back to the quandary of what he wanted to do about Dumbledore and started rolling that over in his head again. Torture didn’t sit right with him and it probably never would. But still he thought about all the pain, all the sorrow and loss, that Dumbledore had had a hand in and he wondered what could ever make that right? He was so furious with the man, he wanted him to hurt…didn’t he?

No answers came to him and he was left with an odd taste on his tongue for his troubles.

“So…” His dad said. “That’s that. Although, wait a moment, how did you discover the truth? I can’t recall.”

“Mum.” Harry said licking his lips and taking control of the story. “Sirius had sent me a journal he’d found that belonged to my mum before the attack on the ministry. I read it and knew the truth. And I was so angry because I thought my dad had abandoned me and everyone else. I wanted answers. So I went to get them.”

“Typical.” Snape sneered. “You do realize Mr. Potter that running away to America without permission caused a panic amongst the Order and wasted precious resources on a man hunt?”

Harry remembered what his dad had told him about Occulmency and he felt a muscle in his jaw twitch as he looked the potions professor dead in the eyes.

“Well that’s not my fault is it?” He snapped.

“Mr. Potter-”

“No. Shut up.” Harry told the man. “No one in the Order gives a bloody damn about me during the
summer. None of you do. You send me off to the Dursleys and then you forget about me for the next three months. Only Ron and Hermione ever write to me and that’s only when you let them. How in the hell was I supposed to know you’d check up on me? It’s not like any of you ever have before."

He saw out of the corner of his eye, Molly Weasley’s stricken look and he couldn’t even bring himself to feel guilty about it.

“In what world was I supposed to think that the Order would care about me now?”

“Surprisingly we have more things to be doing than catering to your every whim Potter.”

“Do you really?” Harry said. “Cause I’m pretty damn sure that without me this entire rebellion is pointless.”

“You arrogant, insolent-”

“Severus please do watch your tongue.” His dad said, a smile in his voice that was the exact opposite of kind. “James might have been willing to forgive a slight or two but rest assured that Loki does not.”

Before Snape could reply to that Jarvis interrupted to tell everyone that the food was here. Thor and Steve immediately volunteered to go get it, knowing that the insane volume of food would be far too heavy for a normal human to carry. Harry honestly felt a bit bad for the delivery guys. Harry elbowed his dad and gave him a look. He sighed and got up.

“I’ll go get it.” He said. “It’ll be quicker if I do.”

With that he teleported away in a plume of green, his typical way of moving about the tower.

“Look.” Harry said. “I had to get answers and I got them. I’ve been here, with my dad, safe for the entire summer. I didn’t think I had to tell any of you anything since none of you ever check up on me and none of you are my guardians. I don’t need permission from any of you to do what I think is best for myself and I’m not going to let you bully me into thinking otherwise.”

“But Harry, we were so worried!” Molly said.

“Were you worried when I went to my relatives to mourn Sirius all by myself?” Harry asked her, his voice gentle but stern. “Especially since we all knew that Tom Riddle has the power to possess me at anytime regardless of the blood wards? I could have been attacked by him every night and no one could have done anything for me since I was all alone.”

She looked truly horrified then and Harry winced.

“I’m not trying to make you feel bad I’m just pointing out that I wasn’t any safer with the Dursleys than I am anywhere else.”

Asgard aside. Harry still didn’t like to think about his time there, it made something in his heart prick and his throat would sometimes close up. He sniffed.

“I did what was right.” Harry said. “And now we all know the truth. And we were able to save Sirius from the veil.”

“As touching as this all is.” Dumbledore said, finally looking at Harry. “I’m afraid that it can’t be allowed to continue. Harry, the blood wards are failing, remaining away from your home any longer will destroy them completely.”
Harry looked the man dead in the eyes. Unlike his father he wasn’t glaring at the old man with a sense of terrifying divine wrath. Harry had no idea but in that moment he was glaring at Albus in a way only Lily Evans ever could. His dad returned almost silently, bags upon bags of food floating around him. Harry didn’t look at him as he spoke to Dumbledore, his voice final and cutting.

“That is not my home. My dad is my home, not them.”

And with that a protection Dumbledore had laid on him over 14 years ago shattered like stained glass. Harry expected to feel something, a loss of some sort. Part of him had wondered if the blood wards had been what allowed his mother’s magic, her sacrifice to remain with him. His dad had told him that her magic was there, that Harry had been carrying it around all his life and he hadn’t wanted to lose that.

But the blood wards had to go.

And go they did. Harry felt the magic crack and shatter into nothing but dust. He didn’t feel different or empty. Nothing from within him slipped away. In fact, it felt like he’d just taken off a coat that didn’t fit quite right.

“What have you done?” Dumbledore demanded as if he already didn’t know.

“What I should have done years ago.” Harry said before turning to his dad. His dad was staring at him, his eyes only slightly misty. Harry gave him a small smile from his position on the couch. “Is that Chinese I smell? Can I have the Orange Chicken dad?”

“I…yes.” He said shaking himself. “Let’s just set all of this out then.”

“Without the blood wards you are at Tom’s mercy.” Dumbledore said.

“I already was.” Harry said carelessly. “At least this way I get to be happy.”

“But.”

“He made his decision Albus.” His dad said. “And he’s not going to change his mind on it. Besides you know just as well as I do that once someone has renounced a home blood wards will never function there again. I’m surprised they lasted as long as they did, even when I first met Harry I could sense those things were practically useless. Have they always been that weak?”

“Pretty much.” Harry told his dad as his dad handed him the large white box filled with food. He didn’t elaborate on why that was and his dad didn’t ask why he felt no love for the people who had supposedly raised him in his place. Something Harry was eternally grateful for.

“Well then that’s hardly much of a loss anyway. Don’t look so glum Albus, I’m more than capable of protecting my son.”

“Was he not severely injured in this last fight?” Snape asked, a sneer clear in his voice. His dad didn’t even pause as he moved around handing out food to people. He acted as if he hadn’t even heard Snape’s question, which made a look of faint annoyance pass over his face. Harry lifted a hand to cover his smirk but not quick enough for Snape not to see it. “Taking after your father more than ever I see, Potter?”

“No.” Harry said, his voice deceptively calm. “I’m taking after my mother.”

Harry knew he didn’t imagine the minute flinch in the man’s dark eyes when Harry looked at him dead on. And suddenly Harry felt very powerful indeed. He held Snape’s gaze demanding that he
see him and not his father’s ghost. For all that Harry loved his dad, and truly he did, he really wasn’t much like his dad in most ways at all.

His dad, after all, was not interested in extending Dumbledore any form of mercy.

“My mother would never want me to live in a place I wasn’t happy.” Harry said firmly. “She sacrificed her life so that I could live, not so that I could suffer. I’m not going to dismiss her love for me by twisting her sacrifice into something that it wasn’t. I’m not going back to the Dursleys and I’m not going to let the Order tell me what to do. I’m the one who has to defeat Tom Riddle and it’s time I acted like it instead of a stupid kid that anyone can push around.”

“The Order is the world’s best shot at winning this war Potter.” Mad-Eye Moody said.

“No, I am.” Harry snapped. “That stupid prophecy is about me. Not any of you! The Order needs me way more than I need it. All this time you’ve treated me like an object to be locked away when you don’t need me, like a trophy to wave around to the other side. No more! So, if you’re not going to respect me and my family, then just leave. And do let the door hit you on the way out!”

They were gaping at him but Harry couldn’t bother to feel embarrassed. He had just faced Voldemort and 50 American presidents all in one day. He wasn’t going to let the Order bully him around anymore. He wasn’t going to be bullied anymore.

“Well.” The headmaster said. “What exactly do you wish from the Order then Mr. Potter?”

“I want to go to meetings. You’re not going to hide things from me just because you think I’m a kid who shouldn’t hear it. At this point I’ve fought Voldemort more times than pretty much anyone else in the world. I’m not innocent and I don’t need to be protected from the truth.” Harry said folding his arms. “If I’m not properly and regularly informed of things then I won’t work with The Order. I won’t let anyone on my side work with you either. I can work with my dad, the armies of Asgard, the Avengers, and probably the Americans just fine without any of you.”

The headmaster looked around at the rest of the Order Members. Harry was aware that he’d hurt Mr. and Mrs. Weasley’s feelings. He made a note to apologize to them later, to explain better. When the headmaster finally looked back at him, it was with something like defeat in his eyes.

“Well Harry.”

And that, was that.
Harry's First Flame Party

Chapter Summary

They finally have that party Loki insisted they throw to celebrate Harry coming into his own.

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone!! Thank you so much for the amazing responses last week! I'm so glad you enjoyed it!! I can't wait to read your comments this week! <3

Harry’s first flame party was…understandably tense, at least at first. Plenty of the Order members had been asked to leave once everything had been explained to them. Harry’s dad had promised to bring Harry and everyone else to London for a full meeting in a week’s time. Dumbledore had been understandably reluctant to leave before getting a chance to get anything more out of the situation, but his dad had been firm.

Harry had been sent to bed with a promise that the party would be the next day. Tony had been kind enough to give the Weasleys and Tonks, who’d been invited to stay for the party, guest rooms for the night. The Weasleys because they were practically Harry’s family, and Tonks because she was good friends with Remus and Sirius. Harry also admired her quite a bit. His dad had popped back to London with Mrs. Weasley to get Ginny from the Burrow and bring her to New York so she wouldn’t be alone in Britain.

In the morning, after a tense breakfast with the magic users while Mr. and Mrs. Weasley avoided looking at Harry due to their guilt, the party began. His dad was forcibly cheerful as he showed off the purple flame that was still merrily burning in the sconce his dad had conjured. It looked to be roughly the same size it had been when his dad had first placed it there. Harry wasn’t really sure what that meant but his dad certainly seemed pleased by it.

The first part of the party was more ritualistic. Thor and Loki performed the whole thing with much more gravitas than Harry expected. He was forced to stand next to his first flame while Thor offered him a sword, and his dad offered him a bit of his own green magic, symbolically representing Harry’s growth into adulthood. Harry didn’t feel like an adult, but this was about as close to a birthday party he’d ever gotten that wasn’t tinged with some sort of drama. He was determined to enjoy it, to make this a pocket of joy.

Once the ritual was done and Loki had introduced him as tradition required, a young man beginning his journey into maturity, the party became far more familiar to him. There was a table of food and drinks, Jarvis was playing fun muggle music at an appropriate volume, and conversations flowed throughout the room.

The first people to congratulate Harry were Sirius and Remus. Sirius pulled Harry into a hug and mussed up his hair with a fist. It had taken Harry time to get used to these sorts of touches. His dad and Thor had been terribly careful with how they touched him in the beginning. Only doing it when
he could see and had warning of it, always softly.

Sirius had been much the opposite. He was rough with his affection, sort of like an oversized dog who jumped on people when it got excited. Sirius had touched Harry so often, with and without warning, that he’d been rapidly desensitized to it. He’d actually sort of appreciated it because on some level it proved that Sirius was really truly alive and with him again. When Harry had started responding to Sirius in kind, most everyone else had also started to be a bit freer with their touches.

Harry was quite sure he’d been touched more often in the past few weeks alone than he had been in the last decade combined.

“I’m so proud of you pup!” Sirius said releasing Harry from the hug. “Your first flame!”

“You don’t even know what that means.” Harry said.

“It means that it’s important enough to make James smile like that. Kid I haven’t seen him look this giddy since Lily agreed to marry him.” Sirius said nudging Harry in the side with an elbow. Harry giggled a little at that. “Anyway. I figured since I’ve got so many years of presents to catch up on I could get you something now and then something next month for your birthday!”

“You got me something?”

“Oh don’t look so surprised!” Sirius said. “Trust me you’re gonna love it! I had to search all over New York until I found the perfect one!”

Sirius snapped his fingers wandlessly conjuring a brightly wrapped box. Harry grabbed the box from the air and gave it an experimental shake. When nothing made a noise, he ripped at the paper and opened the box. Inside was something made of supple black leather. Harry carefully removed the item to reveal it was a leather jacket.

“Cool right?” Sirius asked. “It’s just like the one I used to have! I wore that all the time at your age!”

“I know.” Harry said. “I’ve seen the pictures.”

“Put it on!” Sirius insisted. “You’ll be a regular lady killer with a jacket like that, mark my words!”

Harry smiled and pulled on the brand new jacket. It fit well on him, the lines on the shoulders molding to his own body. The folds on the chest of the jacket looked crisp and clean and the sleeves of the jacket only bunched a little at his elbow in a way he was pretty sure was intentional.

“See!” Sirius said. “Remus doesn’t he look sharp?”

“Yeah.” Remus said. “It does look good, although I’m not sure it’s his style.”

“Of course, it’s his style! A leather jacket looks good on anyone!”

“Thanks Sirius. I love it.”

“Check out the pockets on that! I charmed them so that they’d fit practically anything in there!”

Harry dutifully reached into the front pockets and found that they were significantly larger than he expected them to be. He smiled, ready to thank Sirius again, when his fingers brushed up against something. He grabbed at the metal and pulled it out to reveal a key ring with one silver key on it.

“And that’s part two!”

“Part two?”
“You can’t have a leather jacket like that without an accessory to go with it!”

“You.” Remus growled.

“Don’t be like that Moony! Kid’s almost 16, totally old enough to own a flying motorcycle enchanted by yours truly.”

“A flying motorcycle?” Harry squeaked.

“Yep I heard about your flying car incident and I knew you’d just love something a bit more portable. My first motorcycle got lost after I was sent to Azkaban, so I bought a new one for you and magicked it perfectly. Once we can sneak out from under your dad’s nose I’ll take you out and show you how to drive it.”

Harry sniffed once and then pulled Sirius into a hug, hiding his now blinding smile in the man’s shoulder.

“Thank you.”

“What are godfathers for?”

“Sirius. I can’t believe you’re being so irresponsible!”

“Oh please. Like you got him something sensible!”

“For your information I got him a book.” Remus said in a very snooty tone. The man waved his wand, conjuring the book which had been wrapped in silvery paper. Harry laughed a little and let go of Sirius to take the book. Carefully Harry unwrapped it too, letting the paper drop next to the box Sirius’ gift had come in. All three of them looked at the title.

“Really Remus? You’re gonna claim the moral high ground?”

“Well it’s not like I wasn’t going to be there to monitor him and his friends.”

“You got me a book on animagi?” Harry wheezed.

“Not just a book.” Remus said. “The book. This is the book your dad and the others used to manage their own transformations all those years ago. It’s filled with their notes and tricks. If you started now, you and your friends could probably manage the whole thing by the time summer ends.”

Harry could hardly believe his eyes. He opened the leather tome and saw to his pleasure there were three signatures on the cover page. Prongs, Padfoot, and Wormtail. Harry leafed through the book and saw jokes written in the margins and sentences that were roughly crossed out and replaced with frustrated corrections. Sirius and Remus were now arguing with each other about which of their gifts could be considered more irresponsible. Harry closed the book and then pulled Remus into a hug.

“I love it.” Harry said. “Thank you!”

“Just don’t tell your dad who gave it to you.” Remus said. “It’s our job as your honorary uncles to teach you things that would horrify your dad.”

Harry giggled at that and promised to keep it secret.

“Good. Don’t hesitate to ask either of us questions while you’re working on it. When you need supplies let me know. I’ll get you everything you need.” Remus promised with a smirk, he looked far too pleased with himself.
“Oh look. James’ noticed us. Hide that book and get outta here pup. We’ll distract him.” Sirius said.

Harry grinned and stuffed the book into the pocket of his new jacket. He’d tell his friends about it later out of earshot of the adults so that they could start work on it right away. He skipped away and heard his dad start demanding explanations from his friends about the looks in their eyes.

“Harry!” Thor called out. “Come over here!”

Harry turned on his heel and made his way over to Thor who’d been in the middle of talking to Tonks about Asgard. Tonks gave Harry a pat on the back in congratulations and told them that she was going to get a snack.

“I’ve a gift for you.” Thor said. “Do you recall the conversation we had in Asgard?”

“I…yeah I remember.” Harry said looking at his feet for a moment. “If you’re trying to change my mind…”

“I’m not. I respect your decision.” Thor said firmly. “But I think my idea might be too your liking.”

“Well let’s hear it.” Harry said folding his arms over his chest.

“Tyr is one of the most respected warriors in all of Asgard. He is interested in apprenticing you, you truly impressed him during your time in Asgard. Not to mention the other trainees are missing their new friend.”

“They miss me?” Harry asked.

“They do.” Thor confirmed. “Although Baldur didn’t seem pleased to learn your identity.”

“He didn’t like me much.” Harry said with a grin. “Seemed a bit jealous really.”

“Of course he would be!” Thor said. “I explained to Tyr the situation that you couldn’t live in Asgard, that you had a duty to your home. He insisted that I extend this offer to you.”

“Which is?”

“Once a week you come to Asgard and train with him and the others. Only for the afternoon.” Thor said seriously. “Heimdall would keep an eye on earth while you were there and Loki would create a communication method so that you could be alerted immediately if anything were to happen. You’d train with him personally for half the day and then for the rest of the week your father and I would help you practice.”

“I…” Harry really had no words to use. Thor gave him a smile and a light squeeze on his arm.

“Harry. There is no one better in all the nine realms to teach you how to wield a blade. Not only that but he’ll teach you how to dodge and block better than anyone.” Thor said. “You could grow so much and every moment you spent in Asgard would be helping you become the best warrior you can be, better than Tom.”

“I don’t know…” Harry trailed off. “You know how I feel about Asgard.”

“A little peace in your life isn’t going to harm anything.” Thor said. “I promise you, if anything happens on earth you’ll be able to come right home. You can have this without guilt. I swear to you on my hammer, I’ll defend this planet with everything I have while you’re off learning. That’s my gift to you, I’m promising you peace of mind while you’re in Asgard.”
Harry swallowed back the lump that had formed in his throat. Thor somehow managed to find exactly the right words to pierce his gut.

“Can… can Ron and Hermione come with me?” Harry asked, turning his head to look at his two friends. “They should learn too, we’re in this together.”

“I don’t see why not. Although you will have to convince Ron’s parents to allow it.” Thor said. “You’ve got to understand. Tyr is desperate to teach you, if that means teaching two humans how to have your back then he’ll do it. Might even be happy to do it once he sees how fearsome Hermione is.”

“I’ll talk to them then.” Harry said. “But what about when I go back to school?”

“I’m sure we’ll find something that works with your schedule.” Thor said grinning. “You’re going to love it Harry. Trust me.”

“Is this like the Asgardian version of loving it where I get a bunch of bruises?”

“Obviously!”

Harry laughed and thanked Thor for the gift. He imagined it was difficult to get these sorts of accommodations for Harry together. Tyr didn’t seem like the sort of guy to give people these sorts of allowances easily. It warmed Harry to know that Thor had listened to his concerns, truly listened to them, and had then found a solution to Harry’s problem. It made his throat feel sore just thinking about it.

Harry wandered away from Thor, looking out at the party. There was still some tension in the room. The Weasleys were causing it inadvertently with the Avengers, those who knew the truth and those who didn’t clashing with every other sentence. Ron was huddled over by Hermione, still rather upset with his parents for being so strict with him the day before. When Mrs. Weasley had figured out that Ron had known where Harry was the whole time she had been very displeased.

The twins were talking with Bruce of all people, strangely enough Bruce didn’t seem annoyed or bothered, although there was a weird sort of tension going through his frame. Ginny, being who she was, was talking with Steve about whatever she felt appropriate. Harry thought he heard her telling the man that she was the one who’d taught Harry how to punch.

“If I’d known why he wanted to know I would’ve taught him my bat bogey hex.”

Harry shivered at the mention of that spell. Despite the lingering tension in the room, he felt strangely buoyant. Just yesterday he’d stood up to a bunch of government officials and somehow managed to get them to listen to him, trust him. He had also found the courage to throw off the blood wards and forsake the Dursleys completely. He’d demanded respect and happiness and he’d won it, at least for now.

It felt almost dreamlike. He really was staying here for the summer. Nothing would keep him from spending this summer as he had the past few weeks. Learning magic from his dad, training with Thor and the others. Movie nights where he could cuddle up with his dad and fall asleep on his shoulder. He could cook meals whenever he wanted and share food with people who genuinely appreciated it. No one was going to make him leave, no one could.

He was hit with the realization as he touched the soft leather he was wearing, that this is how it should have always been. Perhaps not in Avengers tower but this feeling. It should have always been with him. Sirius and Remus should have always been sneaking him gifts his parents wouldn’t have
wanted him to have. Thor should have always been there finding ways to tempt Harry to spend time in Asgard instead of earth.

It should have always been this way. He should have always had it. He thought back again to the man who had deprived him of this life for so long, who had actively chosen to have him live in misery for the good of the world. Dumbledore was gone but his presence was still felt. In the loyalties of the Order members and in the disgust of the Avengers. Harry didn’t know how to feel, not truly, not anymore.

Even with a night of sleep he was still as confused as ever. His conversation with his dad, interrupted as it had been, hadn’t helped him any. His dad was so certain, so sure. Revenge and Justice were the same, they were right and it would be his dad’s pleasure to administer them. Sirius and Remus were obviously of the same opinion. They had been robbed of over a decade of happiness, just like him, and they knew they should do something about it. Thor was much the same. Wishing to met out revenge in the name of those who had been hurt directly, never once wondering if that was the right thing.

Harry’s ears still rung when he remembered Hermione and Ron’s rants about what they would do to Dumbledore if given half a chance. Harry also understood now that all of the Avengers hated Dumbledore too. In their eyes nothing justified what he’d done. He suspected that they had guessed a little of what the Dursleys had been like and it disgusted them. They wanted to Avenge. That’s what they were there for, to avenge the hurt of the world.

But it still settled oddly in his gut. What was wrong with him? Why did the idea of killing Voldemort or torturing Dumbledore leave him feeling so off? Voldemort was a monster, he needed to be killed, if allowed to live he would just kill more and more innocent people. Harry knew that. He knew. Yet he could still remember the Tom Riddle who’d begged his own headmaster to be allowed to go anywhere else for the summer than his orphanage. It made Harry ache with empathy. Unlike Harry, no one had ever opened their home to Tom and the world was witnessing the consequences.

Tom Riddle wasn’t in the right. He was evil. He had chosen that path, a path that Harry had denied. He would not stay in a jail, and Harry knew he wouldn’t surrender. But whenever Harry imagined using his sword on the snake faced monster like he had with those Draugr an awful sensation formed in his stomach. Why did the thought of killing someone so awful make him feel guilty? There was nothing wrong with it, at least not in this instance. Why did getting revenge against those who wronged him make his mouth taste like ash?

He wondered who he could talk to. Who could help him with this. It seemed like all of the adults in his life had already come to a different conclusion than him. Besides how could Harry argue with them about their right to get revenge? Dumbledore had hurt them as much as he’d hurt him. Harry was at a loss.

“Harry dear.” Mrs. Weasley said. “Are you alright?”

“I’m fine.” Harry said giving a small smile to the woman. “It’s my party, why wouldn’t I be fine?”

“It’s just well…” She fretted. “So much has happened recently and I admit that I haven’t been here as much for you as I could have been.”

“Mrs. Weasley.” Harry said firmly. “You gave me my first real Christmas present. You always opened your home to me when you could and you fed me even when you were struggling. You let me be friends with your children even though I tend to run into danger all the time.”

“But we…we left you with those muggles.” She spat. “I knew you weren’t happy there! I knew
from the moment my boys rescued you in Arthur’s car and I just…I let you go back!”

Harry easily reached out and took the woman’s hand making her look at him.

“I forgive you.” He said sounding far more confident than he had when he’d told Odin those same words. In truth it was easy to say it to her. He would always love Mrs. Weasley and her husband for being the very first adults to show him what parents could really be like. Even if they’d never really been his parents like he’d dreamt sometimes, they’d still given him warmth and love and comfort without expecting anything in return. “You thought you were doing what was best for me and for your family. It wasn’t the right choice but it wasn’t done because you were trying to be mean.”

“Oh Harry.” She said. “I just wanted you to be safe. Dumbledore told me that you’d be safe with the Dursleys even if they didn’t make you feel happy. I thought I could make up for it, give you enough love when you were around to help you when you weren’t.”

“I knew you loved me.” Harry said. “I knew you saw me as a seventh son, but that wasn’t enough.”

Harry bit his lip and looked around at the room of people. He hadn’t realized until quite recently how twisted his mind had been, how lost he’d felt.

“The Dursleys made me feel like I didn’t matter.” Harry told her. “They spent my whole life making me feel that way. I didn’t even realize I thought like that, that I believed that until my dad.”

“Of course, you matter Harry! Of course, you do!”

“Mrs. Weasley. Every time Dumbledore sent me back to the Dursleys it just convinced me that I didn’t. I knew you loved me, but I believed you didn’t love me enough, that I didn’t deserve anything you gave me.” Harry said trying to make her understand. “I thought I deserved it, being there, that that was how it was supposed to be.”

The woman’s face crumpled, and Harry let her pull him into a hug. She cried into his shoulder, apologies and promises that she loved him and that he mattered, that he’d never deserved any of it. And right then Harry knew that. He might not tomorrow, just like he might try to run away from his friends to protect them. But right now, he knew down to his very core that what she was saying was true. He wanted to hold on that feeling, that knowledge for as long as he could.

“I’m okay now.” He told her, hugging her back. “You couldn’t teach me that. I had to figure it out myself and I couldn’t do that in Surrey. I had to leave England, had to get far enough away that I could think clearly. Do you understand why Ron lied now? He knew I needed to figure this out, he was protecting me like he always does.”

“I do.” She said. “I am so angry I didn’t see the truth sooner, Harry. I don’t think I’ll ever forgive myself. But I know why Ron thought he had to lie to me. I’d sent you back to those muggles before and Ron couldn’t trust that I’d see the truth. I’ve failed you both.”

It felt both awful and good to hear all at once. Awful because he hated making anyone feel guilty or bad. Good because he’d secretly always wanted an apology from them. He’d wondered sometimes when Uncle Vernon locked him up for the fifth time that week why Molly and Arthur never did more for him. They claimed to care but they left him there anyway.

“It’s okay.” Harry said, echoing the same advice he’d given to Odin. “You can do better in the future. Maybe trust Ron a little more? He and I are best mates and he wants to be by my side, help me win this war. I don’t want to make him choose between his family and me, Mrs. Weasley. Don’t make him choose. Please.”
“Oh, my dear boy.” She said, lifting up a hand and cupping his cheek tenderly. “How can he make a choice when they’re the same? You’re his family just as much as I am. You should have your own hand on our family clock at this point, I think. It’d make me worry less. I raised Ron to be loyal to the right thing, I should’ve predicted he’d be just like my brothers. Keeping him from you, from the fight, won’t work. Forgive me for feeling overprotective, I don’t want to lose any more family.”

Harry didn’t know much about Molly’s family. He guessed that her brothers had died since Ron had never mentioned any uncles. Probably in the war.

“Ron’s been invited to learn defense with me on Asgard.” Harry said. “Just once a week for the afternoon, he could learn how to defend himself from the best. It’s not the same as wrapping him up in bubble wrap but maybe it would help you feel better? If you knew he really knew what he was doing?”

“Yes.” She said after a moment. “I’m not ever going to stop worrying about my baby boy but…but knowing he’s learning how to defend himself, it might make me fret just a bit less. I’ll need to talk to Arthur about it, you understand.”

“Course.”

“Thank you, Harry. You make me proud every day, from the moment we met in King’s Cross, I’ve known you were so kind and brave. I love you dear boy.”

Harry hugged her again. The woman who was as close to a mother as he could ever remember having. She wasn’t perfect, far from it, but she was present and real. Most importantly she was trying. While he knew she was nothing like what his own mum would have been like, it made the hole in his heart ache a little less knowing he’d been found by her. Molly Weasley hugged him tightly and placed a wet kiss on his forehead just like she did with all the rest of her children. Harry faked a noise of complaint, mirroring Ron’s own actions.

Harry disentangled himself from the hug and made his way over to Ron and Hermione, a skip still in his step. His friends were sipping on cups of soda and talking amongst themselves. They grinned as he neared them.

“You’ll never guess what Remus got me for my first flame.” He said.

“What?” Ron asked straightening up immediately.

Harry reached into his pocket and pulled out the book. He held it up so that both of his friends could read the title.

“Oh brilliant!”

“You know this is something I’ve really been meaning to research!”

“He said if we started right away, we could manage it by the end of the summer.”

At his friends’ excitement Harry found his eyes being drawn over to his dad, who was now talking to Arthur and Tony about enchanting muggle objects. Maybe the party had been a great idea after all.
Father-Son Magic Lessons

Chapter Summary

Loki and Harry sit down for the first of many asgardian magic lessons

Chapter Notes

This one is pretty lore heavy folks! Please forgive me rambling on about how I think magic works lol.

“Alright.” Loki said rubbing his hands together. “Are you ready Starlight?”

Harry looked up at him from his position on the ground. He was sitting cross legged on a pillow. Loki had instructed his son to wear something comfortable and his son had taken that to mean his pajamas, a pair of sweatpants and a t-shirt that was slightly too large. With Tony’s help Loki had been able to expand his son’s wardrobe over the past month and now Harry had plenty of things to wear, it warmed something in Loki every time he saw his son wearing something that fit and that suited him.

“Course.” Harry said, wiggling a little in place. “I thought we’d never get around to doing this.”

“In my defense you had that meeting with the Americans and then there were your lessons with Tyr and then the meeting with the Order in London.” His dad said. “With your training schedule and the work you’re doing with Hermione and Ron, you’ve hardly had time to relax. I’ve also been busy training the Avengers in magical fighting tactics. Things have gotten quite busy.”

“But in a good way, right?” Harry asked, unsure for a moment. “I know I’ve totally changed how you and the Avengers do things…”

“A change for the better I assure you.” Loki said sitting down in front of his son, he crossed his legs and they were just close enough that their kneecaps bumped lightly. “You’ve been here for almost two months and we all adore you.”

“I like it here.” Harry said, sounding just a little bit awed that he could say that out loud.

“I’m glad.” Loki said. “Now. We’re here to help you learn Asgardian magic. It’s been a few weeks since your first flame party and we really should have started lessons then but… well you know things happen. Better late than never.”

The past few weeks had done wonders for Harry. He was almost a different person to the stick thin boy who’d punched him in the face two months ago. Now, only two weeks from his son’s 16th birthday, the boy looked like a demi-god. It was true he’d never have the bulky muscle of Thor, but he’d filled out, thanks to the copious amounts of food Loki fed him each day. His son had grown into his height and now instead of being a broom he was lithe and powerful. There was a healthy glow to his skin that combined with the light tan he’d gotten from all the time he spent outdoors
made him look very dashing.

There were new callouses on his son’s hands from his sword work. Each day his son spent two hours practicing with either Loki or Thor to work on the lessons Tyr gave. Tyr had been extremely doubtful that Harry would progress quickly if he wasn’t in Asgard every day but Thor had convinced him and Harry had quickly proven himself. Harry had taken to a sword beautifully too.

He’d had a tendency in the beginning to go on the defensive only. He was very careful to block hits to himself, especially to his gut, and he tended to dart in and out of a fight, retreating whenever there was a threat of a hit. Tyr had appreciated the caution but had disliked the lack of aggression. Loki and Thor had worked hard to force Harry to start actually attacking his opponents instead of just reacting to what was thrown at him. It was a work in progress still but Loki could see small daily improvements.

Part of him liked the idea that his son was so defensive, it meant he was less likely to get hurt. Granted he was aware that his son would eventually have to use his sword or his magic to kill Voldemort, but that wasn’t something he liked to think about. Often when they practiced Harry gravitated towards maneuvers and methods that would allow him to subdue opponents without hurting them much. He still liked the disarming spell best. Loki didn’t have the heart to point out that he wasn’t going to win the war by yelling ‘Expelliarmus’.

His daily practices, in which he was frequently joined by Ron and Hermione, had allowed him to grow. His strength grew too, now that he was properly using his Asgardian muscles, his body was growing to it’s fullest potential. Tony had been more amused than annoyed when Harry kept breaking things with his growing strength, thankfully. Ron and Hermione had also grown stronger and more confident, although their muscles took much longer to grow than Harry’s, his godly ancestry helped him heal much faster after each practice.

That didn’t mean the two other teens didn’t keep up. Tyr had been insanely impressed by Harry’s shield siblings. Ron with his long, almost gangly, limbs had started learning to use a bow. And he was good at it. There had been a sharp learning curve at first but Ron had excellent aim. It was all a matter of strengthening his arms so that he could hit things from a distance. When in Asgard Fandral always swung by and the godly archer gave the boy tips. When he returned to the tower Clint told Ron to forget everything Fandral told him and to listen to him instead.

Ron seemed delighted that two different adults were fighting for his attentions.

Hermione had, before going to Asgard for the first time, devoured 15 different books on weaponry and created a chart detailing the pros and cons of each weapon as it related to her skills and strengths. She’d marched right up to Tyr, showed him her research, and told him that she would like to learn how to use a battle axe. Tyr had taken one look at the tiny girl, far shorter than any of the other trainees with her bushy manic hair and snorted.

“Perhaps a dagger would be more appropriate?”

He hadn’t asked that question again after her first lesson when she’d picked up one of the training axes, cast a spell on it to make it light enough for her human arms, and used it without hesitation to attempt to cleave one of the other trainees in two. Hermione’s justification for using the axe was that she could use it as she pleased in close quarters, she could also use the broad side as a shield against spells, and use it as a way to quickly carve shapes into the ground or nearby walls for offensive runic magic. The fact that she’d determined the battle axe to be the best match to her magic had confused most at first and frightened most everyone after two weeks.

Volstagg the member of the warrior three that used a battle axe had been pleased to meet Hermione.
Even more pleased when she was happy to sit with him and listen to his advice on the best sorts of chopping methods. It was almost sweet in a way. Hermione, always a sponge for knowledge, was more than willing to listen to any of the warriors in Asgard drone about their accomplishments as long as they were willing to answer her detailed and pointed questions.

Sif had also liked Hermione, offering the girl far more advice than she ever gave to any other trainee. Sif was used to being smaller and slightly physically weaker than most of her opponents. She helped Hermione adapt her fighting style so that it was more effective against her male counterparts.

The three had learnt so much over the past few weeks but the biggest change had been wrought in Harry. Loki had managed to help strengthen up Harry’s mental blocks against whatever thing was in his scar, giving Harry the ability to sleep comfortably through the night. Harry had more than enough food and he hardly ever flinched when people touched him. The suspicion and wariness in his eyes had faded as well, leaving behind a relaxed teenager.

Harry held his head high now and he spoke his mind and demanded respect from people without having to be spitting mad. He walked with confidence and his laughter came easily. It wasn’t always perfect. Sometimes Harry had nightmares and generally the weekly meetings with the Order always left Harry feeling mulish and frustrated. He also had a tendency to retreat into himself whenever something bad happened. But things were improving, slowly if not as steadily as Loki would have liked.

And now it was time for the next step. Loki had been training Harry and his friends in human magic for the past month. But there were things that only Harry could learn. His Asgardian magic was active now and it was important that Harry learnt to control and command it.

“So.” Harry said looking down at his hands for a moment. “What is the difference between the magic I know and this stuff? You said it’s Asgardian magic but like…all magic comes from the World Tree right? That’s what you told me. Shouldn’t it all be the same?”

“You’re correct. All magic does come from the Yggdrasil. Each magic user draws power from there and stores it in their core. We’ve talked about cores before you and I, and about what makes yours so unique.” Loki said causing Harry to nod. “For the most part Asgardian magic is very similar. Asgardians just tend to have larger cores which means that they are capable of more powerful spells.”

“But…” Harry pushed.

“But there is a reason we’re called gods.”

“I thought that was just like a title?”

“No. You see when I say I’m the god of mischief what I mean is that I can access portions of the Yggdrasil that others cannot. I can draw power from the magic that represents entropy and bend that energy to my will. Thor, as the god of thunder, can access the magic of nature and command the forces of nature in a way that no one else can. Yes, a powerful magic user can make a storm, but they are not connected to the storm, not like Thor is. If they call a storm, they can’t control how long the storm last or how strong it is. Beyond that Thor can call on specific portions of lightning and thunder, to a degree that is unheard of in any other being.”

“Okay.” Harry said mulling that over in his head. “But you said that every Asgardian magic user gets that flame thing-y like I do. So are they all gods?”

“Generally speaking yes.” Loki said. “Asgard has two classes of magic users. The mages and the
sorcerers. Mages are those who either have a small amount of magic, not enough to access the higher planes of the Yggdrasil or who gain magical power through other means. And then there are magic users like you and I, sorcerers who are born with great magical power and can produce a flame. A flame is an indicator that you have the capability of becoming a god.”

Harry made a choked shocked noise which made Loki grin. He conjured a glass of cool water and handed it to his son who drank it thankfully.

“I’m a god?” He asked once he’d calmed down some.

“No. Not yet at least. No one is born a god, it’s something you become.” Loki said. “And the path is unique for everyone. What you decide to do with the power you already have will define you and it may allow you to become more than what you are.”

“Oh.” Harry said. “But then if I’m not a god right now, then why do I need to learn any different sort of magic?”

“The flame, your flame, Harry, is evidence that you are accessing parts of the Yggdrasil that a lower magic user cannot. The color of your flame indicates what types of magic you are best suited for which further shows what sorts of higher magic you can call upon from the Yggdrasil.” Loki explained. “As you age your magical core is going to grow to take on more qualities from the parts of the Yggdrasil you have access too. In time, if you don’t train yourself to use these new forms of energy, your magic will grow out of your control.”

“Okay that makes sense. Sort of.” Harry said. “But I don’t really understand the color thing? I mean my magic was like four different colors right? You said that they connected to different branches of magic but just now you said they were planes of magic.”

“Human magic users access the middle pools of magic in the Yggdrasil.” Loki said.

Loki carefully waved a hand conjuring an illusion of the World Tree. It floated between glowing gold and sparkling.

“We’ve talked about the World Tree before.” Loki said. “How each fruit of the tree is a planet or realm and that the branches are streams of energy connecting each one.”

“Yeah.”

“Well, Midgard or earth is right here, in the middle of the tree.” Loki said pointing to the center where there was a ball of light representing the earth. Harry leaned in to get a better look, squinting his bright green eyes. “So humans who are born with the capability of using magic, tend to draw power from the trunk of the tree, right close by. There are some who can reach the higher planes just as there are Asgardian magic users who can only reach the middle, it’s not a hard rule. This isn’t a lesser form of magic either, there’s quite a bit of power to be gained from using the trunk. Humans have a wide breadth of abilities with magic. If there’s a form of magic out there in the universe then it’s likely that humans have found a way to use it. Think of it like this, everything passes through the trunk. Energy travels up from the roots through the trunk and then up to the leaves and branches on the top, so that means that almost all forms of magic are possible for humans.”

“So when Hermione talks about all the branches she means those?” Harry asked pointing to the branches of the trees. His son looked like his mind was swimming through syrup. Loki knew it would be difficult to cram centuries of magical theory into a few lessons but they had to make do.

“In essence yes. Each type of magical energy congregates in different parts of the world tree and
develops fully there.” Loki said, Harry looked a bit confused and so Loki sighed. “Okay let’s start over. Let’s go down to the roots of the tree, well before any realms have formed. The roots of the world tree hold magic in its purest most undiluted form. Gathering magic from here is dangerous, there is no diversity it is just pure purposeless energy. You can’t cast complicated spells with this stuff Harry. It’s incredibly powerful, so much so that it’s nearly impossible for any living being to control. Magic from the lowest planes can be divided into six forms.”

“What are they?”

“Time. Soul. Space. Mind. Power. Reality.” Loki said making the roots of the Yggdrasill light up in six different colors to represent these concepts. “This is magic in it’s purest form, all spells and branches of magic can be placed into one of these six categories.”

“My flame was purple. That’s soul magic right?”

“Yes.” Loki said smiling a little. “But you are not taking your magic from the lower planes, if you tried it you’d explode.”

“Then where am I getting it from?”

“Patience.” Loki said. “Let me finish explaining this. You know most Asgardian magic users have to spend centuries learning this stuff. You ought to be grateful I’m giving you the simplified summary.”

“Right.” He rolled his eyes at his son’s cheek and then had the six colors from the roots begin to travel up into the trunk of the tree, passing by the realm of the fire giants and the dwarves. As the magic traveled up it began to spread out into new hues, once where there was just red there was suddenly pinks and blood oranges and scarlets.

“As the energy in the Yggdrasill travels upwards it diversifies into new types of magic. It can all be traced back to the original six types but now there is the possibility for spells and unique types of magic.” Loki explained. “For instance, transfiguration is part of Reality. When you transfigure something, you change reality for a moment. Drawing magic from the trunk means you are still taking magic that is truer to the source but still diluted enough to allow you to change a needle into a matchstick.”

“So if you go higher into the world tree…then it gets even more colorful?”

“Exactly.” Loki said pleased, his wiggled his fingers causing the colors to travel up into the branches and leaves. It pooled around in a rainbow of colors, every single one imaginable. There were brilliant whites and silvers mixed in with bronzes and golds, every single color visible to the human and not so human eye. “The higher the magic travels up the world tree the more it changes. By the time it reaches the top it’s become the sort of divine magic that I and Thor use. This sort of magic is very specific in what it can do. Its diversified to the point that Asgardian magic users can really only access a few of the colors instead of the whole rainbow as it were. We can do great and powerful things, things that humans could not ever dream of, but our skills are far less broad than a human’s. We exchange a breadth of magical branches for an in-depth strength in one or two.”

“Okay, but I’m from both here and there.” Harry said pointing to the trunk and then to the upper branches.

“Yes you are. That means you can draw magic from the trunk with ease as well as from the pools of magic in the higher levels. I can do so as well but that’s because I’m the god of magic, that gives me greater leeway in where I draw my power from.”
“So could you take magic from the roots?” Harry asked.

“I’ve never dared to.” Loki said. “Starlight taking magic from there is dangerous, anyone who’s ever tried it has died. Taking magic directly from the source without allowing it to dilute and diversify is just asking to make yourself explode.”

“Got it.” Harry said. “Roots are off limits.”

“Good.” Loki nodded. “Now. You are in a state of flux. Because of the spells I placed on you, your magical core has only been able to access the trunk of the tree as you grew, now that those spells are gone, your core is touching the branches for the first time. Now your magical core is evolving, it’s going to take time before your magic stabilizes into something new.”

“Is this like magical puberty?” Harry asked.

“Essentially.” Loki said. “It’s not going to be easy Harry. Most people don’t go through this. There are very few people who can draw their magic from more than one level of the tree.”

“Is anything in my life easy?”

“Don’t worry. I’m going to help. I went through this too you know. When I became the god of magic my core went through significant changes, very similar to the ones you’re going through now. I’ll help you learn to control it, I promise.”

“Okay. I trust you.” Harry said. “How do we start?”

“First you need to know which branches of the tree you can access. We know what colors your flame is; purple, white, green, and gold.”

“Purple is soul magic, White is enchantment, Gold is charms, and Green is transfiguration. That’s what you said.”

“See here. Look at the tree.” Loki said pointing to the left where the variations of white hues and tones had congregated in a wonderful monochrome canvas. “This is where Alfheim lays. The light elves are called such because they most frequently call upon the white magic of enchantment. That’s not to say that all light elves do of course but we’re speaking in generalities now. The elves are capable of rendering great magic with their enchantments. There are even some elves who can just sing thing into existence, enchanting trees and weapons and anything else with great power by their words alone.”

“So…Could I do that too?”

“Perhaps. You’d have to get an elf to teach you to sing. I’ve heard you in the shower, you need to learn to carry a tune first.”

“Hey!”

“Harry you can draw from this portion of the Yggdrasil. I’m going to give you the tools to learn how to draw upon that magic and how to control it but how you use it and what you wish to learn further is up to you.”

“Okay. Where’s the gold?”

“That’s Asgard, the golden realm.” Loki said pointing to the top of the tree. “Gold is for charm magic. I know it doesn’t make sense at first but charm magic is part of the Power portion of magic. In
the Asgardian sense, charm magic is a way of exerting your will upon an object without changing the inherent nature of it. You can make a pineapple tap dance but once you stop it’s still just a normal pineapple. In the same way you can cast hexes and jinxes upon people that can hurt or harm them but once the magic is removed they are the same as they were before. It’s a powerful type of magic and by far the one that has the most versatility. Asgard has used charm magic to create a utopia free of disease and famine. Almost everything we eat, drink, wear, and live in has magic on it to better the quality of life.”

“Is that why the air tastes like that?” Harry asked.

“Yes I’m afraid so.”

“Huh.”

“I suspect your connection to charms comes from your mother. Her magic was very gold, even if it was only human. She was best at charms out of all the magic she did and I think she passed that connection on to you. You got the green from me that’s for certain.”

“And green is over there? By the Vanir?” Harry had been paying attention in previous lessons! Loki smiled at him, proud that he was remembering.

“Yes. Green is transfiguration. It’s change and shifting of shapes. There is also a lot of nature magic that is green. Nature is all about change and growth. I called it entropy earlier and that’s what I mean. This plane of magic is about truly changing the world around you. Enchanting enhances qualities already there, charms paste on changes to something without changing the object, and transfiguration changes the object into something else.”

“So enchanting is part of the Power category too?”

“No it’s part of the Soul category.” Loki corrected. “When you enchant the object you strengthen or play down the inherent characteristics of the thing you’re working with, the soul of it.”

“So. My white and purple magic is the same?”

“It’s from the same source but it’s diversified into something new.”

“This is really complicated.”

“It takes centuries of study to understand and I’m quite sure no one has ever managed it completely.”

“Okay. So I can take magic from the elves, the Vanir, the aesir, and…Where is the purple?”

“Down there.” Loki said pointing closer to the roots.

“I thought you said no roots!”

“I did! Just look, there’s the Realm Helheim. It’s not in the roots, but just right above them. This sort of magic diversified early, and it remained closer to its truer form than most others. True soul magic, the kind that you are capable of is exceedingly rare because no one lives down there. Helheim is known as the realm of the dead and if anyone lives there I’ve never heard of them. People who can draw from this plane of magic are powerful. It’s different from enchanting.”

“How is it different? What even is it?” Harry asked.

“It’s the ability to interact with souls Harry.” Loki said gently.
“I don’t understand what that means.”

“Everything in the universe, from the stars to the planets to the pebbles in the bottom of a stream bed have a soul, a bit of something that defines what that are. How and when those souls form is heavily debated. If a mountain has a soul and then is eroded down into a million stones, does it still have only one soul or is that soul dead and now there are million stone souls instead? Magical scholars have argued this topic for millennia and no one really knows for certain. What we do know is that they exist and that they are, for the most part, immutable.”

“Immutable?”

“They remain the same.” Loki said. “The soul of a tree is going to always be just that, a tree. If I transfigured that tree into a house, then it’ll act like a house but the soul of the thing will still be a tree, and when the transfiguration fades, the tree’s soul will be relatively the same and the body of the tree will revert to match that. If I charm a tree to be fire proof, then the soul is still just the same as it was before, the tree itself isn’t even changed, it’s just coated with a magic protection, like a shield.”

“But you said enchanting messes with the soul right?”

“It enhances the soul. If the soul of the tree in question says that this tree produces flowers, then the tree can be enchanted to produce more or less flowers. An elf will sing to the tree and bring out strengths or weaknesses in its soul to get the results they want. The soul of the tree is still just that, a tree, but it has changed evolved into something different than it was before, but it is still undeniably a tree.”

“That makes sense.” Harry said slowly. “So is soul magic just like super enchanting?”

“I suppose you could think of it that way.” Loki said with a small laugh. “What it is, is the ability to command souls. You can command a soul to linger in a body for longer than it normally would if someone is fatally wounded, you can command a soul to leave a body if you wished. Some soul magic users have used this power to call forth the souls of the dead to speak with them, although often that goes terribly wrong. A great example of soul magic is the golden apples of Asgard.”

“Those are the things that give you immortality right?”

“Yes. Indunn, a powerful healer and soul magic user like yourself, used soul magic to create the golden apple trees. She took some normal apple trees and she commanded the souls of the trees to change, to bear fruit that had the ability to seal souls to their vessels. When you eat one of those apples you gain immortality because the apples change your soul, makes it stickier so that you don’t die very easily. The changes in your very soul result in a stronger body, slower aging, and more magical power. Your soul is forever changed, that’s what this sort of magic can do Harry.”

“Oh.”

“Yes oh.”

“But what am I supposed to do with it?”

“I don’t know.” Loki said shrugging. “There are so few true soul magic users that there aren’t any common paths for you to take. I’m afraid we’re going to have to make it up as we go along.”

“Do you think I could…I mean this Indunn lady seems to know what she’s doing.” Harry said. “Not to say I don’t want your help I do it’s just…”

“Indunn is a notorious shut-in.” Loki said, giving his son a smile to show he understood. “She lives
in the mountains of Asgard and tends to her garden. She’ll visit the city once every few centuries if she’s forced to. The only time she communicates with anyone is when there’s a new child born and an apple is needed. The parents will send a message to her using a raven, and she will go to them with one apple for their new child. She leaves before the party starts.”

“So, talking to her is out?”

“I didn’t say that.” Loki said. “I’m just warning you that it could be difficult, perhaps even impossible if she’s feeling particularly stubborn. I can teach you how to access that magic, and how to control it. But the more advanced things, the stuff that women like Indunn are capable of is going to take time to study and practice.”

“So my main form of magic you basically don’t know anything about but the other three you do?”

“We share two colors.” Loki confirmed with a smile. “And I’ve enchanted before, although it was the more human way of doing it. With that we should be able to manage to ensure you don’t harm anyone.”

“I really think I should try and talk to Indunn.” Harry said after a moment of thought. “It’s just…the prophecy talks about a power that Tom knows not.”

“Soul magic could be it.” Loki agreed. He was careful then this was the first time Harry had addressed the wording of the prophecy directly since telling it to him. Loki didn’t want to scare his son off. “Tom knows the killing curse, but I highly doubt he’s done any sort of magic that inherently changes the shape of a soul. There are human branches of soul magic but they’re mostly lost arts, far too obscure for anyone in the last three centuries to have learnt with any degree of success.”

“But the other types of magic.” Harry said. “Even if Tom can’t access the higher planes like I can he can still do them. He’s enchanted and charmed and transfigured before. Way more than I have. Tom knows that power, even if he doesn’t know the highest forms of it.”

“And you think Soul magic could be it? That’s not a bad idea Starlight.” Loki complimented. “Speaking to Indunn could be helpful. I’ll send her a message explaining the issue. I can’t promise anything, but she might agree to speak to you since you have magic like hers. There hasn’t been another like you in millennia, she could be curious.”

“Thanks dad.” Harry said smiling. “Now. Is the lecture over? Can we actually get started now? I promised I’d show Ron and Hermione something cool tomorrow before we went to Asgard.”

“You didn’t think to ask me if we were going to do anything interesting today? I could have had a 15-hour lecture planned.”

“Dad. Come on I know you better than that.”

Loki smiled and waved his hand banishing the floating illusion of the World Tree, it had done its job. He reached out and took his son’s hands in his own.

“You’re right.” Loki said. “I’ve always believed in learning by doing. I thought we could start with the magic I’m most familiar with. Transfiguration. How would you like to learn how to shape shift like me?”

“Really? I could learn how to do that too?” Harry asked. “Like an animagus thing or…like Tonks?”

“Those are the human forms of what I’m going to teach you. You can learn how to become an animagus if you wanted, it’s quite a useful skill. Animagi can sneak through most warding systems
without getting caught. Although I’d better not see you doing that without some sort of supervision.”

“You didn’t have supervision.” Harry teased.

“Yes, and I was very irresponsible.” Loki said. “What I’m teaching you is the Asgardian version. It will result in what appears to be the same thing as the human version but we are drawing power from a different portion of the Yggdrasil. That means it’ll feel different than the human method.”

“Okay. So, I can do this version but not the human shapeshifting?”

“That’s a gift one has to be born with I believe.” Loki said smiling. “But the Asgardian version is something you can learn. I was born with a natural inclination for it, but I had to practice a lot to turn into animals. I think we should start simply. Let’s see if we can get you to change your hair color.”

“I’m ready.”

Loki took his son’s hands in his own and began to lead him in calling forth his magic. Once they’d gotten through the lecture portion of the lesson things became much more enjoyable for the both of them. It was exactly as Loki had dreamed it would have been all those years ago. He recalled holding his infant son to his chest and telling Lily how brilliant their son was going to be. He’d insisted to her then that he was going to teach their son everything there was to know about magic, and that he’d be the best the realms had ever seen.

And as Loki coached his son in accessing the parts of his magic that had been hidden from him, he felt pride bloom in his chest. This was what perfection was, Loki was certain. Sharing his hard earned knowledge with his child, helping them grow and learn, and seeing the results of that right before his eyes. It made him wonder about Odin for half a moment. Had Odin ever looked at either him or Thor, sat down and shared what he knew?

Loki could recall praise being handed out. Odin had always been willing to tell Thor that he’d done a good job, just as he’d always been willing to tell Loki to try harder not to get into too much trouble. But had Odin ever sat down with either of them and gently corrected the way they held their blade, or offered advice on their studies? For the first time in Loki’s life he wondered if he’d not been the only one ignored by Odin. Had Thor been just as desperate for the attention of a father that never truly came?

“You’re doing a good job.” Loki said as Harry’s face scrunched up as if he was in pain. The boy’s midnight dark hair was now slightly lighter.

“My hair looks exactly the same!”

“It doesn’t. You’ve lightened it at least two shades. Very impressive for a first attempt.”

“Why is it so hard?”

“You’re exercising a part of your magical core that’s been dormant for a long time. It’ll take time.” Loki said, not mentioning that most Asgardian magic users struggle for centuries to get their first flame to even appear and Harry had done that with relative ease. Harry didn’t like to be pandered too.

“I want to try again.” Harry said.

“Alright.” Loki said. “Dinner isn’t for another hour, do you want a snack now before you try again? Having a full stomach can help.”
“Let’s just do this.” And Loki could respect the boy’s determination.

“Close your eyes.” Loki began again. “And focus on my words.”

He guided Harry in reaching into his core, pulling magic from his heart instead of his stomach. Harry’s hands glowed bright purple and Loki smiled, he was a natural at this.

“Now you’ve pulled the energy to your hands. Perfect if we were going to be doing some spell casting. But you need to redirect the flow to the area of your body you wish to change. So try and see where the flow is in your body. It starts in your heart.”

“Yeah.” Harry said, his eyes still closed. “And then my shoulders? They’re tingling.”

“So from your shoulders it went down your arms and into your hands. That makes sense. That’s where you normally push your magic. Through the hand you hold your wand with, but you need to change that flow to your neck and then your head. Focus, this is your power, you can control where it goes.”

Harry nodded and his face scrunched up again. Loki could feel the magic recede from his son’s hands as it was pulled back, inch by inch, up his arms. He watched as minutes passed in silence. He gave encouragement and advice every five minutes or so, whenever it seemed that Harry was getting frustrated. After about thirty minutes, Loki saw a change. A brilliant smile bloomed on his face as his son’s hair color lightened and filled with fire.

“Oh Harry.” Loki said.

“Did I do it?”

Loki let go of his son’s hands and conjured a mirror. Harry slowly opened his eyes and then his mouth dropped open. He reached up and grabbed at the thick straight locks of hair that were now a bright coppery red, the same color as his mother’s.

“Woah.”

“There. Excellent job.” Loki was proud to note that his voice only cracked a little at seeing his son look so much like his mother. With his bright green eyes and eager grin it smacked him in the face at how much he shared with her. Harry’s smile fell just a little and he reached out to place a hand on Loki’s knee. Another amazing change, Harry reached out to touch now, freely and without much hesitation.

“I miss her too.” Harry said, his voice soft.

“She would be so incredibly proud of you, Starlight. So proud. I know I am.”

“You think I can keep the hair? Just for the day?” Harry asked.

“It’s your body Starlight.” Loki said. “You can make it look however you’d like.”

“I don’t think I’d make a good ginger, but I’d like it for a little while.” Harry decided looking at the mirror again. “Is that how shapeshifting works, like all of it?”

“The simplest things. You’re free to practice this as often as you want but more complicated things like changing gender or species should wait until I can supervise.”

“Gender? Why would I want to do that?”
“It can be fun.” Loki said letting his body easily shift around just enough that it was clear that she’d changed. “I did this quite often before becoming James Potter.”

“But…”

“Remember what I said Harry. No matter how you change the shape of your body you are still you. And no matter how I appear I am always Loki. I just sometimes enjoy moving between different physical identities. It’s not for everyone mind you, but it’s not bad.” It hadn’t occurred to Loki that she’d have to explain this. She’d been playing around with gender for centuries, so long that it was old news in Asgard, and Asgard never let go of gossip. It hadn’t occurred to her that her entire on earth had been spent in mostly one form without much thought to change. There had been so many other things on her mind than switching her body around to fit her mood.

“No. I get it.” Harry said quickly, hurrying to assure Loki that he didn’t mind. “And it’s cool. I just didn’t know.”

“Good.” Loki said.

“Do I need to call you…anything different when you look different?”

“Harry.” Loki said lifting her now smaller hand with manicured nails to his face. “No matter what I appear as, I will always be your dad.”

“Well that’s all that matters.” He said smiling back at her.

“Let’s go to dinner.” Loki said. “Let’s see how long it takes Stark to notice my new look.”
There was something to be said for Grimmauld Place.

That something wasn’t very nice.

But still, it was something.

Harry scrunched his nose as he looked up at the decapitated house elf heads on the wall. Really he couldn’t understand why anyone would find that attractive. It just made something in his gut squirm uncomfortably. It was such a huge sign of barbaric cruelty, of being proud of it. With his dad’s training he’d become all the more sensitive to magic, enhancing a skill he already had and making it stronger.

He didn’t like how the Order Headquarters felt. Especially compared to the strength and warmth of Asgard or the clean, almost sweet feeling of Avengers Tower. Thankfully he only came here once a week for a meeting that normally didn’t last longer than an hour. This week’s meeting was going to start soon; Sirius, Remus, and his dad were already in the meeting room, probably saving him a seat.

Harry was on his way back from the room that he and Ron had spent the last summer in. He’d forgotten a bag of sugar quills in one of the drawers and he’d wanted to see if they were still good. He ignored the terrible feeling in the air and took the steps down two at a time.

“Oi! Potter.” Tonks said. “What are you doing over there? Meeting’s this way.”

“Hullo Tonks.” Harry said grinning at the woman. He held up the bag of sweets that was still fresh. “I found my candy stash from last summer. It’s still good.”

“I see.” She said. “Congrats on that.”

“I’ve got some great news.” Harry said waking over to the woman whose hair that was currently a bright purple. “My dad’s been teaching me Asgardian magic. Wanna see?”

“Sure.” She said. “Come on, show me what you’ve got!”

Harry grinned and then closed his eyes. He focused just as he’d been practicing and felt the tingle in his scalp that let him know he’d succeeded. He opened his eyes to see Tonk’s mouth had dropped
open in shock.

“I know right? Asgardian shape shifting!” Harry reached up and grabbed at the now longer and straighter red hair that had replaced his normal messy black. From experience he knew it was now about shoulder length, and he’d given himself bangs that actually covered his forehead too. That had been an important addition to have if he wanted to move around without being noticed. He smiled at the bright red lock, knowing it was the same kind of hair his mum had had.

“That’s brilliant! I knew your dad was a shapeshifter we talked about it at your party but I had no idea you were one too! Welcome to the club!” Tonks said slapping him on the back. “What else can you do?”

“Not much yet. I made myself smaller today so I could fit in my old robes.” Harry said blushing only a little. They were going to go robe shopping to get things that actually fit today, his dad had promised. But for now, shrinking himself down was easier than wearing robes that only went to his mid-calf. And magically enlarging his clothing just made them itch abominably. “Dad says it takes lot of practice since I wasn’t born doing it like you and him.”

“Makes sense. Still! It’s an awesome skill to have.” She said giving him a wink. “Any reason you picked red hair? Trying to match Ron and the Twins, are you?”

“I…no it’s my mum.” Harry said. “She had hair just this same color.”

“Oh.” Tonks said, looking a bit awkward at the mention of Lily Potter. A woman she had never known, who had died when she had been a child. “I had no idea. It’s a good look on you.”

“Thanks.” Harry told her. “Anyway, I’m going to put this candy with my bag. I’ll see you in the meeting?”

“Don’t be late!”

Harry rolled his eyes and walked towards the exit of Grimmauld Place. The meeting was only supposed to last an hour or more. They were having it early in the day, far before the time most people had breakfast. The plan was to have the meeting, go out to eat some breakfast, then meet up with Hermione and Ron to do school shopping. His dad had brought Hermione and her parents to London with them and they stayed in one of Tony’s apartments he had in the city.

Harry didn’t ask why the billionaire had property in most major European cities.

It was setting up to be a good day, Harry thought. He got to the creepy coat rack and found his bag. Rather it was one of Steve’s bags, a messenger bag he’d had stuffed away from a SHIELD mission where he’d been undercover. Steve had been happy to let him borrow it to practice enchanting on.

That was going…sort of well. The bag didn’t try to bite anyone other than him who tried to open it anymore at least!

Harry carefully opened the bag and put the smaller bag of candy inside. He’d share this with Ron and Hermione once they all got to Diagon Alley. He stood up and readjusted his school robes. His dad had helped him with the shrinking that morning when Harry had realized that none of his school uniforms fit him anymore. He didn’t feel too terribly constricted but he’d gotten used to having longer limbs by that point and having them be abruptly a bit shorter had made him act a bit clumsy.

Behind him the door swung open, Harry turned around to see who it was and saw that Snape was standing there. Snape was staring at him with wide eyes, frozen stock still.
“Hello Professor.” Harry said trying to be polite as he could. He and Snape hadn’t actually been alone together since Harry had left Hogwarts at the beginning of the summer. His dad had ensured that much.

“Potter.” The man’s voice was a bit strangled and Harry couldn’t understand why. Harry didn’t know if it was appropriate to ask, or if he even cared.

Who was he kidding? Of course, he cared. He still couldn’t decide if getting revenge against Dumbledore was the right thing to do. Figuring out how he felt about Snape of all people was practically impossible.

“You alright?” Harry asked leaning forward a little. “I know you had that meeting with Tom last night. If you need…”

Apparently even that much concern was too much. The man snarled and strode past him, robes swirling around his legs as he practically ran down the hallway.

Huh. Weird.

Harry readjusted his robe again and then followed Snape towards the meeting room. He didn’t even know what he’d done that time. Snape was already sitting on the far side of the large room, glowering at Harry’s dad, which was normal. What wasn’t normal was the flinch when Harry sat down next to his dad and gave his dad a smile.

“You changed your hair.” His dad noted.

“Wanted to show Tonks.”

“Ah. A noble cause. Did you find your candy?”

“Yeah.” Harry said. “Surprised it didn’t get cursed from staying in this place for so long.”

“I’ll teach you how to filter out the energy in this place so you can concentrate better soon enough.” His dad promised, looking a little concerned. He reached out and ran a hand through Harry’s hair as if to check for a headache that hadn’t yet appeared. Out of the corner of his eye he saw Snape frown and look hard at the floor. What was up with him?

“Thanks.” Harry said. “It feels terrible here.”

“Let me know if you need a break, you can leave the meeting whenever you want. I’ll let you know what you miss.”

“I’m fine. It’s only for an hour.”

“Just keep it in mind Starlight.”

Harry had mostly gotten used to his dad’s fussing. It was a huge change from how awkwardly standoffish the man had been in the beginning, when neither of them really knew how to talk to the other. More and more Order members were filtering into the room, taking seats around the long oval table and greeting people. Harry waved brightly at Fred and George who complimented him on his Weasley-ish good looks.

“Always knew you were our long lost brother.”

“It’s the eyes that gave it away. Every Weasley’s got emerald eyes!”
“Oh Harry.” Mrs. Weasley said, walking over to her two sons, ready to pull them into their seats before trouble could start. Mrs. Weasley looked a bit teary as she looked at him which Harry thought was a bit of a strange overreaction to a hair color change. “It looks lovely on you dear.”

“Thanks. Your hair looks nice too.”

Hermione and Ron didn’t come to these meetings. The Grangers didn’t want their daughter in the war room and Mrs. Weasley had put her foot down on allowing Ron there as well. It didn’t matter much since Harry told them everything anyway, but it made the adults feel a bit more comfortable.

“You’re so sweet.” She said sniffing. “I do hope your father is feeding you enough.”

“He is.”

“I am.” Loki said at the same time. “I promise you, he gets the five square meals a day a growing demi-god needs.”

“Well that is good to hear.” She said. “But Harry you let me know if you get hungry okay? I’m sure I can mix something up in the kitchen for you.”

“I will Mrs. Weasley.” Harry said with a smile.

“Molly.” Arthur said. “Come sit down, the meeting is starting. Oh Hello, Harry, you’re looking quite sharp today.”

“Thanks?”

“The likeness is remarkable.” Arthur said. “I can’t hardly tell a difference now.”

“Likeness?” Harry asked. “I just changed my hair color…”

“Oh well. You see I remember Lily used to have that same hair style when she was your age.” Arthur said. “I remember seeing her with that hair when I was a student and so was she. We were a fair few years apart of course but…”

The man trailed off and Harry’s eyes flicked over to where Snape was sitting. The realization of what Harry had inadvertently done settled in and he swallowed and looked away before Snape could catch him staring.

“I’ve only seen pictures of my mum with really long hair.” Harry said, for lack of anything better to say.

“She started growing it out when she turned 15.” His dad said. “But when she was younger she had it quite short.”

“Oh.”

“Don’t worry.” His dad said. “Even if you started dressing exactly like her, I wouldn’t mind. You’re allowed to do with your body what you want and seeing her in you doesn’t hurt me.”

His dad had gained the ability to somehow know exactly what to say to him over the summer.

“Thanks dad.”

The room quieted and Harry looked up to see that Dumbledore had entered. Arthur and Molly both whispered their goodbyes and rushed to take their seats. Sirius and Remus stopped their game of
gobstones by hiding the board beneath the table and leaning back in their chairs to pretend that they hadn’t been playing a children’s game. Harry snickered a little at Sirius’ innocent humming.

“Welcome.” Dumbledore said. “I see that we are all here so there’s no reason not to begin immediately. Remus, how is your mission with the werewolves?”

Remus sat up completely and cleared his throat.

“I just got back from another visit with some of the outer packs. Most of them aren’t interested in either side of the conflict which is honestly the best we could hope for. There’s only two packs that I found that are siding with Greyback.” Remus said. “I’m working on some agreements with five packs that would result in non-aggression for us, but it’s slow going. I honestly think the only way we’re going to make any headway at all is if we offer them Wolfsbane.”

“Wolfsbane is incredibly complicated to brew. Brewing enough for an entire pack isn’t feasible.”

“I know that.” Remus said looking over at Snape. “And I’d never ask Severus to take on that burden himself. But it’s the only thing that would interest the packs. It’s not like I can promise them government help, not with the way the new Minister is going.”

“I understand.” Dumbledore said. “But we must still try to ensure that no more groups join Tom’s army. Already a majority of European vampires have joined him. Not to mention the trolls he’s captured and the giants he is courting. Hagrid is still attempting to work out some sort of deal with the Giants and he has not yet returned from that mission.”

“I’ll keep working on it.” Remus promised. “But right now, no news is good news as far as I’m concerned.”

“Very well. Let’s move on. Arthur?”

Harry listened as each Order member talked about what they had been attempting to do and what they’d learnt. Mr. Weasley was trying to determine who in his part of the Ministry was a Voldemort supporter, who was neutral, and who was on their side. It was difficult work but he was making good progress. Tonks and Shaklebolt were trying to do the same within the auror corps while also keeping an ear to the ground for potential Death Eater targets and raids.

Eventually they got to Snape, who had been strangely silent throughout the whole meeting. Harry looked expectantly at the man who seemed incredibly discomfited by that fact.

“You-Know-Who is still unaware of Potter’s identity as well as Loki’s reasons for involvement.” Snape said. “He is incredibly displeased by Loki’s current trajectory of interacting with Order Members and the Hogwarts staff. I implied to him that the Headmaster was trying to woo the god and his team of muggles to our side.”

“How did you explain away my fighting him in New York?”

“You are protecting New York with the muggles, any attack against that city would be one you would respond to.” Snape said, looking at Loki with a glare in his eyes. “It was nothing personal. Your working with the muggles is for your own benefit as well, you have no real vested interest in being a hero, but it serves you to fake it to stay out of jail.”

“Hmm.” Loki said. “And have you mentioned my new appointment as the Defense Instructor?”

“I have.” Snape growled. “The Dark Lord has ordered me to sway you to his side of the conflict. He is also sending out every child he can within Hogwarts to attempt to do the same.”
“As we expected then.” His dad said. “Albus, how goes the revamping of the wards around the school? I trust the Asgardian warding systems aren’t being too troublesome?”

“We are almost complete with that as well. It should all be done two weeks before the students arrive.”

“Good.” Loki said. “I don’t wish to prolong this conflict any longer than it already has been, if something goes wrong then I want that school as protected against invasion as possible.”

“Of course.” Dumbledore agreed. “Now, James. How are preparations in the States?”

“I feel the Avengers are about as well trained to fight against Death Eaters as they can be at this point. My brother is especially prepared.” Loki said. “I’ve finished charming the teleportation devices that will allow them to travel to areas of concern in the event of an attack. We will now be able to near instantly mobilize to 12 major cities in Europe, Hogwarts, a few choice magical government buildings, as well as multiple places within the United States. If an attack is sounded, we will be alerted, and able to move as needed.”

“I just don’t know how I feel about muggles fighting with us.” Moody grumbled.

“You haven’t seen them fight. I promise you, Mad-Eye, they can handle it.” Sirius said. “We’ve put them through their paces.”

“I’ll believe it when I see it.”

And probably not even then.

“And you Mr. Potter?” Dumbledore asked.

“The Americans are doing well.” Harry said. “I had another meeting with them two days ago. They’re mobilizing defensive forces for all of their major magical centers across the continent. They’ve been working with the Avengers on designing warning systems and that’s how we’re going to be able to help them. They’re combining muggle surveillance with magical forms of it to catch Death Eaters before they blow anything up.”

Harry shifted, feeling only slightly disconcerted with everyone staring at him. His dad’s hand, the one hidden beneath the table, reached out and took Harry’s. Harry took comfort from the light squeeze he was given and continued.

“They’re willing to offer us a few platoons, or well me a few platoons.” Harry continued. “In the event of an attack that I’m fighting at in Europe, they’ll send up to 120 soldiers to help assist, depending on the severity of the situation. Of course, I have to be the one to request it and there are also concerns about how the IWC will feel about Americans just coming into a country uninvited so it’s not totally worked out but it’s getting there.”

“Only 120?” Shaklebolt demanded. “That’s hardly anything.”

“A lot of their forces are focused on defending their people.” Harry explained. “And it’s kind of hard to offer more when we don’t even have an actual battleground to go to. If there were front lines I could point out to them, they’d be more willing to send an entire army at the problem.”

Shaklebolt and a few others didn’t look too pleased with that explanation but Harry wondered if they could have done better than he had arguing with 50 presidents who seemed to like to listen to their own voices more than anything else.
“One of the big initiatives right now is rooting out all Death Eaters in the country.” Harry continued. “I don’t know how much of Tom’s forces over there have been taken down but they’ve done four raids in the last week alone.”

“The Dark Lord is not pleased by the American’s actions.” Snape said. “I’m not given much information on that portion of the war effort, but I believe the Dark Lord has plans on ordering most of his American forces to go into hiding until a new invasion plan can be started.

“Well I think it’s going well over there.” Harry said.

“Is there not anyway you could convince the Americans to agree to help if you are not present?”

“No.” Harry told Dumbledore. “They don’t want to work with anyone but me. They don’t even like talking to my dad much. I have to be involved or they won’t be.”

“That’s going to be difficult once you start attending school in a month’s time.”

“Hopefully Tom’ll focus back on me once I’m close by again.” Harry said. “If he’s focused on me then he probably won’t attack anywhere else. If he does and we need their forces then…”

“That is a decision we’ll make when we come to it.” His dad interrupted. “I believe that due to the prophecy Tom’s efforts will be focused on Hogwarts once the school year begins again. He can do nothing else until that is fulfilled.”

“Which is why the wards around Hogwarts are so important.” Sirius said. “Seriously, I was able to sneak past those, multiple times.”

“We’re aware.” Remus drawled.

“I’m interested in what other protections Asgard is willing to offer.” Dumbledore said ignoring Sirius and Remus as they started to whisper to each other.

“Well. Last time I was there, I talked to my grandfather.” Harry said just a little awkwardly. “We agreed that Asgard should help whenever they can. If anyone attacks Hogwarts then I have a way to contact Asgard for help. The Bifrost’ll transport a whole army to wherever we need it.”

“Of course. Harry’s relation to Asgard needs to be hidden for as long as it can be. We’ve already determined to portray a strained relationship to the public between us.” His dad said. “I’ll treat him as any other student, although one I might find a bit annoying, and he’ll treat me with suspicion due to my history. The longer we can go without revealing Harry as a demi-god to Tom Riddle the better.”

It wasn’t going to be easy to pretend to not like his dad but Harry knew he had to do it. He’d agreed with the idea when his dad had brought it up and he’d have Ron and Hermione’s help in pulling off the ruse.

“Why the secrecy?” Arthur asked.

“Tom Riddle used my son’s blood for his resurrection ritual.” Loki said. “We have no idea how much more strength he’s gained from that than he would have from using a truly mortal source. As long as Tom doesn’t know the blood is half divine he can’t experiment with it to gain more power. His ignorance protects us.”

“We’re not going to manage to keep it secret for long.” Snape said. “Potter’s mind is still quite undefended from The Dark Lord’s influence.”
“Undefended?” His dad asked dangerously.

“The boy is a failure at Occulmency and…”

“Really? Because I found him to be an exemplary student.” His dad cut Snape off. “Perhaps instead of focusing on his perceived failings you should look at your own.”

“My failings? The boy is disrespectful and arrogant.” Snape said. “He couldn’t learn a magic more difficult than a levitation spell without having his father hold his hand through the process. The boy is only as good as you claim because you spoil him, he’s got no clue how to truly-”

His dad slammed his hands onto the table and stood up, magic gathering around him in a fearsome swell.

“Listen here Sni-”

“Dad.” Harry interrupted, placing a hand on his dad’s arm. He pulled on his dad and his dad followed the suggestion, falling back into his seat. Good, now his dad wasn’t going to commit murder. Grimmauld Place did not need any more negative energy to it.

“Of course.” Snape sneered. “Of course the great James Potter would back down from a fight so easily. Isn’t that what you did when you ran back to Asgard, Potter?”

“That’s enough.” Harry said standing up then. He turned his full gaze onto Snape, his eyes full of disgust and frustration. “He is backing down because this is a stupid, pointless argument and we have better things to be doing than playing around with your ego.”

Snape was frozen again, like a deer standing in front of a speeding car’s headlights. Harry continued his tirade.

“Look me in the eye and tell me you taught me Occulmency. Tell me that you actually taught it to me correctly.” Harry said. “Look at me.”

Snape looked away. Harry narrowed his eyes and then sighed.

“That’s what I thought.”

The meeting continued on without much interruption after that.

When thing finally came to a close and everyone had been updated, his dad got up ready to leave this place with Sirius and Remus and start their day properly. Harry only had eyes for Snape though. The man was sitting quietly, silently glaring at the floor and ignoring everyone else who tried to speak with him.

“Go ahead and catch up with the others.” Harry said softly. “I’ll meet up with you by the front door in a few minutes.”

“Harry?”

“Dad.”

“If he tries anything I’ll be here in an instant.”

“It’s going to be okay.” Harry said seriously. “I’m just gonna talk to him.”

His dad didn’t look pleased by that but nodded anyway. Harry appreciated the sign of trust. He was
surprised when Snape didn’t try to leave, the man looked like he’d rather stab himself than talk to Harry, especially when Harry was looking like that. Harry got up from his chair and made his way slowly over to the Potions Master.

“What do you want Potter.”

“You know.” Harry said, using the same tone that someone would use to remark on the weather. “I think I might hate you.”

Snape looked up and glared at him. He opened his mouth probably to say that he didn’t much care what an arrogant boy like him thought, Harry didn’t let him.

“You had all that time with my mum, you had years of being her friend. Years that I’m never going to have.” Harry said, his voice tinged with something that could have been called kindness or cruelty. “And I think I hate you a little for that. You got so long with her, you were gifted with knowing her and this is what you did with that.”

“Do not speak of her.” Snape warned.

“What? You’re telling me I can’t talk about my own mother?” Harry demanded, his voice incredulous. “You’re the one who bullies children. We both know how mum felt about bullies.”

And that shut Snape up too.

“I mean really.” Harry continued. “The first time we ever met, I was taking notes! Writing down what you were saying in potions because I was so excited to learn from you. And you attacked me for it, for having the same interests as my mum.”

And suddenly, with Snape’s tiny flinch, it all clicked into place.

“All this time. All this time, you’ve been punishing me for being like her, haven’t you? I reminded you of her and you couldn’t handle it.” Harry said. “Every time you told me I was just like my dad you were trying to forget how much like her I was.”

“Potter…”

“And you wanted me to hate you, didn’t you? You wanted me to act just like my dad so you wouldn’t have to think about what you did and who you lost.” Harry continued. “And if I hated you, if I acted out then it was okay, you could take things out on me because I’m just like my dad.”

Harry couldn’t believe it. All this time and it was that simple? The hours of painful occulmency lessons, the humiliation in potions class, the unnecessary detentions, the cruel words. All of it was because of that? Years of suffering and it boiled down to Snape not wanting to face that he’d messed up? That he’d betrayed his mother, become a Death Eater, and lost her friendship forever? Snape had spent the last five years making Harry’s life miserable at every turn just because he couldn’t deal with his own shit?

Snape should have known better his heart screamed. Snape had known Aunt Petunia. He’d known probably better than anyone what kind of woman she was, and how she saw magic users. And yet in his own cowardice he’d ignored all evidence to the contrary to protect himself. Harry had come to him half starved and eager to learn and Snape had slapped him down telling himself lie after lie to justify his cruelty.

Harry suddenly felt very tired. A bone deep weariness invaded his soul as he considered the man in front of him. He’d spent weeks agonizing about how he was meant to deal with Snape. The man had
tortured him, invaded his mind over and over again, and then blamed him when he couldn’t defend himself. He had driven Harry to believing he couldn’t trust any adult in his life. He had pushed Harry to the Ministry that night, almost killing Sirius and his friends in the process.

He had felt so incredibly angry and conflicted about Snape ever since his dad had told him how he hadn’t failed at learning Occulmency, how it had been Snape who should have been better. The relief mingled with disbelief those words had given him still popped up when he saw Sirius sometimes. He’d wondered what he should say to Snape, this monstrous man who’d made his time at Hogwarts more difficult, more painful than it had to be. Who took out his hurts and regrets on children who had nothing to do with them.

How many indulgent fantasies had he had over the past month alone about yelling at Snape, about taking the jerk down a notch or two before letting his dad have whatever was left? And now Harry was standing here, able to lay down a sentence, totally justified in doing so and he just felt… *tired.* This wasn’t like Dumbledore who could and would harm others. This was just a bully who never learnt to grow up and face his mistakes.

He pitied Snape.

Yes, that’s what he felt. Pity. Harry didn’t think he’d ever felt pity for someone before. Sympathy? Yes. Empathy? Hermione would argue a bit too much. Compassion? His dad said it was something he and his mum had had in common.

But pity?

That was new.

Where was the satisfaction at yelling and ranting at someone who was so pitiful? Who was a coward and a bully and was only that way because he didn’t know any other way to be? Snape was glaring at him, his eyes filled with hurt and malice in equal measure and Harry just felt tired. What was the point of all of this? Of letting Snape take up so much space in his heart and mind when this is what the man truly was?

“You don’t want me to act like my mum?” Harry asked. “Fine. I won’t. I’ll do something she *never* did.”

Snape straightened up, Harry saw him tense ready to draw his wand. The man expected an attack, proof that Harry was always what Snape had wanted him to be. Harry drew himself up, straightened his shoulders and looked the man directly in his dark eyes.

“I forgive you.”

“Wha-”

“You heard me.” Harry said. “I forgive you. For everything you’ve done to me. Even the stuff I don’t know about. And if you do something to me in the future, then I’ll forgive you for that too.”

And there was true horror in Snape’s eyes. It wasn’t the startled relief Harry had seen in Odin’s, or the affection he’d gotten from Mrs. Weasley. No Snape was looking at him like a man who knew he didn’t deserve it, who didn’t even *want* it, and was being given it anyway. There was pain there too, new laid on top of old. Harry nodded to himself, he felt better having let go of all that frustration. All that was left was the pity he felt for the man.

He didn’t love Snape. He didn’t like him. A part of him would always hate him just a little for being the kind of man he was. It wasn’t like with Odin where Harry saw something in him that he wanted
to nurture. No. This was Harry cutting ties, this was Harry setting himself free of the awful chains
Snape had put on him from the moment he’d had his first potions class.

“I forgive you Professor Snape.” He repeated again seeing more pain and more horror form in the
man’s face. This was something Snape had never known. Forgiveness, freely given. Not even his
mother had ever had the courage to do it.

“If you think this means I’ll-

“I don’t want anything from you Professor.” Harry said seriously. “I’m just giving you my
forgiveness, that’s it. You’ll always have it no matter what. So. There.”

Harry turned and left the man where he was sitting, now emotionally gutted. Snape would probably
hate Harry for this, for giving him something like that. Snape certainly didn’t deserve it, probably
never would knowing the man. But Harry didn’t care. There was so much power in what he’d just
done. Harry had decided to end the fighting with Snape, end the pain on his terms and no one else’s.
Not even Snape had a say in how Harry ended it. If Snape had had his way, then Harry would’ve
been dragged down to his level of cruelty and petty insults.

What did it matter what a man like that thought of Harry? It didn’t! What mattered was how Harry
felt in that moment.

And Harry found that even the dark oppressive atmosphere of Grimmauld Place that he felt free.

“Hey dad.” Harry said walking up to the group of Marauders. “What do you say we get waffles for
breakfast?”
Training with Tyr

Chapter Summary

The Golden Trio is in Asgard for a day of training and Harry tries to learn asgardian offense.

Chapter Notes

Hey!! Thank you so much for the brilliant comments last week! I loved each and everyone I'm glad you all enjoyed it!!

“Excellent form Haraldr. For the defense.” Tyr said as he walked up to where Harry was dueling against Hemrod. “What have I told you about that?”

“Uhm…The best defense is a great offense?” He hazarded, Tyr paused as he always did whenever Harry used a common human phrase. The man’s face took on a stupefied and delighted look.

“The best defense…Ha! Brilliant Lokison! Now why don’t you take your own advice and get a bit more aggressive! I’ll make you duel against me for the next hour if you don’t!”

Harry grimaced at the implied threat and he saw a sympathetic smile from his dueling partner.

“Of course, Master Tyr.” Harry said. “I’ll do my best.”

Harry still didn’t enjoy using his sword offensively. He preferred blocking and disarming over slashing/stabbing motions. Still did even after weeks of being trained. It was the thing that annoyed Tyr the most about him. He was used to having to beat in the importance of defense into young aesir skulls and Harry was the exact opposite. Harry wondered if the man, in all his millennia of teaching, had ever had a student like him before. Tyr nodded and continued on his journey between the dueling students.

“Alright Haraldr.” Hemrod said. “Let’s try again?”

“Yeah.” Harry said hefting up the sword his dad had given him. “On three?”

“You’re actually going to swing at me this time?”

“Yes.”

“On three then.”

They counted down to three and then they began. Hemrod stared at Harry when the two of them began to circle each other and Harry didn’t immediately move to attack.

“I’m getting to it!”
“It’s not like you’re asking for my hand. You’re just trying to cut me in half.”

“How is that better?”

“Just do it unless you want Tyr to beat you into the dirt.”

Harry sighed and then lunged forward with a swing. Hemrod immediately parried and the fight began in earnest. He tried throughout the rest of the duel to be more offensive but the longer the fight went on the more Harry slid into what he was more comfortable with. And his failed attempts garnered Tyr’s attention. When the training session ended, most of the trainees were allowed to sit down, drink copious amounts of water, and rest. Harry, however, had a large hand placed on his shoulder.

“I don’t believe you’re done yet, Lokison.”

“Figured.”

“Let’s do a demonstration for your peers.”

“Whatever you think is best.”

“So now you’re interested in what I think is best? Fascinating.”

Ten minutes later Harry found himself leaning against Ron with six new bruises on his body and a head that was only slightly dizzy. All of the rest of the trainees were also lounging around, having watched Harry’s rousing defeat by Tyr with various levels of sympathy and amusement, Baldur being the one who’d enjoyed it the most. Harry really didn’t like that guy. He was essentially the buff version of Malfoy and Harry liked him less than he did Malfoy. It was at least slightly entertaining being Malfoy’s rival. Baldur was just boring.

Ron lifted up his jug to Harry’s lips and let Harry take a long sip. Hermione had her wand out and was carefully practicing her healing spells on his arm. After Harry’s injuries during the attack on New York by Voldemort, Hermione had committed to learning basic magical first aid and Harry had volunteered to be her test subject. She was already much better than Lockhart ever was.

“Haraldr.” Herdic said from his position of leaning against his twin brother Heimir. “Tyr’s punished you like that every week for the past month.”

“Yes. Yes he has.”

“Well why?” The Aesir pushed. “All you have to do is fight offensively, it’s not hard, that’s the easiest part!”

“Harry’s always been like that, defensive.” Ron said before Harry could spout off something snarky. “Long as I’ve known him he’s done that. Every time we played chess since we were little, his strategies always been more defense.”

Harry hadn’t even known that but Hermione nodded along like it was common knowledge.

“It’s true.” She said. “Even when Harry plays quidditch he prefers to fly away from conflict.”

“I’m the seeker! I’m supposed to be getting the snitch, not fighting bludgers.”

“Still.” She said shrugging. “Your favorite spell in the entire world is the disarming spell, everyone knows that.”
“It’s a good spell!” Harry argued.

“I’m not saying it isn’t. But you could do to be a bit more…aggressive.”

“Why aren’t you?” Hemrod asked. “Every time we duel, you always slide back into defense unless I remind you. Why?”

“I just like it okay! Why are all of you so focused on offense anyway?”

“Because that’s what a fight is.” Baldur cut in, snooty and superior. “If you’re not going to actually fight you might as well just stay home with the women.”

“What did you say about women?” Hermione asked turning to give her evil eye to the swordsman. Baldur hid his fear well.

“Strange mortal exceptions aside women don’t fight and neither does this illustrious prince.” Baldur scoffed. “It’s cowardice, that’s all it is.”

“I’m not a coward.” Harry said sitting up to glare at the blonde.

“Oh really? Said the tiny little prince who still can’t swing his sword. The All-Father is ashamed of you, certainly, for your cowardice. What sort of warrior has he allowed into our realm? A pitiful kind that’s for sure.”

“Not wanting to hurt people isn’t cowardice!” Harry shouted, finally standing up to glare down at the blonde. “I understand that this whole thing is a game to you, because you’ve never been in a fight and every time you’ve lifted your sword it’s only been for practice but I’m learning how to kill people! Every time I go back to earth, I go knowing that I might have to take someone’s life, that is something you’ve never had to do Baldur so just shut up!”

“It’s not a game! I’m training to be a warrior, to fight for Asgard!” Baldur said jumping up to meet him head to head.

“In what war?” Harry demanded. “You have this idea in your head that once you grow up Odin’s gonna declare war on someplace so you can go off and prove how great you are! That’s not going to happen. You live in peace, all you know is peace. That’s all you’re ever going to know you arrogant idiot!”

“Idiot? At least I’m not the one too cowardly to swing a sword.”

“So you’re not going to argue the arrogant part? At least you’re not a total moron.”

Baldur growled and wrenched around to punch Harry in the gut. Harry reacted immediately by letting his magic burst out of him and send Baldur sprawling to the ground. The warriors all rushed away as Baldur groaned and pushed himself up. Harry felt so suddenly frustrated with the warrior in front of him.

“I have spent my entire life being pushed around by people like you.” Harry said. “I have felt small and weak and useless because people more powerful than me decided that being kind was the same thing as being a coward. I’m not ever going to be like you, even if I never learn to sword fight right, I refuse to use my power and strength to hurt someone else, not when I can just stop them instead.”

Baldur looked ready to try and clock Harry again.

“Haraldr.” Harry winced and turned to see that Tyr had returned. “Baldur.”
Baldur stepped back from Harry.

“Baldur. You attempted to attack a fellow trainee outside of a duel. That is against the rules.” Tyr said. “You are aware that any attacks like this are grounds for expulsion yes?”

“Yes, Master Tyr.”

“Then I suggest you go home and consider whether you wish to remain here or not.” He said. “And what you will do to prove to me that you deserve to stay.”

Baldur nodded and bowed, very stiffly, before rushing away. Harry didn’t watch him go, instead he kept looking at Tyr. Tyr stared at him for a moment before nodding to himself.

“Hemrod. Take the rest of the trainees to the arena. Prince Loki has prepared a surprise for all of you this afternoon and I was to lead you there. Haraldr and I will be along soon.”

“Yes, Master Tyr.” Hemrod said. Harry looked over at his friends who seemed still unsure. Harry gave them a nod and they left him alone with Tyr. Soon the trainees had all left and Harry found himself alone with Tyr.

“Sit with me Haraldr.” The man motioned to the ground right close to where Harry had left his sword. Harry settled down a little awkwardly, well aware of the bruises his friend had not been able to heal. Tyr looked at him for a while, letting the tension build around them.

“I’m not sorry for defending myself.”

“I didn’t expect you to be. Baldur has been…argumentative with you since you arrived.” Tyr said. “I suspected you two would fight eventually.”

“Oh.”

“Do you know how I lost my hand?”

“Uhm…” Harry had no idea why that was relevant at all. “No?”

“It was bitten off.” Tyr said. “By a giant wolf.”

“I’m…sorry.” Harry said.

“Ah. Was my fault at the end of the day.” Tyr said. “I was young then, terribly young. Still just a warrior, no better than anyone else. Odin had been about to…banish someone, I can’t say who you understand, their name is illegal to even speak.”

“That’s fine.” Harry said.

“The person banished was second in command in Odin’s army. A greater warrior you’ll never find. They went rogue after a while, I have my suspicions as to why but only Odin knows for sure. Odin sent out the Valkyrie, his greatest force of warriors and they slaughtered them all.” Tyr said. “Odin went himself next and he took me and a few others with him. I don’t believe he wanted many witnesses for what was going to happen.”

Harry shifted a little awkwardly. Thor had mentioned the Valkyrie to him, as had Sif, both of them had been very impressed with the long-fabled group of women warriors. According to them, the warriors had died in a terrible battle and their practices has died with them. It had made him a bit sad to hear about it, but Tyr’s voice held true grief and pain.
“I’d volunteered to go.” Tyr said. “My wife was a Valkyrie. Lucky man that I was. Most Valkyrie preferred the company of each other but I managed to gain the heart of my beloved Brenna. I wanted to gain revenge, to help stop this monster before they destroyed any more of what I loved.”

“I’m sorry.” Harry said. “That you lost her.”

“It’s an old wound.” Tyr said. “Much of the grief has passed from me.”

“Still.” Harry said. “It’s not very fair is it?”

“Death rarely is.”

Harry found he couldn’t argue with that. Tyr took a moment to put aside the memory of his wife and continued.

“It was our job to capture their steed and lock it away. They rode on a giant wolf, terribly intelligent it was. While Odin talked with his second in command, trying to get them to surrender, we tricked the wolf into its chains. But I was arrogant, I was angry. I wanted to cause harm to the things that had taken so much from me. In my rage I didn’t notice the wolf gaining freedom and it got my hand in its jaws. From there things descended into madness and Odin ended up having to banish his second in command.”

“Why are you telling me about this?”

“All of Asgard has one fatal flaw.” Tyr said. “We had it then, when we were conquerors freshly betrayed by our greatest leaders, and we have it now in times of peace. It is our aggression.”

“That’s not…surprising?” Harry hazarded. “I’m sorry I’m not better at that I just…”

“No. No. Don’t apologize.” Tyr said. “Just listen to me.”

“Sorry.” Harry said if only to get the man to glare at him a little.

“Asgardians are reckless, we go into a fight uncaring of what damage our battles will cause, to ourselves and to others. We love to be aggressive, offensive, to fight. What happens after is someone else’s concern.” Tyr said. “After I lost my hand I had to relearn how to fight. I had to recover from my grief from Brenna’s death without being able to hold a blade like I used to. I could not even dress myself for her funeral.”

Harry didn’t dare to interrupt the man. Not now. He was beginning to suspect what was going on here. Or at least he had an inkling of an idea.

“It was incredibly humbling. I had to live with the consequences of my aggression, of my blood lust, every single day. Not to say that there were not others who lost things but I… I lost my dominate limb. There was not a moment during that time where I wasn’t reminded of my own losses, my failures. I eventually learned to be cautious, to be aware of what my actions would bring. It was that caution that gave me the edge to become one of the greatest warriors Asgard has.” Tyr said. “I saw that same caution in you that first day, you were careful not because you feared being hurt but because you didn’t wish to fail and you didn’t want to harm me.”

“I…well I knew you could defend yourself.”

“And yet when I gave you openings to attack me you never took them. You could have injured me, but you only disarmed me. And then immediately told me you’d done it wrong.”
“Well I did.”

“You disarmed me on your first attempt, something no student of mine has ever accomplished while using a sword too large for you, and you’re still insisting that you did it wrong?” Tyr demanded. “You and I both know that in a real fight your form doesn’t matter as much as your results. That doesn’t mean you skip your practices.”

“I know.” Harry said smiling a little. “I promise I practice every day with my dad and uncle. Three hours at least.”

“So your father’s told me.” Tyr said. “I’ve never had Loki this interested in swordsmanship you know? When he was my student, he couldn’t be bothered to put his magic texts down but now that you’re learning he’s suddenly more obsessed with it than anyone I know.”

“He can be a bit much.”

“I’m aware.” Tyr said. “I’ve known that boy since he was a tiny little thing. I was there when Odin took the boy in, helped clean him and feed him his first warm meal in norns knew how long.”

“Really?”

“Oh aye. Odin likes to pretend that he kept that secret so well but there were a few of us who knew.” Tyr said. “Never bothered me much, but I didn’t care for Loki’s less than stellar dedication to my classes.”

“Weren’t we talking about me?”

“Right.” Tyr said giving Harry a look. “Your caution is commendable. You’re careful Haraldr and you are kind. I understand the fear you have. You fear swinging too hard or too fast and doing harm that can’t be undone. You seek for nonviolent options because you fear what you would do if you chose violence. That sort of caution normally takes centuries for an aesir to learn, if they ever do.”

“If you understand then why are you being so hard on me?”

“Because there will come a time when you will have to choose violence. I don’t know the prophecy but your uncle has told me enough. This Tom Riddle is not going to let you disarm him and put him in jail, he won’t allowed himself to be put to sleep. No. He won’t stop until he is dead, that is how evil works.”

“I know that.” Harry said before suddenly feeling quite desperate. “I just…I don’t want to okay? I don’t want to kill him!”

“Why?” Tyr asked. “Did he not kill your mother? Has he not killed thousands? Perhaps even millions? Does he not deserve death?”

“I have no idea!” Harry said slamming his fist onto his knee. “I know he won’t stop killing people until he’s dead. I know that. I know I have to be the one to do. I know that he deserves this, that everyone deserves to live in a world that he’s not in, but it still feels…wrong.”

“Taking a life should never feel right.” Tyr told him making Harry look up and into his eyes. “I know, that’s rich coming from a man with a kill count higher than his age, but I mean it. It shouldn’t feel right, Haraldr Lokison.”

“Then how can I possibly do it?”
“Because not doing it would feel so impossibly worse.”

Tears stung his eyes and he looked back down at the ground. None of this was fair. Why couldn’t it be fair?

“You are incredibly wise for your age, but you are still young.” Tyr continued. “When you lift your blade, I know it will be in defense of those you love. Not for power, not for money, not for revenge. But because if you don’t use your strength then those weaker than you will suffer.”

“I don’t know if I can do it.” Harry said. “I wish it was easy, that I didn’t feel so bad about this, about my fate. I shouldn’t feel so conflicted, my dad isn’t. Neither are my friends or the Avengers. You’re not either. No one but me is.”

“And yet the norns chose you to do it.”

“What?”

“Has it not occurred to you that the reason the prophecy is about you, is because of who you are?”

“Well I am a demi-god.” Harry began.

“Not that. Plenty of beings have power. Why did the norns not send a prophecy for Frigga to weave, telling her that Odin was to destroy Riddle? Why did they not have your father, the god of magic, intervene in when the realm of magic was in danger? Why did they require it of you? A child?”

“I have power. Something Tom doesn’t have.” Harry said. “They said that in the prophecy. My dad and I think it might be soul magic. We’re trying to get a meeting with Eir to learn more about it.”

“A powerful force indeed and if anyone could teach you it would be her.” Tyr agreed. “But why not have Eir destroy Voldemort then? Eir is far more powerful than you, grown as she is, and she has been trained in many magics and martial arts. Why not call on the goddess of life to end the scourge of it? Why you?”

“I…I don’t know.”

“Yes, you do. You just said it stupid boy. The fact is, you are the only person who is struggling with killing him.” Tyr said. “You have such a strong heart, I’ve never seen the like in all my millennia.”

“How is my heart supposed to save the universe?”

“I don’t know.” Tyr said shrugging, almost as if he didn’t care not knowing. “But you will figure it out. And in the meantime, I’m going to teach you how to defend yourself and others. I believe however, that we are going to have to change some things.”

“What?”

“You need to learn how to fight back, how to be proactive.” Tyr said. “That is non-negotiable. Defense isn’t enough, not for a war. But it’s clear that you aren’t going to take to normal techniques either. It feels wrong to you, to your heart, and I’d be far stupider than I am to ignore that.”

“What are you saying?”

“It’s been a long time since this sort of thing has been practiced in Asgard. Thousands of years in fact.” Tyr said. “There were some Valkyrie who specialized in non-fatal forms of combat. They fought with the intent to down an opponent and keep them down without doing permanent damage.
It was taught only by the Valkyrie, something only a select few in their number knew. A method to capture enemies and those who would do harm to themselves without killing them.”

“If only the Valkyrie knew it, then how can I learn it?”

“Because it was a secret my beloved Brenna shared with me.” Tyr said, a bittersweet smile on his face. “I never forgot her lessons, the things she shared with me because she loved them and me, and now I’ll share them with you.”

“Thank you.” Harry said, his voice soft and awed. “Thank you, Master Tyr.”

“It is my honor.” Tyr said. “But you must promise me that you’ll put everything into these lessons. You mustn’t hold back.”

“I won’t. I swear.”

“Good boy.” He said. “Now, I believe your father is going to have a nervous breakdown if I don’t take you to the arena.”

“What surprise were you even talking about?”

“Your father mentioned to me how much you love that game of yours, quidditch was it?”

“Yeah?”

“I thought the recruits could learn something from a game that has balls that intentionally try to injure them. He brought a set of brooms for a game, to teach them situational awareness.”

“Really?” Harry said jumping up from the ground. “We’re going to play quidditch!”?

“That was the plan. Hopefully the recruits have figured out the brooms by now. Come on, we best get over there before they start without you.”

Harry gave Tyr a huge grin and held out his hand for the man to take. He pulled Tyr up and thanked him once more, both for the quidditch and for the promise of a new way to fight. Tyr slapped him on the back and told him not to worry his head about it. He was just doing his job.

Is this what teachers were supposed to be like?

Harry shook his head. Better not think about that too hard. There was quidditch to play after all.
Harry had requested that they not throw him a birthday party.

Loki had brought it up only two weeks before, wondering if his son had any traditions he wanted to share with him. Harry had gotten a slightly shifty look on his face before shaking his head.

“Can we not have a party? We just had the First Flame one and I don’t really want that many people around all focused on me. It’d be nice if I could spend part of the day with Ron and Hermione, but I don’t want a party.”

In truth Loki hadn’t liked the request. He’d missed out on 14 other birthdays after all. From 2-15 Loki had been off galivanting elsewhere. He wanted to try and cram as many birthday gits and celebrations into this July 31st to make up for it. Maybe it was the Asgardian in him, this desire to throw a huge party to celebrate his son’s 16th birthday. The Aesir after all searched for every opportunity to have a giant feast, any reason was a good enough reason if there was going to be mead involved.

But he knew his son would be extremely uncomfortable with a birthday party of that caliber and Loki wanted to respect that while also giving his son the party he deserved. So, he’d gone to the one person he trusted most to help.

“I was wondering when you’d come.”

“You understand of course, that this must remain between us.”

“I’m not gonna say a word. Might want to make sure the twins aren’t listening in though.”

Loki lifted up an eyebrow and turned to the doorway of Ron’s bedroom. To his surprise he saw oddly realistic ears sticking out from beneath the door.

“Fred. George. Actual privacy please.”

“Oh come on!” Fred whined.
“We can help! We’re great at mischievous plans!”

“And if this plan requires mischief you two will be the first I call.” Loki promised. “But for now, we need privacy.”

He snapped his fingers transporting the twins, and their spy equipment back to their shop. As an added bonus he also sent along a pranking spell he’d invented four centuries ago that they were sure to enjoy decoding. That should give them at least an hour.

“There.” He said. “Thank you for making time for me Ron.”

“Course Mr. Potter. You are here about Harry’s birthday, right?”

“He doesn’t want a party.”

“Sounds like him. I don’t think he’s ever had a good birthday party.” Ron said. “When he turned 14 his birthday got ruined by a Death Eater attack at the World Cup. Then when he was 15, he almost got killed by dementors and had to go on trial for under age magic.”

“Seriously?” Ron nodded gravely and Loki sighed. “Well that makes sense then. He asked that I don’t throw him a party.”

“But you want to.”

“Well, it’s his birthday. The second one I’ve gotten to spend with him.” Loki said. “Besides, Frigga and Odin are not pleased that they weren’t invited to his First Flame party, if I don’t do something for his birthday they’ll think I’m being petty.”

“You’re not?”

“Hush up.”

“A big party wouldn’t make him happy.” Ron said. “He doesn’t like being the center of attention either. It makes him paranoid.”

“So what? I just give him a gift and pretend it’s any other day?”

“I don’t know what you want me to say. I’ve only ever seen Harry comfortable at a party a few times in my life and all of them have been about Quidditch.”

“Quidditch?”

“Yeah, he was on the team 1st through 3rd year. 4th year we didn’t have Quidditch because we had the Triwizard tournament and last year was a mess.” Ron scowled. “But for the first three years he was Gryffindor’s seeker. Whenever we won a game we’d have huge parties and Harry would be right in the thick of it.”

Loki could well remember how crazy those parties had gotten when he’d been a student there. And with Fred and George also on the team…well he knew they’d likely gotten more intense. They were probably on par with an Asgardian Feast, at least energy wise. Feasts could last for weeks if Odin allowed and humans just didn’t have that sort of stamina.

“So we could play quidditch?”

“With who? Hermione doesn’t like brooms. So that just leaves me, you, Professor Lupin, and Sirius.
That’s not enough to make one full team. Even if we brought on Ginny and the twins.” Ron said. “Besides, Harry’d see what we were doing a mile away.”

“So we just don’t tell him.” Loki decided. “We just need to find 12 willing players, as we have you and Harry already, and get a game together for his birthday. Then we can have a party after to celebrate whichever team wins. And if I also so happen to have a few gifts for Harry then that’s merely a coincidence.”

“It’d have to be natural.” Ron decided. “The party has to seem spontaneous. And if we invite anyone from Hogwarts to come and play Harry’ll know it wasn’t.”

“I’ve got an idea.” Loki said.

And so the plan was born. With Ron and Hermione’s help, Loki had smuggled up two dozen enchanted brooms, top quality from Diagon Alley, to Asgard. Loki had convinced first Tyr and then the trainees that they absolutely had to learn how to fly on brooms and play this unnecessarily dangerous game. The trainees had been eager. Tyr had been less so until he saw the bludgers in action.

Next Loki had had to get the word out without having it reach his son’s ears. That was done by sending Thor out into Asgard to talk to the Aesir about this new wonderful game he’d learnt about on earth and how he hoped that he could bring it back to Asgard for everyone to see. Soon the entire royal city was buzzing with curiosity about a game that was played 50 feet in the air and had elements that were designed to injure you and send you plummeting to your death.

They were obsessed.

Convincing Odin to let him rearrange the Royal Arena had been far easier than he’d expected. Really Loki had only had to explain that he wanted to deface a millennia old edifice to the greatness of Asgard to trick Harry into celebrating his 16th birthday, and Odin asked what supplies he needed. He’d feared that Odin would deny him, force him to find an alternate location. The Royal Arena was only for the most official and sacred events after all. (Sacred to an Asgardian meant, of course something very, very bloody that likely involved a sword.)

Frigga had volunteered, or rather demanded she be allowed to prepare the celebration feast after. So preparations within the palace were done under Harry’s nose the two weeks before his birthday. It was all coming together and Loki knew they’d be ready to start it the day before his son’s birthday. From Harry’s perspective this would be a pick up quidditch game that had gained the attention of the aesi, who loved watching games like this, and the aesi, well known for their love of feasts, would insist on having a party to celebrate the winners.

Loki had no doubt his son would be the winner. None at all.

(He was also very willing to subtly hex any member of the opposing team if it looked like his son might need a bit of help.)

Harry would get to play the game he loved and have a party to celebrate how wonderful he was. Then they’d go back to earth and the next day, on Harry’s real birthday, they’d hold a small private event with everyone Harry was closest to in the tower. Just like Harry wanted.

Yes. The plan was perfect.

Loki could see no flaws in his plan whatsoever.
Except for perhaps one.

“Hello, Loki.” Odin said.

“Why are you here?”

“You expected me not to come down to see my one and only grandson play this mortal game?”

“I…yes!” Loki growled.

Below them Loki watched as Harry took six of the trainees to one end of the arena while Ron took the other six. There were some trainees who weren’t playing, those poor unfortunate souls were with Hermione, talking strategy for when they would be allowed to play. Loki had been afraid that Harry had gotten in trouble with Tyr, but based on the look in his son’s eyes it hadn’t been bad at all.

“Well that hardly seems fair.” Odin said sitting down next to Loki. Loki had taken this place in the arena because he intended to be the announcer for the game. Of course, he shouldn’t have been surprised that Odin would want to bother him. “I gave you permission to put up those hoops and enchant the arena floor so that it was softer. I should at least be allowed to see the results.”

“Fine.” Loki said, not interested in arguing. “You can see without speaking, you’re not a whale.”

“Loki. Is it truly so onerous to have a conversation with me?”

“You don’t have conversations, Odin. You give speeches and you make decrees. And I am done with those.”

“I cannot become better if you don’t allow me to try.” Odin said stiffly. “I know I failed you, I do. Just as I failed your mother and your brother and so many countless others. I want to fix it, Loki. You must give me that chance.”

“I must?” Loki repeated. “Still demanding things you aren’t owed, then?”

Loki didn’t look over to see the frustration in Odin’s figure. People were starting to stream into the arena in small groups. Word had gotten out, via Thor, that a game of quidditch was going to be played and the curiosity was rampant. Harry and Ron were both figuring out their teams’ strategies. It was a bit sad that Ron and Harry couldn’t be on the same team, but Ron was the only other child with actual playing experience.

They’d given the trainees flying lessons so that they wouldn’t fall to their deaths, but that is far different from playing in a real game.

“I don’t have to do anything Odin.” Loki said. “And I don’t see why I should. You have had millennia to be a good father to me, millennia. Why is it that you’re suddenly so interested in doing it now when I don’t need you.”

“Loki.”

“No. Shut up.” Loki said. “You wanted a conversation, then you have to actually listen to what I’m saying.”

“Very well. Say your piece.”

“You were never there Odin. Never.” Loki said. “I hadn’t realized how absent you were until I started taking care of Harry. I know, I do, that I tend to be a bit overzealous with my son. But
perhaps I’m just trying to be the exact opposite of you.”

“I was there,” Odin denied. “I was always in Asgard during your childhood.”

“That is not what I mean and you know it.” Loki said. “You didn’t teach me, you rebuked me. I spent my entire childhood grasping for mere seconds of your approval and I never got it. Never.”

“I approved of you. You are my son.”

“Well you never showed it. You never did anything to say that, you never even said it.” Loki said. “So forgive me for thinking you a liar.”

“What would you have had me do then? Hold your hand?” And why did he sound so dismissive? As if Loki wouldn’t have jumped over himself to hold his son’s hand if he needed it. As if Loki didn’t lose sleep at night wondering if his son had enough physical affection.

“Yes!” Loki said finally turning to glare at the man next to him. “What is so difficult to understand about that? If I’d needed a hug or my hand being held I would have wanted you to do it! That’s what it means to be a father.”

“I wanted to make you strong.”

“Then you should have showed me strength instead of dismissal.” Loki snapped. “Strength would have been creating a world where I felt safe and accepted. Strength would have been showing me how to be proud of who I was instead of ashamed. Strength would have been showing me how to forgive and gain forgiveness. You never showed me any of that.”

“Safe? Asgard is the safest realm in the nine!”

“Not for a frost giant runt.”

“Is that what your complaint is?” Odin asked. “I don’t see how I could have changed all of Asgard’s opinion on Frost Giants.”

“You are the All Father.” Loki said. “If anyone could have done something it would have been you. You and you alone had the power to change how the aesir see the other races but you chose the easy way out. Instead of changing the world to fit me, you changed me so I would fit with this world.”

Loki leaned forward, his elbows planted on his knees. His son was laughing, from this distance it was hard to tell why but that hardly mattered.

“You forced me into a shape that wasn’t my own without my consent and you lied to me about it for my entire life.” Loki said. “All because you didn’t care enough to create a world where I could be myself.”

“I wanted you to be safe.”

“Did you?” Loki asked. “Because all it did was drive me to madness. And now, I face the awful fate of knowing nothing about my own species. I don’t even know if my son’s inherited any frost giant blood or magic from me. If he did I wouldn’t even know how to help him. Eventually he’ll want to know about that part of himself, about that part of me. And I will have nothing to give him but stories of monsters beneath my bed.”

“I never wanted you to question your place with me.”
“You can tell me every day what you wanted and what you intended.” Loki snapped. “But that will never matter because it is not what you did. I have no interest in pandering to you now that you’re finally willing to change. I’m an adult man, I have a child of my own. You can’t turn back the clock and wipe away all the neglect Odin and I have very little reason to let you try.”

“So that’s it? You wish to end things like this? Leave your family fractured into pieces?”

“My family is on earth.” Loki said motioning down to his son. The boy was glowing with excitement. “I have a son, two shield brothers, and Thor I suppose. It is the family I made, the family I trust. I’m not the one who fractured Asgard’s royal family.”

“You would forsake your mother?”

“Frigga isn’t my mother. I don’t even know who my mother is. I’ll never know because I will never be welcome in Jotunheim long enough to figure it out.” Loki said. “Frigga is a good woman and I…I love her. But I can’t trust her, not knowing the lies she told me. Maybe one day I could forgive her, but that’s because I know she loves me. I don’t know that about you.”

“I do love you.”

“Words mean very little to the god of lies.” Loki said.

“Very well.” Odin said standing up. “Then I suppose I’ll just have to prove it.”

Loki watched the older god go, forcing himself not to hope. Carefully he stood up himself. The arena was filling quite quickly now with buzzing and excited Asgardians. Thor had even settled down with his friends, excited to see his first game. Loki cleared his throat and waved at Ron, the boy gave a thumbs up. Loki nodded, cast a spell to enhance the volume of his voice, and began.

“People of Asgard! You have come here today to witness a spectacle of epic proportions!” Loki began.

It was easy to pretend that Odin hadn’t once again gutted him. That he wasn’t bothered by a man who was doing too little for him much too late. What did it matter that Odin wanted to repair their relationship? Loki didn’t need him, didn’t need his forgiveness or support. Loki had become what he was today despite Odin’s actions and he didn’t need Odin bursting in and ruining that.

He didn’t.

The game began with the teams taking to the air, Ron going to guard one set of hoops while Hemrod went to the others. One of the trainees not on either team went up into the air to release the quaffle while Hermione stood in the center of the arena, ready to free the two bludgers and the snitch. When Loki finished counting down from three, the game began and he immediately jumped into announcer mode, forcing himself to forget about Odin.

All of this was for Harry at the end of the day. The feast Frigga had secretly ordered and prepared. The stories and praises Thor had shared with the Aesir. The hours of flying lessons Ron and Loki had given the trainees. All of it was for Harry, so that the boy could play the game he loved without worrying. A little pocket of joy, of light, in the dark times they lived in. A good memory for him to cling to when things got too hard.

The work had been worth it too. Seeing Harry whip around in the air like he’d been born to fly filled him with joy. Hearing the crowds cheer and gasp whenever he neatly dodged a bludger or feinted against another player made Loki want to shout, to exalt. Had Odin ever felt this way about Loki? Or even about Thor? Or had he always held himself too distant to truly revel in his sons’
accomplishments?

The game was exciting, certainly. The trainees were just good enough on their brooms to not fall off and be a hazard to themselves. They were also bad enough that it added a level of danger and tension that kept the aesi on the edge of their seats. Loki’s commentary and Hermione’s willingness to ensure that the point counter was kept up to date helped as well.

Whenever Ron blocked a shot from the quaffle or, one of the trainees hit a bludger there were shouts and waving of fists. Every time points were scored the cheers were deafening. This was the sort of entertainment Asgardians were born for. It involved all of their favorite things; competition and the constant threat of injury. Harry was an absolutely beautiful player too. Loki had to keep himself from focusing all of his narration on his son, and his skills with a broom. There were, after all, 13 other people playing and he knew too well what favoritism did to someone.

“And that is 10 points for Sigrun!” Loki shouted when Ron failed to block a quaffle. Harry’s team had named themselves Sigrun and Ron’s was named Betri. They’d even gone so far as to change the color of the shirts they were wearing to match their team’s hastily chosen colors. Sigrun was blue and Betri was orange. “That makes the total points 120 for Sigrun and 110 for Betri! We are neck and neck here! And still no sign of the snitch anywhere!”

It took an hour for the snitch to appear and when it did Harry and the other seeker, Herdic, dived for it at the same time. The snitch had been flitting around near to the ground, close to the exit of the arena. Loki continued to narrate as the two fliers sped towards the stone floor. Herdic pulled up ten feet from the ground to avoid a collision, but Harry just flattened himself closer to his broom and kept going.

The snitch flew up towards the walls of the arena, the walls were about ten feet tall and held up the weight of the seats and the aesi that occupied them. The walls had been carved from granite and were comprised of thick cubes that were stuck together with magic. The snitch flew along the slightly curved walls and Harry moved to follow. He twisted down the concave curve, mere inches from the stone wall. The snitch continued to flit and flicker out of reach.

Asgardians were screaming, nearly throwing themselves off the wall to get a good look at the insane demi-god. The snitch flew into the crowds and they dove back, to give Harry room for his pursuit. The beaters of Ron’s team sent bludgers at Harry, that Harry dodged by pulling up at a 90 degree angle. The bludgers banged into the stone seats, denting them and sending rock shards into the air.

Harry dove to the right as the bludgers got up to fly back into the game. He reoriented himself towards the snitch and then…

Let go of his broom.

He began to fall at high speeds towards the snitch and to the ground 30 feet below. The crowds screamed again, and then Harry held out a hand and summoned his broom. The broom flew down and caught Harry mere feet from the ground, slowing his descent so that he didn’t splatter into the earth. Harry instead rolled on the ground a few times before forcing himself up.

Silence.

Harry held up his hand and revealed the weakly fluttering snitch.

“And he’s done it! Haraldr Lokison has captured snitch for a total of 150 points! Team Sigrun wins!”
The resulting cheers were deafening.

Loki fell back into his seat and tried to catch his breath. That child was going to be the death of him.
Happy Birthday Dear Harry

Chapter Summary

A Tradition is shared and a birthday celebrated.

Chapter Notes

Hey everyone!! Thanks so much for the brilliant comments! I'm glad you all enjoyed the Quidditch! I skipped over the feast in Asgard but just know everyone ate a lot of food and had fun!

11:56

Harry sat huddled on the ground, blanket around his shoulders, and knees nearly touching the floor to ceiling window he was sitting in front of. They’d gotten back stupidly late from Asgard, really less than an hour before. The feast had been unexpected and fantastic. He’d always enjoyed celebrating Quidditch wins and that win had really been something. He hadn’t realized how much he’d missed the game until he had an opportunity to play it again without Umbridge bothering him.

His body felt pleasantly sore and he was certainly exhausted. His body floated along as he looked out the window and onto the night life of New York City and he knew he should get up and go to his bed. But a tradition was a tradition.

11:57

He was about to turn 16.

He considered what he’d be doing right then if he’d not listened to Ron when he’d suggested that Harry actually go and punch his dad. He would probably be in that tiny room in Privet Drive. He’d be starving certainly, unaware of how much food he needed to consume and his aunt and uncle unwilling to feed him enough for a normal human regardless. Maybe Dumbledore would have picked him up by now, taking him to Grimmauld Place or The Burrow to stay as a ‘gift’ for behaving himself.

He considered all of the good things that had come into his life. Sirius’ rescue. Thor’s support. Tyr’s teachings. His dad’s love. Even the tattoo on his wrist that connected him with Ron and Hermione. He wouldn’t have had any of those things, well except for the tattoo, if he’d followed along with Dumbledore’s plans. If he hadn’t made a choice for himself. His dad would still be alone here in New York, thinking he failed to save him, and Sirius would be alone in that awful fog world.

Harry felt at peace sitting there. Maybe it was the exhaustion. It probably was. But the stress and anger he’d felt before the Quidditch game had faded. His worries over his ability to be the person the world needed him to be had been set aside. Things were good. He’d made the right choice running
to New York.

11:58

“Starlight?”

“Hey dad.” Harry said, his voice raspy after an hour of silence. His dad wandered into the room. The darkness chased away by a bauble of light he conjured.

“What are you doing up? A nightmare?”

“No. I haven’t gone to bed yet.”

“Whyever not? You have to be tired after today.”

“It’s…personal.”

“Oh?” His dad sat down next to him, and shifted around so that he was looking at him, elbow planted on a propped up knee and his face resting in the raised hand.

“Normally I’m by myself on my birthday.” Harry said. “No one…made a big deal of it when I was growing up and Ron and Hermione could send stuff on my birthday, but I was still alone.”

“Are you feeling overwhelmed? I promise you tomorrow is going to be very casual.”

“No. I just have a tradition I guess.” Harry said. “I wait up till midnight and then…then I sing happy birthday cause then someone did you know?”

His cheeks turned very red at that and he looked immediately out the window to hide his mortification. How sad was it that he’d never had anyone sing him Happy Birthday before, that he always had to do it for himself. Usually locked in a room while feeling a bit too hungry and angry with the world.

“I see.” His dad said, his voice subdued. “Would you like me to go then?”

“What? No.” Harry said. “You can stay.”

11:59

“So, you sing it right at midnight?”

“Yep.” Harry said. “Right when the clock strikes 12.”

“Just one verse?”

“Any more would be a bit sad don’t you think?”

As if this wasn’t already sad enough. Harry licked his lips and took in a deep breath.

“Have you ever visited mum?”

“What?”
“Her grave? People bring flowers to graves.” Harry said, as if his dad didn’t know. “I’ve never been, I don’t even know where it is.”

“I’ve never gone there myself.” His dad said. “But I know where it is. I can take you there if you’d like.”

“How can we go now?” Harry asked, feeling bold.

“Now?”

“If we go now, we might make it before…”

Never mind that according to time zones midnight had already happened in Britain. That wasn’t the point. The point was that Harry wanted to spend his birthday, the part he’d celebrated regularly by himself for most of his life, with his parents. His dad sniffed and then snapped his fingers. Shoes were magicked onto Harry’s feet along with a warm jacket. Then his dad pulled him to his side and Harry immediately hugged him. Magic pulled them along and a moment later Harry found himself standing in a graveyard, or right outside the gates of one.

Harry straightened his shoulders and stepped away from his dad. But not so far that he couldn’t still hold the man’s hand. Carefully they pushed open the gate together. It was early in the morning, a little bit before the sun would rise but Harry pretended that it was dark and murky. They walked through the aisles of grave stones, looking for the right one. They found it soon enough. A large rectangular stone that was so white it glowed in the starlight.

Harry and Loki both paused in front of the grave and read the words written on it.

*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.*

Carefully they sat down together, the blanket that Harry had been wearing as a cape, placed beneath them to protect them from the freezing morning dew.

12:00

“Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday to you. Happy birthday dear Harry.” His dad sang, while holding Harry to his side. He wasn’t a bad singer surprisingly, although his voice was thick and clogged. “Happy birthday to you.”

“Thanks.”

“Don’t thank me for that Starlight.”

“Not that…I mean coming here.” Harry said. “It’s hard.”

“I shouldn’t have waited so long. Your mother is likely very cross with me.”

“Is she though?” Harry asked. “Can she…Where is she?”

“I don’t know exactly where she is.” His dad said after a few moments of contemplation. “No one knows what happens to souls that pass on. All we know is that the soul departs and that its energy goes somewhere. Since souls are so immutable it’s easy to guess that wherever they go, they remain the same. Wherever your mother is, whatever the afterlife is, she’s still the woman who loved us both so much.”
“Oh.”

To think that they were sitting what was essentially on top of his mother. That what remained of his mum in this existence was laying cold under the ground. Tears stung his eyes and immediately started running down his cheeks. He missed her so much it ached. He didn’t even know why he missed her. He had no memories of her except for the one where she was begging for her life. He didn’t know her. And yet the pain lingered and festered.

His breath hitched and his dad pulled him a bit closer. A sob crawled up out of his throat, painful and jagged. He looked at the nearly glowing gravestone and watched as it became blurry through his tears.

“Oh Starlight.” His dad said. “Come here. It’s alright.”

But it wasn’t alright. It wasn’t. His dad gathered him up, pulling him to his chest so that he could cry without anyone seeing and began to pet his hair in an attempt to soothe him. Harry just cried. He cried like he had after seeing Sirius fall through the veil. Like he had when he’d carried Cedric’s body back to Hogwarts. He cried and cried and cried.

12:23

“Feeling better?”

“Not really.”

“It’s okay to miss her.”

“I didn’t even get to know her. That’s not okay dad. It’s not.”

“No. I don’t suppose it is.”

12:31

“Your mother didn’t like flowers.”

“She didn’t?”

“No. Hated them. Came from being named Lily. She received far too many plant based gifts over the years, gave her a complex.”

“And who was giving her those gifts?”

“I’ve no idea what you’re implying.

12:37

“What was your wedding like? Was it…nice?”

“Small. Your mother didn’t want to trouble anyone with a big party. Besides that we had so few people to invite. Her parents were dead and so were mine. We mostly had the other Marauders and
the Order to ask to come and plenty of them were on missions.”

“Did you like it?”

“I can’t remember ever being happier.”

“Really?”

“She looked so terribly radiant in that dress. She outshone every goddess I’ve ever known and I could feel her love for me. Nothing compared.”

12:42

“Of course, your mother didn’t approve of my plans.”

“It was just a kid’s broom.”

“That’s what I said! I didn’t account for your…adventurous spirit or for the welfare of our cat.”

“We had a cat?”

“Yes. It’s a tradition from Asgard to give a newlywed couple a cat. Normally it would be the job of the in laws to gift it but…well it wasn’t hard to find a good cat for our home. A handsome strapping thing it was, more fluff than actual body. It a…it died that night I believe.”

“Oh. What was its name?”

“Don’t tell your uncle but I named it Thor. It was blonde and far too eager to please.”

12:49

“Her favorite food was white chocolate. Couldn’t get enough of the stuff. Whenever we fought, I had to get pounds of it just to get her to look at me again.”

“Pounds?”

“I’m pretty sure she was just teasing me to see how much chocolate I would actually buy.”

“And how much was that?”

“Let’s just say I made Honeydukes run out of stock a few times.”

12:56

“We lived near here. Our home was just a few streets down, under the fidelus. It was perfect Harry. Your mother and I painted the walls by hand, I even learnt to use a few tools to help repair our furniture.”

“Why didn’t you just use magic?”

“We both wanted it to be…real and solid. Something held together by our hands and not just our
minds. We wanted to put care into it. So that you could feel our love in every wall and dish.”

“It sounds nice.”

“It was lovely. I think it might be nice to go back, fix it up.”

“Really? Won’t that hurt?”

“That place was my first true home, I built it with my hands and with Lily by my side. I miss it, I miss sleeping in my room and cooking in my kitchen. I miss dancing in the living room to silly songs. I miss that life.” Loki said. “Besides. It’s not like I can live with Stark forever, eventually the man is going to pass on of old age and then where will I be?”

“You’re going to stay on earth that long? What about Asgard?”

“I’ll visit certainly.” Loki said. “For Thor at least. But Earth is my home now and no matter what happens I’m not ever leaving it again.”

1:10

“I nearly fainted three times when Lily was in labor with you. I did faint when her water broke.”

“Dad.”

“What? She was giving birth to the first demigod in millennium, forgive me for being stressed!”

“I’m pretty sure mum needed you.”

“Nonsense, she had Alice there.”

“Alice?”

“Yes. Alice Longbottom, one of her best friends. She was the maid of honor out our wedding.”

“You knew Neville’s parents?”

“I can’t believe they named their child Neville. Have you met them?”

“Once. In St. Mungo’s. They’ve been there since Mum died.”

“What happened?”

“Bellatrix got ‘em. The Cruciatu. Nev visits them a lot but they…they’re not really there.”

“I see.”

1:38

“Your mother and I first met on the train to Hogwarts you know. She was beautiful even then. Although more in the ‘don’t mess with me I will kick you in between the legs’ sort of way.”

“Did she ever stop looking like that?”
“About the time she agreed to start dating me.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever looked like that.”

“Oh, trust me Starlight. You have.”

3:49

“I wish I could talk to her. Ask her things.”

“You can ask me things.”

“I know but…You keep saying I’m so much like her and I want to know what she would do you know? Because I don’t know what I’m doing.”

“You mother wasn’t all knowing you know. She was much smarter than me, don’t get me wrong, but she wasn’t some perfect being. She had flaws and faults. I loved them just as much as I loved everything else about her.”

“So, do you think she could have helped me?”

“I can’t think a better person for you to follow.”

4:21

“My legs are starting to hurt.”

“Do you want to head back?”

“Not really. It’s…it’s nice here. Being near mum.”

“Harry, you’re always with her. She left her magic with you, to carry with you. You’ve never been without your mother.”

“I guess. But…this is where she is.”

“We can visit as often as you’d like. Even during the school year. You say the word and I’ll sneak you away to Godric’s Hollow.”

“But without flowers, right?”

“We’ll bring her some chocolate.”

4:58

“I love you mum.”

“I adore you Lily.”

“We’ll be back soon. I promise.”
They appeared back in the tower, Harry felt exhausted. His dad half carried him to his bed, and used magic to change Harry into some pajamas. Harry let his dad tuck him in, even going so far as to place a kiss on his forehead. He was too tired to scrunch his face up in disgust.

“Thanks for taking me, dad.”

“Of course, Starlight.”

“I love you.”

“I love you too.” Another kiss on his head. “Now get some sleep. I’ll wake you for a late breakfast.”

Harry snuggled into his bed and let his exhaustion finally pull him under. He dreamt of laughter, laughter that was so different from the screams the dementors let him hear and yet he knew to be from the same source. He dreamt of two people dancing in a sunlit kitchen and he dreamt of a yellow cat with a tail perfect for tugging on.

10:00

“WAKE UP PUP!”

“Wha-”

Harry opened his eyes to see that Sirius was literally bouncing on his bed. Harry groaned and flipped around so that he could hide his face in his pillow. Sirius clearly didn’t like being ignored because Harry heard him promise Harry that he’d regret it. The next thing he knew there were four paws pressing down on his back and legs while a dog howled like his life depended on it. Harry growled and flipped around, using his godly strength he picked up the dog and tossed it.

Sirius transformed back into a human and landed on his feet.

“Come on, get out of bed! You can’t sleep the whole day away.”

“Just watch me.” Harry fell back into his bed, intent on falling back asleep. Or at least pretending too.

“Oh no you don’t. Levicorpus.”

Harry yelped as magic took him off the bed, his blanket falling off of him and landing half on the bed and half on the floor.

“Put me down!”

“Never!”

Sirius laughed as he dragged Harry through the air, out of his bedroom, up the stairs, and towards the penthouse. Harry tried to break free of the spell, but as he was half asleep and annoyed, he didn’t have much success. When they got to the penthouse it was to the Avengers, the Grangers, and his dad all lounging around. Remus was also there, but he was sipping tea and chatting with Bruce while pretending that he couldn’t see Harry’s dilemma.
“The birthday boy is here!”

“I hate you.”

“I love you too pup!”

With that Sirius placed a wet kiss on his cheek, complete with smacking sound and deposited him on a chair, right next to Hermione. Harry grumbled under his breath, but his dad just slid a plate full of food towards him and Harry’s anger was appeased in the face of french toast.

“Good morning.” Tony said. “We were just talking about your quidditch game yesterday. We were sad to miss it.”

“Not like it was planned or anything.” Harry said by way of an apology. “When I have my next game, you all can come.”

“You should have seen it though.” Thor crooned. “His flying was amazing! The way he dodged those bludgers!”

“Thor. Trust me.” Remus said. “I’ve seen plenty of Harry’s games. Nothing he did in Asgard can top what he did in his third year.”

“He literally jumped off his broom and plummeted to the ground to catch the snitch.”

“Harry once, mid game, cast a patronous one of the most difficult spells a wizard can cast, at a dementor that had wandered onto the field and then he caught the snitch.” It had actually been Malfoy under a cloak, but Harry didn’t feel like correcting Remus.

“Dementors?” His dad demanded.

“My fault!” Sirius sang. “I’d just escaped Azkaban and everyone thought I was going to break into Hogwarts and slit Harry’s throat while he slept. They sent the dementors to guard the school.”

“It was awful.” Harry said. “Hated those things. Had Remus teach me the patronous just so I could make them go away.”

“What are dementors?” Steve asked, intrigued.

“Dark magical creatures. You can’t see ‘em if you don’t have magic yourself.” Sirius said. “But they feed off of human misery. Their mere presence forces anyone in the vicinity to relive their worst memories in hyper detail. If you’re further away you’ll just feel cold and dreadful. Too close and they’ll give you the kiss.”

“The kiss.” Hermione piped up before anyone could ask. “Is when the dementor literally eats your soul and leaves you a mindless husk.”

“And they sent those things to guard a school?” Clint demanded.

“Minister Fudge’s idea.” Harry told them. “Wanted to be seen as ‘doing something’ about Sirius.”

“I can’t count the number of students I had to give chocolate to over the year.” Remus said. “Chocolate gives people a bit of immunity from a dementor’s influence. I carried about a thousand bars in my robes just to give out to the kids who were especially weak to it.”

“Did it even work? Keep the kids safe from the terrifying Sirius Black?” Natasha asked, wryly looking at Sirius.
“Hell no. I’d been dealing with those bitches for over a decade.” Sirius said, puffing out his chest in pride. “I just stayed in my dog form mostly and they left me alone.”

“It’s how he got around the castle. Gave all of us about ten heart attacks.” Hermione finished.

“Are we going to keep talking about this?” Harry asked, looking up from his half-eaten plate.

“Are you alright?” Thor asked.

“Just thinking.” Harry admitted. “About all the kids that got hurt from that. I mean it was bad for me. The dementors made me faint, cause of the scar and all.”

“Your scar hurt around dementors? Why would it do that?” His dad asked.

“No idea, just hurts.”

“Hmm.”

“You’re concerned about the other kids?” Remus asked. “Don’t worry, influence from a dementor fades after a few months. All of the kids should have recovered completely over the summer.”

“Right well.” Harry said. “That’s good.”

He continued to think though, even as the conversation flowed onward. Last night he’d considered his choice at the beginning of the summer. A choice that Dumbledore hadn’t wanted him to make, a choice Dumbledore had done everything in his power to hide. But it hadn’t mattered, Harry had broken free.

Harry had found a third choice.

The Americans had found a third choice in him too. They wanted to fight Voldemort but they didn’t want to play Dumbledore’s games. The Avengers had found a third option. Not Voldemort, Not Dumbledore. Harry. Harry was the third option in this war. People who wanted what was right and didn’t want to submit to Dumbledore’s manipulations.

But there were plenty of people who couldn’t make that choice because they didn’t know that Harry was no longer Dumbledore’s lacky.

“Is it time for gifts?” His dad asked. “All this heavy talk has distracted us from why we’re all here. It’s my son’s birthday.”

Harry filed away his thoughts for later. He needed to talk to Ron and Hermione about it before he even attempted to come up with a plan. But he had a good feeling that his friends would be all over it.

“Gifts!” Thor shouted. “Let’s get out the gifts!”

Harry pushed away his now empty plate and watched as everyone in the room pulled out wrapped gifts from behind their backs or beneath their chairs. Harry looked over at his dad and gave him a smile.

Happy Birthday to him.
The summer is coming to an end and none of the Avengers are looking forward to saying goodbye to the magic users.

Woo! Last week's update was terribly bittersweet, here's a chapter that's mostly sweet.

“So, I bought property.”

“We’re not playing Monopoly right now Tony.” Steve said, not looking up from his plate.


“And you’re telling us about this why?” Natasha asked.

“If you’d stop interrupting me I’d tell you.”

“Fine fine.” Bruce said. “Tell us about this property.”

“It’s beautiful guys, not my normal aesthetic but good.” Tony began. “Tudor Style Mansion practically. Ancient thing, I bought it at the beginning of the summer but it hasn’t been ready until now. Had to do a lot of refurbishments on it to make it habitable while also keeping in with the… historical aspects. I dunno one of my lawyers keeps track of all of that.”

“Tony. You’re monologuing.” Clint warned.

“Right. You know how Loki, Hermione, and Harry are packing up to go to Scotland in a week?”

They knew that. Thor had been very sad to see the signs of his departing brother and nephew. Not to mention the disappearance of Lady Hermione. The Grangers had settled into New York well. Their dentistry business, which serviced workers at Stark Industries was booming and they had already made plenty of friends. Whatever tension the adults had felt at being there had faded and they felt comfortable enough greeting the heroes when they saw each other while also having more than enough to do on their own.

They were also the only adults not to be extremely disappointed that the magic users were leaving. This would be the sixth time they would see their child off for boarding school and they knew how to handle it. Thor and the rest of the Avengers had gotten used to Harry being around. To having Remus and Sirius causing trouble. And they’d all grown to love Loki and accept him. No one was happy about the magic users leaving for Hogwarts.

“What about it?” Thor asked.
“Well I might have…asked a little trickster if he knew the location of Hogwarts, like on a regular map.” Tony said. “And he did. The nearest village to the school is Hogsmeade which is an all magic village so no one but Thor is allowed inside. Like literally, if we tried to go in there we’d just get magicked back before we got close.”

“We already know about Hogsmeade.” Bruce said.

“But did you know that about 20 miles away from Hogsmeade there’s a quaint little Scottish village that just so happened to be home to a Mansion that used to belong to some lord or king or something and I bought it?”

“Tony.” Thor said grinning.

“Sirius helped me with the final touches.” Tony said. “We put in a doorway in the penthouse that when you open it leads to the entryway of the mansion. We’ll still live here in New York for security purposes but there’s nothing saying we can’t pop over to Scotland occasionally and then use one of the specially made portkeys that’ll take us to the castle gates. Maybe we can visit for Harry’s games.”

“Tony.” Clint said. “You old sap.”

“Yeah. Yeah whatever. I just figured that since all of you were going to be so glum about it that I might as well do something. Not like I’m going to miss Harry or Hermione or anything.”

“But you said you bought the house months ago.”

“I think ahead.” Tony mumbled. “For Steve. He’s too emotional you know.”

“Right.” Steve said. “Well thank you Tony, I appreciate you taking into account my sentimentality.”

“And mine.” Thor said. “I was going to miss my nephew terribly.”

“Yeah. Don’t cry about it or anything.”

They all pretended to believe Tony, well used to his inability to admit to having ‘feelings’. Personally, Thor thought it was adorable. They all knew that Tony was going to be the worst about missing the kids. He’d spent a lot of time with Hermione in the lab, teaching her engineering and physics and in return being taught a voracious amount of magical theory. Two insane babbling geniuses melding together like alchemy.

Tony himself had been brighter since having Hermione around. The billionaire had adored having a person around who had crazy ideas and questions and had no hesitation in testing them out with Tony. The amount of times they’d seen the two experimenters with singed hair from a test gone wrong (and occasionally one gone right) was too numerous to count. Thor wouldn’t be surprised if Tony had bought that Scottish Mansion just to avoid not being able to see his little mentee.

The Grangers had approved of it, they preferred it over their daughter wielding a battle axe for reasons Thor couldn’t comprehend. Hermione was wonderful with an axe. Of course, she had to cast a spell to lighten it for her slightly since Asgardian metals were quite dense for humans but beyond that she used it wonderfully. A fearsome warrior indeed.

“Has it really been an entire summer?” Clint asked.

“August went by quickly.” Natasha agreed. “I don’t think we’ve ever been this busy between fights before. Normally we fight something, go back to the tower and…”
“Speak for yourself.” Tony said. “I have a real job to go to.”

“You gave the real job to your girlfriend.”

“Not because she was my girlfriend but because she’s amazing. I don’t like the nepotism accusation! Besides I may not be CEO but I still am the face of the company and I do a lot of R&D. The rest of you just relax on my dime.”

“Yes Tony.” Steve said. “We know we owe you a lot. But Nat’s got a point, we didn’t spend much time with each other outside of training and fights.”

“Yeah well…” Tony shrugged. “Didn’t seem like something we wanted to do.”

“I’m glad we’ve changed.” Thor decided. “We are shield brothers now, not just a team.”

And that was certainly true. While they did not dislike each other before Harry’s arrival they also had very little tying them together. They had the invasion of New York and keeping an eye on Loki as the two reasons they even lived together in the same place. Now that Loki didn’t require keeping an eye on, his innocence and sincerity proven beyond a doubt and trust having been gained, there should have even been less reason for them to talk.

Steve had once expressed a desire to leave and find a place on his own. Clint and Natasha had in the beginning mentioned needing to return to work with SHIELD. Bruce, ever the most slippery, had tried to escape multiple times with various excuses. Even Thor had wondered if it would be better for him to leave this team and go spend more time with Jane.

By all rights, they shouldn’t even be together in the penthouse. Before Harry they used it so rarely, preferring to spend time by themselves. But Tony had volunteered his living space as a team gathering site and it had become comfortable. There were video games to play and everyone’s favorite snacks stored in the kitchen. Things felt comfortable and homey in a way Thor had never expected to find on earth and it was thanks to the strong bonds he had with these brilliant humans.

“What exactly is a shield brother?” Bruce asked.

“Oh I can answer that!” Hermione piped up.

“Hey!” Tony said brightly. “When did you get up here Elphaba?”

“Just now.” She said. “I came to remind you we have lab time scheduled in an hour. You were late last time.”

“Yeah, I’m sorry about that. I promise I won’t forget.”

“Why do you know what a shield brother is?” Clint asked.

“I read about it obviously.” She said. “And…well, if you promise not to tell my parents I might have a bit more practical knowledge as well.”

“Already been sworn to secrecy kid you know that.” Hermione looked pointedly at everyone else who nodded and promised not to mention it with varying degrees of sincerity. Then she nodded and walked over while rolling up her sleeve, she revealed her bare wrist to show an intricate knotted mark. Marks that Thor would know anywhere.

“This is a mark of…brotherhood you could say.” She said. “They’re magical tattoos you get when you promise to be another person’s shield brother or sister. It’s a bond, sort of like family, but
different. It’s one you chose and one that’s build on experiences not blood. It’s a symbol of love and affection and trust.”

“And you have one?”

“Of course, I have one.” She sniffed, letting her arm fall back and her sleeve slip down covering the mark. “When Harry found out his dad was…well Loki, he was frightened and confused. Had no idea what to do or who to be. Me and Ron wanted to make sure he knew that no matter what he had us. We were his family and we’d be by his side. So we did the little ceremony and got our marks.”

“That was very kind of you.” Thor said.

“Practical.” She corrected. “That way anytime Harry gets the stupid idea that he should just go out on his own he has a reminder as to why that’s a terrible idea inked in his skin. And when he went to New York, we’d be with him in spirit.”

“So, when Thor says that we’re shield brothers…?” Steve pushed.

“That’s sort of personal. Ron, Harry, and I just…knew I suppose. We didn’t get along at first but now there’s no doubt that’s what we are. If you all have a bond like that then eventually you’ll know too.”

“She’s correct.” Thor agreed. “It’s not a sentiment declared lightly. I make it because…I feel at home with you all here. I had been afraid that my time on earth would be lonely, even with Jane and my other friends, that I would miss my home and my people. Now I am hardly ever homesick because I have friends like you.”

Suddenly based on the mystified looks on some of his friends faces’ Thor realized he might have misstepped.

“It’s fine if you don’t feel the same.” Thor said, reassured. “I know you are my friends and that is what is important.”

“How do you get one of those tattoos?” Tony asked, looking at Hermione. “There’s no blood sacrifice or anything is there? I don’t want blood on my 1000 dollar carpet.”

“Tony…” Thor said.

“Hey, I might be…allergic to emotions but that doesn’t mean I can’t…what’s the ritual?”

“Oh, it’s simple!” Hermione said. “You just raise your hand, state your true name and declare that you are a shield brother or sister to however many other people are participating in the ceremony. Then your magic binds you…although since most of you don’t have magic I think you’d have to get a magic user to help facilitate.”

“That simple?” Clint murmured. “Seems like the sort of thing you’d need a potion or something for.”

“No. Sometimes the best magic is just the simplest.” Hermione said. “Now. Harry and I were…working on something, so I’ll see you in an hour Mr. Stark.”

“For the last time Elphie! It’s Tony.”

“Whatever you say Mr. Stark.” And then with a smirk that was far from innocent the girl genius left, going back down the elevator to work on projects unknown.
“What do you think the kids are working on anyway?” Steve asked. “Every time I come in the room they freeze.”

“Me too.” Bruce said. “Must be something exciting.”

“I know Remus knows what it is.” Natasha said. “Cornered him about it but he slipped away before giving it up. He doesn’t seem worried though, I doubt it’s dangerous.”

“Do you think it’s got anything to do with why their breath smelt like plant matter last week?” Clint asked. “I noticed it and pointed it out and Harry lied and said it was a new tea they were drinking.”

“Somebody needs to teach that kid a better poker face.” Steve said. “I don’t support lying but…really it’s getting sort of sad at this point.”

“I’ll get on it.” Nat said. “Give him some pointers before he leaves for school.”

The conversation continued between them, eating brunch and gossiping like old women together. None of them brought up the shield brother thing again but Thor suspected it was on all of their minds. It was certainly on his mind. Thor had of course done this ritual before, with the Warrior Three and Sif. It was a bond he still felt, and the mark rested on his chest for evermore. But Thor felt far less proud of the mark as of late. It was a mark he had formed without Loki, an exclusion he wanted to claim was accidental but he knew better. He’d been young and foolish and cruel.

Loki had found mortals to form that bond with, his Marauders, but that didn’t change that Thor had excluded Loki from that sort of bond for centuries beforehand. And now here he was in the same exact situation, a team he trusted and loved was considering that next step and they were doing it without Loki.

Thor wouldn’t allow it to happen twice. He wouldn’t. Loki was, in a twisted sort of way, the person who had brought them together. First by his invasion and subsequent sentencing and again with his son and his willingness to accept their help fighting Voldemort and his kin. Excluding Loki would be excluding an important part of their history and of Thor’s family here on earth.

Tony left the brunch first, going down to his lab to get to work on his techno-magical experiments with Hermione. Slowly the others began to disperse too for their own personal tasks. Thor himself wandered away from the penthouse and down to the floor that he shared with Loki and Harry. Loki was in Scotland today, the man had some ‘training’ to do that was required of new instructors at the school that would keep him away for a few days. In order to keep up the ruse that he was a teacher and not Harry’s father he wouldn’t be able to spend much time here in New York in the next week. So far as Thor knew, Harry was now by himself with Hermione gone to work with Tony. Perhaps Thor could tempt him into a training session or to play a game with him that afternoon. It would be a good way to spend the day Thor thought. He was after all still competing for title of best uncle against Black and any little bit helped right?

Thor stepped out of the elevator and began making his way towards his nephew’s room. To his confusion he heard a strange rustling and turned away from the hallway that led to the bedrooms and went to the small living room that was connected to their personal kitchen. Thor carefully reached for his hammer, ready to use it if someone was breaking into the tower. He pressed his back along the wall and quietly slunk forward towards the strange noises.

He turned the corner and paused at the sight before him.
Thor knew ravens. His father used to breed them. His favorites, Huginn and Muninn, had spent a long time on Odin’s shoulders acting as two extra sets of eyes. When he’d been a young man those two birds had spied on him and whenever he’d been up to trouble, they’d tattle on him to Odin. Thor had gained an appreciation for their intelligence and playfulness once he grew a bit older. There was still a raven aviary in the palace that Odin would visit when he was especially troubled.

The raven on the couch was small enough and had the shape of one not quite grown. The flight feathers had replaced the first fluffy kinds but it still had a bit of awkward growing left to do. The pronounced feathers below the beak hadn’t yet grown in either. Thor liked the young ravens best out of all of them. They were more sociable and playful than the adults. This was probably because they were small enough to know they could still be eaten by something larger than them and liked the protection Thor offered, but still.

Even Loki liked ravens for all Huginn and Muninn had ratted them out as children. They were tricky and smart and were amendable to getting into any sort of mischief if there was food involved.

But where had this raven come from? There were no open windows in the room, had it snuck in through a vent? Thor watched as the raven ruffled it’s feathers a little, and then hopped from place to place on the back of the couch. The bird seemed to be gearing up for something. Thor watched as the lights overhead glinted off the black feathers and gave a purple iridescent sheen.

The bird let out his wings and jumped off the couch. Thor expected it to start flying around, perhaps do some tricks. He had once seen a particularly crafty raven fly upside down around the palace for what appeared to be no reason at all. Instead he had to hold back a laugh as the bird awkwardly flapped it’s wings, failed to catch any air and dropped to the ground. Ah, so it was very young then. Just learning to fly.

He was content to watch as the raven got back up, hopped onto the couch with a harsh flap of their wings and tried again. Most ravens had their parents and siblings to teach them but it seemed this poor thing was on it’s own as it attempted to learn. The bird attempted it five more times with various success until it finally managed to get airborne. It began to circle in the room, learning how hard to flap to stay steady, growing in confidence.

At least it was until it turned towards Thor and spotted him. The raven squawked in shock, lost its flow and started to fall out of the sky. Thor jumped forward and carefully caught the juvenile raven.

“Well hello there.” He said. “Aren’t you a handsome bird? It’s been such a long time since I’ve seen a raven as fine as you.”

He was well aware that while ravens couldn’t necessarily understand words completely, they did know when they were being complimented. Thor helped the young raven stabilize on his arm and looked at the shifting bird.

“How did you get inside here little bird? Did someone bring you in or did you sneak in? I won’t tell anyone if you snuck in.”

He got a better look at the bird and noticed a strange discoloration on the crown of its head. Normally a raven’s feathers were all black, but up close he could see a few of the smaller feathers on the crown of its head were white, forming a runic pattern. The bird’s eyes were also strangely green, something he hadn’t seen on a raven before either. He normally would have assumed it was an earth variant of the bird but…
“Harry?”

The bird looked away.

“Nephew.”

The bird ducked it’s head.

“I’d prefer to have this conversation with you having a human mouth.”

And so, the bird’s body began to grow, feather’s sinking back into skin until he had his nephew clinging awkwardly to his arm.

“It’s me?” He said. “Surprise.”

“At least you didn’t greet me with a knife.”

“A knife? Why would I do that?”

“Long story.” Thor said. “I didn’t know your shapeshifting lessons with Loki had progressed this far?”

“They haven’t?”

“Are you asking or telling me?”

“This is different. Dad’s teaching me aesir shapeshifting and that was a human version. Me, Ron, and Hermione have been learning it together. It’s supposed to be a secret.”

“Uh Huh.”

“You’re not going to tell anyone are you? Come on Uncle Thor. Sirius and Remus don’t even know we managed it yet. It’ll stay between us.” Harry said, still holding onto his arm and looking at him with wide green eyes. Thor’s will immediately wavered.

“I don’t know…”

“It’s just until we’ve worked out all the kinks. I’m trying to figure out how to fly. Ron and Hermione haven’t worked out how to move on four legs yet.”

“What do they turn into?”

“Hermione’s an otter and Ron’s is a cute little dog.” Harry answered easily. “Makes sense, otters are super smart and so is Hermione and Ron’s super loyal just like a dog. I’m a raven I think cause of the flying. Hermione said ravens are excellent flyers.”

“They are. Although you don’t seem to have inherited that.”

“Hey! You try having wings instead of hands sometime.” Thor giggled at the offense in his nephew’s tone.

“Fine. I won’t tell anyone. But you’ve got to prank your father with this.”

“Prank him?”

“When Loki first learnt to turn into an animal, he pranked me in his snake form. I want justice.” Thor
said as he lowered his arm so Harry could touch the floor. The boy grinned up at him.

“I can do that.”

“Then we have a deal, nephew.”
Loki’s back at Hogwarts and already regretting the decision to go as Loki instead of James. Who knew he’d miss his old professors this much?

Ahh! Thanks for the wonderful responses this last week guys! I’ve been pretty busy getting ready for a conference I’m going to in december and the emails I get alerting me to comments really brighten up my day! <3

“Professor Odinson.” Flitwick said.

“Loki, please.”

“Of course, please call me Filius.”

“Excited for the year to begin?” Loki asked the smaller man, who had climbed onto the seat next to Loki.

The feasting hall looked beautiful, it made Loki’s heart ache with nostalgia and memory. The floating candles flickered and filled the room with warm light. The enchanted ceiling showed the wondrous cosmos, the most amazing view Loki had ever known in his long life. The four long tables were decorated to the nines and everything seemed to be holding its breath for the students’ arrival.

“Oh yes.” Filius said. “It’s always lovely to welcome in the new first years and greet older students. Although this year is quite a bit…more somber than previous years.”

“Hmm? Oh you’re talking about the Dark Lord.”

“Yes. Yes I am.” He said. “I had hoped we were free of his influence but…well now war has returned to our doors. I can only hope the students will be safe here.”

“Do you think they wouldn’t be? Albus assured me this castle was well warded.”

“It isn’t the wards. Those are impeccable.” Filius assured him. “It’s their parents. They send their children forward with missions and expectations and make their children little spies. I notice of course but I can’t say anything without endangering them you know.”

“Hmm.” Loki agreed, trying not to seem too friendly. Filius had been one of Lily’s favorite teachers and even Loki had fond memories of the man as James. But Filius didn’t know he’d been James, he couldn’t know just yet. The only people who knew within the school were Albus and Severus. Loki hadn’t even told Minerva yet even though he desperately wanted to. “It should be interesting certainly.”
“Interesting?”

“Oh yes Filius. I am so unfamiliar with this world. This school represents a microcosm of the war. The light and the dark.” He said using his hand to wave to one side of the room and then to the other. “What better way to learn what each side truly represents than this? I can’t just take Albus’ word for everything can I?”

“You cannot possibly be suggesting…”

“I am keeping an open mind.” Loki cut him off, not denying the implications. “Giving both sides an equal chance to sway me. By the end of the school year I suspect I’ll know exactly where my loyalties should lie.”

“Hmm.” The man said far stiffer than he had been moments before. It was necessary Loki knew but that didn’t mean he had to like it. Slowly other professors began to amble in. Loki had seen some of them in passing in the past few days but Albus had kept him very busy. It was clear the old man was afraid that Loki would begin sewing dissent amongst the faculty.

Tempting, and certainly something he would do in the future.

Tonight would be the first night that Loki would have the power to do whatever he saw as necessary within the school. First Loki needed to scope out and see how high tensions truly were between the students. There were rumors within the order about what the Death Eaters would send their students in to do and Loki needed to know if any of them represented a threat to his son or their plans.

When the teachers had all settled in, Albus came in carrying the sorting hat and the stool upon which it sat. Loki quirked up an eyebrow at the sight of the old frayed hat and looked over at Filius.

“And what exactly is that?”

“It’s the sorting hat. An interesting bit of charm work. The new students wear it and it sorts them into the proper house.”

“Fascinating.” Loki said. “I do wonder what house I’d be in. Albus told me of them of course and I find the whole idea quite quaint.”

As Filius took offense to his tone Loki wondered how much longer he would have to wait until he could see his son. Surely the train had arrived by now? It had only been a day since he’d hugged his son goodbye and committed fully to the charade they were going to use. Loki couldn’t show his son affection, had to act like he didn’t know him, that he didn’t like him. Harry would have to act angry and frustrated with Loki, treat him like a villain. It would hurt, far more than any charade Loki had ever acted on before, but it was the plan.

“It’s time.” said Albus. “The students are here.”

Sure enough the doors to the Great Hall swung open and students began filtering in following the Head Boy and Girl. Loki immediately began scanning for a sign of a tall messy haired boy with a red and gold tie. He spotted Ron and Hermione first, they were walking in together as Prefects but without their third friend. Loki lifted up an eyebrow in question and Ron gave him a shrug as if to say ‘I don’t know what to tell you’.

How comforting.

All of the returning students settled down at their respective tables and Loki couldn’t spot his son anywhere. Fear gripped his heart, had something already happened in the last 24 hours? No. His son
had promised he’d be careful on the train ride over. He’d sworn it. If anything dangerous happened he was supposed to use the emergency bracelet Loki had enchanted to ask for help. There had been no signal which meant his son was fine.

Loki just had to convince himself of that.

Before he could spiral into a panic and send a message to Thor to scour the entire train track for his son, Minerva came in leading the tiny 11-year-olds and right in the thick of the group was his son. Harry looked delighted, surrounded by children that he towered over by nearly two feet at some points. Loki had always been incredibly tall and his son had inherited that height, appearing over 6 feet in height now, something that was far more obvious now that he was standing around tiny 11 year olds.

Why was he with the first years?

Harry whispered to the group while pointing up and all of the children immediately listened to him and gasped in shock at their first sight of the enchanted ceiling.

“Whatever is Potter doing?” Filius asked.

“Trouble looks like.” Loki said, knowingly echoing Snape.

Minerva walked all the way up to the sorting hat while the first years remained congregated around Harry. Hagrid had also come in with the group and was now making his way to the staff table. The hat began to sing, a song strangely similar to the ones it had sung in Loki’s youth, warning of the importance of unity and dangers afoot. How many wars had that hat seen in its lifetime? As the hat sung, Loki watched as his son lean down slightly to whisper jokes in the first years ears, causing flurries of nervous giggling. When the hat finished, Minerva unrolled her customary scroll and began to read.

“When I call your name, you will come forward and be sorted.” She said. “Cassidy Aberle.”

A tiny girl, closer to half his son’s height than anything and with hair the color of the sun, squeaked just a little sending a ripple of laughter through the students. The girl immediately blushed bright red. Harry reached out to her and gave her a pat on the back, whispering words that Loki couldn’t hear but knew the contents of anyway. The girl beamed looking far more confident and nearly bounced her way up to the hat.

She put the hat on and the hat mused for a few moments before calling out her house.

“RAVENCLAW!”

Traditionally the house that had the new student would cheer while the other houses would politely clap. If someone was sorted into Gryffindor then of course the Slytherins didn’t even bother to clap and the Gryffindors returned that favor with vigor. In Loki’s time as a student there had even been years where the rival houses had booed at newly sorted students. The Ravenclaws immediately began to cheer for their newest student and to Loki’s utter surprise, Harry cheered along with them.

Based on his son’s volume levels he was pretty sure he’d gotten yelling lessons from his uncle. Damn the thunderer.

Harry’s excitement was passed onto his gaggle of first years who all cheered for ‘Cass’. The girl took the hat off and rushed back to the group of students, accepting a high five from Harry before going over to her new seat at the end of the Ravenclaw table. There were mutters of confusion throughout the entire great hall as students and faculty alike wondered just what Harry was playing at. Loki tried
to send a questioning look over to his son but Harry pretended not to notice.

Minerva cleared her throat causing silence to descend throughout the school and called out the next name. Just like with the girl, when this next student, a boy with dark skin and adorable freckles was called, Harry gave him plenty of encouragement and a gentle push to help him out of the crowds of students.

At first the different houses just watched as Harry Potter cheered on each first year by name with equal vigor no matter what house they were sorted into. When the first student was sorted into Slytherin, the students held their breath. Harry didn’t seem to notice or hesitate as he cheered for the young boy with brown hair and a slightly crooked nose. The boy looked hesitant still but Harry offered him a high five and congratulations just like everyone else. The Slytherins looked downright terrified at the act.

Loki noticed shortly after that that Ron and Hermione were whispering around their house table as well as to select other students on the Hufflepuff table. Their whispering soon enough encouraged those two house to start cheering vigorously for every student, following Harry’s lead. Soon enough the Ravenclaws were persuaded by the Hufflepuffs and the Slytherins joined in last because they weren’t going to be outdone by any house at all thank you very much.

What was his son up to? Harry hadn’t mentioned this at all in the last few times they’d spoken about the return to the castle. Loki watched as the excitement and fervor increased with each student, children were laughing and joking. The newly instated first years were joking with their fellows between tables, unconcerned with long standing house rivalries. By the time the last student was sorted, into Gryffindor, Loki hardly recognized the sorting ceremony at all.

Harry gave the last student, Matthew Young, a high five and then led him to the table himself. Harry’s cheeks were slightly red as his fellow housemates began to interrogate him on what the hell he’d been thinking. Before Harry could answer anything, Albus got up and stood in front of the podium.

“Greetings, students.” Albus said.

Loki immediately tuned out the man’s opening speech, far more interested in his son and the results of his actions. There was a blonde boy that looked distinctly like Lucius glaring at the back of his son’s head from the Gryffindor table. Was this the ever so famous Draco Malfoy then? Harry hadn’t spoken of the boy in kind terms, one of the few times Loki had heard his son outwardly show aggression to someone not actively insulting someone he loved.

Loki tuned back into the headmaster’s ramblings when he insisted everyone ‘eat up!’. With a clap of his hands the tables were filled with pounds of food. The students cheered and began to dig in, grabbing at food like wild beasts. Loki reached out for his own food with far more grace, at the same time he cast a spell that would allow him to listen in on his son and his surroundings.

“Harry. What the hell was that?” Ron demanded. “When you told me you had something planned I didn’t think it was messing with the First Years.”

“I wasn’t messing with ‘em.” Harry denied his mouth slightly full of food. His son swallowed and spoke again. “You remember when we first met? How I had to ask for help getting onto 9¾?”

“Yeah?”

“Well I was thinking. How many first years get lost or hurt on the way to the castle? Like Dennis! Dennis, didn’t you fall in the lake and almost get drowned by the giant squid?”
“It saved me after a little bit.” Another Gryffindor insisted causing a bit of laughter to flow through the table.

“Right yeah. Except you were dripping wet and shivering through the whole feast after you got sorted. And Neville, you lost your toad and he almost got hurt on the way in right?”

“Trevor’s better now.” The other sixth year defended. “What’s your point?”

“My point. Is that this school doesn’t do anything to make sure the first years are safe coming in. They don’t know any magic yet. They can’t defend themselves or help others if something happens. Hagrid’s there and he’s great but he’s only one man and he can’t do magic either.”

“You went with them to protect them.” One of the other girls at the table said.

“Yeah exactly. If Dumbledore isn’t going to make sure they’re safe, then somebody should.” Harry said before taking another bite. “So, I hung out with the first years near the back of the train and rode over with them on the boats again. I explained it all to McGonagall and she let me get away with it. We won’t lose any house points I promise.”

“Well that’s something at least.” Hermione said making Harry roll his eyes. “And it was very kind of you.”

“Kind? No. I’m being smart. How many times have a bunch of us almost died since we were too young to know how to defend ourselves? Hermione you once got petrified!”

Loki could see that there were Hufflepuffs listening in to Harry’s impassioned words as were most of the Gryffindors. Fascinating.

“Well. Yes.” She said.

“And then there’s been the trolls and the dementors and literally the entire forest we’re surrounded by. Once you get to our age, we know enough not to die immediately but like…those kids need help and it’s obvious Dumbledore doesn’t care about them.” Harry said stubbornly.

“I’m sure it’s not that bad.” One of the other students insisted.

“How many times have you almost died?” Harry asked them, not unkindly causing the student to look down at their plate. “I say we do something about it.”

“Like what?” Ron demanded.

“Well. How about we start with a map? For the first years? They don’t know where anything is and the staircases move. If they get lost, they might get stuck somewhere with a three headed dog or something. A map can help them find their way.”

“We could also attach the maps to our prefect badges!” Hermione said. “That way if they truly need help they can call for one of their house prefects and we’d be able to find them based on where their map is in the school! No more having to ask the portraits for directions or hoping for one of the ghosts to find them!”

“But we didn’t get a map.” One of the older students complained.

“You should have gotten one.” Harry said. “And we can fix it for all the kids younger than us. That’s what matters.”
“I guess. But how would we even do that? It’s not like the castle’s ever been mapped in the first place.”

“Yeah. It has, by my dad.” Harry said. “I found it a few years ago hidden away. He made a map of the entire school. He used it for pranks, but I bet with a bit of work we can copy the layout and use it for the first years.”

“Let’s get to work.” Ron said. “Classes start tomorrow so we’ll need to pass them to the other prefects soon enough.”

It was clear parts of this had been planned. Ron wasn’t the greatest of actors. But the students didn’t seem to notice. Loki watched as his son used the Marauders Map, the qualities that made the map truly special (such as the locations of every person in the castle and the secret passageways) hidden, and began to copy it. Soon enough Hermione got up and called over the prefects from the Hufflepuff table explaining what they were doing.

A part of the Gryffindor table was cleared away and soon, against all open tradition, there were Hufflepuff students and a few Ravenclaws sitting at the table, eating together and working on enchanting the maps for the first years. There was a certain level of familiarity and comradery amongst the house members.

Loki noticed that Albus was watching the whole scene his eyes twinkling and his mouth slightly pinched.

“Professor McGonagall.” Loki said looking over at the head of house. “Is that appropriate behavior? I was told that students sat with their house.”

“Professor Odinson. I can assure there is nothing in the school rules that ban students from interacting with the other houses.”

“Interesting.” Loki said in a tone that implied he didn’t approve at all. In truth he was trying to hold back a smirk. Whatever his son was doing he wholeheartedly approved. The students continued to work for a little longer, then Harry stood up.

“One minute guys.” He said. “We’re forgetting something.”

“Wot?” Ginny Weasley asked.

“The Slytherins.”

“The snakes?” Another Gryffindor demanded. “Why would we care about them?”

“Because they’re people.” Harry said with all the certainty of Lily Evans defending her friendship with Severus Snape. “And they’re students, kids just like us, they deserve to be safe in the school too.”

“Oh come on Harry!” Someone said.

“I’m just going to give them enough copies for their first years, that way all the first years have access to it.”

“You can’t go over there.” A younger student, perhaps 13 or so said. “It’s dangerous.”

“I’ll be fine.” Harry said almost carelessly. “No one’s going to attack me in front of the entire school.”
And with that, Harry walked away from the safety of his table and made a beeline right towards the blonde who’d been glaring at him. In his hands he carried the first group of finished maps as if they hadn’t already been designated for the Gryffindors. Loki and the rest of the faculty watched with baited breath. With every step Harry took towards the Slytherin table a hush fell over the school. Everyone knew of Harry and Draco’s rivalry and this was unprecedented. The amount of potential chaos was brilliant and Loki had to hold back a shiver of delight as Harry stopped right in front of Draco Malfoy.

“Malfoy.” He said, placing the maps on the free portion of the table that he found.

“Potter.” The Slytherin responded with a sneer. “What are you doing over here?”

“Oh nothing much. Came over to see how the competition is doing you know? I’m finally back on the Quidditch team again. Should be a good year for it.” Harry said with a grin at the sight of Malfoy’s face, which was painted with confusion and a bit of outrage at his son’s flippancy.

“Listen Scarhead-”

Harry leaned forward, planting his hands on the Slytherin table so that he was eye level with the blonde, his green eyes warm and almost amused if Loki had to guess.

“I’m listening.” He said his voice far too friendly, it was the same tone Loki had used once upon a time and it was very annoying.

“I…You can’t just come over here and…”

“Pretty sure I can. You do it all the time.” His son said. “I missed your yearly visit to me on the train ride. Can’t I ask after the health of my greatest rival?”

“One would think you’d have far greater rivals to worry about. Or has the man who murdered your parents already slipped from your empty head?”

“Voldemort.” Harry said making the entire table hiss in pain. “Is my enemy. You are my rival. Totally different thing. I respect you as much as I dislike you. Voldemort’s just a cowardly bastard.”

And the offense on their faces? The sheer horror at his son’s tone and words? Loki had to use all of his skill not to burst into laughter. Malfoy was gaping at Harry like a fish out of water.

“Anyway. Malfoy. The other prefects are at the Gryffindor table working on maps we can give out to the first years, so no one gets lost or hurt in the castle. With the war going on things are more dangerous than ever and the first years don’t know any magic to defend themselves yet.”

“And what? You’re offering to share with us out of your kind Gryffindor heart?” He sneered.

“Uh yes.”

“Hah! I’m not an idiot Potter as if I’d trust anything you’d magicked for my house.”

“Oh honestly.” Harry said before reaching into his robe pocket and pulling out his wand. Malfoy and all of the surrounding Slytherins drew their wands with a flick of their wrist ready to fire at Harry without hesitation. Harry didn’t seem to notice or care. Instead his incredible son lifted his wand straight up in the customary fashion that Loki had taught him and spoke very seriously. “I, Harry James Potter, Heir to the Potter and Black line, swear upon my name and my magic that the maps I am offering to Draco Lucien Malfoy are exactly what I have claimed them to be and that I am giving them to him without wanting anything in return. So, mote it be.”
Harry’s holly wand had glowed bright purple and the magic had spread down his hand and arm until it dissipated in a shower of sparks to show the vow taking hold. Harry shook his hand and put his wand away, ignoring the gobsmacked looks all of the purebloods were giving him.

“What? I figured that was the easiest way to get you to believe me. Unless you want to rob Professor Snape’s stores of veritaserum or something.”

“What are you trying to do Potter?” Malfoy demanded.

“I’m trying to offer you something that’ll help you keep the first years safe in a way we never were.” Harry said firmly. “In our first year Quirrel let a troll into the dungeons and Dumbledore sent your entire house down there without a care. In our second year there was a basilisk moving through the plumbing and nothing was done to help students move safely until a dozen kids had gotten petrified. The dementors in our third year caused more problems than I want to count for the first years who couldn’t hope to defend themselves against their aura. If Dumbledore and the rest of the staff aren’t going to do anything to protect us then we have to do it ourselves and it starts with this.”

Oh Harry.

“So what? You’re Dumbledore’s Golden Boy, Potter.”

“No.” Harry snapped “I stopped being that the moment he let my godfather get murdered right in front of me.”

And finally, things began clicking in the minds of every Slytherin that was listening in. Loki watched as every cunning snake at that table began to consider what that meant. A split between the Savior of the Wizarding World and the Leader of the Light? It was incalculable. His son stood there before them suddenly a third choice in a war that had always been divided in two. Harry knew it too.

“You know? That first train ride over when I told you that I could tell the good sort for myself?” Harry said. “I lied then. But I’ve finally figured it out. And Dumbledore? He’s not on my side, not anymore. Take the maps or don’t. But they’ll help you protect the kids in your house who need it. Aren’t Slytherins all about self-preservation?”

Harry pulled himself up so that he was standing to his full height. He gave Malfoy a grin, full of promise and mischief, of chaos.

“See you on the Pitch, Malfoy.”

Albus Dumbledore’s frown was far sweeter to look at than the desert Loki helped himself to.
Harry was prepared for the staring.

How could he not be? For the past five years of his life people had been staring at him. Staring at his scar. Whispering about him throughout the halls. Staring at articles in the Daily Prophet about him. In truth people had been staring at him before Hogwarts as well but that was mostly the pitying kinds of stares that people got when they thought you were a dirty no good troublemaker who ought to wear nicer clothing.

Still.

Harry had planned on people staring at him.

Ron had even brought it up in the planning phases. As they worked out how they were going to differentiate themselves from Dumbledore and present to the school, and to the world at large, that Harry Potter was now his own wizard who wasn’t Dumbledore’s pawn, Ron had mentioned it. Unlike every other time in the past where Harry had done something and then been blasted by the public fallout of it, the point of this was to be **public**. Kids were going to stare. There were going to be rumors and whispers. That was the whole idea.

Harry had promised his friends that he was ready. Asgard had helped in some ways. Because the people there stared at him too. Partially because of the fact that he was technically a prince, partially because Tyr had taken him on as an apprentice, but mostly because of quidditch. Harry had learnt from, strangely enough, Odin how to deal with staring. His grandfather had seen him feeling awkward and had pulled him aside and given him his first ‘prince’ lesson.

So yeah.

Harry had planned on the staring.

What he hadn’t seen coming though was the blushing.

Yes. **Blushing**.

His classmates were blushing when he talked to them. Almost every girl Harry now knew
(Hermione, Ginny and Luna being the thankful exceptions) turned as red as a tomato when Harry spoke to them. At one point, in Charms, Harry had offered Lavender Brown one of his quills and she had stammered so much, with her cheeks fire truck red, that she’d spilled her ink jar all over her desk.

Which was just so weird.

Girls from every house were doing it too. A fourth year Hufflepuff Harry had never met before had accidentally bumped into him in the hallway and when Harry had offered a hand to help her up she had started mumbling her words together so badly that he had no idea what she was saying, all while staring hard at the ground. The tips of her ears had been the color of Ginny’s hair.

It was bewildering.

Even more so because some of the boys were doing it too. Dean and Seamus both had acted so strangely that first night when Harry had changed out of his school uniform and into his pajamas. Both boys had been staring at him and then when he’d caught them, they’d blushed and looked away. Harry knew it wasn’t his scars because he hadn’t gotten any new ones over the summer and his friends had already seen all of the ones he’d had. And not much else had changed for Harry since then.

Well obviously, he was taller now thanks to the spell.

But why would being taller make so many people blush?

Ron was tall. He and Harry were near the same height now and Ron didn’t make every girl in the entire school blush.

Harry had of course considered that perhaps the girls had crushes on him, but he’d thrown that idea out of the window immediately. After all none of the girls had been crushing on him as a 4th year when he’d needed to get a date to the Yule Ball. In fact, no one had wanted to go with him at all and he’d ended up having a horrible time with Parvarti. Who had had an equally terrible time and hadn’t talked to him for three months because of it. Of course, now she and her sister were staring at him with slight blushes on their cheeks just like everyone else, so Harry wasn’t even sure what to make of the situation at all.

The only time Harry had thought perhaps a girl had liked him it had been with Cho last year and well…every time he thought about his first kiss in Madam Puddifoots he shuddered.

It had been so wet.

So no. The entire school couldn’t be crushing on him. That was madness. Harry had gotten taller when the spell had ended, and he’d finally stopped slouching all the time. His clothing also fit a bit better, but he looked the same as he always did, minus the glasses.

Okay. So maybe he’d gotten a bit of an unintentional make-over.

But! It wasn’t enough to explain the blushing. Really it wasn’t.

Harry had gotten used to going to his dad when he faced problems like this. It almost scared him when he realized how normal that had become. In just one summer his entire…world view had been put upside down. Never before in his life would he have considered going to an adult with a problem like this but it had felt so natural to seek out his dad and ask him why everyone was blushing when he looked at them or spoke to them or touched them in anyway.
But Harry couldn’t ask his dad anything. His dad wasn’t his dad anymore. His dad was Professor Loki, suspected villain. Harry was supposed to treat the man like he’d treated Snape in the past few years. Which meant that Harry definitely couldn’t linger after class and wait for the room to empty and ask his dad if he had noticed anything weird happening with the students. Maybe there was some sort of spell on him? Or someone had put something in the food.

No. That wasn’t an option.

Harry had spent the very first class of his school year with his dad as the professor. And he had spent the entire time glaring at the man with all his might. Every time his dad said something that could hint that he was maybe evil, Harry had twisted his face into a scowl or had scoffed under his breath. His ‘insolence’ had cost his house 15 points in the first day but Hermione had earned those back and more in her other classes so no one noticed.

His dad was a good teacher Harry knew. He explained things in a way that made even Crabbe and Goyle understand and he didn’t assign insane essays like Snape did. Not that Harry knew what Snape assigned in his NEWT level course. Harry hadn’t gotten an ‘O’ on that and so he hadn’t qualified to get into the class. Not that Harry was all that upset about not being in potions.

Of course, he’d been told that in order to become an Auror he’d need to get a NEWT in potions but that was a dream that no longer interested Harry. After all, if he became an Auror he’d have to work for somebody like Fudge. Sirius had been the one to point out that if he still wanted to be an auror then the Ministry would be daft to turn him away anyway, he was after all ‘The Chosen One’. His godfather had said it as a joke, but Harry had known there was a nugget of truth there.

If working with the American Government had taught him anything it was that fame mattered. Harry had only gotten as far as he did because of his fame. Was that a little upsetting? Yes. But Harry had dealt with it. (Tony had actually been the most help with that ironically enough. The man had dragged Harry down to his lab one evening and given him some very helpful ‘how not to piss off the paparazzi unless you really want to’ tips.)

All of this meant that there was really very little reason for Harry to be upset about his lack of Potions Class. Harry had also dropped Divination. His grandmother was a seer and his dad had been very clear that if he wanted to learn more about that stuff then Frigga would be highly offended if he went elsewhere. Harry had spent very little time with his over-doting grandmother and he didn’t want to know what she’d be like if he offended her.

So, no potions. No divination.

It had left him with an oddly empty schedule. There was DADA, transfigurations, charms, and herbology. But those classes only met once a week and two of them met on the same day. The classes weren’t long either, just an hour and a half. Which meant that Harry had six hours of class a week. Compared to Hermione’s gargantuan schedule it felt like Harry didn’t have much work to do at all.

Even Ron was taking more classes than him, his parents had pushed him to take more classes because it was important for his future.

Harry’s empty schedule of course worked to his benefit. It allowed him to have time once a week to sneak away to Asgard for training for a few hours in the afternoon. It also gave him time to practice his own magic in relative privacy. Harry couldn’t just stop practicing wandless and aesir magic just because the school year had started, so when Ron and Hermione went off to class together, Harry planned to go up to the Room of Requirement and practice whatever he pleased. Be it magic or sword work.
Still with all of that, Harry had hours of each day that he could fill with whatever he wanted. Of course, a more responsible soul would spend that time writing up their homework assignments. But Harry was never going to be an academic, no matter how much Hermione despaired about it. Harry preferred to leave his work to the last minute and turn in hurriedly rushed essays that he’d done the night before.

It had worked for him the last five years and he didn’t see why he should change it now.

This of course led Harry to spending far more time than he should thinking about why girls blushed when he talked to them and why Dean still wouldn’t look him in the eyes most mornings. It also led him to interacting with the first years a lot more than originally planned.

It had started simply enough with him helping to pass out maps on the first day of classes. Harry had gone around with rolls of parchment in his arms and given out maps to every newly minted student while the school watched, and most girls blushed. Harry had liked talking to the first years, even if some of them had been a bit over eager. He’d told them the things on the train that he would have wanted to be told.

Things like ‘I promise you’re going to do just fine’ and ‘No one does their spells right the first time, you’re supposed to make mistakes’.

But Harry had apparently had more of an influence than expected. Because on Tuesday he was waylaid by three Hufflepuff first years.

“Uhm! Harry!”

“Oh Hey Sarah, Cassidy, Drew.” Harry said turning to look at the three kids.

“Are you busy?” Drew asked.

Harry had already had his two classes for the day, he’d planned on going up to the 7th floor to practice some of the new moves Tyr had taught him with the dummies the room could provide but that could wait till after lunch.

“No. Why? You guys need something?”

“We were wondering. We just had our first class with Professor McGonagall and well…”

“How do you turn a needle into a matchstick? I’ve tried a hundred times and it just won’t do it!”

“None of us can get it. We’ve tried on our own for the past hour.”

“Why don’t you ask your prefects for help?” Harry asked.

“They’re busy.” Cassidy said. “Please can’t you give us some tips or something?”

If Harry had known what saying yes would do he probably would have hesitated more. As it was, he merely shrugged and motioned for them to follow him. He led them to a nearby empty classroom and then explained the theory behind transfiguration. His dad had given him so many lectures over the summer about magic, relating it to things Harry understood. His dad had been able to untangle the complicated theorems and put them together into something that made sense.

Harry passed that knowledge on, at least enough of it that the first years were able to reorient themselves and try the spells again. Within 30 minutes all three first years had gleaming needles instead of match sticks and Harry felt rather satisfied.
“There you go.” Harry said. “Just remember what I told you about transfiguration and you should be able to do anything McGonagall asks you to do this year.”

Harry didn’t think to ask them not to tell anyone else. Why would he? Instead he had accepted the grateful hugs the three students had given him and then gone on to get his lunch. It happened again on Thursday. He didn’t have any classes at all that day and Ron and Hermione did. He’d found himself quite disoriented at first. This was the first time he and Ron hadn’t had the same exact schedule.

But before he could get too waylaid, every first year Gryffindor had confronted him in the common room and begged for help with their charms assignments. Since Harry was painfully aware of how important a Windgardium Leviosa could be (and wasn’t Flitwick teaching them that one early this year? Harry could have sworn they didn’t have that lesson until Halloween) he’d agreed to help them out.

Harry had told them about how Ron had saved their lives by using this spell on a troll’s club which had made them suitably impressed with how amazing the spell could be and then Harry had explained more magical theory. Just like his dad had taught him. He left out the stuff about godly magic though, for obvious reasons.

As it turned out, Harry was actually a good teacher. He’d gotten a taste for it with the DA. But unlike the DA Harry didn’t have a monstrous headache and Voldemort threatening to possess him every other minute. So, Harry had spent the next hour helping the first years with their first charm. By the end of it the entire common room was filled with colorful feathers floating around and dancing in the air.

One of the first years suggested having a competition to see who could do the spell the best.

“Alright.” Harry said. “I’ll be the judge. Let’s see who can lift the heaviest thing.”

Three broken chairs, a shattered window, and a lecture from their head of house later, Harry found himself cleaning up the common room by hand and thinking to himself that he wouldn’t be helping anymore first years.

Of course, by Saturday things got totally out of hand. A Ravenclaw came to him asking for help finding her pet snake, a corn snake named Reginald that Harry found napping in the courtyard on a sun warmed stone. Then a few Slytherins came to him and asked for advice with defense magic. Harry saw in the corner of his eye Malfoy and the others spying on them and knew he couldn’t say no, or he’d be a hypocrite. He’d helped students from every other house after all. So, Harry had taught the first years a few good spells and even let them practice them on him, which resulted in him being flung around on a grassy hill far more times than Tyr normally threw him during one of their lessons.

It had been great to see Malfoy looking thunderstruck that Harry was willing to treat the Slytherins like everyone else.

Anything that stumped Malfoy was worth a few bruises.

Things began to spiral from there and by the middle of the second week of classes Harry had a gaggle of first and second years that followed him around like ducklings asking for advice and laughing at everything he said. This of course only exacerbated the problem with the blushing since when girls saw him helping and laughing with the kids, they blushed even more than they had the
week before.

Harry knew he was in trouble when the students asked for help in potions.

The very idea that Harry could help anyone with that class was frankly laughable.

So, Harry had done what he always did when he ran into a school problem.

He’d gone to Hermione.

“Hermione?” He asked.

“Harry? Where have you been! Ron and I have been in the library for thirty minutes waiting for you to show up so we could work on our charms essays together. Besides, this is the only place we can talk about you know what.”

“Yeah. About that.” Harry said. “What do you guys think about restarting the DA?”

“What?” Ron asked. “I thought we decided that the DA wasn’t good anymore since it didn’t have any snakes in it and it was basically a Dumbledore thing?”

“Right well obviously we’d need a different name.” Harry agreed. “But I dunno, it was good being able to practice Defense stuff with everybody wasn’t it?”

“Harry.” Hermione said looking at him from over her tower of books. “What’s going on?”

“You know how all the first years have been following me around?”

“Yeah.” Ron laughed. “I told you your little opening feast stunt would backfire.”

“Ron you’re a regular seer.” Harry deadpanned. “One of them asked me for homework help.”

“Oh well that’s not so bad.” Hermione consoled. “You’re actually very good at magic Harry, even if you don’t do your homework like you should.”

“No Hermione.” Harry whined. “You don’t understand. He asked me for potions help.”

There was a beat of silence and then Harry looked up to see that Hermione had a hand to her mouth and was clearly trying very hard not to laugh.

“Oh go on.”

Hermione and Ron both burst into gales of laughter, loud enough that Madam Pince shushed them from across the way. When his friends managed to stop laughing at him, Hermione spoke.

“So, you want to what? Set up the DA as some sort of study group?”

“And why not? We could have meetings in an empty classroom. I bet McGonagall wouldn’t mind signing off on us using a space. Then any student could come and ask for help and there’d be someone who could help them. That way the first years never have to rely on me for help with potions.”

He shivereded at the very idea.

“The prefects are supposed to help the new students.” Ron pointed out.
“Yeah but they’re not.” Harry said. “No offense guys but you’re super busy. Hermione’s taking like ten classes and she doesn’t have time to do all that and help a first year figure out how to make a pineapple tap dance. Most of the other prefects are in the same spot. Honestly Ron do you think you have time to set up a tutoring session for any firstie who needs it?”

“No.” He admitted.

“The whole point of this year is to help unify the school.” Harry added. “What better way to do that then to use the DA. We get a few students from each house who’s good at a certain class, ask them to give up a couple of hours each week to come and offer help. Spread out the work a bit.”

“You’re only suggesting this cause, you don’t want to be drowned by a bunch of over eager 11 year olds.” Ron accused.

“It’s a good idea.” Hermione cut in before Harry could defend himself from Ron’s entirely true accusation. “Neville certainly could help us with herbology. No one is better at that class than him, not even me.”

And Hermione didn’t sound pleased by her last sentence. Harry and Ron both grinned at her frustration.

“Okay great.” Harry said. “I’ll start asking around, see who’s open to helping.”

“But Harry?” Ron asked. “Who could you possibly ask to help with potions? Hermione’s the only one who’s any good at ‘em and she can’t tutor every first year.”

“Yes, I can.”

“Not without a time turner.” Ron muttered.

“She’s not the only one who’s good at them.” Harry sighed. “There’s a couple others who could do it.”

“Who?” Ron asked while Hermione gave Harry a very pitying look.

“They’d never agree to it.” She warned.

“I’ll make them.” Harry decided. “Phase One of our plan was a complete success. Even the Slytherins are using the maps we made. Phase Two can be getting this new study group together.”

“Harry, who are you two talking about?” Ron demanded.

“Isn’t it obvious?” Hermione demanded. “Draco Malfoy and Blaise Zabini are in the top three in our potions class and that’s not just Snape’s favoritism.”

“Harry no.” Ron begged. “Not the ferret. Anyone but the ferret.”

“There isn’t anyone else.” Harry said. “Snape chases any other student who could be good out of the class before they learn anything decent and you know it.”

“So what? We just invite a Death Eater in Training to teach the first years?”

“No. We invite another student to help us.” Harry said. “Malfoy might be working for Voldemort but even he won’t hurt kids. Probably.”

Neither of his friends looked very convinced. Harry sighed.
“I’ll watch him like a hawk. We can even make him sign something like what Hermione had the DA sign.”

“Well that’s something at least.” Ron grumbled. “Fine. Go see if they’ll agree.”

“Great!” Harry said standing up.

“Harry. Not now.” Hermione said. “You have to write your charms essay! It’s due on Friday!”

“Can’t stop now Hermione!” Harry sang as he got up from the table. “I’ve got some Slytherins to find!”

Harry held back a laugh as Hermione glared at him and Ron grinned. He felt much lighter in spirits now that there was a plan in place to keep the first years off his back. He pulled his invisibility cloak and the marauder’s map from his bag and exited the library unseen. The first years had been so distracting that Harry had almost forgotten about the mystery of the blushing students. Harry was very forcibly reminded of it when he found Draco and his cronies hanging out near the lake.

“Oi! Malfoy!” Harry called.

Draco stiffened and turned to look at Harry.

There was a faint but clearly discernable blush on his cheeks.

Now wasn’t that interesting?
Draco Malfoy's Terrible, Rotten, No Good Summer

Chapter Summary

Draco spends the opening feast glaring at Potter.
If it even was Potter and not some handsome look-a-like.

Chapter Notes

All the ace people in the comments last week who vibed with Oblivious Harry. I want you to know that I also vibed hard with that, as one of the most oblivious ace's alive lol. I'm here for the solidarity.

Draco’s first thought upon seeing Harry Potter was simple.

*He looks like he had a good summer.*

It was an incredibly unwelcome and unusual thought to have.

He had purposefully not tried to find Potter on the train ride over, he’d had more important things to do. He had expected to see the same skinny, glasses wearing, slouching Potter he always did entering the Great Hall. Potter always looked like the summers had been hell for him. He came back skinnier, wearing robes that didn’t fit, and with bags under his eyes. Draco had always made a note of his ill health with glee.

Of course, Potter was suffering. That’s what happened when you pick the wrong sort.

But when Potter had entered with the first years, he hadn’t looked like Potter at all.

*He looks like he had a good summer.*

He’d been taller, having grown over a foot in height since the last time Draco had seen him. His hair had been cut by someone who knew what they were doing. In previous years Draco had suspected that Potter cut his own hair a few days before returning to Hogwarts which is why it looked so shaggy and poorly cared for. But Potter’s hair, while still messy, was the sort of stylish messy that made it clear that it was meant to look that way.

His glasses were gone too. The ugly frames that had been too large for him as a first year and too small for him as a fifth year were gone. Instead his face was free of any adornment, aside from the scar on his forehead. His green eyes seemed to glow as he looked around the room and spoke with the first years. The color of them contrasted well with the healthy tan of his face.

Potter had somehow managed to tan. A feat that had never happened in all the years Draco had known him. The boy had always been a sickly pale, unlike Draco’s own regal coloring. But now Potter’s skin was a nice, even golden tan, that only came from work. Either Potter had purposefully spent time in the sun getting that color or it was a glamor of some sort.
What was the worst out of all of it though was the physique.

Potter’s robes were tailored to fit him and made of a higher quality than what you’d get at Malkins for the standard price. This tailoring revealed a body that did not belong with Potter. There were muscular arms and a well defined chest that were obvious even from a distance. Malfoy knew Potter wasn’t smart enough to pull off a glamor this realistic which left only one possible conclusion.

*He looks like he had a good summer.*

Draco had had that thought and had gripped his robes beneath the table so hard he’d nearly torn them.

Potter looked like he’d had a fantastic summer and Draco hated it. Despised it with every bit of his soul. How dare he have the gall to stand there looking like that? In what world was that fair? That Potter had had a good summer and Draco had…

Well.

There was a new sort of weight on his forearm that made it clear exactly what sort of summer he’d had.

A weight that writhed around, a mass that had been placed there where it could seep into his skin and attach itself to his very soul.

It had hurt so much, and he had been so…

No.

This was what his father had trained him for. Even if his father was in Azkaban, even if his mother was locked up as a prisoner in their Manor, Draco was still exactly what he was made to be. He was proud of the mark. He’d wanted it. Had always wanted it. From the moment he’d seen his father’s mark when he’d been a young child he’d known what he was destined for. Draco wouldn’t back down now.

Even if his arm itched with the weight of it sometimes.

Draco had spent the rest of the feast glaring at Potter. Glaring at him for laughing, for high fiving first years, for eating more food than Weasley. He hadn’t been at his best when the Gryffindor had waltzed over to their side of the great hall like he owned the place. He’d placed the parchment rolls of maps of the school onto the table in front of Draco. A trap or a peace offering? He spoke, going so far as to offer a magical vow to ensure they knew the maps were exactly what he meant them to be.

“You know? That first train ride over when I told you that I could tell the good sort for myself?” Harry said. “I lied then. But I’ve finally figured it out. And Dumbledore? He’s not on my side, not anymore. Take the maps or don’t. But they’ll help you protect the kids in your house who need it. Aren’t Slytherins all about self-preservation?”

And Potter smiled at him. His eyes literally sparkling with delight.

“See you on the Pitch, Malfoy.”

And just what the hell did that mean?

Potter was like an entirely different person. He sat still in class, excelled at every spell he tried, and he helped first years regardless of house. The only time the Potter Draco knew made an appearance
was in Defense when the Golden Boy would glare and scoff at the God of Magic like he used to do with Snape. Other than that it was like a more handsome look-a-like had taken Potter’s place and it seemed like nobody but Draco had even noticed.

When Draco watched Potter willingly take hexes from first year Slytherins he knew things were bad. No one had that good of a summer.

No one.

So, when Potter walked up to him and his friends, aside from Crabbe and Goyle who were in the greenhouses, while they sat on the lake enjoying the rare warm fall afternoon, Draco had no idea what to expect. Potter had forgone his robe, wearing instead only his button up shirt and dress pants. The sleeves on the shirt were rolled up to his elbow and Malfoy could see the leather strap he had on his forearm to keep his wand attached to his arm.

How obscene.

“Oi! Malfoy!”

“What could you possibly want Potter?” Malfoy demanded, glaring up at the too tall Gryffindor.

“Testy today are we? Is it Flitwick’s essay? Heard that one was a doozy of an assignment. I haven’t started it, but Hermione seems upset about it so it’s probably brutal.”

Flitwick’s essay was brutal. Just because Potter had gotten house points and extra credit for his map creation from Flitwick didn’t mean the professor would forgive Potter his poor writing skills. That wasn’t the point either.

“I’m testy because a half blood fool is bothering me. Go away.”

“Ha. Half-blood.” Potter said grinning down at Malfoy. Instead of going away, the idiot plopped himself down in front of the Slytherins, leaving himself totally vulnerable to any attack the group of them wanted to make.

“What are you on about?”

“It’s just, I totally am a half-blood. Never really thought about it before.” Potter said. “Maybe I should come up with some sort of nickname for it.”

Was Potter daft? Malfoy had just insulted his parentage and the bloody fool was sitting there grinning to himself. Potter snapped his fingers.

“I know! Professor Snape used to call me Prince Potter all the time. I could be the half-blood prince! That’s perfect. I’m going to start signing all of my letters with that.”

“You are aware that your blood status is nothing to be proud of correct?” Blaise Zabini broke in, sounding far too amused.

“You expect me to be ashamed of my mum? The woman who managed to deflect a killing curse from You-Know-Who for me? You’re crazy.”

“Yes well at least our mothers are alive.” Draco snapped. Potter finally looked at him a bit of his old fiery spark back into his eyes. Good.

Draco wanted to fight him. A good duel with Potter was exactly what he needed. He had a mission
after all. One given to him by the Dark Lord himself. Draco would not fail, not like his father had.

“Could you chill it with the orphan jokes mate? Get some new material. Making fun of me for being an orphan was fine when we were 11 but honestly, I expected more from you.”

“Why should I update my material when you’re the exact same orphan you’ve always been?”

“Well not the exact same.” Potter said lifting up an eyebrow. “I got rid of the glasses you know.”

Oh, was that all? Draco glared at him fiercely unwilling to even play his game. Pansy sighed and sat up.

“Potter, either tell us why you’re here or just go.”

“I’m starting a tutoring group.” Potter said as if that was a normal thing to say. “For the younger years so that they can come to older students and ask for help with their homework or any spells they’re struggling with. I know the prefects are supposed to do that stuff but if Hermione’s workload is any indication they don’t have the time.”

No one had a workload like Granger’s, Malfoy snorted at the very idea.

“And you are telling us this why?” Blaise asked.

“I want your help running it.” Potter said. “I know you and Malfoy are the best potion students in our year. It makes sense to see if you’re game, since you two are the only two who could possibly help the younger years with anything. Not like I could do it.”

“Has the Great Potter finally discovered how incompetent he truly is?”

“My potions skills aren’t much of a secret, Malfoy.” Potter said. “Besides I’m good at other things.”

“Like what?”

“Uhm. Talking to snakes? I’m pretty good at that. Oh! And quidditch.”

“Behold, our Chosen One.” Pansy said snickering.

“The answer, if you couldn’t tell, is-”

“Before you say no Zabini consider this.” Potter interrupted. “Your first and second years are going to go to this study group. They’d be stupid not to, I already have all the first years begging me for tutoring and you know it. If you join the group of students I’m pulling together as tutors, then you can make sure that the Slytherins are treated fairly by the others. This is an opportunity to be right in the middle of this instead of spying in on it from the outside. Are you really going to say ‘no’ to that?”

Since when was Potter smart?

“I don’t find the idea of being attacked by your followers very appealing.” Blaise scoffed. “We know better than to go where we won’t be welcome.”

“No one is going to bother you.” Potter said very seriously. “If they do then they’ll deal with me. This is going to be a house rivalry free space.”

“Why should we believe you?” Pansy demanded.
Potter rolled his eyes and then spoke.

“How about I tell you a secret? Something to…simplify this?”

“We aren’t your mind healer Potter.” Malfoy snapped.

“I was supposed to be in Slytherin.” Potter said.

What?

What the…

“You’re lying.” Blaise said.

“Am not.” Potter said. “The hat wanted to put me in Slytherin, argued with me about it. I had to beg it to put me in another house. Swear on my mum’s grave it’s true.”

“Seriously?” Pansy asked.

“Mhmm. Only reason I’m not a snake like the rest of you is because I only knew two things about Slytherins by that point. Firstly, that the first wizard I’d ever met had told me that Slytherins were bad news and secondly that the man who murdered my parents was a Slytherin. It was basic self-preservation to go someplace else. So, I got sorted into Gryffindor.”

“Why are you telling us this?”

“Because this summer when I realized how much Dumbledore was trying to manipulate me I did some thinking.” Potter said. “And I figured that I’m not so different from you guys. Blood status aside I guess. I don’t want to play Dumbledore’s games anymore. He wanted me to hate you all, to think the worst of you for no other reason than where the hat put you and who your parents are. I’m not doing it anymore. You’re kids just like me.”

“How sweet.” Draco drawled. “Any other little pithy poems you’d like to spout to us?”

“I’m sorry about your dad.” Potter said making Draco stiffen completely. Potter continued. “I’m an orphan, like you keep pointing out, I know what it’s like to have your parent taken away. It’s not fun. I mean don’t get me wrong, your dad tried to murder me so I’m not sad he’s in jail, but I know you cared about him and it’s not fair you have to suffer for his crimes.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about Potter.”

Potter just shrugged, not denying his point. Draco gritted his teeth. He wanted Potter to react, to fight him, just like they used to. What? Was Draco not good enough for Potter anymore? Well too bad. It was Draco’s job to figure out who Potter was allied with now and who had been training him in magic. He was meant to discover what Potter’s true powers were now and where they had come from. Draco was going to figure it out. He would.

“Are you really splitting with Dumbledore then?” Blaise asked. “That wasn’t just some stunt?”

“Yeah. Yeah I am.” Potter said seriously.

“Fine. I’ll join your stupid tutoring club.” Blaise said.

“Blaise!” Draco said.

“What? He makes a good point.” Blaise said.
“You have to promise to be fair to every student that comes to you for help.” Potter said. “All the tutors are going to sign something to make sure that no one is treated poorly. You’ll be allowed to read through it and check it for any untoward spells before you sign, and we’ll all sign the same thing. Fair’s fair.”


“They make some good points.” Potter said. “All the houses do, I could learn a lot from your house too.”

“What could you possibly have to learn from us?” Malfoy demanded finally gaining his voice back.

“Malfoy. I have a prophecy on my head that says I’m either going to kill You-Know-Who or die trying. On top of that, Dumbledore is also trying to put me into life threatening danger for his twisted chess game.” Potter said. “If there was ever a time to learn cunningness, resourcefulness, and self-preservation it’d be now.”

That made Pansy and Blaise both snort while Draco just glared at Potter. Potter looked right back at him and sighed for a moment.

“Dumbledore wants us all to believe we have to be enemies. That we have to hate each other. But that’s just the sort of thinking that let the war get as bad as it is now. And now we have a bunch of younger students who are going to die if they don’t learn enough magic to defend themselves. I don’t want any of those kids to get hurt, not like I was, not like we were. I’m choosing to go against the plans Dumbledore has for me. We all have that choice.”

Potter stood up and shook his legs to get the grass off of his shoes.

“Thanks, Zabini for agreeing to help. I’ll send you a message with all the details. If anything doesn’t seem fair to you let me know and we’ll revise it. If there are any students in your house who you think would be willing to help send their names to me and I’ll add them to the pool.”

“You’d take my recommendation?” Zabini asked.

“You know your house better than I do and if they’re willing to sign the same thing I’ll be signing then I don’t see the problem.” Potter answered. “Just be warned though. Hermione’ll be enchanting the paper so don’t think you can trick her, should ask Marietta how that worked out for her.”

All three of them shivered at the reminder of the boils that had been on her face for weeks after the snitching incident. Granger was ruthless when she wanted to be. Potter grinned and turned to leave, but then he paused.

“Remember, we can all choose who we want to follow. Even if that just ends up being ourselves.”

Obviously, Potter was recruiting. It was so obvious it was painful. And yet Draco could still see the thoughtful looks in his friends’ eyes. It was the same look that had been spreading through the Slytherin Common room ever since the opening feast. It was the look that increased each time Potter was spotted helping a Slytherin first year or casting a difficult spell without breaking a sweat.

Potter’s power was just as convincing, if not more so, than his kindness for most of them.

And what power it was. There didn’t seem to be a spell Potter couldn’t do. No transfiguration was too complex, no charm too taxing. Crabbe even claimed that he saw Potter doing wandless magic in an empty courtyard and Goyle had backed him up much to the astonishment of the house. If Potter was capable of that then…
It was the same look that kept most Slytherins from writing home. It was the look that caused whispers late into the night when the darkness of the common room could hide an identity. It was the look that was rocking the structure of the school, institutions and traditions that had been in place for generations were being knocked down because of one stubborn Gryffindor. Draco wanted to scream, wanted to spit at the very idea. How dare his house consider this?

Did they not know their duty?

Potter didn’t. He didn’t know anything. What did he know of loyalty? Of family?

*I’m sorry about your dad.*

Malfoy clenched his jaw. He stood up roughly.

“Draco.”

“Don’t Blaise.” He snapped. “You made your choice. I don’t need you anyway.”

“It’s not like that!”

Draco wasn’t willing to listen though. He stomped viciously away, ignoring Pansy’s calls and Blaise’s denials. They were traitors through and through. He’d thought they were his friends, that they could be trusted. Of course, he’d been foolish to think that. He didn’t need them. He only needed himself. He could complete his mission, get the information his Lord wanted, and he’d protect his mother, he’d get his father free. He’d make everything perfect. He had no other choice.

Draco stalked his way all the way to the other side of the castle. He found himself pacing angrily back and forth along the cliff’s edge. There was no one there to bother him, no windows for people to spy from. He was alone and he was furious.

_Frightened._

He wasn’t a fool. Draco knew what would happen if he failed. If he betrayed the Dark Lord. His mother would pay the price. His father too. His entire family rested on his shoulders, they depended on him. He would not fail. He wouldn’t.

What did Potter even know of choice anyway?

Potter had had his whole life handed to him. People fell at his feet to give him what he wanted. Only someone like Potter would be arrogant to break an alliance with Dumbledore while fighting a war against Draco’s Lord. Potter was far too foolish to follow into battle. He would get them killed, just like he’d gotten his godfather killed.

Draco angrily kicked at a rock, sending it flying off the cliff and into the sea below. He scowled as he watched its rapid descent. Only two weeks into the school year and he was already feeling the pressure, the fear. He had to send information soon or all would be lost. His Lord had made that clear. For every week he failed to produce results his mother would be…

No. Potter was wrong.

There was no choice for him. Not for any of them.

The sun began to set before Draco had calmed down. He had remained outside for hours, skipping
dinner and his afternoon class. Draco would have stayed out for longer, he had in fact planned on it, but he heard a crunch. He turned to see Potter standing a fair distance away, his wand lit up with a simple lumos.

“If you take one step closer, I’ll consider it a sign of aggression.”

“You asking for a rematch duel?” Potter asked. “I’m game.”

“What?”

“Been a while since we dueled. You really got me that first time with the snake conjuring.”

“Just go away Potter.” Draco sighed.

Potter didn’t.

Instead the idiot took one more step.

Draco flipped around and fired a high-powered blasting hex right at him. Potter immediately dropped his lumos spell and brought up a shield. The shield held against Draco’s attack but sent Potter skidding back along the wet grass. Draco growled and fired another spell at him, which Potter dodged. He fired again and again and again. Each time Potter either deflected, blocked or dodged. Even as Draco’s spells got darker, Potter didn’t react beyond trying to move closer to Draco.

Draco took a step back and kept fighting.

“Fight back!” Draco shouted. “FIGHT BACK YOU COWARD!”

For the entire summer Draco had been fighting. Fighting to protect his mother. Fighting for his place. Fighting for his family’s honor. Fighting for his life. He’d been fighting a battle he knew he could not win. Fighting a never-ending war that resulted in torture and nightmares each day. Fighting a fight that ended with him being marked with something that trapped him in a destiny he had no choice in.

And now. Now he could finally win. Now he could take down Potter. He could, he knew he could. But that damn idiot wasn’t fighting back.

Just taking steps closer and closer to him.

Draco stepped back trying to maintain their distance.

His chest was heaving as he fired spell after spell, hex after hex. The grass around them was burnt and singed from the magic that failed to hit it’s target. He could smell the acrid scent of ozone as he tried to get Potter to react, to do something.

He fired a cruciatus.

Potter dodged and stepped forward.

He took a step back.

There was no ground beneath him.

His and Potter’s eyes widened at the same time.

He began to fall.
“MALFOY!”

Draco squeezed his eyes shut as gravity began to pull him down to the rocky cliffs below. Then a powerful force gripped his robe and pulled with inhuman strength. Potter dragged him by his robes all the way into his arms and then further back away from the cliff’s edge, holding him in a grip that was far too strong.

“Holy shit.” He said. “That was close. What were you thinking, Malfoy? You could have died.”

“What does it matter?”

“Huh?”

“It doesn’t matter Potter! Nothing does! You’re a fool if you think so. I don’t have a choice.”

“Of course, you do.” Potter said, pulling back. Draco roughly pulled himself away from Potter.

“No, I don’t! He has my mother you idiot!”

Potter froze, he froze so completely it reminded Draco for a moment of the victims of the basilisk.

“Oh.”

“I have my destiny Potter and so do you.” Draco said. “We’ve never had a choice.”

“No, you still have a choice Draco.”

“If you think I’m going to abandon my family then you’re…”

“No. No.” Potter interrupted shaking his head almost violently. “I’m saying we should save them, your mum I mean. Let’s save your mum.”

“What are you talking about?”

“You say you don’t have a choice because You-Know-Who has your mum. So, let’s free your mum.” Potter said as if it were simple. “Then you’d have a choice.”

The mark on his arm throbbed a warning as if it knew the direction of his thoughts.

“You’re insane.”

“No, I’m not. Your mum is in Malfoy Manor, right? Let’s go get our brooms and fly over there. You can get us under the wards, and I can keep us from being noticed.” Potter said, his eyes were lighting up now with an unholy chaotic light. It was unlike anything Draco had ever seen.

“And…and how would you do that?”

“I’ve learnt a lot of magic over the summer.” Potter promised. “Had a great teacher. I can disguise us so no one will suspect our true identities. We go in, find your mum, and get her out of there.”

“And then what? Come back here?”

“I’ve made a lot of allies over the summer. There’s a safehouse we can take her too. No strings attached. You don’t have to join me or any side if you don’t want too. Your mum will still be safe as long as she doesn’t do something to endanger herself.”
“This…this is crazy.”

And why wasn’t Draco running? Why wasn’t he taking this opportunity to fight again? Why was he listening?

“Come on Malfoy.” Potter said, holding out a hand, eerily echoing the hand Draco had offered him years ago. “Make a choice.”

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