Hidden Path

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Summary

Loki planned on showing all of Asgard how unprepared Thor was for the crown. He hadn't planned on meeting Tony Stark.

It's strange how a chance meeting could change everything.

Loki slipped out of Asgard unnoticed. He was only planning on being gone for a couple hours. It was unlikely that anyone would notice his absence, not with such festivities around the corner.

If no one would listen to him about his brother’s ineptitude then only actions would rid them of their blindness. All he had to do was convince a few Jotuns to try and retrieve their stolen casket. It shouldn’t be too difficult. They were mindless monsters after all.

His booted feet met the branches of Yggdrasil. He had to concentrate to make sure the magic in the tree did not push him off. Loki pooled some of his magic in the soles of his boots, acting as a counterforce. It was a delicate process and very few mages could perform such a feat.

Now he just had to find an easy path those barbarians could traverse.

The leaves of the world tree were wilted and three times his size. Like the rest of the tree he could not see them, but he knew they were there. The leaves blocked his sense, making traversing the branches even more difficult. He’d have to create a clear path for the frost giants, lest they hit their heads and fall into the Void.

Loki hated relying on such deplorable creatures for his plan, but they were the only thing that could really incite Thor and not be traced back to the younger prince.

He grinned, very pleased with himself and his plan. He used his magic to pull himself to another branch. He pushed aside an oversized leaf and completely froze. He was not alone.
A man was laid out on the branch effortlessly, red magic keeping him from being repelled off of Yggdrasil. A lit cigar was in one hand and a large bottle in the other. His head and back were propped up against a folded leaf, a feat that should be impossible.

“Not many people travel the branches now-a-days.” The stranger stated, not opening his eyes.

“Indeed.” Loki agreed. The prince moved a bit closer, trying to identify the mage. He was far too short to be an elf and he did not look like an Aesir. He looked like a Midgardian, but their type was rarely gifted with magic. The other man cracked his eyes open. “What are you doing here?”

“Enjoying a bit of peace and quiet.” The other man took a puff of his cigar. The smoke slowly fell from his lips. It twisted into a red and gold image of a flock of birds. They flew away, disappearing behind a leaf.

“This is a bit of a dangerous place to be resting.” Loki said while glancing around, trying to find a different path to Jotunheim. The other man sat up. He twisted his wrist slightly and the cigar in his hand disappeared.

“Not really. It’s only dangerous if you aren’t well acquainted with the tree.” He patted the branch, red magic emanating from his hand. “You look a bit stressed. Would you like a drink? I promise you it’s good stuff.” The man took a swig as if to prove his point.

“I am not stressed.” Loki sneered. Who did he think he was, talking to a prince of Asgard like that?

The stranger held his hands up in surrounded, one of which was still clutching the bottle.

“Relax, I meant no harm.” The stranger took another swig. “I was just hoping for a bit of small chat. I’m just tired of everyone judging me. You seem smart enough. Thought we could talk about magic or something.” The stranger shrugged. “I’m Tony Stark by the way.”

Loki did not give his name. This was a secret mission after all.

“I must be on my way.” Loki said, finding a proper branch to hop onto.

“Heading to Jotunheim?” Loki froze. “There’s a quicker route if you go that way.” Tony pointed behind himself.

“How did you know I was going to Jotunheim?” It seems his plan may be ruined before it even truly began.

“Well, it’s not like it’s that far of a stretch.” Tony paused while taking a sip of his drink. “Jotuns are only welcomed on Jotunheim and Niflheim. The path to Niflheim is in the opposite direction.”

“Are you daft or just blind?” Loki reeled back.

“Can’t say I’ve been accused of being blind in a few centuries. Get called a dumbass religiously though.” Tony chuckled. Loki spun around, heading back to Asgard. He was annoyed enough with the idiotic Aesir. He felt no reason to burden himself with the ramblings of a mad man. “Don’t get me wrong. Your glamour is really well done, impressive work for someone so young.” Tony shouted after the god.

Loki stumbled slightly, his anger and frustration disrupting his concentration on his magical balance. He teetered towards the edge of the branch and a band of red magic caught him, wrapping around his waist and pulling him towards the center of the branch.

“Unhand me!” Loki shouted, sending out a burst of magic. The other mage blocked the attack with
a red shield.

“Just trying to help. Trust me when I say that the Void is not a place you want to fall into.” Tony was holding his hands up again in surrender, but there was not an ounce of worry in his expression which only annoyed Loki further.

“I am Loki of Asgard and I won’t be manhandled.” He hissed at the ignorant man.

“Last I heard Jotunheim and Asgard were at war. I’m glad to see they’ve resolved that.” Tony chuckled and the bottle in his hand disappeared. “I never really expected them to integrate though. I guess Pepper was exaggerating when she said things were bitter between the two realms.” Tony mused, effortlessly leaning against one of the wilted leaves of the world tree again.

“What are you even talking about?” Loki seethed.

“A Jotun… living in Asgard. What part aren’t you getting?”

“There are no frost giants in Asgard! That would be preposterous.” Loki said. Tony stood and moved closer to him, but the prince didn’t move backwards, not wanting to show how unnerved he was feeling.

“You really don’t know do you?” Tony’s eyes suddenly began to glow red. Magic washed over Loki and he threw a dagger at Tony. He caught it bare handed, still looking at Loki critically.

“What are you doing?” Loki asked, trying to keep the fear from his voice. This mage was stronger than he’d originally expected, possibly even a threat.

“Yes, it’s not your magic hiding your true form.” Tony said, the red magic in his eyes fading. “Can’t you feel it?”

“You are imaging things.” Loki took a step backwards, not liking what this stranger was saying.

“You’re smart enough to transverse Yggdrasil’s branches. Surely you can sense the skin deep foreign magic. Concentrate. You’ll be able to feel it.”

“No. You are wrong and ignorant. I will not be a party to such lies.” Loki turn around, intent on heading home.

“Have it your way, princess.” Tony said indifferently. “Either you’re lying to yourself or someone’s been lying to you for a long time.” Loki was about to spin back around and toss another dagger at the man, but a tapping noise and a wave of magic interrupted him. Loki looked backwards and Tony was gone.

Impossible. There was no realm close enough for even the best of mages to latch their magic onto and pull themselves to. Only the Bifrost could instantly teleport someone. The other mage couldn’t have just disappeared.

Loki shook his head, trying to stifle his annoyance and confusion.

He quickly made his way back to Asgard. The coronation would start soon and his absence would be noted. It would be just another reason for the Aesir to despise him.

“There you are.” Frigga said with a smile as Loki walked into his private quarters.

“Mother, to what do I owe this pleasure? I would assume you’d be primping for the ceremony.”
Loki sat beside her, slowly undoing the clasps on his boots. They were not regal enough for the coming coronation.

“I was worried when I couldn’t find you.” She said while kissing him on the cheek.

“I was on the branches, trying to find a bit of peace.” Frigga helped Loki pull off his coat. “I unfortunately ran into a fellow.” Loki pursed his lips in annoyance.

“Was he mean to you?” Frigga teased her youngest son. He gave her a look and she chuckled primly.

“He was just saying ridiculous things about Jotuns and glamours. Nothing of consequence.”

“How strange. Which realm was he from?” There was something in his mother’s tone that made Loki glance over at her.

“I did not ask.” Loki sat up straighter, trying to read his mother’s expression. “He said that there was a glamour on me.” He stared intently at Frigga. She looked like the perfect mixture between confused and entertained. That… didn’t make sense. She should have that usual sly grin that always appeared when she heard something preposterous.

“What a strange thing to say.” Frigga sat up, straightening out her dress. “Put it out of your mind, my love.” She kissed Loki on the forehead. “Don’t play any tricks tonight either. I must finish preparing.” She walked away at her usual pace, but he could see a certain tension in her shoulders.

Loki bit his tongue, trying to push down the panic that was budding inside of him. He looked down at his hands. He’d be able to sense another’s spell on him, wouldn’t he? But if it was a glamour that had been on him all his life…

No, that was preposterous. What reason would someone have to put a glamour on him. He was a prince of Asgard. No one would have been able to touch him let alone cast a spell on him. Besides no one was strong enough to cast a spell that would last that long… other than Odin.

No, no, no, no.

That didn’t make any sense.

Yet… he’d always felt like an outsider.

But he couldn’t be one of those frozen monsters.

Against his will Loki began concentrating on the magic that pulsed inside of him and all around him.

The castle was steeped in Odin’s magic. Loki filled his chambers with his own magic. Yet there was still something there… He focused on the strange inconsistency. It was all around him, so subtle, yet now that he realized it was there he could not ignore it.

He let his magic sweep over it… Odin’s magic and it was all over him.

Loki touched his wrist with a glowing green finger, mapping out the foreign spell. It was complex—a complex glamour. It was a mosaic of runes and every time he tried to unravel it, the spell just shifted back in place.

His skin felt like it was itching and crawling at the same time as he forced more of his magic
forward, counteracting the runes.

And then there it was. Just a flash of blue, barely larger than the hilt of one of his daggers, before his skin turned white again. It was enough to convince him though.

He curled in on himself, his breaths coming too fast.

Everything suddenly made sense.

He never fit in here because he was a monster.

They all despised him.

They all knew he was different.

They could all sense that he was wrong.

A knock on his door snapped him back to attention. He quickly put up his façade as one of the servants entered his chambers.

“Prince Loki, the coronation is about to begin.” A short Aesir woman said.

“I shan’t be in attendance.” He told her. She was about to say something else, but something in his eyes warned her off.

Loki knew his façade could hold against a single servant, but his mother—no, was she even his mother? Regardless she’d be able to see past his calm demeanor.

He couldn’t stay here.

He couldn’t face all of Asgard, not when he didn’t understand… understand this.

A monster in the golden city.

Was he just another one of Odin’s tools?

The servant was going to go straight to either Odin or Frigga, and then he’d be cornered. Loki had to leave now.

But where could he go? Half the realms were loyal to Asgard, and the other half were either inaccessible or hostile towards Asgard, other than-

The mage that had seen right through a spell that had been under Loki’s nose his whole life looked like he was from Midgard. And he had seen through the glamour with so little effort.

Loki found one of the hidden paths, using his magic to pull himself onto Yggdrasil.

He would find this Tony Stark, and maybe then he could figure this all out.

Notes: This is kinda an alternative start to my other fic: Again so if ya want to read more go there since this is just a one shot ;)

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