Sharpen Your Claws

by Of_Lights_and_Shadows

Summary

People always seemed to underestimate Tony, and he even encouraged it, sometimes. Being underestimated was a great tool to have. It was fine. Until it was not.

Notes

Sometimes I like to ignore everything past a1 didn't happen and the team are like a family. This is one of those times.

See the end of the work for more notes

Tony absolutely loved being underestimated. It made proving himself right all the more satisfying. And when it came to his shifter form? He'd much prefer others thinking of him as a small, ordinary housecat than whatever it was that he was. After all, what's to expect from a non-shifter father and a seemingly plain mother?
(Short answer: A Lot.)

He would very much loved to keep a secret that he was a Shifter in the first place. It didn't even last through his first decade of life. Goodbye already inexistent, normal childhood. As if the kidnappings weren't enough.

Nobody noticed when a cheetah cub roamed New York one night. It was the same night Tony Stark was kidnapped, at barely eleven years old. Nobody seemed to connect the two events with one another.

Tony was glad about that.

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Tony was tired. He was so tired that his Shift was threateaning to trigger, even under suppressants. That would only serve to prove to the rest of the Avengers what he knew they thought: it made him unreliable. What use was, after all, a plain cat Shifter in battle? Small, useless, vulnurable. Everyone forgets small cats have claws too; they're small, but they're natural hunters too.

My dear child, this is your secret. It's your choice if you want to tell anyone or not.

What about you, mama?

I'll stand by my choice Tonio, but mine should not influence yours.

He lets out a sigh as he enters his workshop.

"How's my little tiger doing?"

"More a kitten than a tiger right now, Loki."

"No nicknames? It must be something either too serious, or you're too tired to think."

"It's both. Bruce is gone, everyone seaches for him and also everyone doesn't want me involved. All because I'm small and weak if I'm forced to Shift."

"But you have a ridiculous plan to set into motion."

"Naturally. I want your help in it."

"And what's in for me?"

"The chance to mess with the rest of the Avengers?"

"You got yourself a deal."

"Good. I'm gonna rest now."

Tony yawns, and lays down, falling asleep.
Loki picks up the Scottish Fold and moves them to a bed, falling asleep as well.

When he wakes up again, Tony is nowhere to be seen, but he's left a note of instructions behind.

Loki smiles.

*This will be fun.*

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Steve feels relieved seeing Tony on the team meeting. He was so afraid Tony would run off to find Bruce. But he finds him on his lab, and when asking to have dinner, as a team, Tony reluctantly agrees.

They spend the night as an almost team, and he lets out a sigh when Tony makes jokes.

It's going to be okay.

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*Come on Brucey, please, wake up! I can't carry you, or even drag you outside! Please!*

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When Bruce regains consciousness, he's greeted with a disturbing sight. He's in a place unfamiliar, surrounded by evidence of a carnage. There's blood adorning the walls, still wet. Badly mutilated corpses, as if hellhounds were unleashed upon them. It's a scarring image to experience, one that sets even then strongest minds on edge.

Then, he hears a growl, and his senses searches for it. And there it is, a.... lynx? staring at him, eyes bright, with a familiar intelligence that tends to hide in a shifter eyes. The shifter circles him for a couple times.

"Do you want me to follow you?" he asks, not expecting an answer. When they walk away, he follows.

The rest of the Avengers are waiting for him outside.

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Steve is more than happy to see Bruce coming outside, safe and in one piece, ignoring his
companion. The animal ignores them as well, until it notices Tony, and just walks towards him.

"Yes, yes, I got your things." Tony says with a smile? and throws a backpack to the large cat, and it drags said backpack back to where it came from. Tony follows.

He comes back a couple of minutes later, followed by Loki.

"Thanks for keeping an eye on them for me, Loki." Tony says and Steve is, at best, confused.

"Excuse me but, what the fuck?" he hears Clint say. Well, he's not wrong. He'd like some answers as well.

"It's quite simple, really." Loki replies. "I spend time with you, while Stark went on his rescue mission."

"Oh no. He said Stark. He's angry at me." Tony mutters.

"Tony was that lynx?" Natasha questions. "Tony is a cat shifter."

"Actually I'm not. Not exactly."

"Familiae felidae superioris." Bruce explains. "Some people don't have a singular, species-focused shift, but one that extends to a genus or, in rarer cases, like Tony's, a family."

"So what, Tony can swift into lions and stuff?" Clint jokes.

"I've been to Wakanda, once. Everyone lost their shit when I shifted into a panther."

"You're serious?"

"Like a heart attack."

"What about Loki?" Steve asks, ingoring Tony's horrid joke. "I thought he was dead?"

"Rumours of my death have been greatly exaggerated." is all that Loki says.

"We got a thing. I help him come up with pranks. He leaves the rest of the world alone. And we have a thing." he repeats. "Is there a problem?"

Steve glares at Loki. "Hurt him and you'll have to deal with us." he threatens. Loki just smiles.

"I wouldn't want it any other way."

End Notes

my love and thanks to Elly for suggesting Tony's shifter forms!

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