### Icy Diplomacy

**Summary**

In the aftermath of the Jotunheim fight, Loki finds himself left behind—and Odin has his reasons for being a little slow to the rescue.

**Notes**

So... I'm basically done with my November project. Well, more accurately, I'm done with the "focus on this exclusively for a month" aspect of the project (which was quite productive). That means I can get back to writing fics.

But it's been over a week since the turn of the calendar page, and the only thing I've managed to write up enough to publish is this. Which is, notably, not any of the things I'm supposed to be writing. For more information on my priority list, and what's holding me back for various fics, see [this blog post](#).

Anyway, short version: My Muse bugged me until I wrote this, and so here, have a chapter. I doubt I'll follow up on this soon, but you never can tell with the Muse. This certainly isn't my focus for the near future. And I still hope to update like three fics this month, including *Tremble and Serve* (which I've got nearly a chapter done on, but I'm struggling with part of it), but we all know how skilled I am at predicting the future.

Sigh.
See the end of the work for more notes

- Inspired by What Once Was Lost Returned by demonqueen666
Chapter Summary

*Jotunheim*, he thinks, dazedly. *I… fell.*

Chapter Notes

**Content Warnings:** For this chapter, there's just a bit of blood, some mild (for Asgardians) damage, and a mention of… I guess, technically, it wouldn't be cannibalism, but still—Loki has some unflattering beliefs about what the Jotnar do to their prisoners.

Oh, and terror, but that comes with the territory ^_^

Something cold and wet hits Loki in the face, and he flinches, but can’t muster his thoughts enough to move. A crunching, crumbling sound echoes around him, like footsteps in snow, and then the sudden *crack* of ice.

*Jotunheim*, he thinks, dazedly. *I… fell.*

Lying on the ice like this, with the frigid wind brushing against his skin, he should feel colder. He feels… soothed, like those summers he got heat stroke and the healers resorted to ice baths to bring his temperature down.

None of the other children got heat stroke, just from enjoying the sun.

*Thor* never got heat stroke.

A sudden dazzle of colors makes it through his eyelids, and he blinks up at the shadow above him, backlit by the dancing light of the Bifrost reflecting off the walls of the cave.

So Thor’s… leaving? Going home? The others wouldn’t leave without him; he has to have gotten free.

Maybe he’ll summon help, come back for Loki? Loki swallows down a sound that’s half chuckle, half sob; he knows how little Thor values him these days. As the Bifrost fades, he tries to content himself with the thought that at least Thor got safely away.

Norns, his ribs hurt. It hurts to *breathe*.

Above him, blotting out the ever-dim light of Jotunheim, the shadow’s getting bigger—darker.

Farther up, two silhouettes peer over the edge. Sharp-edged, with horns.

*Jotnar*, not Aesir, and Loki suddenly realizes what the shadow is.
Sheer terror gets him on his feet again, stumbling, woozy, turning desperately to find an escape path but seeing nothing but different shades of darkness. His feet slip on the ice, and when he feels something stir the air behind him, he darts away only to slide straight into a wall of frozen rock.

Shoving off from the wall—head ringing, nose dripping blood—he whirls to face his attacker, conjuring two daggers and flinging them straight at what he guesses would be the neck. But the lumbering creature just keeps coming, reaching out a huge, meaty hand that doesn’t stop even when Loki slices at it with another dagger. He ducks under the fingers as they try to close about him, but the slippery surface offers no purchase, and then the hand’s shoving him down against the ice, crushing his breath from his body.

Pulled into the air, he can’t even cry out, too dazed, for a moment, even to struggle. His heart hammers in his chest, and he swallows the taste of his own blood as he sees the ice shelf flowing past him, as though he’s falling once again—except this time, he’s rising. When he manages to raise his head a little, he sees the other giants growing larger, their expressions hidden in the gloom.

The lumbering beast who retrieved him finally nears the surface, and lifts Loki in a dizzying swoop up to the two who wait for him—smaller giants, though still nearly twice as tall as any Aesir. Before Loki can even get his feet under him, they’ve grabbed his arms.

Though he struggles to pull away, it’s hopeless; he has no choice but to stumble along between them, seized by the unrelenting terror of his childhood nightmares.

Thor escaped, right? Loki’s ploy worked? It had to have worked.

Did the others make it back to Asgard? Or are some of them still here, already captive? (They wouldn’t be hiding; Thor’s friends are too ‘courageous’ to hide.) Is he the last to be found?

He shudders, trying not to picture his fate, trying not to recall the tales he grew up on, the horrible feasts that the frost giants partake in whenever they have access to Aesir flesh.

Even if Thor cares enough to seek help, it might already be too late.

In two quick strides, Odin is at Heimdall’s side, the light of the Bifrost fading behind him as Thor’s little gang murmurs in growing dismay.

“Can you see him?” Odin demands, low.

“Mmm,” the gatekeeper rumbles. “He has fallen far beneath the top layer. Hurt, but not severely. They are retrieving him.”

“What?!” Thor explodes. “Father, we must—”

“You must get your friends to the healers,” Odin counters over his shoulder, coldly. “Or did you not hear me the first time?”

“And leave Loki in the hands of those monsters?!”

“Since when do you even care?! ” Wheeling on Thor, Odin advances, barely mastering his fury enough to form coherent sentences. “So caught up in the lust for battle that you didn’t even notice your friends getting hurt, your brother falling through the ice. Look at the consequences of your actions, you foolish, arrogant boy!”
Thor quails, eyes wide—Odin hopes in realization that he’s crossed a line they might never recover from. But there’s no time to focus on his older son, not now. “Go,” Odin commands again. “See to your friends. See if you can make this a little better, somehow. I’ll deal with you when your brother is safely home.”

And yet, as Thor takes Fandral over his shoulder and flings himself toward the palace, leaving Sif and Hogun to see to Volstagg… Odin cannot bring himself to open the Bifrost again. Not yet.

Heimdall, the embodiment of duty and loyalty, does not question him, but merely waits for orders, his face as impassive as ever.

A shaky sigh passes Odin’s lips. “Would that I could sit on Hlidskjalf and see for myself how he handles this,” he muses. “But I shall have to see through your eyes, old friend. Laufey is too crafty to harm such a valuable bargaining chip, and…” He trails off, reluctant to give voice to his other concern.

“There is no direct evidence that Loki let the Jotnar into Asgard.”

“No… but the Jotnar are not fond of sorcery. There are not many who can walk between worlds… and I know of only one mage in all Asgard who specializes in evading your gaze.” His shoulders slump a little. “It is hard to come to any other conclusion.”

Soberly, Heimdall nods.

“I must know how far his designs extend. Until today, I had thought his tricks to be relatively harmless, and I have never seen cause to question his loyalty… to the Realm, if not to the one who holds the throne. But if he plots with the Jotnar…”

But Heimdall is shaking his head, his gaze focused far away. “He is with them now, but not willingly. And where they touch him, his skin has turned blue.”

Odin pales. “Does he know yet? Has he figured it out—or have they told him?”

“I cannot read the minds and hearts of men,” Heimdall says, slowly, “but from what I can see… he seems to be terrified.”

Chapter End Notes

I debated about splitting up the Loki section from the Odin section, given that the rest of the fic is likely to be a split POV. If it turns out to work well with a clear split between Odin chapters and Loki chapters, then I probably will give Loki the even chapters (even though, by all rights, Loki should always have the odd chapters). But these just felt too short to post as separate chapters, and anyway they end at about the same place, so it felt like a fake cliffhanger (“didn't we just have that cliffhanger at the end of last chapter?”), and I didn't want to do that to y'all.

Anyway! This fic was partly inspired by a very long fic (over 100 parts) on the Norsekink forum, wherein Loki gets captured on Jotunheim and ends up discovering his true identity and having to come to terms with it and all. I haven't even read the whole thing, though what I read of it was quite enjoyable.
My piece isn't going to tread the same ground; I just wanted to acknowledge it, and point people at it, for those who like Jotunheim fics or Jotun Loki fics. As far as my fic, well, I have a good strong idea of where I'm going with it, start to finish (though, of course, that's not always how things happen), and I don't really want to say more due to spoilers leaking through. But it won't be set on Jotunheim, and Loki isn't going to stay here very long; it's more of a "start the chain of events" kind of thing, a What If for if the Jotunheim Incursion had gone a bit differently.

Also, I kinda wanted to name this something like *Cold Equations* or *Cold Solutions* or the like, but that would hint at a much darker story (given the original and well-known stories by those names). But it would've been nice to be able to use the title to point at Odin having to calculate out the cost of his decisions here, and what it'll cost both of his boys.
Before the Ice Throne

Chapter Summary

“If indeed you are the son of Odin,” Laufey drawls, “then surely you know full well the rules laid down by the Allfather. So I would ask, again, why you are here, in my Realm, which has been forbidden to all those of Asgard.”

Trembling, Loki casts about for something to say, a justification for his presence that doesn’t put him in an even worse spot, and yet also doesn’t lay the blame on Odin or Thor or Asgard. Why is he here?

Because Asgard thinks so highly of their golden prince that they’ve overlooked his every flaw… because Thor is a warmonger, and even Laufey knows it. Putting him on the throne would have brought all Asgard to its knees.

He can’t say any of that.

Chapter Notes

All righty, finally an update to a fic! Not by any means the top-of-the-list fics, but hey, an update is an update, and it was easier to write this one on account of the atmosphere (we’ve just had our first real snowfall of the year; too bad Jotunheim (at least in this fic) doesn’t have trees, because near us, they are gorgeous).

Anyway, it's time to see what Laufey has to say to his 'guest'!

(As usual, sensitive readers, please check the End Note for content warnings. Nothing bad really happens in this chapter, but Loki's fear is ramped up a bit, and there are some little things that might trigger certain readers.)

The giant ice throne looms ahead as the giants drag Loki back to the place where this whole disaster started—where, not an hour ago, Loki had attempted his best diplomacy to bargain for their release, right before a not-so-subtle insult had blown everything right to Hel.

With that short-lived truce thoroughly shattered, with Thor and his friends gone and Loki unsure of his own fate, he finds that he can’t stop trembling. Norns, he wishes his body wouldn’t betray him this way. The jeers he’s grown up with mock him from memory (coward, trickster, ergi) and he flushes with shame to show such weakness before Laufey.

The towering king of the frost giants sits there, atop the throne, as if he’d never left—as if he’s part of the scenery, old and unyielding as the frozen cliffs. Even when Loki’s captors come to a halt before him, Laufey barely seems to breathe; only his eyes move, looking Loki over with a piercing gaze.
As long minutes pass in silence, Loki tries not to visualize what his eventual fate might be. He is a son of Odin, and if today is the day he sees the Valkyrie come for him, then he is willing—as much as it is possible to be willing, at his age—to face his fate like any warrior of Asgard.

At length, Laufey slowly rises from his seat and steps down off the throne, in no apparent hurry, showing no clue as to his intentions as he approaches. Once in arm’s reach—his own, not Loki’s—he squats before his prisoner, his legs creaking and snapping like an unstable ice floe, and brings his eyes nearly level with Loki’s to inspect him more closely.

_I am a son of Odin_, Loki reminds himself. _So long as that is true, I can face anything._

He has to believe that.

“Why have you come here?” Laufey asks, finally, voice slow and rumbly, betraying nothing of his feelings on the matter. “You’re far too small to be a warrior.”

The familiar tone of the insult rouses a wave of indignation under the fear, but, unlike Thor, Loki smothers his first impulse; pointing to the Jotnar he’s just killed would do little more than hasten his own demise. And Laufey had said as much of Thor: _Why have you come here? To make peace? You’re nothing but a boy, trying to prove himself a man._

Instead, Loki reaches for more calculated words, though they come out tight, through trembling lips: “One n-need not be as tall as a g-giant to be a warrior of Asgard.”

“A warrior?” Laufey’s grin mocks him. “Why, you’ve hardly lost your baby fat.”

The images of a possible feast rise up again, and Loki’s heart pounds in his ears. He has no idea if they’ll be more likely to kill a warrior than a child, but he refuses to abase himself to that degree. “I assure you,” he returns, “I’ve had ample experience on the battlefield.”

“Mmm,” Laufey rumbles, and cocks his head to one side. “I confess I’ve had little practice at guessing the ages of those from Asgard, but you do _seem_ like a child.”

He has to bite back an acerbic protest, from centuries of being thought less capable—less worthy—simply _less_ than his brother, even as they rode into adventures together and claimed victory side by side. And that was before Thor, too, had begun to think of him as somewhere beneath him, beneath _notice_.

Drawing from his lessons in diplomacy, he seeks for a way for neither side to lose face: “Are the Jotnar still children, then, after a thousand winters?”

“Ah, I see,” Laufey murmurs, nodding slowly. “Well, then, _warrior_… I would know your name.”

Another flush of shame at the reminder: Thor is well known among the Nine, but Loki has always existed in his shadow; of course Laufey wouldn’t recognize him. He forces himself to stand straight, chin up, as if he weren’t still held in the grip of a frost giant to either side. “I am Loki Odinson,” he says, “Silvertongue, and second prince of Asgard.”

“Intriguing,” Laufey says, after a moment. “Our guest is of royal blood,” he adds, waving off the guards. “We must show him more respect.”
When the hands release him, Loki wonders, briefly, if there might be a chance here: throw an illusion, sneak away, make it back to the Bifrost site. But then, it’s already opened once, to retrieve Thor and his friends, and now the light is gone, and Father isn’t here to retrieve him. Has he been abandoned?

And if the Bifrost won’t open for him, what then? Hide here on Jotunheim? Try to find the rift he stumbled across, the one that leads to Asgard, even though he’s never seen it from this side? He has no landmarks to go by; all he’d seen was frozen rock, like everything else around him. How long could he last here, on his own? He’s not even sure what the giants actually *eat*.

Besides, would he even be able to get away to begin with? His illusions do little more than fool the eyesight, give an impression of sound; they can’t block scent, and covering his footprints would take all of his concentration. If the giants track him down…

No, it’s better to talk, at least for now, and leave his illusions as a backup trick for if—when—the diplomacy turns sour. And hope that he’s rescued before that happens.

“If indeed you are the son of Odin,” Laufey drawls, “then surely you know full well the rules laid down by the Allfather. So I would ask, again, why you are here, in my Realm, which has been forbidden to all those of Asgard.”

Loki’s gut clenches and his eyes tear up involuntarily, because he *does* know the rules, and he *did* know the rules—he learned of the Allfather’s decree from storybooks his mother read to him before he could *talk*—and yet he defied them to come here. And he’s not hidden from Heimdall’s sight, so his father *should* know by now, and yet… he wonders, again, if he’s been abandoned to this fate. Perhaps, having already rescued the heir apparent, Asgard will turn a blind eye to the lesser prince, who should have known better than to bypass an edict that has been in place since the last war.

It might not even be Odin’s choice; there are matters of law that not even the Allfather can overrule. Perhaps he cannot risk another confrontation here, even to save his own son.

If Loki had only managed to get back to the Bifrost site with the rest of them…

“Tears, young warrior?”

Loki flinches when Laufey’s hand comes up, a massive finger gently raising his chin. Laufey’s eyes darken—sudden, intense interest, a sign Loki has learned to look for in negotiations—and his lips spread into something like a smile before he lets go.

Trembling, Loki casts about for something to say, a justification for his presence that doesn’t put him in an even worse spot, and yet also doesn’t lay the blame on Odin or Thor or Asgard. Why *is* he here?

Because Asgard thinks so highly of their golden prince that they’ve overlooked his every flaw, while they constantly berate Loki for every way he fails to be like Thor.

Because Thor is a warmonger, and even Laufey knows it: Putting him on the throne would have brought all Asgard to its knees.

Because whenever Loki tried to call Odin’s attention to this fact, the Allfather brushed him off, as if Loki were only seeking to discredit Thor in order to win the throne for himself.
He can’t say any of that, but he must say *something*. Staying silent isn’t going to help him or Asgard.

Regardless of the provocation, Loki’s the one who caused all this in the first place—not that he’s going to admit to that, not to Laufey. Which makes it less than just to lay the blame on the frost giants, for rising to the bait… besides, blaming them would likely get him killed all the sooner. But he can’t come up with a better story that’s still plausible, and Laufey already knows a little of what happened.

*How did your people get into Asgard?*

*The house of Odin is full of traitors. We have the right to reclaim the Casket.*

“Frost giants broke into the weapons vault,” Loki admits, finally. “Our defenses proved strong enough to destroy them, and Father—Odin—held that the matter was settled. He would not have sought further reparations.” He realizes that he’s picking at his hands again, and forces himself to stop. “My brother was not content with our father’s response,” he adds, phrasing it as diplomatically as he can manage. “He led us here to seek redress. I… cannot claim anything of my brother’s motivation, but, for my part, I did not come here thinking to kill.”

“Oh? Then what were your plans, little one?”

He takes in a deep breath. “I’m well aware that my brother can sometimes act rashly, and let his temper get the better of him. He was outraged—and not without cause—but the matter is… delicate, between our Realms, and I had hoped that being at his side, I could… remind him of our duty, and perhaps curb the worst of his… fervor.”

Laufey huffs. “You did not think to simply stand aside, and let him bring ruin on his own head?”

“He’s my brother!” Loki protests before he can think better of it. “Do the Jotnar know nothing of family?” The rage pushes back his fear, a little, before he realizes the lack of diplomacy in his wording. “B-Besides, he is the crown p-prince; whatever harm he might do would reflect on all Asgard. I could hardly stand aside and let him bring us back to war.”

“And yet you claim to be a son of Odin,” Laufey muses. “Where did you learn to seek peace instead of power?”

A sudden image of his mother makes him choke down a sob, trying not to focus on the fact that he might never see her again. That she might soon be mourning him, and that it might be entirely his fault.

“Or do you speak of peace merely to save your own hide?” Laufey murmurs, dark and low. “Is that the bargain here? Do they even know you are missing, I wonder? Did they realize that they left you behind?” His face grows hard. “When the Allfather came to retrieve your companions, he bid me treat their actions as those of children. Dozens, perhaps hundreds of my people, dead at your hands, at the hands of those who came *looking* to make war, and I am to turn my wrath aside so easily as that? And *this*—”

Suddenly Laufey’s hand is around Loki’s neck, his long fingers stretching up behind Loki’s ears and into his hair. Not squeezing, though the fury on Laufey’s face is far less controlled than his hand.

“This,” Laufey repeats, his voice echoing back from every direction. “The *insult*, come to light. I find it hard to believe that it’s a coincidence, you coming here.”
It’s too late to escape; he should have, should have run, should have tried his luck, but it’s too late
and the cold is creeping up his neck into his hairline, his eyes blurred with renewed tears.

His mother will be mourning him after all.

“He took everything we had,” Laufey muses, still staring into Loki’s face, although his gaze is
somewhere far away. “It was not enough for him to drive us back to our own Realm; he left our
homeland in ruins, lacking its most precious treasures. I cannot be surprised that his son brings war
and death to our cliffs yet again. But if Odin did not plan this…”

The fingers tighten on his neck, just the tiniest bit, and Loki knows the end is coming; he draws
together what courage he has left, and pulls a dagger, stabbing it deep into Laufey’s arm.

If he is to die here, then he will do it like a son of Asgard.

The fingers drop away—“Hold!” Laufey shouts—and Loki pulls back, ready to throw an illusion
and run—but as he blinks away the tears, he realizes that the ice around him looks… different.
Bright, and colorful, in ways he doesn’t have words for. The blood dripping from Laufey’s arm
swirls with colors, like an oil slick, and even the Jotnar themselves shimmer in the dim and shifting
light.

Breathing hard, Loki glances down at his hands and sees the same colors dancing there, along the
surface. He gasps, almost like a sob, and then Laufey’s other hand grips his shoulder and he looks
up into the shining, shifting face of the being he has feared since childhood.

“What—what did you—” Loki stammers out, for there is no magic he knows that could change his
perceptions so completely. “Wh-what have you d-done to me?”

“Oh, little warrior,” Laufey says, a fierce grin spreading across his face. “Perhaps there is
something to be gained today after all.”

Content Warnings: Loki’s terror gets ramped up (he really thinks that Laufey’s gonna
kill him, and for a while he believes that Asgard (including his father) has abandoned
him), but nothing really bad happens. At one point, Loki stabs Laufey, and Laufey
bleeds in an unusual way.

Laufey puts his hand around Loki’s neck, as if to strangle him, but does not do
anything worse.

Loki’s unwilling (and unwitting) transformation into his Jotun form is seen from the
inside, confusing and terrifying to Loki (who, unlike in the film, either doesn’t guess
what’s happening, or is trying to convince himself that it’s not what he thinks it is).
While I'm At It: Does anyone know where this "Laufey King" stuff came from? Thanks to people who chimed in to finally point me at the right information! I much appreciate it ^_^

(Original Version: I have seen it *all over the place*. Not "King Laufey" but "Laufey King." I know of no other place that I have ever seen such usage. I don't know if people are drawing from an established canon or mythology that I'm as yet unfamiliar with, or if it's a piece of fanon that has become ubiquitous (maybe mishearing "Laufey, King of the Frost Giants" as "Laufey King, of the Frost Giants" or some such? or a language error from someone who's not native to English?). But I'm seriously itching to know where it came from.)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](https://example.com) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!