Piece by Piece

by Kairyn

Summary

Clint cannot stand it any longer. What he found out haunted him until he did something about it and now he's got an Ex-God in his house that was near a vegetable and he has to find some way of dealing with that. Also he's pretty sure this is a bad idea and he might have gone insane. But what else was he supposed to do? Let the guy rot?!

Notes

So... yeah, should I be doing this? Probably not. But I gave up resisting. I left the original one shot like it was because I shouldn't be starting new stories... but yeah, let's ignore that... and do it anyway because I'm a glutton for jumping around from thing to thing... sigh. I hope nobody minds yet another another story before I finish my others.
This was stupid, Clint reminded himself. Stupid, stupid, stupid, just so stupid. And he should probably come up with another word for it, but he couldn't help it because he was being stupid. But Clint could not for the life of him shake what he had seen. Seeing Loki slumped in a wheelchair drugged out of his vegetable mind and left to wither away had been haunting him. Clint tried to not think about it and just move on. But constantly his brain kept dragging him back to that day.

What certainly didn't help was knowing that Thor was depressed because he had been told by his father that his brother didn't want visitors. Which Clint was sure was just a way for the bastard to keep Thor from finding out what had happened to Loki. That his brother was left to soil himself in an empty room like a helpless infant.

Clint tried to convince himself that Loki deserved every second of it, but that rang hollow even in his own thoughts. Did Loki even know what he'd done anymore? That didn't seem likely with the darkness Clint had searched ruthlessly for any sign of intelligent thought. So then there was no reason to keep him locked up. Clint would normally be the first to advocate keeping the bastard locked away, but this wasn't normal.

So, Clint had a difficult problem in front of him. What could he even do, and should he do it in the first place?

Clint hemmed and hawed for several months over it despite the feeling of urgency that was seeping into his bones. Finally, though, he just couldn't take it. Clint emptied out the office at home on the first floor that he never even used. With the help of Stark, he outfitted it with something appropriate for someone severely handicapped. Tony thought it was all for Laura's mother who had taken ill and Clint was okay with that little lie. Clint had to add an entire bathroom down beside the new bedroom since none of the ones already in the house would be large enough to make handicapped accessible.

It was around that time Laura asked what was going on, and Clint couldn't exactly lie to her. She had listened as Clint explained what he'd stumbled across and how it led him to finding Loki left to rot with barely any thoughts left in his head. Clint had a feeling if there had been a brain monitor hooked up to the alien not much activity would have registered. It took Clint a few days to convince Laura that he was not crazy or compromised and it took hacking into SHIELD to find a security feed of Loki's room.

Clint hadn't been any more prepared for what he showed her than she had been. Because while he knew Loki was defenseless and at the mercy of SHIELD guards, he hadn't realized the full extent of it. Clint tasted bile but forced the urge to vomit down as he and Laura stumbled across even more abuse of Loki.

Laura quickly closed the laptop lid to shut off the feed of a gang of guards crowded around Loki while the sounds of crying and flesh being impacted came from the center of the circle. The feed was grainy and dark and so hard to see, but it was clear Loki wasn't fighting back. His pale limbs were quite clearly sprawled along the ground and stood out like white marble in the dimness. "... alright," Laura said after a minute. "Just get him out of there, Clint," Laura said with her eyes squeezed tight.

Clint nodded and gave her a kiss on the cheek. "I'll be back, Laura," he said before getting up and grabbing his equipment. Clint hesitated for a moment before picking up his phone. SHIELD would never let Clint just go in and take Loki from them, but Thor would not give them the option.

"Hello?" Thor asked into the phone loudly. "Friend Clint? Is this you speaking through this strange
device!? I have not yet grown accustomed to such dainty technology! But the little screen that said the name 'KATNISS' had your picture on it. I do not understand how Stark has programmed this."

"Thor! You don't have to shout, buddy. Yes, it's me. Listen... I have something I have to tell you."

"Oh?"

Clint swallowed hard. "Yeah, and you're not going to like it..."

Thor was unsettlingly quiet as Clint explained everything he had seen and discovered about the SHIELD facility. Through the phone, Clint could hear the rumble of thunder, but Thor himself said nothing. Clint was nervous but kept forging ahead with his plans of getting Loki away from SHIELD that he already had a safe place set up for him to go and he just needed help getting Loki out of that cell. He spat it all out quickly since his heart was thundering in his chest like nobody's business. "So, what d'ya say big guy? Prison break sound good to you?"

There was a moment of silence. "Verily," Thor finally said. His voice was near a growl. "I shall meet you there, and then I shall have words with Fury and my Father."

Clint shivered as he swore even this far from New York he heard the sky rumble from Thor's rage. "Right. I'll send you the coordinates and meet you there in a couple hours."

"Clint."

Clint caught himself from hanging up just in time. "Uh, yeah?"

"You have my thanks."

Clint almost cringed. He didn't really want thanks. Clint hadn't exactly jumped up and rushed to get Loki out of there. He'd dilly-dallied for months trying to forget he saw anything at all. He'd left the guy there even though Clint knew he'd been rendered harmless. "I'll see you there," Clint said since he didn't want to accept thanks and he didn't want to argue with Thor when he was already in such a murderous mood.

Clint drove to the nearest landing strip where SHIELD kept a small plane for him to come and go with. Then flew that jet to the SHIELD base where Loki was being held in the jungles of South America. It was a remote place, and Clint had a hard time landing the jet. One, because of the dense foliage, and two, because there was a raging hurricane ripping through the area and trying really hard to bring down Clint's aircraft. After struggling with the controls and attempting two landings, Clint finally managed to get the plane down on the top of the facility.

The wind and rain were punishing, and already, alarms were going off. Clint cursed and hurried to the roof access. He should have known that Thor wouldn't wait. Clint was soaked to the bone even after the short trip from the plane to the stairwell and from what it looked like the entire facility was running on backup power. The halls were glowing with red lights and alarms blared too loudly in Clint's hearing aids.

Clint readied his bow with stunning taser arrows and made his way to the nearest stairs that would lead to the unlisted levels. He hadn't told Thor exactly where Loki was but judging by the unconscious bodies all over the place Thor was going to tear the place apart to find his brother. And it probably wouldn't even take him that long. Several guards had burns all over them (electric burns it looked like) and broken limbs from where they had been manhandled into each other and solid objects. Clint didn't envy their recovery time in the least. It was probably going to be months to years.
Nobody was conscious as Clint got to the level he'd found Loki on. He cursed aloud. He'd really been hoping for a more subtle breakout than this. Clint realized that he had probably been too optimistic. Clint put his bow and arrows away as he reached the hall with Loki's cell at the end. The thick vault-like metal door had been torn off its hinges and tossed away. Clint had to crawl over it practically where it was caught catercorner in the corridor.

Clint paused as he heard crying, and he really didn't feel it was his place to go in there. But, after about five minutes, Clint knew that he had to pull them out. SHIELD would already be sending reinforcements, and they needed to get Loki treatment most likely.

Clint reluctantly stepped forward and into the small, dank room. Thor wasn't sending out bolts of electricity, which was good, but he was rocking the limp form of his brother there on the ground while sobbing something that didn't remotely sound like English.

Loki was staring at nothing in Thor's arms. He was even thinner than Clint remembered and had more bruises all over his paper-like skin. His naked body was filthy with his own waste, blood, and other things that Clint would rather not categorize. Thor rocked his brother in his arms like a child whose favorite toy was broken, and Clint winced at the far too accurate description he'd come up with. Thor had tears streaming down his face as he continued to say whatever he was repeating as he stroked back Loki's matted hair. Loki didn't seem to notice.

"Thor," Clint called softly. "We gotta get him out of here, buddy."

Thor glanced over at Clint, his eyes red around the blue and face lined deeply with distress. "He says nothing..."

"... yeah," Clint said uneasily. "I don't think he's gonna be saying anything for a long time, Thor." If ever again.

Thor's face screwed up with more pain, and Clint felt like a complete bastard. Thor looked back down at Loki in his arms and murmured something else before kissing Loki's forehead and then gently picking him up bridal style. "Hold on," Clint said as he went forward and undid the IV bag that he was sure was still feeding Loki sedatives. Those probably weren't helping anything although Clint did put a sample of the fluid in his belt in case Loki had been hooked up to it so long as to get his body dependent. Withdrawal in his state would probably kill the guy. Clint glanced over at the toppled wheelchair in the corner and decided not to take it. The thing reeked anyway, and it wasn't as if wheelchairs were difficult to come by. "Alright, let's go."

Thor nodded, and Clint led the way back out of the facility. Nobody was in their way, but Clint knew that they were fighting the clock. SHIELD knew where they were and most likely what they were doing.

Sure enough, as they got to the last level before they could reach the roof, an entire squadron led by Fury himself was standing in their way. "Barton. Thor. What do you think you're doing?" Fury asked entirely too calmly given the situation.

"We are taking my brother from this barbaric place," Thor said. "You had no right to do this to him!"

"Odin gave us that right," Fury replied.

Thor's eyes glowed, and little bits of electricity escaped to snap to the metal on his armor. Thunder rolled outside. "Believe me, I will be taking that up with him later, but you will not stop us leaving with Loki now. Whatever rights Odin gave to you, I am revoking. You have gone too far!"
"Too far?" Fury echoed. "He's a war criminal that killed hundreds."

"And now he's a vegetable," Clint couldn't help but say. "Believe me, I hate him more than anyone, but he's not a threat to anyone anymore. I don't even think he knows his own name you ripped him apart so much."

Fury glanced over at the still limp figure that Thor was cradling in his arms. "You will let us pass, Fury. Or I will cut my way through you," Thor said firmly.

Fury glanced between Thor and Clint. "Letting criminals just leave isn't the way we do things," he said.

Thor narrowed his electric eyes and shifted to put Loki in Clint's arms. Clint almost staggered under the unexpected weight but managed to recover. "Take Loki and leave, Clint. I will finish here," Thor said as he pulled his hammer from his belt.

Clint knew there was a second way to the roof, but it was on the other side of the facility. But, waiting around here didn't seem smart, so he turned and left. He heard Thor buzzing and the whirling of his hammer. "Please, try to stop us," Thor said darkly to Fury and his men.

Clint didn't wait to see what would happen and just made his way to the other roof access at the other side of the facility. Loki made a strange noise, and Clint glanced down at him. It was the first noise Loki had made at all, and it sounded almost pained. Loki was looking off to the side, and Clint realized he was looking at where Thor had been left behind. "He's going to be alright," Clint said. "Thor's no pushover." Clint had no idea if Loki even knew who Thor was, but clearly, there were enough fragments in his damaged mind for there to be some sort of connection still.

Loki settled again, and Clint hoped it was because he understood, but he didn't hold out too much hope for that. More likely he'd just forgotten it already or run out of energy. Clint had to hoof it all the way around the facility, and he could still hear crashes and shouts as Thor beat whoever was stupid enough to try and stop him to a pulp.

Clint kicked the door to the roof open and cursed as he realized the storm hadn't let up in the least. He hunched his shoulders and ran through the punishing rain to the jet, cursing the whole time as his skin stung with impact after impact and he had to blink his eyes furiously to keep water out of them.

As soon as they were in the jet, Clint laid Loki down on the medical bench and put a dry blanket around him. Loki was staring at the lights of the different monitors as Clint quickly put them on him. His vitals seemed stable, so that was definitely a plus. Clint strapped him down to the bench since he didn't seem aware enough to hold on should they hit turbulence.

Once his passenger was secure, Clint set to the task of taking off in the middle of a storm. It wasn't going to be easy, but Clint surely didn't want to wait around. Thor seemed intent on ripping the place apart, and Clint didn't want to play witness to that. Thor would catch up later, Clint was sure.

The amount of turbulence and the buffeting of the wind was enough that Clint usually wouldn't dare take off in such conditions, but he knuckled down and pulled out every trick he could think of to actually get into the air. He cursed violently as a lightning bolt almost hit them, but he managed to avoid it and headed up to try and clear the clouds since Clint couldn't see the end of the storm any other direction he looked.

The turbulence was even worse, and Clint fought the controls every inch of the way through the clouds. Had he mentioned how stupid he was? Because Clint was sure, he was the stupidest person on Earth for this.
Finally, the jet cleared the storm and Clint allowed himself a moment to recover and slow his heart rate to something more reasonable. He looked down and saw the storm still rolling down below, the clouds lighting up with electrical discharges every minute or so. Clint saw that the storm was spread at least twenty or thirty miles around the facility in any direction and whistled lowly to himself. He hadn't known that Thor could make a storm so big. Thor had only ever made localized storms of a few miles before. "Your brother really loves you, Loki," Clint said back as he started back for home.

On the flight home, Clint got several calls from various people, all of which he ignored. No doubt what happened at the facility was getting out, and everyone wanted to know what he was thinking. Clint hadn't yet figured out how he would explain what he was doing to the others, so he was doing the mature thing and ignoring the problem entirely. Laura was the only call he took, and that was just to assure her that: he'd gotten Loki, he wasn't hurt, and they'd be home soon.

Clint checked on Loki somewhere over the ocean and was glad to see that the alien had fallen asleep. Or maybe passed out. Clint couldn't tell. Clint got out some simple medical supplies and tried to clean Loki up some. He was in a disgusting state, but Clint shoved his reactions back as best he could. It wasn't as if Loki would have messed himself like this normally. Plus, this was the guard's fault for just leaving him there when he clearly had no ability to take care of himself.

Clint tossed the soiled rags into the trash and used some wet wipes to try and clean him up more, but there was only so much that could be done without an actual bathroom. Some wounds Loki had Clint made sure to clean and bandage, but not many were something that Clint could actually treat. He was covered in bruises, but that wasn't something that could be addressed by anything but time.

By the time Clint got home with Loki, it was nearly ten at night, which Clint was glad for. It meant the kids would be asleep and he didn't have to explain who the person who looked and smelled a lot like a corpse was or how he'd gotten into his state. Laura was still up, and her eyes went hard at the sight of the unconscious bone-thin man that Clint carried into the house.

"I got the bathroom ready," Laura said as she held the door to what was now going to be Loki's room open for Clint.

"Thanks, Laura. Thor'll probably be here soon, I left him to deal with Fury and SHIELD," Clint said as he took Loki into the bathroom. Though there was a handicap shower in the bathroom, Clint had also put in a tub as well, and Clint carefully lowered Loki into the lukewarm water. He would have to rebandage Loki's wounds, but Clint had only done a half-assed job the first time since he'd also been trying to keep an eye on the plane at the same time.

Clint rolled up his sleeves and with Laura's help gave Loki a proper bath, which he desperately needed. Even after washing his hair three times the mess of snarls there was just so matted by filth it wasn't coming out. Laura ended up having to cut the mess free, which revealed a festering cut underneath that would have to be treated. It was a nasty looking thing that started near the right side of the crown of Loki's head and curved down and back towards the nape of his neck. Clint wasn't sure what caused it, but now it made sense why Loki's hair had been so severely matted on that side.

Loki woke up at some point, Clint wasn't sure when. He just knew that he looked up to ask Laura something and saw distant green eyes staring down at him. "You're awake again," Clint said. He wasn't expecting a response, not really, but it was still strange that Loki just stared as if completely unaware Clint had said something. "We're just cleaning you up. I don't know if you remember me," Clint said as he scrubbed the ex-Prince's feet -the soles were filthy black they were so encrusted with dirt- with a washcloth that he should probably change out for a fresh one. "My wife Laura is behind you."

"Hi there," Laura said as she paused in her cleaning of the gash in his head to move enough that he
saw her. Loki continued to stare. Laura's smile didn't falter. "Don't you worry. We'll get you all fixed up," she said as if she were talking to a child. Which, Clint realized, she sort of was. And wasn't that just the saddest thing ever.

Loki did nothing to indicated he understood and soon Clint and Laura went back to what they were doing, although Laura had decided to tell a story about Lila beating the neighborhood boys in a race at school. Clint wasn't sure if it was for his benefit or Loki's.

It ended up taking the better part of two hours to finish cleaning Loki up from his neglect and tend to all of his wounds properly. The head wound was definitely the worst as it had gotten infected and would have to be treated for that before it could heal properly.

Once Loki was properly taken care of for probably the first time in months and months, Clint carefully pulled him out of the tub and carried him to the bedroom. Laura helped get Loki into a pair of pajamas, which looked a bit ridiculous on him since he was so thin. Plus, pale orange didn't seem to be his color (although Clint was blaming that on Laura since she bought the things). "There," Clint said as he situated Loki and pulled the covers up over him. "I'll stay up and wait for Thor. I'm sure he'll want to be with you a while before going to yell at Odin." Odin's name got a reaction -if only a small one- Loki shied slightly to the side and Clint made a mental note of it to tell Thor later. Even vague associations Loki could make to his past was more than Clint had thought they'd get.

Loki's eyes roamed the room for a few moments before settling on the window. Clint looked out but saw nothing of any interest out there. It was all dark woods way off in the distance. But Clint didn't comment. Instead, he made his way to the door. "You should get some rest," Clint said. "It's late."

Loki, of course, didn't respond and kept staring out of the window as Clint turned off the light. He left the door partially opened, however, in case something happened that he needed to hurry in for. Now that he had gotten Loki out of that inhumane situation... what did he do? Clint sighed and rubbed his face. He had to admit he hadn't really thought that far in advance. Probably make it so that Loki wasn't a bag of sticks would be the best choice. Great. Had he mentioned how stupid he was lately?
Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Just so you know, I wasn't intending or expecting to have another chapter out so soon but I really wanted to write the conversation between Thor and Clint... so much so it distracted me from writing the next chapter of Once More with Empathy... which is much more lighthearted than this! Darn you annnnggst!

It started raining at the farm only about half an hour after Clint had put Loki to bed and about ten minutes after that Thor landed with a heavy thud in the front yard and probably making a colossal depression of mud. Clint went to the door as Thor, dripping wet and looking so very done, trudged up onto the porch. Mud was splattered up half of his legs and all over the bottom of his cape, but he didn't look in the least harmed. "Is he well?" Thor asked.

Clint shrugged. "As well as he can be. I put him to bed a little while ago after giving him a bath and patching up what wounds I could," Clint said. It felt so weird to be talking about Loki like this. The man who'd been pulled out of a plane mid-flight and slammed into the ground without any long term effect at all. Now Clint was giving him baths and putting him to bed because he couldn't do it himself. The juxtaposition was almost too much to comprehend, and somehow, this was Clint's life now.

Thor nodded and carefully put his hammer down inside the door of the house and undid his sopping wet cape to hang on one of the pegs right beside Lila's pink bookbag and Cooper's green jacket. Thor's cloak looked a little silly intermixed with all of the kid's stuff, but Clint just shook it off as he figured he'd be getting used to that sight in the future. Clint very much doubted that Thor wouldn't be a regular visitor as long as Loki was at the farm. However long that would be. Clint hadn't thought ahead to questions like that. "How did it go back there with Fury?" Clint asked.

Thor's face grew dark. "He lives. And knows now to not come after Loki again," Thor said. "I imagine it will take him some time to recover from going through that wall. Admittedly, I was not aware it was a load bearing wall at the time. I didn't intend to bring that section of the building down around us... but I dug him and his agents out before they were crushed when they know I could have left them. I made sure they will not forget the many debts they now owe."

Clint could only stare for a minute. "... oh," he said finally after failing to come up with anything else. Clint had to admit even despite how angry Thor had been he was a little surprised that he'd actually thrown Fury through a load bearing wall. "Well, it's probably a good thing you didn't kill them," Clint said. That would have just made Thor a target for SHIELD.

Thor was quiet for a moment. "Despite what Fury did... he wouldn't have been able to harm my brother at all if it weren't for my Father. And, even if it were solely Fury's fault... to leave an enemy behind to slowly die of his wounds is unnecessary and dishonorable. My mother would be disappointed if I showed such behavior. If you are going to kill someone you do it," Thor said with the confidence of someone knowing that they were right. "So, I made sure they survived... but that is what took so long. Humans can be frustratingly fragile at times. Especially their necks."

"Right," Clint said. Moments like this were when Clint was reminded that for all their differences, Thor and Loki were, in fact, raised together with the same ideals. And maybe, they weren't as total
opposites as people tended to think. "You want to see Loki? Hopefully, he's asleep, but I wouldn't be
surprised if he's not." Clint had no idea if the guy had any sort of regular sleep schedule or how often
he even slept at all.

"I would, thank you," Thor said.

Clint nodded and gestured for Thor to follow him through the house. As they passed the dining
room, Laura looked up from where she had been preparing the kids lunches for the next day. "I
thought I heard something heavy land outside. Hello, Thor," she said as she came around the table.

"Lady Barton," Thor greeted with a slight bow of his head. "Thank you for opening up your home
to my brother. I know it could not be easy, especially with his history with your family."

Laura shook her head slightly. "What was happening to him wasn't justice anymore, Thor. It went
far beyond justice and even vengeance to something just too horrible and inhumane to tolerate."

Thor bowed his head again. "Your words mean much, thank you. I will see my brother now, if I
may."

"Sure thing." Clint agreed. He led Thor to the cracked open door and pushed it further so that the
light from the hall illuminated the room a bit more. There was enough ambient light coming through
from the dining room where Laura was working to see that Loki was still awake and looking at
whatever outside that had caught his interest. Clint wondered, entirely unwelcomely, when the last
time Loki even saw the outside was before today.

Thor hesitated for a moment and then stepped into the room. There was a chair shoved in the corner,
and Thor pulled it over to Loki's bedside. "Brother. I've returned," Thor said softer than Clint
thought he'd ever heard his voice before. Loki's lack of reaction made Thor's face screw up, and he
reached out to take hold of Loki's thin hand. "Why is his hair so short?" Thor asked.

Clint almost jumped at the question suddenly addressed to him. "There's an infected gash on his
head... we had to cut his hair to get to it," Clint explained. Thor nodded and leaned heavier on the
edge of the bed without letting Loki's hand go. "Can... can I do anything, Thor?" Clint asked. Clint
felt awkward and would really like something to do to keep him busy.

"You have done much already, Clint," Thor said. "Thank you, but I think I will sit with my brother
for a while."

Clint nodded and left the room although he left the door completely open so that Thor could continue
to see. Thor was still soaked, but he didn't seem to notice. Clint sighed and went to get some towels.
There was water and mud traipsed all over the floors to clean up too. Thor nodded silently when
Clint delivered a stack of dry towels to him, and the Thunder God put at least a token effort into
stopping the water from pooling around him. Clint wasn't sure how successful he was but left Thor
to what he was doing again to go and clean the rest of the mess up.

Cleaning the floors didn't actually take that long, and Clint was anxious with too much energy from
just breaking Loki out of his cell and all that entailed, so sleep really wasn't much of an option. So
Clint went to sit in his living room and waited. Laura stayed up with him for a little while before
Clint convinced her that she should go up to bed. It was so late, after all, and life on the farm started
early.

Clint needed something to do with his hands, so he tended to his equipment even though he hadn't
even fired a single arrow in the rescue. Thor had taken care of all the fighting that needed to be done
mostly before Clint had gotten there. Still, it was something quiet to do, and that was ideal. Clint
wanted to keep things quiet. It wouldn't wake the kids, disturb the brothers in the back room, and he would be able to stay alert in case someone came to demand answers for his sudden break out of a notorious villain (that they probably wouldn't have been told was practically lobotomized with his own freaky staff or whatever).

Was that how lobotomies worked? Clint had no idea, but he was pretty sure scrambling the brain was involved somehow, and Loki seemed *pureed* he was so damaged. Clint made a face and directed his thoughts away from that mental image. He knew that the others would be questioning his sanity, but Clint hadn't made this choice on a whim. Clint believed what he saw with his own eyes, and he'd seen how harmless Loki was. He'd seen (okay probably not physically seen but whatever) the lack of anything in Loki's mind. Yes, Clint had wanted Loki to suffer and pay for what he did. He still did. But that Loki and this Loki were so far removed from each other Clint was still having trouble reconciling the two.

Clint would have to convince the others about it somehow, although he wasn't sure how he would go about doing that yet. Clint emptied his pockets and examined the sample of IV fluids that he'd taken from Loki's cell. He should probably see what was in the stuff. Clint had a small analysis kit in the shed that he was pretty sure he'd never even used before. SHIELD had issued it to him as standard when he became a field agent, and Clint had never really had a call to use the damn thing. It was big and heavy to lug around, and if he was going to be coming into contact with drugs, it was probably something he'd seen before. Like Cocaine or Heroine or maybe Meth. Nothing to keep a legendary superhuman god down.

The rain had at least stopped so Clint didn't have to worry about getting soaked as he went out to the shed and dug around for the kit. It took him a little while, but he did eventually find the black case shoved in the back of a shelf that was holding a bunch of random stuff that Laura had decided they were saving. One box was full of baby clothes, and Clint didn't think a third kid was in the cards.

Clint had to knock a thick layer of dust and dirt off the case and then dragged the at least forty-pound pain in the neck back into the house to set the thing up. Clint had to take a few minutes to actually read the little handbook thing and figure out where he was supposed to put the sample but he got it set up and let the machine analyze while he went back to dealing with his already perfectly maintained equipment.

After about twenty minutes, the machine's screen changed, and Clint turned to fully look at what the readouts said. He let out a low whistle at the list of different drugs in the solution. Etorphine and carfentanil were both large animal tranquilizers Clint knew. Like for elephants. And that wasn't even all the stuff in that mix. There were some basics, like morphine and valium. Clint wasn't sure how Loki wasn't dead from the stuff he was being pumped full of. Maybe it just took that much to keep an Asgardian down? Well, that certainly boded poorly for if they ever needed to put Thor under for any reason. Who kept elephant tranquilizers around anyway? Well, Tony probably had some somewhere for God knew what reason, but then he seemed to have some of everything just because he could.

Clint huffed and leaned back in his chair. He would probably have to see about getting something close to this unGodly cocktail for if Loki *was* hooked or even if he just needed to be sedated for any reason. Good thing Clint owned a farm. He knew quite a few large animal vets that might be able to get the nonhuman use drugs.

Thor came into the room and sat down heavily on the couch opposite Clint. He let out a heavy sigh and rubbed his face with his hands. Thor kept his face buried for a few minutes before looking up at Clint. "I do not know what to do..." Thor said. "He is right there in front of me, and yet he is not there at all."
"Yeah..." And really, what else could Clint even say to that?

Thor sighed again and looked over his shoulder at where the room Loki was in was. "It is not natural for him to be this way. Loki is always so animated and intelligent and just-just always so aware of everything, and now he is like that! I know he did horrible things, but he is still my brother, and it pains me to see him in such a state!" Thor closed his eyes and took several slow breaths. "I do not even know how they could have done this to him... it seems impossible, and yet he will not respond to anything at all."

Clint looked down at his hands. "They used the scepter on him," he said. "And I don't think they cared if they caused damage when they did."

Thor opened his eyes again. "Loki's Scepter?" Clint nodded. "Why would they use such a thing on him? They clearly did not seek his obedience, or he would not be in this state. Loki would have given in before his mind fully collapsed, he values his own intellect too much to risk hurting himself in such a way."

"I think they used it to make sure he wouldn't lie or anything during interrogations," Clint said. That was what he figured that scientist had meant that Clint asked when he first discovered Loki. The old man had said they used it to get information.

"... I suppose I can understand the impulse better than most, but I cannot help but find that a poor excuse for doing this to my brother," Thor said.

The room fell silent after that, and Clint wasn't sure how to break it. There was nothing that he could say that felt even remotely appropriate.

After a long time, Clint finally scrambled together a question that he needed the answer to and would tell him for just how he would have to plan for the future. "Can anything be done to... fix him?" Clint asked. "Ya know, from Asgard? Because this is beyond us Earthlings."

Thor pursed his lips together tightly. "I do not know. I would have to summon a healer, and, to do that, I must first confront my Father about what has been done. And the lies he told my mother and me. He said Loki refused to see visitors, not that he was lying on Midgard in a cell not fit for animals, helpless to even defend himself."

"Yeah... that doesn't sound like a fun conversation," Clint muttered. "So we have no idea if he can be treated beyond the physical. If he can't... are you going to take him back up to Asgard?"

Thor hesitated. "My mother would want him there so she could tend to him... but I do not know if he would be safe. Much depends on how things go with my Father," Thor said. "If... if Loki cannot stay on Asgard, I am not certain what to do. I would not feel right burdening you with his care. And Loki will live for many centuries yet... no one person on Midgard will ever be able to tend to his needs. He will... outlive everyone... even like this..."

Clint looked away as Thor brought his hand up and hastily wiped at his face and gave a loud sniff that Clint was sure he was hoping didn't sound like he'd been about to burst into tears again. But Clint wasn't in the least fooled. Thor had just hit the heart of the issue really. If nothing could be done for Loki, then he would live the rest of his very long life a sad shell of himself. And that, Clint, was entirely confident in saying, was a fate worse than death.
Thor slept on the couch in the living room with his hammer right on the floor beside him. Clint eventually went to bed himself but didn't end up getting all that much in the way of sleep. He kept waking up at every little noise that the house made or that came from outside. Clint didn't usually sleep with his hearing aid in because it was terribly distracting, but he couldn't help from being little paranoid after breaking a prisoner out of custody. Natasha was probably going to kill him. One for breaking Loki out in the first place. And two for bringing Loki within twenty miles of Laura and the kids, much less to the same house. She was more protective than even Clint was.

Because he slept so poorly, Clint gave up on even trying around five in the morning. He was still tired, but Clint's internal alarm usually woke him up around five thirty or so anyway so he saw no point in waiting in bed still awake. Clint took a quick shower and started the coffee before poking his head into Loki's room.

Loki was sleeping at least, although when Clint had checked on him before going to bed himself, the ex-God had been awake, so Clint wasn't sure how much time Loki had spent staring out of a dark window. Clint sipped his coffee as he wandered the first floor of his house restlessly. Laura got up a little later and started on breakfast. If she found it odd that Clint was clearly wearing his tactical gear in the house, she didn't comment on it.

As the sun slowly rose above the distant trees, the kids started waking up and them rushing downstairs is what woke Thor. Laura got the kids to sit down at the table while Clint handed Thor the biggest mug that he could find filled with coffee since he knew how much Thor liked the stuff. Thor murmured his thanks and took a long sip as Clint headed over to the table where his children were waiting for their breakfast.

"Hey kids, I need to talk to you about something," Clint said as Laura started putting out the plates of eggs and bacon. Lila and Cooper looked up immediately, probably expecting yet another rule they didn't quite understand, but that Clint insisted upon since he knew how the darker elements of the world worked. "I need you two to stay away from the back office." The kids didn't usually bother to go into the back office since none of their toys were kept there, but just in case it was better to get it set from the beginning that now that room was entirely off limits.

"Why's that, daddy?" Lila asked as she chewed on the end of a piece of bacon.

Clint hesitated for a moment, not entirely sure what to call Loki or how to phrase the situation in a way that would be appropriate for kids. He definitely wouldn't call Loki a friend and saying someone fried his brain was out of the question. "Um, Mr. Thor's little brother was hurt really bad, and he's going to be staying with us for a while," Clint said. He figured that was sanitized enough for kids.

"So, he's here to get better?" Cooper asked.

"... yeah," Clint said. Hopefully, Loki wouldn't be here long enough for the kids to realize that 'better' was probably going to be measured in very minor improvements. Actually, Clint really hoped they never realized the extent of Loki's condition. "So, we don't want to bother him too much, alright? Just like when you two aren't feeling good and don't want to go out to play."

The kids nodded solemnly, and Clint was sure that, at least for a while, they would do what he asked and stay away from the back room. "Speaking of Loki, someone should probably bring him something to eat," Laura said as she handed Clint a bowl of scrambled eggs and tiny slivers of bacon.
Clint didn't miss the implication that he was the one that should do that and nodded before going to the back room. Loki was still sleeping. Clint put the bowl of egg and bacon on the side table as Thor came in behind him. "Should we be waking him?" Thor asked uneasily, eyeing the sunken quality of Loki's eyes and the dark bags there.

"He needs to eat," Clint said. "He's way too thin. And besides, it wouldn't hurt to get him on some sort of a sleep schedule rather than leaving him to just doze off whenever. By the way, I don't know if you spoke much to him last night, but he seems to at least recognize your dad's name."

"I did notice," Thor said softly. "His reaction was not encouraging..."

Clint wasn't sure how to reply to that. Loki and Odin's relationship, from what little Clint knew of it, hadn't seemed so great even before all of this. Probably better to focus on what they could actually do for the trickster. Like getting him to not look like a skeleton. "Now, Thor, there's three ways this could go down. One, Loki's able to feed himself just fine. Two, he could not be able to feed himself, but with help is alright. Or three, he could be unable to manage at all, and we'll need to put a feeding tube in him."

Thor frowned at that. "A feeding tube?"

"Yeah... it, well, delivers liquid food directly to someone's stomach so that they don't have to chew or swallow it. There are lots of reasons someone might need one, and there's no telling if Loki will. I just wanted you to be prepared in case this doesn't go well," Clint said. Clint really hoped that a feeding tube wasn't needed because he had never put one in someone before and didn't want to use Loki as a guinea pig in figuring it out.

Clint reached over and gave Loki a small shake. "Loki. Loki, I need you to wake up for me."

Loki let out a little noise that sounded remarkably like a small animal. "Brother, please rouse yourself," Thor said as he crowded closer. He looked anxious even though Clint was pretty sure Loki just didn't want to wake up, and nothing was wrong. Clint had the unpleasant realization that Thor was going to become even more overprotective than he already was after this. Clint sort of already knew that in the back of his head, but this just confirmed it.

After another little shake, Loki woke up and blinked a few times. The damaged God looked very confused. "We brought you something to eat," Clint said as he reached for the bowl of breakfast. Loki's confused expression didn't ease any as Clint held out the dish. Clint sighed and gently took hold of Loki's hand to actually put the bowl there. Loki looked down into the bowl in his lap, and his brow furrowed slightly as if he were trying to puzzle out what he was looking at.

"It is good, Brother," Thor said in a softly encouraging tone. "Lady Barton is an excellent cook. And you must be hungry..."

Loki didn't react to Thor's gentle prodding and just stared down at the mixture of egg and bacon in his bowl. Clint waited another moment to see if Loki would do anything else, but when nothing happened, he reached out to take the fork out of the bowl and stabbed a small bit of egg.

Clint had to nearly stuff the bit of fluffy yellow egg past Loki's lips. Loki didn't fight it, just appeared utterly unaware of what he was supposed to do. Clint almost sighed in relief when, after a moment, Loki seemed to realize he had food in his mouth and slowly chewed and swallowed the bit of egg. Clint repeated the process with more little bits of food, and slowly Loki seemed to get the hang of eating again. It took him less time to realize what he was supposed to do although Loki still didn't make any move to feed himself.
Clint had no idea when the last time Loki had even had food was. Probably not for a while judging by how thin he was. But as Loki started opening his mouth for the food rather than Clint needing to all but shove it past his lips, Clint allowed himself to hope that maybe he just had to relearn it. Thor shifted uneasily, and Clint figured that the Thunder God was really the better one to be doing this. Maybe Loki would respond more if it was Thor trying to get him to eat on his own.

"Here, Thor," Clint said, holding the fork out to Thor. "It looks like for now we'll have to feed him. Just go slow and don't give him too much at one time." Thor looked utterly bewildered and a little terrified but gingerly took the fork from Clint. Clint got up from his seat and gestured for Thor to take his place.

There was a pause, but then Thor sat down in the chair, pulled up to the side of the bed. Clint pretended to not notice the way Thor's lip trembled as he put a small piece of bacon and egg onto the fork and mimicked what Clint had done. What was harder to ignore was how Thor's eyes watered more and more with each passing bite he gave to his little brother.

After about ten or so small bites of food, Thor dropped his hand holding the fork and his head. Thor lifted his free hand to his face even though Clint had already seen the tears. Clint hadn't ever seen Thor cry before, and he had no idea what to do about this situation. Seeing the always strong and cheerful God of Thunder crying was almost painful all on its own.

Clint reached over and put a hand to Thor's shoulder. "At least he's eating," he said in an attempt to be optimistic. "He might still get better and be able to feed himself."

Thor shook his head and wiped his face before looking up. "This is not right," he said. "He should not be like this."

"I know, buddy," Clint said, rubbing Thor's upper shoulder. He really was trying his best to comfort the larger man, but he didn't think it was really working all that well. "I know. How about I take over again, and you get some air?"

Thor nodded and got up from the chair. Clint watched him leave and then sighed. If this only had hurt Loki, Clint might not have cared so much but seeing the ex-Prince rendered so damaged was now affecting Thor rather than Loki. There wasn't much more that could be done to Loki, Thor was altogether another story. Clint sat back down and picked up the fork that Thor had dropped. Thor might not be able to bring himself to feed his brother right now, but Loki still needed to eat.

Loki was slow to eat even the soft eggs so by the time Clint had finished feeding him the whole bowl, the last bits of warmth had faded, not that Loki seemed to have noticed. Drinking from a glass seemed to be harder for Loki, but Clint managed to get a good amount of it into the damaged ex-God after some spillage and fumbling.

Clint could hear the kids playing outside in the yard by the time he was putting the half-empty glass to the side to mop up what liquid had spilled. Loki seemed to hear it too as he turned to look at the window. "Those are my kids," Clint said. "Don't worry, they won't bother you."

Loki just continued to stare, and Clint figured that was about as much reaction as he was going to get out of Loki. Clint took the dishes back out to the kitchen where Laura was already mostly done cleaning up. Laura looked up as Clint put the bowl and fork in the sink. "Considering how Thor left the house looking like someone ran over his dog... I'm going to guess it didn't go well?"

"He ate it all," Clint said as positively as he could. "But we're going to have to feed him, at least for now."
“That’s unfortunate,” Laura said. "No wonder Thor looked so upset.”

"I'm just glad I don't have to try and put a feeding tube in him," Clint said. "That's a little beyond the first aid that I know and if I screwed it up on Loki... well, I wouldn't want to see Thor's reaction."

Laura made a bit of a face but nodded. "From the things I’ve seen and heard about him, that probably wouldn't end well. I think that was part of why he left. Thor did say he would be back soon but that he needed to be 'in solitude for the moment,'” Laura said, sinking her voice deeper in imitation of Thor's speech. "How long is Loki going to be here, by the way?” she asked as she washed the bowl.

Clint shook his head. "Not sure. Sort of depends on what happens when Thor goes back home to confront his dad."

"It's hard to believe that their father could condone something like this,” Laura said.

"I just know that there's bad history there," Clint said. "And I've never met Thor's old man, so I have no idea how likely it is. I certainly couldn't do something like that, but maybe Odin's different." Just the thought of someone treating Lila or Cooper the way Loki had been made Clint feel ill, and he didn't dwell on it long due to how reprehensible it was. Clint couldn't imagine willingly allowing it to happen.

Clint took the now clean bowl that Laura handed him and dried it off with a nearby towel. "I don't know how long Thor's going to stay here before going back up to Asgard... I kind of think he wants to make sure Loki really is stable before leaving."

"I think he is," Laura said. "You said he ate everything, right?"

"Yeah," Clint agreed. "He was really slow at eating, but he managed it. If in half an hour it's still all down I think we'll be pretty good on that part."

"That would be nice. He's way too thin," Laura said. "I could count his ribs last night."

Clint nodded. "Hopefully he's not like Thor and needs to eat five metric tons of food every day," he muttered. He felt he was only slightly exaggerating the amount of food that Thor could consume. "Because I don't think he can eat fast enough for that right now."

"We can always build up to more if we need to," Laura reasoned. "Plus I'm sure we can slip some extra calories into his meals if it comes to that. I'm sort of hoping he won't be here that long."

"Me too," Clint said.

There was a loud thud from outside, and Clint went to the front of the house to see Thor already coming closer. When Thor came in, his clothes looked damp and muddy again, and Clint didn’t doubt he'd been off in the mountains causing some sort of massive localized storm. "You alright there, big guy?" Clint asked as Thor came into the house.

Thor nodded. "My apologies for leaving," Thor said in a rough voice. "It is simply... difficult, seeing my brother in such a state."

"I get it," Clint assured him. "I think he's still awake if you wanna sit with him a while."

"That would be wise. I have decided to return to Asgard and see what can be done for him," Thor said. "I will be leaving tonight."

Clint couldn't say he was too surprised. The longer they just left Loki like he was, the less likely
they'd be able to do much about his state. At least that was Clint's assumption. Either way, delaying
certainly wouldn't help anything. "How long will you be gone?" Clint asked.

"I am not sure," Thor said. "Hopefully not more than a few days but it does depend on how difficult
my fa... the king will be."

Clint felt his eyebrow go up at the deliberate change of title but thought better than to say anything
out loud about it. Thor must have done some soul searching while he was out there being a force of
nature and Clint wasn't shocked that some things had changed. It must be hard to associate with
someone who had so severely hurt your baby brother or at least allowed it to happen. "Well, spend
time with him for a while. I'll bring in some lunch in a few hours. And don't worry... he'll be safe
here while you're gone." Thor nodded and walked past to go and see Loki.

A tension headache was starting to form, and Clint took a few deep breaths to try and release some
anxiety. Clint hoped that Thor's trip up to Asgard was quick because he was really dreading when
the other members of their team decided to investigate what was going on. Thor's help dealing with
that was something Clint was really counting on. Hopefully, the others would hold off for a little
while.
Before Thor left for Asgard, Clint hurried into town to get some additional supplies. The vet wasn't exactly prepared for a Master Assassin so Clint was able to steal a few vials of large animal tranquilizers with relatively no fuss whatsoever. Clint also made a stop to pick up some better pajamas because while he loved Laura to death... pale orange pajamas were not a good look on many people, Loki included. There were a few other things that Clint grabbed as well that he thought might help with the situation before heading back home. He also ordered up a wheelchair although that would probably take a few days to come in from a bigger city.

When Clint returned, he wasn't surprised to find Thor sitting with Loki again. Thor was talking in that language that Clint assumed was Asgardian or Old Norse or something with one of Loki's hands between his own. Loki was staring at the cover across his lap as Thor spoke and Clint gently knocked on the frame to get Thor's attention. "How's it going in here?"

Thor glanced up briefly but then shook his head. "I am not certain he understands me at all. He doesn't react to anything but the King's actual name. Not his titles or even 'Father' bring any reaction," Thor said.

"Is that a bad thing?" Clint asked as he went to put the new clothes in the dresser.

"Not necessarily," Thor said. Something about the Thunder God's tone made Clint look back over his shoulder. "... but he also does not respond to Mother's name or titles. Not even a little."

Clint cringed and arranged the folded clothes for another moment. "That's... that's rough," he finally said. He had nothing else he could say and that felt inadequate.

"They have always been close," Thor said as he lowered his head. "When we were younger. Me and my friends... we used to tease him for being so attached to Mother. We shouldn't have but-"

"But you were kids and kids do things like that," Clint said. Kids were generally terrible to one another. Thor didn't have to explain that sort of thing. Kids picking on one another seemed to be a pretty universal phenomena. Not to say that it still didn't suck but Loki was hardly the first kid to be bullied for being a mama's boy, if that was essentially what it boiled down to.

Thor looked over at Clint. "I still feel bad for it. Mother was the only one who ever seemed to understand Loki and we only ever tried to get him to stop confiding in her. And now... now he doesn't even seem to remember her," Thor said as he watched Loki's attention slowly drift across the room towards the window. "This will crush her."

"He might still get better," Clint said as he closed the drawer. "Especially if you can get some of those fancy healers of yours down here to fix him up."

"If the King allows it," Thor said bitterly.

Clint frowned. "Do you really think he did this to Loki on purpose? Or knew this would happen somehow?"

Thor was silent for several minutes before sighing. "I don't know," he said. Clint winced at how broken Thor sounded when he said that. "Both my Father and Heimdall should have been able to see and put a stop to this long before Loki was rent apart in such a way. That they didn't is... I cannot think of any excuse that would be acceptable."
"Is your Dad going to be mad at you for helping me get him out?" Clint asked.

"I do not care," Thor said.

Clint nodded a little and gave Thor a pat on his shoulder. "He's safe now, at least," Clint said in an effort to be encouraging.

"How can I ever trust him again?" Thor asked before rubbing his face. "If he can let this happen to his own son... what else is he able to do? To rationalize away? I don't think I can bring Loki to Asgard and trust he will be safe so near a man that condoned this... but to keep Mother away as well seems too cruel to the both of them. I do not know what to do..."

Shit. What was Clint supposed to say? How do you respond to that in any meaningful way? Thor pressed the knuckles of his fist to his mouth as he stared at Loki's pale hand.

After several minutes of thought, Clint sighed. "I think you should wait to decide things like that until after you talk with your mom and dad."

"Perhaps you're right," Thor murmured. After a minute, Thor leaned over and murmured something to Loki. The damaged ex-God didn't react to whatever Thor told him or to the kiss that Thor put on his forehead. "I will be back, Brother, and soon. Until then, Clint shall look after you. You will be safe here, I promise."

Loki watched as Thor left. Clint felt awkward and made his way out of the room after Thor. Clint swore that he heard Loki make some sort of a noise but it was too faint, and when Clint glanced back Loki was just staring again. His thousand yard gaze was very uncomfortable to try and meet. Clint looked away again.

"So, you're heading out to Asgard?" Laura asked as Thor wrapped his cape around his shoulders.

"Yes," Thor agreed. "I feel if I delay in confronting Odin I will only get more upset. And besides that, my Brother needs to see healers sooner opposed to later and that cannot happen until after I have returned to Asgard."

"Makes sense," Clint said. Clint had to admit he was a little apprehensive but he was pretty sure he would be no matter how this situation played out. Either, yes, this is exactly what Odin had planned or known would happen and Holy Shit. Or, no, things got out of hand and Odin just hadn't been able to stop it somehow, and What The Actual Fuck? Neither of those options were good.

Clint followed Thor out to the front yard. The grass and ground had been pushed and ripped up from Thor's landings and take offs over the last few days to the point Clint knew he'd need to dedicate a day or two to fixing the damage. Maybe he should invest in a landing pad if Thor coming and going to visit Loki was his reality for any length of time.

"I will try to be as quick as I can," Thor said as he unhooked Mjolnir from his belt. "Again, you have my thanks."

"Yeah, don't mention it," Clint said.

Thor glanced at the house one last time and then seemed to straighten his shoulders. "Heimdall! The Bifrost!" he shouted to the sky.

There was a moment's pause and then rainbow light slammed into the ground, searing ancient runes into the rippled grass of Clint's yard as well. Clint stepped out from under the porch and looked up even though he knew that there wouldn't be any sign of the huge beam now that Thor was gone.
"Good luck," Clint muttered.

"Clint!"

Clint whipped around at Laura’s call and hurried into the house. Instinct had him darting to the backroom where Loki was. Had Loki really somehow just been faking until his brother left? Clint’s heart was in his throat as he ran in.

Clint was shocked to see Loki curled up and pressing his hands over his ears so hard his nails were digging into his scalp, including the infected head wound on the left side. Clint cursed aloud and jumped onto the bed to pull Loki’s hands away. Loki whined and his fingers dug in harder, drawing several streams of blood with seemingly far too much ease. "Loki! Let go! You're hurting yourself!"

Loki squirmed and thrashed as Clint tried to pull the God’s hands away uselessly. Loki might be weakened and not have memories or whatever but he was still stronger than a human. Clint didn’t give up and after several long minutes of fighting, managed to pull Loki’s hands down. "Easy, Loki. It’s alright."

Loki whined and squirmed some more. "What happened?" Clint asked as he kept Loki’s hands down.

"I was just checking on him and then the Bifrost went off... then he did that," Laura said.

Clint frowned as slowly Loki settled again. "I guess... maybe it was too loud for him?" Clint suggested. If they had just left him in that dark cell ninety percent of the time or whatever, then maybe Loki had gotten used to processing much less sensory information. "Or it surprised him?" That would be a better option, although Loki’s reaction was extreme if he was just surprised.

"We should cut his nails," Laura said as she eyed the blood on Loki’s fingers and hands. "So he can’t hurt himself again."

Clint nodded and realized something else. "I’ll take him and get him cleaned up. Can you... change the sheets, Laura?" Clint felt awkward bringing something like that up but it needed to be done. Clint should have realized this would be a recurring issue.

"Oh, yes, of course," Laura said.

With some manhandling, Clint was able to get Loki out of bed and into the bathroom. Loki didn't struggle or do more than just be mostly dead weight as Clint got him undressed and into the tub to wash off. Laura stripped the bed to change the sheets while Clint cleaned and treated the wounds in Loki's scalp before trimming his nails down so that Loki couldn't continue to hurt himself.

Loki stared at his hands after Clint cut his nails down. "They were pretty long anyway," Clint said as he rinsed some soap off of Loki’s back. "But cutting them down will stop you from hurting yourself," Clint explained. Loki just kept staring at his hands under the water as if he’d never seen them before.

Once Loki was cleaned up again, Clint dried him off with a nearby towel and got him into some of the new clothes he’d bought that day. Getting Loki dressed was a little bit of a struggle as Clint was shorter than Loki and the ex-God was not giving much help. Laura had changed the bedding and helped Clint get Loki settled again under the fresh sheets and covers.

Laura started the laundry as Clint watched Loki sit there blankly. Clint had no idea what to do in this situation. Clearly, Loki had some sort of thought in his head if he was able to react to things and his attention could be caught, but there was so little that he did actually react to that Clint wasn’t sure
how helpful any of those realizations were. "Do you think that we should put a television or something in there with him?" Laura asked as she came to the door behind Clint. "I feel bad leaving him in there with nothing to do."

"I'm not sure if he'd watch it..."

"Couldn't hurt to try," Laura pointed out.

"True. I think I've still got that old one in the garage," Clint said.

"You mean the one I told you to take to Goodwill five times already?" Laura asked with amusement.

Clint shifted. "See, you keep saying that but if I had actually done that we would not now have a spare television to put in Loki's room. It was meant to be," Clint said.

"It was you being lazy and it working out," Laura countered although she was smiling.


Laura hummed in agreement and kissed Clint's cheek. "Well, you can be hurt while you move it, alright? I'm going to see about lunch. It's getting close to that time and it doesn't look like Loki should be missing too many meals." Clint nodded and watched for a long moment as Loki stared at nothing. He wasn't sure if a TV would help or be of any interest to Loki but at least there was a chance that Loki would have something to keep him occupied that would be somewhat stimulating. Just him sitting there staring at the wall was just too sad.

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