"One day, you’re going to love me as much as I love you,” Tony said as he gripped Loki by his long hair, knotting his hand in it. “And it’s going to piss you off so much.”
“I do not wish to go!” Thor complained loudly while flipping his cape over his head. Loki scoffed, hopping off an ornate chair.

“That is because you are a slug-brain!” Loki shouted and dodged Thor’s well aimed spoon.

“Well your eyes look like slugs!” Thor chased after his little brother, but the younger god was far quicker. They darted around the legs of the Aesir.

“You move like a slug, Thur.” He purposefully slurred Thor’s name, knowing how much it aggravated him.

“I will catch you!” Thor ducked under a table, trying to cut off Loki’s route. The younger god hopped onto the table and right over his brother’s head.

“It shan’t be I who gives out first!” His brother was already breathless, having spent a majority of his morning in the training yard practicing with sword and shield.

“Liar!” Thor squawked and nearly tripped as Loki turned a sharp corner. Loki laughed loudly, pausing only to stick his tongue out at his brother. Thor let out an indignant yell.

“Is that your war cry, brother, or have you just stubbed your royal toe?” Loki’s laughter seemed to echo as he ran further away.

“You can’t run forever!” Thor was nearly out of breath, but he refused to give up.

“I don’t need to,” Loki said while skidding into a room. Thor tried to tackle him, but his cape was snagged by an Aesir dressed all in white.

“Trickster!” Thor shouted while looking at the frowning face of their tutor. Loki cackled happily, falling onto his back and clutching his stomach in mirth.

“You are late, Odinson,” Gilda said while setting down the younger Aesir. “I shouldn’t have to commission your brother in order to get you here. Must I speak once more to her majesty?” Thor’s eyes went wide and he shook his head. “Good. And you, Odinson,” Gilda turned her attention to the younger of the two brothers, “is that the way a prince should act, rolling around like a pig in swill?” Loki stood up quickly, brushing himself off.

“No, Lady Gilda. I shall endeavor not to disappoint you once more.” Loki bowed with a regality that did not fit his young age.

“Nor I!” Thor bellowed and bowed in a far less graceful motion.

“I will hold you both to that.” She nodded primly. “Thor, take your seat. Loki, you may leave.” Thor groaned and Loki did his best not to pout.

As Thor so kindly put it weeks ago: ‘This is the big kids’ class. You’re puny and will probably pick your boogers and gross out Siffy.’

Loki glanced backwards at the classroom. Sif was the one who liked to eat boogers, not Loki.
Hogun and Frandie-Pants were using rulers to sword fight. Volstaggering-Axe was hiding behind a book doing who knows what. Amora-my-green-magic-is-so-much-better-than-yours was drawing on a piece of parchment.

Loki frowned. Tony-All-Alony wasn’t in class. He was usually the first one to lessons.

“Hurry along now, Loki. You don’t want to be late for your own lessons.” Gilda waved him off. Loki rolled his eyes, heading to the training yard.

Chapter End Notes

Important: There's a lot of side pieces to this story. They're to be read during this story. At the end of certain chapters I'll let you know that it's safe to read one of the side pieces. They're meant to add to this story and show different perspectives. Please do not read them all at once because they won't make sense and will give away spoilers.
Go Eat a Fig

Chapter Summary

Figs and Blankets.

“Do it again!” Lorelei whined, hurting Loki’s ears.

“What will I get in return?” Loki asked, glaring at the girl who was unfortunately in all his lessons.

“I don’t know! You can look up Amora’s skirt or something!” Loki recoiled at the thought of Lorelei’s older sister.

“Why would I want that?” He turned his nose up at her, seeing as he was a prince and she was not a princess.

“’Cause you’re a boy and boys like Amora.” Lorelei pouted, crossing her petite arms and blowing at a strand of her red hair.

“Well I’m not Thur or one of his idiots three. Amora is annoying and I don’t want to see her face or what’s under her skirt.” Loki scrunched up his nose and Lorelei burst out laughing.

“She does smell weird,” Lorelei said after she calmed down, toeing the ground uneasily.

“Indeed.” Not that Loki really knew.

“Please, Loki, Prince of Asgard, future Jotun slayer, climber of trees, and master of all things magic! Please, please, please! I’ll steal one of my father’s magic books for you and do your homework for half a year!”

“And see my grades suffer because of it? I think not.”

“Loki!” Shedragged his name out.

“Fine, but you shall owe me one favor in return. Deal?” he asked and she nodded eagerly.

“Yes! Now let me see it!” Lorelei hopped up and down. Loki rolled his eyes before casting a spell. A large mirror formed in front of her and she gasped. “I’m going to be so pretty! Amora can go eat a fig!”

“Thur,” Loki called out to his brother. The blond god did his best not to cringe at the nickname. “Thur, Thur, Thur!” He continued calling, getting louder. Thor’s eyes stayed focused on the book in his hands. “Thur, you know you can’t read. Why even bother pretending. You needn’t lie to me.” Loki sat up, bundling himself in a blanket at the end of Thor’s bed. “I shall take you from the forest and teach you the ways of the proper folk. I shall teach you the letters and runes. I shall teach you about numbers and why it’s important to take baths.” Loki stood on the bed regally draping the blanket as if it was a cape. “You will be my talking bilgesnipe. I will parade you around all of Asgard and you shall be the life of the party.” Loki paused, waiting for a reaction. “Thur.”
Finally the blonde brother snapped, tossing his book at Loki. Loki whooped with laughter, dodging the book and hightailing it out of Thor’s room.

“Stop stealing my blankets!” Thor shouted after his brother and was met with peals of laughter.
"You shall use a hammer!" Thor said happily. Loki struggled, trying to get out of the headlock. "We will be the most glorious of warriors, winning each battle gloriously!"

"Stop repeating yourself! You're going to make me trip." Loki dug his bony fingers into Thor's back, but his brother did not release him as they made their way down the halls. "And why must I use a hammer?" He'd add on a Thur for good measure, but he doubted that would grant him freedom anytime soon.

"Do you not wish to smash in the heads of the frost giants?" Thor asked while pausing at a doorway.

"Of course I do, but there are more effective means-"

"Hardly!" Thor nodded for one of the guards to open the door since he couldn't risk Loki getting away. "They shall write songs about us and it will be glorious!"

"Did you just learn that word today? Mother will be so proud now that you can use words with more than two syllables." He poked at Thor's side, making him flinch. Thor ground his knuckles on Loki's head, making him groan in protest.

"Glorious, Loki. Everything will be glorious. They will call me Thor Hammer Bearer and you shall be Loki Not as Good with the Hammer! We shall stand back to back and destroy all those that cross our path." Finally Thor let him go, causing Loki to stumble.

"I want to use knives. They have both short-range and long-range uses. Besides I'd rather slice and stab than smash."

"Hammers can be used at a long range too!" Thor whined while flipping open one of the weapon's chests.

"What are you going to do? Tie a cord to your hammer and drag it back after you've tossed it?"

"Perhaps!" Thor tossed a heavy hammer to his younger brother.

"Be more careful!" Loki hissed, nearly being hit in the chest while Thor turned back to get another hammer.

"A warrior must always be ready for battle!" Loki shot a bolt of energy at Thor causing him to flinch and hit his head on the top of the chest.

"Loki!" Both princes froze and turned around to face their father. Thor quickly ran off to the other side of the training yard.

"Yes, father?" Loki asked sweetly, making his green eyes go wide.

"The training yard is for learning how to properly fight, not for magic."

"Yes, father."
"Good, now go train with your brother. You must be strong enough to protect this realm when I am
gone."

Loki ran over to Thor. The older brother laughed hardly.

"Shut up, Thur."

"Sit down you three," the mage said in clear annoyance.

"I'm not going to sit by her." Amora pointed towards her younger sister. Lorelei scowled.

"There's a seat between you. Don't complain," the mage in all white said while lifting a large book.

"But I can still see her! I do not wish to see her," Amora whined snootily. The mage sighed.

"Odinson, sit between those two," the Aesir woman said while flipping through the book.

"Tis not my seat." Loki waved dismissively from Lorelei's left.

"Tis no one's seat indeed. Thus you should have no qualms sitting in it."

"No! This is Tony's seat!" Amora shouted. "I do not wish to sit next to a baby." Amora's face was quickly getting red. Loki ignored her comment, wishing that Kelda hadn't skipped lessons this week. She was much quieter than the sisters.

"Where is Tony?" Loki couldn't quite remember when he last saw the older boy.

"Their house was locked up last time we ventured there," Amora supplied.

"Lord Howard has taken his family to Svartalfheim," the mage said. Loki furrowed his brow in confusion.

"Why would they go to Svartalfheim?" The dark elves were far from friendly to the Aesir. Though the dwarves conducted business with the Aesir.

"Probably for business," Lorelei said while leaning close to Loki. That made vague sense. Lord Howard was the second richest Aesir in all of Asgard, second only to Odin. Their family was renowned for their business dealings.

Suddenly all three of their seats were pushed forward, bringing them flush to the tables. Amora and Lorelei let out a squeak while Loki grabbed his book, ready for a fight. They calmed down when they heard their teacher chuckle.

"Enough chatter. It is time for your lessons."

Chapter End Notes

ficart would be much appreciated btw ;)

"When it is your name day, Thur, then we can play your silly games."

"But hide-and-go-seek is boring," Thor complained. Loki turned around quickly, his brand new cape fluttering.

"Fine stay in your room. You are far too loud to hide anyway."

"That is because hiding is for cowards!" Thor shouted, but still followed his brother to the gardens. Children from Loki’s class, Lorelei, Kelda, and Hoder were already there along with Thor’s classmates, excluding Sif who was in trouble for breaking into her family’s armory and couldn’t stay past the feast.

"We thought you had started without us," Frandie-Pants said while balancing himself on the edge of a fountain.

"Yes, we were desperately looking for you," Amora said sarcastically while making a crown out of flowers.

"Happy name day, Loki!" Lorelei shouted for the fifth time. They had all feasted together just an hour prior.

"Who shall be the seeker?" Hogun asked while brushing dirt off himself. He had just finished wrestling with Hoder.

"I think Loki should, seeing as he’s the great hunter." Thor pouted and Loki grinned. It had been a fluke that Loki’s arrow had been the one to finally fell the boar they had all been hunting two months prior. Thor was still annoyed about that and had glued the large tusks to Loki’s favorite helmet, ruining it.

"Very well. I shall hunt you down one by one." Loki grabbed a stick off the ground and wielded it like a sword. "Home base is the fountain." Loki sat on the edge and began counting with one hand covering his tightly shut eyes. He could hear them scamper off while giggling. When he finally reached 100 he shouted, "I am Laufey, king of the giants and I will make bread from your bones!" His voice was deep and he heard Lorelei burst out laughing from far to his left.

He ran over to a shrub with indigo leaves before diving over it.

"No!" Lorelei shouted while scurrying away. "I am a good Aesir!" Lorelei laughed loudly as Loki tapped her head lightly with his faux-sword. She stuck out her bottom lip before running over to the fountain.

"I have found one child!" Loki shouted while stomping his feet. "But she is far too scrawny to make a proper meal of!"

"Hey!" Lorelei said indignantly while sitting on the edge of the fountain. Loki glanced under a stone bench, but no one was there.

"I have a giant’s appetite. I need a fat little Aesir to make butter out of!" Loki hit a bush with the stick. They all knew who he was referring to. "Volstaggering-Axe!" He sensed someone shift behind a copse of trees. He hurried over and pounced on the two hiding children. "These are not the fat one I will kill!" Loki said while hitting Hogun and Hoder on their heads with the stick,
significantly harder than he’d hit Lorelei. “I shall use your blood to make my wine.”

“Not on your life, Jotun scum!” Hoder said while grabbing another stick. Hoder was faster than Loki, but the prince was more skilled. With a few choice parries and swings he had disarmed the younger Aesir. Before Hoder could complain more Hogun pulled him by his ear to the fountain where Lorelei was swinging her legs happily.

“I have bread and wine, but no goblet to drink it from!” Loki quickly climbed up a tree getting a better view of the royal gardens. “Surely Thor’s head will make a good goblet for it is already empty!”

“Loki!” Thor shouted while running out from his hiding place behind a statue. Loki tossed his stick, hitting Thor in the head.

“I have found my goblet! To the kitchen with you!” Loki pointed to the fountain and Thor frowned, realizing he had given himself away.

“Four naughty Aesirs left to make my meal from!” Loki hopped out the tree, landing easily. He grabbed his stick again and ran to Kelda’s favorite hiding spot. As he predicted she was there, hiding behind the sundial. “There be left three, and they shall all be found by me! I will take them to my frozen caves, because they are all knaves!” Hogun whispered something to Thor and they both snickered. “Silence wine and goblet lest I give you to my army to fill their stomachs!” They shut up and gave each other a terrified look, as if Loki really would send them to Jotunheim.

He found Volstagg next who scowled at the earlier use of his nickname. Only Amora and Frandial-Pants were left. He knew the best way to lure out the Aesir girl.

“And my meal would not be complete without beautiful flowers to lighten my table. Where would I find such beauty?” He asked slyly while looking between two shrubs. There was the faintest of rustling behind him. “I must have Frandral to make my giant table beautiful!”

He heard an indignant noise and quickly found Amora hidden behind a pane of lattice.

“You big stupid!” She tossed a rock at him and he swatted it aside with his stick, breaking it.

“Frandral you win!” Thor announced, happy he was able to talk freely again. They all went to the fountain. “Well done, brother.” Thor clapped Loki over the shoulder, already having forgotten his insult earlier.

“Yes, I will have a proper meal now,” Loki joked while grinning viciously. It only made Thor laugh harder. “Frandial-Pants begin your count.” The older Aesir sighed with mock frustration before covering his eyes with both hands and loudly counting down from 100.

Loki sprinted off, having already figured where he wanted to hide. He found a sturdy drainpipe and quickly scaled it, nimble fingers easily finding grooves. He pulled himself up onto a ledge between a gargoyle and windowsill. The whole wall was covered with moss that perfectly matched his new cape. He unclasped said garment and hid behind it. Just as he made himself comfortable Frandral finished his count down.

He stayed perfectly still as listened to Frandral look for the other children. Another voice soon entered in though, his father’s.

“Enough,” Odin said gruffly, frustration evident in his voice.

“The boy is the same age as Thor and Lord Howard has always been loyal to the crown even when
everyone else wanted to make peace with Jotunheim. Without his support and weapons we surely would have lost many more warriors. And Maria… you must do something,” Frigga said in a soft tone.

“This is an attack on all of Asgard.” Odin paused. “I will send our best warriors. This insult will not go unpunished.”

“Odin…”

“I have already made up my mind.”

“Very well, husband.”
Loki stubbornly wiped away his tears. He was a warrior. Warriors did not cry.

“The poor little Loki. Is he going to go cry to mommy?” Thor taunted and Loki pulled himself off the ground. He refused to fall for his taunts. He tossed the bulky hammer at Thor before running the weapon chests in the training yard. “Coward!” Thor shouted while running after his brother.

Loki threw open the chest he knew held throwing daggers. They were large in his hands, but they felt far more comfortable than the hammer ever did. He spun around and threw one of the blunt knives at Thor’s throat. The Aesir was too close to dodge, but he did not let that slow him down. He swung his hammer down heavily and Loki only barely avoided it. Thor swung again, aiming for Loki’s middle. The younger god knew that even with his armor the blow would still hurt. He tried to hop to the side, but Thor’s foot shot out, tripping him. He rolled away, dodging another hammer blow.

Loki threw another dagger from the ground, hitting Thor on the forehead.

“That would have killed you!” Loki shouted, tears still clouding his vision.

“Liar!” Thor bellowed, his face as red as his cape.

“You’re the liar!”

“Knives are for girls and meals!” Loki rolled forward and away from Thor’s stomping foot. He hopped up and twisted around, burying a knife between the plates of Thor’s armor. The god grunted.

“Tony uses knives and he can win against you even on his worst day!”

“Well he’s dead!”

“What?” Loki froze and Thor used his brief distraction to hit Loki’s arm. Loki shouted, feeling his arm break. Thor dropped the hammer onto the ground, realizing what he’d done.

“Loki!” He reached out, but the younger god moved back from him, gripping his arm. “I shall get the healer.” Thor closed one of the weapons chests. “Just sit down and I shall be back soon.” Loki looked away from him, hiding his tears. He heard Thor running inside.

Loki leaned against the wall. This was all Thor’s fault. Loki hadn’t wanted to spar. It was the middle of the night, but Thor had pulled him out of bed. And now his arm was hurting terribly and Tony Howardson was dead.

It’s not like Tony and him had been friends. The only lessons they shared were the weekly studies on magic, but even then Tony had either been off in his own world or flirting with Amora. If anything he’d found Tony annoying because he never took their lesson’s serious, yet always did well when their teacher asked him questions.

Loki’s eyes watered even more, and not just because of the pain in his arm.

Even if Tony had been a bit annoying and very pompous he had been the only other male who willing took lessons on magic. Loki had felt a strange camaraderie with the other boy, even if he didn’t speak of it.
Tony had also been different than all of Thor’s other friends. He wasn’t as quick to fight as the others were, instead using words to either calm or redirect his friends’ anger. Loki had really enjoyed watching him do that, especially when it got Thor in trouble with their teachers.

But now he was gone.

Asgard’s warriors failed.

Loki suddenly felt very alone, crying in the dark training yard.

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FYI I posted a new one-shot about baby!Loki called From the Heart
The funeral was held a month later. Lorelei and Amora were hugging each other, their mother had a hand on each of their shoulders. Thor was distracted, fiddling with the clasps of his all black outfit. Frandral was crying freely. Frigga was smoothing down Loki’s hair, silently comforting him.

All the adults had somber faces, few emotions passing through. Odin was reciting a long list of Lord Howard’s accomplishments. According the All-Father Howard had saved Odin’s life multiple times and had bested the frost giants in many battles, winning them artifacts that still rested in the royal vaults. After he was done Frigga stepped forward and told a story about how Lady Maria and her played in the woods of Vanaheim when they were both still young. They had traded secrets about the herbs of the forest all the while becoming close friends.

There wasn’t much they could say about Tony though. He was too young to have seen any battles and hadn’t really been close to the other children. The only one could say anything was the royal blacksmith who told a story about Tony sneaking into the smithy and observed the smiths at work. They had all known he was there, what they hadn’t expected was for him to sneak in the next day and make his own daggers, adding in runes and charms his father had taught him until it was better than most of the smiths could make.

Loki didn’t cry, even when the empty pyres were set alight. He only dug his fingers into Frigga’s black skirt as she continued running her fingers through his hair.

The feast that followed was a quiet affair. The dishes that Lord Howard favored were served and the seat to Odin’s right was left empty in honor of the fallen god. There were whispers though, rumors on how the second wealthiest family in Asgard met its end.

The favorite rumor was that Malekith himself had killed them in retaliation against Lord Howard decreeing that he would not sell to the dark elves. Others said that Lord Howard had been messing with the Bifrost and had sent himself and his family straight to Helheim. Only a few spoke of a botched kidnapping and even fewer spoke of them defecting to Svartalfheim.

Loki snuck out of the room halfway through the feast, not able to stand all the conjecture and court intrigue. He went to the training yard and dug through the weapons chest. He finally found what he was looking for. It was a scepter, not Tony’s preferred weapon, but one he trained with none the less. The hilt was slightly warped.

Loki remembered the day it became deformed some years ago. Loki’s leg was broken at the time and his teacher was doing research. He effectively had the day off. Loki had been sitting on one of the benches that lined the walls, wanting to see Thor fight.

He watched while grinning as Thor sparred with their instructor. The instructor was taking it easy on Thor, but the older prince was giving it his all. Their swords clashed loudly creating a familiar song that soothed Loki. All too soon Thor was disarmed. He yipped in pain as the instructor hit him on his back with the broadside of his sword. It made Loki snicker, but he quickly hid his smirk when Thor glared at him.

“Go sit with your brother.” The instructor said while readjusting his armor. Thor nodded while gasping for air. “Howardson, it is your turn.” Loki hadn’t known there was anyone else in the training yard. Now that he looked around he found the older Aesir. Tony was napping on one of the benches. He rolled off while yawning. “You’ve been testing my patients all year. You were supposed to be watching in order to learn.”
“I was watching,” Tony said while stretching then tightening his armor.

“Don’t lie to me, Howardson.” The instructor made a *tsking* noise. He went through a weapons chest, pulling out a scepter.

“I thought this year we were practicing with swords.” Despite his words Tony took the offered scepter.

“Your father is a master when it comes to the sword.”

“Either you’re making the assumption that my sword skills are hereditary or that my father is teaching me. I guarantee you that neither of which is the case,” Tony mumbled while testing out the weight of the scepter. The instructor sheathed his sword and pulled out a flail, the ball at the end of the chain had no spikes, but would hurt none the less. In his other hand he took up a shield.

Tony and the instructor moved to the center of the yard. The instructor lazily swung the flail. The one handed weapon had a slightly shorter reach than the scepter, but the instructor’s height made up for that.

“Are you ready?”

“Yeah,” Tony responded in a bored tone.

“Take this seriously, lest I bash your skull in.” The instructor made the first move, aiming at Tony’s head. The younger god hopped backwards, not bothering to counter attack.

“I am taking this seriously. You’re the one who isn’t.” Tony lifted the blunted blade of his scepter using it to point at the instructor. The older god grinned at the boy that was not even half his size.

“Very well. I’ll give you a fight then.” The instructor rested the hilt of the flail on his shoulder, his grip sure as the ball and chain rested on his back. Loki knew that it was the flicking motion of the flail that really gave it power. As the hilt was swung the chain and ball would follow through.

The instructor bolted forward, swinging the flail downwards. Tony blocked it with the scepter, but couldn’t dodge the shield. He grunted as he was pushed backwards. Before he could fully recover his footing the ball of the flail veered straight for his head. Tony barrel rolled to his side, moving out of the way. He swung the scepter out, aiming for the instructor’s legs. The older god hopped just high enough to avoid it.

“You have to be quicker.” The instructor flicked his weapon out and Tony used the scepter to take the brunt of the hit. The older Aesir had strength on his side though, almost causing Tony’s knees to buckle. He redirected the force of the hit down and to the right.

“Fight me, old man!” Loki was surprised by how angry Tony sounded.

“Disrespectful.” He bashed his shield against the scepter, almost trapping Tony’s fingers and possibly breaking them. Luckily the younger god twisted out of the way. “Running won’t work on the battlefield,” the instructor stated as Tony put some space between them.

Loki sat up straighter. He had sensed something during Tony’s last evasion. There was magic at play.

“Does it look like I’m running away?!” Tony asked while brandishing the scepter. The magic grew stronger and Tony’s grip on the scepter tightened. Despite his evident anger Tony remained still, waiting for the instructor to move.
The instructor rushed forward, his shield in front of him and flail ready to strike. Just before he entered the younger Aesir’s range Tony hit the ground with the blade of the scepter and used it to vault upwards, ramming his feet into the instructor’s face. Loki could hear the crunching of his nose. The instructor stumbled backwards as Tony landed on the ground.

Tony swept the instructor’s feet out from under him, causing him to fall backwards. The younger god pounced on the prone Aesir, knocking aside the shield and flail. He clasped his fists together before ramming them down on the instructor’s bloody nose.

Tony was quickly flipped over, his head bouncing against the hard ground. As the instructor raised his fist Loki could feel the magic strengthening. The older god let out a pained cry before punching Tony, knocking him out.

The instructor hastily stood up, tearing off his vambrace. It clattered loudly, skidding to a halt. He picked up Tony and hoisted him over his shoulder without saying a word. Thor followed them out, accompanying them to the healing room.

Loki limped over to the abandoned vambrace, trying not to put too much weight on his broken leg. A small handprint was obvious on the armor. The handprint was strangely smudged and the metal was discolored. He dropped it back on the ground, knowing that his instructor would be back for it.

After that he grabbed the scepter. There was another handprint, though it was fainter. The metal…it almost looked like it had been melted.
“There’s a rumor,” Lorelei whispered to Loki.

“Aren’t there always?” Loki said dully, flipping through a spell book.

“Loki, pay attention to me!” Lorelei whined.

“I’m responding, aren’t I?” Lorelei pulled on Loki’s cape and he pushed her out of her seat in retaliation. She squeaked indignantly. “Stop annoying me.”

“But it’s an interesting rumor!”

“I’m sure.” Loki’s voice was sarcastic.

“It’s about Tony.” She drawled out the dead Aesir’s name and Loki’s eyes flashed to Lorelei’s. He snapped his book close.

“Well, you have my attention. Speak.”

“Mother said that the city guards caught a pair of robbers. They had been trying to break into Tony’s home, but Lord Howard had put up all sorts of wards before they left. Apparently the robbers tried to get in and were shocked almost to death. Mother said that no one can get into the mansion, but that there’s a ton of treasure in their just waiting to be found! Isn’t that cool?” Lorelei tugged on Loki’s sleeve, trying to make him as excited as she was about the news.

“Interesting.”

“Loki!” She dropped her head down on the table. “You’re no fun.” He poked her side and she giggled.

“Isn’t your home in the same neighborhood?”

“Yeah, but our manor isn’t as pretty as Tony’s.”

“Do you remember that you still owe me a favor?” Loki asked and Lorelei sighed.

“I remember.”

“Tomorrow evening you are to officially invite me over for dinner and to study.” Lorelei pursed her lips in confusion, kicking her legs out back and forth.

“Why would you want that?”

“I needn’t tell you. That wasn’t part of our bargain.” He smiled at her cunningly and she pushed him out of his seat.

“Let us go with you!” Amora whispered while scattering papers on the table to make it look like they were studying.

“No, I need you here to cover up for me in case a servant checks in on us.” Loki waved them aside.
There were two royal guards positioned just outside the library. He’d have to go through a window in order to get out of the room unseen.

“Oh, only one of us has to stay behind.” Amora leaned in close to Loki, almost conspiratorially. They both looked at Lorelei.

“Why am I the one who has to stay behind?” She threw her hands up in frustration.

“Because, you dolt, you’re terrible with magic. Loki and I can perform illusions, unlike you.”

“Doesn’t that mean you should be the one to stay here?” Lorelei pointed at her older sister, still pouting.

“Lorelei, you’re the one who is staying behind. You can either do as you’re told or tattle on us. What will you do?” Loki stood close to her, using his height to intimidate her, despite only being two inches taller.

“You’ll owe me one then.” Lorelei said while crossing her arms and looking away from him.

“No I won’t. If you tell on us I’ll say it was your idea and that you were just mad that we left you behind. They will always believe me over you because I am an Odinson.”

“Exactly.” Amora looped her arm with Loki’s, dragging him over to the window. “Shall we, my prince.”

“I am not your prince.” Loki pulled away from her and hopped up, grabbing the windowsill. He pulled himself up with one hand while opening the window with the other. He slid halfway out before reaching down to help Amora. She swatted his hand aside and he rolled his eyes before going out the window. Amora followed him out shortly after. “Lead me to his house.”

“You don’t even know where it is?” Amora asked while raising an eyebrow.

“That’s the only reason you’re accompanying me. I know how to stick to the shadows unlike some people.” He gestured to her golden necklace and earrings that caught the light. She flipped her hair behind her shoulder before walking on.

They kept close to the walls and Loki was surprised by how little Amora was complaining as they trudged through shrubs and dirt. They had to pause multiple times to let Aesir pass them by. He could tell that Amora was already getting tired from the few illusion spells she used. He held back a smirk at her lack of ability.

It took them twenty minutes to reach the manor, far longer than Loki would have liked. There were guards positioned around the building, but they would be no problem. Few Aesir could properly see through illusions.

“Loki,” Amora whispered. He gave her a questioning look. “I can’t do anymore illusions. I’m out of energy.” Loki glanced around. As annoying as he found Amora to be he couldn’t just leave her behind. He’d gotten her into this situation and it would be dishonorable to leave her alone on the streets, even if there were guards nearby.

Loki grabbed her wrist and pulled her forward, casting an illusion on them both. They crossed the street and by the guard’s unseen. They used the vine covered wall to climb into the garden. It was empty.

“Why did you want to come here?” Amora asked in a soft voice.
“I wish to see the wards Lord Howard used.”

“Not here to steal anything then?” Amora joked while moving deeper into the garden.

“Careful.” He pulled her back and covered her mouth before she could let out a shriek. She shoved aside his hand.

“Who keeps snakes in their garden?” She said flustered as she looked down at two snakes, one of which was eating the other.

“They’re not native to Asgard. They’re venomous.”

“Of course they are.” She scoffed while looking around.

“Stay close.” Loki wished that he had brought a weapon, but it would have been suspicious considering he was supposedly just going over to their home to study.

A loud screech made both of them flinch. Loki looked up, trying to find the source.

“It’s Tony’s golden eagle.” Amora filled in, pointing towards one of the trees.

“He has an eagle?” It was a beautiful creature.

“Had an eagle. Tony mentioned once in class, but your brother and Sif made fun of him for it. I think they were just jealous.” Annoyance was clear in her voice. “I talked to him later about it.” Amora let out a low whistle while holding out her arm. The eagle tilted its head to the side. She dropped her arm when it didn’t come to her.

The bird suddenly swooped downwards, dive bombing onto a snake. It began pulling the snake apart, undisturbed by the presence of the two children.

“Let’s go.” He pulled Amora behind him, a green flame in his hand to light the way. They passed a variety of small dangerous creatures, many of which Loki had to blast with his magic. When they reached the patio Loki was starting to feel fatigued. Amora sat on one of the wrought iron chairs. Loki moved to the thick wooden door.

“Don’t touch it,” Amora warned.

“Obviously.” Loki kept his hands clasped behind his back to resist temptation. He sent out the slightest amount of magic and black runes lit up wherever his magic touched. “Wow.” He should have brought something to write in so he could copy the intricate wards and perhaps even solve their riddles. He stared at them in wonder.

“Loki, we can’t stay here for long. It’s too risky and I’d rather not get in trouble tonight,” Amora said from behind him once she had regained some of her energy.

“Fine.” He’d leave this mystery for another night. Loki helped Amora up from her seat and their trip back was much quicker than their first. No one noticed their fieldtrip.
They rode out to the Bifrost.

They were still too young to truly go on adventures on their own so they had four guards accompanying them. Luckily the guards usually stayed out of the skirmishes Thor got them into unless it looked like they were going to be overwhelmed.

“Amora has gone too far.” Thor said for the fifth time. Loki rolled his eyes, but stayed silent.

“She is an enchantress.” Sif spit out the last word. Loki didn’t know how she’d finally gotten her father to agree to let her leave Asgard. Sif had never been allowed to leave Asgard without her parents before.

“She is too wily for her own good.” Frandral added in, urging his horse to catch up to Thor’s.

“I’m sure she’s found herself a new teacher.” Volstagg laughed deeply.

Despite knowing Amora’s proclivities towards using her body for her own personal gain once more Thor had fallen into her bed only to be ‘betrayed’. It felt like a never ending cycle between the two of them, and whenever Loki pointed that out to his brother Thor always grumbled something about Loki being jealous before promptly ignoring him.

The younger god looked out into the Void, bored with the conversation they were having. Thankfully the clopping of the horses helped drown out the noise of same discussion they’d had countless times.

On this occasion the guards might actually be useful considering they were going to Niflheim. There weren’t many monsters there, but the few that resided in the frozen realm were deadly.

“Her image keeps flickering.” Heimdall said, his voice emotionless. Loki could see a hint of annoyance in his golden eyes.

“How is that possible?” Thor asked loudly. Of course Thor didn’t know. He’d given up learning magic ages ago.

“It matters not. Are you all ready?”

“Yes!” Thor answered for the group despite not checking with the other members of the party.

The golden solarium light up and they were pulled to another realm entirely. A cold wind cut through the group causing the Aesir around him to shiver. He told them they should have worn more than one cloak. They never listened.

Thor, Sif, and the Warriors Three all looked to Loki.

“Head north.” The youngest god said in a bland voice. He’d had the foresight to place a charm on her, assuming that she would flee once her ‘business’ in Asgard was completed. Like Loki she enjoyed traveling to the different realms to learn magic. Their method of getting others to agree to teach them was very different though. Amora seduced mages into agreeing to help her. Loki used his title to his advantage and if that didn’t work he’d trick his target out into teaching him.

Far ahead was an ice-forest. He could tell it made the others uncomfortable. It had been at least a
century since he was last in Niflheim and the first time he saw one of the ice-forests his mind immediately went to the stories his mother used to tell him at night about frost giants. After a few days of exploration in the form of a direwolf he found that there was little life in those forests. They did serve as good hide place though.

They rode for hours, periodically asking Loki for directions. He could tell Thor was getting annoyed due to the lack of fighting. He kept glancing at Loki, as if it was his fault. It was going to be dark soon and riding at night was unwise.

“I’ll change into a hawk and see if there are any caves nearby.” Loki flew off his horse before Thor or his friends could protest. If it was up to them they’d ride through the night, or at least until one of their horses broke a leg.

Loki soared high above, catching an updraft. The frozen trees slowly became smaller. Loki pulled out of his upward spiral, veering west. Thankfully it was not snowing or sleeting. His sharp eyes took in the landscape, looking for the telltale signs of shelter. He flew for an hour, finding nothing before returning to his group.

“Any luck?” Sif asked while pulling her cloak closer to her form.

“None.” He could see the dread in his companions’ faces. “There is a small clearing up ahead.”

Loki led the way. It didn’t take long for them to set up camp and a small fire. Everyone looked miserable, save Loki. The younger god held back a grin. He had warned them that they should have brought better cloaks.
Loki woke up with the sun. He nodded to the two guards that were standing watch. After stretching he pulled out dehydrated meat and cheese from his rations. It wasn’t exactly palatable, but it would take far too long to hunt for a proper meal.

He concentrated on the charm he’d placed on Amora. She hadn’t gotten far since he went to sleep. If she remained where she was they’d catch her by nightfall.

Loki went over to the horses and began brushing them down as he waited for the others to wake. As Loki predicted, Thor was the last to awaken.

They mounted up and were weaving through the forest soon enough.

By midday Thor was grumbling to his friends about being bored, and when he wasn’t doing that he was recounting a story they had all heard a hundred times.

“We are getting close.” Loki said after hours of biting his tongue. The terrain had changed, becoming rockier and steeper. The horses had to slow down. “We should go on foot from here.” They’d have to leave behind one guard to tend to the horses. Loki wasn’t worried. He knew most of Amora’s spells and could figure out all the rest.

He was nimbler than the others and easily transverse the complex terrain. Behind him he could hear Thor and Volstagg commiserating with each other. Loki picked up his pace, not wanting to submit himself to such an annoyance. One of the guards tried to keep up with the young prince, but Loki beckoned him away. Amora was still far off.

Briefly he considered shifting into a direwolf. He would be able to make fast work of this slope and possibly even pick up on Amora’s scent. Loki decided against it though. Thor always made comments under his breath about Loki having fleas and the mange, and that was the reason no one wanted to take him to their bed.

Loki reached the top of the slope and froze. He hadn’t even sensed anyone, but a lone figure in dark furs stood out starkly against the wintery terrain. He was completely covered, only his eyes showing through. There was a leather bag slung over his shoulder and a bow in hand. On his back was a quiver full of arrows. A dead rabbit was tied to his belt.

The two figures stared at each other for a long moment and Loki could just barely see the gloved hand that held the bow tighten slightly. Loki prepared to grab one of his daggers, gauging the wind and distance. He could teleport behind the figure, but Thor could come over the slope at any moment, chancing being struck by any arrow Loki dodged. He’d have to make his move first.

Sif and a guard reached the crest and both immediately drew their weapons.

“Reveal yourself!” Sif shouted and the others in their group hurried to join them. The stranger’s grip loosened.

“Sif?” A vaguely familiar voice called out. Loki blinked in confusion. The stranger slowly reached up, pulling off the fur mask and helm. The tip of Sif’s blade dipped down.

“Anthony Howardson?” She called out, surprise evident in her voice. Loki glanced at her then back to the other to the individual. He dropped his bow and opened his arms wide.
“It has been far too long!” He said while walking over to them. Sif ran and embraced him. He twirled her around before setting her back on the ground.

“1,038 years to be exact!” She clarified.

“In these years apart you have only grown more beautiful, and deadly if the shine of your sword tells me anything. What are you all doing here?” Tony asked while brushing his hands up and down her covered arms, trying to warm her up. Loki was surprised when Sif blushed bright red.

“What are we doing here? What are **you** doing here? All of Asgard thought you were dead. Please tell me Lady Maria and Lord Howard live as well.” Tony’s expression fell.

“They are in Valhalla now.” He smiled sadly and glanced over her shoulder. “Thor, is that anyway to greet an old friend?” Tony called out. The older prince was gaping like a fish. Tony walked over to the group with Sif trailing behind him. “Come on, you dullard, don’t tell me you don’t recognize me! I know I’ve grown, but I surely don’t look that different!” Tony brushed a hand over his face. He still did not have facial hair, but his smile was larger than Loki had ever seen it before.

“Tony!” Thor finally bellowed, scooping up the shorter Aesir into a strangle like hug. Frandral and Volstagg joined in.

“You all are killing me!” Tony patted Thor on the shoulder, requesting to be put down. Thor reluctantly released him. “Hogun, I see you have not grown obnoxious in old age.” Tony grinned cheekily at the other Aesir and Hogun smiled faintly. “Which means,” Tony turned towards the youngest prince, “you’re Loki.” Tony’s eyes swept over Loki from head to toe.

“That I am.” Loki wasn’t sure how he felt. Surprise was most evident, but he felt many other emotions just below the surface.

“I can scarcely recognize you.” He placed his hand on Loki’s shoulder. “Damn you’re tall.” Tony laughed before looking at the group as a whole. “What brings you all to Niflheim?”

“We’re here to catch Amora to punish her for her most recent crime, but that is of little importance. We were all at your funeral, yet here you stand!” Thor laughed heartily while clutching Tony’s shoulder.

“Was it a pretty procession? I always wondered about that.” Tony joked. “I know where Amora is, but I fear she’ll flee before we can get close enough. She has wards laid out once we get closer to my cave. She did not mention breaking any laws though.” Tony held his chin glancing up briefly.

“The enchantress knew you were alive and did not tell us?!” Thor gripped the hilt of his hammer, his anger at the Aesir woman growing further.

“Enchantress?” Tony snickered. “Is that what she’s going by now-a-days? I always knew she was vain. We’ve been in contact for a couple centuries now. I figured she’d have told you I was alive.” Tony turned around and went to pick up his bow. “You all look like you could use a warm meal. I usually try to get fresh meat when I have guests.” Tony patted the rabbit on his hip. “I suppose this will have to do since I don’t think any of us want to be in this weather much longer. It’s going to sleet soon.” He pulled back on his helm and mask. “Let’s go.”
By the time they reached the cave Loki could no longer sense Amora. He honestly didn’t care that she had gotten away. He only disliked that he’d have to listen to Thor complaining about it later on.

The mouth of the cave was covered in smooth metal. Tony pushed on it and seams appeared on the surface, slowly forming two doors. Loki could sense a bit of magic as the doors swung open. He heard a strange whisking noise, but couldn’t identify its origin.

“Your other guard will be able to open the door when he gets here.” Tony had drawn the guard a map so that he could take a safer route for the horses. Loki almost felt bad for him considering it was starting to sleet. “The horses can come in too.”

Past the metal doors was a large area covered in hay. In front of them was a wooden wall with an ornate door. The entryway also had a horse, though it looked hardier than any breed that lived in Asgard. In the corners were hides in the middle of being tanned and stacks of firewood. There was also a golden eagle with a rabbit in its talons. Tony whistled lowly and the eagle flew over, dropping the rabbit into Tony’s outstretched hand. The raptor perched on the god’s shoulder, towering over him. Tony seemed not to mind though.

He opened the wooden door and Loki felt heat radiate outwards. Thor and his friends practically moaned in pleasure as the cold was swept away. Loki began undoing his cloak as he observed his surroundings.

The inside of the cave was much larger than Loki had expected. Wards were written all over the walls. The ground was covered with wooden flooring. Against the walls was a large assortment of shelves that held anything from dried mushrooms to reams of strange cloth.

“You can hang your cloaks and weapons over there.” He gestured to a series of hooks and half filled weapon racks. Tony took off his own fur ensemble, putting it into a chest. He had already dropped the rabbits near a fire pit and the golden eagle had found a perch on the footboard of a large bed.

Loki hung his two cloaks, but kept one of his daggers on his hip. Thor and his companions completely disarmed themselves. Loki did his best not to comment on their naive trust. Even if Tony was an old friend they should still not leave their best defenses behind. Thankfully the three guards did not follow the older prince’s example.

“Sorry for the lack of seating. I usually only have one or two guests at most.” Tony unfurled pelts and placed them around the fire pit. “Feel free to warm up while I start up a stew.” They all gathered around the fire, excluding the guards who kept their distance. Loki positioned himself so he could clearly see the formerly dead god. Thor followed Tony over to the slab of stone that jutted out of the wall and functioned as a counter. Tony moved around quickly, gathering ingredients before starting to peel a potato like vegetable.

“Friend Tony,” Thor began and Tony turned to face him.

“Thor, unless you’re about to help me cook go take a seat. We can talk once we’ve all eaten.” Tony pointed the finger long knife he was using to peel at Thor as he spoke. “Now be helpful and take that barrel of mead to everyone. There should be cups on that shelf over there.” Loki had to hold back his laughter when Thor looked completely baffled at being ordered around. There was a long pause before Thor did as he was told to.
A moment later mead in stone cups was passed around the fire. Loki watched with rapt attention as Tony continued cooking and the group around the fire whispered to each other. Tony skinned and gutted the two rabbits, giving his eagle the innards. He pulled out a large cauldron and tossed the cut ingredients into it. He added in dried meat and headed to a barrel, putting in some sort of liquid. Tony hung the cauldron right above the fire pit before returning to the kitchen area.

“You all are lucky.” Tony uncovered a large loaf of bread. “Amora makes the best bread.” Somewhere in the back of Loki’s mind his thoughts went to his first name day when Tony was missing. He had made a joke about using Aesir bones to make bread. An image of Amora grinding bones came to mind, making Loki chuckle. Sif gave him a look, which Loki easily ignored. “I don’t have any butter, but I do have honey.” After passing out the bread and honey Tony finally joined them.

“Tony, you must tell us how you came to be in Niflheim and with Amora.” Thor said while devouring this bread.

“My family got into some trouble in Svartalfheim and it cost them their lives.” Tony paused, taking a sip of mead. “After leaving that realm I decided to travel around, being an adventurer. I’ve killed orcs for villages, helped capture a dragon for some Vanir nobles, and gathered items from all over the realms for those that would pay me. I have a house in almost every realm excluding Helheim and Muspelheim.” Tony shrugged. “I saw Amora a couple centuries back in Alfheim so we caught up over drinks. We meet up every once and a while.”

“Why did you never come back to Asgard?” Sif asked, looking sincerely hurt.

“There were no adventures to be had there. Asgard is too peaceful for me to have any fun in.” Thor laughed loudly, making it clear that he agreed.

“I see that your sense of adventure has not changed at all Tony!” Thor clapped the other god on the shoulder.

“What about you all? Do you usually go to other realms on adventures?” Tony asked while glancing into the cauldron. He tapped the side and Loki felt a small jolt of magic. He gave the other god a questioning look, but Tony only grinned in response.

“Alas, my princely duties often get in the way, leaving such adventures to the guards.” Tony laughed.

“Yeah, I remember you always whining about having to sit in during council meetings.” Tony grinned widely and Thor’s eyes narrowed. He reached for his side, not having remembered that he hung his hammer by the door. Before Thor could voice his needless sense of being insulted they were interrupted by the wooden door opening. The fourth guard walked in, covered in ice. “Wow, here, let me help you with that.” Tony stood up quickly, going over to the guard. His hands glowed faintly red as he helped take off the stiff cloak. The ice quickly melted away.

“My thanks.” The guard said before pulling out a handkerchief and blowing his bright red nose. Ice was crusted into his beard and eyebrows.

“Come warm yourself by the fire. Dinner is almost ready.” Tony pulled over the guard who looked at Thor for permission. The prince still looked miffed, but nodded none the less. Tony went back over to the kitchen area, grabbing metal bowls and spoons. He served up the stew, even offering some to the guards who were stationed around the room. They refused though, eating straight from their rations as they were supposed to. Tony sat between Sif and Hogun.
The stew was nearly perfect, but Loki summoned a vial of cracked pepper so give it a bit of a bite. Tony raised an eyebrow at him briefly, but did not comment.

Tony was the first one to finish eating. He laid backwards, hands pillowing his head, not caring the least amount about decorum. The empty bowl was sitting on his chest. His golden eagle swept over landing by Tony’s face. Sharp eyes peered down at the god before chirping. Tony waved the raptor away and it took off, landing back on the footboard of the bed.

Thor and Volstagg had seconds then thirds while everyone else was satisfied with just one serving. Tony collected the empty bowls and took them to the kitchen area.

“What are your plans for tomorrow morning?” Tony asked while sitting with the group again. The fourth guard had taken up position against the wall. Thor glanced over to Loki who was sipping his mead. It was a good brew.

“Amora is no longer in Niflheim. We’ll have to go back to Asgard to ask Heimdall where she went.” Loki answered Thor’s unasked question.

“We are riding on to Asgard. You must join us Tony so that all of Asgard can rejoice and we may feast together as we once did as boys!” Thor raised his cup while smiling broadly. Tony glanced into his own cup, his expression unreadable.

“I suppose it has been a while since I’ve been home. I probably won’t stay long though, perhaps just a year or two.” Tony smiled suddenly, raising his own cup. “To Asgard and old friends!” The group toasted and exchanged smiles, although Loki’s was a bit strained. He had never really been friends with Tony, though the sentiment was nice. Tony finished his drink. “It’s about time we turn in if we want to rise at first light. I’d rather not spend a night out there just because we didn’t wake up early enough.” Tony stood. “I suppose you Odinsons can share the beds. I’ll pull out some more pelts for the rest of you.” Loki glanced at his brother who gave him a look that made it clear he wasn’t going to share the large bed. Loki openly rolled his eyes, but did not comment.

Tony grabbed more pelts from one of the chests near the bed as the rest of Thor’s group started unpacking their sleeping pallets. Thor began undoing his armor and Sif turned away from him. Loki held back a chuckle. This was her first adventure with them. She’d have to get used to seeing them all half naked if she planned on going on anymore.

Tony hung up a hammock in the corner of the room before blowing out the candles, leaving only the fire to light the cave. Loki settled into his makeshift bed, already divesting himself of the majority of his armor, though he did keep a dagger close. In the dim light Loki could see the glowing eyes of the eagle. They were almost hypnotic as Loki fell asleep.
Loki was the second one to wake, excluding the two guards who were standing watch. Tony was nowhere to be seen in the cave. Loki pulled on one of his cloaks and grabbed his scepter before going to the antechamber of the cave. Tony was there, attending to the horses. The golden eagle on Tony’s shoulder screeched, making Loki cringe.

“Morning.” Tony said without looking away from the horse he was brushing down.

“Good morning.” Loki joined him in taking care of the horses. “I see that you have not scorned magic.”

“You noticed that, unlike your brother and my old classmates.”

“Indeed.”

“I’m guessing that they’re not appreciative of magic.” Loki glanced at the other Aesir. His expression was neutral. “That’s their loss.”

“It doesn’t help that the only ones from our age group who are adept at it are Amora and me. She only uses her magic to get her way.” Loki did not let himself frown.

“I thought Kelda wanted to be a mage too.”

“Her mother remarried a Vanir so they moved to Vanaheim. Last time we spoke she was still practicing, mostly focusing on controlling the weather.” They had both been fairly young when she left. Loki would never admit that he felt like she abandoned him. By that point Lorelei had given up magic and Amora was already travelling the realm in search of teachers. There was no one left his age that wanted to practice the fine art.

“Elemental magic… I can definitely see her using that.” Tony smiled and it somehow felt more genuine than all the others he had shown the group. “Let’s go wake up his royal laziness and the rest of the group. I wasn’t lying when I said I’d rather not spend the night out there.” Tony patted his mare before returning to the cave proper. His eagle screeched shrilly, causing Frandral and Hogun to bolt up. Sif looked around, but relaxed when she saw Tony. Volstagg and Thor didn’t even stir.

The eagle took off and landed on the footboard of the bed, screeching again, this time even louder. Thor turned onto his side and Volstagg woke.

“I’ll wake him.” Loki said before pursing his lips and walking over to his brother.

“Thur, wake up!” He nudged the older Aesir with the butt of his scepter.

“Go away, Loki. Your nightmares are no concern of mine.” Thor grumbled and Loki did his best not to blush.

“I am not 600 anymore, Thur. Now get out of bed before we all leave you behind.” Loki poked him harder and Thor swatted at the scepter.

“You are not mother.”

“You should be thankful for if I was I would have your hide for being so petulant.” He knew that
would wake up his idiot brother. Thor’s face turned bright red and he jumped out of bed, aiming a punch right at Loki’s face. The younger god hopped backwards and used his scepter to vault over the fire. Thor edged around it. Loki raised his scepter, keeping his brother at a distance.

“Now, now Odinsons, no fighting in my home.” Tony said while clapping his hands together and grinning.

“Stay out of this, Howardson!” Thor shouted before calling his hammer to him. Loki ducked down, already anticipating his brother’s move.

“Do you truly wish to disrespect our host’s home by going against his wishes?” Loki kept the fire in between them as Thor tried to close the distance between them.

“Home? This is a cave.” Thor snorted derisively.

“That’s right. It is a cave. And if you toss about that hammer it will cave in.” Tony said before dumping water onto the fire, startling both princes. The wooden and metal doors flew open and cold air gusted in. “Now can we get back to Asgard? I’m sure the All-Father is waiting to hear news on Amora.” Thor shivered violently, lowering his hammer and retreating to the bed to put on his undershirt and armor.

“Yes, we needn’t waste any more time on Loki and his tricks.” Thor said, assuming it was Loki’s magic that had thrown open the doors. The younger god did not bother correcting him.

The group quickly got dressed and packed up their gear. Thor was still grumpy but did not try to fight again. Tony’s pack was the largest as he grabbed various things off the shelves. After blowing out all the candles and saddling the horses Tony closed the wooden door behind them, placing a silent ward on it. When they were all outside Tony told them to wait a moment.

As the metal doors closed they disappeared into the wall seamlessly. Tony knelt in front of the cave, both hands on the ground. A strong wave of magic made Loki’s shoulders tense. The cave shuddered suddenly before slowly sinking into the ground. Loki glanced at the rest of the group and could see how uneasy they were.

Good, let them see that not all those who did magic were women or dishonorable. Perhaps then they’d learn.

Tony pulled himself onto his horse; the eagle on his shoulder took off.

“I know a safe route back to the Bifrost point.” Tony urged his horse forward, taking the lead. Thor grumbled something under his breath, but was otherwise silent.

True to his word the trip back was quicker. They only stopped at noon for lunch.

“Wow, I’d forgotten how that felt.” Tony said as the light faded and they were in the golden solarium.

“You have been hidden from my sight for many years.” Heimdall said, his voice giving nothing away.

“It’s easier to travel unseen.” Tony smiled charmingly and Loki held back a grin. He couldn’t agree more.

“This realm has suffered in your family’s absence.” Tony looked at the all seeing god, but said nothing, only making his horse move forward. The eagle took off, heading to the city. Loki nodded
at Heimdall before following the group down the Bifrost.

“Mother and father will be most pleased! We must see them at once!” Thor said, having regained his good spirits now that they were in Asgard again.

“And show up smelling like the forest and bedecked in fur?” Tony snorted. “No, I think I’ll stop at my manor first.” His horse trotted a bit faster and Thor was speechless, not used to being completely disregarded. Loki grinned openly. Evidently being away from Asgard meant losing stuffy court etiquette.

“I shall go tell Lorelei that we did not catch her sister.” Loki told Thor, encouraging his mount to move faster. “I shall meet you back at the palace.” Loki caught up with Tony. He glanced at the older god who contrasted so much with the city they rode through. Behind them the other gods split off, taking a different road to the palace.

Tony gave Loki a curious look before moving his horse closer to Loki’s.

“Why are you following me?” Tony asked idly. The Aesir on the street were giving them curious looks.

“As I said I am going to speak to Lorelei.”

“That’s not your real reason though, is it?” Tony gave Loki a knowing look and the younger god’s green eyes lit up.

“It’s a reason, just not my main one.”

“Why do I feel like the other reason has to do with me?”

“Because it does.”

“You’re not very forthcoming with information, are you?”

“How can you fault me for that when you aren’t forthcoming either?”

“I’ve answered every question posed to me.”

“You did so while giving away the least amount of information possible.”

“What can I say? I’m a man of mystery.” Tony grinned cheekily and Loki scoffed. “I’ll assume that you want to see my home. Amora told me about your little trip there after my ‘funeral’.”

“Amora has a habit of talking far too much.” Loki had learned that the hard way long ago.

“She’s a giver.” Tony chuckled under his breath before dismounting. Loki followed suit, but paused when Tony led them to the gardens. “Don’t worry. The horses will be fine outback. The vermin and snakes only bother intruders.” They let loose the horses before turning back towards the front of the manor.

They stopped in front of the ornate door that had two swords crossed over it. Engraved into the metal door was the image of countless other weapons, many of which were outdated and primal. Near the top of the door was an engraving of an eagle that was quite similar to the one that traveled with Tony. There was no handle.

“Are you sure you can even enter? Many have tried before and were injured for their efforts.” Loki warned, shrugging off his knapsack and cloak. Asgard was far too warm for such attire.
“This is my home, my birthright. Of course I can open the door.” Tony pulled off his thick gloves. He grabbed the hilts of both of both blades. Red magic cascaded over the metal. Black runes lit up and bled away too quickly for Loki to read them. Tony pulled apart the crossed swords at an excruciatingly slow pace until they flanked the door. The swords were shaking and inched back to the middle every time Tony’s concentration wavered for even a moment. The metal eagle was starting to emerge from the door with a loud keening noise.

Loki took a step back, sensing the danger.

“Perhaps…”

“Not yet, old man.” Tony grunted to himself before pulling both swords off and stumbling backwards. Tony jolted forward, ramming one of the swords straight through the door. “Told you I could do it.” Tony grabbed the hilt of the buried sword and twisted it. There was a loud clicking noise and he pushed the door open. “Welcome to my ancestral home, Prince Loki.”
Loki was surprised to see that the sword-turned-handle had not gone all the way through the door. When Tony closed the door he the second sword through it, creating another handle.

“Interesting.” Loki commented while glancing around. Everything had a layer of dust to it. “It might be prudent to hire some servants.”

“I like it. Looks rustic.” Tony began shedding his bags and furs, carelessly dropping them to the side. “Would you like a drink? Father always had the best drinks.”

“Weren’t you only in your 800s when you left for Svartalfheim?” Loki asked while following the other Aesir.

“Something like that.” The walls were covered with weapons of all sorts, all of which still looked deadly despite disuse. Their footsteps echoed off the marble floors. “You can put down your things anywhere.” Tony paused in front of a door with a metal star that was all sharp edges. The older god tapped the middle before twisting it in a few directions. It popped out slightly and Tony turned it. Just like with the other door there was a click before it opened. “My old man was a fan of locking things.”

“Not surprising considering he was the God of Mechanisms.” Loki mused while they walked into a study that was lined with books. Tony swept papers off the desk carelessly before sitting on it.

“Well, in the end that didn’t get him too far.” Tony upturned two crystal cut glasses and opened a decanter. He filled both the glasses before handing one to Loki. Tony took a sip and hummed happily.

“What do you mean by that?” Loki asked before trying out the drink. It was definitely not Aesir mead, but not bad. It had the sweetness of elf made wine and the heat of dwarf scotch.

“He’s dead. They’re both dead.” Tony knocked back the rest of his drink.

“Everyone dies.” Loki stated, trying to read Tony’s expression. Tony poured himself another glass.

“Yeah, but we’re still alive!” Tony raised his glass and Loki toasted with him purely out of habit. “Look at you. You’re a lightweight.” Tony plucked the half finished glass out of Loki’s hands. His face did feel a bit warm, not that he’d admit that. Tony set the glasses aside before heading back out of the study. Loki followed him. The door behind them closed and clicked in place, startling Loki. “Are you satisfied or would you like to snoop while I get cleaned up?”

“Princes do not snoop.” Loki scowled and Tony glanced at him with a grin. It was strangely disarming.

“If that’s the case I can lead you back to the door. Otherwise I can show you to the library. We have many books that even the royal library doesn’t have.” Tony turned around so that they were
face to face. “Books or the door. What do you want?”

“What makes you assume I am interested in books? I am an Aesir after all.” Loki raised his chin up.

“Other than the fact that you’re a mage?” Tony chuckled. “You’re missing that tan Aesir warriors usually have.”

“You don’t have it either.” Loki said defensively. Whatever that drink was it made Loki’s tongue a bit looser than he’d like it to be. Tony’s laughter grew louder.

“Yeah, that’s because I’ve been in Niflheim. In case you didn’t notice there’s not a lot of sun there.” Tony lazily put his hands in his pockets, looking confident and at ease. It was unnerving. The other Aesir warriors usually weren’t that comfortable around him, either because of his magic usage or because they knew him. “Books or the door?”

“Books.” Loki said while crossing his arms and trying to look regal.

“Right this way, your majesty.” Tony’s voice was the perfect balance of mocking and playfulness. Loki didn’t know how to react, so when Tony turned back around and began walking Loki just followed behind.

They came to a door just like every other. It had the same star-like metal adorning it. Tony twisted and turned it in what looked like a random order until it popped out, creating a knob. The scent of parchment wafted out, instantly relaxing Loki as the door was opened.

“I’ll be back soon. Don’t set the place on fire.” Loki only nodded in response, his eyes already flitting over the various titles. The door closed behind him and he was so enraptured that he didn’t notice the lock clicking back in place.

There were books from nearly all the realms. A few of the titles were even written in languages Loki didn’t recognize. He traced one of them with his fingers, the All-Speak allowing him to read it. It was a spell book on shape shifting, something he was well versed in, yet something told him there was more information here.

Loki grabbed the book before plopping down onto a couch and promptly sneezing. This place really needed a cleaning. Actually, he was surprised there wasn’t more dust considering the manor had been empty for a millennium.

Regardless, Loki flipped open the book, skimming the contents. His eyes widened when he found a passage about staying shape shifted even when knocked out.

Time slipped away without his notice.

The clicking of the door startled him.

“Glad to see you’re enjoying yourself.” Loki looked at the other Aesir, feeling a bit stunned. He looked completely different. His once shaggy hair was cut and styled, his ragged clothing had been replaced by fine Aesir garb, and his once dirt stained skin was spotless. “Luckily my father’s old clothing fits me.” Tony stood a bit straighter. “Are you ready to head back to the palace?” Loki glanced down at the book in his hands. “You can borrow it.”

“My thanks.” Loki snapped the book closed and brushed himself off while standing. As they made their way out Loki noticed that the once black runes on the front door were now red.
The trip to the castle was far different than the trip to Tony’s manor. The Aesir were staring, but now they actually recognized Tony since he looked so much like his father. Many whispered and others just stared in amazement and disbelief.

The palace gates were opened for them and two servants met them to take their steeds.

“I could have sworn this place was bigger.” Tony mused while walking next to Loki.

The younger god snorted before wordlessly split away from him, heading to his chambers while Tony doubtlessly headed to the throne room.

Loki held back a scowl when he saw that the door to his chambers were open. Thor was sitting in the lounge, or more accurately stewing in the lounge.

“The audacity of that low-blooded Aesir!” Thor said while jumping out of his seat. Good, so he wasn’t here to exact revenge on Loki for waking him up this morning.

“Forget him brother. He has been away from royal court for far too long.” Loki drawled out his words as he walked to his bedroom. Thor followed him, unperturbed by Loki’s less than enthusiastic response.

“Does he not know I am a prince?! Surely he hasn’t gone soft in the head since we last met!” Thor was stomping his feet as he walked and Loki could feel a headache forming. “I should challenge him to a duel and remind him of his proper place.” Thor smiled as if he just had the most brilliant idea in all the nine realms.

“Perhaps it would be wise to observe his fighting abilities before you challenge him.” Loki said while divesting himself of his armor and heading for the bathroom. Now that he was back in Asgard he could smell the funk he’d built up in Niflheim.

“I am a prince of Asgard and the student of the greatest teachers. I have slain-”

“He took the same lessons as you did until he went missing. Why you’ve been attending to your princely duties he has been traversing the realms for a thousand years, adventuring and sharpening his skills.” Loki said while standing in the doorway to his bathroom, half dressed. “Now leave me in peace so that I may get cleaned up.” He closed the door a bit harder than was necessary. He listened and made sure Thor left before he started his bath. “Idiot.”

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Note: Temul made some absolutely fantastic art for this chapter. It can be found here. Check out her other stuff too :)
Tony's First Moniker

When Loki reached the feasting halls everyone was already eating and in good spirits.

“Did I miss anything?” Loki asked while sitting next to Lorelei, not bothering to take his place at the royal table.

“Queen Frigga read Tony’s soul and announced him as the God of Metal.” Lorelei said excitedly. Her face was slightly flushed and Loki briefly wondered if she already had a crush on the other Aesir or if she had merely drank too much.

“How quaint.” Loki took a bite of his meal. “I assume you have figured out we did not apprehend your sister.” Lorelei laughed.

“So I gathered.” She smiled brightly at him. “I’m just so surprised that he’s alive. The queen and king seem rather happy about his arrival.” Loki glanced up to the royal table. Frigga was beaming, but Odin’s happy façade did not completely hide his tension. “What has he been doing for all these years?”

“Adventuring, according to Tony.”

“Wow, that must have been so fun.”

“I don’t really see how an 800 year old can go adventuring.” Loki poured himself a goblet of mead, despite still being a bit lightheaded from his drink earlier.

“I think he was closer to 900. I just remember Amora whining when we were kids that he’s older than her.” Lorelei poked at her food with her spoon. It was one of her terrible habits.

“My point still stands. Can you imagine yourself anyplace other than Asgard or Vanaheim while that young?” Loki asked, staring pointedly at her hands as she began picking at a honey roll, crumbs getting everywhere.

“Why do you think he was alone? If he’s here that means his parents might still be alive.” Lorelei said and Loki glanced at the royal table. Tony was taking animatedly to Odin. Loki felt a twinge of envy. Odin was smiling almost proudly. He never gave Loki that look.

“Tony said his parents are dead.”

“Did he say when they died?”

“He is being very vague.”

“You sound suspicious.” Lorelei said while pushing away her plate, waiting for the next course. Loki frowned, but supposed he’d been accused of worse.

“I just dislike not having all the information.” Loki turned his attention to his meal. From the corner of his eye he could see Lorelei fidgeting. It was another one of her annoying habits, but it was better than hearing Thor and his friends tell the same stories over and over again and adding in not so subtle insults about Loki and his magic.

Halfway through the feast the All-Father slammed down his spear Gungnir, silencing the hall.

“Very rarely do we have so joyous news as a lost comrade coming home. His circumstances prove
that it is best to always be prepared even in times of peace. As such Anthony Howardson has an announcement of his own.” Odin sat down and gestured to the younger Aesir to stand. Tony did so, smoothing out the front of his outfit and smiling charmingly to the whole feasting hall.

“First, I would just like to say that it is so good to see so many familiar faces after my long absence. Though it does seem that some of you have grown more out than up, Volstagg.” Tony winked at said Aesir and the room chuckled in response. “As for my news, I want you all to be the first ones to know that I am reopening my father’s weapons business. My many years abroad have taught me about the ever present threat Asgard faces. I’ve gathered many new weapons and armor designs in my travels and I look forward to incorporating them. I’ll also be taking commissions for those who want custom armor and weapons. I look forward to serving Asgard as countless generations of my family has done before me.” Tony raised his goblet. “To Asgard!”

“To Asgard,” echoed throughout the hall followed by cheers.

Loki held back a sigh of annoyance. Yes, he understood the importance of Asgard being properly defended. What annoyed him was the fact that instead of the festivities ending late at night Tony’s announcement practically guaranteed that the racket would go on till early in the morning. They’d be so loud that the noise would reach his chambers and the royal library. He’d have to leave the castle all together if he wished for any semblance of peace.

Loki finished his meal and silently excused himself. He grabbed the book Tony lent him before going to the royal gardens in order to escape the revelries. After reading for a few hours he began modifying some of his shape shifting spells so that they were more resilient and used less magic.

He was in the form of a magpie in a tree when he spotted a lone figure entering the gardens. Loki heard an old elf song being hummed in the dark before he could clearly see Tony with a goblet in hand. His face was flushed, most likely due to copious drinking.

Tony dumped the rest of his mead into a bush before sitting on the bench under the tree Loki was perched in. The older god spotted the book on shape shifting on the bench across from him and examined it before looking around.

“Hey Loki.” Tony said while looking up the tree. Loki swooped down, shifting into his usual form when he was just a few feet off the ground.

“Good evening.” Loki said regally. “I’m surprised you’re not still inside with the rest of them.”

“There are only so many drunk Aesir I can handle. Besides, I’ve been living mostly alone for the past few centuries. It will take me a while to get used to such big parties.” Tony shrugged. “Also, I’m pretty sure your brother hates me.” Loki grinned widely.

“Why do you think that?”

“He challenged me to a drinking competition.”

“Oh, did he now? How did you fare?”

“Considering I spent a few years with the dwarves only drinking their fire ale, it was no surprise that I won. Thor’s face was blood red with anger right before he passed out, almost breaking his own nose on the table. Hogun and Volstagg had to carry him back to his quarters.” Tony and Loki shared a laugh. “I don’t think he’ll ever really accept me into his group, but that’s not too big of a loss.” Tony slapped a hand over his mouth, eyes going wide. “Sorry, I hadn’t really meant to say that in front of you. I guess the mead affected me more than I realized.”
“That’s quite alright. I can’t fault you for not enjoying his company. Half the time he drives me insane and the other half he baffles me with his stupidity.” Loki said and was startled by Tony’s rolling laughter. It sounded so much more genuine than when he was talking with the All-Father.

“I’m glad I’m not the only one that thinks that.” Tony smiled honestly, once again pushing Loki off kilter. It seems Loki wasn’t the only one who hid behind a mask when dealing with the vast majority of people. That realization was almost comforting.

“Congratulations on receiving your title.” Loki said, changing the subject.

“Thanks, I probably should have come back before my 1,800th name day so I could have received it properly.” Tony glanced up at the two moons of Asgard in thought. “How old are you again?”

“1,637. There’s still a bit of time before I receive my title.” Loki remembered Thor’s 1,800th name day. Few had been surprised by him receiving the title of God of Thunder.

Loki’s jaw clenched slightly.

“You’re worried.”

“Something tells me that my title won’t be as kind as God of Thunder or God of Metal.” It was a concern that he’d never admitted to anyone else before.

“Don’t worry. I have a feeling that the Norns have a more interesting future planned out for you than just king or head adviser.” Tony patted Loki on the shoulder and the younger god was surprised that he didn’t flinch away. Loki didn’t like such casual touches. Before he could respond someone from the mouth of the garden called out Tony’s name. “I suppose I should get back to my party.” Tony frowned slightly before looking back at Loki, his expression lightening. “Feel free to stop by my manor anytime. That library hasn’t seen enough use as is.”
Loki took Tony up on his offer, much to Thor’s annoyance.

“Come on an adventure of epic proportions with us!” Thor said while blocking Loki’s path.

“I’d rather not.” Loki tried to get around his brother, but Thor moved in his way again.

“We’re going to Alfheim. You love Alfheim.” Thor pouted, making him look like a 600 year old.

“I do enjoy Alfheim, yet my relation with the elves gets worse every time I venture there with you.” Loki held back a frown, thinking about the last time they were there. Thor had destroyed a good portion of a forest that many elves had used for almost daily hunting and gathering. They were all banned from the closest village, which of course had one of the best crystal shops in all the nine realms.

“Loki-” The younger god shifted into smoke, moving above Thor then around a corner. When he was out of sight he changed back to his usual form. It was another trick he’d learned from one of Tony’s books. It was a dark elf spell, but cost Loki too much magic to be practical in battle. He heard Thor let out a grunt of anger and Loki held back a chuckle.

Loki took a horse to Tony’s manor. He pressed the image of a small shield on the door and heard a noise that sounded suspiciously like two swords clashing. It was a rather interesting doorbell. A moment later came the loud sound of locks unbolting. The door opened and a servant let Loki in.

“Are you here to visit Lord Anthony or to visit the library?” The servant asked, his head tilted down respectfully.

“I would like to see him.” The servant nodded and led the way to the study. He knocked and a moment later Tony opened the door. Loki found it both amusing and disconcerting that every door in the manor locked automatically.

“Good afternoon Loki.” Tony stood aside so that the other god could enter. “Here to show me a new spell or for the peace and quiet?” Tony sat back at his desk which was covered with half drawn schematics.

“To show off.” Loki dropped his satchel onto one of the empty armchairs.

“Alright, give me a second.” Tony closed his eyes tightly. When he opened them again they were glowing bright red. It was a strange spell that allowed the user to more clearly see the runes and process of a spell. Loki kept forgetting to ask Tony how he did it. “Go ahead.”

Loki took in a calming breath, centering himself. If he was going to be seen doing a spell he would do it perfectly. Magic cascaded over him as he shifted into black smoke and rose into the air.

Before he could react Tony threw a protractor at him. Loki suddenly solidified and fell to the ground with a hard thud.

“What was that for?” Loki asked, feeling embarrassed that his spell failed.

“Your smoke is as good as a solid object until you learn to let things pass through you. Right now it only works as a shock factor and if you’re hiding or trying to escape.” Tony walked over and helped Loki stand before grabbing the protractor from the floor.
“You know I could have you beheaded for that. Attacking a prince is a serious crime.” Loki crossed his arms over his chest, feeling even more embarrassed.

“Oh, and what will you say to the royal court? ‘Lord Anthony hit me with a protractor and I got a boo-boo.’ I don’t think that will go over so well, Lokes.” Something in the older god’s tone calmed Loki down. Tony was just joking with him, no harm meant. Perhaps it was the use of a nickname. For once he didn’t find someone using anything less than his proper name annoying.

“Either give me advice on how to improve it or go back to your pretty drawings.” Loki waved flippantly.

“You know they’re schematics.” Tony gave him a look that made Loki chuckle. “Fine, I guess I can help you out.” Tony sat on his desk, looking at the taller god. “You’re still thinking like a solid object. You can’t pass through a wall or anything with this spell technically. You just move around them like water flowing around a rock.” Tony made a vague hand gesture before nodding to himself. “Sorry, I’ve never really taught anyone spells so my explanation might not be that helpful.” Tony smiled bashfully, but there was a hint of amusement there too.

“No, I think I understand.” Loki rubbed his shoulder where the protractor had hit.

“You’re more vulnerable in that form too. It has no real defenses other than evasion.” Tony glanced around the study. He pulled a statue off a shelf and set it in the middle of the room. “Try moving around this a few times.” Loki glanced at Tony as he sat at his desk, going back to drawing designs.

Loki rolled his shoulders trying to work the tension out of them. This spell really did take it out of him and his fall hadn’t really helped. He recited the spell under his breath, feeling himself quickly warp. He kept himself close to the marble floor. Loki examined the statue, trying to envision himself flowing around its golden edges. Slowly he moved to it before trying to move around it.

He fell to the ground with less force than his last fall. He cursed under his breath gripping his head. A lump was already forming there. He looked over at Tony, but the other god seemed not to have noticed Loki’s failure.

Loki wiped away the perspiration that was starting to form on his forehead before trying again. This time he pictured hugging the statue, letting his smoke wrap around it. Before he could go forward anymore he solidified. He let out a yelp as he gripped his collarbone. His clavicle was definitely fractured. Once again he looked at Tony, feeling even more embarrassed, but the other god was engrossed in his work.

Loki stayed sprawled out on the cold marble floor for a few minutes, trying to catch his breath. The cold felt spectacular against his fatigued body. He could probably perform this spell one or two more times before he exhausted himself.

He scowled at the ceiling before standing up and performing the spell again. This time he pictured himself as water. Water flowed, he had to flow. Slowly he began moving around the statue, splitting before joining himself on the other side. He had to be like water moving around a rock-

Loki solidified and held in a moan of pain while gripping his left side. He probed his side. Three of his ribs were broken, one of which was dangerously close to a lung. He pulled himself off the ground feeling more exhausted than hurt.

“Tony,” Loki said while carefully sitting down on an armchair.
“Yes?” Tony finally looked away from his schematics.

“Can you get your servant to bring me water and something to eat? I fear I may have used a bit too much energy,” Loki asked, still clutching his side.

“Certainly.” Tony made a twisting motion with his hand that ended with two fingers pointing slightly upwards. “Break something?”

“Yes, three ribs and my left clavicle. I was just about to cut my side so I can hook my finger around my rib and pull it away from my lung.” He’d done it many times while on one of Thor’s adventures.

“No need. I’m a decent healer. I had to be considering some of the places I went.” Tony was interrupted by a knock on the door. He opened it revealing a different servant. “Bring water and dinner.” The servant left and Tony did a quick spell that kept the door open so that he wouldn’t have to unlock it again. “Take off your shirt. It’s easier if I have skin to skin contact.”

Loki did so and was annoyed at himself for feeling embarrassed. He wasn’t built like the other Aesir, as Thor and Volstagg so often reminded him. What made it worse was that he was on the tail end of puberty and doubted that he’d gain anymore muscle mass.

Tony’s hand was surprisingly warm at it touched Loki’s side. Red magic seeped out and Loki could feel the painful pulling sensation of his rib being moved back into place. He didn’t react to the pain though. This time he was prepared and it was nothing compared to some of the wounds he got in the training yard. The process took longer than the healers at the palace usually took, but it worked none the less.

By the time the servant came back his collarbone and ribs were fixed and Tony even eased some of the swelling on Loki’s head. He pulled his shirt back on while thanking the older god.

They ate in comfortable silence before Loki said goodbye for the evening and went back to the palace.

Note: My dear friend Temul drew part of this scene called Smoke and a Booboo. Check it out and give her some love :)
Thor was boasting to the whole feasting hall about his most recent trip to Niflheim. Honestly, Loki did not care about how many rock golems he had smashed.

He just wished Lorelei or Tony was here. Lorelei always scoffed with him whenever Thor exaggerated his feats. Tony on the other hand would whisper under his breath about a similar adventure he had in which he used magic and completed his goal quicker and more efficiently than Thor ever could. He would tell Loki about the random weaknesses some beast or another had and how exactly to exploit them.

Unfortunately, this feast was small. Only the royal family, Thor and his friends, and a few of Odin's trusted advisers were in attendance.

Loki was about to slip away unnoticed when Thor called out to him.

"Loki, I miss our time together fighting back to back!" Loki almost snorted. They never fought back to back. Thor always either pushed Loki out of his way or ran headfirst into the brawl. "Will you join us on our next adventure? Father has commissioned us to retrieve an artifact from Vanaheim. It should be good fun."

"I think not, Thor. It has been too long since I've been to one of the council meetings. I have duties I must attend to." Loki explained and Thor's easy grin quickly changed into a scowl.

"You have been spending far too long inside. You are as white as milk."

"Thor," Frigga warned halfheartedly and was easily ignored.

"It's that damn Howardson. Before he came back you always went on adventures with us, now you spend all your time either in the library or at his manor."

"Well pardon me for finding his company more interesting and mentally stimulating than yours," Loki said in a calm tone, his eyes half closed as if this was the dullest thing in all nine realms.

"Are you sure his company is not stimulating in another manner? He did spend an awfully long time in Alfheim, after all," Thor teased maliciously. Loki was proud of himself for not blushing.

"We're not like that Thor, and you acting like a petulant child is actually discouraging me from ever going on one of your reckless adventures. Now, if you'll excuse me." Loki turned himself invisible with a quick spell.

"Yes, run away with your magic," Thor called after him. "That's all it's ever good for!"

Loki pulled on one of his finer robes. He was true to his words when he said he hadn't attended one of the council meetings in quite some time. He had to act his part as knowledgeable participant even though he was by far the youngest there and had never seen true combat before.

He straightened out his embroidered tunic, pleased with his appearance.

Loki walked the near silent halls while glancing over the notes from the last council meeting. Nothing really stood out. Two guards opened the large golden doors to the council room causing Loki to glance up. He was surprised to see Tony seated inside, his eyes focused on a scroll in his
hands. He purposefully bumped against him as he walked to his chair. Tony glanced up and they exchanged a smile.

A few minutes later the rest of the advisers arrived, shortly after followed by Odin. Loki was seated in the chair to the left of the king, as his status dictated.

As with every council meeting it began with Heimdall's report on the other eight realms being read. Nothing of importance was really said. The dwarves in Svartalfheim had started on a commission Odin had given them. Vanahem was as peaceful and dedicated to Asgard as always. Jotunheim was dealing with some conflict, but without access to the Bifrost it mattered not. Muspelheim's fire giants were causing a bit of a stir, attacking the fire dancers and weaker races. If they continued Asgard might have to step in. There were no significant changes in the other realms.

The festival to commemorate Asgard's victory over Jotunheim would be in a few months. The council began discussing what kind of entertainment, food and drink they would bring in from the other realms. Tony only spoke up once to let them know that one of the crops in Vanahem had suffered blight so one of the dishes they were thinking of importing would be more expensive than usual.

The next order of business was directed at Tony. They discussed the palace's defenses and the new armor and weapons that Tony had his workers creating.

This was… different. Loki had never seen the other Aesir look so serious, yet as he talked about a previously unknown weakness in the layout of the palace he had a thoughtful look that aged him a couple hundred years. He used jargon that Loki hadn't heard since he was a young boy and learning about various weapons for the first time. He mentioned a resilient metal he wanted to use to make the new armor with and Odin said they'd discuss it later on since it would increase the price.

By the end of the meeting Loki had a new appreciation for the God of Metal. He wanted to talk to him about the new armor for the guards, but Odin told Tony to stay behind and waved Loki off.

Loki shrugged to himself and went back to his room to change into more comfortable attire.

Thor came back with his companions a few days later. They all looked terrible. Loki didn't comment at all when they walked by him, but his silence spoke volumes. Apparently they hadn't retrieved the artifact from Vanahem.

Shortly after that Loki was summoned to his mother's solarium. Frigga was sitting with a half embroidered tapestry on her lap and warm tea on the table beside her.

"Mother." Loki nodded respectfully to her, before taking the seat across from her.

"Good afternoon, my love." She smiled at him and it was infectious. Frigga glanced back down at her work, continuing embroidering it. Loki was used to this. She always took time with their conversations which Loki didn't mind in the least. He enjoyed sitting in her presence. She had a calming effect on him. "Your brother came home today," she said almost an hour later, not looking away from her work.

"That he did." Loki pursed his lips, already knowing where this conversation was going.

"You have been spending quite a bit of time with Lord Anthony. I remember when he was barely tall enough to reach my knees." Or perhaps he didn't know where this conversation was going.

"His personal library has many books our own does not." Loki explained.
"I'm sure it does, but it has taken you away from your brotherly duties."

"Brotherly duties?" Loki raised a single eyebrow.

"You and Thor are supposed to look out for each other." Frigga glanced up from her embroidery giving Loki a pointed look.

"Perhaps he should learn to look out for himself," Loki grumbled, crossing his arms.

"Loki." Frigga's voice was sharp, making Loki flinch and sink into his seat.

"I do not enjoy his adventures. I prefer staying in Asgard, studying at the palace or at Tony's."

"I fear Lord Anthony is a bad influence on you." Frigga sighed, disappointment evident in her voice.

"How so? He's far more responsible than Thor is." Loki ran a hand through his hair, not meeting his mother's eyes.

"He neglected his duties as a son of Asgard for over a millennium. Only those in his family can access and create many of the designs of the best weapons Asgard has. By playing adventurer he put our realm at a disadvantage. Now he is working quite hard to make up for lost time. You may even be a distraction to his endeavors." Loki felt himself bristle up with indignity.

"Am I not allowed to have my own friends, mother? Or must I suffer spending all my time with Thor and his ilk?"

"That's not what I meant. Besides, you have Lorelei."

"Yes, a single friend. She annoys me half the time and the other half she's either repeating a rumor or agreeing to whatever I just said." Loki clenched his jaw, hating that he was forced to spend time with those he did not like, those that belittled his magic. Of all of them Hogun was the least annoying since he was mostly silent and actually listened to Loki's plans on occasion.

Loki briefly wondered how his life would have been if Thor was less prone to gallivanting through the forest. Maybe then Loki would have more friends and wouldn't be as ridiculed. The thought passed quickly considering he knew Thor would never settle down.

"My love…” He refused to look at her.

"I will go on the more dangerous adventures, but do not expect me to like it." With that, he left.
Odin’s 6,300 name day was only a year and a half away, practically just around the corner. Every hundredth name day was celebrated and Loki somehow always got him a present that was never good enough.

It was a chronic problem that he had been trying to remedy since boyhood.

“What are you getting the All-Father?” Loki asked Tony as he sat in his study.

“Hmm, probably a new eye-patch. He’s been wearing the same one since we were children.”

“That may not be wise. My father has always been a bit sensitive about his missing eye, although he never shows it.” Loki flipped idly through a spell book, not bothering to look at the other god.

“I’ll risk it. Would you like to see the design?”

“Of course.” Loki watched Tony as he went over to one of the shelves. All the books were untitled, yet Tony easily found what he was looking for. He flipped through the pages and Loki could see random designs from gauntlets to garden art.

“Here it is.” Tony handed him the heavy book.

Loki had never seen runes made so… elegantly. In the very center of the eye-patch was the rune that represented Asgard. On the boarder the runes that represented the other realms were engraved. Loki’s fingers hovered over the finely crafted image, wanting to trace how each rune seemed to seamlessly flow into the next. He could almost see it made in metal and glinting in soft light.

“It’s beautiful. What metal will you make it from?” His eyes drifted to the designs on the opposite page. An armor of matching design and regality.

“An alloy of Aesir gold and uru.” He stated, as if a combination was so easily done.

“You can manipulate uru?”

“Have you forgotten my title?” Tony asked jokingly.

“It’s just hard to believe.” Uru was rare enough and required great heats to be malleable. The difference between that and Aesir gold was too vast to be combined.

“Have I not shown you to my forge yet?” Tony asked while taking the design book from Loki.

“You have not.”
“Well then let’s go.” Tony grinned and Loki was hard pressed to deny him anything. The younger god set aside his spell book and followed Tony. He could almost swear that the combination Tony used to open the door to the study was never the same thing twice. They walked past countless doors that all looked the same to him. It made Loki curious as to what was hidden behind each of them.

They stopped in front of a door that looked the same as any other. Once more Tony manipulated the star shaped metal until it popped out, forming a handle. The scent of ash came with a wave of heat. The door lead to a stairwell that was pitch black, with only a stray candle or two to light the way. They descended in near silence.

“The heat never leaves, even after a thousand years it was still warm, waiting for its master.” Tony touched an ash stained wall and red magic laced itself into the mortar between the stones. The stairwell became an eerie red. “The walls take on the color of their master’s magic. Slowly though, and black is hard to replace with any color.” Loki could not see his face, but could hear the frown in his voice.

The smithy looked like the one in the palace, but Loki could sense that it was far different. Tony’s red magic still glowed in the mortar of the walls, but glowed brightest near the forge. Tony dropped the book on a metal table with tools of the craft. It echoed strangely and Loki glanced up. The room was three stories high. At the very top was a swirling ceiling of metal that seemed to shift every time Loki moved.

Small windows dotted the wall, but no light shined through.

“My house is the second richest in Asgard. Our true wealth lays here.” Tony pointed to a door with a similar sword hilt-handle that the front door had. Toward the middle of the door were countless razor sharp triangles. Loki could not see what Tony was doing, but a moment later there were three subsequent clicks. Tony pulled the door open and gestured for Loki to follow him. “Metals of all sorts reside here.”

The door led to a thin stairwell that stuck to the wall, slowly spiraling upwards. The small windows that he had spotted earlier were not truly windows at all. What looked like recesses from the outside formed shelves on the inside. As they ascended metals of greater and greater worth were piled in bricks, none labeled, yet easily identified by any learned man.

The very top had stacks of uru in far greater number than any of the other metals.

“Greater a fortune than I have ever seen before.” Loki said, unable to hide his wonder.

“It’s not just the metal.” Tony ran a hand over the uru. “It’s the potential that lies in wait.” He grabbed a single brick before they began heading down the stairs once more. He also grabbed a gold bar. “You know, you’re the first of your line to see this place. It is usually reserved for only those in my family.” Tony smiled over his shoulder at Loki. “I’d offer to let you watch me work, but there are many secrets that I cannot share.”

“We all have secrets.” Loki said with little emotion, if only to continue the conversation. Tony chuckled darkly in return.

“That we do.” Tony set the two metals on the table next to the book of sketches.

“How much would it cost to make the matching armor?”

“It would cost a fair fortune, but for you I could give a discount.” He grinned at the younger god,
once more giving the genuine smile that made Loki feel off kilter. “Give me a week to measure out all that will be necessary for it and I’ll give you a price in return.”

“Good, now may we return to your study? I find this heat nearly unbearable.” Loki adjusted the collar of his shirt, perspiration wetting its hem. Tony chuckled.

“Alright, let’s go Lokes.”

The younger god still did not know how he felt about that nickname.

Chapter End Notes

Please read the side piece *Paint it Black* before continuing on.
It was a feast like countless others. Loki was just happy that for once Tony was in attendance. He had come earlier in the day for a council meeting and Loki had convinced him to stay with promises of showing him his newest spells.

They were discussing under their breaths the finer details of Odin’s armor that still had a ways to go. All that was left was the inlaid design.

Loki was briefly distracted by one of Odin’s ravens landing on the king’s seat. Odin tilted his head slightly, listening to the bird whispering into his ear.

Odin slammed down his spear, catching everyone but Loki off guard.

“Amora has been spotted in Alfheim. Thor, take your compatriots and capture her. You go too, Loki.” Odin slammed his spear down again, but before the Aesir could follow their orders Tony stood ramrod straight. He bowed his head slightly.

“King Odin, I respectfully request to join in on this quest. No one knows her spells as well as I, and I’m sure it would help if she saw a friendly face. I believe I can convince her to come back to Asgard peacefully.”

Odin considered his offer for a long moment.

“Very well. But hurry back. There is still much business you have to attend to.” Tony bowed further.

“Thank you, All-Father. I shall not disappoint.” As he stood up straight he flashed Loki a sly grin.

As they made their way out of Asgard Tony let out a whistle and his golden eagle appeared out of nowhere, landing on his shoulder.

“You never mentioned your eagle’s name.” Loki said while steering his horse closer to Tony’s. Tony reached up for the raptor and it nuzzled his hand.

“His name is Jarvis. He’s a spectacular hunter and companion.” The eagle made a strange chirping noise. “His keen eyes have saved me a hundred times over.”

“You need a bird to keep you safe?” Thor mocked from in front of them as they all rode down the rainbow bridge.

“You need four warriors constantly with you to keep you safe?” Tony countered without missing a beat. Thor reared his horse around, reaching for his hammer. “The All-Father wishes us to make haste. Squabbling on the Bifrost probably isn’t what he meant.”

“One of these days, Howardson, I will properly remind you of your place.”

“Your confidence is adorable.” Tony urged his horse on, catching up with Thor and his companions. “Tell me, Odinson, have you ever slaughtered a hoard of frost giants? Have you sat in Surtur’s court and shared tales over glasses of fire wine? Have you pulled a sword from your chest
and used it to kill the very one who inflicted the wound?” Storm clouds were quickly forming over all of Asgard. “Calm down. If you ever wish to be king you must get in control of that temper of yours.”

“Enough of your insolence!”

Thor finally cracked and wheeled around his horse while aiming a blow at Tony’s head. Before Loki could react Tony had a dagger out, blocking Thor’s attack. The horse below Tony nearly buckled. Only red magic was keeping it from being smashed or falling.

“Do you think this is how a prince is supposed to act?” Tony’s free hand was on the hilt of a second dagger and his eagle screeched in warning. The Warriors Three and Sif had already pulled out their weapons while Loki was unsure of whose side he should be on.

“Thor, now isn’t the time.” Loki finally said riding up to them. “And Tony, stop purposefully aggravating him.” He used a bit of his magic to push their weapons away from each other. He was surprised by how much resistance he met while trying to force Tony’s hand. “Now are you two done or must I call this whole expedition off?”

Thor holstered his hammer while glaring at Tony. His icy blue eyes switched to Loki.

“You and I will have words about your tone later.” Thor yanked a bit too hard on his reins making his horse neigh in pain. Tony and Loki waited for Thor and his companions to continue down the bridge before they urged their steers on.

“He’s too easy to mess with, though I fear I may have accidentally caused you strife.” Tony said while spinning a dagger on the palm of his hand. It flickered red before disappearing.

“You are right though. That isn’t how a prince should act.” Loki clenched his jaw, trying to slow down his heartbeat. He hadn’t seen Thor that angry in decades. “Hunting down Amora should calm him though.”

“She’s my friend, so I’d rather not use the term ‘hunting down’ if you don’t mind.” Tony glanced at Loki with a sardonic grin. “What exactly is it that she did?”

“Officially she went directly against the All-Father’s wishes.”

“His wishes?”

“Traveling between realms without using the Bifrost is forbidden. It has been since-” Loki hesitated for a split second, “you and your family went missing.”

“Interesting. What’s the unofficial reason?”

“She was sleeping with Thor while also sleeping with Lord Vlats.”

“Isn’t he older than Odin?”

“Yes, and he use to be on the council too, but lost his place after Thor found out. He lives in Vanheim now.” Loki shrugged as they reached the solarium.

“I fucking hate politics.” Tony said as the Bifrost sucked them in, taking them to Alfheim. Due to their alliance the Bifrost deposited them just outside of the city Amora had been spotted in.

“I can sense her.” Good, his charm was still in effect. He always knew he was a better mage than
her. From the lack of movement it seemed like she hadn’t notice the Bifrost. “She’s in the upper district.”

Thor wordlessly led the way, his posture stiff and unyielding. Loki urged his horse into a trot, catching up with his brother. Thor wouldn’t be able to find his way through the city without him.

The elves gave them a few looks as they passed by, but otherwise seemed not to care. Loki always liked the elves. They were much calmer than the Aesir and more open to diversity. They actually respected magic instead of scorning it.

“Tony! Tony!” A young male voice called out. Their group looked for the source and saw a young elf in a long coat running over to them.

“Sibin! You haven’t grown at all in 300 years!” Tony said in a teasing voice as the young elf made it to Tony’s steer. He had to crane his neck to see the Aesir. Loki was surprised that the boy was able to keep up with their horses.

“Hey, I’m still growing unlike some people!” Sibin elbowed Tony’s leg and the Aesir kicked him softly. “I’ve got some good merch if you’re interested.” The boy opened his coat, showing an assortment of items. “How about a little Promen root? Or perhaps some dwarven ale? I recently acquired a watch that gives the times and seasons of every realm.”

“You ‘acquired’ it?”

“You interested or not? “

“Let me see the watch.” Tony reached down, holding his palm open. Sibin handed him a silver pocket watch that he pulled from a hidden fold in his coat.

“Just push your thumb down on the image of the realm you want to know about. It will pop open and will show you the names of the main cities in that realm. Click it and there ya go.” Tony followed the instructions and seemed pleased with the results.

“How much, Sibin?”

“All the money ya got.” The kid joked and Tony kicked him again.

“Do I need to go to the whore house and tell your mother that you need a whipping?”

“That reminds me, I was there last night and your mother says hello.”

“Alright you little shit.” Tony grabbed the elf by the collar of his shirt and hefted him onto his horse. “I’ll give you one of my daggers for the watch and I know you were hiding some methra gems in the back of your coat. Give me all of it and we’ll be even for that time I took a beating for you.” Sibin made the most outraged noise, but handed over a bag of grey dust to the Aesir. “Good, how is your mother?”

“The flower shop is doing well.”

“I’m glad. Give her my regards.” He lowered the young elf carefully back to the ground and Sibin quickly ran off, disappearing into the crowd. Tony handed Loki the watch and leaned in close.

“Screw all those rules about not being able to travel between realms as we please. Consider this a gift for all those name day celebrations I missed and any others I won’t be there for.” Before Loki could respond Tony quickened his horse. “I can sense her. She’s just up ahead.”
A few minutes later they arrived in front of an all white building.

“This will be more complicated than expected.” Loki sighed and Tony shared the sentiment.

“What do you mean?” Thor asked, his voice still showing his earlier aggravation.

“She’s in a House of Hvit. Only a select few are allowed in and you can’t force anyone out of it.” Tony explained, while dismounting his horse.

“They can’t refuse a prince of Asgard,” Thor said confidently.

“Have you visited the five holy citadels of Alfheim and drank from the spring?”

“Holy citadels?” Thor scrunched up his nose in distaste.

“In each one you have to do a few challenges then you get an ingredient to a potion that allows an individual to speak the old language.”

“Preposterous. The All-Speak can translate any language.” Thor and the rest of the group got off their horses and tied them to a post. Tony didn’t bother to tie his.

“Loki, have you climbed the citadels and drank from the spring?” Loki snorted at the preposterous question.

“I did so when I was 1,400.” He waved dismissively. It had been a bit of a gift to himself and had only taken him three years to complete. The challenges had been interesting and had expanded his understanding of magic.

“Not bad.” Tony pushed on the pristine white doors. “I won’t tell you how old I was. Don’t want to embarrass you.” Loki purposefully knocked his shoulder against Tony’s while walking into the building.

“Norns forbid you embarrass me.”
The inside of the building was almost blindingly white, with two elves flanking each door. One gave them a curious look before disappearing into another room.

“I am Prince Thor of Asgard and I demand entry.”

“Thor, Tony and I can handle this. All you need to do is wait here,” Loki said while moving in between the prince and the elf. Thor’s face was quickly becoming red, but before he could speak a tall elf in all white came out. The elf breathed out a strange sigh that formed words to only those who knew the language.

“Do you wish to enter?”

“Only with permission, but I fear the rest of this group does not hear nor speak,” Tony said in response and Loki nodded in agreement.

“Why are you nodding? Don’t ignore me Loki!” Thor grabbed his brother by the shoulder and yanked him back so that they were face to face.

“Calm down you oaf, unless you are trying to get us all kicked out.” Loki brushed Thor’s hand away.

“They are truly but children then,” The elf said, ignoring the scuffle. Tony chuckled and Loki glanced at the elf with a grin.

“Yet they think themselves above the rest of us, or at least one in particular does.” Tony and the elf looked at Thor then nodded in agreement.

“The guards can hold them at bay if need be. You two may enter though.” Tony and Loki both gave half bows in thanks before following the elf in. Thor tried to follow them, but a small squadron of guards appeared, blocking his path. He began ranting, but when the doors closed the sound was completely cut off.

“You must relinquish all your weapons,” a shorter elf said while directing them to another room with large empty tables. Loki quickly laid down his daggers and scepter before looking at the other Aesir. He was surprised by how many weapons Tony had hidden away. There were a slew of daggers and two swords that he had somehow escaped his notice. In the heels of both his boots were round disks that were sharp all around. Up his left sleeve was a collapsed crossbow with a single glistening bolt and on his right wrist was a clear bracelet filled with what looked like black sand.

Loki gave Tony a curious look.

“Some habits die hard.” Tony shrugged before looking at the elf that was guiding them. “We’re ready.”

The elf took them to another room that was filled with fountains. Both Aesir began washing their hands and faces, knowing from their past experiences that it was mandatory.

“Very good.”
The next room they were taken to had a circular table. A few other elves were sitting there, some of which were dark elves. Loki and Tony sat down and were handed cups of tea. Tony drank his slowly, savoring the taste. Loki drank quickly, knowing that the longer they stayed the more likely it was that Thor would cause a diplomatic disaster.

Loki stared at the other Aesir whose eyes were closed. He was humming in pleasure. The elderly elf that sat next to Tony began whispering to him and every so often the Aesir would chuckle. Tony glanced at the elf and they toasted together.

It was strange to Loki. It seemed like wherever Tony went he either made a friend or knew someone. He exuded a confidence that put others at ease and attracted them to him.

It was far different than what drew others to Thor. The prince was loud, making those with similar interests feel proud of themselves.

Thor’s charm was lacking in subtlety while Tony’s drew an individual in before they could even realize it.

“You’ll have to pardon us. We’re here to see an old friend.” Tony picked up the large tea kettle and began walking around the table refilling cups. “Though we are very grateful to have made new friends.”

“And we with you,” Those at the table said, nodding in thanks when he filled their drinks. Tony set the tea kettle back in the middle of the table before gesturing for Loki to follow him.

“What was that about?” Loki asked as they made their way through the white halls, being able to sense Amora’s location.

“I’m pretty high in the order. By serving them it’s seen as me giving my blessing,” Tony said nonchalantly. “I helped convince the high council of the order to allow a few dark elves to take the tests. The dark elves brought new dimensions to the unspoken language. It was purely an honorary title. I have no real political power here.”

“How did they know you were high in the order?”

“The tea, the cups, and the kettle all react differently depending on who’s handling them.” Tony paused, leaning on a wall. “When the tea was poured into my cup it turned into a spiced wine. When it was poured into yours I assume it stayed as tea.” Loki nodded in agreement. “When I handled the kettle it turned the tea into spiced wine and the wine can’t be turned back to tea. That’s all there is to it. I’m surprised you didn’t learn about that during your time in the citadels.”

“Unfortunately I did not have time to linger. I was constantly called back to Asgard for one reason or another, so whenever I completed one citadel I’d move on automatically to the next.” Loki frowned. Most of the time when he had been called back it was to fix one of his brother’s follies.

Tony pushed himself off the wall and they began walking again.

“Amora is only a few levels above you in the order. When she handles the tea kettle it turns into a warm cider that feels like silk on the tongue.”

“You two have been here together before?” Loki felt a strange regret. He wondered what his life would have been like if he was not a prince. He would have traveled the realms whenever he pleased. He would have all the time in the realms to visit all the great masters and places of learning. Instead he was bound to Asgard, never being allowed to stray from her for too long.
“She was telling me about a play in this city and it sounded interesting. We went together, but neither of us felt like traveling the branches once it finished and each citadel gives free lodging.” Tony shrugged. “Amora probably already knows we’re here.”

They rounded a few more corners.

“Things have become even more complex,” Loki stated while frowning and looking at the door that led to a natural spring. The door had a sign that read: Purification and Penance.

Tony nodded while sighing before he opened the door. Steam rolled out of the room, engulfing both the gods.

“Amora,” Tony called out.

“Tony?” They followed the sound of her voice.

When Loki saw Amora he was speechless. Her once long flowing blond hair was shaved completely off. Instead of her usual form fitting clothing she was wearing a loose white dress. At her feet was a bucket carved out of stone. In her hand was a cup that she was using to throw water on the hot rocks beside her.

“You have never looked more beautiful,” Tony said and she scowled at him in a playful manner. “Unfortunately we’re here to take you to the Realm Eternal.” Amora frowned and threw another cup of water onto the hot stones.

“Very well. I need to change into something dry.” She nodded demurely and Loki thought it did not fit her personality.

“May I escort you?” Tony asked while holding out his arm. Amora rolled her eyes but hooked her arm with his as she stood. “Are you staying in the west corridor?”

“Yes.” The pair walked in front of Loki and he was curious about what exactly their relationship was. Amora was infamous for her sexual deviances.

The room Amora was staying in was equally startling. It was mostly bare except for a wooden pallet for rest, a wooden chest, and a screen that hid a toilet.

Amora pulled out an equally simple white dress from the chest and disappeared behind the screen to change. Loki glanced over at Tony, but the older god just looked amused.

When they neared the entrance together they were stopped by one of the guards.

“Do you go freely?” He asked Amora.

“I go freely,” Amora said and unhooked her arm from Tony’s.

“Are you alright?”

“Just a bit nervous.”

“You can ride with me if you’d like,” Tony offered and Amora scoffed. “Don’t worry I had Jarvis fetch another horse.” Loki hadn’t even noticed the eagle’s absence. He gave Tony a confused look. “I tied a message to his foot then sent him to go to an elf who owed me a favor. Jarvis has a spell cast on him so that he can always find me.”

“What, you’ve never seen an eagle ride a horse?” Amora asked with a sly look in her eyes.
“He looks very dignified actually.” Tony nodded to himself. “An eagle among sparrows.”

“A king among peasants,” Amora added in.

“A mage among warriors,” Loki said and the other two Aesir glanced at him before they all burst out laughing.
The look on Thor’s face when he saw Amora was one Loki would never forget. For once the fool was left speechless. The goddess looked pointedly away from him and mounted the horse Jarvis had been perched on. The eagle flew over to Tony’s shoulder. The God of Metal unlaced a small piece of parchment from around the raptor’s foot. He stared at it for a moment before chuckling and burning it with a bit of magic.

“Are you coming, Thor?” Loki asked while sitting tall on his horse. The older prince gaped a moment longer before nodding and getting onto his horse. From behind them Loki could just make out Sif’s soft voice whispering to the Warriors Three. Volstagg chuckled deeply before Sif punched him on the shoulder, almost making him fall off his horse.

Loki made his horse trot a bit faster and the other horses followed suit. They reached the intricate design in the burned grass quickly. The Bifrost opened without prompting. They were sucked into the light before finding themselves once more in the golden solarium.

As they rode through the city Amora somehow managed to look both humble and refined at once. All the Aesir on the streets looked at her. Some were amused while others paid them no mind.

The group rode straight to the palace. Jarvis flew off when they reached the royal stables. Guards surrounded them and put shackles on Amora’s wrists. She was undisturbed by them.

They were escorted to the throne room where the All-Father was seated proudly.

“Very good.” Odin’s voice reverberated throughout the room. He waved dismissively towards the group. Thor and his companions left and Loki was about to as well, but he saw Tony standing strongly next to Amora. “You may go Lord Anthony.”

“I am here to stand trial, same as Amora,” Tony said and there was a murmuring between the few council members who were also in the throne room. Even Frigga, who stood by Odin’s side, looked confused. Loki moved to the side, just a few steps away from his father. He could already tell that there was no talking Tony out of this.

“Pray tell what crime have you committed.” Loki could see a tinge of fatigue in Odin’s eye.

“Amora is being tried for illegally traveling between the realms. In my millennium away I traveled between the realms without the help of the Bifrost many times. We have both broken your law,” Tony said without hesitation. Amora gave him a confused look.

“Are you arguing that you should be punished for a crime you didn’t even know you were committing?” A smile slowly grew on Odin’s face.
“Ignorance of the law is no excuse for breaking it.” Tony paused. “Regardless of that once I returned to Asgard I read up on the new laws, as is my duty as one of the council members. Even after knowing your edict I chose to go against it. I have been to other realms without using the Bifrost. Whatever punishment you have in store for her should also be in store for me. I just hope your verdict doesn’t hinder my business.” It was blatant manipulation, far from the finesse Loki used. The young prince could see the anger slowly rising on the All-Father’s features.

“She has committed more crimes than just her unlawful travels. She knew she had gone against Aesir law, yet did not yield herself to judgment.” Odin’s grip on Gungnir loosened slightly, that is until Tony opened his mouth again.

“That is a mistake any woman in her position would make.” Tony took a step towards the All-Father, looking completely relaxed. “Have you ever wondered why she felt the need to flee her home?” Tony paused, pretending to wait for an answer. “On the day she fled were the skies not ink black slashed only by bursts of lightening and the roars of thunder? I admit that any man who catches his lover with someone else has the right to be angry. Similarly, that lover has the right to be scared of such a righteous fury.

“Thor is a great warrior and prince. Amora is but a mage and her family has long ago fallen out of power. The man she was found with was a council member in high standing, yet he has been exiled. Is it so farfetched that Amora would fear for her life? Is it so hard to believe that that feeling must have only intensified when time after time Thor found where she was hiding, hunting her down?

“She sought me out in Niflheim because she knew I could protect her from the wrath of anyone who wished to harm her. And when we found her on Alfheim she was staying in a House of Hvit, one of the few places a prince cannot just bully his way into. Amora has been meticulously hunted down to the point where she decided to stay in one of their rooms of Purification and Penance for three months without food. She should not have to apologize for trying to avoid harm even if Thor may not have intended to hurt her. He is a god that inspires fear. Though an admirable quality on the battlefield it does not translate well into times of peace or with tender matters of the heart.

“The simple crux of this case is that Amora would not have felt the need to leave if not for Thor’s reaction. Even beyond that, what the prince failed to understand when he found out about Amora’s infidelity was that he was the other man. The council member was well aware that in his old age he could not treat her properly as a lover should, yet she did not flee in fear of him despite his high standing in court when her indiscretion became widely known.

“What’s worse is that when Amora went to her lover, Lord Vlats, once more to join him in exile she found that he’d been killed not long after he arrived by violent means.” A few council members started whispering amongst each other. “Though Amora has broken these laws it was not done so in bad faith.” Tony went back over to the goddess and pressed down on her shoulder slightly. “Amora begs you to overlook these desperately taken transgressions and for your protection.” Amora dropped to her knees. “Her time abroad has only strengthened her love for Asgard and she only wishes to come home.”

“Please, All-Father.” Amora’s voice had a quiver to it and Loki could see the council members sway. “All those things Tony said are true, yet he does not know of my biggest regret. During my time in purification and penance I came to realize how much your son means to me. I felt the need to punish myself by abandoning all my belongings and even cut my hair. He means so much to me, but I was scared, scared that he could never feel the same.” Amora looked up at Odin with glistening eyes, tears clinging to her lashes. “And even if he did I was scared you’d never accept me into your family. As Tony said my house has fallen out of standing. I was with Lord Vlats
because I knew he would never turn me away or break my heart, yet by protecting myself I have hurt a god we both care for deeply. It is not only your forgiveness that I need to beg for, but his as well.”

Loki glanced around the room and could see many of the council members were leaning towards Amora’s story. Frigga seemed conflicted and Odin was pure rage.

“What say you, Odin All-Father?” Tony asked after a tense moment between the three.

“Probation for the both of you. Neither shall be allowed into the castle unless invited or on business. If either of you break another law in the coming 300 years your punishment will be harsh and there will be no lenience.” Odin slammed down Gungnir with more strength than Loki had ever heard him use before. The shackles on Amora’s wrists fell away and Tony helped her stand.

“Thank you, All-Father,” Amora said softly, wiping away tears. Tony nodded at the king and left without looking back.

Chapter End Notes

There is an in-depth theoretical look at the Asgard vs Amora Nisdottir case called A Case Study. It is not part of the actual plot, but you can read it if you like.
Roaming Around

Chapter Notes

This vague reference of a scene doesn't really fit into my timeline, but I wrote it before even looking up assumed dates. *Rubs the back of my neck awkwardly*

Merry Christmas!

“Your father hates me,” Tony said with a glass of dwarven ale in his hand.

“He hates being outsmart,” Loki corrected as he grabbed another apple treat Tony’s servant had brought them. “Though I can’t say he’s pleased with you right now.” The younger god let his head rest on the back of the couch, feeling a bit fatigued as he nibbled at the treat. “You do know Amora has been playing with Thor for the past 600 years, don’t you?”

“And doesn’t that tell you something? There have been many others, but he’s the one she always comes back to.” Tony took a sip of his drink. “When we ran into each other a couple hundred years ago she felt the need to tell me all about Asgard. And you know what; time and time again she went back to talking about Thor. Thor this, Thor that. It’s annoying. She’s been in love with him since we were little kids.”

“I still don’t understand why you defended her.” Loki glanced sideways at the other god. Jarvis was perched on Tony’s chair, reminding Loki of Odin’s ravens.

“I just hate when people use their position of authority to needlessly punish others.” Tony handed Jarvis an apple treat and the raptor bit it before spitting it back out onto Tony’s head. The God of Metal just brushed it aside onto the marble floor.

“Haven’t you been gallivanting around for the past 1,000 years? You seem like the sort who wouldn’t take notice of such trivial things as laws or titles,” Loki said, causing Tony to snort.

“Don’t let the peasants hear you say that or there will be a revolt.” Jarvis glided over to Loki’s couch and the young god hesitantly reached up to the raptor. After a moment the eagle nuzzled the offered palm. Loki beamed before dropping his hand back to his side.

“I got into some mischief today.”

“Do tell.”

“It was nothing too serious. I just switched the direction of all of Thor’s buckles on his armor. I doubt he’ll even notice the change, but he’ll fumble about and get frustrated. No real harm done. Once he gets used to them I will merely turn them once more.”

“You’re a devious mastermind.”

“Oh, and you have a better idea?” Loki asked while sitting up so he could properly view the other
“Have you ever been to Midgard?”

“Once, but it was terribly dull.” Loki waved dismissively.

“No place is dull when you have good company,” Tony said while jumping out of his seat.

“You know Odin won’t allow you use of the Bifrost and you are on ‘probation’.”

“Loki, Loki, Loki.” Tony shook his head as if he’d just heard a joke. “Rules are meant for those who have no clout.”

“Weren’t you just saying something about hating when others use their powers against those that are weaker?” Loki droned with far less enthusiasm than Tony.

“You have selective hearing, don’t you?”

“I’ve been accused of worse.” Loki slowly stood up, purposefully taking his time to annoy the older god. “Odin won’t be entertained.”

“The worst he can do is give me a whipping. If he tries to confine me anywhere I’ll claim that I can’t continue my business and the nobility will be disgruntled. No king wants disgruntled citizens, especially not powerful ones.”

“And if he confines you to your own home? It is well known that you do your specialized works here.”

“I’ll claim that I don’t have the right materials, some of which are very difficult to obtain, by anyone other than myself.”

“And what of myself? I have no business to hide behind.”

“Only a crown,” Tony retorted as Jarvis swooped then perched on the older god’s shoulder. “Are you in or are you going to bury your nose in a book?” It was a low blow, but Loki had heard it enough times not to be offended, although it did have a bit more sting come from a friend.

“The All-Father has had the hidden paths guarded.”

“Not all of them.” Tony gestured for Loki to follow him. They made their way through the weapon adorned halls, passing by more locked doors until they came upon one with a sword hilt for a handle, denoting its importance. The room they entered was cold and made of stone. Loki could feel the power there as the world tree’s branch touched the realm.”Ta-da!”

Tony grabbed Loki by his arm and pulled him through the stone and onto the world tree. The younger god stumbled slightly in surprise before they both began running along the branches, with Tony in the lead. Jarvis followed above them deftly darting through the invisible leaves and branches.

“You move so slowly!” Loki said while passing Tony.

“Not all of us grew like a weed over these last thousand years!” Tony shouted. “But I have learned a few tricks!” From the corner of Loki’s eye he saw Tony jump off a branch. Loki wheeled around only to feel air brush by him. “Keep moving Lokes! We don’t have all year!” He turned back around and saw the God of Metal just ahead of him.
“And they call me the trickster!” He usually was able to see through such illusions, but it seemed like Tony always had a spell or two that Loki hadn’t seen yet.

After that they ran side by side for days until Tony stopped them. Loki took a moment to concentrate before he felt the branch touching something solid. They used magic to pull themselves to it and ended up on a green plain on a dim night.

“There’s no one around,” Loki complained. He had hoped to scare a few of the shortly lived creatures that lived here.

“We only just got here. Calm down.” He looked over the dew covered grass. Loki glanced at his pocket watch, but without knowing which city was closest he really couldn’t know the exact time. “I’m not the best shape shifter, but I can change into an eagle. It might be more entertaining to explore this realm as animals. I can take topside, you take the land, yeah?”

“Very well.” Loki watched as Tony relaxed his shoulders and closed his eyes. The older god let out a few deep breaths before forming into a golden eagle that was almost identical to Jarvis, save a spot on his chest that was molting. Loki transformed into a wolf with ease.

Jarvis and Tony took to the air and Loki followed them on foot. The air in Midgard tasted different to him, cleaner. The sky had more stars with a single crescent moon lighting the night.

Loki had almost forgotten how enjoyable it was to run freely. Periodically he could hear Jarvis and Tony screech. Some part of his mind questioned if the two understood each other. Above he saw them both bank to the left. He followed and quickly found an animal that looked like a scrawny version of a horse. Loki felt excitement build in his chest as the animal burst out of the brush. He began pursuing it on instinct. Every time it veered too quickly for Loki to follow either Jarvis or Tony would scare it back on course.

He could hear the creature’s heartbeat thundering against it ribs, hooves rhythmically hitting the soft ground, stuttering the longer they went. Loki could almost feel his jaws clamping down onto the animal’s thigh, causing it to falter. That wouldn’t be enough though. Midstride Loki shifted into a direwolf before pouncing on the other animal. It fell heavily to the ground before Loki latched onto its neck, strangling it to death. After a few moments he gave the neck a good shaking just to be sure.

Loki looked into the high trees, his vision able to take in more details in this form. In the distance he saw Tony and Jarvis perched together. Tony’s wing was spread out as Jarvis preened it. Tony’s shockingly gold eyes were staring directly at Loki. The direwolf tore open the dead animal’s stomach and howled. Tony and Jarvis dove before flaring their wings out and gliding over. They began pulling at the animal’s innards while Loki devoured the meaty thighs.

All together they made short work of the bloodied carcass, Loki eating the majority after Tony and Jarvis lounged in a tree preening each other. Loki sat on his hind legs while licking his jaw. He’d almost forgotten how enjoyable it was to be in this form.

A wailing in the distance caught Loki’s attention. He tilted his head to the side, flicking his ears to locate it. He barked, getting Tony and Jarvis’ attention. He took off in the direction of the noise. He couldn’t hear silent wings above him, but he could almost sense the two raptors.

The deceptively soft noise of a river came into range as the wailing only grew louder. It was more than one animal making the noise. Tony arrived before Loki, shifting back to his Aesir form.

“It’s a pair of babies,” Tony said while crouching over them. “These humans are pretty barbaric to
just leave their young on the side of a river.” Loki looked down at the two red faced infants through the eyes of a direwolf. They looked strangely like the Aesir, yet smaller and chubbier. Tony glanced around. “I’ll take to the skies and see if there are any humans around.”

Before Loki could respond Tony shifted quicker than last time and flew away with Jarvis. The two raptors split leaving Loki alone with the two screaming infants. They were both shivering and the small pallet they were on looked like it may have just washed ashore recently.

Were humans truly so idiotic as to send off their defenseless? He growled in annoyance before pulling the pallet away from the water. It only made the babies scream louder. Loki curled around them carefully and they quieted slightly, hiccupping periodically.

When he agreed to having a bit of fun on Midgard this is not what he’d meant. Even so, he would have felt bad for leaving such defenseless beings that looked like his own kind. His mother would have scolded him severely if he did.

He shifted his head slightly to view the small humans. They were mirror images of each other. One was gnawing on his fist while the second was holding his brother’s arm. Their cries had turned into mewls. After a few hours they both fell asleep and the sun was starting to rise. He had begun dozing off, but then he heard the screeching of an eagle. His head popped up as Tony banked to the side. Loki somehow knew he wanted him to follow. Loki glanced at the babies in confusion before carefully picking them up by their swaddling. He was surprised when they didn’t start screaming their heads off again.

They moved slowly with Tony leading the way. After a few hours of travel Loki heard a human. He brandished a walk stick in order to protect the herd of animals he was watching. The human paused when it heard one of the babies start to cry. Slowly Loki lowered the bundle down before backing away. Once he was at a safe distance he ran to a copse of trees. When he glanced back he saw the human holding the bundle to his chest and crooning softly.

Tony flew by Loki, the tip of his wing brushing Loki’s flank. Loki took off after him and soon after Jarvis joined in. He was surprised by how agile both of them were, deftly moving between branches and leaves. Countless hours passed like that, with Loki chasing the two raptors, but never quite getting close enough to tag them.

Tony screeched before spirally downwards carefully. He returned to his Aesir form before plucking off some of the green fruit from the tree he was leaning against. He bit into one before immediately spitting it out and tossing it aside.

“Bitter,” He said simply as Loki changed into his usual form. “Jarvis spotted a town ahead. He said the humans were playing some sort of betting game. I thought it might be fun to trick them out of all their money then buy frivolous things. You interested?”

“Of course.”
Loki held back a giggle as he watched Tony balance a flagon on the top of his head while jumping over an unconscious mortal.

“Impossible,” Loki said, slurring the single word. Tony dipped into a bow suddenly and somehow caught the flagon without spilling a drop of Aesir mead. “Impossible!”

“Tis no trick!” Loki loved how Tony somehow randomly sounded like a pompous old man whenever he was thoroughly drunk.

“Pff,” was Loki’s only response as he poured himself more mead. He couldn’t remember ever being this drunk before. He had no idea why he’d never done so. Actually, he did know why. The only people he could get drunk with before Tony were Lorelei who refused to drink more than a glass or of wine or Thor and his idiotic friends who only became more annoying with every drink.

“You’re frowning again,” Tony said while shoving an unconscious man out of the seat across from Loki. The two gods had early on bought drinks for everyone, quickly getting them to pass out before Tony pulled out a large barrel of Aesir mead from out of nowhere.

“Am not!” Loki said pompously while standing up before promptly falling back into his seat. Tony held back a snort.

“To his Royal Drunkedness!” Tony raised his own mug of mead, some of it sloshing over.

“To his Noble Ass-ness!” Loki stumbled over his words while pointing at Tony with his mug. “Norns, that was terrible,” Loki admonished himself, dropping his head onto the filthy table. Tony laughed loudly before putting his mug down heavily on the table, causing Loki to flinch.

“You’re such a light weight.” Tony pried Loki’s mug from his hand.

“Not all of us are built for drinking!” Loki said without lifting his head up. “Are you part dwarf? You’re short enough and I know your family loved traveling to Svar-” The chair underneath Loki suddenly disappeared. He scrambled to catch himself on the table, but ended up falling on his rear.

“What did they call you when we were kids?” Tony asked while walking over to the fallen god. He offered his hand and Loki frowned before taking it.

“They called me many a things,” Loki mumbled while trying to brush away the spilt drink from the pants he had won from an idiotic mortal that though he could outfox him. Loki was startled when Tony flung his arm around his shoulder.
“No pouting allowed.” Tony squeezed his shoulders before letting him go and grabbing another chair for Loki to sit on. “It was one of the kinder names.” Tony poured Loki another drink.

“Something about trees…” Loki’s eyes lit up. He jumped onto the table, startling the both of them.

“I am Loki! Climber of Trees! Master of Magic and Slayer of Laufey!” Loki shouted, proud of himself for having not fallen off the table in his haste. He broke into another fit of giggles before it turned into a startled yelp as Tony flipped the table over. Once again Loki was thrown to the ground, but this time he landed on a human, softening his fall.

“You’re so full of it,” Tony said while righting the table. Their flagon of mead and two mugs were floating in the air, unaffected by the sudden upheaval. “I meant the climber of trees one. You grew like a freaking weed. You’re built tall to be all nimble and speedy.” The flagon and mugs floated down onto the table. Loki remained laying on the ground, using a human as a pillow. “I’ve got strength on my side, but I’ll never be as quick as you.” Loki could hear Tony gulp down even more mead, but couldn’t see him from his position on the floor. “Please don’t tell me you passed out.”

Loki scoffed and pulled himself off the ground.

“I figured it out!” Loki announced as he sat back in his seat, their last conversation completely forgotten.

“I love how specific you are when you’re drunk.” Tony grinned at the younger god and Loki was slightly taken aback by how genuine and open he looked.

“How you balanced the flagon on your head.” Loki grabbed it from the middle of the table.

“You might want to slow down.” Tony glanced at Loki’s mug. The younger god had knocked it over while reaching for the flagon. Loki blushed.

“I meant to do that.” Loki raised his chin slightly before his grin broke through his snooty façade. Tony shook his head while grinning. “As I was saying,” Loki ran a hand through his short hair, composing himself slightly, “you were able to balance the flagon because you are the God of Metal.” Loki clicked his fingers against the flagon. “Metal.”

Tony shrugged nonchalantly while taking a sip of his mead.

“Just because I’m the God of Metal doesn’t mean I cheated.” Tony nodded, looking rather pleased with himself. Loki rolled his eyes over exaggeratedly. “I’m sure you can do it, Loki, Climber of Trees.” Tony somehow bowed in his seat. His smile was infuriating and Loki was hard pressed to turn down such a challenge.

“Be prepared to be amazed, you peasant.” Loki stood on wobbling legs while glaring at Tony with bleary eyes. He moved away from the table slightly before he carefully placed the flagon on top of his head. He took in a few centering breaths before taking a step forward. He looked down the bridge of his nose, trying not to step on any of the passed out mortals.

Norns, were humans supposed to have seven fingers?

Before he even realized it the flagon was falling to the ground. Tony lifted his hand, a burst of red magic coming out, catching both the flagon and the younger god. Tony clapped as Loki blushed.

“Well done, Loki, God of Grace.” Loki sat down heavily in his seat, downing half his mug in one go. He couldn’t look up from the poorly crafted table. “What’s wrong?” Tony leaned forward slightly. “Come on, Lokes, talk to me.” Loki gnawed on his lip for a brief moment before forcing himself to stop and look at his friend.
“You’re the god of metal, Thor is the god of thunder. Both of you have noble titles. What will I be? God of Being Tall? God of Agility? Loki, God of Shadows?” He felt tears welling up and forced them back, feigning a smile. “It matters not. My thoughts just strayed for a moment.” Loki was once again surprised when Tony pulled his chair over and sat next to him.

“Would you like to know a secret?” Tony whispered while leaning closer to the younger god. Loki blinked back his tears.

“A secret?” Loki asked and cringed when his voice broke.

“The biggest of secrets hidden right in front of all of Asgard.” Tony nodded over exaggeratedly. He glanced around the room as if looking for eavesdroppers. “You know there is a reason Thor is the god of thunder instead of lightning,” Tony whispered, leaning even closer to Loki. The younger god gave him a look of confusion. Tony laughed to himself before looking at Loki slyly. “Lightning is a flash of powerful energy striking in the blink of an eye.” Tony snapped his thumb to emphasize his point. Loki’s confusion only grew. “Thunder is just a loud, useless noise!” Tony broke into a fit of laughter and it wasn’t long before Loki joined him.
All in all they spent a month on Midgard and two weeks for traveling to and from. As Loki exited Tony’s manor he saw one of his father’s ravens perched on the manor across from him.

“Father, I am back.” Loki nodded at the raven and it took off heading for the castle. A feeling of dread settled in his stomach. Perhaps he should have left word of his coming absence. He hadn’t been gone that long. He hadn’t even hidden his presence from Heimdall’s eyes, though Tony had hidden himself as purely a counter measure against the All-Father’s decree.

Royal guards were waiting for him at the gates of the palace and he did his best not to roll his eyes in annoyance. Didn’t his parents know he was in his 1,600s? He didn’t need them to constantly keep him under lock and key. At his age Thor was already traveling the realms with his friends. Why couldn’t Loki do the same?

He was escorted to the All-Father’s private study which was a good sign. Odin was always kinder when he didn’t have an audience to play to. On the other hand Frigga was there too which spelled trouble considering she enforced the rules more than her husband did. It mattered not though. He knew how to manipulate each; it would only be a tad harder considering they were together.

“Mother, father.” Loki greeted them with a small bow.

“Loki,” Odin said, his grip on the armrests tighter than usual. Frigga gave him a sad smile.

“It’s comforting to know my absence was noted,” Loki said while looking away from them and frowning.

“My love, don’t act like that. You knew what you were doing was against the law. By doing so you weaken our whole family’s position.” From the corner of his eye he saw Frigga’s hands twitch. That always happened when she wished to hug him.

“Do not act childish, Loki. I fear that what your mother said about Lord Anthony being a bad influence is true.” Loki was about to quip at the king, but was cut off. “When was the last time you talked to Lorelei properly or went on an adventure with Thor? It has at least been a year.”

“You are exaggerating. Besides, whom I keep company with is none of your business.” Loki could feel his anger rising up, fogging any strategy he had in mind.

“All of Asgard is my business.” Odin frowned, not letting his Loki’s anger transfer to him.

“You hate him because he’s a mage instead of a meat head like Thor’s friends. Will you ever accept that I am not like your golden son?” Loki let his voice waver, playing on Frigga’s sympathies.

“That is not what we are here to discuss today.”

“So it’s true then-” Odin slammed his fist down on his desk, causing both Frigga and Loki to flinch.

“Don’t act like a petulant child, Loki. You are an Odinson and as such you have responsibilities and duties. Not only did you break one of my laws you neglected your duties in a blatant show of defiance.”
“Not everything is about you and my ‘duties’!” Loki clenched his fists at his side. “Thor hasn’t attended a council meeting in at least two decades and you dare speak of me neglecting my duties?!” Odin stood quickly and Loki shrunk backwards.

“You will not speak to me as such.” Odin’s voice was deadly calm. “All of Asgard sees your brother performing noble deeds while all they know of you is your mischief and propensity to perform magic. The least you can do is pretend to be a good prince.” Loki felt tears forming in his eyes, but he refused to let them show. From the corner of his vision he saw Frigga place a hand on Odin’s arm. The king sat down with a rough grunt. “You may not see Lord Anthony for a year.”

“What?! This is preposterous! Why can’t I have any friends of my own-”

“This has already been decided, my love,” Frigga said softly and Loki felt all the righteous anger in him drain away. Why did she always have to be so loving? He glanced between the two, not bothering to hide his tears anymore.

“I don’t understand why you both are always so lenient with Thor.” Loki turned around and left hastily before they could say anything else. He made his way through the halls taking all the passages that were rarely used. He could feel the inevitable breakdown quickly overtaking him. He wasn’t going to make it to his room.

Loki slipped into one of the lesser kitchens that was no longer in use. He slid down the door and onto the golden ground. He curled up until he was gripping his legs to his chest and had his face buried in his knees. Silently he cried.

He couldn’t understand why they were always stricter with him. Thor caused diplomatic crises almost every time he left Asgard, yet barely got more than a scolding and before a month was over he was already off to another realm to do more of his ‘heroic deeds in the name of Asgard’. When Thor got into trouble they covered it up, yet when Loki set even a toe out of line his punishment was harsh.

Loki wanted to smash something, to gallivant through the realms as freely as Thor, but most of all he wanted to go over to Tony’s and rant about the injustice of it all.

Who would he discuss magic with now? He’d already read most of the tomes on magic in the royal library and he had long ago drained all his teachers of any information they had. Odin refused to bring him new teachers.

What did they expect him to do? He would not spend all his spare time with Thor and his companions in the training yard, refining a skill that he found to be inefficient. He could best nearly any Aesir warrior as is and his fights with Thor never came to blows. Loki usually said his piece to his older brother with sharp words and even sharper insults before disappearing to pout in private.

After a while Loki had cried himself ragged. He splashed cold water on his face before venturing out of the unused kitchen. On his way to his chambers he passed by the entrance to Thor’s. Amora’s sultry giggle came from behind the doors causing Loki’s anger to come back full force.

The damn fool! Would he ever learn? She was a seductress and a woman of poor moral standings yet he was allowed to see her while Loki could not spend time with Tony who was respected by all of Asgard and even a member of the council.

With a frustrated growl he grabbed a nearby vase and threw it against the doors to Thor’s chambers. The two guards flanking it did not even flinch, much to Loki’s frustration. After letting
out an angry growl he stormed off to his chambers.

He wanted to scream and destroy his whole room, but knew it would just leave him exhausted and feeling hollow. A familiar screeching caught Loki’s attention. He visibly deflated before going over to his open window and letting the golden eagle in.

“Jarvis, what are you doing here?” Loki asked while petting the raptor the way he knew would cause him to lean into his touch. He noticed a small piece of parchment tied to the golden eagle’s leg. He undid the knot holding it in place. A smile formed on his lips as he read the contents of the note.

_Lokes,

_Hope everything went alright with your parents. Apparently I missed a few deadlines for commissioned work while we were gone. Whoops._

_I dug up one of my father’s old magic books on being able to speak while in the form of an animal. It’s very informative. I think you’ll like it. Visit me soon otherwise I think I’ll never leave the smithy._

_-Tony Howardson_
After Loki informed Tony of his situation via Jarvis the eagle came back with a scroll clutched in its talons. When Loki unfurled it there was nothing there. Jarvis hopped from the windowsill to Loki’s writing desk. The raptor bobbed its head towards a nibbed pen.

The god sat down and took the pen, quickly signing his name.

Loki's sig

Slowly the words disappeared before being replaced.

Nice signature. It's a bit too flowery for my taste though.

Loki scoffed.

Let me see yours then.

Fine.

Tony's Sig

Lovely, isn't it?

Hardly. Loki wrote back. How did you make this?

A dark elf made it. It looks like any other piece of paper. The only way to identify it as different is the smell. Loki took a whiff before recoiling.

Bilgesnipe dung?

Close. It's Bilgsnipe hide drawn taut. Then some crazy things happen to it. It's not that rare in Svartalfheim.

I see. It's a rare thing on Asgard. There was a knock on Loki's door. Someone is here. I'll write back soon.

Loki set aside his pen just as Frigga walked into his chambers.

“My love, I’m sorry if your father seemed harsh. We worry. You must know that,” Frigga said while pulling him over to a loveseat.

“I am 1,638 mother. You needn’t worry.” He brushed aside her delicate hands.

“A mother always worries, even when her baby is 100,000 years old.”

“My point is proven then. You admit that you’ll worry regardless of what I’m doing, so why not allow me to keep company with Tony?” Loki sniffled quietly. His nose was still raw and stuffy from his earlier cry. Frigga moved closer to him, pulling him into a hug. He sat tensely against her,
not wanting to give in.

“Perhaps we should have been blunter with you.” She kissed his cheek and Loki relaxed against his will. “His family has always been of questionable standing and have not always been on the side of Asgard. He has been hiding from Heimdall’s sight for 1,000 years, now the two of you are the best of friends.” Frigga paused, straightening out the collar of Loki’s shirt. “He is not the little boy who used to fall asleep in the training yard while waiting for his turn. Far too much can happen in 1,000 years.”

“So you refuse me a friend because of ignorance?” Loki leaned away from his mother, trying not to scowl.

“You are a prince of Asgard and my son. You are of paramount importance. I would be devastated if anything ever happened to you. All of Asgard would mourn.”

“All of Asgard.” Loki scoffed.

“You love me. I know that, but Thor and father?” He let out a huff of a laugh.

“Odin loves you. He would not act this way if he did not. He is just trying to protect you,” Frigga said and Loki looked away from her while crossing his arms over his chest.

“And what of Thor?”

“You two are brothers, one in his 1,600s and the other in his 1,900s. No one expects you two to get along. Just because you two bicker does not mean you don’t love each other. Give it 800 years and you’ll be the best of friends.”

“I doubt that. He’s a shining hammer while I’m a dagger hiding in the dark.”

“Then come out of the darkness, my love.” Frigga stood and held her hand out for Loki.

“What do you expect of me? I am not going to swing around a hammer while shouting tales of my deeds.” He refused to join her. It was all a gimmick, a play to gain his forgiveness, as if he was so easily pacified.

“You needn’t be like your brother to come out of this darkness.”

“Then what do you suggest of me? I attend every blasted council meeting, and may it be noted that I only started truly doing so after Tony arrived. I do not cause diplomatic mishaps unlike your other son. I continue my studies despite constant discouragement. What more can I give?” He was just barely keeping from shouting.

“You needn’t be like your brother to come out of this darkness.”

“It’s not what you can give. It’s what you can stop.” Frigga suddenly turned serious. “Mischief may have been acceptable when you were 1,200, but such actions now are unacceptable.” Frigga stood straighter. “I know it was you who froze all the dishes when we were celebrating our victory over Jotunheim last year. You messed with the clasps of Thor’s cape so that it would fall off at the most inopportune moments. You tricked Lord Stiles out of a shipment of fine cloth, which you used to cover the streets from here to Lorelei’s house.”

“She was being pompous and said she’d only come to the castle if the streets were lined with silk,” he mumbled. “Besides that was half a decade ago.”
“And what of the mischief you got into on Midgard?”

“What of Midgard? No one ever pays attention to that realm and it’s not like we went on a massacre. If anything Tony and I did less damage than Thor does within the first hour of any of his ‘adventures’.”

“Your actions reflect poorly on Asgard, Loki—”

“And Thor’s actions don’t?”

“Admittedly he does not have your finesse, but all his blunders are done outside this realm.”

“What does that have to do with anything?!’” Loki jumped out of his seat, doing his best not to lose his temper.

“Asgard is the only realm that can properly move troops. The worst the other realms can do is cut off trading. Your actions cause turmoil domestically. A kingdom is not so easily ruled when the people are displeased,” Frigga said calmly.

“So you’d have me sit on my hands for all eternity just to placate the masses? Do you not value my happiness at all?” Loki looked at the ground, feeling tears of frustration forming in his eyes. He hated how easily he cried when it came to the ones he loved.

“My love, do not act childish—”

“You expect me to act one way yet treat me like the other? You wouldn’t ban Thor from seeing his friends.”

“This isn’t about Thor, Loki.”

“So you do not deny it then. You would never treat him as such.”

“This argument is going in circles. I merely wished for you to know that your father and I love you and we’re just looking out for your best interests.”

“And the best interest of Asgard, apparently,” he said and from the corner of his eye he could see Frigga let out a silent sigh. It only made him feel worse.

“Will you join me in my solarium? We can read poetry together as we once used to,” Frigga offered.

“I have just come back from a journey, albeit a short one in which I doubt anyone noticed my absence save you and father. I need to wash.” It was a poor excuse, but he was too exhausted both physically and emotionally to come up with a better lie.

“Feel free to join me when you’ve finished.” Frigga leaned up and placed a tender kiss on his cheek. Loki had to concentrate to not let any emotions shine through as his mother paused to look at him. She gave a slight nod before leaving.

Loki flopped into his seat at his writing desk, resting his forehead on the cool wooden surface. He hated that his parents used Asgard as an excuse to restrict him. He did somewhat understand why they worried about his association with Tony. Admittedly he didn’t know much of Tony’s history, but perhaps now was the time to change that.

He grabbed his pen.
Mother is being paranoid. Loki wrote, his handwriting less refined due to his fatigue.

It’s a mother’s job to be paranoid. Came Tony’s response a moment later. Loki groaned in annoyance.

You’re supposed to be on my side.

I am on your side. Now who’s being paranoid?

I’d punch you if you were here. Loki could almost hear Tony’s laughter. I must admit that I am interested on what exactly happened after you and your family left. Loki paused, knowing this was probably a delicate subject.

You wish to hear the tale of Tony Howardson?

Obviously.

Who am I to deny my prince?

Just get on with it, you fool.

Very well, you royal ass.

Chapter End Notes

Please let me know if the signatures aren't showing up. Thanks :)
Stories of Stories

Once upon a time—

There was a dashingly good looking 900 year old boy

Must you always play the fool? Loki finally asked after the fourth crossed out start.

Fine, you truly are impatient

Tony!

Calm your royal britches down. One day my family and I decided to go on a picnic

A picnic?

Stop interrupting. It wasn’t so much of a picnic as a feast. As you know my father was a business man and his father before him. Our family has a long tradition of being friends with the dwarves on Svartalfheim. They give us raw ore and metals. We give them alloys and metals they’re incapable of refining. Wham bam thank you ma’am.

Of course after generations of comings and goings something’s bound to go wrong. Just my damn luck. There was a long pause as Tony’s words faded away. A group of dark elves knew we were going to be there somehow and decided it was the best idea in all the nine realms to try and capture us in order to get the secrets of our weapons business.

The idiots didn’t seem to understand who they were messing with. We make weapons. We are weapons. A group of fifteen or so attacked while we were on our way to meet up with the dwarves. It was a nifty ambush. You know the gorges in Svartalfheim?

In the corner of the page a detailed image of a chasm was being drawn.

Of course. Loki wrote, almost sad to see the fine art just disappear.

Six of them descended on us from the sides while the rest boxed us in. Five of them were dead by my father’s sword before they could even get in place. My mother took out three. I killed two. My old man was run through by a couple pikes, one went straight through his heart. There was a pause. You should have seen the elves’ faces. They were so startled. Another pause. I was close enough to being dead for them not to care about me. That was their mistake. I took out another one while laying on the ground bleeding everywhere. Mother tried to protect me and had her throat cut for the effort.

There are ways, Loki, ways even the royal family doesn’t know about when it comes to the world tree. With the last of her breath she pushed me out of the realm. I landed hard on the tree. Don’t know how long I was out. Long enough for scabs to form.

Tony started drawing the world tree with all the realms. It was so detailed that by the time he drew one realm the others had already disappeared.

What happened after you woke? Loki asked when he could take it no longer.

An image of a faceless boy formed, frozen in midstride.

I could scarcely think so I did as any other child would. I ran. The branches aren’t kind to those
who do not know the way. I was ravenous, drained of blood, and still had a broken sword in my chest. It’s rather difficult to pull a sword from one’s own back. Hadn’t even known it was there at first. When I finally unsheathed it from my flesh I passed out again, but when I woke I was still firmly grasping it. Guess all those lessons in the training yard hadn’t gone to waste.

Tony drew a broken sword, shaded clearly to show blood.

It nearly killed me, but I would have died without it. Damn, that sounds like a contradiction. I ran, walked, crawled, climbed for who knows how long, always holding onto that dark elf sword. It was a shoddy piece of work.

He etched the sword again then drew an arrow to it, labeling it: piece of shit.

I remembered the stories my mother told about traveling from realm to realm. Did you know our mothers were friends?

An image of Frigga holding the hand of a faceless woman formed.

You’re a wonderful artist, Loki commented.

Had to be. Tony said nothing more on the subject. At some point I realized there was a difference between certain areas. It was just a feeling, an instinct, but at that point all I had were my instincts. I pushed myself forward and was suddenly engulfed in heat. Muspelheim. It could have been worse. I could have ended up on Jotunheim. Though in the end there’s not a big difference between burning to death and freezing to death. One just takes longer than the other.

I was barely there for five minutes and I was already boiling alive. Ran into some ash wolves. Only three. Killed two of them. The other ran off. I’d never been so happy to eat something that tasted like dirt and iron until that point. I ate everything. I broke their bones and sucked the marrow out, I tore off their heads and used it to make a stew of brains, tongues, and eyes all boiling together- Am I being too graphic?

Loki scrambled for his pen, having dropped it at some point.

No, please go on.

Sorry, I just get caught up when thinking about my first real meal. Their blood somehow sustained me. I gnawed the fat off their black pelts. They matched the ground perfectly and were somehow cooler than my own clothing or nudity. They also provided good camouflage. I used the sword to hunt, but it wasn’t good enough. Muspelheim was as hot as a forge. I just had to find the right tools, or make them. You’d be surprised how innovative a 900 year old can be. I made myself a set of knives. After that hunting became a lot easier.

I traveled that realm many years. The soles of my boots had melted long ago and were constantly being replaced by cooling earth as it became gunked on only to fall off. I learned to sleep on my feet. Even the pelts couldn’t really protect me from the molten ground.

The first time I saw a fire giant it was night. I thought I was hallucinating again. Fire is always dancing. Lava creeps and crawls, but these giants, they lumbered. It was difficult to know where the ground began and their feet ended. Their glow pulsed. That’s how you can tell they’re alive.

I hid knowing I couldn’t fight it. My daggers would probably just melt before they could ever hit. More and more of them appeared. It was a migration. I stayed perfectly still for days, crouched down as they passed by. Slowly they came to a trickle, and then there was only one that lingered. From his glow I could tell he was old and close to death. When I knew there were no other giants
coming I crept closer.

Tony drew an image of volcanic ground with a mound of earth in the shape of a fallen being seamlessly molded with it. Another image of a small, faceless boy appeared, miniscule in comparison.

It had been so long since I had encountered someone that I was surprised when the giant spoke to me. He asked me why I was there. I told him the truth and his laughter bellowed smoke. It was a sad laugh. He decided to make a deal with me. If I told him a good story he’d give me a very rare jewel.

I spoke of tales for two days and three nights. I made him laugh. I made him cry. By the end it wasn’t even about the jewel. I had just missed talking. His light was almost gone. He told me if I followed the giants’ trail I’d come to a city with traders that could take me nearly anywhere. Then, with the last of his energy, he pulled his chest open. His light went out and I took a single jewel from where his heart should have been.

It took me a few months to get to the city. I bartered and argued my way into a group of light elves. They took me to Alfheim, and the rest is history.

Loki stared at the parchment as the ink faded away.

“There has to be more,“ he whispered while lifting the paper, as if Tony could hear him.

You can’t just leave it at that! Loki scribbled down, his handwriting sloppy.

Another time, Lokes. I have work that needs to be finished. Sleep tight.

Reluctantly, Loki put down the paper. He glanced around the room. At some point the sun had fallen and the two moons had risen. He looked at the paper again and felt strangely alone.

Note: Also the amazing Temul made another lovely work of art for this fic called Smoke and a Booboo. Check it out as well as her other works :)
At first light Loki wrote a quick note to Tony, but received no reply. That wasn’t surprising. The other god was far from an early riser. He meandered to the royal library still in his loose nightwear. If his parents were going to treat him like a little 600 year old he wasn’t going to feel bad for not dressing properly.

He gathered up countless books, balancing them carefully in one hand before stealing a few hotcakes from the kitchen.

Right before he reached his chambers he was almost bowled over by Thor and Amora. The goddess giggled, her hair suddenly grown back and tussled, eyes shining. Thor had his arm wrapped around her hips and it was clear they hadn’t gotten a lot of sleep last night, if any.

“Reading books has made you blind,” Thor said before hitting Loki’s hand, unbalancing his tower of books. They all came tumbling down.

“Needless aggression,” Loki whispered under his breath, all around too angry with his whole family to expect anything less than scorn. He leaned against the golden walls of the hall while finishing his hotcakes. He licked his fingers clean before gathering back up his items and going back to his room.

He laid out each book carefully on his bed and admired the symmetry of them for a moment. With a careless motion he belly-flopping onto the bed, sending all the books bouncing up an inch. He let out a childish giggle before clearing his throat and looking at the treasures he’d gathered. Most of the books were on Muspelheim. It was a realm he had only been to a handful of times. He found the heat to not be to his liking and the inhabitants were very rude to outsiders.

Loki first looked up fire giants, skimming over the information he already knew. His eyes paused upon heart gems. Apparently there was only one way to obtain them. A fire giant had to freely give it away, causing their immediate death. Apparently the gems had a strange way of refracting the light, but the first three books said nothing more on the subject.

As the day slowly passed his eyes kept drifting over to the blank scroll. He’d just spent a month and then some with the other god. He really shouldn’t be missing him already. Loki grabbed a pillow and buried his face against it. The soft silk was so different than the earth and grass he slept on while on Midgard. Tony and Jarvis would always be perched above him, one always watching vigilantly for any danger.

The palace did not have the white noise of bugs calling to each other or the sound of wind tussling leaves. There was only the sharp noise of pages turning and the distant sound of boots stomping annoyingly loudly.

Loki rolled onto his back, staring at the high ceiling. Perhaps he should join his mother in her solarium. She would surely be there. It was her favorite place in the whole palace.

From the corner of his eye he saw ink forming on paper. He immediately jumped up to see what was being written or drawn. An image slowly formed. It was all harsh angles and symmetry. A strange mixture between hazy green and blue skirted the edges of the image, while the rest was anywhere from pink to blood red.

A heart gem (not to scale) since I’m sure you were interested. I bet you’ve been researching
Muspelheim all day, came Tony’s easy scrawl. Loki’s face warmed up.

Have you been spying on me? Loki asked while sitting at his writing desk.

You’re my friend. I don’t need to spy on you to know what you’ve been up to. I’m sure you can take a guess at what I’ve been up to. Loki could feel Tony’s humor.

Without a doubt you have been in the smithy for the majority of the day. Presently you’re twirling your pen in your left hand and there’s a drink in your right. The undersides of your fingernails are still black from work since you came straight up, not bothering to wash. One of your half-filled books is open on your desk. Loki paused, imagining it. Am I right?

Damn near close. I wasn’t ‘twirling’ my pen as you put it. I was putting the finishing touches on the design for your present to the All-Father. I was going to show you them at the end of the next council meeting since that’s probably the only time I’ll really be able to see you. I suppose I could just have Jarvis deliver it if need be. There was a pause. It’s really no fun though if I can’t see your expression. Half of this business is being able to read the customer.

I’ll try to trick one of the council members into speaking with Odin near the end of the meeting. Loki wrote, happy to once more have a course of action.

I’m not worried. I already have a good idea of what you want for his armor. Besides, you’re only grounded for a year. That’s nothing.

Grounded? That isn’t exactly the word I’d use. It’s not like I’m confined to the dungeons or anything. I am still a prince.

Yeah, and you never cease to remind me of that fact.

A crude drawing of Loki with an obnoxiously ugly crown appeared followed by squiggles that Tony labeled as: stink lines. Loki crossed out the image before drawing a poorly done version of Tony on fire. He’d have to work on his drawing skills. They were truly pathetic in comparison.

A picture of Loki as a direwolf slowly took shape. Loki tilted his head as he watched it appear. The view was from above, probably how Tony and Jarvis saw him during their travels on Midgard. He was surprised by how sleek he looked. Previously he’d only caught glimpses of his image in trembling puddles as he drank his fill.

Loki took the upper portion of the page and began sketching out a bird. He paid special attention to the talons, which admittedly were far from proportional to the rest of the avian, far too large in general.

Directly in the wolf’s sights was a single dot that quickly formed into a rabbit, one of the many animals they had hunted together. Loki began filling in the background. Strangely enough Midgard only had one moon.

It was oddly entertaining drawing with Tony. It was also far different than anything he’d ever done before. Something like this usually required close proximity which admittedly wasn’t something the Aesir were comfortable with when it came to Loki, excluding Lorelei, but that was because she had no self-preservation.

Tony abruptly x’ed out the whole scene, causing it to disappear instantly.

Tony began drawing the watch he’d given Loki. The younger god quickly went over to his discarded armor and pulled it out. He set the watch next to the paper and was amazed once more
by the accuracy. Tony had only held the item briefly, yet drew it without hesitation.

*What time is it?* appeared at the top of the page, clearly rhetorically.

Tony x’ed out a part of the image and it disappeared. He redrew the top of the watch, this time open. He was once more surprised when an image of him peering at the clock was drawn.

*Time for Loki to stop admiring himself,* Tony wrote.

*Really? You’re going to make the argument that I’m the vain one of the two of us?*

*You are very… prim.* Loki let out an indignant snort.

*I am a prince! What do you expect of me?* Tony did not respond immediately and Loki started fidgeting in his seat.

*Even as a direwolf you were all regal and never slouched. I have no idea how you did it. I took every chance I got to roost. Being all proper must be tiring.*

*That is quite the understatement. Unfortunately I have to be proper for both myself and my brother.* Loki drew his brother with a mug of foaming mead in hand and an overly curvy version of Amora beside him. *Honestly, how has he not learned yet that Amora is just going to leave him in a year or so? I tell him every time what she’ll do yet he still falls into bed with her then I am the one who has to hear him rant when she’s gone off once more. He whines and whines until I tell him that she’s a fool for leaving him and stoke his ego.* Loki wanted to toss aside his pen in exasperation, but refrained.

*Maybe he just needs to learn that lesson himself. You’re not your brother’s keeper. Besides, his ego is far too large. No one is that grand, not even me- and I’m my favorite person.* There was another pause. *You’re a close second.* Tony drew himself winking over-exaggeratedly. *I’m heading back to the smithy. The next council meeting is in a couple weeks I believe. Till then, keep writing and drawing terribly.*

Before Loki could come up with a witty retort the words faded away and the moment was lost. He dropped his forehead to the table, already fed up with this stupid punishment. Thor was always so annoyingly happy, whereas happiness always seemed to be a fleeting emotion for Loki, always slipping through his fingers.

Two princes who couldn’t be any more different… It was just another thing that didn’t make any sense in Asgard.
The days were crawling by at such a slow pace that Loki wanted to gouge his eyes out. Being stuck in the palace was just not conducive to his health. Surely this is how he was going to die, in a void of activity.

If he left the palace one of Odin’s ravens would constantly be watching him, making any sort of mischief impossible. He could invite Lorelei to come over, but she was so boring and would only remind him about Amora, which in turn reminded him of how idiotic his brother was.

Thankfully, he finally had the opportunity to see Tony. Loki arrived at the council meeting a whole thirty minutes early and was disappointed to not see Tony there. The younger god unrolled his very special parchment along with a report of what happened during the last meeting. Truly nothing new was ever said during these proceedings unless there was an incursion, but the realms had been at peace for a very long time.

A few of the council members gave him impatient looks as if he was thirty minutes late. Did they not know that regardless of what he did he’d always have a place of importance in Asgard’s political arena?

Just as Loki quickly scribbled down: *When are you going to get here?* Tony walked into the room, feigning a yawn. He greeted each council member in turn and there it was again, that undeniable charisma that seemed to suck everyone in and made them smile. If Loki wasn’t so amused by it he’d probably be jealous.

Tony had one of his sketch books under his arm and began talking to one of the council members while showing him a drawing. The elderly man looked very pleased and patted Tony on the back while laughing. Tony grinned before taking his seat. Casually, he pulled out his parchment.

*Good morning Lokes.*

*Good morning to you as well. How are you?*

*Tired. I hate these pointless meetings, but my family has always had a seat on the council and it’s a good excuse to see you.*

Before Loki could respond Odin came in. Luckily Loki was in his blind spot, allowing him to continue. Heimdall’s report was read out and Tony continued writing.

*Things I’d rather be doing right now:*
Loki glanced at the older god, but Tony’s face was perfectly neutral as he stared at the speaking council member.

*Did I ever tell you about the first time I went to Jotunheim?* Tony wrote.

*No, I assume it was not a pleasant experience.*

*More or less, yeah. I was around your age I think. Some elves wanted pelts for some ritual. Jotunheim isn’t as cold as some parts of Niflheim. Regardless I dressed in thick clothing that blended in with the white and blue landscape.*

Loki glanced up when his name was mentioned.

“This yes, all preparations for the All-Father’s 6,300 name day are almost complete.” The celebration was just two weeks away. Of course everything was underway. Loki was just thankful that it would be a small affair considering four months later the summit in which the leaders from the important realms came together on Asgard to discuss the futures of the realms and trade negotiations would take place.

*Anyway, I thought I was perfectly concealed, but then one of the ice wargs attacked me. I thought I was dead for sure when everything went black, but then I woke up to red stares. Those damn frost giants had locked me in some sort of ice caravan. They were discussing if they should kill me or not. My leg was mangled. As I discreetly listened to them I pulled a long fang out of my thigh. I decided I wasn’t going to stick around to find out what they decided.*

*I slowly built up magic in the palms of my hands. I was honestly surprised they didn’t notice. All at once I shot out fire in all directions. Their screams were almost hiss like.*

*Luckily the beasts I was looking for were pulling the caravan. I quickly slit their throats then took their pelt and was out of that realm as soon as possible. I got quite the reward for that one.*

At the end of the meeting Odin was thankfully preoccupied, allowing Loki and Tony to sneak to one of the underused hallway. Tony flipped open his sketch book.

“This one or this one? I already finished the new eye patch.” He turned the page. “It looks exactly like this and either design will go nicely with it.” Loki examined both images carefully before deciding on the one with the simpler design.

*“Loki,”* a deep voice growled causing the young god to flinch.

*“We were just attending to business father. I swear it.”* Loki held a hand over his heart.

*“Purely business,”* Tony added on while holding up the closed book. “I was just making certain that his purchase is exactly how he wishes it to be.” Tony bowed deeply to the king before turning to Loki. He nodded at the younger god before departing without leave.
Loki glanced at his father’s mildly annoyed expression before quickly disappearing.

It was absolutely perfect. Loki ran his hand over the armor for what felt like the thousandth time. The metal felt like silk yet shined brightly. For once he was certain that his gift would outshine Thor’s. The oaf usually ended up giving their father some sort of trophy from his most recent outing.

“It is a fine piece,” Frigga admitted while straightening it out on the display stand. When the time came a servant would wheel it out for Odin to see. “How much did it cost you?”

“Three decades of saved allowances and investments.” He could easily read the surprise on her face. “Tony forged it at a discount and his present is a matching eye patch.”

The feast was already in full swing and despite having the perfect gift Loki wasn’t in the best of moods. As always, Tony seemed to know someone during a new situation. This time it was a representative from Alfheim. The elf was tall, even taller than Loki. He also seemed to be very familiar with the God of Metal.

From Loki’s seat at the royal table he could see the elf’s hand resting idly on Tony’s inner thigh, his thumb randomly brushing out. Tony hardly seemed to care. His arm was carelessly resting on the back of the elf’s chair, his fingers twisting a silver lock of hair back and forth.

Thor began challenging different dignitaries to drinking contests. None of them seemed to mind, easily joining in. Even Tony decided to join when Thor made one comment or another.

Loki sipped his drink while watching from a distance.

An annoyingly high laugh rang in his ears. He glared at the goddess who had suddenly appeared by his side.

“It seems someone has a crush,” Lorelei said while stealing a roll off Loki’s plate. He swatted at her hand, but allowed her to keep the pilfered food.

“Are you enjoying having your sister back?” Loki asked, always knowing exactly what to say to make her pout.

“Can she and Thor be any more obnoxious?” Lorelei tossed a bit of the roll at him. This is why he usually did not allow her anywhere near his food. She always either pulled it to bits or threw it at someone.

“At least they are keeping their ‘activities’ in their chambers. That’s an improvement.”

“So says you. They also come over to my manor and Amora’s chambers are right next to my own. They are both embarrassingly loud,” Lorelei said. Loki’s eyes were steadily on the group of those who were drinking their mead like water, or more specifically on Tony and the elf that was now
openly hanging off him, filling his mug whenever it emptied. Was he trying to get the Aesir drunk? Frigga cleared her throat and it was like a chain reaction. Those closest to the royal table quieted down, causing those near them to do the same until the whole hall was nearly silent.

“As you all know today is the All-Father’s 6,300th name day. We are not only here to honor him, but to celebrate the peace being kept for all these centuries. As protector of the nine realms he has raised us all out of barbarism and into a new age of prosperity. Tonight we shall all share in the revelry!” Frigga raised her goblet. “To the All-Father and all nine realms!” The sentiment was echoed loudly and presents began being ushered in.

The order of items was in an almost degrading fashion. There were only four other realms in attendance and the presents were brought up from least important realm to the most important. First came Niflheim’s presents, followed by Svartalfheim, Alfheim, and finally Vanaheim. Throughout the proceedings Odin was smiling politely, thanking the representatives of each realm.

Then came the gifts from Asgard. It started with the items from the lesser houses. None of them were really of interest. Amora’s family gave the All-Father some book, but Loki didn’t get a chance to read the title. There were many houses of higher standing than hers. Finally it was Tony’s turn. Despite his long absence his house was still only second to Odin’s.

The All-Father undid the simple parchment that contrasted greatly with the glossy papers and silks that were wrapped around the other gifts. Loki was happy to see that Odin looked begrudgingly pleased with the gift.

Next came Loki’s. He gestured for the servant he had hidden away. A moment later the armor was wheeled out and the hall was nearly silent save for a few whispers. Loki couldn’t hold back his grin when Odin actually stood up to get a proper look at the armour. A moment later he placed a hand on Loki’s shoulder while sitting down.

Loki almost felt high and didn’t even notice when Thor’s lackluster present was brought out after his and then Frigga’s.

Odin gave his thanks to all in attendance at once and everyone in the hall went back to their merriment. The drinking game started up just where it left off. Thor was clearly in a worse mood than before, much to Loki’s delight. That feeling quickly faded when he saw Tony with the elf sitting in his lap.

Lorelei had scampered off before the gifts were given, leaving Loki all alone and with nothing to distract himself with. He glanced at his father, but he was talking to a Vanir dignitary. Frigga was off entertaining a Niflung.

Boredom always led Loki to mischief. It was a well-known fact. As such he did not feel the least bit bad as a goblet or mug fell over with every twitch of his finger. He even timed one perfectly to make it look like Thor had spilled it all over a dark elf. Said elf pushed back her chair in order to avoid the liquid, hitting a servant and causing a tray to tumble loudly onto the ground.

Thor apologized profusely and Loki did his best to look innocent. His actions did not go unnoticed though. When he glanced at the God of Metal he was eyeing Loki with a knowing look, but did not alert the others to his activities.

Next item to meet its doom at Loki’s whim was a gravy tray that Thor somehow clipped while reaching across the table to wake a Vanir who was nearly passed out. Tony laughed openly, but stopped abruptly. The elf was whispering something into the god’s ear and Loki was not pleased to
see Tony’s hand tighten on the elf’s hip.

Without thinking he caused the elf to fall backward and out of Tony’s lap. Tony quickly helped him up. The elf’s face was crimson and he hissed something at the god before angrily walking to the far end of the hall to join his own kind again.

Loki balked when he realized what he’d done. Far too quickly he ran out of the hall, pretending that he was about to vomit. He heard some of the guests laughing at him, but that was better than them laughing at him for what he’d actually done.

He turned countless corners until he felt safe enough to stop and sink into an embarrassed heap. Perhaps he really had too much to drink. He was usually in better control of his mischief, and it rarely ever hurt anyone.

Loki was surprised when he felt two hands lift him up. He let out an undignified squeak. He hadn’t even heard the other god approaching.

“What was that about?” Tony demanded and Loki wanted to shrink back, but he was already flush with the wall. He’d never seen the other god angry before, even when he was arguing with Thor he looked amused.

“I’m- I’m sorry,” Loki offered while looking away from him. Tony’s grip on Loki’s upper arms loosened slightly. He could feel the other god’s warmth through his tunic.

“That’s not an answer, Lokes.” There was that nickname again. It always made him feel things.

“I’d rather not say,” Loki whispered. He really couldn’t look at the other god.

“You can’t just leave me with that. I’m not some peasant who will skitter away just because you have a pretty crown. I don’t take anyone’s bullshit, not even yours.” Tony dropped his hands back to his sides. They were balled up into fists. Loki really hoped it was in frustration rather than anger.

“I-” Loki paused while biting his lip, trying to find the right words. He was surprised when Tony’s eyes glanced at the small movement. Loki’s heart leaped and once again he acted without thought. His lips connected with Tony’s and the surprised look in the other god’s eyes did not deter him. He was already committed. If he pulled back now he’d just look foolish.

Thankfully his frantic movements were met by Tony’s.
A thrill raced through Loki when he felt one of Tony’s arm wrap around him, pulling him even closer. Loki felt bold and slipped his hand under Tony’s shirt. The older god froze and Loki flinched in return. Tony quickly pulled away from him and Loki nearly stumbled forward.

“Damn it, Loki.” Tony sighed under his breath, scrubbing a hand over his face. The younger god felt his breath get stuck in his throat and his face redden even further. Tony looked at him for what felt like ages, but was only a moment. The disbelief in his brown eyes melted away into concern. Loki glanced down the hall, wanting nothing more than to make his escape. “Alright, look at me.” His chin was caught between a forefinger and thumb, gently coaxing him to face Tony again. Tony’s hand did not fall away and Loki wasn’t sure how he felt about that. “You’re a great person, far better than I had expected, but this can’t happen.”

“Why not?” Loki cringed at how weak his voice sounded.

“Because I guarantee that if we do anything more than this you’ll end up hurt beyond belief.” Tony’s hand drifted to the side, a thumb brushing over Loki’s high cheekbone. The older god looked surprised when Loki leaned into the touch. His brown eyes almost looked like they were seeing him for the first time.

“You’re not making any sense,” Loki finally said, proud of himself for not letting his hurt emotions shine through.

“I don’t have to be making any sense to be telling the truth.” Tony leaned up and placed a soft kiss on Loki’s lips before pulling away again. “Take as much time as you need. Just know that I still want to be your friend.” With that the older god disappeared around the corner and Loki collapsed in on himself.

Loki hadn’t felt this awkward since he was in his 1,400s and found Thor and Amora desecrating his bed. He couldn’t even go to his room, fearing that he might see the magical parchment stained with words and images.

He was sticking to his mother’s side and following her throughout her activities, royal or otherwise. She knew something was wrong, but he refused to speak to her on the matter. He was embarrassed enough as is without her comforting words that would only sound condescending to his ears.

Thor was as oblivious as always, but Loki was thankful for that. At least with Amora around Thor was in a better mood. Loki even enjoyed their spars in the training yard now that Thor wasn’t constantly spewing out degradations. Amora hadn’t stuck around this long before. Perhaps he had been wrong about her. She did seem to have a calming influence on the older prince.

The All-Father seemed to be in a better mood than he had been in the past 1,000 years. There were so many possible reasons. Odin had seemed rather pleased by Loki’s gift as well as Tony’s. Loki was not leaving the palace as much, meaning less of his mischief was afoot. Thor’s adventures had been less destructive. Asgard had never been safer now that Tony had worked on her defenses and all the guards had new weapons and armor.
It seemed that everyone was happier. Even Tony looked more relaxed and comfortable when Loki saw him at the council meetings. Everyone was better off except Loki.

It was almost humorous. Some part of him always knew he’d end up being miserable. He was the shadow prince. This is the way things were supposed to be.

At least Tony was true to his word, allowing Loki space and time. He didn’t try to seek Loki out, not even at the end of council meetings. He didn’t try to catch Loki’s eyes either. It was both a relief and a punch to the gut. The other god seemed to be perfectly fine, even happy despite their friendship coming to a complete standstill. It made Loki feel insignificant, like Tony had only been humoring him.

“The royal families are set to arrive today and tomorrow. King Pendir and his oldest son are as reluctant as always to venture from their region,” Lord Heins said during a council meeting.

This was no surprise. The dark elves and the dwarves inhabited the same realm, with the elves above ground and the dwarves below. The two races were far from friendly and had a tendency to attack each other as much as possible. In order to get to the Bifrost point the dwarves would have to leave their caverns. During the last summit rouge dark elves had tried to attack them, ruining the proceedings before the dwarves even arrived.

“Lord Anthony,” Odin addressed the younger god, “you have good relations with the dwarves.” Tony nodded in agreement. “You shall accompany both my sons to escort King Pendir and his entourage here.”

“Yes, your majesty.” Tony nodded humbly and dread settled in Loki’s stomach. There would be no avoiding him then and even his idiot of a brother would take notice of the rift between them.

“You shall depart first thing tomorrow.”

Shortly after Odin’s decree the council meeting came to a close and Loki quickly left before Tony could get a chance to talk to him.

That night Loki couldn’t sleep so he readied his best armor and sharpened his daggers and scepter. He glanced over books on dwarves and their cities, despite having already memorized all those facts long ago.

In the morning Thor was excited as he always was before he went to a different realm. His group was at the ready, including Sif who had become a fixture in their group during adventures. Tony was waiting at the Bifrost. He was in new armor and with a second horse that had a large pack on its back.

“What is that?” Thor asked suspiciously, mirroring Loki’s thoughts.

“A few deliveries the royal family commissioned me for,” Tony explained simply while smiling and patting the bundle. There was the distinct noise of metal clacking together. “It won’t slow us down. Promise.” Tony grinned charmingly and Thor relaxed.

“Let us go, my friends, on this most honorable quest,” Thor said while his horse trotted down the Bifrost. Thor’s companion followed directly behind leaving Tony and Loki at the back. Loki gripped the reins to his horse tighter, feeling all the more awkward.

Tony reached up and petted Jarvis who was perched on his shoulder. Loki could hear soft humming coming from the older god. It was an elf lullaby. During their time in Midgard the other god while in his eagle form had sang it. Loki always wondered what the words to the lullaby were,
but now he figured he’d never know.

The Bifrost pulled them in and a moment later they were on the hazy fields of Svartalfheim. Loki instantly felt parched and took a swig from his oilskin.

“Loki.” The god almost choked on his mead at the sound of Tony’s voice. After a few rough coughs Loki responded.

“Yes?”

“Do you have the time?” It was an innocent question, yet it had Loki fumbling around, searching the folds of his coat. He pulled out the watch Tony had gifted him with and for some reason felt his face heating up.

“Half past noon,” Loki read after opening the watch.

“Hmm,” was Tony’s only response before putting his horse to heel, leaving Loki behind with the eight guards that were accompanying the group of young Aesir. Loki sighed as Tony slowed down when he reached Thor, displacing Volstagg. Tony leaned slightly towards the prince. Thor glanced over at him and Loki could tell that Tony was talking to him. From his distance Loki couldn’t hear them, but a few minutes later Thor’s booming laughter sounded followed by Tony’s good-hearted chuckle.

A part of him knew that he could join in on the joke if he wasn’t so damn ashamed of losing control of himself. Tony hadn’t even shown any signs of being attracted to him before then, yet Loki had still been ridiculously petty when an elf flirted with the older god.

Tony probably only kissed him back because he was drunk. This was all Loki’s fault.

He shouldn’t have been so foolish as to think Tony would do anything of a sexual nature with him or even just hug him. They were both males. Such relations were taboo in Asgard. The only reason Tony could so openly have a male elf sitting on his lap during the feast was because elves were known to submit to their partners in the bedroom. If an Aesir male had been the one on Tony’s lap the party would have come to a standstill.

At least Tony was being kind about the whole thing, even allowing them to be friends again once Loki reeled in his wayward emotions.

All it would take was time— and time was something they had plenty of.

They set up camp when the sun reached the horizon.

They were all seated around a low fire, eating their rations and drinking mead. Loki was seated next to Thor. On the elder prince’s other side was Sif who was talking with Tony. The God of Metal was telling her about female fire demon who fought better than all her companions, despite being much smaller than them. Sif was completely engrossed and Loki just wished the others would shut up so he could hear Tony’s voice.

“One doesn’t let things like decorum or expectations define you,” Tony said at the end of his story. His tone sounded strange, as if he was coming to a realization. “One doesn’t let them stop you from getting what you want just because it doesn’t line up with their perceived sense of morals. Be proud of what you are, even if it does mean stepping on a few toes.” Tony’s voice dropped lower
and Loki could only barely hear him. “Sometimes you just have play dirty to get what you want.”

“But I thought—” Sif cut herself off.

“You know, there’s a saying that I’ve heard in almost every realm I’ve been to. The gist of it is that all’s fair in love and war.” That gave the female warrior pause.

“You are very strange, Tony Howardson,” Sif finally said.

“If someone’s not playing fair it would just be to your disadvantage to do so, though I can’t really condone such dishonorable means. Even I’m above that.” Tony laughed and Sif smiled softly.

That night Sif’s sleeping pallet was located between Tony’s and Thor’s. As Loki fell asleep he could hear Tony whispering softly and Sif’s muffled giggles. He slept uneasily and woke up when the three moons of the planet were lined up at their highest point. He felt uneasy despite four guards being awake and on alert.

Loki sat up and discarded his cloak. He’d been sweating in his sleep and felt disgusting because of it. With a slow movement Loki stood and was surprised to see his brother awake. His heart lurched when he saw that Sif was safely tucked away in Tony’s arms with her head resting on his shoulder.

Thor was eating more of his ration while staring at the fire.

“Brother,” Loki called out, startling the older prince who hadn’t even noticed him. Thor looked up slowly and his grin looked forced. “Would you like to go for a walk?” Thor considered him for a moment, the dying fire casting strange lights on the pair of them. He nodded and two guards joined them as they moved over the sparse landscape. “It’s unusual for you to lose sleep.”

“Aye, as always you are right, brother.” That comment made Loki raise an eyebrow and glance at the older prince.

“It’s good to hear you finally admit that,” Loki said jokingly as they walked together.

“I somehow did not notice till recently that we’re all grown up.” Thor paused. “Save you, Loki. You still have plenty of growing to do. Perhaps in another hundred years you’ll have a beard.” Thor laughed loudly and slapped Loki on the back playfully.

“Let us hope that within the next hundred years you will grow a brain,” Loki said dryly and Thor laughter only became more spirited. It made Loki grin.

They walked on in silence, never getting too far from the camp. The dim light of the campfire was always in their peripheral.

“One of us will be king someday,” Thor said almost an hour after they both got up.

“Are you just now realizing this?” Loki asked condescendingly and Thor threw his arm over his brother’s shoulder bringing him in close and kissing him on his temple sloppily. “Get off me Thor!” He tried pushing the other Aesir away, but he couldn’t get out of his much stronger grip. It only made Thor laugh louder.
They arrived at the entrance to the underground city at high noon the following day. The cavern was unguarded. There was no need for guards. The passages were too narrow to take an army or even a small group through unnoticed. It was all bottlenecked allowing for the dwarves to take down any forces that dared to enter.

Luckily, the caverns had been made by rock giants so the ceilings were high enough for the group to ride their horses through.

Loki could feel the heat building up the further they descended into the ground. Every time he came here he felt like a part of him was being suffocated. Besides that, last time he had visited this kingdom he had accidentally insulted the king and his queen.

Tony was in the very front of the group because he claimed to have traveled through the passages countless times and knew the quickest ways. He took a different route than the one Loki usually traveled. True to his word they did reach the dwarven capital sooner than expected.

There were dwarves dressed in fine clothes waiting near the city entrance for them.

“King Pendir welcomes you all to his home. A feast has been prepared in your honor,” a female dwarf addressed the two princes. Her attention drifted to another Aesir. “Lord Anthony, your usual quarters have been prepared.” Tony nodded in response and Jarvis took off, heading for the castle.

The group rode on, escorted by three dwarves. As always the God of Metal seemed to know someone. Tony was talking to one of them and they were comparing gauntlets. Loki couldn’t decide if it was annoying or admirable.

Everything for the feast was already set up by the time they entered the castle. The atmosphere was far different than that of Asgard. King Pendir did not separate himself from the other dwarves. There was only one table in the stone feasting hall.

“Prince Thor and Prince Loki! It is always an honor to play host to you two!” Pendir shouted while raising his goblet.

“It is always an honor to be amongst such honorable and cheerful company!” Thor said back, equally loud. Loki only nodded in response, knowing that anything he said would be overlooked in favor of the golden prince.

“Lord Anthony! Have you come to pilfer our ale stocks again?” Pendir laughed loudly and Loki briefly wondered if this is how things would be if Thor became king.

“I strive to only keep pace with you.” Tony bowed deeply. “But first I would like to make a delivery to your son, if you don’t mind?”

“Go forth! You know where he is!” Pendir waved off the God of Metal.

The group all took seats and everyone seemed to be in high spirits. Loki did his best to enjoy himself. This wasn’t his preferred form of entertainment. Luckily all the dwarves’ attention were focused on Thor.

He used that time to observe those around him. King Pendir had gained weight, but it was mostly seen in his shoulders. The king was older than Odin, but not by much and he was far from
prestigious in comparison. The dwarves and the dark elves were constantly fighting, keeping both groups from reaching their full potential. There had been many conferences between the two races in which they tried to reach a peaceful agreement, but none of them ever came to fruition. Loki had a feeling that was by design. Svartalfheim was nowhere as loyal as Vanheim or Alfheim to Asgard. It would make sense that Odin wouldn’t want the dark elves and dwarves to unite.

Sif seemed far more relaxed than usual and the Warriors Three were as rambunctious as always. Thor was getting along with the king as expected.

Midway through the feast Tony came back, but sat with some of the lesser nobles. He didn’t seem to mind though. Instead he was singing loudly with them and even joined in on the dancing. He looked like he was having so much fun that Loki almost felt like he was being pulled into the merriment. He even felt like dancing despite looking terribly awkward whenever he tried.

There were a few drunken brawls, but the Aesir mostly stayed out of it. Loki watched it all while sipping on his ale.

“King Pendir, would you like to dance?” Tony asked when there was a lull in the conversation.

“You did me a great disservice by not asking before!” Pendir shouted boldly while standing from his seat. Loki couldn’t help but smile as he watched the two danced recklessly.

“Retreating is not in a true warrior’s nature!” Thor said loudly, pulling Loki’s attention his way. The older god’s arm was carelessly thrown over the back of Frandral’s chair.

“Aye, but not everyone is a true a warrior as you are,” Volstagg said in response. “A servant in the palace told me about a particular incident between a certain mage and warrior during your father’s name day.” Volstagg giggled childishly and Loki froze mid-bite.

“Surely no more tales can be told of that night that I have not heard already,” Thor said while filling his goblet.

“No small wonder considering your reaction may not be the usual merriment that such embarrassing stories tend to invoke,” Volstagg said and Loki hid behind his goblet.

“A tale is to be told and you dare leave me out of it?” Pendir asked with false anger. Loki sunk further into his seat, wishing to disappear.

“Of course not!” Thor pulled out a seat for the king. “Proceed Volstagg!” Loki bit his tongue and sent a quick spell, knocking over Volstagg’s cup, yet his magic didn’t stop there. Loki’s eyes widened as the ale somehow caught on fire. The king and two Aesir moved backwards. King Pendir was patting down his graying beard, trying to put out the fire that had jumped there. With a sweeping hand motion Loki put out the fire and fell back into his seat, not having even realized that he had stood.

“Loki!” King Pendir shouted, causing the whole hall to fall silent. “Must you always play your tricks?!” Loki glanced around, reading the expressions of those in attendance. Of course, how stupid of him! The dwarves were far more adept at sensing magic than the Aesir.

“I beg for your forgiveness, King Pendir. I hadn’t meant to cause trouble.” Loki bowed deeply, not seeing any way around it.

“Loki…” Thor growled out.

“What was your intensions then, young prince?” King Pendir asked while smoothing his frayed
beard. Loki glanced around, feeling the heated glares of all those around them. The truth was too embarrassing to be said aloud, let alone to be said in front of so many. What made it worse was the fact that even Tony looked disappointed in him. All that there was left to do was lie and play up to expectations.

“It’s as you said. I only wished to play a harmless trick on Volstagg. I was not aware that my magic would react in such a manner.” Loki bowed even deeper, feeling his face flare up. It wasn’t so much that he got caught or that he was making a fool of himself in front of the whole court, worse yet was the look on Tony’s face that he could see from the corner of his eye.

“Please King Pendir, forgive my brother. He is still young and foolish,” Thor said while bowing. “He did not mean it as an insult. It could have easily been my beard that caught on fire.”

“This feast is over. I will not take retaliations against your brother, if only out of respect for your father.” Pendir waved a hand and dwarves started leaving the hall. The king himself turned away and started walking out. “The guards will escort you all to your quarters.”

Loki was shepherded to the others side. Thor grabbed Loki by the back of his neck and made him look at the ground as they were surrounded by dwarven and Aesir guards. Thor’s grip was painful, but he refused to say so. He was practically pushed into his room and the doors were slammed behind him.

His room was disturbingly silent and all the emotions from the past few months were welling up. In frustrated movements he began stripping off his armor, throwing the pieces to the ground.

Why did everything always fall apart for him? Thor did idiotic things all the time, yet no one blamed him! When he got home… he knew that he’d be punished despite Thor having blundered twice as much and during even more delicate situations. It was stupid and unfair.

Yet it was surprisingly easy to fall asleep. He was used to being in trouble after all.

Loki woke up feeling terrible, which was far from unexpected. He’d have to ride with King Pendir and his entourage to Asgard and then he’d have to deal with his father’s wrath. Hopefully his punishment would happen after the summit considering it was set to begin right when they arrived.

Food was brought to his room and he ate in silence until Thor came in. The God of Thunder was still scowling.

“Let us be on our way. We needn’t anger the nobility any more than you already have.”

“Shut up, Thor. Don’t act like you’re the perfect prince who’s never flummoxed. Of the two of us you’re the one who causes the most destruction,” Loki said while pulling on his cape and outer armor. Unsurprisingly Thor grabbed Loki by the back of his neck.

“Know your place, brother. Your tricks are not welcomed here or anywhere. Father won’t be pleased,” Thor said under his breath and Loki shook out of his hold.

“Let us go.” Loki moved past his brother, pushing down his anger and embarrassment. He felt sick to his stomach, but wouldn’t let it show. When he was home things would be better. Things were always better when is mother heard his side of the story. No one else ever commiserated with him other than…

When he reached the royal stables his horse was ready, but he noticed that the mare and the packhorse Tony had brought were already gone. Loki frowned. Evidently he wouldn’t even be able
to rekindle their friendship so he could commiserate with him. At least Tony would listen instead of just assuming he was merely out to make mischief.

The trip out of the dark caverns was longer considering their group had nearly doubled in size.

Tony was just outside the entrance, resting in a hammock. His mare was laying down and his packhorse had another bundle on its back. He yawned and rolled up his hammock as the group approached.

“Lord Anthony,” King Pendir greeted and the God of Metal rode beside him, much to Loki’s chagrin. Their conversation was soft, and Loki couldn’t hear them from his position far in the back of the group, out of sight, so as not to anger anyone.

It only took them half a day to get the Bifrost point, but due to the difference in time between the two realms it was sunset when they arrived in Asgard.

Tony split off from the group, promising King Pendir that he would join the summit after he got cleaned up.

Loki kept his posture straight despite knowing he’d get scolded soon enough by Odin and whatever good will he’d built over these past few months would amount to nothing. The palace loomed over him and he automatically went to find his father. It was better he heard of Loki’s mistake directly than from one of the guards.

The All-Father was in one of the smaller conference rooms with two of his advisors.

“Father, may I have a word?” Loki asked politely. Odin waved off his advisors before motioning for Loki to sit in the spot across from him.

“You have done something wrong,” Odin stated, disappointment evident in his single eye.

“An accident, I assure you.” Loki fumbled awkwardly with his sleeve. “I was just trying to get Volstagg to not spread around a rumor about me.”

“Don’t mince your words. Tell me everything that happened,” Odin demanded, a half hidden sneer firmly in place.

“We were all in the feasting hall when Volstagg started telling Thor and King Pendir about,” he paused, looking for the words, “about one of my shortcomings.”

“What shortcoming is it this time?” Odin asked and Loki visibly cringed.

“A failed love interest,” Loki admitted.

“With whom?”

“Is that really relevant?” Loki asked, his voice a bit too high.

“Do not test my patients, Loki. You have come here to beg my forgiveness. You have no right to refuse my question.”

“You needn’t worry. I was rejected quite thoroughly.” Loki glanced in the direction of the door, debating just fleeing and dealing with the consequences later on. “I used a spell to knock over Volstagg’s drink. Something went wrong and the ale caught on fire. Embers jumped to King Pendir’s beard. I quickly extinguished it before he could be hurt, but not before my hand in the
incident was noticed. I accept whatever punishment you see as fit.” How many times had he said that last line before? Without a doubt it was at least the 10,000 time.

Loki didn’t want to see Odin’s look of disappointment, but knew that not meeting his gaze would be seen as a sign of weakness.

“I shall decide on your punishment once I’ve had a proper chance to discuss this matter with Pendir.” Odin was silently fuming. “Now go and ready yourself.” Loki bowed, undecided if he was pleased about this outcome.

Loki quickly walked to his chambers. As he passed by Thor’s chambers he could hear the older prince and Amora making obscene noises. Loki snorted in annoyance and was almost happy for the fool. At least someone was having a good time.

That thought made him grin sadly, but he stopped short when he saw who was in his chambers.

“I would think you’d be in the meeting hall,” Loki said to the God of Metal once he had composed himself.

“I figured I’d check in on you first,” Tony said while standing up and stretching his back as if he’d been waiting there for quite some time.

“I’m perfectly fine,” Loki lied through his teeth, then quickly changed the subject. “Is that new armor?” Loki gestured to the red and gold armor that looked simpler in design, but made from better material.

“Yes, thank you for noticing.” Tony smiled and it was contagious. “It’s my finest creation yet.” Tony walked over to Loki slowly. “I chose the colors red and gold for a reason.”

“Oh? What reason is that?” Loki asked while grinning. It was so good to just talk like this again, without feeling like he was about to die of embarrassment.

“And why would I tell you that?” Tony asked while tilting his head to the side slightly.

“What?” Loki’s smile faltered. “Because we’re friends, of course.”

“Friends?” Tony’s laughter had a bite to it that made Loki freeze. “Why would I ever want to be friends with someone like you? Loki, you’re just a pathetic little mage who can barely wield a proper sword. The second son… you’re just a spare, and a shoddy one at that.”

“No, wha-“ Loki began asking, but was startled when Tony was suddenly in his face.

“You think you’re so clever, yet all your little tricks are just annoying. You don’t even look like a true Aesir.” Tony poked Loki in the shoulder and the younger god was pushed backwards slightly. “You’re disgusting and scrawny. No wonder Odin is always so disappointed with you.” Tony grinned maliciously. “And you even thought I’d be interested in someone like you. I almost vomited when you tried to shove your tongue down my throat. When will you finally learn your place? You’re nothing but an embarrassment, and an ugly one at that.” Tony grabbed Loki’s shoulder and pushed him down. The younger god was so startled that he fell. “Spare everyone and just hide like the disgrace you are.” Tony walked to the door and Loki was too stunned to react. The older god looked backwards just once. “Pathetic.” With that Tony slammed the door closed leaving Loki alone in the dark.

Loki stared at the door, his mind unable to comprehend what exactly just happened. He looked down at the palms of his hands. He could feel his magic just pulsing beneath his skin.
His magic… but Tony always thought his spells were interesting. He’d said that- but-

Loki felt like he was collapsing in on himself.

“Why, why would he say something like that?” Loki whispered as he felt tears run down his face.

His hands began shaking and he balled them into fists, bringing them close to his chest, trying to keep himself together.

They’d been friends for two years now and he was the only one who ever accepted him, but now-

“I don’t understand.”

It didn’t make any sense. None of this made any sense.

Loki sat there for what felt like hours, trying to understand what had just happened.

And then he heard screaming.
The screams seemed to come from all over the palace, making Loki jolt to his feet. He grabbed his scepter from off the shining floor and ran out of his chambers.

His steps faltered when right outside his door a guard was yelling his lungs out while writhing on the ground and trying to pull off his melting armor.

Loki cast a cooling spell, but it had no effect on the metal.

The guard’s hands were being charred down to the bone, his skin falling off in burnt chunks.

It was no use, besides there were far more screams coming from the conference hall. He started running towards the noise. As he passed by Thor’s chambers the older prince stumbled out of his room, pulling on pants and holding his hammer.

“Loki,” he greeted while falling into step. They passed guard after guard, each one either dead or in the process of being cooked alive. When they finally reached the conference room neither could open the door. “Stand back, brother.” Thor slammed down his hammer, but it only barely dented the age old doors.

Loki’s eyes widened as he spotted a crack near the top. He shifted into smoke and willed himself through the small opening.

The sight that greeted him was far worse than expected. All the guards were dead. The foreign dignitaries’ armors were welded to their chairs. And his father was ripping off his melting armor as the eye patch Tony gifted him oozed over his face and to his other eye.

Loki didn’t know what to do at first. He was frozen in place watching his father scream in a way he’d never heard before.

And then he saw Tony in the middle of the chaos, his hands raised and a vengeful grin in place.

The doors behind him exploded open as Thor entered the room, pushing Loki out of his stupefied state.

“Odinsons,” Tony said, his voice barely breaking through the shouts and screams as he unsheathed
his two swords, one red, the other gold. He pointed one sword towards the brothers and the other in the direction of the All-Father. “How kind of you two to join me on such a joyous occasion.” He spun the sword pointed at them and a large gust knocked them both backwards. They were only stopped by an equal force pushing them forward.

“Thor, Loki, take care of this traitor. I shall help your father,” Frigga said, her hands alight with cornflower blue magic. Both sons charged forward, weapons at the ready. Frigga was just a few steps behind.

Thor was the first to reach Tony. He sent down a powerful blow with his hammer, yet Tony deflected it, spinning around and slashing Thor’s exposed back from hip to neck. In the same movement he created an X with his swords, stopping Loki’s swing short. With a surge of magic the blade of the scepter was clipped off.

Frigga slipped by them and Tony glanced at her with an almost amused look on his face.

“Why?!?” Loki shouted, both to distract the God of Metal and out of desperation. “Why would you do this?!?” Loki pulled out two of his daggers and tossed them at Tony’s throat. The older god slammed down one of his heels and three disks of metal flew out. Two intercepted Loki’s daggers and the third blocked Thor’s hammer from hitting Tony’s shoulder from behind.

“Oh Loki, poor, sweet, misunderstood Loki.” Tony chuckled darkly as Loki grabbed another dagger. Tony hopped backward, grabbing Thor’s raised hand that held Mjolnir without even looking and leveraging him over his shoulder. Loki had to sidestep as to not be bowled over by his own brother. “There’s no politics here.” Tony slashed at Loki’s arm and he just barely stopped it with his dagger. “It’s just good old-fashioned revenge.” Before he could react, Tony’s other sword sliced downwards straight through the metal and leather of Loki’s chest plate.

Loki hissed in pain. Some part of him woke up, realizing this wasn’t just another nightmare.

Behind the fray Loki saw Frigga clap her hands together, encasing them in darkness, before she pulled off the molten armor from Odin’s body. The All-Father let out a stuttered scream and Tony looked backwards. Loki used his brief moment of distraction to toss a dagger, but another disk of metal flew from Tony’s boots, blocking it. Tony slashed Thor twice on his torso before kicking him in the stomach, sending him sprawling. He jumped over his prone form.

“No!” Loki shouted when Tony raised his golden sword to hack Frigga’s unarmored form. Tony’s movement veered slightly and he flicked the gold sword up and it somehow found its sheath on his back. He broke open a glass bracelet on his wrist and the black sand within snaked out, shoving Frigga away. Loki sent out a blast of green magic, but Tony threw a dagger and it split the magic in half, diverting it away from him.

Tony gripped the hilt of his red sword with both hands before stabbing it into the All-Father’s left thigh. His hand surged forward and he grabbed the liquefied metal off Odin’s face. He pulled it off revealing a boiled eye. The metal formed a perfect disk in his hand.

“Enjoy your new scars, All-Father,” Tony said and the disk exploded into thirds, each stabbing the king through one of his free limbs. “Until we meet again.” Tony turned towards the stunned nobles, one hand aimed towards Frigga. A small crossbow appeared from beneath his armor and shot her through the shoulder, pinning her to the wall. “Fine kings and dignitaries from the realms Odin never took seriously. Know now that the All-Father and the Aesir are far from immune to attack.” Tony unsheathed his golden sword again and slammed the blade into the marble ground. It exploded into countless black shards, creating an impenetrable fog. When it cleared the God of Metal was gone.
Chapter End Notes

The side piece *Light my Fire* for this *universe* can be read from anywhere between chapter 29 and 33.

*Like a Rolling Stone* can be read at any point after this chapter, but I recommend doing so before chapter 35.
The Fallout

The silence that followed Tony’s abrupt departure lasted only a second.

Healers and servants rushed into the conference hall, the majority going to Odin. Loki immediately went to his mother’s side. He pulled out the crossbow bolt from her shoulder, not letting his hands shake under the torrent of his own emotions.

“Are you alright, my love?” Frigga asked while looking over his shoulder. Her fingers ghosted over the long gash on his chest and torso, cornflower blue magic wisped out, staunching the bleeding.

“I can’t talk right now,” Loki admitted while trying to move to his father’s side, but there were too many healers around the king. Instead he went over to the nobles to un-weld their armors from the chairs. King Pendir and his son Prince Fendir were halfway out already and the representatives from Alfheim were almost out. Malekith was cursing angrily and pushed away the prince when he tried to help. Instead Loki went to King Frey of Vanaheim and began un-welding him. Thankfully the various dignitaries were not harmed by whatever spell Tony had used on them.

The All-Father had passed out and was being taken to the healing room on a gurney one of the healers had summoned.

“A thousand pardons,” Loki said, trying to salvage the situation. “Evidently we had a traitor amongst us, one who many of us knew.” Loki pointedly glanced at King Pendir and his son. “You all will be escorted to your quarters and we shall reconvene soon enough.”

The librarian, one of Loki’s old tutors, came in and helped free the rest of nobles, especially the Niflungs, whose magic was more defensive than suited for crafting or destruction.

Loki gestured for more servants to be brought in and they helped the uninjured nobles go back to their rooms. One of the healers tried to treat his wounds, but he waved her off, instead demanding they take him to his father.

Odin was in one of the private healing halls and a bandage was covering his eyes.

“How is he?” Loki asked his brother who was being patched up.

“He shall live, but never see again,” Thor said solemnly. “His eye was boiled in his skull. It is a miracle that he is still alive.”

“I don’t believe in miracles. Tony- Lord Anthony,” Loki corrected himself, “I don’t think he was aiming to kill the All-Father. If that had been his goal he had plenty of opportunities when they were alone.”

“Humiliation then?” Thor asked, his frame sagging slightly.

“He attacked him in front of the most powerful beings in all the nine realms. I can see no worse humiliation for a king than to be disgraced in front of his equals and his court.” Loki bit his thumb in frustration, a habit he had long ago thought he’d lost.

Frigga walked in hastily, shrugging off the hands of a healer.

“King Pendir and Malekith have left. The only time the dark elves and dwarves had ever agreed
and it had to be this… I couldn’t stop them without starting an inter-realm conflict. The rest are
staying though.” Frigga ripped open the shoulder of her dress and pressed her hand against the
wound. Loki could almost feel her healing magic. With her spare hand she grabbed one of the
servants, stopping him in his tracks. “Get Lord Heins. Tell him I want a full account of how many
guards were wounded or killed. All reserve guards are to be put on duty. Tell them that under no
circumstances are they to wear their newly issued amour.” The servant nodded and scurried off.
She turned to the healer that was working on Odin’s face. “When you are finished the All-Father is
to be sent to his healing room. He’s fallen into Odin-Sleep.”

“Mother, should I-” Thor began, uncertainty coloring his voice.

“No, I will take reign while he is asleep. The nobles need to see a trusted face.” Frigga glanced at
her two sons. “Neither of you are ready to rule.” She kissed each one on the forehead before
glancing at her handmaid. “Lira, get me a blueprint of all changes that have been done to Asgard’s
defenses since Lord Anthony got back. When the guards are gathered I want a group dispatched to
his manor.” Frigga turned towards her younger son and quickly healed the gash that traveled from
collarbone to navel completely, leaving behind a scar. “Change into new armor. I want you to
accompany the guards to Lord Anthony’s manor. You’re one of the few who has ever been in
there.”

“Yes, mother.” Loki nodded to her, secretly relieved that she was taking control of the situation.
She turned to a servant that was taking notes frantically.

“I want every person that worked in his manor properly interrogated. All his comings and goings
are to be found out. Also, send a message to Heimdall that he needs to be on alert and for him to
compile a list of all of Lord Tony’s uses of the Bifrost. If he has allies I want to know about them.”
Frigga continued listing off things that needed to be done. Her voice faded as Loki made his way to
his chambers.

He passed by various dead guards, all of which were being carted off by reluctant servants. At
some point the metal had cooled and all that was left was the smell of burnt meat and disfigured
bodies.

Loki paused in his chambers when he spotted the enchanted parchment Tony had given him. His
hands began shaking and he couldn’t stop himself from grabbing a pen.

Why? he asked simply, his letters covering half the page. He stood motionlessly as he looked at
the paper waiting for any sort of response. He let out a long, deep breath when his scrawl faded away
and was not replaced by Tony’s blockier handwriting.

He didn’t know what he expected to happen. It wasn't like Tony was going to write him and say
that it was all just some big joke and he didn’t need to worry.

That, of course, did not happen.

The page remained blank and Loki shed his broken armor emotionlessly. The watch Tony had
gifted him fell out of his ruined coat and clattered onto the floor. He quickly picked it up and held
it in his open palm. He was tempted to toss the small item against the wall, shattering it, but
equally as tempting was the need to keep the item that was once precious, that was still precious.
He set it on his writing desk knowing that he could always destroy it later.

The trip to Tony’s manor was filled with the whispering of the Aesir citizens. Word of what had
occurred in the palace had already spread. Loki was sure that the king of the dwarves and Malekith
suddenly departing did not help quell the worries of Asgard’s citizens.
When they reached Tony’s manor Loki told the guards to wait. He examined the front door carefully. Instead of the two swords it had originally when it was locked there were now four. Loki used the spell of observation he’d learned from the older god. He could barely make out the red runes, but knew automatically that if anyone without the same magic touched the door they’d be shocked, just an inch away from death.

Green magic poured out of Loki’s fingers and he could feel the guards behind him shift uneasily. Idiots. They would have nearly killed themselves trying to open the door if he hadn’t stopped them.

Slowly he lifted his hands to the door, his green magic pulsing over the red runes, looking for any weaknesses. The spell seemed to be focused on the four swords that were crossed in the middle of the door. They had to be both physically and magically moved.

Even if Loki could mimic Tony’s magic he couldn’t mimic his strength. The God of Metal was nearly as strong as Thor due to his adventuring and work in the smithy.

Cautiously he reached out for the door while keeping a shield between his hand and the magic that was pulsing in the door. Before his touch could connect he was zapped, sending him flying backwards. One of the guards caught him and Loki felt strangely childish.

“We will have to find other means of entrance,” Loki said, clearly frustrated. He glanced at the head of the guard. “I shall survey the area myself. Keep your men back lest they wish to be shocked.”

Loki did not wait for their response, merely beginning circling the large building. The stables were empty. The manor was plated in gold just like the rest of the city, but Loki vaguely remembered Tony mentioning that the walls were actually made of uru that was enchanted by his forefathers. All the windows were shuttered closed and had four daggers over them in a similar design as the front door.

Even the low wall that surrounded the backyard was enchanted to burn on touch, but Loki easily vaulted over it with the help of his spare scepter. He cast a spell of fire when he saw how many venomous creatures were in the backyard, far more than when he and Tony had sparred there earlier in the year. The small animals screamed in pain as they were killed.

The backdoor was completely gone. The wall appeared as if it had never been there before. The only obvious clue that it had been there was the orientation of the sidewalk, guiding an individual to the now blank wall. Loki brushed his fingers over the spot and the shock was not as intense as the front door. This would have to be their point of entry then.

Loki would have to enlist mages from Alfheim if they wanted to investigate the manor within the next couple months. Loki frowned as he remembered that every door inside the building was locked in a fashion Loki could never figure out despite having been in and out of the building for two years. It would probably take a decade and a half to properly search the manor.

When he circled back around to the guards a few of them were whispering about how Loki had been Tony’s friend. They silenced themselves when they saw the youngest prince. He couldn’t hide his scowl though.

Loki summoned a pen and paper to himself and began writing out an official order for a group of mages from Alfheim to be brought in and housed in one of the guest manors. He detailed how much they would get paid and their actual jobs.

“Take this to the mage college in Alfheim. We need sixteen mages of a high caliber,” he said while
handing the order to a guard. “Heimdall will send you to the nearest Bifrost point, but you will
need a horse for the rest of the trip.” The guard nodded while taking the piece of paper and quickly
running off. “You eight are to guard this manor. No one is to come close to it and if Lord Anthony
is spotted he is to be apprehended on spot if possible, if not killed.”

Loki’s mouth tasted bitter as the words left his mouth. It was necessary though. All of this was
necessary because Tony… No, Loki couldn’t refer to him as such anymore. They were not friends.
Tony had just-

And all the things he’d said.

Was it all some game?

On his way back to the palace he passed the representatives from Niflheim riding to the Bifrost. He
wanted to stop them, to shout at them for being so inconsiderate. The king, the All-Father had just
been attacked. This was the time to show loyalty, not to run back home and hide.

Although that’s exactly what Loki wanted to do. He wanted to just dive into bed and cry. He
wanted to scream and shout into his pillow until this sense of betrayal and pain faded away. He
wanted to take an axe to the door of Tony’s manor, hacking it to pieces. He wanted to set the
enchanted parchment aflame. He wanted to take the watch and smash it between his fingers, feeling
the springs and gears yield under his hold.

Most of all he wanted to understand.

Tony spoke of revenge but-

“Enchantress, he was of your ilk and you often fled to his side when Asgard would not have you.”
Sif’s voice cut through Loki’s torrential thoughts. “Do not pretend like you weren’t in on his plan.
You distracted Thor with your feminine wiles when he was supposed to be in the council room.”
Sif had he sword raised horizontally to the ground, pointing at Amora who was unarmed, not that
that meant much for a mage.

“I didn’t known anything of Tony’s dealings until you all did. My loyalties rest with Thor and all of
Asgard. I would do nothing to hurt him,” Amora explained, straightening out her hair that was
disheveled. Thor was standing between the two females.

“So you claim, but did you not curse him a century back for not returning your affections?” Sif
accused and Thor shifted uneasily. Loki could tell that he was unsure of which side of the
argument he should fall on.

“That was different.” Amora’s face was starting to get red and Loki could almost feel the magic
building up in the palms of her hands.

“You play at tricks just like all mages do, yet you deal in your own flesh. Have you no shame?”
Sif raised her chin slightly.

“That does not have anything to do with this matter. I am no traitor.” Amora looked around and
spotted Loki. The younger god’s eyes widened when he realized what Amora was about to say. “If
betrayal was based solely on association then you must call Loki a traitor as well since he is the
one who spent the most time with Tony and is also a mage.”
“Amora.” Thor’s voice had a warning tone to it.

“I only speak the truth, Thor. I will not be accused heedlessly just because Sif is jealous.” Bright green magic flickered at the tip of Amora’s fingers, her anger making her lose some of her control. Sif sputtered, her own face turning red.

“Do not try and change the subject,” Sif said, lowering her sword slightly.

“Then do not place blame where blame is not due. Tony- Lord Anthony acted on his own and for reasons unknown to me. Had I known of such plans I would have told the All-Father directly. I may be a mage, but that does not make me a traitor.”

“You were quite insistent that we not leave the bedroom,” Thor added and Amora reeled backwards.

“Am I ever not insistent when it comes to the bedroom? I act as such because I love you.” Thor flinched at the word love causing Amora to visibly shrink away from the group. “You don’t believe me, do you?” she asked while turning towards the older prince.

“Of course I do, Amora. It’s just that…” Thor trailed off looking down at his boots.

“I’ll never be enough for you, will I?” Amora crossed her arms over her chest, stepping away from the other Aesir. “You all accuse me of being some enchantress yet you peruse the whore houses of every realm.” Amora gestured towards Thor as she spoke. “Is it because I’m a mage? Is that why you’ll never trust me?!”

“You are a trickster, just the same as Tony and Loki,” Sif said loudly before Thor could respond.

“Do not put me in the same category as them.” Amora hissed, swinging her arm out, green sparks emitting from her fingers.

“You dare speak of my brother as such?” Thor said, stepping forward and reaching for his hammer. Amora held her hands up in surrender, all magic fading from her fingertips.

“I meant no harm. Loki is an honorable warrior.” Amora’s voice was soft and Loki felt his face heating up. This was not what he needed right now. He’d long ago had enough of Thor defending his ‘honor’.

“I am not 600 anymore. You needn’t defend me.” Loki walked into the fray. “I doubt Amora had any part in these dealings. Even she is not that nefarious.” Loki touched the tip of Sif’s sword, pushing it down. “Your fallacious ideas about association being a cause of guilt are idiotic. We are in a time of upheaval. Needless arguing will get us nowhere. We all have duties and I suggest you all attend to them.” Loki walked away from their idiotic squabbling.

He knew he should check on his father, but his anger was boiling just under the surface. If he saw his father laid up in bed he might lose it. Instead he slammed the door to his chambers closed and went over to his writing table.

Why? Loki’s handwriting was blemished by teardrops and he sincerely hoped that Tony couldn’t tell. He stared at the parchment, his fury and anguish building with every passing moment. He wrapped his fingers around the paper. It would only take the smallest of jerking motions to tear it apart.

But once again he couldn’t do it. Instead he shoved the parchment and the pocketwatch into the lowest compartment of his desk. He could feel the wound on his chest flaring painfully. It would
scar. Left collar to right hip. A parting gift from the god he…

No, every word Tony had spoken to him was a lie. Everything Loki felt towards the other god was a lie.
Chapter Notes

Big thanks to Temul who has been keepin' my grammar and spelling in check. This lovely lady is awesome and officially working with me to make this story all shiny :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

The day after The Blinding, as the Aesir common folk were calling it, only the dignitaries from Vanahem and Alfheim were still in attendance. Odin was still asleep and Frigga had taken up his duties flawlessly. While Loki had been out inspecting Tony’s manor Frigga had convened a meeting with all the high lords.

Queen Frigga reestablished relations with Vanahem and Alfheim. Vanahem was easy considering her father ruled it. Alfheim was peace loving and the tributes they had to pay were a pittance compared to what Svartalfheim had to pay.

There was dissent, though. The dignitaries from Niflheim refused to come back to Asgard and both the king of the dwarves and Malekith weren’t talking to the Aesir.

Loki could almost feel the tension brewing and there was already talk of war, though who wanted to go to war with who was not clear.

Heimdall had found no sign of Tony as of yet, but he did mention trouble in Muspelheim. Apparently the news of the All-Father’s injury had spread to all the realms. The trade routes between realms were being cleared and the few Aesir traders in the realm of fire had been attacked. Retaliation would have to be swift in order to quell any other thoughts of rebellion.

Both princes were called into Odin’s study. Frigga was sitting in his seat, documents were spread on the desk and she was gripping a cup of warm tea loosely.

“Odinsons,” Frigga said and both princes immediately felt the gravity of the situation. “The delicate peace between the nine realms has come to an end. War is upon us once more. I wish you were both older, but we do not have that luxury. You two will share command with King Frey. He has agreed to be our ally against the fire giants. The light elves are giving to the cause with both men and money. The dwarves are not responding to our ambassadors so all our armor and weapons will come from the Vanir blacksmiths.” Frigga leaned back in her seat. “The assaults shall be mounted from three different Bifrost points.” Frigga unfurled a large map. Loki and Thor leaned over the map, looking closely at it.

“These three points?” Loki pointed at the map. All points were around the capital city of Muspelheim.

“Yes. This one,” she pointed to a dot in the west, “is all uphill so it will be led by my father. Their fire dancers are in the north east. Loki, you will command this wing of the battalion. It will consist of half Aesir, one fourth Vanir, and one fourth light elves.” Her hand drifted to the point in the south. “Thor, your army will consist mostly of Aesir, but there will be a small group of elves with you.” She gave both her sons a pointed look. “You three are to take the city together. If one of you moves too quickly you might be flanked and lose more warriors than necessary. Once the city is
taken it will be our base of operations for our other campaigns in Muspelheim.”

“We shall destroy these fire giants as father destroyed the frost giants,” Thor said, slamming his hand down on the map as if he could really crush the city.

“Mother,” Loki said, drawing her attention to him. “It may be relevant to know that Lord Anthony once mentioned sitting in Surtur’s court. He may be allies with the fire demons.”

“Then all the more reason we should destroy them all,” Thor bellowed confidently.

“What I mean is that they may be more aware of our tactics than the frost giants ever were and possibly outfitted with items made by Lord Anthony.” It still felt strange to call him that, yet Loki refused to speak of him as he once did. Frigga’s lips formed a hard line as she looked at the map.

“I will consult with my father. Loki, I need you to go to Alfheim and supervise the making of charms that will make our warriors resistant to fire. Thor, though you loath the library,” Frigga said teasingly, “I need you to talk to the head librarian and get her to gather all the information she has on Muspelheim, also for her to create pamphlets on the weaknesses of fire giants, fire demons, and dragons. Also on the fire dancers. I doubt they’ll participate, but it doesn’t hurt to be prepared.”

“Very well, mother,” the two princes said in unison.

“I also sent an order for some elves in order to help unlock Lord Anthony’s manor,” Loki added in.

“A good idea. We need to have them guarded though. There has been enough betrayal as of late.” Frigga nodded and dismissed her sons.

Loki quickly got a horse and a dispatch of guards to accompany him to Alfheim. Frigga was right. Times of upheaval were the most dangerous. Even when going to one of their closest ally’s realm.

His trip to the city was relatively quick since he wasn’t traveling with his talkative brother. The mages were already waiting for him, having received the order earlier in the day. They were still designing the first model of the charm. The elves had decided it would be wisest if the charms were hidden beneath the chest armor in the form of a necklace.

The charms would divert heat, reduce burning, quell dehydration, help push heat out of the armor, keep metal from melting, and encourage cooling, basically the opposite of the charms they made when Asgard went to war with Jotunheim.

Loki could only think of a few improvements, but the elves looked thoroughly impressed. It was nice to feel appreciated once more. Somehow his fledging confidence had been cut to the ground after the one person who supported him had just as easily destroyed him.

One of the mages was wearing the white robes of the House of Hvit, immediately reminding Loki of the time he and Tony went into one of the citadels to retrieve Amora. It had been a good day, but once again left a bitter taste in his mouth.

He stayed on Alfheim for a week, working with the mages on the charms before he returned to Asgard. He could already see that the war effort was underway. The few smithies in the city were bellowing black smoke. The taverns were full with the warriors that came from the countryside.

When he rode by one of the butchers he could smell meat being smoked and dehydrated. Tanneries were making under-armor, heat resistant boots, and wineskins. Bakeries were changing their ingredients from decadent items to breads that would not mold.
Frigga was in the war room with one of King Frey’s trusted counselors as well as with many veterans from the war with Jotunheim. A large map of Muspelheim was laid out on a table.

“-crush all forces including civilians. Anything less than total victory will just breed future problems,” one of the advisors was saying as Loki entered the room. Thor had a grave look on his face as he sat near the back of the group. Loki joined the group that was circled around the table. None of them acknowledged him, but that wasn’t surprising, considering that other than him and Thor, the youngest among them was Frigga in her 4,100s. Everyone else was around Odin’s age or older.

“How long do we expect this campaign to last?” Frigga asked once the advisor had stopped talking. Two of the older advisors shared a look and Loki had to purse his lips to not comment on their subtle insubordination. Even if Frigga was a woman, she was also queen and second only to the All-Father.

“It will likely take half a decade,” one of the advisors finally said to her.

“Shorter than originally expected.” Frigga smiled sadly.

The group continued talking about the various stratagems that would be used and the weaknesses of their enemy. Surtur was brought up more than once. The fire demons reigned over the fire realm, more deadly than any fire giant.

Despite his best efforts, Loki’s thoughts drifted to his former friend and what he’d said before he attacked Odin.

“You think you’re so clever, yet all your little tricks are just annoying. You don’t even look like a true Aesir.” Tony had looked so different than he’d ever seen him before. “When will you finally learn your place? You’re nothing but an embarrassment, and an ugly one at that.” He had pushed Loki onto the ground, towering over the young god. “Spare everyone and just hide like the disgrace you are.”

Thor clapped his hand on Loki’s shoulder, startling him out of his thoughts.

“There is no need to fear, brother. We are sons of Asgard and will not be so easily defeated.” Thor’s reassurance only served to anger Loki.

“I am a warrior, same as you Thor. You needn’t coddle me.” Loki brushed off his brother’s hand and went to his chambers.

It was a month and a half later that the war was finally underway. The All-Father had finally woken from the Odin-Sleep. His sight was truly gone, but he was no less imposing. He endorsed their campaign and gave an empowering speech before the troops took off.

Asgard’s three forces were deployed in tandem.

Loki was only surprised by the heat that instantly surrounded him. He’d only been to Muspelheim twice before and always left immediately.

He had spent the last two weeks getting acquainted with his troops. Few of the Aesir or Vanir truly respected him, but that was overshadowed by the respect the elves showed him. After a few choice, brutish fights none openly disrespected him or questioned his command.
Just like Tony described, the molten ground stuck to his boots.

Someone must have let leak the fact that they were going to attack because there were troops waiting for them.

The first wave of enemies were ashwolves controlled by mages in the city. They were… far larger than Loki had expected. The elves and Loki worked to sever the bond between the wolves and the mages or to have the ground swallow up the large beasts. The Vanir and Aesir fought directly with their weapons, filling the air with the yipping of slaughtered animals. His troops reported no losses and they continued their march to the city.

The next wave was fire demons. They spewed out flames the way Aesir breathed out air.

Loki had insisted that charms be placed in the shield of every warrior, and that order was proving to be the right call. The red flames licked at the shields, but were otherwise repelled.

Before they could finish off the second wave, the third joined in. It was a combination of mage fire dancers, fire demons, and armored ashwolves.

Loki briefly worried how his brother and uncle were doing, but quickly focused on the task at hand when the fire demons began chucking lava at them. Loki, in tandem with three other mages, cast a large cooling spell, slowing down the fire demons and allowing for the warriors to more easily slaughter them.

The fire dancers were harder to deal with. They were dwarves and easily went under their defenses. They darted around quicker than most Aesir and Vanir. The elf warriors could only barely keep up with them. Some of the fire dancers were even riding on the back of the giant wolves, adding to their agility.

Loki mentally cursed the vulnerability of horses that made it impossible to use in this realm.

The mages were having an easier time with the fire dancers, casting simple spells to trip them up so that the warriors could dispose of them.

The heat was insufferable and Loki could tell it was taking a toll on his troops despite the various charms they all had. Loki felt like he was boiling alive, but didn’t dare show any weakness in front of all the warriors and mages that were under his command.

He couldn’t hold back a hiss of pain when a fire dancer got around his defenses and slashed his arm. With a quick spin of his scepter he beheaded the redheaded enemy.

The battle seemed to go on forever and the heat just kept building.

An ear shattering explosion ripped through the group. Loki looked for the source and saw the ground splitting open, lava spewing from the charred ground. Troops were engulfed by molten earth. The mages focused on stopping the onslaught from the ground with little success. It spoke of magical origin.

Hopefully, the mages in the other squadrons would be able to quell any other eruption.

Countless waves of enemies came down on them, but none of them were fire giants, much to everyone’s surprise.

Midway through the battle, Loki lurched over and vomited. One of the elves hauled him up and he was grateful that no one else saw his show of weakness.
They entered the city and began clearing out the buildings, killing everyone regardless of if they were warriors or otherwise.

By the time the battle ended and they had conquered the city, the sun was setting and one of Muspelheim’s moons was midway in the sky.

Loki was relieved to see Thor mostly unscathed. The God of Thunder’s eyes were alight with happiness and warriors were around him talking loudly. King Frey called the two princes over and gave a great speech on the importance of the day.

The war that was only supposed to last half a decade was already six decades in and with it came Loki’s 1,700th name day.

He did not mention it, nor was it brought up in conversation even when he chanced upon seeing his brother during a lull in the fighting. The battles felt never ending. Every day felt just like the last. Fire demons would attack from the molten earth. Ashwolves would plague the night. Fire dancers cast spells and hypnotized warriors away from safety.

There was no rest. There was no silence.

There was only the rotation of troops.

From the relative safety of the back, tense middle, and clashing front.

Loki could never stay in the back for long. His face was well known and he had to keep up a show of unwavering strength, a warrior his father could be proud of.

But the heat… Norns, he had never felt such aching. Every part of him was affected. He constantly felt like a sickly child. He was always moving sluggishly, and that wasn’t just because of the molten earth that stuck to his boots with every step he took. His magic was weaker here, despite Muspelheim having a stronger connection with the world tree than Asgard had.

There was no comfort in this place. He was constantly being cooked. They had to sleep in hammocks because the ground would literally burn them. The metal rods that kept the hammocks up had to be specially treated and Loki knew Asgard paid a fair fortune just to give the troops somewhere to sleep…

Muspelheim also had terrible storms. Without warning, the already grey skies would darken and thick gas would seep out of the earth causing those who couldn’t get a wet cloth around their faces to cough as their lungs were scratched. The gas would quickly rise up, carrying ash with it that formed into hard pellets that would come down from the sky for hours on end.

Every breath Loki took in felt asthmatic, every gasp filled with ash and infernal heat. He heard the Aesir talking about him when they thought they couldn’t hear them. They thought him weak and an incompetent leader.

Loki was just grateful that the troops he commanded were mostly mages. They did not question why he chose more indirect means of attack in order to weaken Surtur’s forces.

The young god slowly accumulated more scars as well as experience. He felt foolish for ever believing himself battle ready before this war started. There was quite a difference between the scuffles he and Thor ended up in when on one of their tasks and actual war. Those adventures
always lasted a week or two at most and they knew that they’d arrive home safely - and that home was actually safe. Reports of fire dancers periodically sneaking into Asgard were sent to him, setting Loki on edge, worrying about his mother and father.

Despite all his training, Loki had almost lost his life multiple times. He saw countless elves and Vanir under his command die.

Another decade passed.

Battles were lost and won with Asgard slowly gaining ground.

And Loki forgot what it meant to be comfortable, to have a moment just to himself.

The only positive was that it didn’t allow Loki’s thoughts to stray too far from the immediate future or the previous battle. His thoughts rarely sank back to times in which he was not alone and had a friend other than Lorelei.

Eventually, Surtur only had one stronghold left, a castle upon the tallest mountain Loki had seen in any realm. Its steep angles did not allow for even the most skilled warrior to scale it.

The war came to a standstill as parts of the mountain had to be cut away in order for troops to even have a hope of attacking the castle. Craftsmen were brought in from Asgard, Vanaheim, and Alfheim, all to hurry the work along, but they were constantly attacked. The warriors that were used to only protecting themselves and those to their left and right were suddenly cast in the role of protectors of civilians.

Red boulders were sent down the steep ledges, bowling over countless and often times filling in any progress that was made. The boulders couldn’t be stopped, only diverted with the help of mages. It caused even more strife among the different groups. Every time a warrior was flattened under one of the boulders, or worse became a part of it, the Aesir would blame the mages.

It took four years just to get two thirds of the way up the mountain.

That’s when things somehow became worse. Surtur started sending out what few forces he had left.

Dragons, just a touch smaller than horses, swarmed out of the fortified castle, spraying out acid that boiled flesh and left individuals blind. Fire dancers appeared from between crevices in the mountain, slicing and hacking anyone who was in their range. Fire demons used their brute strength to push back warriors, sending them tumbling down the mountain side.

The day Surtur finally revealed himself, a quarter Thor’s troops were killed.

Surtur was ten times the size of the tallest Aesir and he wielded a sword of flame that cut through so many easily. Their forces were pushed back down the mountain and for a week and a half Loki went without rest as he consulted with the best mages of Alfheim and Vanaheim on creating charms for swords and shields that could withstand Surtur’s sword. With great effort, they found a solution and were despised because of it.

As the new charms were distributed, rumors of the mages holding back were spread throughout the various camps.

Asgard’s combined forces moved with renewed vigor, seeing the end of the war in sight.

It was Thor’s forces that finally surrounded Surtur and it was the golden prince who landed the finishing blow. He struck down Surtur’s head, only being able to reach such heights with the help
of one of Loki’s spells. The fire demon’s head erupted as its body shattered. His giant sword fell to
the ground, killing hundreds. Chunks of his burning body flew out across the Muspelheim
landscape, hitting the farthest corners of the realm.

The combined victory roars of the Aesir and Vanir drowned out the cheering of the elves.

Surtur’s molten body fell apart, spreading all over the castle and mountain, entombing the last of
his forces there.

After seven decades the war was officially over, Loki could finally go home, and the traitor
Anthony Howardson had not been seen once.

Chapter End Notes

I also posted a drawing I made of Surtur’s castle :D Please be kind. This is my second
shot at visual art. It's called Long, Long Way to Go.
They were welcomed back to Asgard as heroes. A feast of unheard size was being thrown in celebration of the war finally ending.

It was the first time Loki had seen his father since the war began. Odin sat strongly and no longer wore an eye-patch. Instead he openly showed his scars. One eye socket was empty while the other was pink and had a milky film over his once blue iris.

He moved easily and Loki could feel magic at work. The feast was loud and Loki grinned slightly as the Aesir, Vanir, and light elves celebrated in earnest, for once putting aside their differences. He could still see the war weariness weighing heavy in their eyes and on their shoulders.

Thor spoke loudly, regaling the various Aesir that were either too young or too old to take part in the war with stories.

Despite everything, despite fighting seventy years for Asgard, there were still whispers, whispers about him being weaker than the other Aesir, rumors about him still being in contact with Tony. All lies.

Loki took his revenge by playing small tricks on them.

The feast continued for three days straight, in which no one slept and plenty of mead was passed around. When Loki could finally leave the festivities without drawing attention to himself, he made his way to his chambers. The servants had kept it as impeccable as he expected. Everything was just as he left it, even his writing desk…

Against his will and better senses Loki slowly walked over to the writing desk. He could almost feel the rasping of the parchment under his fingers, the cold weight of the watch in his hand.

He knew he shouldn’t… but it hurt so much, knowing it was there. But he knew what happened to the things Tony touched. All the mages that tried to enter Tony’s manor died. The building was still untouched and holding all the secrets of the nine realms.

Loki could still hear Tony’s voice and exactly what he’d said.

“*There’s no politics here. It’s just good old-fashioned revenge.*” More than all the insults and cruelties that he’d said, those words replayed in his head during the silent moments between battles on Muspelheim.

With tears in his eyes and against his better judgment Loki opened the bottom drawer of his writing desk and pulled out the enchanted parchment. The question that always ran through his head was put into one simple word.

*Why?*
The word quickly faded away and Loki didn’t even know why he bothered.

If Tony hadn’t destroyed his parchment then surely he abandoned it. The same way he-

“I’ve been knocking for the past ten minutes,” Frigga said while standing behind him. Loki flinched.

“A thousand pardons. I must not have heard you over the revelry,” Loki said as he shoved the parchment and watch back into their drawer.

“Your father is asking after you.” She rubbed his shoulders, making it less likely that he stood and joined the feast again.

“How has he been? Your letters were never specific,” Loki asked, leaning into her touch.

“It was a struggle at first, but he has adapted quite well. The commoners have given him the moniker of Odin the Unseeing, though they never say it around him. His face gets quite red and his ire rises.” Frigga started working a knot out of Loki’s neck and he practically melted. “Thor has told many tales of your bravery on the field, yet I have not heard a single one from you.”

“He does enough talking for the both of us.” Loki sighed, feeling weary. He’d gotten enough of such boasting around the campfires that were entirely unnecessary considering it was always warm in Muspelheim and the moons provided enough light to safely move. It was even worse now that the war was over.

“My love, I wish to know how you are. Another war may already be upon us.”

“So the dwarves and dark elves really have united.” Loki frowned and his head fell forward when Frigga hit a particularly tense spot on his back.

“Yes, I feel the hand of that traitor in all of this.” Loki’s eyes flew open at the mention of his former friend.

“Surely they will be discouraged now that we have finally put an end to Surtur and conquered Muspelheim.” Frigga leaned down and placed a kiss on the crown of Loki’s head.

“Hatred is rarely logical.”

“Hatred?”

“The dark elves have a long history of distrust and hatred towards the Aesir and Vanir. If they wanted to fight us, the light elves would stay out of it. The two races have slowly been coming back together. No one knows why their schism has been closing.”

“Tony…” Loki whispered. Frigga’s hand froze on his shoulders. “He mentioned once that he convinced the light elves to allow some of the dark elves into one of their magical and ritual based orders.”

“We cannot attribute all our woes to him.”

“Our war with Muspelheim would have never come about if not for him. The scar from when he slashed me open is still here.” Loki touched his chest. It was one of many now. Despite his superior training he’d still gotten wounded on multiple occasions. Frigga leaned down and hugged him from behind.
"I know, my love. Let’s go join the feast again. You’ve been gone for far too long from your father’s and my side.” Frigga tugged on his hand and Loki stood with an exaggerated sigh. “Don’t act like that. You’re already in your 1,700s.” That comment only made him sigh louder as he followed her, purposefully dragging his feet. She tugged him to her side before looping her arm with his and kissing him on the cheek.

He’d almost forgotten how nice it was to be around her, how nice it was for someone to truly understand him…

The din from the feasting hall quickly overtook them, keeping them from conversing further. They sat at the royal table. Thor was boasting loudly to their father. Loki gave a look to his mother, making it clear that his absence hadn’t really been noted.

He looked around the room and was surprised to see Amora seated with Lorelei. The older sister’s relationship with Thor had turned sour once their trust had been shaken immediately after the day of The Blinding. Loki had no doubt that now the war had ended their relationship would pick back up, although the way Sif was eyeing the eldest prince could mean otherwise. She hadn’t been allowed in the front lines, but had still fought valiantly. She had been in King Frey’s regiment, though, so neither prince really got to see her.

The two sisters were bickering as usual, but at least this time it hadn’t come to blows, not yet at least.

The Warriors Three were eating and drinking happily as if they hadn’t just gotten back from a war. They did look relatively unscathed compared to the majority of the other Aesir, except for Frandral, who had lost all but his pointer finger and thumb on his left hand.

Everyone was in such high spirits, yet Loki couldn’t truly join in. At least while they were at war his mind was almost constantly working, trying to see everything from his opponent’s perspective, deciding how the terrain would play into the coming battles, and everything that came with commanding a large group. But now there was only a gaggle of cheery voices, the noise of mugs and goblets clinking together, and the laughter of lovers being reunited once again.

It was almost sickening. Loki just wanted silence, silence after all these years of being surrounded by clashing swords and grunts of pain. Silence instead of his churning thoughts and the whispers of those who did not understand him.

Then there was the sharp noise of clapping, drawing everyone’s attention to a table in the middle of the feast. Loki could see the drawing of blades before he spotted the source of the noise.

“Bravo, All-Father, bravo,” Tony said, his voice carrying through the hall as he relaxed in his seat, even going so far as to rest his heels on the table with a half full goblet in hand.

“Howardson!” Odin’s face quickly grew red and the guards quietly made their way through the crowds. Warriors were already surrounding the God of Metal, yet they did not obstruct his view of the royal table.

“Glad you can recognize my voice, considering your eyes have gone a bit bad with old age.” There was laughter in Tony’s voice, making Loki feel sick.

“Coming back to my court is a death sentence.” Odin made a hand-motion and the guards started moving closer.

“I highly doubt that.” The goblet in Tony’s hand melted and the mead evaporated. The God of
Metal unsheathed two swords from his back. “Besides, I’ve come bearing news.” Tony thrust his sword backwards blindly, stabbing a Vanir straight through. The warrior had been sneaking up on him.

“Speak before you breathe your last.” Odin held his hand up, stilling the guards and warriors. Tony leaned forward happily, plucking a golden apple off the table and shining it against his armor.

“You’re so dramatic.” Tony chuckled before taking a quick bite. A warrior lost his patience and attacked, swinging his axe down heavily. Tony caught the blade barehanded. Electricity sparked from blade to hilt and the warrior was suddenly twitching on the floor. “Now what was I saying?” Tony threw the bitten apple across the hall. It hit the golden floor and burst. “Ah, yes, now I remember. Surtur is still alive and just a few hundred feet shorter.” There was an audible gasp from the room. “He’s currently at one of my bases of operations partaking in his own feast.” Tony chuckled and it was a very dark sound. “He’s not very happy with what you did to his people, so I’m giving him a bit of a boon. With the help of some of my forces he will attack Asgard and this realm will have blood on her golden streets.”

“Kill him,” Odin ordered and a horde of warriors and guards descended down upon the god. Loki felt a magical wave and the group was pushed back with a startling force. Tony stood easily, jumping onto one of the tables.

“You should definitely work on Asgard’s defenses,” Tony said while parrying the swing of an axe. “It was far too easy to get to this realm and even easier to get into the palace.” Tony jumped over the swing of a sword that was aimed for his knees. Loki sent a burst of green magic at the other god the same moment Thor threw his hammer. Tony’s eyes briefly met Loki’s before he slammed down his swords, causing them to burst into countless shards of metal. They swirled around him and he was gone before the bolt or hammer could strike.
After Tony’s abrupt arrival and departure the feast was cut short and all merrymaking came to an end.

“I tried to contact him earlier,” Loki admitted once he was alone with his mother again.

“Did he respond?” Frigga asked without missing a beat.

“What if that was his response?” Loki gestured in the direction of the feasting hall.

“How many times have you tried to contact him before?”

“Only three other times, but that was before I went to Muspelheim.” Loki bit his thumb, feeling well buried anxiety make itself known.

“I doubt he would need an excuse to come back and terrorize Odin. I believe his only motive was to unsettle all of Asgard. Besides-” Frigga cut herself off.

“Besides what?”

“There’s only so much an individual can fake. He did not need to spend that much time with you if his only motive was to distract you when he wanted to attack the All-Father.” Frigga paused. “He did not need to be your friend. He either did that to be cruel or because he genuinely enjoyed your presence. Although he is rather insane.”

“Once,” Loki hesitated, looking at his mother carefully. “Once I thought I saw his eagle, Jarvis, flying above me during one of the battles in Muspelheim. He could have just been surveying the battle, though.” Loki bit his thumb again and Frigga pulled his hand away from his mouth.

“Unfortunately, it’s very unlikely that we’ll ever really learn the truth of the matter. All you need to remember is that he betrayed all of us and used your insecurities to keep you away from the All-Father so that he could more easily attack him.” Frigga kissed Loki on the cheek. “Asgard will be prepared for the next time he brazenly returns.”

Loki sincerely hoped she was right, and perhaps next time he’d be able to do more than throw a paltry spell at his former friend.

Two more decades passed and nothing was seen of the God of Metal or Surtur. Muspelheim was mostly under Asgard’s control, and Svartalfheim was still acting unruly. If not for the ever present threat of Tony and Surtur leading forces to Asgard then the Aesir would have put the dark elves and dwarves in their place.
“Brother!” Thor bellowed while draping a thick arm over the younger prince’s shoulder. “In less than 100 years you shall receive your title!”

“100 more years and perhaps you won’t be such an idiot.” Loki shrugged his brother’s arm off. “Now stop stating the obvious and give me my gift.” Loki made a grabby motion with his hands, excited, causing his brother to laugh. Loki held back a grin at how easy it was to entertain him.

“Not yet. It shall be given to you at your name day feast, as is proper.”

“Now you suddenly care about what’s proper? Not when you were running around half naked in the palace when the representatives from Niflheim were visiting?” Loki made a tsking noise and his brother only laughed louder.

“Worry not! I’m sure you will be pleased with your gift!”

“If it’s another war hammer I’ll hit you so hard you see the rainbow bridge,” Loki warned, shaking his fist at Thor. Blue eyes went wide and Thor ran off. Loki let out an exasperated huff. The idiot.

Somehow their relationship had become a bit easier now that they had both seen war.

Things had finally settled down enough for his name day celebration to be officially conducted, despite being decades late.

Loki could hear the feast being set up even though it was just past noon. It was sure to be a large affair, but he doubted he’d enjoy himself much. Tony’s appearance after the war seemed to remind everyone that he and Loki were once friends.

The whispers and rumors of him not being a true warrior only grew louder, despite all his accomplishments on Muspelheim. Not even the Warriors Three took him seriously and they had seen him in action various times during their adventures and at war. The only ones that seemed to respect him were Lorelei, who didn’t really count, and the light elves, which he never got to see since inter-realm travel was too dangerous with a constant threat looming over their heads. It didn’t help that relations with Alfheim were strained since they’d allied themselves with Svartalfheim. The light elves were only rarely allowed on Asgard now, and even then it was for a very short meeting with the All-Father.

Loki hated being restricted to Asgard, but it was necessary and he understood that. Fire dancers and fire demons were still roaming the branches of the world tree, attacking any Aesir, Vanir, or light elf they happened upon. He could travel to Muspelheim, but it was far too hot there and he’d have to go with a squadron of guards. Niflheim’s cities were boring and not worthy of visiting. Jotunheim was far too dangerous and Helheim was inaccessible for all those that were living. Vanaheim was just a larger version of Asgard with less warriors and more farmers. Svartalfheim was too dangerous and Midgard held no interest to him.

He was practically trapped with idiotic warriors who did not appreciate him nor take his abilities seriously. The few mages who resided in his realm either knew less than him about magic or were unwilling to share their knowledge. Amora hadn’t been in Asgard for the last fifteen years due to another lovers’ quarrel.

His only comfort was his mother, but she was busy attending to Odin since he refused any help other than hers.

Loki had already thoroughly read through the royal library and his thoughts unwillingly went back to the library in Tony’s manor. He’d wished he’d borrowed more when he had the chance, but
remembering such things only made some part of him ache.

All that was left for him was watching his brother spar in the training yard as he used to do as a boy and try and create his own spells in the privacy of his own chambers. He rarely attended the feasts anymore, but went to every council meeting. Tony’s spot on the council had been replaced by one of the lower houses who specialized in weapons, but their craft in no way compared to the things Tony could make…

Loki did his best not to think of the other god, but thoughts always slipped through.

“Screw all those rules about not being able to travel between realms as we please. Consider this your gift for all those name day celebrations I missed any others I won’t be there for.”

Loki supposed that should have been a clue, but it had been a single comment out of a million. How was he expected to see such treachery in the face of kindness?

“Prince Loki, the feast is soon to begin,” a servant said, startling the god out of his musings. He’d been sitting on a balcony, staring at Asgard for almost half the day. Loki nodded at the servant and retreated to his chambers to change into one of his best outfits since all eyes would be on him tonight.

Thor was in Loki’s chambers, grinning widely. The older prince had a poorly wrapped gift under his arm. Loki gave him a questioning look.

“Your gift, brother,” Thor said while handing over the parcel. Loki tested its weight before pulling the string that kept the shining paper in place.

“New daggers.” Loki grinned while admiring them. There were only three, but each had the image of one of his favorite animals to transform into, a magpie, a serpent, and a direwolf. He gauged their heft and balance and was pleased with the results, even going so far as to toss one. It flew through the air smoothly and hit its mark. “Thank you, Thor, for once you do not disappoint,” Loki joked and the God of Thunder engulfed him in a stifling hug.

“I’m pleased that you like them. Now let’s go drink ourselves silly!” He began pulling Loki out of his chambers, but Loki twisted out of his grip.

“I will meet you in the feasting hall. I need to change first.” Thor nodded in agreement and left. Loki quickly exchanged his outfit for a more regal ensemble that had gold threaded into the sleeves and around the collar. Perhaps he wouldn’t stand out the same way the other Aesir did, but he would look dashing none the less, or at least he hoped that was the case.

He gave the new daggers a place of honor on his hip, showcasing their hilts, yet somewhere in the back of his mind he knew Tony could have made a better version.

The last of Loki’s gifts had been received and as usual he was bored out of his mind. He couldn’t really leave, though, considering the feast was thrown in his honor.

Every few minutes an Aesir would come up to the royal table and recount some story about the war in which Loki ‘nobly lead the charge’ or ‘met a demon blow for blow’. Each story was overdone and sounded the same as the last to him. It felt nice to be praised for his deeds on Muspelheim, but they never spoke of all the spells he performed that saved lives and brought the war to a conclusion years earlier than it would have otherwise.
Far in the distance the howling of wolves somehow broke through the thick walls of the palace and even thicker noise of the feasting hall. Loki froze in his seat and looked around, trying to see if anyone else had heard the uncharacteristically close wolves. The only one who seemed to take notice was the All-Father, but catching his attention to ask was no easy task.

Odin slammed down Gungnir and the hall fell silent immediately. The deep howling of wolves was heard again, this time accompanied by screams. A guard came running in.

“Asgard is under at-” The guard was cut off by a dagger finding a home in his throat. Loki stood quickly, turning behind him to where the dagger had been tossed from. Before he could react, a pair of hands grabbed him by the shoulders. He was pushed downwards and a stifling heat engulfed him as the golden floor swallowed him and Tony up. The last thing he heard was his brother’s shout of alarm.

Loki woke up to complete darkness. With a quick spell a ball of light appeared above him.

He didn’t know whether he should be relieved by the familiar surroundings or fearful, considering who owned them.

He was in Tony’s library, and upon closer inspection said god was in the room too. His eyes were shut and he was lying on the couch across from Loki’s. The younger god slipped a dagger off his belt, the serpent one from the feel of it.

With deliberately slow movements Loki bridged the gap between them, dagger raised and ready to strike. He’d go for the throat, straight through the jugular. His hand shot forward as quick as a viper, but an even quicker hand caught it.

Loki let out a grunt as his hand was twisted and he was knocked off balance. As he fell to the ground, he felt the dagger being pulled out of his grasp and his wrist snapping. A moment after he hit the plush carpet a weight landed on top of him, knocking the air from his lungs. The cold feel of metal touched his neck. He swallowed down a hiss of pain, and his Adam’s apple bobbed, nicking himself.

“You’re a sight for sore eyes,” Tony said, his face only a few inches away from Loki’s. The older god had grown a beard since he’d last seen him and a part of Loki’s mind thought that it fit him.

“You… you bastard!” Loki tried to grab one of his other daggers, but the one that was against his throat pressed down, reminding him how close to death he was.

“I’ve been called worse.” Tony rolled off him and was on his feet in an instant. Loki went for one of his other weapons, but Tony threw the dagger, hitting Loki on the hand with the hilt. “You’ve gotten quicker, but you were only at war for a few decades. Give it a few centuries and you might be able to physically best me.”

“I needn’t rely on such simple means.” Loki raised his hands, an offensive spell easily coming to mind.

“And what would you do if you did defeat me? Have you forgotten you’re on my territory?” Tony gestured towards the door and Loki belatedly noticed that the lights had been turned on at some point during their scuffle. “That door has a lock you couldn’t solve in a thousand years. Beyond that is two more, one of which cannot be manipulated by anyone but me.”
“Desperation breeds innovation. I’ll find a way out,” Loki said, his hands glowing green.

“You know how many occasions I’ve had to kill you, yet stayed my own hands?” Tony asked before Loki could attack.

“This is just another one of your tricks.” Loki began moving to the side, trying to get a better angle for his attack.

“Maybe, but what if it’s not?” Tony wasn’t putting up any visible defenses, but Loki knew he was prepared.

“I don’t care if it’s not a trick. You hurt my father and all of Asgard. I will get retribution.”

“You mean I hurt the man who barely acknowledges your existence and the realm that refuses to accept you, that ridicules you at every turn? Yeah, I just gave them a taste of their own medicine.” Tony’s grin grew wider.

“Countless died because you instigated a war between Asgard and Muspelheim.”

“Instigated is a bit of a strong word. Besides, each generation of Aesir ilk goes to war. Before you it was Jotunheim, and before that it was against Vanahem, and before that it was against Svartalfheim. It’s an endless cycle. When Thor has a son he too will go to war, probably against Svartalfheim and Alfheim. You’ll see.”

“You used me,” Loki accused, hedging to the left slightly. Tony matched his movement.

“True, true, but I could have used you a lot harder and left you a worse mess because of it.” Tony licked his lips and the younger god was reminded of what happened between them on Odin’s previous name day. “I could have used and abused you, but I chose not to. You were never my target.” Loki could feel something inside of him starting to crack.

“Why, why did you do that to me?” he asked, doing his best to keep his voice steady.

“It was never about you. I wasn’t expecting to see your group in Niflheim. I was going to kill you then and there simply to hurt your father, but then I saw the rest of your group. I had been planning my revenge for so long, and what better way to claim my place in Asgard than to become friends with the darling princes.” Tony sneered, but it was quickly replaced with a look of humor. “But I quickly found that Thor was too obnoxious and annoying to spend any time with. You, on the other hand, were inquisitive and entertaining. Those are very rare qualities.”

“Why have you brought me here?” Loki asked, not liking where this conversation was going.

“Odin was the one who tried to kill off my whole family.”

“You’re nothing but a liar and traitor. Answer my question.”

“Odin’s the liar. He said my family was attacked by rogue dark elves. He was the one who hired them to kill us. They did their best to end us, but my father was the God of Mechanisms. He had a gadget that would help us escape. One of them followed us onto the world tree—”

“Shut up, you liar!”

“Elves killed my father and my mother tackled an elf and they both fell into the Void so that she could save my life! Odin is a monster and all of Asgard belittles you. You deserve better than that. I can give you better than that. There are countless libraries at my disposal. Come with me and
you’ll never be ridiculed for being a mage. You’ll never have to deal with belligerent Aesir again.”

“You stories will not sway me. They are my family and I’ll never betray them!” Loki’s hand glowed brighter and he struggled not to straight out attack Tony. Anything less than the perfect spell would just be deflected, or worse, redirected towards him.

“Yes, they are stories, but they’re also the truth. I have eyes and ears in the palace Loki. I know how they treat you. It will only get worse with time, Lokes—”

“Don’t you call me that! Don’t you dare call me that!” Tears were starting to cloud his vision. It was stupid. It had been over ninety years since they had had a proper conversation, yet those old emotions were hitting him full force again.

“Loki, it’s not going to get any better in Asgard. You may be a prince, but you were never supposed to live like a bird in a cage. There’s still so many places to explore, spells to be mastered. If you stay in Asgard you’ll either die in that palace as an unhappy old man or go mad.”

“And what of your revenge? Have you forgotten that they are my family? That I love them?”

“I have no qualms with Frigga or Thor-”

“You only wish to kill my father.”

“If I wanted him dead he’d be dead. I’d rather see him suffer till the Norns see fit for him to die.”

“Then I’m just another one of your tools to hurt him. I won’t let you use me again.”

“I’m not going to lie. That is a factor, but if I really wanted to hurt him I’d’ve taken Thor instead. He is the golden prince after all.”

“Stop trying to manipulate me!” Loki sent out a blast of magic, but Tony batted it away. Loki teleported behind the other Aesir while leaving an after image, yet Tony somehow knew, elbowing Loki hard in the gut before throwing him over his shoulder and smashing the couch on impact.

“There are two options in front of you, Loki,” Tony said while stepping away from the younger god’s prone form and the wrecked couch. “Either you stay in the Realm Eternal and grow more miserable as the years pass or you come with me and see that there’s more than just Asgard. Regardless, I will still pester the All-Father, but I’ll leave your brother and mother out of it. What life do you want to live?” Tony asked as Loki stood back up.

“I will not betray my family or Asgard.” Loki spit at his feet. “You have my answer, now either let me go or fight me.” Loki summoned more magic to his hands, preparing a slew of spells to put himself at the advantage.

“Have it your way, Loki Odinson.” Tony held out his palm and a book flew to his hand. “If you change your mind, this will help you get back in contact with me.” Tony tossed the book at him and Loki only barely caught it. In his brief moment of distraction Tony cast a spell and the younger god fell asleep.

The next time Loki woke, he was in his own bed and a book about dream-walking was on his nightstand.
The attack that had taken place on Loki’s name day celebration had merely been a distraction. The God of Metal had released a hoard of ashwolves on Asgard, injuring many, but killing none.

A servant had been the first one to find Loki and spread the news that he was back and unharmed.

Loki’s abrupt disappearance had not helped his reputation. The Aesir were only more suspicious of him and in turn he played more pranks on them, making them regret their snide remarks and thinly veiled insults.

Their actions towards him only gave Tony’s words more weight in Loki’s head. Even Lorelei was turning away from him in favor of being courted by some low lord that was terribly dull.

On the one occasion he tried to explain himself to Sif after a particularly bad prank went awry, she had dubbed him Spreader of Lies, a moniker that was quickly picked up by others.

The young god did his best to ignore the book Tony had given him, a twisted name day gift, but half a decade later annoyance and boredom overtook him. He began learning how to dream-walk, but vowed never to use it to get in contact with Tony.

It took him five years to learn how to dream-walk safely. He was delighted to find out he could transcend realms and speak with his old teachers from Alfheim and Vanaheim. They redirected him to new teachers that he could learn from as he slept. It was the single greatest gift anyone had ever given him, yet he could never tell others the source lest they think him a traitor.

Thor’s 2,000th name day came and went without incident. The whole realm had been on alert and prepared for an attack that never came. It was almost humorous, how tense everyone had been, but Loki’s smirk quickly died when he saw all the suspicious looks that were cast in his direction.

Loki received his title on his 1,800th name day and no one was surprised when Frigga read his soul and dubbed him God of Mischief.

Centuries passed without any real incidents, other than a few rebellions in Muspelheim and Svartalfheim’s continuous refusal to pay tribute to Asgard.

Every time the Aesir geared up to ‘put those elves and dwarves in their proper place’, as Thor put it, there would either be a new rebellion on Muspelheim or an attack on Asgard by fire dancers. Loki was not the only one to see the connection, but there was little that could be done about it without leaving some part of Asgard exposed.

Travel between Vanaheim and Asgard opened once more, but Alfheim was still firmly allied with
Svartalfheim, although they still paid their tributes. The All-Father was hesitant to raise their tax to punish their disloyalty. He was fearful of their reaction. If they cut off trade it would be a significant blow to Asgard’s economy since most of the weapons they got were by way of Alfheim from Svartalfheim. Also, if Alfheim rebelled against them, Svartalfheim would join in and Muspelheim would take advantage of the situation. The balance in the nine realms was far more delicate than it had been since the time of Odin’s father.

Loki was just grateful that Midgard was still primitive and not a viable threat.

Odin was becoming more closed off, spending more time with the older prince, listening to him tell stories of his time in Muspelheim and his adventures before Tony’s betrayal. Loki did not know how to relate to him anymore. Their relationship had always been tenuous due to Loki’s inclinations towards magic rather than the sword, but now it was worse.

At some point Loki began carrying around the watch Tony had given him centuries ago. It no longer made him angry or sad. Instead, he saw it as a representation of a fleeting happy moment in his life and a reminder to never be so foolish ever again.

The God of Metal had been right about Asgard being a cage, not that Loki would ever admit that to him. Now that he could dream-walk Loki was no longer stuck in Asgard. His knowledge of magic grew continuously and he even shared dreams with Amora when she wasn’t in a foul mood. They were usually filled with ridiculous parties where the guests never talked to them and the food was superb. He didn’t visit Lorelei, though. She had gotten married and considered it cheating for them to spend time together when she was sleeping in the same bed as her husband. He visited Kelda a few times, but she had changed drastically since their time spent together as children. He even visited his own mother on occasion, having tea together and pleasant conversations in a garden from her childhood. Mostly, he spent his time on the peripheral of strangers’ dreams, watching random scenarios play out.

It was only after his 2,200th name day that Loki truly felt tempted to seek one of Tony’s dreams out. With others he could usually get away with watching unseen, but Tony was a mage and most likely was well versed in dream-walking.

Loki knew he shouldn’t, and that Tony was a traitor, but he felt so alone and alien amongst his own countrymen. He felt undervalued and forsaken. Now that they were no longer at war, Thor had somehow forgotten about all Loki’s deeds and victories. He poke fun at Loki being a mage and ‘no true warrior’. The worst was when Loki went to visit their father and overheard them commiserating on how shameful Loki’s actions and title as God of Mischief were.

Thor began attending council meetings along with Loki, but always spoke over any of the younger prince’s ideas and scowled whenever Loki tried to continue speaking.

When they ventured to Vanaheim’s wilderness with the Warriors Three and Sif he was always disregarded by the group. When he tried to refuse going, Thor bullied him into it by either forcing him to go to the stables or complaining to Odin who would then order him to go. When he went to his mother she would tell him it was his duty. It was fairly miserable, but did allow Loki to perform a bit of mischief and collect items from Vanaheim.

Then the coronation happened and Loki had felt so clever, so damn clever when he showed all of Asgard how unprepared Thor was to be king, but then they went to Jotunheim and everything went wrong.

He was a monster, no true Aesir. Every time he had felt like an outsider had been for a reason. He was never like them, he was never truly a son of Asgard or Odin.
He tried to find the truth as emotions swirled inside of him, upturning everything he once knew, but Odin fell asleep and Thor was gone. All that was left was opportunity, opportunity to prove that he was more Aesir than Jotun. Opportunity to show that he would always see Asgard as home and not that frozen realm of giants. Opportunity to show Odin that he was just as good as Thor.

But it wasn’t enough and all too soon he was falling, falling, and falling.

And then he landed and it hurt almost as much as letting go.

There he learned what true monsters were. He learned with each drop of blood spilt and tear cried.

Loki tried reaching out for the world tree, but it was too far away.

He was weak, and his magic was even weaker.

His only respite was his dreams.

He could see others’ dreams, but could no longer interact for some reason.

At first he wanted to go to his mother, but her dreams couldn’t distract him, only dreaming of weaving and embroidering. Thor’s dreams just angered him. They were filled with his mortal woman. He never had access to Odin’s dreams.

His old teachers could not sense him and their dreams were usually lackadaisical and purposeless, hardly serving as any distraction.

Finally, he wandered into Tony’s dreams. The God of Metal didn’t notice him either, much to Loki’s devastation. It had been his last ditch effort to escape. His dreams did prove to be unique. Tony dreamt of battles in various realms. Some he won and others he lost. He dreamt about running with ashwolves in Muspelheim and telling stories to a dying fire giant. He remembered crafting his first knives and arguing with his father. He dreamt of facing the challenges of the House of Hvit. He dreamt of sparring with Amora and then sleeping with her. He remembered countless lovers. His unconsciousness took them both through the plains of Jotunheim and the hidden caves of Muspelheim. He dreamt of flying high above the worlds.

The most engrossing dreams were the ones of his time with Loki. At first the God of Mischief was startled to see himself in the other god’s dreams, but he quickly found them to be his favorite. It was different, almost embarrassing to see himself from Tony’s perspective. He had been so awkward and scrawny.

There were also different dreams like he never had before. There was always a beautiful song being whispered, yet it had no words. It sounded so familiar, yet he couldn’t place it. Everything was a fog in those dreams. He was a young child once more, running around the palace, Vanheim, or one of the other civilized realms. He was searching, always searching, but he never knew what for.

And then one day he was making a deal for something he didn’t even want, all in hopes of finding his lost freedom. With that, he was pushed through a cosmic door and landed in Midgard.
Okay, the reading format for this side piece 2000 Light Years From Home is a bit different than usual. Each chapter corresponds to one of Our Paths Unfold's chapters. Chapter one: *Spinning Around and Around* is to be read after this chapter.
Welcome to Midgard. May I Take your Order?

Chapter Notes

Thank you, Temul, for making me roll around while thinking about this chapter ;)

Maybe he could go home.

That was his first thought when he landed in Midgard.

Memories of rejection and lies quickly quelled that hope. Worse than that was the embarrassment.

Loki had done the most dishonorable deed that any warrior could do. He tried to end his own life. The shame of being seen as a coward was only amplified by the fact he had failed at said act.

Surely by now all of Asgard knew of his cowardice and of his despicable origins. It seemed to prove everything they had whispered about him right.

No, he had no home or family anymore. He was Loki No-One’s-Son.

At least now that he was on Midgard he could feel the calming presence of the world tree, but he could also feel another presence in his mind, one that didn’t belong to him.

The physical torture may have been over, but he was by no means free, not yet at least. Not with the presence at the back of his mind. This was his opportunity to be free of it all and he meant to use it.

He could not let them through the wormhole, and perhaps now that he had distance on his side he could escape the mental torture.

Within the first ten minutes of being on Midgard he had claimed a slew of servants. He listened intently to Agent Barton as he described the various agencies. Loki treated his wounds as he started devising his plans. The Avengers Initiative was particularly worrisome. There was the Black Widow, Hulk, Captain America, Falcon, and Ant-Man, along with a slew of consultants and faceless agents. Not every listed person had actually joined, but Loki was certainly impressed by how far the Midgardians had come since he last visited the realm.

Loki had dropped his spell of concealment when the torturing first began, but that did not guarantee that Heimdall would have noticed him yet. The Tesseract gave off strange energy that could possibly block the all-seeing god. Other than mages on Alfheim, the All-Father was the most likely to be able to rid him of his mental passenger.

Thus, after setting his plans in action, he created a ruckus in a nation that had suffered greatly under a rule like the one he was threatening. Soon enough he had caught the attention of SHIELD and their initiative. He put up a compulsory fight only using the minimum of his abilities, diverting the
majority of his magic to healing wounds. After sparring with Falcon and Captain America he was captured.

Loki tried to silence his mind and the other mind as he was flown to his destiny of choice, and then Thor appeared, but was seeking the Tesseract and not Loki. Through the combined efforts of Ant-Man, Captain America, and Falcon the God of Thunder was halted and they were all taken to the SHIELD Helicarrier.

He tried to get a bit of rest in the glass cage, but thoughts of his brief conversation with Thor left him on edge. He had truly been abandoned.

Then the sole female member of the Avengers Initiative appeared and tried playing a mind game with him. The gall of it. Did she not know he was in his 2,500s, that he had been playing these games for over 1,900 years?

Before he could drop a few clues he felt a presence that made him still.

“Loki?” Black Widow asked and looked to where the god was staring. An innocuous looking man walked into the holding bay. “Dr. Stark, you’re supposed to be with the other consultants.” The woman said, her tone even. The metal doors behind him slammed shut as he shape shifted into his usual form. The assassin pulled out a gun.

“Howardson!” Loki shouted, slamming himself against the glass in hopes of breaking it. One of the locks keeping the glass jail from falling to earth came undone.

“Howardson.” Tony nodded with a grin as he began walking around the room. His fingers were grazing against the metal walls, welding the doors shut. “I see that you chose to go mad rather than die as an old man in Asgard.”

“Who are you?” Black Widow asked, keeping a fair distance between them.

“Just another former citizen of Asgard, Tasha.” He shrugged innocently.

“Why are you here?” She asked, mirroring the question that was on the tip of Loki’s tongue.

“Just visiting an old friend. I was surprised to see you falling out of the Tesseract, which by the way, I am not happy you stole. I was waiting for the mortals to do all the research and then I was going to nab it.” Tony chuckled and Loki bared his teeth. “It doesn’t matter. I’ll get it back soon enough. Honestly, I thought you were dead for a while there. The tracking spell I placed on your watch didn’t work for some time and then I suddenly felt it in the same realm I was currently occupying. Imagine my disbelief.”

“Step away from him,” Widow said when Tony moved closer to the glass. The god raised a single hand and her gun began melting. She threw it aside, shock evident on her face.

“I’m the God of Metal, dear, so unless you try to kill me with your thighs you’re no real threat to me.” The molten metal floated over to Tony’s hand and reformed as a gun. He had it carelessly pointed at her head. “Now where was I? Ah yeah, my spies never could really figure out what made you snap. At first I thought it was the coronation, but then I remembered that it was pretty much expected that Thor was the heir apparent for the past 500 years. So I tracked everything that happened between then and the Bifrost myself. My spies in Jotunheim divulged quite the juicy fact. It seems like my family wasn’t the only one Odin betrayed.” Tony glanced backwards and Loki could sense Thor running in their direction. “I bet you wish you’d taken me up on my offer on your 1,700th name day.” Tony laughed again and Loki felt the madness of the past year mix with...
his well buried emotions towards Tony.

“Liar! I trusted you!” he screamed and hit the glass, causing another lock to click out of place.

Behind Tony, Thor hit the welded door with his hammer, causing the whole Helicarrier to shudder. Another lock came undone.

“Stop Thor!” The assassin shouted, but the God of Thunder wouldn’t be deterred.

“I guess that’s my cue.” Tony began sinking into the metal ground as Thor slammed his hammer down again, knocking down the door and causing the last of the locks to come undone. Tony raised a hand and red magic flew out. The top of the cage melted into an opening. “Your ride is here.” A thin cable formed on the Helicarrier and Loki used it to swing to the waiting helicopter, summoning the scepter back to him. The last thing he saw before entering the helicopter was two golden eagles flying away.
Thor tried to keep up with the scientific jargon that was coming from Dr. Banner, Dr. Stark, and Dr. Pym, but it was too much. It was just another time he wished he had Loki’s cleverness. The younger god always seemed to pick up on conversations even if he’d never heard of the topic before.

Thor’s eyes drifted to the image of his brother on screen. This was not the Loki he once knew. Loki used to be... he used to be sane. How could he not see that they were still brothers?

“What happened to him?” Dr. Stark asked, joining Thor in front of the monitor.

“I do not truly know. He found out some startling news and he unraveled. He fell into a place of nothingness and was missing for just under a year. This is not the true Loki. My brother loves mischief, but this is far too grave to be considered one of his pranks.”

“You two don’t really look like brothers,” Dr. Stark observed. Thor looked at the mortal and there was a glint in his eyes that made the god uneasy.

“We are brothers, if not by blood then by comradery.”

“Well it looks like your comrade is on the other side of the battlefield,” Dr. Stark said slyly and before Thor could react, Dr. Banner called over the other scientist.

Thor continued watching the monitor and Director Fury joined him. The director kept asking him questions about his brother that he responded to with clipped answers. Black Widow appeared on screen and the director stopped talking, instead turning up the volume. Captain America joined them in watching the live feed.

“What’s your brother doing there?” Black Widow asked and looked in a different direction. Fury changed the camera angle and they spotted Dr. Stark entering the room.

“What the hell is he doing there?” Fury asked under his breath, glancing backwards. The scientist
had slipped out of the room unnoticed by everyone. Dr. Pym joined them in front of the monitor.

“Dr. Stark, you’re supposed to be with the other consultants,” the assassin said and Thor’s eyes went wide as the man transformed into a god.

“Howardson!” Thor shouted at the same moment Loki did. Without thinking, he punched the image in hopes of the God of Metal feeling it. “Lead me to Loki now! Howardson is an enemy of all of Asgard and known to meddle in things that do not involve him!”

“Just who the hell is he?!” Fury shouted as Captain America began leading the god to the glass cage.

Thor did not hear him, though. Instead he pulled out his hammer and wished the mortal would move faster. When they reached the doors, he pushed on them with all his might, but they would not budge. He slammed down his hammer on it, and it barely dented. The God of Metal’s magic must be at play. Nothing the mortals could make would be able to stand up against Mjolnir.

He hit it again and the doors flew open. As he entered the circular room the cage holding Loki fell out of the Helicarrier.

“Toodles, Odinson,” Howardson said while disappearing into the metal floor. Thor ran to the gaping hole and sighed in relief when Loki landed on a different airship.

“What the heck just happened?” Captain America asked, looking at Black Widow.

“Things just became more complicated,” she said while looking out the hole. Her eyes flashed dangerously when she saw the helicopter and who was piloting it. The airship disappeared and the Helicarrier suddenly jolted. Alarms started blaring.

“They shot out one of the engines. Widow, Captain, I need you three to take care of Dr. Banner. He transformed and is going on a rampage. Thor, meet up with Ant-Man and Falcon in the portside engine room. They’ll need your help,” Fury ordered and Thor glanced back out the hole, considering just flying out and chasing after Loki, but he couldn’t abandon his new allies.

He raced to follow the director’s orders, following the directions through the complex halls as Fury shouted them out through the intercom.

Ant-Man and Falcon were already working on it, but they needed him to lift and balance the airship so that it wouldn’t flip and ram into the ground. It was a surprisingly difficult and he was just happy he could help.

When the ship was fixed, he joined the Avengers in the lab again.

“Who the hell was that?”

“Anthony Howardson,” Thor growled. “He is a former lord of Asgard. He claims that King Odin betrayed him, that my father betrayed him, but that is a lie. Many centuries ago he betrayed all of Asgard and instigated a war between Asgard and Muspelheim. He and Loki were friends before he attacked our father. Loki hates him because he used their friendship to his advantage. He appears every few centuries to humiliate the All-Father and create chaos. They are not friends, but I fear with Loki’s recent madness he may join up with the traitor.”

“I vetted him myself and he didn’t raise any red flags,” Natasha said. Her expression was unreadable, but Thor could sense anger brewing beneath the surface.
“He fooled all of Asgard. It’s little wonder that he could fool you mortals.” It was not meant as an insult, merely a statement of fact.

“He melted my gun,” she added in, showing her burnt hand.

“Howardson is the God of Metal. He used my own father’s metal eye-patch to boil his last eye, blinding him.” Thor reached for the hilt of his hammer, wishing to finally put an end to the other god.

“What are his weaknesses?” Captain America asked.

“I wish I knew. The All-Father would send more warriors now that he knows Howardson is here, but the Bifrost is broken. He barely had enough energy to send me here.”

“You guys,” Dr. Banner called to the group over, wearing SHIELD issued fatigues. “We’ve tracked down the Tesseract. It’s in New York.”

“Dr. Stark- Howardson,” Dr. Pym corrected himself, “has a building in New York City.”

“It’s a safe assumption that Loki is there either to exact revenge or to ally himself with Asgard’s most notorious villain,” Thor said sadly, looking at the ground. Director Fury was on a comlink and Thor felt the Helicarrier change direction.

Chapter End Notes

Please read chapter two of 2000 Light Years From Home. It is titled: Guiding Light.
Invasion of New York

Chapter Notes

Thank ya Temul!

I’m rewatching Guardians of the Galaxy. Fun times :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Loki had his thralls damage the Helicarrier just enough to slow down the Avengers before he flew to New York, all the while questioning Barton about the alias Dr. Stark. Apparently, he was a consultant for SHIELD and ran a thriving weapons industry. He had various PhDs in different scientific fields and was known for his lavish lifestyle.

Loki checked his pocket watch and could not feel any tracking spell on it, probably due to all the enchantments already laid upon it. He pried it open and finally found the runes written in blood, probably Tony’s. The other god had known his location for all the centuries that Loki kept it on his waist. Loki washed away the magic with his own blood. He put the watch back together and checked the time of New York City. It was midday and Barton made it clear that the main branch of Stark Industries was there. It was the perfect place to spit in the face of the one who hurt him almost as much as Odin had.

Stark Tower was easy to find and Loki snorted at how ostentatious it was. It was oddly fitting for such a vain god.

His appearance hadn’t changed that much since Loki last saw him 500 years ago when he terrorized Asgard, releasing a hoard of fire demons, though his threat of Surtur never came to fruition. But now his beard was neatly trimmed into a sharp goatee, his shoulders were slightly broader, and he had a scar that ran from the back of his ear and disappeared beneath his shirt.

Loki had Barton and his other thralls guard the wormhole machine as Selvig set it up. He himself entered Tony’s base of operations on Midgard.

“I was wondering when you’d get here,” Tony said. He was seated on a luxurious couch, a glass of fire ale in hand. Jarvis was perched beside him. Loki felt his anger shoot up, but also hope. Perhaps he didn’t need to go to Asgard, not if Tony could rid him of the other presence in his mind.

Loki opened his mouth, but he was physically incapable of saying the words. Instead, his hand went for one of his daggers and Tony raised an eyebrow in question.

“I’ll kill you,” Loki hissed.

“Do that and this whole building will explode along with that shiny device you put on the roof. The Tesseract would doubtlessly be fine, but you’d be dead.” Loki growled in frustration. “Look, Loki, I’m going to let this whole invasion thing play out. It sounds interesting enough and a good
way to embarrass Odin the Unseeing. Just think of me as a bystander. I’ll just be watching from the distance. You can use my tower. Honestly, this building was only a pet project. So you can either waste your time trying to fruitlessly fight me or prepare for the group of ‘heroes’ that will be here in three minutes.” Loki scowled, but glanced out the window. “Thor and Falcon will be here first. Now might be a good time to open that wormhole.” Tony waved him off.

“Deceiver,” Loki hissed before running back to the Tesseract. The sky split open and Loki felt a cold thrill from the one in his head. Below, on the balcony, Loki saw a metal chair forming before Tony sat on it, a glass in hand. Loki would have shouted at him, but then he saw Thor.

The God of Thunder aimed for Loki, his hammer coming down heavily.

“I’m the least of your worries,” Loki said while rebuking his attack and gesturing towards the hole which aliens were pouring out of.

Falcon swooped down towards Tony. The god lifted his hand and the mechanical wings suddenly folded in on themselves, sending the hero plummeting to the ground.

“I’m Tony Howardson, God of Metal, Gear-Talker! Your weapons have no effect on me!” Tony shouted to the descending hero before releasing the spell, allowing for Falcon to fly again. “Idiot.” He chuckled as an alien sideswiped the hero.

Above them Loki was meeting Thor blow for blow. Aliens started plowing through civilians and buildings. Chitauri rained down on the city. Loki sent a burst of green energy at the older prince, sending him flying off the building and directly into the path of a behemoth monster. Loki let out a hoot of a laugh as Thor was swallowed whole.

Before Loki could really enjoy seeing his former brother’s failure, the Helicarrier appeared and the Hulk came flying out. The green hero slammed into Stark Tower and Black Widow zip lined in.

“Barton,” Loki shouted, “take care of your lady love.” The archer began firing off shots which the assassin deftly avoided with movements that seemed almost impossible. Before Loki had to contend with the green beast, a Chitauri distracted him.

The other mind in Loki’s head chuckled happily, but Loki couldn’t share the sentiment. He had expected more from them.

Barton suddenly hit the ground and Loki spotted a glimmer in the air. Loki summoned a dagger and threw it at the glint, but it twisted out of the way. Loki clapped his hands together, then slowly pulled them apart, an energy field forming between them. He stepped forward and the green field continued moving, hitting the glint. Ant-Man returned to his normal form, hitting the ground hard.

Loki called a Chitauri to him, targeting Black Widow and Ant-Man. Even if the wormhole machine was practically impenetrable it was better to keep the ‘heroes’ away.

Before he could jump into the fray, a strange noise caught his attention. Falcon came flying up the face of the tower. A grappling hook shot out of his gauntlet and Loki easily dodged it.

“Pathet-” Loki was cut off by a tugging sensation. He was pulled off the building with the hook caught on the back of his armor. “Foolish,” Loki said while grabbing onto the wire. He tugged sharply on it and Falcon faltered in the air. Loki began climbing up the thin wire, but it suddenly detached, sending the god plummeting to the ground.

Loki twisted in midair, sending off a blast with his scepter, shooting him onto one of the Chitauri hover boards. He landed gracefully.
Bullets flew at him harmlessly. Loki sent a paltry wave of magic in response, knocking Black Widow off the tower. Falcon caught her in midair, and they struggled to remain airborne before he tossed her onto an adjacent building. She landed while rolling before immediately pushing off the ground and springing for Loki’s hovercraft. The god was so impressed that he did not bother to stop her from landing.

Black Widow pulled out a knife from the holster on her thigh and slashed at the god. He batted away her attack with his scepter, an amused look on his face. He kept her at a distance as the Chitauri flew them between buildings. A dash of red and white flew into his vision. Loki stopped the shield with his bare hand. He threw it at the redhead and she pushed down on it with both hands, flipping over it and sending the shield back to earth.

She landed a punch straight to Loki’s jaw, sending 30,000 volts of electricity through him. He faltered for the barest of moments, having been shocked on more than one occasion by one of Thor’s stray bolts. Widow kicked the scepter out of his hand. He jolted forward trying to get it, but had to lurch backwards to avoid a well-aimed arrow. The female assassin jumped off the craft, deftly grabbed by Falcon, and a second later there was an explosion behind the god.

Loki was forced forward with fire at his back. He hissed at the shrapnel that pierced his shoulder. He quickly shape shifted into a magpie as he fell, gliding despite his damaged wing. Another arrow flew at him and he barrel rolled to avoid it before shifting back.

As his feet hit the ground, he threw out the three daggers his former brother gave him. Thor hit two out of the air, but the third found its mark in his thigh. The God of Thunder pulled out the dagger and his eyes widened when he recognized the direwolf-hilt.

Thor charged forward, knocking aside two Chitauri easily. Loki leapt out of his range, already knowing he could not win in a physical fight considering he was still not completely healed from his torture. He jumped onto another hovercraft, sending sludge at the other god, slowing him down.

Loki forced the Chitauri to head back to Stark Tower.

He was surprised when the Hulk jumped from between buildings, dragging both Loki and the Chitauri down.

“Beast!” Loki shouted as he felt a green hand snap his leg carelessly. From the corner of his eye he saw Tony sitting on a different building, his eyes squarely set on the younger god.

“Puny god, smash!” Hulk slammed him against the asphalt. Loki grabbed two daggers, tossing one at Falcon who was closing in. He stabbed the Hulk in his hand, yet the giant green monster was unperturbed.

The world spun as he was bashed against the ground and a building repeatedly.

“Sir, you have to do something,” a voice in the distance said through Loki’s sudden daze. “They can’t blow up the city!” Loki’s mind felt different. He was light headed and the colors all around him changed. Why hadn’t he noticed that his cloak was green? Or that Tony’s eyes were brown?

High above, he saw Tony bat away a Chitauri lazily.

“We have to evacuate- No, it can’t be that close!” Loki lolled his head to the side and he saw Captain America with a worried look on his face.

“What seems to be the problem, Steve?” Tony asked, his voice somehow carrying over the chaos.
The man in red, white, and blue recoiled at the familiarity in the god’s voice.

Hulk tried to jump up and smash the God of Metal, but cords ripped out of the ground and buildings, wrapping around him and keeping him from moving.

Loki tried to sit up, but a heavy boot stomped down on his chest. He blinked hard as Hawkeye glared at him. The archer quickly shot down a Chitauri that came too close.

Captain America glanced frantically between his comlink and Tony.

“There’s a nuclear missile heading here to kill us all!” Steve shouted to the god. Tony glided down the building, one hand sinking through the metal façade to slow him down. In his other hand was an undisturbed glass of fire ale.

“I assume you want me to help you,” Tony said with an amused grin. He sipped his drink and the captain’s face grew red.

“Dr. Stark, you’re one of the good guys-”

“Good is relative.” Tony glanced down at Loki. “Why should I help? I can leave this place in an instant, allowing two Odinsons to die. That would be a win for me.” Hulk let out a strange garbling noise. “Dr. Banner, I always wanted to meet your angrier half.” Tony’s grin was infuriating and all too familiar to the younger god.

“You’re a weapons maker! You know how to disable a nuclear device. You’d be saving countless lives!” Captain America looked up as if he could see the missile.

“Most of those lives will end in some 70 odd years.” Another metal chair formed out of the wall and Tony sat down carelessly. “I’m a businessman. What are you going to give me to save New York?” Chitauri flew by, but seemed not to notice them.

“What is it you want?” The blonde was becoming flustered.

“I don’t know.” Tony leaned backwards lazily. Loki wanted to get his attention, but he felt listless. “ Practically everything I want is at the tip of my fingers.” Hulk grumbled and the cord around him tightened.

“Your business is based here. Your tower would be destroyed and your employees killed.”

“In this job market I’m sure I can find new employees within a few days.” A side table appeared and Tony put his glass on it before pulling out a dagger. The captain reached for his shield, but stopped when Tony began picking at his nails with the dagger, ignoring the blonde.

“Clearly, you want something,” Loki rasped, finding his voice again. “You wouldn’t come down here otherwise.” Barton kicked Loki in the head.

“You know me so well, Lokes.” Tony’s eyes were alight with amusement. “As the God of Mischief said, there is something I want.” His brown eyes lingered on Loki. “I want your shield, Capsicle.” Some part of Loki sagged at what Tony demanded. He had thought… “I made it. Technically it already belongs to me. So what do you say? A shield for a city? If anything you’re getting the better end of the deal.” Tony flipped the blade in his hand, sheathing it again before picking up his glass.

“Fine, Dr. Stark, if it will get you to save the city.” Captain America tossed the shield underhanded and it disappeared midair.
“You won’t be disappointed.” Tony bowed mockingly before shifting into an eagle. He soared into the air listlessly. Loki could barely see him, but he could sense his magic as he shifted back to his Aesir form at the top of Stark Tower.

Hulk was released from his bindings and the green beast started smashing Chitauri left and right.

“Here it comes.” The captain used his hand to shade his eyes as he looked up into the sky.

Loki could see a flash of metal in the sky, quickly being surrounded by red magic. Its path shifted upwards until it entered the wormhole. A few moments later the portal closed and all the aliens fell to the ground.

The whole world was silent for a tense moment.

Then the sirens and screams started back up.

Captain America gripped his comlink tightly, his eyes meeting Barton’s.

“Stark diverted the bomb, but he stole the Tesseract and the scepter,” Captain America reported. “He’s gone.”

Chapter End Notes

You are now free to read the final chapter of 2000 Light Years From Home. Please enjoy ;)


The heroes gathered around, looking down on him.

“Oh Loki,” Thor said, his voice portraying every sad emotion that had come about since his banishment. “Please don’t tell me you allied yourself with that fiend Howardson.”

“And if I have?” Loki asked with as much venom as possible, if only to get a rise out of the prince.

“Has he not hurt you enough?”

“He has hurt me less than Odin has.”

“Why must you blame him for everything? He saved your life.”

“If you think that’s what I’m mad about then you’re truly a fool.” Thor sighed in response.

“He ran away with the Tesseract. He abandoned you for the second time.”

“Regardless.”

“Very well, brother.”

“Don’t call me that. We were never brothers, not even in arms.” Thor stood silently, looking at the younger god.

“You ungrateful bastard!” Barton shouted, readying to kick the fallen god. Thor stilled him with a firm hand on his shoulder.

“The All-Father will stand judge over all you’ve done.”

“Odin the Unseeing.” Loki scoffed. “I’m sure he’d be happy to kill another Jotun.”

“Please do not act like this, Loki,” Thor said as he pulled out the magic dampening handcuffs.

“Act like what? This is how I’ve always been. You’ve just been too blind to see it.”

Captain America hefted the god up and Thor clasped the shackles in place. The younger god could feel his power waning, but thankfully the other voice in his mind was gone. He could live with captivity, but he couldn’t live with the constant mental torture.
“Come on, we have to take him into SHIELD custody,” Black Widow said. “Barton, we need to take you in too.”

“What?!”

“We know he was controlling you, but we still need to do tests to make sure you’re alright,” she clarified and Barton scowled, but nodded.

“Alright, let’s go,” Falcon said, a comlink in his ear. “SHIELD agents, policemen, and firefighters are already on scene. I don’t know how many casualties there are yet.” He turned towards Thor. “This Howardson character, do you think he’s going to attack again? He has the Tesseract.” Thor looked grave.

“Howardson does not always act logically. Sometimes it’s only a few decades before we see him, other times it’s half a millennium. He has no quarrel with you all, but surely the Tesseract will be used against Asgard.” Thor’s tone was depressed as he stared at the ground. “The Tesseract was supposed to help us get back to Asgard. I fear he may cause havoc while I’m gone.” Loki burst out laughing and Thor’s shoulders sunk lower.

“Tony will rain down destruction on Asgard. Odin the Unseeing will die at his hands and the Realm Eternal will fall.” Loki’s laughter turned insane.

Despite feeling betrayed all over again, Loki didn’t know what he was expecting. Maybe some part of him was hoping that the God of Metal would have tried to trade him for saving the city, instead of choosing a meager shield. It was insulting, but somehow fitting.

A helicopter landed in front of them, gracefully swooping between the narrow buildings and avoiding the Chitauri corpses. It was clearly SHIELD issued.

“I’ll collect Bruce,” Falcon said, glancing in the direction Hulk was starting to slow down. “Go back to HQ without me.” His mechanical wings jetted him into the air. Loki watched him go as Thor and Captain America bodily moved him into the helicopter.

So this was it.

He’d remain a prisoner on earth until the All-Father regained enough strength to bring him back to Asgard and then what? He already knew what the Aesir thought of him before the coronation. He doubted their opinions had grown better with time. Their mocking laughter would ring in his ears and he knew his rage would only grow, making him lose all his good sense and logic.

A part of him still could not believe that Tony had left without him. Perhaps their friendship really had been a lie.

Loki did not say anything as the helicopter slowly rose over the destruction he had made the realm subject to. The archer was glaring daggers at him, but Loki didn’t care, he didn’t care about anything right now. Only two emotions were present in him: relief that the other mind in his head was gone and the sense of deep seated betrayal that once again Tony had let him down. He was foolish to even consider that the other god might ever help him.

The screeching of an eagle over the sound of the helicopter blades gave him pause and Thor noticed his change of demeanor, strangely more perceptive than usual.

“Do not play anymore tricks, brother, or I’ll muzzle you.”

“You’ll muzzle me?” Loki said, not having to fake his indignation. “So, it’s true. You really do
think I’m some sort of monster.”

“That has nothing to do with this.”

“You don’t deny it then.” The agents exchanged curious looks. “It matters not. Surely I will be put
to death when the Odin the Unseeing summons me to Asgard.” Loki sneered at his former brother.
“You know he’s the one who had Tony’s family killed.”

“Why must you always believe the lies, especially when the truths are in front of you? We love
you, Loki.” The god reeled backwards, somehow pushing himself further into the plastic chair.

“Liar, idiot, oaf, simpleton, slug-brain!” Loki screeched, making the agents all tense. “You’re
blinder than Odin.” The older god didn’t respond. “Do you truly think he’d betray all of Asgard,
give up all his rights, and become an enemy of the strongest realm for no reason?”

“Perhaps you should muzzle him,” Natasha commented, her expression unreadable. Clint gave her
a thankful look, but did not say anything. Captain America was pointedly staring out the helicopter,
trying not to listen in on the private conversation.

“Howardson betrayed you,” Thor tried once more.

“Odin betrayed me. If I had known what I know today, on my 1,700th name day feast I would have
taken up Tony on his deal and the All-Father would not only be blind, but also deaf.”

“Do not say such things. It will not help your case when we get back to Asgard.” Loki laughed
bitterly.

“There will be no case when I get back to Asgard. They’ll kill me. There’s nothing else to it.”

Thor did not know what to say. He felt like there was no getting to the younger god. His mind was
already set and Thor had never been able to change his mind once a thought had set in. Instead, he
stared down at Loki’s feet.

The younger god snarled, but set to work trying to push his magic out of the cuffs.

All too soon they arrived at SHIELD HQ and Loki was shoved into another glass cage. He kept his
expression emotionless and merely stared at his own reflection, the reflection that did not really
show who he truly was, a blue monster abandoned by both parents and by the one person he
considered a friend. Lied to all his life by the woman he consider his mother and the man who
never acknowledged him. Then there was the oaf that did not understand that they had truly never
been equals. All the emotions stewed inside of him, just waiting for the perfect moment to be
unleashed.

Days passed in which he was neither fed nor visited. Despite the lack of nourishment he could feel
the last visible signs of his torture fade, even if his invisible ones were festering.

The agents that were guarding him changed periodically as Loki slowly mapped out the spell and
runes that made up the magic dampening cuffs. It was more complex than he had expected, but he
could probably undo it given a couple months. Considering how weak the All-Father was last he
saw him, he’d have more than enough time.

Loki felt like he was going insane all over again, though. The silence was not helpful since it
allowed his mind to replay every second from the coronation on. Thankfully, he could still dream-
walk so at least in sleep he could escape. On one night someone walked into his own dreams,
interrupting his connection with an idiotic Midgardian that dreamed about a strange sport called
football.

“Good evening, Loki,” Tony said, sitting in an imagined parlor. Loki looked around at the manifested room. It was similar to Tony’s manor in that the door had the same strange silver star lock as most doors in his manor did, but the interior was much cozier, reminiscent of his cave in Niflheim.

“Howardson.” Loki nodded regally at the other god as he took a seat across from him.

“I assume you’re in SHIELD custody.”

“I am,” Loki said, not wanting to admit anything else on the matter.

“How unfortunate for you.”

“Yes, well, it has given me the opportunity to haunt a few dreams. The archer is of particular interest since I’m already in his nightmares.”

“You don’t take losing very well do you?”

“Does anyone?” Loki asked immediately in response.

“I suppose not. Just think about it as varying degrees of success. You’re no longer under control of whoever was leading the Chitauri.”

“You sound so certain.”

“Loki, I’ve traveled many realms and seen many things. I know mind control when I see it.”

“And yet you did not try to help me.”

“As I said, I wanted to see that invasion play out. It seemed entertaining.”

“You stole the Tesseract,” Loki accused, the feeling of betrayal welling up inside of him again.

“It was kinda already mine. I was just waiting for the humans to finish with their research before I took it, but then you came around and I had to change my plans. The Tesseract was always going to fall into my hands. It was only a matter of time.”

“And what do you plan to do with it?”

“Haven’t decided yet. So many possibilities and plenty of years to figure it out. Although, I was thinking about playing with these supposed heroes.” Loki did not respond. “They did give you a bit of a fight and beating.”

“An unrepeatable feat, I assure you.” Loki scowled in the dream and the other god stood, going over to a small bar and pouring them both a drink. He handed one of the crystal cut glass to Loki who drank the spiced wine. He almost believed he was finally quenching his thirst, but knew otherwise.

“You know they’re trying to shut down all my pseudo-human businesses don’t you?”

“If you didn’t want that to happen then you shouldn’t have revealed yourself as an Aesir traitor.”

“Are you really going to call me a traitor?” Loki took another sip, pausing in thought.
“Regardless, you betrayed me.” Tony sat back across from him.

“Fair enough.” They both stared at each other.

“So why did you reveal yourself?” Loki’s hands subconsciously gripping his glass tighter.

“Why indeed…” Tony hummed to himself. “I’ll tell you what I said on your 1,700th name day celebration. You’re inquisitive and entertaining and those are rare qualities. Even though it has been a few centuries, I am not opposed to allying ourselves together. It will be fun.”

“I’m quite capable of breaking out of this place myself.”

“I’m sure.” Tony chuckled and it was such a familiar sound, not tainted by anger and insanity. “But it could be easier. You needn’t trouble yourself when I could easily break you out. I already have Jarvis in the building hidden away.”

“Yes, I’m surprised your loyal raptor is still alive.” This evoked another chuckle from Tony.

“My eagle, he is more a being of magic than an actual living creature. He was made many generations ago to serve my household and has done so faithfully.”

“And yet he was not there when you needed him most,” Loki said referring to the death of Tony’s parents. Tony frowned.

“He was ordered to stay in Asgard and guard the manor. He did his duty flawlessly. So do you want me to break you out of there or not?”

“What do I get from this?”

“Other than me breaking you out?”

“We already established that I’m capable of escaping this on my own.”

“What else is there, Loki? Where will you go once you’re free? Who will you see? You have no real allies. Asgard’s been cut off far too long and I know of some of your adventures dream-walking, but I’m sure most of those elves and Vanir are loyal to Asgard or at least so far as to not associate with a wanted criminal and traitor. You have no home. You have no resources. Surely anything is better than that and I’m offering you so much more.” Tony paused. “Just think of all the fun we used to have. Back then, I was restraining myself and you were still trying to be who the All-Father wanted you to be instead of yourself.” Loki did think back about all the times he sat in Tony’s study practicing some new spell as the other god designed new weapons and read reports on his weapon manufacturing business.

“You raise a fair point,” Loki admitted, still undecided, but leaning toward Tony’s offer. “What are the terms of this agreement?” Loki asked after a long pause.

“Terms?” Tony grinned. “I wasn’t really thinking of making this that formal.” Loki pursed his lips in annoyance.

“Perhaps we should keep this a bit formal. Last time we didn’t, things didn’t go my way.”

“You were in your 1,600s. At that point anything could hurt your emotions.” Loki hissed at the other god, tossing his glass at him. It went straight through Tony’s image and the god did not even flinch. “Just being honest, Lokes.”
“There’s that nickname again.” Loki sneered.

“Does it truly bother you that much?”

“We were both different people then.”

“What would you rather me call you?” Loki hummed in thought.

“Do you know of all the monikers they gave me?” he asked, slightly changing the direction of the conversation.

“I know of a few,” Tony admitted. “I was actually there for your 1,800th name day when Frigga read your soul and titled you God of Mischief. It was funny.”

“Yes, well, you would find that humorous.”

“It’s fitting, every title is fitting.”


“How quaint they called me the God of Metal, Boiler of Eyes, and Gear-Talker. So what do you want me to call you? Spreader of Lies? Dream-Walker?”

“Let’s stick with Loki for now.” The younger god refrained from shifting uneasily. He hated most of his monikers. “I want no other name from you.”

“Fine. Call me Tony, then.”

“I have no qualms with that.”

“Do we have a deal, then?”

“I guess we do,” Loki said begrudgingly.

“Wake up, Loki.”

The god sat up, pushed into consciousness.

Right outside the glass door was Jarvis. The eagle scratched at the ground and the metal floor right in front of Loki suddenly opened up. He hopped through it and alarms started blaring. Before he could look around, Jarvis appeared right in front of him. Instinctively, he followed the eagle as the shackles fell off his hands and his magic was released. Loki felt the power engulf him once more and the last of his wounds heal. Effortlessly, he shot down the black clad agents, occasionally summoning daggers to slit their throats or nail them to the walls.

Black Widow turned a corner in front of him, unholstering two pistols. Loki threw a dagger, setting off the bracelet mechanism that allowed her to shock him during their last battle. She fell to the ground, convulsing as the electricity ran through her. Loki’s laughter echoed through the metal halls.

Jarvis led him to a window that he crashed through, changing into a hawk quickly. The two birds of prey disappeared into the night sky.
Feel free to read *The Last Carnival* anytime after this chapter.
Loki was surprised when he was led back to Stark Tower. Of all the locations he’d expected Tony to be, he did not think it would be the epicenter of his last attack. The building was surrounded by SHIELD agents, but it seemed they were incapable of entering it.

Loki’s thought briefly went back to all the mages that tried entering Tony’s manor. More than one had died in their futile attempts.

The two birds of prey landed on the balcony, Loki changing back into his Aesir form. The door opened and he walked in, once again following Jarvis. Tony was sprawled out on a couch, seemingly still asleep.

“It must be nice to have such a dedicated servant,” Loki commented, sitting across from him just as he had earlier in the night in a dream.

“Jarvis is a lifesaver, I must admit.” Tony stretched, his back cracking. The god really did look different than he had 500 years ago. The years had actually improved his looks. He was no longer as gangly as he was when they were friends and the beard had been sharply shaped into a goatee, making his brown eyes look more vibrant.

“I assume you have some sort of plan.”

“I have more than one plan, I always have a ton of them, but first I thought we could go back to Asgard and get a little rest.”

“Do you go back to Asgard often?”

“Every few decades. It’s a nice place to catch some Zs.”

“You sleep in the viper’s nest?” Loki held back a grin.

“Safest place in all the nine realms.”

“Very well. To Asgard then.”

Tony did a hand motion and the Tesseract appeared in his hands. He breathed out a silent spell and a doorway appeared.

“Ladies first.” Tony gestured to the portal and Loki scoffed, recognizing the parlor of Tony’s manor. The taste in the air immediately changed as he went through.

The older god led him to the room Loki always used when he stayed the night back when they’d both been lying to themselves.

“I’m sure you remember the lock mechanism.” Loki nodded. He’d used the door so many times that it was permanently engraved into his mind. He manipulated the star shaped lock until it popped out as a handle. “I’ll be in my office if you need me. Jarvis is making a meal now.”

“The raptor can cook?”
“That and so much more, in case you didn’t notice.”

Tony left him alone and Loki’s whole demeanor changed as he entered the room. With tired fingers he peeled off blood and sweat stained armor, letting them fall heavily to the ground. The bathroom had a similar lock as the door and he easily opened it, nearly falling into the brass tub. Lukewarm water filled the large basin. The perfect temperature for Loki, just another reminder of his disgusting heritage.

In the bathroom it was the first time he got a proper look at himself in more than just warped glass. His hair had grown so long, just past his shoulders, and his face was gaunt. He had new scars to accompany the long gash on his chest that Tony had given him the day he blinded Odin and the burn marks from the war on Muspellheim. His back was riddled with new scars, but thankfully the majority of the wounds hadn’t scarred for some reason.

Loki eased himself into the tub and felt the year and then some filth slowly ease off his skin. He reached for the bottle of numeria leaf soap, his mind drifting to the last time he used it. He had been so young and naive. The coarse soap felt heavenly on his skin. He scrubbed away at the blood and dirt, surprised by the paleness of his own skin. He’d always been pale, but now more so than ever.

He had to drain the basin twice before he was finally clean and feeling like his old self, the god he’d been before the coronation, but a whole lot wiser. He had outgrown most of the clothes that were in the dresser of his room, but a quick spell (one he learned from Frigga) was all it took to resize them. He settled on a dark green tunic, black trousers, and soft boots that he hadn’t remembered leaving there all those centuries ago.

Through the shuttered windows he couldn’t see if it was day or night. Loki glanced at his discarded armor and unhooked his pocket watch from it. He pressed the image of Asgard then flipped it open. It was late evening.

As he exited his room he smelled the decedent scent of rich food. His mouth watered and he followed the scent into the living room. Tony was already seated, reading a book in one hand with a goblet in the other.

“Such a familiar sight,” Loki commented, sitting across from him. “Though we both look a bit different now.”

“Yeah, you bean sprout. You filled out a bit,” Tony said, ruffling Loki’s feathers. It was an old jest, but Loki couldn’t find it in him to be annoyed, not with such bountiful food laid out in front of him. Tony gestured lazily to it and Loki filled his plate to the brim.

He did not care how savage he looked eating it and some part of his mind thought it was fitting considering his heritage. From beneath his eyelashes he watched Tony eat. The god slowly speared chunks of meat and vegetables as he read, all the while washing it down with fire ale. The drink tasted familiar to Loki and spoke of times far better than this.

Five platefuls later, Loki leaned back in his chair, satisfied.

“I’m constructing new armor for you,” Tony remarked offhandedly.

“The last time you made someone armor it ended with countless deaths.”

“It needed to happen,” Tony said, brushing aside the issue completely. “I doubt that armor you were wearing is something you want to keep. It smelled of death and decay and most of it was broken beyond recognition.”
Loki admitted he was right with a curt nod. Tony handed him the book he’d been reading, or more accurately looking through, considering Loki now saw that it was just one of many of the sketch book. “I marked the pages you might find interesting. All of them were designed when we were still friends.” Loki flipped through the pages, as always impressed by the ingenuity and clarity of Tony’s drawings.

“This one,” he said, pointing towards one that was adorned with serpent-like designs. “They called me a snake in the grass far too many times for me not to like the name.” Tony let out a pleased hum.

“Super. As my new partner you need to look the part and have the best weapons and armor. It would be embarrassing if you didn’t,” Tony commented with a poorly hidden grin. “You still use a scepter and daggers, I assume.”

“Of course.” Loki thought back to the armor he had abandoned so easily on the floor. Only two of the three daggers Thor had given him for his 1,700th name day were left. The lost one probably resided with Thor from when Loki had stabbed him. Tony took the book back and flipped through it, showing various designs for scepters. “I like them equally,” he admitted. “Which one is the most functional?”

“This one. I can add in plenty of runes if there are any spells you want to use to fortify it.”

“I can think of a few.”

“I’ll keep the daggers simple and make plenty so you don’t have to retrieve them.” Loki nodded in agreement. Fatigue was quickly overcoming him despite his earlier rest. “Feel free to go back to your room whenever you want,” Tony said while grinning.

“You’re not my mother,” Loki said, surprised by his own joke. It seemed falling into old habits was easier than he thought. Tony just gave him a look and the younger god huffed, grabbing a golden apple to eat later on as he stood.

Loki woke feeling far more rested than he ever thought he would feel again after the Void. Loki lazily pulled on his clothing before walking to the kitchen. A hearty plate was set aside for him and he quickly devoured it, not even bothering taking it to the dining room.

Jarvis was roosting on a perch in the halls.

“Where is your master?” Loki asked after he’d finished eating. The golden eagle screeched before pointing down the hall. There was only one room that the God of Metal would ever be in in that direction. The door to the study was wide open, allowing Loki to enter easily. The god was still in his clothes from the previous night, though they were dirty and there was soot under Tony’s nails, making it clear that he’d been working at the forge, most likely throughout the night.

“You look better,” Tony commented.

“A miracle considering-” Loki cut himself off.

“I saw the video of when you arrived in Midgard. I can fill in the rest,” Tony said and Loki actually didn’t think he could fill in the rest. What did the other god know of torture? The majority of his life had been spent adventuring and scheming to hurt the All-Father.

“How much of everything that you told me is a lie?” Loki asked, startling them both.
“Surprisingly little,” Tony responded. “I already corrected the lie I told you about how my parents died. The first realm I traveled to was Muspelheim and the story about the fire giant who gave me his heart gem was mostly true. Yinsen, that was his name, I told him stories for far longer than I said I did and he told me stories in turn, teaching me spells in his last days. I wouldn’t be half the mage I am without that brief time we spent together. Although he did try to get me to give up my hopes for revenge.”

“Clearly he failed,” Loki said derisively, making Tony grin.

“Clearly,” Tony echoed. “After that I went to Alfheim and traveled with traders, earning myself a bit of money. I visited a few of the citadels of House of Hvít and completed some of their challenges before one of the traders I was with offered to take me to Svartalfheim. I couldn’t pass that up, especially since I knew I’d be welcomed by King Pendir. The dwarves have always been kind to my family.” Loki nodded in agreement. “Before I got there, though, I spent a few decades with the dark elves. They were surprisingly welcoming considering I was an Aesir. I think it was because we all had a certain dark humor that mixed well.

“Before I could go to the dwarves one of the dark elves said she was venturing to Niflheim. I decided to go with her, if only to spend more time with her. She was one of my lovers. We traveled the tree together and reached Niflheim. I met a few rock golems there and really began my adventuring. Eventually I parted ways with her and began going off on my own. After that I went to Jötunheim. As I told you, I really did get captured there except I didn’t break out. I was taken to a large castle. It wasn’t the pleasantest of times, but after a while I talked my way out of the dungeons and into the smithy. I was a blacksmith there for a couple decades. I earned the trust of that clan of the Jötuns. When they were attacked by a different branch I fought alongside them in the form of a Jötun, if only for the entertainment of it. That war lasted two centuries and I partook in it freely, sharpening my fighting skills further.

“From there I went to Vanaheim and relaxed, regaining some of the weight I’d lost during my long stay on Jötunheim. Then back to Alfheim to finish the citadel challenges. Finally I met up with the dwarves, who were quite happy to see that I was alive, though I swore them to secrecy. From there I was all over the different realms, learning and planning my revenge. It was a coincidence when I met Amora. It was just so good to see a familiar friend.” Tony leaned back, looking at the ceiling. “Then I eventually ran into you and the rest is history.”

“It really isn’t, though.”

“What else do you want to know?”

“How much of our friendship was a ruse?”

“None of it.” Loki did his best not to scowl.

“I don’t believe you.”

“Believe whatever you want to believe. I truly did have fun spending time with you, Loki. For my plans it wasn’t necessary for us to be friends. I didn’t need to be your friend to keep you away from the conference hall on the day I planned on attacking Odin in front of all the realms.”

“And yet you did it anyways and used it to hurt me.”

“I did. I admit that freely. But as I already stated, I could have hurt you a lot worse. Do you think I didn’t want to kiss you back on the night of the All-Father’s 6,300th name day? That took a lot of restraint on my part.” Tony laughed and it just made Loki angrier.
“I won’t be played with again.”

“I have no plans to play with you, Loki. Back then I wasn’t playing with you, not in the way you mean at least. Yes, I used you, but I wasn’t playing with you. If I was playing with you, you would be dead by now.” Loki snarled while recoiling.

“You really don’t know how to promote trust do you?”

“Can’t say it’s one of my strong points.” Tony paused. “Look, I don’t plan on betraying you or hurting you. I did lie to you, but I’m telling you the truth now. I won’t ever lie to you again, unless you ask me to.”

“Why would I ever ask you to lie to me?”

“Well there’re many things I’d ask you to lie to me about.”

“Such as?”

“How much I hurt you. I honestly don’t want to know. If only to alleviate some of my own guilt.”

“You almost sound sincere.”

“Almost.” Tony smiled in a strange way.

“This partnership needs to be built on something other than mutual hate for the All-Father.”

“Shouldn’t that be enough?”

“Maybe for you, but I don’t just partner with anyone. If I wanted someone who hated the All-Father I could find plenty of them on Jotunheim.”

“Why bother when there’s a Jotun sitting right in front of you?”

“Are you trying to scare me off? I wouldn’t care if you were a frost giant, fire dancer, or rock golem. What matters to me is that you’re Loki.” The younger god was startled into silence.

“You do not truly mean that.”

“I already told you I fought alongside the Jotuns for many decades. Perhaps we should visit Jotunheim. You can learn more about your people.”

“They are not my people!” Loki shouted automatically in response.

“I guess I’m your only people then,” Tony said, waving dismissively. Loki flinched, saddened by how true that was. “You don’t have to be so antagonistic towards me. I’m fine with us not being friends right away. I know I’ve screwed you over more than once, so I’m not really expecting that level of trust yet.”

“Yet?” Loki repeated.

“We have centuries in front of us.”

“Don’t remind me.”

“That’s not a bad thing.” Loki was about to remark that perhaps he only thought that because he had friends and family, but remembered he didn’t actually have family and friends were debatable.
“Can we just talk about our immediate plans?”

“It will take me a few weeks to complete the armor and scepter. It would probably be best if you just got some rest, but if you want to travel around I won’t stop you. I won’t give you the Tesseract, but I don’t mind dropping you off wherever you want to go.” Loki scowled.

“Give me access to the library and I’ll stay.”

“Someone’s a bit testy.” Tony shrugged. “Fine.” He tore out a piece a paper from one of his sketch books. “Here’s the sequence for opening the door to the library.” He handed over the paper and Loki quickly memorized the twists, turns, and pushes to turn the lock star into a knob.

“My thanks.” He left without another word, heading to the library he’d dreamed of so many times before.

Weeks passed quickly and there was little said between the two of them. After their meal together their first night they hadn’t eaten together. Instead, Loki’s meals were either delivered to his room or the library by the eagle.

Loki let himself get lost in the books, adding more spells to his arsenal. The two rarely spoke to each other, both engrossed in their own work.

Finally Jarvis called for him, trilly screeching in a way that Loki oddly understood. The door to the smithy was open and he slipped through, following the flight of the eagle closely. Loki idly noticed that the walls were no longer black with Lord Howard’s magic, but bright red with Tony’s.

The other god was waiting, tossing a bar of metal between his hands.

“How often did you come back here just to use the smithy?” Loki asked, the question having niggled at his brain.

“More often than you’d assume. My father had many spells to conceal when he was working, one of which makes the black smoke of the forges odorless and clear. You’d have to be on the chimney to feel the heat.” Loki did not respond, instead eyeing the armor that was laid out for him. “It’s complete. I just wanted you to try it on to see if it fits perfectly, considering I didn’t really take your measurements other than by eye.”

Tony began clasping it onto the other god. Loki felt awfully young and awkward as the armor was put on him. Tony circled the god once. Loki’s sense of awkwardness grew stronger as he felt himself being analyzed piece by piece. Tony ran his hands over both of Loki’s sides, making the younger god flinch. The metal heated slightly and became more fitted around him.

“That will do, I suppose,” Tony said, stepping back from his work. “Here, test the balance of this scepter and the daggers.” The items in question were handed to him. The daggers were a bit lighter than he was used to, possibly due to the dark metal that was used to create them that was sharper than any of his previous weapons. The scepter’s balance was perfect and Loki marveled at the wonder of it.

“These will do,” he said haughtily. Tony snorted, but didn’t comment.

“I’m glad. They were enjoyable to work on. I rarely get an actual commission now that I’m an ‘outlaw’ - according to Asgard at least.” Tony snorted and his grin was positively thrilled. “Let’s go to my study. I have a few plans I want to discuss with you.”
Loki didn’t bother taking off the armor as they headed out of the smithy. It seemed to move with him easily. The metal was lighter than his previous armor, though he could feel its superior strength and durability easily.

“I was thinking we could play on Midgard a bit longer, with Thor and the rest of the Avengers and possibly Thor’s mortal fling.”

“Fling?”

“He’s found a lovely woman that is way out of his league to court.” Loki nodded mutely in response. The bookcases that covered the walls shifted, revealing a hidden door. “Here’s what I was thinking…”

Chapter End Notes

Feel free to read Another Brick in the Wall from any time after this chapter.

Btw, it's a follow up piece to 2000 Light Years From Home...
“Wear this,” Tony said while handing Loki a necklace.

“The last gift you gave me had a tracking spell,” Loki said dryly, referring to the pocket watch.

“This doesn’t have a tracking spell.” Tony clinked his fingers against Loki’s armor. “And this necklace isn’t a present. This,” he pointed to the pendant of the necklace, “is the heart gem of a fire giant. When we go to Muspelheim this will be the only thing that will keep the occupants from killing you. It shows that you’re a friend, that a fire giant trusted you enough to give you their heart gem when they died.”

“Why aren’t you wearing one?” Loki asked, his suspicions ever present.

“Where we’re going everyone knows me.” Tony grinned cheekily. “Besides, I only have one of these very pretty heart gems. Don’t lose it or I’ll be very offended.” There was a strange glint in Tony’s eyes. It was a dangerous glint, far different than anything Loki had seen before. This wasn’t the crazed look he’d had when he’d attacked Odin nor the maliciousness when he’d whispered hateful words to disable Loki.

“I will keep it safe.” Loki slipped the necklace on. “And what of the Aesir stationed in Muspelheim?”

“We’re not going to a place the Aesir will be.” Tony smiled slyly. The Tesseract appeared in his hands, a portal opening with a few choice words. Heat radiated from the wormhole. Tony walked through and Loki scowled before following him. He truly hated Muspelheim.

They were underground. That much was obvious. It had the scent of brimstone that seemed to be ever present in Muspelheim. There was a group of fire dancers sitting on the molten ground. They glanced over at the pair. One stood and moved gracefully towards them. She glanced at Loki before her eyes went to Tony.

“What wares of value have you brought?” the fire dancer asked, tapping her foot impatiently.

“Other than myself?” Tony asked, turning in a small circle, his arms raised in exhibition. The fire dancer laughed loudly.

“Poor wares indeed. Not worth the ash of my breath.” The dancer spit on the ground between them, a flame springing forth from the land.

“Luckily we are not here for ash.” Tony gestured to Loki, drawing the dancer’s attention. “Well, not your ash at least. Yours would only leave a bad taste in my mouth.” The dancer moved quick as a snake, kicking Tony in his shin. The god swore through his teeth as the dancer ran off, disappearing behind an outcropping of rocks. “I will piss on your embers!” Tony shouted after the dancer and was met by girlish giggles that echoed.
“It seems you are well respected here.” Loki said, not bothering to hide his grin.

“We’re alive. That speaks volumes.” They began walking and Tony kicked rocks at the other fire dancers that were sitting in a circle. They laughed in response, tossing embers at him. “Save the fire demons Musians are a playful people. Threats exchanged are just a game.”

They continued through the giant cavern. Outcrops of rocks slowly became obsidian buildings. Fire demons and dancers glanced at them, fleeting glances to Tony and looks of suspicion at Loki. He briefly wondered if he faced any of them on the battlefield.

Tony hummed an elf lullaby, not caring about the stares they were garnering despite them unsettling Loki. Such heat reminded him of all those miserable days of war. The constant flickering of flames and huffs of smoke made him want to test his new scepter out.

Tony somehow sensed his uneasiness despite Loki’s façade being flawless. The God of Metal slowed his step, moving closer to the other god.

“I was here during the war, watching, learning,” Tony whispered to the taller god. “On occasion I’d fight, choosing a side arbitrarily. On one such occasion I was on the side of the Aesir, by your side specifically.” Loki raised an eyebrow in question. “It was the fifth day of the battle of Simoplia. Do you remember the battle?”

“Simoplia was the city with the caged dragon, if I remember correctly.”

“Yes, that’s the one.”

“I fought as a light elf with two swords that were gilded golden.” Loki’s eyes lit up with vague recognition. “I had already committed myself to only fighting with swords, but I was bored beyond belief.” Tony paused in his story telling as they passed a fire dancer who had a small dragon wrapped around his arm. “I focused my attention on you and your spells.” Tony grinned widely. “I started countering many of your spells, but none that would leave you defenseless.” Tony chuckled and Loki began glaring at the other god. “You were so frustrated.”

“Of course I was frustrated.” Loki elbowed the god hard enough to be felt through his armor. Tony grunted, but laughed through it. “You swill. I nearly killed my own comrades trying to find which of you were at fault. I should have suspected it was one who was not openly using magic.” Loki grabbed his dagger, twisting it in his palm in false threat.

“If you had noticed me, then you’d have another scar and grievance against me.” Tony’s smile was devious.

“You’re very confident that you’d win.” Loki jeered as they entered a tall building.

“A friendly spar then, when we get home.”

“Home?” The word chilled Loki’s embittered heart. Tony grabbed Loki by his arm, stilling them both.

“A slip of the tongue. I’m talking about my manor. It is my home. I think you considered it home once before. Maybe you will again, given time.” Tony released his arm and continued walking, leaving Loki stunned.

“Lord Anthony!” A fire dancer bellowed, throwing his arms wide in greeting.

“Lord Tibirar, as always you are the first I seek when I come by.” They embraced each other.
“How are your children?”

“They’re too old to be considered children.” The dancer laughed again while guiding them through continuous shelves of items. “You boldly bring an Aesir to Muspelheim. If he was not accompanied by you and wearing that gem I fear there might be riots in the streets.”

“If they knew his name riots would be the least of our worries,” Tony said, causing the substantially shorter fire dancer to glance up at Loki. “He is my partner and I won’t see him harmed.”

“I would not hurt the partner of one of my best customers, so speak freely.” The dancer began plucking items off the shelves, occasionally using magic to acquire objects that were out of his short reach. Tony shrugged at the other god.

“I am Loki No-One’s-Son and I have no loyalty to Asgard,” Loki said and the fire dancer froze mid-step, but quickly corrected himself.

“Then we’re all on the same side. What do you seek in my shop?”

“A jar of buggles and anything else of interest you may have.”

“Then it will be a profitable day for all of us.” The two began discussing prices and Loki looked amongst the shelves. Such items that he would have bought ages ago if not for Asgard’s never ending arrogance. Bulbs of spligs, perfect for strengthening enchantments of softness, grove silt for testing poisons, stalerg ears for staunching wounds, and countless other items unique to Muspelheim.

“Something catch your interest?” the fire dancer, Tibirar, asked, startling Loki. He moved silently. Loki looked around and Tony was nowhere to be seen. “Lord Anthony said that you can get anything you like. For a mage such as yourself I’d recommend slicle stones to test your control of volatile magic. They’re made by the best mages in all of Muspelheim.” Loki put his hands behind his back, clasping them together to keep himself from touching any more of the unique items. It was another habit from childhood he’d thought he’d given up.

“No, I’m already indebted enough as it is to him with the armor and weapons he gave me.”

“Then consider it a gift from me and if not a gift then as an incentive to come back and look at my wares at a later date. You haven’t even seen the best of my stock in the very back of the store.” This he could handle. He was used to others trying to curry his favor with promises and gifts.

“I thank you for your generosity, but I am quite fine.” Loki straightened his posture further, letting his hands rest at his sides. “We are here on business and nothing else.” For some reason this caused the fire dancer to laugh. Loki gave him an annoyed and questioning look.

“A thousand pardons. It is just that nothing is ever strictly business for Lord Anthony. I have never seen one so disposed to mixing business and pleasure as he does. Would that he had a serious day in his life - all nine of the realms would stand in awe.”

“Clearly we do not speak of the same god. I have seen him sit still for hours designing weapons only to head to the forges for days on end, crafting and perfecting weapons and armor.” The two fell silent, neither knowing what to say.

“Everything alright here?” Tony asked, walking in with a new knapsack and eating a grey fruit.

“Everything is splendid!” Tibirar said, throwing his hands up in an exaggerated show of goodwill.
“Good. Your payment is in the usual place.”

“Your patronage is always valued. I’ll send word if anything of particular interest comes into my possession.”

“Till then.” Another Tesseract fueled portal formed in front of them without the cube being pulled out. Loki gave the other god a look, but Tony didn’t comment. They stepped through and the wormhole closed behind them. Loki didn’t recognize where they were. “This is one of my labs in Midgard, actually, in Stark Tower.” Tony pulled off the knapsack and the majority of his armor, leaving him in relaxed pants and a black T-shirt. “Which Avengers do you want? I was thinking it we should also target Director Fury. I’m calling dibs on Dr. Banner.”

“Why do you want the berserker?” Loki asked, slowly touring the large room. It was filled with strange gadgets, far different than his smithy in Asgard.

“We would have probably been lovers if I hadn’t been compelled to reveal myself.” Tony pulled out the jar of buggles, small grey bugs, barely bigger than a thumb nail each.

“You sound so certain.” Loki fidgeted with the hilt of one of his new daggers.

“We spoke the same language of high science. I’m attracted to intelligence. He’s attracted to those who are witty and don’t treat him like a pariah. It would have happened with time. We all deserve a bit of comfort, after all.” Tony opened the jar and put three of each of the buggles into eight separate graduated cylinders. “So which Avengers do you want?”

“I was just going to stage an attack here, then get blood samples from whoever retaliates.” Loki flipped a dagger in his hand, grinning as he imagined the coming battle.

“Jarvis has been scouting already. Bruce Banner is already halfway across the country and Ant-Man is in California. I’ll get their samples and Nick Fury’s.”

“How do you and Jarvis communicate?” Loki asked, clinking one of the cylinders to see if the inactive buggles would react.

“Telepathically. Everyone who is of my bloodline or marries into the family can hear him. He understands every language,” Tony said absentmindedly. He was focused on putting vials of black oil into each cylinder of buggles.

“At what range can you two still hear each other?” Loki asked and Tony glanced over at him.

“Far enough”

“And how do you plan on getting a sample of the berserker’s blood without him smashing you?”

“You’re in a very questioning mood. I’m just going to approach him in my Dr. Stark persona. He’ll know I’m not really human, but that appearance is less likely to set him off. I’ll talk to him a bit, distract him and he’ll ‘accidentally’ cut himself. I’ll offer to heal the wound. He’ll be suspicious, but will agree.”

“Tony,” a female voice said, startling them both. Loki grabbed his dagger, but Tony quickly stilled his hand.

“Ms. Potts, how goes the business world?” Tony asked as a strawberry blonde woman walked into the secure area.
“The board is very angry. Some agency called SHIELD keeps trying to confiscate the designs of our weapons and break into Stark Tower.” The woman threw a clipboard at Tony, who quickly ducked under it.

“Stark Tower is perfectly secure, so unless you let someone in it’s no problem.” Tony waved dismissively and it only made the woman’s face turn redder.

“What did you do this time?”

“I may or may not have revealed myself in front of all of SHIELD and a god who has wanted me dead for almost half his life.” The god raised a hand, preparing to bat out of the air whatever she threw at him next. The woman covered her eyes with her hand and it was almost worse than her throwing things.

“What sort of damage control do you want me to do?”

“Draw up some paperwork and I’ll give you all the power of a CEO. Also get the deeds to all my properties and I’ll sign them over to you. They can’t do anything if they don’t belong to me.”

“Tony, you can’t just…”

“Which of us has the law degree?” Tony asked, going over to her.

“Neither of us have a law degree, Tony.”

“Well, not one from this century at least,” Tony admitted and the woman threw a screwdriver at him, hitting him point blank on the chest. “Ow, come on Pepper. It’s really not that bad. The space tunnel thingy that allows the other gods to travel is broken. There won’t be any significant aliens coming to earth anytime soon.”

“So there will be more aliens.” She held up a pen in accusation.

“Of course. I’m here. Loki’s here.”

“And why exactly are you running around with the top of the FBI’s most wanted list. If it gets out to the public that you and Dr. Stark are the same person, our stock prices will plummet!”

“Money isn’t everything, Pep.”

“Says the billionaire!”

“Technically I’m more of a trillionaire if you count my holdings in other realms.” Pepper threw another metal item at him and Tony didn’t even bother trying to dodge. “Look, I’ve gotten bored playing tech genius, billionaire. No humans other than the Avengers and SHIELD are going to recognize me with this face. Stark Industries won’t be negatively affected. I’m doing this regardless of what you think. Take the company. Consider it an ‘I’m sorry I’m a dick’ gift. Also buy yourself another pair of shoes with that credit card I gave you.”

“Tony…” Pepper sighed. “We’ll have to go to a notary to make all this official. When will you be in town again?”

“Probably later today or tomorrow. I’ll call you when I am.”

“Fine.” Pepper walked past Loki, grabbing the clipboard she’d thrown earlier. “Tony spoke of you a few times,” she commented.
“And what exactly did he say?” Loki asked, his face stoic.

“He’s had many companions, but doesn’t like talking about them.” Her eyes went distant for a moment. “Kind of like a time lord,” she mused. “Anyway, he mentioned that you’re talented, clever, and that you were friends at one point.” Pepper turned back to Tony. “Sign these.” Tony sighed dramatically but summoned a pen to his hand.

“How did the Stark Expo go, considering I wasn’t there?” he asked, his voice serious.

“It was fine. Hammer was being a bit of a pest, though,” Pepper said.

“Nothing new there.” Tony flipped a page. “How is my investment in Latveria doing?”

“Growing stronger every day.” Tony hummed in response. After another five minutes he handed the clipboard back to the strawberry blonde. “Don’t forget to call me.” With that she disappeared just as quickly as she’d appeared.

“A mortal.” Loki stated.

“She’s a sweetheart.”

“Yes, the way she threw things at you made that clear.” Loki gave Tony a sly look.

“There are worse things she can throw at me.” A dagger appeared in the older god’s hand. He flipped it once in his hand before sending it flying, nailing it into a wall. “Have fun fighting the Avengers.” Tony winked before disappearing.
Tony cocked his head to the side, listening to Jarvis. The eagle was two miles ahead of him, far above with sharp eyes trained on Doctor Bruce Banner. Tony was astride a motorcycle, sipping on a drink from Starbucks.

He tossed the half empty drink, forming the perfect arc in the air before landing it easily in a trashcan, not a single drop spilling. He put down the visor of his helmet before taking off. The motorcycle growled loudly, eating the pavement beneath him.

Tony veered the motorcycle off the road, jumping it off an embankment and into a wooded area. He whispered a few words under his breath and the tires changed midair, becoming better suited for off-road usage. Dirt billowed up as he landed. He easily maneuvered through the sparse trees and bushes.

Soon enough he spotted a man wearing a backpack and baseball cap. He didn’t even turn around at the sound of the fast approaching vehicle. Tony sped up, enjoying how calm Bruce was. He was on a direct course, but swiveled out of the way at the last second, kicking up dirt as the back wheel spun out, coming to a halt.

“Hey Bruce,” Tony said while taking off his helmet, revealing his human glamour.

“Dr. Stark.” Bruce’s grip on the straps of his backpack tightened and he was looking a little green. Tony held up his hands, trying to look innocent.

“I come in peace,” Tony said mischievously, turning off his motorcycle and getting off of it.

“You stole the Tesseract,” Bruce accused.

“Why do people keep saying that? The Tesseract has been my property since it resurfaced after WWII. I was just letting you all research it.” Tony placed his helmet on the seat of the motorcycle before stretching his hands above his head and letting out a long yawn. “Anywho, what are you doing out here in the middle of nowhere?”

“I should call SHIELD right now.”

“First off, you don’t have a cell phone on you. Second off, even if you did you don’t want them to know your location, so you wouldn’t call them even if you did. And finally I’m just visiting. No need to get your panties in a twist.”

“That’s not even your true face,” Bruce said, his eyes narrowing.
“True.” Tony scrubbed a hand over his face, dispelling the glamour. Bruce’s eyes lit up for a brief moment. “I like this appearance more anyway, makes me look more roughish.” Tony grinned sincerely, startling the doctor. “How’s life on the road?”

“Did you really just come here to make small talk?” Bruce asked while walking around the motorcycle and continuing down the subtle path.

“I’ve been alive for over 2,000 years and I have another 7,000 something years in front of me. I think I can spare a few hours for a friend.”

“We knew each other for a total of three hours, all of which you were lying to me.” Bruce glanced at the god as he fell in step with him.

“We shared blueberries. Did that mean nothing to you?” Bruce gave him a very clear what the fuck look. “So where are you going?”

“Out of the US,” Bruce admitted when it was clear that Tony would not relent.

“I can understand that. This place is a little too Big Brother-esque for your style. Too many cameras connected to networks.” Tony hummed in thought. “I’m not your enemy, you know. I’m not going to try to turn you or experiment on you. I’m a scientist, not a monster.”

“Not according to Thor. The way he tells it, you’re a terrorist who maimed an old man.”

“That’s not an entirely unfair assessment,” Tony admitted, startling Bruce. “That doesn’t make me your enemy, though. I’m the same guy who joked with you on the Helicarrier.”

“The media said Loki escaped.”

“Wily bastard, that one.” Tony grinned and Bruce gave him a sceptical look. “Why aren’t you with the Avengers anymore? I thought you all bonded over kicking Loki’s ass.”

“I don’t really trust government agencies.”

“That’s understandable. SHIELD is trying to steal all my weapon designs. I’m signing everything over to my assistant so that they can’t take it.” This evoked a surprised look from Bruce. “When you have lived as long as I have you know that money isn’t something you should strive for. Ideas on the other hand, those matter. Virginia Potts can have all my money, so long as she keeps my ideas and designs safe from those who would use my weapons for their own ends.” They both fell silent, continuing their walk through the underbrush. It was a good ten minutes before either spoke again. “This way of traveling is so slow. I can take you anywhere in the world, heck, I can take you to a whole other realm and you’ll never have to worry about the government hunting you down again.”

“I’m fine with traveling this way.”

“At least take my bike. Honestly, I’m surprised you got this far as is. Where do you sleep? Underpasses?” Bruce sighed.

“You could have put a tracker on that bike,” Bruce said, not looking at Tony.

“I already found you once. As much as I love technology I don’t need it to find you.” Tony’s hands started glowing red and he held them in front of him. “Magic, Brucie. It’s my specialty.” A wave of magic shot out, clearing the path in front of them. To the sides of the path, flowers bloomed and bushes grew.
“The last time I saw you use magic it was on the Other Guy, and he wasn’t too happy with being tied down. Neither was I for that matter.”

“Fair enough.” Tony shrugged and Bruce suddenly lurched forward, his hands flailing out to catch himself. “You alright?” Tony asked, holding his hand out to help him. Bruce looked at the outstretched hand for a moment before reluctantly taking it.

“I haven’t fallen like that in years.” Bruce was a bit more flustered than he’d like to be. He was looking down at his left palm that had a long gash running the length. He’d have to stop somewhere to get disinfectant. It would need stitches.

“Here, let me.”

“Let you what?” There was that skeptical look again.

“Heal it of course. I just went full Captain Planet on this place. You think I can’t heal a little thing like that?” Tony scoffed animatedly while waving dismissively.

“You’re not going to try and mind control me, are you?” Bruce asked dryly.

“And hinder that shiny brain of yours? I think not.” Tony held out his hands expectantly.

“Gimmie.”

“You weren’t this childish as Dr. Stark.”

“You just didn’t know me long enough.” Tony pouted slightly. “You know you want me to do it, for science.” Tony made a grabby motion and Bruce chuckled against his will before giving him his hand. Tony’s shoulders relaxed as his hand hovered over the wound. His eyes fell shut and he said silent words. Bruce could feel an almost itching sensation as the flesh pulled together. When Tony let go of Bruce’s palm the area was slightly reddened, but healed.

“How the hell did you…”

“I’m a kind god.” Tony nodded in mock modesty. “Let me help you out.” Slowly all around them wormholes started forming. Bruce froze. “There’s a portal to each continent, excluding Antarctica, since I doubt you’ll be all that useful there. Take your pick. I won’t tell anyone.” Bruce did a 360, looking into each wormhole in turn. “Oh, and here. Take this number. I can’t guarantee that I’ll be able to answer, but my assistant, Ms. Potts, will pass on anything once I’m on earth again.” Bruce took the small strip of paper almost numbly.

“But… why?” Bruce asked, his eyes flashing from one portal to another.

“Because you’re a good person. Despite my reputation I don’t believe in hurting the innocent and I need a bit of good karma.” Tony chuckled good-heartedly. “I’m sure you can understand that.” Bruce was speechless. His fingers folded the small card mindlessly. “Take it or leave it. Just know that I have paperwork that I need to get to.” Tony let the sentence trail off.

“Regardless of your motives, thank you.”

“No problem in the least.” Tony waved lazily and Bruce nodded once before taking the portal that led to Pakistan. “Bold choice,” Tony mumbled as he closed the various portals. He pulled a vial from his coat and deposited a small sphere of blood that had been hidden in the palm of his hand into it. He disappeared a moment later.
Tony appeared in a nondescript building, a glamour in place. After a few minutes he came to the biochemistry lab Dr. Pym was in. The doctor’s arm was in a cast.

“Who are you?” Hank asked, glancing up from his microscope.

“What happened to your arm?” Tony asked, ignoring his question. Hank looked at him suspiciously.

“Don’t you read the news?” Hank asked sarcastically.

“What’s the point?” Tony shrugged and Hank looked at him questioningly.

“You never said who you are.”

“You do think I am?” Tony leaned against the wall, crossing his arms in a relaxed fashion.

“You got past security.” Hank paused. “You’re either a nosey intern or an agent from SHIELD. Neither of which are welcome here. I’m calling security.” Hank grabbed a corded phone, but the line was dead. “I hope you don’t think this little injury will be enough to hinder me from taking you down.”

“I’m not too worried.” Tony grinned in an infuriating manner and a dagger appeared in his hand. “You weren’t very entertaining during the invasion of New York.” In an instant Tony had disappeared, reappearing behind the doctor. His dagger nicked Hank’s cheek, drawing a few beads of blood. “Boop,” Tony said before disappearing.

Tony appeared as a nondescript agent. The SHIELD base was already in chaos. Evidently Loki’s attack was underway.

Tony casually strolled through the halls, whispering to all the keypads and mechanical locks to let him pass through security.

Eventually he found himself in a large room with Agent Hill and Director Fury. The director was blaring out orders as he looked at various monitors.

Tony took a moment to admire the video image of Loki. It was quite clear that the god had each of the Avengers on their toes. He looked flawless as he spun around, one hand wielding his scepter easily as he sent off fireballs in all direction. It made Tony grin.

“Even for a god he’s especially good looking,” Tony commented. Without even turning around Fury shot the God of Metal through the back of his trench coat. “Neat trick. I guess one’s hearing would get better with being partially blind,” Tony said after moving out of the way of the bullet, pretending to be human. The god unholstered two guns and pointed one at each of the other occupants of the room. “Hail Hydra!” Another ruse.

Tony shot both Hill’s and Fury’s guns out of their hands with a bit of help from his magic. He holstered his guns as both SHIELD agents came at him at once. He repelled Fury’s first jabs while
performing a butterfly kick, hitting Hill solidly in the temple of her head. She staggered and Tony moved in on her. He hit her in the same spot with restrained strength. She swayed on her feet for a long second before falling to the ground unconscious.

Fury pulled out a hunter’s knife and Tony mirrored his action, grabbing a pocket knife. The two circled each other, knives at the ready.

Tony could sense other agents coming to their location. He’d have to make this quick if he wanted to continue hiding his godly disposition. Tony surged forward, aiming his knife at Fury’s chest while trying to sweep his legs out. Fury met his stab with his own knife while twisting out of the way of Tony’s foot. Fury sent a high elbow aiming at Tony’s nose. The god ducked below it, trying to slash at Fury’s side. The director hopped backwards out of range, before thrusting his knife forward.

Tony grabbed his wrist and Fury quickly dropped his knife, grabbing it with his other hand. Tony held back a grin. Fury broke Tony’s hold on him and made a feint knife slash. Tony dodged it instinctively and Fury attacked, grabbing Tony’s wrist and twisting it behind his back before sending his knife downwards, going for the jugular. Tony flipped forward, getting out of the leveraged hold and sending Fury flying to the ground.

The director quickly righted himself, but not before Tony stabbed him in the back, just a centimeter higher than his kidney. Fury twisted around, Tony’s gun in his hand.

Clever bastard.

At the last second Tony replaced himself with the Hydra agent he was pretending to be, causing the agent to be killed by a perfectly aimed bullet to the head.
Loki joined Tony in his lab in Stark Tower an hour and a half later. The younger god had a busted lip, but otherwise looked no worse for wear. It was his eyes that really caught Tony’s attention. They did not have the dull shade of exhaustion that they had after his first fight with the Avengers, nor did they look cautious as they had ever since Jarvis had broken him out of SHIELD custody. Instead, they were shining, alive, and absolutely hypnotizing.

Loki handed over the five samples of blood to the God of Metal. Loki’s tongue darted out, getting the stray blood off his lips.

“I saw a bit of your fight when I was attacking Fury.” Tony commented, putting each sample into a jar of buggles. The small grey creatures suddenly came to life, feasting on the blood.

“You tell the best stories,” Loki said sarcastically.

“You fight much better when you’re in control of your own mind and in good health.”

“I suppose it has been a while since you truly saw me fight. Are you still up for that spar?” Loki asked, still high off his encounter with the Avengers. Tony looked up from the jars, grinning widely at Loki.

“Oh, most definitely. Let me just take care of these and my meeting with Pepper and then we can head back to my manor. I always enjoy when things get a bit physical.” The look Tony was giving him made his implication clear. Loki couldn’t settle on one emotion. A large part of him was enraged, but it was the lust that was beneath the anger that worried him. He decided to ignore the comment, for now.

“How did your meeting with the green beast go?”

“With Bruce?” Tony paused. “It went fine. I even gave him a quick lift to the other side of the world. He shouldn’t be a problem, but I think we should still have buggles go after him.” Loki nodded in agreement. “Would you like to come with me to see me sign over 99% of my wealth on Midgard?” Tony asked as he set loose the buggles. The small insects flew straight through the wall, making small, silent loops. “Either that or you can always go back to the manor.”

“I think I’ll join you. I haven’t really seen Midgard, not since…” Loki trailed off and Tony nodded mutely. “Is there any particular form I should take to be safe?”

“Anything you like will work,” Tony responded. His eyes glowed red briefly as he watched Loki shape shift, memorizing the different words of power and runes that the younger god used. Loki shifted into a petite woman with blond hair and the same startling green eyes.

“Where are we meeting her?” Loki asked, his voice high yet still elegant.

“Downtown,” Tony said simply. A portal opened in front of them and Loki felt a jolt of Tesseract magic. They stepped through and it closed behind them. They ended up in a deserted hallway and Tony shifted into his Dr. Stark disguise and into a business suit. He pulled out a phone and a moment later said, “She’s this way.” Loki fell in step with him, his eyes raking the area, taking in everything he could. He was unaware that the humans had a legal system, but the metal statue of a blindfolded woman with a scale in hand and the engraved words beneath her made it clear that this was a place of law.
They found Pepper a few moments later, looking completely professional with a briefcase full of papers just waiting to be signed.

“You’re late,” she said. Her voice sounded annoyed, yet her face didn’t mirror the sentiment. If anything she looked like she was expecting them to be late.

“A wizard is never late, nor is he early. He arrives precisely when he means to.” Pepper scoffed.

“Stop watching the Lord of the Rings. Your ego is already too big, pretending to be a god and such.” Loki bit his tongue, holding back his comment. What it meant to be a god was different than the connotation that the humans used. To be a god was a title of power, not of divinity or otherworldliness. To be a god meant there was some area of life in which one specialized beyond all others. For Loki it was mischief, for Thor it was thunder, and for Tony it was metal. To be a god did not mean having unlimited power or any of the other usual stereotypes.

“Mkay, Pep, whatever you say.” The woman looked like she’d throw something at him, had they not been in public.

Pepper led them to a private office in which they were all seated in comfortable leather seats. An elderly man was waiting for them.

Loki watched him closely as paper after paper was circled around the room. Despite wearing a different face Loki still recognized Tony’s look of concentration. He was strangely fond of this side of the god. Perhaps because he and only a few others really saw it. All the others knew was the villain or the actor. Only Loki and perhaps this mortal ever got to see the true Tony, not the one who acted boisterous in front of merchants nor the one who spoke slyly in front of his enemies. This was one of the god’s true aspects, the ruthless business man who easily gave up his fortune in order to protect his ideas. Yet some part of Loki hated how familiar he was with this private aspect of Tony. It just reminded him of the betrayal.

It took them over an hour to get all the paperwork signed, making Pepper the CEO of Stark Industries and giving her all his patents and real property.

“Will that be all, Dr. Stark?”

“That will be all, Ms. Potts.” The two nodded to each other and Loki could tell that they were friends despite her life being so short in comparison to his own.

Afterwards Tony and Loki went to the hallways they appeared in and disappeared through a wormhole leading back to Tony’s manor.

“Goodness, this thing is useful,” Tony said idly as the portal closed. Loki nodded in agreement and a part of him wished that he had taken it instead of Tony, but that opportunity had already slipped through his fingers. Now he needed to focus on his revenge against Odin and all the Avengers that thought they had outclassed him in battle, especially Thor. The fool should have known that Loki would escape sooner or later, even though he had a bit of a helping hand due to Tony.

“You still up for that spar?”

“I could use a drink first,” Loki admitted, switching into his usual form sans his armor which he teleported back to his room, leaving him in comfortable pants and a tunic. With a slow movement reminiscent of his time with Frigga, Loki began plating his hair, getting it away from his face.

“A drink it is, then,” Tony said, not commenting on Loki’s hair. They both retired to Tony’s study, sitting on the plush chairs next to a fireplace that Tony lit with the flick of his finger. He poured
them both a goblet of spiced wine and Loki practically melted into his seat enjoying the flavor and comfort that engulfed him. “Get any good hits in?” Tony asked after a few comfortable silent moments.

“Thor has a new scar to add to his collection,” Loki commented, his fingers brushing over his collarbone where Tony had scarred him all those years ago. The God of Metal’s eyes were drawn to the small movement.

“I did that, didn’t I?” he asked in a bemused fashion.

“This one?” Loki pulled at the collar of his shirt, revealing more of the light pink flesh. “Yes, this among many others. The majority are now either from my torture or from the war.” Loki paused. “I can say that this is truly the first one I received, not including all those scars I got while sparring in the training yard.” His fingers lingered on the flesh and Tony’s eyes seemed to stay there.

“You know I could have killed Frigga. It was in my original plan, before we became friends,” Tony’s comment blindsided Loki, his green eyes flashing dangerously, both angry and relieved.

“Why didn’t you?”

“Well, she seemed to…” Tony hesitated. “From what I could see from my investigation she didn’t have a part in my parent’s death. And my mother told me stories about their time together in Vanheim as children. Also, she seemed to be the only one who really supported you.”

“What does that have to do with anything?” Loki was feeling defensive again, not really knowing how to handle this sort of situation.

“I think it’s perfectly evident what I mean. I was your only friend other than her. I couldn’t cut both of your legs out from under you. That would have been too cruel.” Tony swirled the wine in his goblet before taking a slow sip. Loki’s hand tensed into a fist, memories of the betrayal and his mother’s comforting words after Odin was blinded came to mind.

“There would have been no coming back from that,” Loki finally commented after five tense minutes. “I would have hunted you down.”

“I would have had to kill you in return.”

“Or simply have been killed.”

“What a perfect lead up to our spar, isn’t it?” Tony set aside his goblet.

“I’ve grown,” Loki said cockily.

“But so have I,” Tony responded just as quickly. “While you were trapped in either dreams or the palace I was wandering the realms, all except for Helheim. I don’t plan on going there ever.” Tony stood up. “Come on, there’s a training ground underneath the manor, adjacent to the smithy.” Tony led him to a door Loki had never seen before. As with every part of his estate, the door was locked. Tony easily undid it.

“Were these locks always here?” Loki asked.

“Most of them yes, although my father,” Tony scowled slightly, “the God of Mechanisms improved on many of them and I made them even better.” The door led them down to a spiral staircase and to a wide open area that must have spanned even further than Tony’s manor. Sconces lit up on the sides of the wall and chandeliers lit the rest of the area.
“Lovely,” Loki commented. It was even bigger than the training yards in the palace.

One of the walls was covered with various weapons, all blunted for training.

“How do you want to do this?” Tony asked. “Armor, no armor, magic, no magic, so on so forth.”

“Let’s start off with hand to hand and move from there.”

“Fine by me. I don’t often get to fight like this, although I did play with Fury for a bit.” Tony smirked briefly before they made their way to the middle of the large room.

Tony’s stance was more relaxed than Loki’s as they stood face to face, yet was just as prepared and guarded. The older god was the first to attack, quickly invading Loki’s personal space with a high jab coupled with a side kick. Loki rebuked the attack, dodging the jab and capturing Tony’s leg midair and pushing it higher, trying to put the other god off balance. Tony used the added momentum to whip his other leg up, aiming for Loki’s head as he spun in the air. Loki leaned backwards, putting him just outside of Tony’s range. The other god landed, skidding backwards and away from Loki. The interaction had only taken three seconds.

Both paused before issuing their next attack. This time Loki was the one to make the first move. The younger god agilely feinted to the left before straightening out his course, going for a quick body blow. Tony caught his fist and quickly twisted it around, but Loki’s body moved with the leveraging motion, not letting his arm be captured or broken. The hold was easy enough to break out of and he sent his knee sailing to Tony’s side. The God of Metal blocked it with his forearm, sending a quick punch to Loki’s inner thigh and to the nerve there. Loki held back a recoil at the jolt of pain, instead twisting to Tony’s side with every intent of sending a stiff palm to Tony’s throat in order to stun him.

Tony moved out of the way in just the knick of time, Loki’s hand stretching right in front of him instead. With a quick movement that was more to startle than to hurt Tony grabbed Loki by his wrist and inner elbow, pushing the elbow up while pushing the wrist down in order to send the other god flying through the air and hitting the ground hard. Loki rolled as he landed, dodging Tony’s heavy stomp that would have broken at least two of the younger god’s ribs. Loki was back on his feet before Tony could attack again.

Other than a dull throbbing on Loki’s back he was uninjured. Tony similarly was fine. The two gods stared at each other’s stance, looking for any weaknesses or tells. Both moved simultaneously forward and met each other blow for blow.

Loki’s style was quicker with sharp movements that stung. Tony’s style was slower but held more power, each hit packing twice the strength of any of Loki’s.

All too soon Loki’s freshly healed lip was busted open again. The two moved backwards from each other, Tony resetting his finger and Loki rolling his shoulder back into place as he licked the blood off his lips.

This could go on forever. They both knew that, yet neither said so. Somehow they both knew that the next attack would put an end to the spar.

Loki was the first to move, his superior speed building up plenty of momentum for his coming attack. Tony let out a slow breath before dodging Loki’s lightning fast barrage of kicks and jabs. His eyes were trained more on Loki’s expression than the younger god’s actual movements. Some part of Loki found that insulting and he redoubled his efforts, moving even quicker.
Tony redirected one of Loki’s kicks to the side, sending the god off balance for a mere second. Tony punched at Loki’s kidney, causing an old scar inside the god to flare up painfully. He hissed, but otherwise kept the pain to himself. Loki twisted to face the other god, sending a jab forward. For the second time Tony caught the attack, but unlike the first he countered it with his own, hitting Loki square in the throat followed in quick succession by a hit to his jaw, then his solar plexus.

The younger god could not breathe and thoughts of his toes barely touching the ground as a rope tied round his neck kept him from breathing invaded his mind. Before he could center himself he was thrown onto his stomach, both hands captured behind his back and with a heavy weight on his legs and back.

“Set, match,” Tony commented. Loki was still in full panic mode, losing his mind and was about to summon his magic to his aid when Tony hopped off him and put plenty of space between them. The younger god turned onto his back, sucking in breaths of air and clutching his throat. His eyes were wide as he stared at the ceiling, not really seeing it. Strangely warm magic washed over him and he felt the pain of his most recent injuries fade and the majority of his panic ease. Loki shut his eyes slightly, taking in a deep breath as he listened to the other god come over and crouch beside him.

“Ready for another drink?” Tony asked, not commenting on Loki’s distress. Loki stared at him for just a tad too long. He nodded in agreement and Tony stood with a hand held out in offer. Without thought Loki took his hand.
Both gods settled in for dinner after Loki had calmed down a bit after their spar. Good old-fashioned Aesir mead was served. It had a familiar sweetness that reminded Loki of home, before it was no longer home.

Jarvis served up a strange circular food between them.

“What is this?” Loki asked, gripping his mug of mead with both hands.

“A Midgardian commoners’ meal called pizza. Fun stuff. You eat it with your hands, though you can use fork and knife if you want to be a square.” Tony served himself two slices of pepperoni goodness. Loki stared at the strange meal before getting his own slice, opting to use cutlery instead of his hands.

“It’s not terrible,” Loki admitted after his second tentative bite.

“That’s the worst review I’ve ever heard for pizza.” Tony chuckled freely. Jarvis swooped back into the room, perching on the back of Tony’s chair.

“Perhaps it will grow on me,” Loki conceded. The golden eagle ruffled its feathers and another pizza appeared, though this one was missing the pepperoni, in its place was sausage. Loki eyed the magic being as he grabbed another slice of pizza. He almost wanted a headier drink to counteract the saltiness of the meal, but he didn’t feel like expending the effort of finding one amongst the extensive collections that Tony seemed to own. “I panicked,” Loki said mid meal.

“Hmm?” Tony responded, looking up from his plate. He set aside his pizza, grabbing a cloth napkin, wiping the majority of the grease from his hands.

“I panicked when we were fighting.”

“It happens.”

“No, you don’t understand - I’ve never panicked while fighting before. Yes I’ve cried, I’ve screamed, but never panicked.” Loki didn’t know why he was admitting this to the other god. He hated showing any signs of weakness especially to someone he used to admire and now hated.

Tony paused in thought.

“During the war,” Tony began, his voice drifting. “How often did you have to fight on your own without either an army surrounding you or companions beside you?” Loki thought back on to the seventy years of battles.
“Only a handful of times,” he admitted.

“And how often were they close calls?”

“Only twice, but I didn’t panic then.” Tony nodded, his eyes going distant for a moment.

“What were you thinking about when you were panicking?” Tony asked. Loki bit his tongue, not wanting to remember, let alone say.

“I was thinking about the last time I wasn’t able to breathe,” he finally said.

“And you felt helpless.” Tony filled in the blank. Loki’s jaw clenched but he did not deny it.

“Yes, for what felt like days… just barely touching the ground, my legs tense as I tried to keep myself from putting anymore weight on his neck.” He rubbed his throat. The rope burns had healed quick enough, but he could almost still feel their constricting grasp on him.

“I can understand that.” Tony shifted awkwardly. “During my time in Jotunheim, while I was still a prisoner in the dungeons, there were many frost giants that were not happy to see an Aesir. One of my torturers had a favorite game of pouring water into my mouth until I breathed it in and just as I was choking on it he’d freeze it in my throat and lungs.” Tony gripped his chest and Loki eyed him carefully. “For days on end I would only get a brief breath of air before I was frozen once again. It felt like I was being stabbed over and over in my chest. My lungs felt both frozen and burning. I understand what it truly means to suffocate. It will take time, but it won’t always cause you to panic. It’s only been a couple months since you were a prisoner there. Give it time, Loki. The panic might not leave, but you may learn how to control it like I do.” Tony chuckled darkly. “I’m just glad the ice didn’t expand, ripping my lungs apart,” Tony commented, a dark grin in place.

Nothing else was said that night and neither brought up the spar or the conversation the following morning.

Tony mentioned going to Muspelheim to watch the fire giants migrate and invited Loki along, but the younger god turned down his offer, instead opting to spend the day in the library.

Loki was slowly working his way through the different shelves, yet every time Tony went somewhere he seemed to pick up more books on various things of interest to Loki. The books were starting to stack up in the corner of the room, not that Loki minded.

He wasn’t getting lost in the information as he usually would as time passed silently. Instead, he kept comparing Tony’s story with his own, both of suffocating, but very different ways. He was sure the Aesir would have been held down for such treatment, yet Loki was left alone in the dark, hands tied behind his back and toes bleeding from scraping against the hard floor as he tried to breathe… He hadn’t been able to see in the darkness.

While hanging in that dark place Loki cycled between a painful apathetic haze, full blown anger, and then heart stopping fear over and over again. In retrospect, those were the good days, the days where The Other left him alone.

When would Thanos and The Other come to the nine realms? It was one of the many complications that were far off on the horizon, yet not far enough.

Perhaps by then- Loki’s thoughts stalled. What by then? He was building up his arsenal of spells, but what could he do against the Mad Titan or The Other?
Loki had yet to discuss the Mad Titan with Tony, and almost feared that the other god would abandon him again if he knew of the imminent threat. The other god knew about the general forces, the Chitauri, but he did not know who had been pulling their strings, pulling Loki’s strings.

They did have the Tesseract, at least. Well, Tony had it. Loki was feeling uneasy. He hated being in the weaker position and there was the ever present threat that Tony would betray him again, that he was being used in order to hurt Odin—Not that he’d mind hurting Odin. He just didn’t want to be used again.

What could he do, though, about such feelings? There was no one else but Tony he could converse with. He could not talk with Frigga about his uneasiness as he once did, not after what she did to him. He did not want to think about her and all the years she spent lying to him.

It seemed that everyone lied to him.

Loki brushed that thought aside, deciding to just lie down in the library, setting aside the book that his eyes had been skimming over but not taking in any real information for over an hour. Some part of him just wanted things to be better, to be how when he was a child, when he could just run around without being criticized for who he was. For the times when he and Thor were equals and loved by all of Asgard as the two princes instead of the golden one and the shadow. Before they labeled him Spreader of Lies.

All of that had been so long ago and he barely had any memories of Tony before his parents were killed. They hadn’t been friends as children, nor enemies. Long ago they had been the only two boys who willingly went to the magic lessons with Amora, Lorelei and sometimes Kelda. But now Amora was off frolicking about as usual, Lorelei was married, and Kelda was a completely different person. Loki was a fugitive in all the civilized realms and the uncivilized ones would attack him on sight.

Perhaps Tony was right. Maybe this really was the only place he had left, this manor that had been locked off from everyone but the God of Metal for so many years. This place that was nearly lifeless save the other god and the golden eagle. It had always been locked off, though. Even before the death of Tony’s parents. From the old rumors the only person that was ever invited here was the queen herself in order to have tea with Lady Maria as old friends were wont to do.

Loki briefly thought about why Odin would want to kill Tony’s family. He knew that Odin was a liar, but there had to be more than that to it. He was a liar, but before that he was king and thought of Asgard first. The death of Tony’s parents and his assumed death had severely weakened all of Asgard. Without access to their designs or their forge the best weapons could no longer be made. Trade between the dwarves of Svartalfheim and Asgard came to a trickle because the manner in which certain ores were smelted could no longer be done since only Howard knew how to.

Asgard had been left with only old armor and weapons. Either that or they could make their own that were subpar or buy some from the dwarves that would be overpriced and still not as good as what Howard could make.

Loki turned onto his side.

Perhaps that had been part of Tony’s plan, to wait until Asgard truly did not have any more weapons. One of the first things the God of Metal did when he got back was make a deal with Odin for all new weapons and armor for the palace and city guards. It had worked out perfectly for Tony, killing Asgard’s main line of defense in a matter of minutes.

There must have been a real reason, though, that Odin would put himself in such a position,
especially knowing how close Frigga was to Tony’s mother.

The God of Mechanisms. Loki mused on the title. His locks were beyond those ever made before and he improved on the design of the crossbow, giving it tenfold strength and beautiful durability, but what else could that title entail? Tony’s family had always been rich, second only to the royal family. There had been political intrigue before, but the two houses had always stood together strongly and it was well known that without Lord Howard’s constant encouragement the war with Jotunheim would have ended centuries earlier, with a treaty. Instead, the war had raged on for two more centuries, ending with the complete devastation of Jotunheim, the capture of the Casket of Ancient Winters, and, of course, Loki’s ‘forced adoption’.

The God of Mechanisms was invaluable and always had been. And despite being a millenium and a half younger than Odin, the king had still respected him highly among his council members, giving him a position to his left, second only in importance to the empty seat on the right that had been waiting to be filled either by Frigga or one of the far too young princes.

Loki bit his thumb, trying to remember the interactions between the All-Father and Howard. Loki had been so young back then, his memories more focused on playing tricks and convincing the kitchen servants to give him sweets. Politics were boring and not worthy of his childish mind.

Loki could remember a feast, though, so many years ago. Loki forgot what they were celebrating, but for some reason Lord Howard was seated at the royal table while Loki and Thor had to sit off to the side since they were still too young to eat with the adults. Loki had snuck under the table in hopes of creating some mischief or another. He remembered that Frigga had noticed him, but hadn’t said anything. She’d rested a hand on his head as he leaned against her leg lazily, playing with the soft hem of her dress.

The words were vague, blurred, but he remembered the All-Father and Howard arguing about Muspelheim. The God of Mechanisms wanted another war, but Odin was arguing that it hadn’t even been a full millenium since the last war. Odin called him greedy while Lord Howard said that the All-Father was blind, not seeing the imminent threat they posed. Odin ordered the other god to focus on Asgard’s defenses rather than warmongering.

Loki clearly remembered Howard storming off, because he knocked over a goblet of mead and the liquid fell onto Loki, making it look like he’d wet himself. Thor and Volstagg had made fun of him for the next three years.

There just had to be more than that. Half the council wanted to be at war at all times as a show of Aesir strength. The loss of their best weaponsmith far outweighed the trouble of arguing with one of the lords of Asgard.

Perhaps he would find out the truth one day from Tony, assuming that the other god actually knew the truth.

Loki remembered how both his fake parents warned him not to spend time with Tony in one fashion or another. Back then they said he was a bad influence on the younger god, or at least that was their excuse. Perhaps they were just wary because they didn’t know how much Tony knew about the death of his parents.

Either Odin underestimated the protection around Tony’s manor and thought he could steal all their methods given time or he had tried to only kill the parents, leaving the son who would be able to access all the information and was still young enough to be manipulated. Or maybe Odin was just arrogant. That thought made Loki grin.
Odin had been arrogant, thinking that Tony really didn’t know about what he did, even wearing the eye-patch he made him. The once horrendous thought of the metal boiling Odin’s eye now made Loki feel gleeful.

It really was perfect, the perfect humiliation, blinding him in front of the nobility of five of the nine realms, all important dignitaries or nobles. Loki wanted to twist the knife in Odin’s gut and show how truly devious the All-Father was.

He smiled bitterly, realizing that the two people he considered true friends both betrayed him at one point. At least Tony’s betrayal had been quick, only spanning over a few years instead of a lifetime of betrayal by his faux-mother.

Loki truly hoped that this wouldn’t be just another trick. All he could do now was to fortify himself against betrayal by learning new spells, keeping himself on guard, and not letting any old emotions cloud his judgment.
Chapter Notes

Thanks Temul!

Tony and Loki both looked over the data the buggles had collected. The small creatures had been sent off a week and a half prior and had been gathering data on their various targets since.

“Fascinating,” Tony said while staring at readings on Hank Pym.

“What is it?” Loki asked, not being able to make heads or tails of some of the readings.

“Biochemistry. He uses some sort of particle that is able to shrink him down so that he’s Ant-Man, it’s also capable of making him much larger.” Loki nodded, looking at the reading harder, trying to see what Tony could see.

After a few minutes he gave up, looking back over at Director Fury’s results. The mortal only slept four hours every day, two in the morning and two at night. He had a very strict routine of working out for five hours a day.

“His aging is odd,” Loki commented, surprised the director looked so young for his age, considering he was mortal.

“Yeah, he had some serum given to him, a weaker version of Captain America’s.” Tony paused. “Natasha took the same serum. It seems like the only people who are all-natural are the archer and Falcon.”

“Oh my little Hawkeye,” Loki said mockingly, picking up his readings. “He just loves to roost,” he mused while looking at the copious hours Clint spent asleep. The archer slept ten hours a night, only woken up by nightmares. “Perhaps I should visit his dreams again.”

“Play nice, Loki. He’s not our real target.” Loki scoffed.

“Perhaps you’ve been playing the villain for too long. You sound like you’re actually going soft.”

“Hey, I’m not telling you that you can’t. By all means, do what you want. We’re allies, equal in this, remember? That sort of teasing just gets boring really quickly. I usually just save those sort of things up for when they’re necessary for my plans.” Loki set aside the archer’s readings, giving them one last glance and being pleased with the sharpness of the archer’s eyes, making it clearer where his moniker came from.

Natasha’s readings were similar to Fury’s, both having used the same serum. She spent most of her day training and the rest of it with Clint. The analysis on her weapons was not that surprising, although he did gain a new respect for her when a buggle drew a picture of her taking down another SHIELD agent with only her thighs.
“I don’t think we really have to worry about Banner anymore,” Tony said. The doctor was staying in the Middle East and quickly losing what little weight he gained while in the US.

Falcon was the most human of the whole group, having neither foreign chemicals or radiation injected into him, nor irregularly sharp eyes born to him. All that was truly mentioned in the readings was his habit of flying around national parks late at night before going back to his home in Baltimore, and then for a run in DC. If need be they could easily target him on one of his runs. Though Loki doubted that would be necessary, considering the way Tony easily disabled his machine thanks to his ability to talk to the actual gears – as he demonstrated by unlocking one of the doors to his manor with a few hushed whispers to it.

Thor’s readings on the other hand made Loki laugh in a crazed manner. The other god was spending most of his time between New York or New Mexico, living purely off some sugary food and alcohol. Perhaps he finally broke the god after being hurt by him so many times. The god’s routine was on a four day rotation of staying in New York and then traveling back to New Mexico.

“We need to target this Jane Foster woman,” Loki said, his eyes slightly crazed.

“I agree, but I’d rather not kill her. I have a fondness for intelligence and she’s the leading mind in her field. Well, other than Selvig, but he’s a little out of the running right now.” Tony gave Loki a pointed look and Loki shrugged.

“He was necessary for my plans.”

“I know. No need for you to justify yourself to me.” Tony gave Loki a strange look that made the younger god feel slightly self-conscious. “We can do a kidnapping if you want.”

“When should we take her?”

“Probably while Thor is flying to New Mexico, let him find the wreckage we leave behind. Just remember that this is a side project, rather than our actual goal.”

“I know.” Loki brushed aside the issue all together. Tony made a humming noise before sitting in front of one of his computers. He’d combined magic and science in order to track the buggles’ locations easily. Everyone was where he’d expected them to be.

“I kind of want to destroy SHIELD,” Tony commented off-handedly. “I could pull it apart piece by piece until all that was left were a few Avengers and a powerless Fury.” Tony sighed. “If not for Pepper I’d probably just send this whole country into chaos, but no, she likes to play business leader of America.”

“You’re quite attached to that mortal,” Loki observed, feigning disinterest.

“She’s one of my few friends in this realm. She’s a hard worker who doesn’t put up with my bullshit.” Loki didn’t respond. “It’s good to have a few allies in each realm.”

“Even in Jotunheim?”

“Especially in Jotunheim. It’s the one place the Aesir really don’t want to go, even if they claim they really want to smash a few frost giants. Other than my manor that’s the safest place in all the realms for me. Although it’s probably not all that safe for you, all things considered. Very few Jotuns know that you’re not Aesir and the ones that did know I either killed or were already allied with me. Those agreed not to spread the information.”

“Why would you do that?” Loki asked, completely confused.
Information is power.” Tony winked at him and Loki was somewhat put off, not knowing what to say.

“My thanks,” he finally settled on.

“None necessary. At that point I thought you were dead. I liked being the only one who really knew.”

“How can you speak of the frost giants so easily, especially after they tortured you?” Loki asked some time later. The God of Metal did not immediately respond, instead he pulled off his shirt showing a myriad of scars.

“This one,” he said, putting his hand over the most prominent scar that was in the middle of his chest, “I received from the dark elves that tried to kill me and my parents. That was on Svartalfheim. This one,” he ran his hand over a long white gash that went from his hip to his solar plexus, “I got on Alfheim. These ones,” he gestured to his forearm, moving aside the glass bracelet that he always wore, “I got when I attacked the All-Father in Asgard.” He turned around. “These are from Muspelheim, before the war.” The upper half of his right shoulder blade was covered with three long gashes that appeared to be claw marks. “A gift from the ash wolves.” He pointed to a series of scars that followed the lines of his ribs. “These are from my time in Jotunheim. The one on my neck I got in Vanuaheim. I’ve been hurt in every accessible realm. At least with the frost giants I knew their motives and knew that their anger was directed towards the All-Father, a common enemy, although it took far too long for us all to realize this.” Tony paused, putting his shirt back on. “Any race, group, or species is capable of significant evil and inflicts such wounds. I’m not going to hold it against the frost giants that they hate the Aesir so much they felt the need to torture any that crossed their paths.”

“How can you not be disgusted by their kind?”

“They’re just another species, Loki. Just the same as the Aesir, Vanir, fire giants, and all the other ones.” Loki hissed.

“You do not know that.”

“I spent over two centuries with them, Loki. I think I learned a bit more than you, considering you were only there for an hour. Tales are just tales and the worst are always the ones built out of hate and lingering fear. Most of those bedtime stories were created while Asgard was still at war with Jotunheim and were continuously told. Before that the stories were about the Vanir and how they were traitorous and wont to practice the womanly arts, before that it was about the dark elves and their love of betrayal. Stories are always created to justify war. I’m sure if you went to Asgard right now and listened to the stories mothers tell their children it would be about the fire demons and dancers and how monstrous they are. They’d say Surtur was the worst being in all the realms and would eat all the bad children. It’s just how the universe works.”

“You lie. You always lie,” Loki said, his hands at his sides balling into fists, restraining himself from setting the whole room on fire.

“Do you want to go to Asgard and pretend to be little kids to see what they say? It would only take a day at most.”

The two sat in silence at an impasse. Loki wouldn’t budge and Tony wasn’t going to waste his breath on trying to change his mind.

“When we attack Asgard,” Tony finally said, “how do you want to handle the queen?” Loki paused
in thought.

“She knew, but she lied. She betrayed me just as Odin did, but worse. At least with Odin—” Loki’s voice broke and he quickly looked away from Tony, feeling ashamed by his own weakness. “I never loved Odin, but I loved her. I was just a stray mutt that she took in. She groomed me for a position she knew I would never be able to take. She claimed to love me, yet lied every day and encouraged me to do things that only isolated me and got me ridiculed. She built me up while simultaneously isolating me. I want her dead.” Tony didn’t respond for a long moment and Loki forced himself to look at the other god. His expression was nearly unreadable, but Loki thought he may have seen a spark of approval as Tony nodded.

“Then the queen and king will die by our hands,” Tony said with very little gusto. It gave Loki pause.

“You’ve had plenty of chances… to kill them. Why haven’t you?” Loki asked and Tony chuckled.

“Because then I’d have no one to play with.” Tony grinned impishly. “You can’t just think of revenge. You have to think about what comes after. If I had killed Odin and Frigga on my first attack, Asgard would have fallen into chaos along with a few other realms. Neither of you two were up to the task of properly leading, and even if you were it would not have been entertaining for me to fight an ‘Odinson’ since I had no real ill intent towards either of you. Everything would have been too messy and some of the more organized realms might not want to associate with me even behind closed doors. But with our plan I don’t have to worry about that.”

“Because you’ll have me to play with?” Loki really hated that word. It made something inside of him burn.

“In the best of ways, I assure you. I’ll say it as many times as I need to. I’m not going to betray you. Everything is much more fun now that we’re back together.” Tony’s smile was so open and charming that it shaved off a few hundred years from the god’s face, startling Loki.

“Back together…” The words hung between them heavily and Loki refrained from gnawing on his thumb to relieve tension.

“Give it time, Loki.” The God of Metal stood, once more looking his age. “You’re not the 1,600 year old that I once knew and you don’t know which aspects of me are real. We have a goal and a partnership. Let things unfold naturally.”
“Why did we decide to kidnap her again?” Tony asked in the silent language of the Hvit, a hand lazily cupping his chin as he spun a dagger around on the table. Loki glanced over at the mortal who was somehow still shouting through her saliva drenched gag.

“To gauge SHIELD’s response and to rile up Thor,” Loki responded, his eyes focussing again on the map on the table. Several buggles were slowly scurrying across the map at varying speeds, showing the location of the Avengers and Director Fury. Thor and Falcon were the closest. “You know either of us could easily silence her with a spell.” Loki glanced at the other god. Tony rolled his eyes.

“That would take away the whole dramatic effect, now wouldn’t it?” Tony gingerly lifted the dagger and sent it flying, lodging it into the wall, just centimeters away from Jane Foster’s face. She let out a shriek before beginning her muffled rant again. There were already four other daggers in the wall and Tony was too lazy to retrieve them, physically or otherwise. “Maybe I should just give her an equation and let her work it out.”

“Now that would take away from the dramatic effect.” Tony snorted in response before standing. He slowly put on the outer most parts of his armor. Loki observed him closely.

“The night of your attack...” Loki wasn’t sure how much of their conversation beforehand Tony remembered.

“What about it?” Tony gave him a curious look. His tone was very open.

“You said the red and gold of your armor stood for something, but when I asked you refused to answer.”

“Oh yeah. I’d forgotten about that.” Tony unsheathed his two swords, one blindingly golden while the other was a dark crimson. The human started ranting louder, tears running down her face. “It represents the blood that was spilt during Odin’s attack on my family and the gold and power he did it for.” Tony twisted both swords before flipping them upwards, both easily finding their sheaths on his back.

“The gold he—” Loki glanced at the human who instantly became quiet once she could understand them. “The gold he killed them for? I never truly did understand Odin the Unseeing’s motives for having you and your parents killed.”

“There was going to be a power shift. It had been in the working since before either of us were born. From what I heard while sitting in on meetings between Odin and my father he wanted to expand his business to Vanaheim, Svartalfheim, and Alfheim. I think the All-Father was afraid he was about to lose his weapon supremacy. I’m sure it didn’t help that my mother was Vanir and that my father spent most of his free time on Svartalfheim with the dwarves. It would have probably tripled our income at least, making us the richest family in Asgard and probably all the realms. My
father was going to unseat him.” Tony grinned devilishly. “And now his nightmare is going to come true and he won’t see it coming, literally.”

“Have I mentioned how much I enjoy how your mind works?” Loki felt a bit of heat flush his cheeks, and he did his best to push away the blush.

“Only once or twice.” Tony winked at him before switching to the All-Speak. “How do you want to kill Thor?” Tony asked and Loki could see the mortal’s eyes go wide.

“I’ve always hated that damn hammer of his. Perhaps you should melt it down and have it boil his eyes like you did to Odin.”

“Oh! Or I could have the molten metal go up his nose and pop his eyeballs out.” Tony offered as they both grinned at each other.

“How absolutely delightful!” Loki stood abruptly, disappearing the map and buggles. “I shall add them to the collection of other eyes I’ve plucked from skulls. My collection is almost complete. I need to kill a dark elf for their distinct irises.”

“I bet you don’t have any fire giant’s eyes,” Tony said in challenge and Loki gasped.

“You’re right! I don’t. Though I don’t really see how I can keep them in one of my jars. Won’t they just turn to stone when they cool?”

“Not if we keep the whole head animated. It would make a nice center piece at the dinner table.”

“We can put spiced wine next to it to keep it warm,” Loki added in, his eyes bright with humor. “Perhaps we should collect all the Avengers’ eyes,” Loki mused. “Though I am not certain that Hulk’s eyes might not switch back to Banner’s once he’s dead.”

“We’ll have to keep the head animated then, though I don’t think he’d make a very good centerpiece.” Tony frowned in an overdone manner.

“Very true. What should we do with the beast’s head?”

“Have you ever played the game PacMan? It’s a Midgardian game, so probably not.” Tony made a dismissive gesture. “We can just put him in the garden and watch him roll around, eating all the poisonous little animals.”

“Or we could set his head loose on Muspelheim, watch as his skin is slowly burned to the bone.”

“Naw, that wouldn’t work. It would just end up collecting molten lava, building it into a boulder.”

Just then, as both gods expected, there was an explosion and Thor and Falcon came swooping into the cliché abandoned warehouse.

“Loki!” Thor bellowed and Jane let out a sigh of relief through her gag. “Have you truly sunken this low?! Howardson is the worst of the worst. You’ve hated him for almost half your life!” Thor pulled out his hammer and Loki’s thoughts flashed back to the night so many years ago when they were in the training yard and Thor told him Tony was dead, right before breaking his arm.

“And I’ve hated you my whole life! What’s your point, Thor?” Loki pulled out an arsenal of throwing knives, as he wished he could have done that night. Each dagger glinted in the dim light.

“Come back with me, Loki. You are my brother. We can go back to Asgard and see mother. Don’t
take out your anger on the mortals.” Thor’s voice became soft.

“Oh, poor Thur, are you missing home? Do you think I’d hold your hand and lead you through the hidden passageways?” Loki let his concealing spell slide off. “Heimdall, hear me now! Asgard is not my home and I have no family, Aesir or otherwise! I shall see Odin’s blood run through my fingers and have all of Asgard bow at my feet!” Loki let out a laugh that he made purposefully sound crazed. “I am Loki No-One’s-Son, God of Mischief, Spreader of Lies, Dream-Walker, and blood will be my vengeance!” Loki threw the magical shroud back in place, hiding him from Heimdall. Tony clapped in appreciation, making Loki grin.

Thor’s mouth was slightly agape and Loki didn’t have to fake his laughter this time. Falcon tried to take advantage of Loki’s distraction, swooping in to rescue Jane, but Loki sent a dagger aiming straight for him. Thor tossed his hammer, hitting it out of the air. Tony compensated by sending the five daggers that were in the wall surrounding Jane’s head flying towards Falcon. The hero had to dive to avoid them. He opened his wings up at the last moment to keep from hitting the concrete floor.

Mjolnir came flying back to Thor’s hand. He swung it forward and Loki recognized the motion. Loki threw five of his daggers upwards while dodging to the side just as the ceiling burst open and a thunderbolt came crashing down. The bolt of electricity jumped from one dagger to the next, never meeting the ground or Loki.

“You’ll have to try harder than that! I’ve seen all your attacks while you haven’t even seen a fifth of mine! This is not a battle you’re going to win!” Loki shouted as Tony steadily sent out either bolts of magic or daggers to keep Falcon at bay.

“Loki, do you have the time perchance?” Tony asked, redirecting his attacks to distract both Avenges. Loki let out a little sigh and fished out his pocket watch.

“Half past noon,” he reported, titling his head slightly. He could hear the helicopters nearing. SHIELD’s response time wasn’t as terrible as Loki had at first expected. “I can take care of these two if you’d be so kind as to set fire to those outside.”

“It would be my pleasure.” Tony threw off two more daggers before giving a mock bow and turning on his heels. Thor went to throw Mjolnir at the retreating god, but Loki quickly distracted him by creating a shade that looked just like Frigga between Thor and Tony.

“No Thor!” she shouted and the eldest prince faltered, giving the God of Metal plenty of time to leave. Her kind face twisted into a copy of Loki’s. The shade and its creator laughed in unison, enraging Thor. He ran forward recklessly, hammer raised. Loki grinned widely and pulled out his scepter while erecting another shade of himself in front of Jane, to keep Falcon at bay.

Outside he could hear an explosion as one of the helicopters crashed as he met Thor’s attacks head on. The glass panes that were still intact after Thor plowed into the building both physically and with thunder were blasted open, glass raining down. Jane screamed, a long shard of glass gashing across her face, ripping the cloth gag.

Thor took in a strangled gasp and tried to run over to her. Loki quickly tripped him with his scepter. He slashed at his prone form, cutting through the cape and armor. Thor rolled away, blood smearing on the grey floor.

“No!” Jane shouted, trying to stand up. A second shade appeared, pushing her back down.

“We wouldn’t want Thor to abandon his favorite mortal whore because she has an ugly new scar,
now would we?” the shade asked her mockingly, cupping her bleeding cheek.

“Get away from her, Loki!” Thor shouted, jumping off the ground and glancing at the three different Lokis. He went to rush to Jane again, causing the real Loki to scoff and attack his vulnerable back. Thor was minimally more prepared this time. He swung around, sending Mjolnir flying in Loki’s direction. He dodged while sending a fourth shade to meet Thor face on before he could reach Jane.

The shade that was kneeling in front of Jane finished healing her face a moment later before shoving a handful of dirty fabric in her mouth so she wouldn’t have to hear her whining.

Mjolnir came flying from behind him, but Loki was expecting it and easily moved out of its path. It made its way to its owner’s hand.

There was another explosion outside and Loki grinned. Loki silently directed two of his shades to team up, one launching the other up and towards Falcon. The mechanically winged hero swooped to the side, just as Loki expected him to. One of the daggers he’d used to redirect Thor’s thunder was embedded in the wall, just a few inches away from where Falcon was heading. With the twitch of his little finger the dagger flicked out of the wall and to the flying hero. He barrel rolled out of the way of the knife, hitting the wall hard.

“A bird really shouldn’t be in confined places,” Loki commented. “Although Hawkeye flourished when he was in my cage.” This enraged Falcon who changed his target to the god. Loki let his three shades play with Thor as he engaged Falcon in combat. Falcon’s flight capabilities weren’t that helpful in the current circumstances, and Loki wasn’t going to fall for his grappling hook trick again.

“Capsicle is heading in your direction!” Tony shouted in the silent language. Loki glanced backwards while sending off a blast of magic to keep Falcon back. He had just enough time to twist out of the way of Captain America’s new shield. There was the distinct sound of bullets hitting metal outside. “You ready to head home?” Loki frowned at the word ‘home’ while roundhouse kicking Captain America in the head. He glanced around. He supposed they had accomplished their goals.

“Very well.” A moment later he felt the magic of the Tesseract flair up. A portal formed in front of him and he stepped through it. The wormhole closed behind him. A moment later another opened and Loki could see a smoldering helicopter through the doorway as Tony walked through it. It closed with a strange static noise, leaving the silence of Tony’s manor surrounding them.

Both gods were grinning widely. Tony’s armor was blood splattered but Loki highly doubted it was the god’s blood. He was still wielding one of his swords, the other was sheathed on his back. Blood was dripping from the golden blade, ruining the pristine carpet.

Without warning they both burst out laughing before heading to the dining room for dinner and to tell their side of the tale.
“They’re crazy.” It was the first thing Jane said when Thor freed her. “They were talking about popping your eyeballs out and keeping severed heads on their table. They’re crazy!” He pulled the small woman into his arms, not wanting to believe her. “I’m sorry, Thor. I don’t think you’ll be able to save him. Whatever madness came from falling into the Void has only gotten worse now that he’s with Howardson.”

“Come, my dearest Jane.” He wiped away at her bloodstained face. “He healed your wound.” Thor wasn’t sure if that was a good or bad thing. Fresh tears ran down her face, cutting through the dried blood.

“He said he was healing it because if I was ugly you’d—” Jane stopped herself short, glancing around at the various SHIELD agents that were slowly surrounding them and sweeping the area. “Is Darcy alright? Loki hit her on the back of her head with his staff and she just dropped like a dead person. Please tell me she’s alright.” More tears were falling from her eyes.

“She’s been hospitalized, but is awake now,” Natasha said while walking over to them with a cell phone in her hand. “She insisted that we call the second we knew you were alright.” Jane grabbed the small device and almost immediately Thor could hear Darcy’s muffled voice start ranting. Natasha tilted her head to the side slightly, beckoning for him to follow her.

“What do you think their goal was?” she asked in her usual monotone as Steve joined them. Sam was sitting on the table getting his arm stitched up.

“Howardson has a tendency to issue attacks that are meant more to dishonor than harm, but he usually doesn’t show up this often. Now that he has the Tesseract…” Thor’s words trailed off.

“The Tesseract and Loki are what’s new to his equation,” Steve added in, causing Thor’s frown to deepen.

“When they were friends they would often disappear for days on end. Before he came back from the dead Loki’s tricks were usually harmless, yet after they met and were friends the complexity of his tricks increased and were more prone to cause damage.”

“So Howardson is the gasoline to Loki’s fire.” Natasha pursed her lips and Sam came over, his mechanical wings folded.

“He did clap after Loki made the stereotypical evil villain speech.” Sam said. He glanced at Thor. “No offense,” he added in for good measure. The god just nodded sadly.

“If they really didn’t want us to find her, Howardson would have ditched Jane’s phone. He did a whole symposium on how cell phones can be used to track people when I was pretending to be his
personal assistant.” Natasha glanced around the nearly empty warehouse. The noise of heavy boots over broken glass was constant as SHIELD agents were canvassing the area, looking for clues. She caught Clint’s eyes as he walked in, cradling his sprained wrist, courtesy of Howardson.

“At the end his lips were moving strangely, but it was different than when he cast a spell, but I’m not sure how,” Clint added in, joining the group.

“Oh! The same thing happened before you all arrived.” Jane walked over, her cell phone still at her ear. “Their lips were moving and their facial expressions kept changing and Howardson even winked at Loki. They were definitely conversing, but I don’t know how.” Thor sighed in realization.

“There’s a language that even the All-Speak can’t understand. To anyone normal it sounds like sighs,” Thor explained, vaguely remembering when they all went to capture Amora on Alfheim.

“Fuck magic,” Clint growled.

“They were after something today and the fact that they left so peacefully proves that they got whatever it was,” Natasha stated.

“You count this as peaceful?” Sam joked, gesturing around them and to his own arm.

“No one died.” Thor let out a slow breath. “Howardson once killed 300 honorable Aesir in under five minutes. I’ve trained with Loki since we were both children. His daggers never miss their marks, and he spoke the truth when he said I don’t know a fifth of his fight maneuvers. He trained his magic skills in private and didn’t even use them that often when all of Asgard was at war for seventy years. I’m sure he is only improving his skills further now that he is with another mage.” Thor looked at the faces of his mortal friends. He couldn’t help but feel responsible. Howardson and Loki were citizens of Asgard, yet they were pestering a realm that had such short lived creatures. It felt so petty to him. “I received word from one of the All-Father’s ravens. My mother is traveling to Midgard. She should know more about Loki’s abilities and hopefully talk some sense into him.”

“I thought you said there was no way to get to and from Asgard,” Sam said and Clint nodded in agreement. Thor let out a humorless laugh.

“There is no way for those who don’t have a good control of their magic. But my mother is a renowned mage and my father’s ravens are creatures of magic. Neither of them has any problem traveling the branches.”

“Branches?” Clint asked, already fed up with all this magic mumbo-jumbo.

“Complex astrophysics,” Jane said, jumping into the conversation again and handing Natasha the SHIELD issued cell phone. “When will her highness be joining us— Oh god! I’m going to meet your mother!” Jane covered her mouth with her hand and Thor chuckled. He pulled her into his arms again.

“She raises a good question,” Steve said while looking away from the reunited couple.

“We think she shall arrive in a Midgard in a moon’s time. She is travelling with many for her safety and very few mages visit your realm since magic is so rare here. The path is not as clear as it is to some of the other realms.”

“Fuck magic,” Clint said again while turning away from the group. “I’m just going to go give my report at HQ.” Natasha followed him out silently.
“Thor, you might want to get your back checked out. It looks pretty bad,” Steve, the unofficial leader of their group, said. The god had completely forgotten the burning pain on his back. Jane went behind him and gasped.

“Tis nothing. The last time our weapons crossed I had no armor on and received two scars for my trouble. This slash barely made it through my armor. It will heal in a day’s time.”

“Must be nice to be a god or a super soldier.” Sam glanced at each blond in turn before chuckling and heading in the direction the two agents went.
A meal always tasted best after a good fight. His time in Muspelheim taught him that. What Tony taught him was the joys of a good drink after a battle.

Both gods were sprawled lazily in a room he hadn’t had access to before. Long ago it must have been a stage for actors, but now Tony had installed some of his technology from Midgard. It was a flat screen that told various stories and that Loki found absolutely delightful. It was similar to dream-walking, but this way used far less energy and usually had some logic to it.

What made it even better as they ate and drank easily was when Tony mentioned that there were countless little stories and series that he could pick up next time he was in Midgard. Loki couldn’t hold back his joy at the thought of a new form of entertainment. Living years on end could get quite boring.

Tony introduced him to popcorn which he immediately hated. They then went through the ‘overpriced theater food’ as Tony called it. The younger god became addicted to Red Vines and Tony promised him that they’d raid a warehouse of them next time they were in Midgard.

They were both sprawled out on separate couches when Jarvis flew in silently, making a soft cooing noise as he landed beside Tony.

“News?” Loki asked while pausing the nonsensical series they were watching.

“Yup, some good and some bad. SHIELD is starting to develop weapons that don’t have metal in them, an investment I’ve been cultivating in Midgard is starting to pay off, and a bit of news from the palace.” Tony made a humming noise, his head slightly tilted to the side.

“Are you going to make me beg?” Loki asked sarcastically.

“No, I was just getting all the details. Odin’s greatest treasure is on the move.” Loki’s thought immediately snapped to the vault deep in the bowels of the palace. Was it the gauntlet or one of Odin’s many other relics? His pulse began to race at the thought of crippling Odin further.

“What treasure?” Loki’s eyes were bright with excitement and his fingers curled inwards, feeling power pool in his palms.

“His wife.” Tony’s simple statement caused Loki to freeze.

Countless different emotions crashed down on him. The strongest was a thousand needles of hatred stabbing into his heart all at once. Love that was built on countless lies lay shattered in his soul. An
exhilarated high left him light headed.

His jaw quivered. He felt an animalistic need to destroy everything— to pull apart warm guts, to watch chaos unfold, to taste the ash of a burning kingdom on his tongue and breathe out destruction.

He would make them all pay. All of them, even Tony—

“…Loki, you in there?” Tony, the God of Metal, his partner and former friend, a traitor, but now… “Come on. You can’t freak out on me. We have plans to make, people to kill, and candy to eat.”

Tony held a Red Vine in front of the younger god’s face and Loki slapped it aside and quickly stood up. Tony hopped backwards deftly, his expression going blank. “You want to tell me what’s going on in that pretty head of yours?” Tony’s voice was calm, patient.

Loki felt anger burning him up inside. He closed his eyes, trying to find something, anything that would calm him down.

But what did he have left? He had no home, no family, no friends. All he had was a tentative partnership with a god that once destroyed him. That and… revenge.

Revenge against Odin.

Revenge against Frigga.

Revenge against Thanos.

And perhaps, one day revenge against Tony, but not today.

Today was for laying down the foundation.

Today was for building his arsenal.

Today was for sculpting tomorrow.

The pieces started falling back into place. What was left of his sanity pieced itself back together, new plans were forming. Ideas sparked to life and were smothered just as quickly. Contingencies for plans he’d never enact. New twists for the knives he’d stab. It was so beautiful…

It was so clear to him. The future was at his feet. And Tony would help him get there.

“Where is she going?” Loki finally asked. Tony’s expression softened.

“To Midgard. She’s with an envoy of mages. One of my spies is traveling with them. I’ll have more information on the different mages in a day or two. They shouldn’t be a problem though, if you’re thinking about an ambush,” Tony said while pulling up a chair and sitting down. Loki flopped down onto the couch, all energy leaving him.

“No, an ambush is far from subtle.” Loki made a dismissive hand motion while looking away from the other god.

“If you haven’t noticed, I’m not very subtle.” Tony held back a grin and Loki snorted. “Do you have something in mind?”

“Of course.” Loki sat up primly, contrasting greatly with Tony’s slouching.

“Of course, he says. Well sharing is caring, sweetheart.” Tony leaned forward, resting his elbow
on the armrest heavily.

“Don’t call me that.” Loki crossed his arms over his chest, feigning annoyance.

“Loki, tell me.” Tony whined obnoxiously and lightly kicked Loki’s shin. The younger god raised his chin haughtily, looking at the paused screen above Tony’s head. “Loki, come on. Tell me.” The God of Metal leaned back in his seat, mirroring Loki’s terse posture. “I guess I’ll just have to nuke every Red Vine factory in Midgard, which would make these,” Tony held up the packaged candy, “the very last Red Vines in all the nine realms.”

“The dark elves have a similar candy.” Loki kept up his façade.

“Whoops,” Tony said as the bag of candy caught on fire. Loki held in a pained noise, but it somehow still came out.

“I shan’t be so easily persuaded to give up valuable information.” Loki refused to look at the smoldering bag.

“Jarvis, I need a list of all Red Vine factories. We’ll nuke the whole area. Actually let’s nuke the whole realm,” Tony said, his eyes squarely set on Loki’s.

“You’ll kill Ms. Potts. You won’t have anyone to ‘play’ with.” Loki mocked him, calling his bluff.

“Pep will be dead in a few decades anyway. I’ll always have my business and Asgard.” Tony tossed aside the bag, the scent of burnt plastic filling the room. A portal appeared beside them and Loki recognized the inside of Stark Tower, Tony’s lab. The God of Metal lazily stood up. “I guess we’re going to play it your way.” Tony walked through the portal and Loki could see a panel flip open in his peripheral. Tony began typing away. “You’re just going to let me destroy a whole realm, you psychopath,” Tony mumbled.

“You’re the one who’s going to kill all the humans. You’re the psychopath,” Loki accused. Tony glanced over at him through the wormhole.

“So we’re going to play the Who’s the Psychopath game.” A slow grin formed on Tony’s face. It was all sharp edges, reminding Loki of the star shaped locks all over the manor. That smile was dangerous.

Tony flipped the panel closed and walked back into the manor, the portal closing behind him.

“It seems like you’re losing,” Loki commented, running a hand through his hair carelessly.

“Am I, Lokes?” His green eyes immediately snapped to Tony.

“Don’t call me that,” Loki growled out, feeling his anger flare up again. The lies— The feeling of being used.

“Am I a psychopath?” Tony asked, falling into his seat across from Loki. “I mean, I act like one.” A dagger appeared in Tony’s hand. He flipped it into the air then caught it easily. “You’re the one who wants to kill the people who raised him.” Tony gave him a sly look.

“You’re the one who maimed an old man,” Loki accused.

“You’re the one who is trying to distract me from your plan.”

“You’re the one who suggested this game, Tony.” Loki grabbed his drink and downed it.
“You stabbed your own brother.”

“You used me.”

“And you liked it.” The glass in Loki’s hand exploded as he launched himself forward. He slashed at Tony’s throat with a shard of glass. The older god met the strike with his dagger. With his other hand he grabbed Loki’s wrist. “Well, maybe I liked it.” Tony’s grin was infuriating. Loki head butted him and was satisfied by the sickening noise of Tony’s nose cracking. “Fuck!”

“Did you like that?” Loki shouted, freeing his arm. He imbued the glass with magic, strengthening it as he aimed for Tony’s jugular. His hand was batted aside and a sharp punch to his gut made him tense. Loki dropped the shard, catching it with his other hand. “Can’t fight against glass, can you?!” He rammed it right into Tony’s stomach. Heat snaked up his hand and arm.

“I always knew you’d have your hands on my belt buckle, just didn’t think it would be so soon.” Tony chuckled and Loki tried to pull back. His arm was trapped, fingers bloodied, the shard in Tony’s stomach. He couldn’t move back so he moved forward. “You’re kind of a bitch,” Tony grunted as the glass was pushed deeper.

“And you’re kind of an asshole,” Loki responded while twisting the piece of glass.

“You know, when I pictured us in this position there wasn’t this much blood.” Despite his broken nose Tony smiled, revealing bloodied teeth. Loki paused, his rational mind flaring back to life. He glanced down at them. Tony was straddling Tony’s legs, one arm at a perfect right angle, his fingers still gripping the glass that was lodged in the other god’s stomach. Loki’s other arm was captured by Tony, held high and at an awkward angle.

Suddenly Loki was pulled forward as his arm was yanked downward. The shard was pushed deeper into Tony’s stomach and Loki cringed as he was stabbed in the side. They were chest to chest, one arm trapped between them while the other was held tightly to his side. Loki’s chin was forced onto Tony’s shoulder and Loki briefly considered sinking his teeth into Tony’s neck, but decided against it, considering the other god was in the same position.

Tony’s bloodied goatee scratched against him as Loki tried to free the hand at his side and pull the dagger out. Tony’s strength was overwhelming, the dagger being pulled higher, splitting Loki further.

“I hate you more than anyone else in all the nine realms right now,” Loki said through the pain. He could feel Tony’s chest rumble as he laughed. It only incited the younger god more. He began calling a spell to himself.

“Don’t,” Tony said, losing all the humor in his voice. “I don’t even need to cast a spell to cause this dagger to explode inside of you.” The metal in Loki’s side started heating up. He wanted to squirm away, but he was trained as an Aesir. Aesir did not squirm. Instead, Loki pushed the dagger in deeper.

“Then do it. I’m not about to stop fighting you,” Loki growled out. Tony’s grip on him tightened and the heat began radiating outwards.

“You think I haven’t wanted to kill you a million times over just because of who your father was? I used to dream about it. When I was a little 900 year old it was the only thing I thought about, burying all four of you under the plains of Muspelheim. It’s what kept me alive.” Tony’s voice was just a whisper. “I got over it.” Tony pulled the dagger from Loki’s side and the metal twisted around his arm snaked away. “And you will, too.” The God of Metal let him go and Loki sat
frozen. He didn’t know if he wanted to sink the glass in further or pull away.

His fingers tightened around the shard, slicing his own flesh.

“Damn it!” Loki shouted while moving backwards. He threw the bloody piece of glass against the wall before storming back to his room.
“You think you’re so clever,” Loki said while leaning back in the rolling chair that the humans tended to favor.

“That’s because I am clever.” Tony glanced away from the computer screen to grin at the other god. “It’s like a video game.”

“This is a waste of time.” Loki pushed his chair back and forth.

“You don’t have to be here if you don’t want to be.” A portal back to Tony’s manor appeared behind them. Loki pursed his lips, but didn’t leave. The wormhole fizzled away.

“You’re such a child,” Loki commented as the screen flashed with an explosion.

“In my defense, I never had a childhood.” Tony toggled a joystick and the view of the camera changed.

“The dwarves would have taken you in,” Loki said absentmindedly, pulling a Red Vine out of a bag and eating it idly. Tony snorted.

“And become their lap dog? I think not.” Tony tapped out new orders on the keyboard and SHIELD agents were deployed to a different area.

“You’re paranoid.” Loki waved one of the candies in Tony’s direction.

“My parents were killed. All of Asgard wants me dead. There’s a high price on my head. I’ve literally been stabbed in the back. Paranoia has kept me alive.” Tony reached over and tried to take one of the Red Vines. Loki swatted away his hand. “I bought you those,” Tony complained.

“Yes, you bought them for me. Not for yourself.” Loki flicked his finger and one of the screws holding Tony’s chair together came out, causing the older god to fall out of his seat. Loki snickered.

“Fucking God of Mischief,” Tony mumbled under his breath while fixing the chair with magic and quickly getting back to the keyboard to fend off SHIELD’s paltry attempts to back hack him.

The bag was suddenly plucked from Loki’s hands. He threw a dagger at Jarvis, letting out an indignant noise. The raptor dropped the bag on Tony’s left side, out of Loki’s reach. Tony grabbed it and swiveled his chair, using the backrest to shield himself. He grabbed a bundle of the candies with one hand, continuing to type with the other.

Loki stabbed Tony through the back of the chair, purposefully missing all his vitals.
“How’s that for being stabbed in the back?!” Loki shouted as Tony lurched forward.

“Oh no.” Tony made an overdramatic coughing noise. “Now the vines are red because I coughed blood on them,” Tony said overdramatically. Loki twisted the chair around and true to Tony’s word there was blood flecked all over the bag and candies, but not because Loki had stabbed him. The other god had bitten his lip bloody, spitting it everywhere.

“I will destroy you and everything you love!” Loki shot green fire from his hands. The computer exploded, shrapnel flying everywhere. He began setting everything on fire.

“Alright. Enough fucking around.” Tony stood up as smoke began quickly filling the small room. Another portal opened and Tony moved faster than Loki had ever seen him before. The God of Metal grabbed Loki around his waist, hoisting him up and over his shoulder. Loki began pounding Tony’s back with his fists as he walked them through the portal. Sunlight engulfed them and Loki was thrown onto a soft forest floor. “You’re such an asshole,” Tony mumbled while clutching his bleeding back.

“I know.” Loki cackled loudly before performing a displacement spell. A new bag of his favorite candy appeared between his hands.

“You’re taking the crazy villain thing a bit too seriously,” Tony said as he sat down on the moss covered ground. Loki held out the bag towards the other god. Tony let out a huff of a laugh before accepting the offered candy.

Chapter End Notes

Not the longest chapter and a bit crackish. Hope you don't mind :)}
Loki breathed in deeply before letting the air out slowly.

He could do this. Everything was already in place. All he had to do was play his part. If there was one thing he could do it was play a part.

Frigga’s envoy was larger than Loki originally thought it would be. Perhaps Odin the Unseeing wasn’t as blind as Loki wished he was.

It didn’t matter though. Everything would fall into place. Everything already had fallen into place.

The envoy was moving slowly as it traversed the branches of Yggdrasil. He watched the expressions of the forward most mages. They were all blind to the traps that laid ahead.

Loki felt an odd mixture of anticipation and anxiety.

He had faced countless battles, yet this was different. This was—

The sound of ice cracking was ear splitting. The screams that followed were less so.

Loki descended upon them with a thousand different spells on the tip of his tongue. He slashed through the first three mages that were stunned from the initial explosion. The next three were felled by his daggers.

They started to coordinate their attacks. Loki let his senses widen, feeling the different rhythms of the spells. Just from the hand gestures and whispered words. He could decipher most of them, but there was always going to be a spell or two he didn’t recognize.

Luckily Tony’s spy had been quite detailed about the different abilities the mages had.

The few that were stupid enough to attack him head on either met their ends by his scepter or dagger. He conserved his magic, just in case.

“Stop!” Frigga’s clear voice rang through the cracking of magic and metal. The group surrounding Loki hesitated and the god resisted the urge to snarl at them. He was still poised to attack. “Loki, please stop this.” She pulled down the hood of her long cloak while stepping forward.

“No, I won’t stop until all wrongs done against me are righted.” He kept his voice controlled,
knowing this moment was critical.

“You think violence will make you feel better?” Frigga’s voice was soft, her eyes understanding. It enraged Loki, but he did not let it show. He had spent far too many years keeping himself from cringing when rude comments were whispered about him to let his control slip now.

“So you have a better idea?” Loki asked sarcastically. The ball of energy in his hand glowed brighter.

“Come home. You are my son no matter what. Revenge will only break your heart. It will break my heart.” Frigga tried to take another step towards him, but her attendants blocked the way.

“If I ever go back to Asgard it will be to burn it down.”

“How can you not see how much we love you? Come home and I’ll show you.” Loki’s face showcased conflicting hope and anger.

“Why would I need to go there to know that? Why not just come with me if you truly believe you can convince me not to take my vengeance?” he asked slyly. She froze and Loki got a sick satisfaction from that.

“Your majesty, you can’t,” one of her attendants said.

“But I must. Loki may have broken the law, but he is still my son.” Frigga pushed aside the mages that were blocking her way. Loki held out a hand for her. She hesitantly stepped forward. He clasped onto her dainty hand before stepping backwards and pulling her through a portal that suddenly appeared behind him. He could hear the outcry of Frigga’s various attendants before there was a sudden silence as the wormhole closed.

“You’re mine now!” Loki said overdramatically as the form in front of him shifted from Frigga’s guise to Tony.

“Oh shut up,” Tony said while grinning. “You played your part well.”

“Thank you.” Loki gave a mock bow.

“That went perfectly. I’m sure one of the mages will report back to Odin about her betrayal or at least Heimdall will,” Tony commented. His expression hardened. “Frigga is in the next room. Do as you will. I’m heading to Muspelheim to wrap up a few business deals.” Before Loki could respond, a wormhole appeared and Tony stepped through it.

The younger god held back a sigh and a dagger appeared in his hand. This was the moment he was most conflicted about. He knew what he needed to do. He could feel what he needed to do, yet it still hurt to think about it, to end her life. He knew that if he asked that Tony would do it, that he would kill her without a second thought, but Loki needed this closure. He needed to put to rest the anger he had for her continuously lying and alienating him all those years.

She was always the one who told him tales on how disgusting the Jotun were. She was the one who was constantly pushing for him to take care of the older prince during one of his ‘adventures’. She had used him and he was not one to be used.

Even so, he still paced in front of the door that lead to the woman he once loved as a mother. His grip on the dagger kept loosening and tightening in quick succession.

“I can do this,” he whispered to himself.
The only good thing about her constant manipulation was that it had given him enough time alone to become a powerful mage, but now he would use that against her.

Finally he unlocked the door with a few twists of the silver star lock. She was sitting ramrod straight in the uncomfortable chair that she was bound to magically by Tony.

“Loki.” Her voice sounded both relieved and pained.

“Frigga,” Loki said, no ounce of warmth in his voice. Her blue eyes widened slightly.

“That Howardson kidnapped me.” Norns, he hated her voice. It was always so soft. So perfectly suited for lying to a child.

“I know,” Loki eventually said. “I was the one who wanted him to kidnap you.”

“What? Why?”

“Because you hurt me.”

“Oh Loki, I never meant to hurt you! You’re my son—”

“Shut up! I won’t listen to any more of your lies.”

Frigga snapped her mouth closed, her fair eyebrows wrinkling. It made Loki hate her all the more. How could he not have noticed how different he looked from all of them, with their blond hair and blue eyes? What was worse was the glamour that Odin had put onto him could have easily been manipulated so that he would look like them, but instead the king had purposefully made him stand out—alienated him before he could even walk. Always the odd one out.

“I’m going to kill you,” he stated simply, both to scare her and reassure himself. “You lied to me. You alienated me. You pushed me into a hole of self-doubt.” He let his Aesir guise slip away.

“You should have either left me out there to die or at least let me know I was a political prisoner.”

“My love, it was never—”

“Shut up.” He could feel tears burning across his skin as they fell against his will. “At least if I had known I was a political prisoner I would have understood why they all hated me, why I was scorned for being who I am.” He could see that she wanted to say something, but with a spell he learned from Tony her tongue was stilled. “I’m going to kill you,” he repeated, glancing down at the dagger in his hand. “Damn you and damn Thor. Damn Odin. At least Odin didn’t pretend to love me. He let everyone know what he thought of me.” Loki chuckled humorlessly. “But you…” He took in a deep breath trying to calm down. “You let them make fun of me and even encouraged me to do the things that made the Aesir think I was strange. Is my title even God of Mischief? Or is that just another one of your ploys?!"

Loki tossed the dagger at her and it embedded itself just a hair’s breadth higher than her left shoulder.

“All I could think about, other than the pain when I was being tortured, was how you knew all along. You made it clear that I was never Thor’s equal. I was either his babysitter or his toy, but never his equal.” Another dagger appeared in his hand. “Norns, I wished I had gone with Tony on my 1,700th name day. At least he…” Loki’s words trailed off.

“He knew how sick you all were. And now look at me,” Loki held his arms wide. “Look how sick I am because of you all!” He pounced forward and stabbed her in the thigh. Frigga let out a
muffled scream. “Look how sick you made me!” he shouted into her face while pulling out the dagger and holding onto the wound so that she wouldn’t bleed too much. “Look how sick I am… because of you. Because of Odin the Unseeing.” He stabbed her other leg. “I should have let Tony kill you the day he blinded Odin, but I was a sympathetic fool and I didn’t understand. I didn’t understand…” His voice became soft and he stepped away from her, taking his two daggers with him.

He turned away from her, not able to stand looking at her tear stained face. Thoughts of the many times of when she wiped away his tears came to mind, but then he remembered most of the time those tears were caused by the Aesir being cruel to him. There was also her paltry scolding of Thor that never dissuaded him from being an arrogant prick.

Loki remembered all the times he’d tried to go his own way, to refine his combat skills while using daggers and scepters instead of the swords, axes, and warhammers the Aesir tended to favor, how Thor had made fun of him and Frigga offhandedly said that she only fought with daggers because she was a woman. How many other comments had there been that he hadn’t noticed or simply blocked out?

So much of his childhood were memories that he’d pushed down, unable to keep what little of his sanity he had left, if he thought too hard on them.

Loki remembered all the times she discouraged him from trying to build up his muscle mass, subtly telling him he never would so he should just work on his speed since he could never be quite as strong as his ‘brother’. How she told him that playing tricks on the Aesir would show them how clever he was, yet it always ended up getting him in trouble or isolating him further.

He was already too far to turn back now, not that he wanted to turn back. He had never had this much fun before. He felt free… like this was the life he was supposed to live, free of obligations, a life where he could hone his skills and sharpen his mind with plans of conquest and triumph. He would no longer be bound by what the Aesir considered *honorable*.

This was his life now and he would not be judged by idiotic, manipulative Aesir.

This was his life now and he loved it. He refused to let such a petty thing as sentimentality hold him back.

With that thought he hardened his expression and turned back towards her. He almost laughed when he realized that she had lost so much blood that she was almost as pale as him.

Loki disappeared one of his daggers knowing one would be able to finish her easily enough. He slowly stepped forward, towering over her petite form. He looked at the already bloodied knife.

With a quick motion he slit her throat, arterial spray gushing all over his armor. Her head quickly lolled forward, hiding the malice he was certain he saw in her blue eyes.

Yes, this was his life now and he loved it.

Chapter End Notes
Please read *Comfortably Numb* before carrying on.
Loki looked at the bathwater, faint traces of blood mixing with the suds. Frigga’s body was still cooling in a distant room. He knew either Tony or Jarvis would take care of the body, once he got back from conducting business in Muspelheim.

Loki felt so… strangely carefree. In a way he had never felt before.

A weight had been lifted from his soul and he almost felt high.

Loki let out a childish giggle before dunking himself underwater, bubbles of laughter still escaping. A moment later he emerged and grabbed a bottle of soap. He lathered up his long hair while humming to himself.

Maybe he should take a trip to Alfheim, take part in some of the more lecherous activities that happened so openly there. He hadn’t partaken in carnal pleasures since his last romp with Lorelei, before she went and got married. And that had been almost three centuries ago.

He’d have to have Tony drop him off there with the Tesseract sometime, otherwise it would take weeks to get there using Yggdrasil.

When he finished his bath and changed into some of his more relaxed outfits he slowly walked to the kitchen. He was surprised to find Jarvis there. He had expected the avian to be with his master, unless Tony was already back, which was unlikely.

A plate of food was set out and Loki raised a questioning eyebrow. Jarvis bobbed his head and Loki took his plate with a nod of thanks.

Norns, that bird spoiled him.

Loki was surprised when Tony appeared the next day. He had expected that he’d be gone for at least a week.

The younger god was still in a good mood from his shedding of a burden yesterday, laying on the couch while watching one of his TV shows. Jarvis was roosted in the crook of Loki’s arm. The golden eagle didn’t bother to acknowledge its master, making Loki grin.

“You’re back sooner than expected,” Loki stated blandly, not pulling his eyes away from the television.

Tony plopped down at the foot of the long couch and Loki scowled, but didn’t comment. Tony
began playing with the clasps on Loki’s boots. The younger god kicked him roughly and Tony chuckled.

“I was thinking we could go out and do something fun to celebrate our victory,” Tony said after watching two episodes in silence. Loki was minimally impressed that the other god had weathered the episodes since he made it quite clear that he hated reality TV shows.

“What do you have in mind?” Loki asked blandly, still not averting his eyes from the television.

“Nothing specific, so long as we’re together.” Tony grinned and Loki kicked him hard in the side. If an interesting episode hadn’t just begun, Loki would have simply teleported away.

“Alfheim,” Loki stated after a few moments passed. It had been on his mind since yesterday.

“Where on Alfheim?” Loki considered his question briefly. He had originally planned on going to one of the brothels, but knew Tony would tease him relentlessly if he did so.

“A beach, somewhere sunny.” The complete opposite of the Void.

“I know the perfect place.” Tony stood while grinning and shifting his appearance. Loki followed suit. The portal opened and a soft breeze flowed in, automatically making Loki relax.

They had been lounging around for hours on the beach front when Tony suddenly perked up.

“Mora-Mora, is that you?” Tony called out, startling Loki out of his alcohol-and-food induced daze. He looked around with listless eyes, but didn’t see the blonde, only a plethora of scantily clad light and dark elves. He couldn’t sense the Aesir with his magic either.

One of the elves paused while taking her sunglasses off. Seconds later she sent it flying at the God of Metal’s head. It hit him right between the eyes.

“Damn it, Tony! How can you always tell it’s me?!” Amora stormed over, still shape shifted as a light elf. Neither god deemed it necessary to get up from their lounge chairs.

“Darling, if there’s anything I know about you it’s that you love your hips.” Tony made a grabby motion with his hands. “You never change them, no matter what form you take.” She practically fell into his lap, his hands settling onto her hips.

“And you always give yourself a few extra inches of height.” She ran a hand through his long, false ivory colored hair. “You’re so ugly like this.”

“You always say the nicest things to me.” Tony’s hands traveled lower. She glanced sideways.

“Who’s your friend?” Amora eyed the disguised god.

“You don’t recognize me?” Loki asked darkly, green bolts of energy jumping between his fingers as he leaned towards her—accidentally knocking over their drinks and ruining the effect completely. “Hello, Amora,” Loki said while slumping back into his seat.

“Loki,” she said with distaste, “I thought you were dead.”

“A common misconception.” Loki gestured for one of the staff to bring over more drinks, but went unseen. Amora draped herself completely over Tony, burying her face in the crook of his neck.

“And what are you doing with him, Tony-All-Alony?” Amora asked, whispering into the god’s
ear, just loud enough for Loki to hear.

“Clearly we’re on vacation,” Tony responded, running a hand up and down her side. Loki pointedly looked away from them, annoyed by the waiter’s inattention.

“On vacation from what, dearest?”

Tony sat up straight, causing her to move away from him slightly. She pouted while playing with the collar of his shirt.

“Oh you know me.” Tony waved dismissively.

“You haven’t been pestering Asgard again, have you?” Amora crossed her arms as she spoke, pushing her cleavage higher and practically into Tony’s face.

“Why would I ever do that?” Tony asked while raising his hand, catching the attention of the waiter that Loki had been gesturing to for the past minute and a half with no results.

“Because you’re very naughty.” She leaned in quickly and stole a kiss. “How is the golden prince?” Loki glanced over at her and restrained himself from telling her about Thor’s most recent love interest.

“He’s on Midgard, actually,” Tony said and Amora cocked her head to the side, rocking her hips slightly. Tony’s hands found their way to her hips again.

“I thought the Bifrost was still shattered,” Amora said after a few moments of thought.

“Odin the Unseeing was properly incentivized to send his pride and joy off.” The group was handed fresh drinks and Loki glared at the waiter for ignoring him earlier. The elf didn’t notice, eyeing Amora instead.

“You didn’t set loose frost giants in Midgard did you?” she asked and Tony almost spit up his drink.

“Surprisingly accurate while not accurate at all,” Tony said after clearing his throat. “I only showed up after the fact.” Amora rocked her hips again, grinding against Tony. The look in her eyes was almost absentminded even when the hand resting on her hip tightened.

“I assume the Spreader of Lies attacked.” She cast a glare at Loki which he returned it in kind. He really hated that moniker. Before he could lash out at her Tony was talking again.

“Accurate while not accurate at all. You’re terrible at this game.” Tony teased her before taking a sip. He almost spit up again when she very purposefully rocked her hips against his.

“Just tell me. You know I hate riddles.” There was nothing subtle about her movements now.

“You know you can’t win this game with me.” Despite his words Tony’s voice was rough. With a single finger he lightly traced the curves of her back. She froze for an instant. “Darling, I’ve been playing your body for over a millennium, so let’s not fight dirty.”

“I thought you liked it dirty?” she asked, but stilled her gyrating.

“Only when we have hours we can dedicate to each other, beds we can ruin, and neighbors we can disturb. Now listen, Enchantress.” Her eyes became focused on him. “Loki has come to the dark side with me and we’re playing against the home team.”
“Howardson, you know I don’t understand your Midgardian references.” Her frown was very clear as she set aside her drink and purposefully looked away from him. He gently grabbed her chin and made her face him as his glamour dropped.

“Loki and I are partners. Odin fucked us both over.”

“Not this again.” She tried to turn away from him, but he wouldn’t let her.

“I don’t care if you believe me or not. We fall into this conversation every decade. Everything that can be said already has been. This is something new.” Tony let go of her chin and she didn’t turn away. “You know I’ve always avoided hurting Thor as part of our game, don’t you?”

“Yes,” she whispered in response. Loki’s annoyance started fading away when he realized Tony was manipulating her.

“Things in Asgard are very unstable right now. Frigga is staying with us in Alfheim, trying to make sense of all the lies Odin has told. Thor is on Midgard playing hero. Loki is with me.” Tony’s voice became soft. “You should go back to Asgard and check on your mother and sister, make sure everything is alright.” Amora jerked away from him abruptly.

“No. I hate them.” She looked away from him stubbornly, but didn’t try to move off his lap.

“Sorry, Mora-Mora, you know I’m just jealous,” he said playfully before leaning up and kissing her on the cheek, startling a smile out of her. Her grin quickly melted away as Tony’s voice became serious again. “A group of mages are going to be arriving in Midgard soon and they’re going to try to take Thor back to Asgard, but I can’t guarantee his safety if he’s anywhere near his father. You know I don’t want to hurt you…”

“Just tell me what you want me to do,” Amora said while blinking away tears.

“I want you to keep him out of the fray, convince him to stay on Midgard. Help him and his friends fight against the villains. Keep him occupied. Without Loki by his side there’s no one to protect him from magic. Show him the side of you that only I ever got to see,” Tony whispered the last bit and Amora really did cry. She quickly wiped them away.

“That’s a nice thought and all, but we’re in Alfheim and he’s all the way in Midgard. I doubt I’ll be able to reach him in time and you know how much he hates turning around once he’s chosen a path,” Amora said while sniffling.

“I acquired a new toy during my travels. It allows for instant portals from one area to another.”

“A powerful toy indeed.” Her eyes lit up.

“Yeah, my toy. You can’t have it,” he said and she giggled in a way Loki had never heard her do before. It was almost childish. “You know how to get in contact with me, Mora-Mora.” She nodded with a small smile while standing up. She took a sip of her drink as she shape shifted into her actual form. Her blonde locks cascaded down her back and she wore a light green outfit that accentuated her curves and brought out the green in her eyes.

“Till we meet again, dearest.” She blew a kiss at him as a portal appeared, startling some of the nearby elves.

“Darling.” He smiled charmingly at her as she stepped through the wormhole. It fizzled out behind her. Tony downed his drink in one go before gesturing for another one. He glanced over at Loki who was staring at him. “What?”
“You’re positively devious,” the younger god said, admiration in his eyes.

“Thank you.”
The Doombots were new to the equation and Steve really couldn’t say he was a fan. At least Thor seemed to be having fun.

Steve really didn’t understand these Aesir.

Thor let out a mighty war cry as he smashed the metallic skulls of two Doombots together. It was vicious and sparks flew everywhere. He had already told him not to do that since the robots were indistinguishable from the newest villain, Dr. Doom.

Fury wanted to interrogate him, to get a better idea on how magic worked.

Captain America repelled another attack with his shield and frowned. His new shield was nowhere near as resilient as his old one.

Black Widow used her Widow’s Bite to shock one of the flying metal men out of the air. It crashed to the ground and proved to be another imitation.

“Damn it,” Hawkeye said over the comlink. Steve glanced up just to see Falcon being knocked out of the sky. Sam grappled with the Doombot, getting free just before they hit the ground.

“I’m grounded,” Sam said, “but I’m still battle ready.”

“I’ve got him covered.” One of Clint’s arrows sent a Doombot spinning out of control and into Thor’s range. The God of Thunder smashed through it with the ease of swatting a fly. “I don’t think Dr. Douchebag is really here.”

“We need to get these robots out of here.” Steve bashed one of the robots and his shield dented.

“Sending one your way, Cap.” Natasha grunted. “They just keep coming.”

“I still haven’t found the source,” Ant-Man said, sounding distant even through the comlink.

There was a flash of green and the Doombot closest to Captain America fell down.
“Did anyone else just see that?” Steve asked, jumping over a smashed car to get to the next Doombot.

“Blonde female spotted. Approximately 6’3’ with glowing green hands flying North East of my position,” Natasha reported, her voice strained. Steve spotted her.

“Please tell me it’s not another one of you Aesir.” Steve groaned. “No offense, Thor.”

“I understand. You have only seen the very best and the very worst of Asgard. I shall investigate.” Steve heard the distinct noise of Mjolnir flying above. “Amora!”

“Of course she’s an Aesir. What, is Manhattan the new vacation spot or something?” Clint snorted before letting out a stream of curse words as he dodged a Doombot.

“Why are you here, Enchantress?” Thor called out loudly, his words echoing through the comlink.

“God of Thunder, I’ve come to offer my help,” she said, her voice carrying over the din of battle.

“We’re in no need of the help of your kind.” Thor landed on the building across from her. She made a brushing motion with her hand and two more Doombots fell to the ground, short circuiting.

“Uhh, Thor maybe we do need her help,” Clint said. “She is kind of kicking ass.”

“Nay, she is merely using party tricks.”

“Well her ‘party tricks’ are kicking ass. Can we trust her?” Natasha asked, her voice slightly sarcastic.

“Amora would not betray me in such a manner,” Thor grumbled.

“Good. Let her know that then.” Natasha pulled out two pistols while diving away from a Doombot. Thor sighing could be heard very clearly over the comlink.

“Do as you will, Enchantress. Just do not hurt the humans. They are fragile and prone to death,” Thor said dismissively before flying off.

“A ringing endorsement from the resident god,” Clint grumbled.

“Let’s just finish this then head back to base,” Captain America said, refocusing the group.

After that everything seemed to fall in place. Black Widow fought by Falcon who was still grounded. Hawkeye covered the pair. Ant-Man found the source of the Doombots and Captain America helped destroy it. Thor and Amora took care of the majority of the robots, keeping them away from civilians.

Steve mentally noted that Amora left behind far less destruction than the other Aesir did.

Soon enough SHIELD agents were swarming the area, gathering up the Doombots that hadn’t self destructed for research.

Amora floated down to street level, brushing aside a lock of her blond hair. The Avengers surrounded her, trying not to look threatening.

“Hello.” Amora waved, her face slightly flushed.

“Enchantress, I am currently courting a fine, upstanding lady of science,” Thor said in lieu of
greeting. The other Avengers gave him an incredulous look.

“Regardless, my prince, with Howardson and Loki on the same side you will need someone who can counteract their magic.” Amora straightened out her short skirt and golden hair piece, almost looking shy.

“You should return to Asgard and marry one of the lords like an honorable Aesir lady would. Your place is not among warriors,” Thor said firmly, using his height to look down on her.

“You’ve made it quite clear that you do not think I am honorable.” Amora pursed her lips before glancing around her. Her eyes landed on Natasha for a split second longer than the other Avengers. “I won’t join in on the fray unless you order me to, my prince, but allow me to at least heal your friend’s arm. It is broken.” Amora gestured to Sam. His mechanical wings were folded and he was gripping his arm. “If you will not allow me to be a warrior then at least allow me to be a healer.”

Thor frowned deeply.

“If she knows about magic I want her brought in,” Director Fury said through the comlink. Thor scowled further.

“I won’t have you manipulating my friends, but I will allow you to accompany us back to our base,” Thor said begrudgingly. In the distance the sound of helicopters became louder. Thor turned away from her pointedly. The Avengers looked at the Aesir woman, feeling awkward because of Thor’s attitude.

“Hey, I’m Clint,” Hawkeye said, taking the initiative.

“I am Amora Nisdottir. I grew up with Thor and Loki, but spent most of my adolescence traveling the other realms.” Amora bowed slightly and Thor grumbled something that even the comlink didn’t pick up. “I am an accomplished mage, but I fear that even I cannot stand up against Loki or Howardson, let alone both of them at once.”

“Don’t worry. I got my ass kicked by Loki more than once,” Sam said while stepping forward.

“Would you like me to heal your arm?” Amora asked while cocking her head to the side slightly, doing her best not to let her eyes sparkle as they usually did when she spoke to any male.

“Sure, but maybe we should wait till we get back to base. I’m sure the boss man will want to see you in action.” Sam’s smile was wide and toothy. It vaguely reminded the goddess of the fake ones Tony displayed when bartering.

“That’s okay. I need a bit of rest after taking care of all those…” Amora gestured to one of the downed Doombots. “Does this sort of thing happen often in this realm?”

“With increasing frequency since Loki and Howardson showed up,” Steve said, joining the conversation. “I’m Steve Rogers, ma’am.” He gave her a polite nod. She giggled and had to hold back the enchantment on her voice that was always activated when she laughed.

“There’s no need to call me ma’am. I am a warrior, the same as you. Although others would disagree on that fact.” Amora gestured with her chin to Thor who was kicking one of the downed robots in the distance. “Tis nothing new. Even before Howardson’s betrayal Thor disliked mages, since then he practically despises all those with an affinity to magic.” Amora watched as a helicopter landed near them and more SHIELD agents swarmed out of it.

“That’s our ride,” Clint said while gesturing to the helicopter. “Don’t worry, it flies flawlessly.”
“It looks like one of Howardson’s little toys,” Amora mused. “Before he went mad Howardson and I were friends. He used to make all sorts of things to startle me.”

“He went by Dr. Stark here,” Clint said, his voice dropping. “He was a weapons developer.” Clint pointed far off into the distance. “That tower is his, but we can’t access it, even with our best technology. Maybe when you’re cleared you can take a look at it.”

“Mayhaps, but his manor in Asgard has been impenetrable for many centuries.” Steve helped her into the helicopter and she gave him a charming smile automatically. The super soldier blushed before quickly looking away.

“I shall fly there on my own,” Thor announced loudly.

“Howardson is the God of Metal, Thor the God of Thunder. Do you have some specialty?” Natasha asked while strapping herself in.

“All Aesir nobility have a title. I am the Goddess of Dance.” Their conversation was put to an end by the loud noise of the helicopter taking off. Amora brushed her hair behind her ear, hating how the wind was tugging it in every direction.

Steve observed her closely.

The Aesir woman didn’t seem to have the same arrogance as the other Aesir he had met. If anything she was acting a bit modest. He wondered if the Aesir people only wore two colors: green and red. Both Loki and Amora seemed to favor the color, although Amora’s green was lighter. Perhaps that denoted mages. Thor’s cape was red and Howardson’s armor was red. Green for mages and red for warriors perhaps—but Amora said Howardson was also a mage.

The colors probably meant nothing and he was overanalyzing the situation.

Her relationship with Thor was interesting, though.

Steve glanced at Natasha and he could tell they were both thinking the same thing.

If Amora joined the team, which it already looked like, then those two would have to work out whatever differences they had.

When they landed on the Helicarrier there were even more SHIELD agents around than usual. Steve knew that was no coincidence. The last time there was an unknown Aesir on the Helicarrier it almost crashed.

Hill met them on deck.

“Fury wants a debriefing stat. Thor is already in the main meeting room,” Hill said without looking up from her clipboard. “Captain America, your shield please. We’ll get you a new one as soon as possible.” Steve reluctantly handed over the shield while holding back a sigh. His bargain with Howardson was a good one, but he still missed his old shield. “Follow me,” Hill instructed purely for Amora’s sake considering everyone else knew where the meeting room was.

Steve could tell Natasha and Clint were keeping a close eye on the newcomer. It made Steve grin. Ever since joining the initiative he’d gotten to know the other members quite well. Clint and Natasha were always so cautious, which made up for Sam’s and Thor’s carefree attitudes. Steve found himself relating most closely to Hank, even though he rarely was around. More often than not he just went back to one of his labs, working on one of his ‘projects’.
“So, Goddess of Dance,” Clint said while moving to the Amora’s side. “Does that mean you can make people dance whenever you want to?” She smiled at him.

“Kind of.” Amora chuckled. “To be the god or goddess of something means you either have some control over it or are the best at it.” She glanced at the mortal and her smile faltered slightly. “Loki is the God of Mischief. When we were growing up he always played the best tricks.” She shook her head and got back on track. “I can’t make others dance, but when they see me dance it makes them want to join in.”

“So you can really cut the rug, then?” Steve asked, jumping into the conversation.

“Cut the rug?” Amora immediately thought about Tony’s various Midgardian sayings and how annoying it was when he used them.

“What grandpa over there is trying to say is that you can dance,” Clint clarified as they continued down the winding halls of the Helicarrier.

“You’re a grandfather?” Amora asked, looking over at the tall blond. “You look far too young to be a grandfather. Oh, or is asking a faux pas?” Amora blushed, not out of embarrassment, but because she knew how alluring it made her look. Steve blushed in return.

“No, I’m not a grandfather. They just call me that because I’m in my 90s.”

“Is that considered old in this realm?” Amora asked while sweeping her eyes over his form. Steve chuckled nervously. “You don’t look old. By our standards you’re just a baby.” She pinched his cheek and he blushed even harder. “How old do I look by your mortal standards?” All the males in the group were instantly silent.

“In our culture it’s usually a trap when a woman asks how old she looks,” Natasha filled in. “You look to be about 25 if you were human.”

Amora fell silent, lost in thought. It allowed the super soldier to pull himself back together and calm down. Amora was… definitely different. Thankfully she didn’t seem to have the same insanity that both Howardson and Loki had.

Chapter End Notes

Please read A Whole Lotta Love before continuing on.
Tony chuckled as he read the reports. Loki glanced over at him.

“Do you have one of those on me?” Loki asked, pointing at the buggle that was tracing Amora’s movements in Midgard.

“I used to when we were originally friends. They can only live for half a century or so.” Tony shrugged and Loki couldn’t bother to be annoyed.

Loki had come to accept the fact that neither of them were their real selves back then.

That wasn’t to say that Tony still didn’t piss him off whenever he blatantly brought up the past or how much he fucked with him.

“They seem to be making quick work of your puppet. What was his name again?”

“Victor Von Doom, a would be mage with enough ambition to rival our own.” Tony stretched lazily. “We never really discussed what we were going to do once everything is in place. Should we burn down Asgard? I was considering starting another war, but that would disrupt my trade business,” Tony mused while frowning.

Loki looked at him closely, trying to read the other god’s features.

He supposed that now was the perfect opportunity…

“I believe there is a group we can wage war against that would not affect your trade.” Loki sat up straighter.

“I’m listening,” Tony said with a cocked eyebrow. Loki could tell that the other god had raised his defenses.

“The Chitauri. They hurt me and I’d be more than happy to return the favor.” Loki raised his hand and clenched it into a fist. His anger was growing quickly. He had to control it if he wished to control this conversation.

“Is that the name of the hive mind aliens that you attacked New York with?” Tony’s eyes were cold, calculating.
“Yes, they would make the perfect target—"

“Or is it the one who controlled your mind your real target?” As usual Tony got right to the heart of the matter.

“That’s a factor,” Loki admitted while running a hand through his long hair. This conversation had already deviated from where he had wanted it to go.

“It’s the main factor, I’d wager. So who is our real target?” The fact that Tony still considered it as both their target was a good sign.

“Thanos, The Mad Titan.” Recognition flickered in Tony’s eyes, but Loki was grateful to see no fear there.

“You really know how to get yourself into trouble.” Tony’s posture relaxed and he poured them both hefty glasses of dark elf spiced wine. Loki took it without hesitation, thankful for the drink.

“What’s your plan?”

“I…” Loki hesitated. He hadn’t expected Tony to be so open to challenging The Mad Titan.

“You don’t have a real plan, do you?” Tony teased. Loki scowled.

“If you would shut up for a single moment in your Norns-forsaken life then maybe I’d tell you.” The younger god practically hissed. Tony held his hands up, grinning. Loki scowled at him before continuing. “I was simply going to use Asgard’s forces to destroy Thanos.”

“Let me guess, you never really took part in the strategic planning during the war against Muspelheim,” Tony said while grinning.

“I was in command of various forces,” Loki said defensively, hiding his frown behind his glass.

“You were too close to the battles to really consider the war.” Tony shrugged and it only infuriated Loki further.

“Why do you always act like you know better than me? It’s a rather annoying trait of yours.” Loki raised his chin and looked away from the other god.

“Do you really think I was just ‘adventuring’ during that millennium I was missing?” Tony asked as Jarvis swooped in. The eagle ruffled its feathers and a platter of oysters appeared between them.

“Pray tell what were you doing then?” Loki asked sarcastically before slurping up one of the oysters. Norns, Jarvis always seemed to know exactly what food to bring them.

“I mentioned the clan battles on Jotunheim. I didn’t just supply the side I was on. I helped lead them from the back lines.”

“So you hid behind warriors?” Loki sneered. Tony made a tsk -ing noise.

“You’re starting to sound like Thor,” Tony said, making Loki scowl further yet remain silent. “You don’t always have to be in the front in order to lead. You of all people should know that.” Tony gave the younger god a sly look. Loki ate another oyster, ignoring the look Tony was giving him.

“When the time comes we shall plan the attacks together,” Loki said evenly, sipping his spiced wine.

“It seems like you’ve really accepted this partnership,” Tony said after a few minutes of silence.
Loki’s face heated up.

“You’re maniacal.” Loki couldn’t look at him. He felt a tad fatigued despite doing next to nothing the whole day.

“I’ve heard many stories about Thanos,” Tony said and Loki was grateful for that. “We might need to have a slight change of plans.”

“Pertaining to what?”

“To the Avengers. If we’re going to face Thanos’ forces they might be useful, and we’ll definitely need Thor back in Asgard.” Tony sighed. “And I just convinced Amora to keep him there.” Tony rubbed his eyes. “That can still be to our advantage, though.” Tony paused. “We have time—We still have time, don’t we?”

“Time enough, I think.” As much as Loki hated it and tried to ignore it, he could somehow sense Thanos.

Loki hadn’t originally planned on inviting Tony to Alfheim with him. His original plan had been to get rid of some of his frustrations through some carnal delight, but that never happened. And as subtle as Tony thought he was, he really wasn’t.

“We have fun together, don’t we. Loki?” Tony asked when the silence stretched on.

“I really don’t see how that’s important.” Loki went to take another sip of his wine, but it was empty. Tony leaned forward and refilled Loki’s glass.

“I just want to be sure you’re enjoying yourself. This isn’t just revenge for me. It shouldn’t be just about revenge for you either.” Tony ate the last oyster, letting out a hum.

“And just what is it supposed to be about?” Loki glanced to the door, wanting nothing more than to escape.

“We’ve talked about this before. You have to think beyond just revenge. What are you going to do afterwards? Will you be happy?”

“Killing Frigga made me rather happy,” Loki said stubbornly.

“What about when all the other pieces have fallen in place and everything is said and done? How long do you think that will keep you happy?”

“Stop asking stupid questions.”

“I’ll always have my business and creations, but what will you have?”

“Shut up, Howardson.”

“Back to Howardson, are we?” Tony’s laughter was hollow. “In the end, what will you have?”

“I’ll have everything I want. Frigga, Odin, and Thanos will be dead, all of Asgard will kneel before me, and…” What else would there be?

“And?”

“And that’s all I need.” Loki stood up, abandoning his drink.
“You’re an idiot,” Tony called out as Loki walked to the door.

“Don’t lecture me.” The younger god began unlocking the door, annoyed by the complex star lock.

“It’s just an offer.” He could almost see Tony’s annoying grin.

“Weren’t you the one talking about letting things unfold naturally?” Loki asked, twisting the lock until it clicked open.

“Just a nudge in the right direction,” Tony called after him. Loki wheeled around, his grasp on the doorknob almost painful.

“Oh, and you think you’re the right direction?” Loki asked sarcastically while opening the door.

“Of course,” Tony said with total confidence and an annoying grin.

Loki let out a huff of annoyance before slamming the door shut behind him.
“What time is it in New York?” Tony asked once they had both finished dinner. Loki clicked open his pocket watch while yawning.

“Just after one in the afternoon.” Loki set aside his napkin. “Are you seriously thinking about attacking them right now? We just finished eating. I’d rather just watch one of those TV shows.”

“It has been two months since we sent Amora there. Don’t you want to know how things have developed?” Tony held up his empty goblet slightly. Jarvis ruffled his feathers and the goblet was refilled.

“Yes, but why right now? Can’t we do it another time?” Loki asked while slumping in his seat.

“You sound like a whining child.” Tony leaned forward and Loki looked away from him, annoyed by the way the other god could so easily read him.

“Well, you sound like an annoyingly over-eager child, always,” Loki said and Tony opened his mouth to speak. “And don’t give me that bullshit response about never having a childhood before.” Loki took a sip of his wine. “You’re being impractical. Let’s just watch a movie.”

“Is that a date?” Tony asked cheekily.

“Of course not.”

“You’re no fun.”

“And you’re disgusting. Now are you going to watch TV with me or not?”

“Fine, you drama queen.” Tony mumbled the last part while standing.

“What was that?” Loki asked loudly.

“Nothing.” Tony held his hands up in mock innocence.

“That’s what I thought.” Loki purposefully made his footsteps loud and Tony snorted.

“Odin the Unseeing has declared Frigga a traitor to the crown,” Tony said while flipping through different reports. Loki never knew where the reports came from. They always just appeared on Tony’s desk. He supposed Jarvis had something to do with that.

“That is to be expected.” A week ago they had launched a small attack on Asgard. Loki used a few spells that he had learned from watching Frigga in secret, spells that only she knew and only she
could teach. Along with having one of Tony’s spies steal a few items from Frigga’s private study, Tony had forged a letter in Frigga’s handwriting. Loki had him write about her ‘disappointment’ with him.

“He’s unbalanced,” Tony said pointedly.

“He’ll be even more unbalanced when we injure Thor.”

“Are you stalling?” Tony asked from behind his desk, crumpling one of the reports and tossing it into the fireplace.

“Of course not.” Loki turned the page of a spell book that he was skimming. “What reason would I have to stall? I made it quite clear that I have no qualms with hurting my false parents. Besides, I thought you wanted to go to Midgard to check on Amora.”

“Sometimes you’re so full of shit that even I can’t tell what you’re hiding,” Tony said while standing. Loki followed his movements with listless, yet guarded eyes.

“You’re the one who is full of secrets,” Loki said, trying to steer the conversation away from himself.

“True, but I make my intentions clear.” Tony sat in one of the armchairs across from him. “You know, not too long after I ‘came’ back to Asgard I finally unlocked one of the doors in the mansion that I never had access to before. It made it quite clear why Odin tried to kill my family. Howard wasn’t planning to just take over the crown of Asgard, but reunite Alfheim and Svartalfheim. He knew that once he had Asgard, Vanheim might revolt, but could easily be made to kneel.” Jarvis flew into the room and perched on the armrest of Tony’s chair. “He was going to have two realms under his direct control and two others as close allies.”

“Why do you feel the need to tell me this?” Loki asked as Tony petted Jarvis.

“Because I want to do it, but bigger and better. I’ve always hated my father and want more than he could ever dreamt of. I want all the realms,” Tony said and Jarvis made a cooing sound. “We will take Asgard as our own and Vanheim will fall in line. Alfheim and Svartalfheim will be made to pay homage to Asgard as they used to. I’m slowly taking over Midgard by saturating it with my machines and creating political sway with my money. Niflheim has hardly any real defenses and such a small population so they will be easy.

“I knew Muspelheim would be the most difficult to take over due to the scattered nature of their people and Surtur’s influence there. That’s why I had Asgard go to war with them, to weaken the Fire Realm and unite them in a common cause. Surtur is still alive, but that is only because of a device I made him. He is weak and small. Muspelheim’s citizens consider me their ally and some even think of me as their savior since I supplied them with weapons, albeit with subpar ones, not that they could tell the difference. When I depose Surtur they will rally around me, especially when I open new trade routes and bring peace between the fire giants and fire dancers. And of course Helheim is out of reach for all living beings.”

“What of Jotunheim?” Loki asked, his heart beating at a rapid pace. Some long forgotten emotion was quickly coming to life in him, one that he couldn’t quite name.

Tony looked away from Jarvis and to Loki.

“The ruling clan in Jotunheim is one I fought with when I was younger. They consider me a close ally and when they see I have the son of their deceased leader as my partner they will follow you.”
Whatever emotion that was coming back to life in Loki was quickly killed and replaced by anger. He jumped out of his chair, fueled by rage.

“So you’re just using me again?! I’m just another one of your tools?!” Loki shouted while grabbing one of his daggers off his belt. Without thinking he pounced onto the other god, stabbing him in the hollow between his left clavicle and shoulder, straight into his heart. Tony lurched forward slightly and Loki’s eyes went wide.

“No, Loki, you’re not a tool.” Tony sputtered, looping his arm around the other god and pulling him close. Loki froze as Tony kissed his cheek, leaving behind a bloodstain. “I was devastated when I thought you died. It was always my plan to take over all the realms. I was so angry with myself for stalling to take over Asgard. I blamed myself for your death. I knew living there for too long would only drive you mad. I thought that maybe if I had only acted sooner I could have saved you, even if it meant you hated me for taking over Asgard. When I found out you were Laufey’s son I thought it was some cosmic joke. We could have been allies centuries ago, but by the time we both found out it was too late.” Tony coughed up more blood and Loki could feel even more blood flowing from the fresh wound.

“I… I don’t understand,” Loki said while trying to pull away, but Tony was holding onto him too firmly.

“You idiot.” Tony coughed again. “I’m in love with you.”

Chapter End Notes

Feel free to read Wild Child whenever you want to.
Chapter Summary

Just a stroll in a Hydra and Avenger infested park.

“You idiot. I’m in love with you.”

The words left Loki completely frozen. Warm blood was seeping between his fingers, slicking up the hilt of his dagger. He reeled backwards when he realized what he had just done. He had stabbed Tony straight through the heart.

Loki pulled the dagger out quickly and the arm around him went slack. Loki put his hand over the wound, pushing healing magic into it.

“Don’t worry.” Tony brushed aside Loki’s hand. “It’s only a superficial wound.”

“What—”

“Look at your dagger,” Tony said while using his own magic to close the wound. Loki glanced around, looking for the abandoned weapon. When he spotted it on the ground his shoulders relaxed slightly. The blade looked like it had been smashed to half its size, far too short to pierce Tony’s heart or lungs.

“Another one of your tricks.” Loki growled while moving away and grabbing the disfigured dagger.

“Actually that was Jarvis’ doing. Remember he melted your cuffs when we were breaking you out of SHIELD’s custody?”

“Then why is there blood on your lips?” Loki asked, not able to look at the other god.

“You’re too smart for your own damn good.” Tony chuckled, but it was a wet noise. “I have a large shard of metal in my chest.” Tony pointed a few inches above his solarplexus and Loki remembered the scar he had there. “It’s the chip of the sword that was meant to kill me and my family, on Odin’s orders. I had to move it quickly to block your attack. I nicked my lungs. It’s too delicate work for my magic to fix. It should heal in a day’s time though.”

“And you called me an idiot,” Loki mumbled while going back over to Tony. “Move your hand.”

Loki placed his hand in the middle of Tony’s chest. He could feel the other god’s eyes on him, but he refused to meet them as he focused on healing the small scratches. His magic laced through Tony’s blood and flesh, ghosting over bone and muscle. There were scars, so many scars and now that he was so close he could feel the scarred flesh that covered the shard of metal, and from where it had been dislodged. That broken scar was bleeding more than his lungs were. He knitted the new wounds back together, then moved away.

“Is that all you have to say?” Tony asked, his voice humorless.

“I want to leave,” Loki stated simply, not being able to look at the other god.
You know I won’t stop you.” Eight wormholes opened and Loki could recognize where each of them led. Loki clenched his hands at his sides, not quite able to decipher his own chaotic emotions.

“But I want to come back,” he finally said when he stood looking at the different portals for what felt like forever.

“Then take Jarvis with you. I can’t communicate with him when he’s in another realm, but he can open up a single portal for when you want to come home, or at least come back here.”

Loki nodded silently before walking through the portal that led to Midgard. The near silent whisking noise of Jarvis flying over his shoulder went unnoticed. Behind him the portal didn’t immediately close like it usually did and Loki felt his chest tightened. Finally it fizzled closed and Loki wasn’t sure how he felt.

It was cold here, where ever here was. A city was in the distance and the sun was setting.

Of course the cold didn’t bother him.

He threw on a human glamour and changed it slightly to match the attire of the locals. He couldn’t hear Jarvis, but he could sense him.

After asking around he found the best restaurant in the city. He wasn’t hungry, but after the Void… well food was a comfort. He was seated on a terrace giving him a good view of the mortals.

Loki smiled glumly as he played small tricks on the humans, tripping them, causing one to run into another, and the like.

The food was delicious by human standards, but not quite as good as the food at…

Regardless, no one could make food quite like the light elves could.

In the palace he remembered stealing honey cakes from the kitchen, doing his best to avoid the sharp ears of the light elves that worked there.

Svartalfheim had the best drinks though, especially when the dark elves and dwarves worked together.

Asgard’s mead was usually too sweet and their food too heavy…

During the war on Muspelheim he had only eaten rations to help create camaraderie between him and those under his command. He had lost so many troops because of Tony’s scheme. But they were never truly his troops. They thought they were following a prince of Asgard, not a prince of Jotunheim. Losing the Aesir warriors was embarrassing, but losing his mages actually pained him.

The mages under his command actually respected him, some even admired him. There were days of silence between the battles where mages would come to him, ask for his advice, and for him to critique their spells.

He had felt accepted in a way he hadn’t felt since Tony’s betrayal. Yet those brief moments were always interrupted by the damn Aesir being unnecessarily loud.

Loki got the attention of a waiter and ordered a cup of tea and a slice of cake.

It was a poor brew. Evidently the humans couldn’t do tea.

He asked where the best tea was and two humans started debating the merits of two different
places he didn’t even know about.

Why had he come here?

He should have chosen Alfheim or Vanaheim, someplace he knew.

An explosion not too far off caught his attention. All the mortals flinched and turned away, but Loki sharpened his gaze, feeling the dull shockwave hit him. The humans started taking cover, but Loki didn’t move, not wanting to abandon his dessert.

His eyes brightened when he spotted Falcon grappling midair with a man all in black. There was a wire around Falcon, not letting his mechanical wings fully expand.

There was a light green flash of light and he was freed.

Of course Tony would lead him to the Avengers.

At least he’d get a show to go along with his meal. He wanted another slice of the delightful chocolate cake, but the waiter was unfortunately hiding someplace. He’d just have to eat this one particularly slowly.

Loki swept the area and spotted Jarvis perched high above. His keen eyes were on the distant fight.

Lightening cut through the sky and there was another explosion.

“How typical,” Loki mumbled before taking a sip of tea. He brushed his finger around the rim, heating the tea back up.

Helicopters flew overhead.

The fight was steadily drawing closer to him, but he wasn’t going to move. He was beyond caring at this point. If they took notice of him, he could easily escape with Jarvis’ help.

They were fighting against Hydra. Loki recognized their emblem from one of Tony’s reports. A small organization that had reached their prime years ago, but were slowly making a comeback.

It seemed like they were giving the Avengers quite the fight.

Hawkeye was shooting down Hydra agents and covering Black Widow.

Thor was using his thunder to pick off agents.

Ant-Man was nowhere in sight, but that wasn’t really surprising.

Loki used his cutlery to strike down any Hydra agents that looked like they were going to disrupt his meal.

And then there was Amora.

She was fighting by Captain America’s side, and Loki had never seen her so happy before.

Stupid Amora, with her stupid crushes.

How could she always be so damn carefree? How many times had Thor made her cry? How many times had she been run out of manors, schools, and whole realms just because of the way she conducted herself?
And yet she was grinning?

The audacity of it all.

Loki wanted to smash her face in, to remind her of all the wrongs that had been done upon her.

Perhaps when things were at their peak he would kill her, although Tony did seem to have some sort of affection towards her. But that could just be another act. The way he so effortlessly manipulated her…

How was Loki supposed to trust someone like that?

He was already used by Tony once before.

What if this was another tactic?

How could Tony say something like that to him?

A black SUV careened around a corner, hitting Captain America straight on. A Hydra agent blasted him through a window.

“Pathetic,” Loki whispered over the rim of his teacup. He had to cover the last few bites of his cake to keep debris off of it.

Amora enchanted two of the Hydra agents into shooting their comrades. It was an interesting trick, but one that would never work on any mage.

“That is Howardson’s eagle!” Amora shouted, pointing her glowing finger towards Jarvis.

“He is behind this?” Hawkeye asked while ziplining down the side of the building. Most of the Hydra forces were either down or in retreat.

Loki looked on, a new plan forming in his mind.

He let his glamour drop and took the last bite of his cake. He donned his armor with a simple summoning spell. It immediately caught Amora’s attention.

“There!” she called out, drawing the attention of the Avengers. Loki greeted them with a wave of his scepter and a grin.

“Loki! What have you done to mother?” Thor shouted, thunderclouds forming overhead almost immediately.

“Well just this morning she was cooking us pastries,” Loki grin turned malicious, “but for all I know she could be sucking Tony’s cock right now.” The God of Thunder attacked immediately and Loki easily parried his predictable blow. “I jest, I jest. Why are you always so defensive?”

“Damn you, Loki. Have you no respect?” Thor continued his barrage of attacks, most of which Loki dodged, hopping from rooftop to rooftop. Loki sent out the occasional dagger or blast of energy to ward off the other Avengers and Amora.

“Oh I have plenty of respect, just not for a dullard such as you.”

The thunder was a bit harder to dodge.

The fight was quick. Loki landed a few blows, observed their different fighting styles, and received
more than one injury.

“Go get your master!” Loki shouted, lying bloodied in the street. All according to plan.
Chapter Summary

Silver can cut deep.

Chapter Notes

This chapter wasn't really in my plan. It sort of just spawned.

The magic suppressing cuffs were a bit of a problem, but nothing he couldn’t handle.

Hawkeye kicking him in the gut was just rude, though.

Thor was ranting about this, that, and the other thing; all of which Loki easily zoned out due to centuries of hearing his nonsensical ravings.

Black Widow and Falcon were silent, the former watching him while the latter held a listening device to his ear.

Ant-Man was back to his natural size and talking to Captain America about Howardson and Loki’s ‘desperate’ call for help.

Amora was staring at him with a look of confusion on her face. She could tell something wasn’t right, but was too inept of a mage to tell what it was.

He wanted to shout out his plan to her, to prove how idiotic she was, but knew that would not work in his favor.

Finally SHIELD agents surrounded him, or at least they surrounded what they thought was him.

His shade was hefted up by Captain America and Loki followed closely behind as ‘he’ was taken to a helicopter. The magic suppressing cuffs meant Loki had to keep close proximity to the fake in order to maintain it.

Loki performed a spell to make himself weightless as he boarded the helicopter, making Amora swing around trying to figure out what he had just done.

“Amora, what’s wrong?” Captain America asked while wrinkling his brow.

“I thought I felt something. Loki is trying to break out of his shackles by hitting them with his magic,” she said while staring at the shade, which grinned in return.

Loki decided to have a bit of fun.

He observed the group. Falcon, Hawkeye, and Ant-Man had all taken a different helicopter. Thor was glaring at him, a fresh cut above his eye slowly healing. Amora was watching him, a subtle
look of worry in her eyes. Black Widow was in the front with the pilot. Captain America was staring at his shield, which was once again dented.

“Do you wish to know what Tony did to your shield, Captain?” ‘Loki’ asked, leaning as forward as the reinforced seat harness would allow him to.

“Loki,” Thor warned him. ‘Loki’ tilted his head to the side, widening his eyes in a way that was disconcerting. His not-brother tensed up before ‘Loki’ turned back to Captain America.

“Admittedly I was surprised when he didn’t immediately melt it down for its metal.” There was a glimmer of hope in the blond’s eyes and Loki was more than happy to extinguish it. “He did take care of that gaudy paint job.” ‘Loki’ chuckled. “He was telling me about how much you admired him, well, how much you admired him when he was Howard. Back then he was fondue-ing some strumpet named Peggy.” Captain America’s face was becoming steadily redder. ‘Loki’ turned his attention to the Aesir woman. “From what I heard Tony is quite the accomplished lover. I wouldn’t know personally, but Amora would.” ‘Loki’ laughed.

“Hush with your stories now, Loki,” Amora said, far too composed. ‘Loki’ looked at his not-brother.

“Do you remember the night we went to Niflheim to capture Amora after another one of her dalliances?” ‘Loki’ paused for the briefest of moments, pretending to wait for a response. “What you didn’t know is that she and Tony were having their own dalliance in the very same bed you would sleep in later that day.” Loki wasn’t certain if this was true, but if the brief encounter Amora and Tony had in Alfheim told Loki anything it was that they were both very familiar with each other’s bodies.

Thor jumped forward, ripping his seat harness out as he punched ‘Loki’ hard across the face, making the whole helicopter lurch.

“You are nothing but a liar and I am ashamed with myself for ever defending your honor.”

“Speaking of honor, does your Lady Jane know you are betrothed to Lady Sif? Or have you already fallen into Amora’s bed again as you do every century or so?” ‘Loki’ laughed madly and Loki wished he had some sort of recording device so he could show Tony this later on.

“Times have changed, Loki,” Amora said calmly, her eyes averted. “All of us have grown up; unfortunately not all of us have matured.”

“And what of the Lady Widow?” ‘Loki’ asked, changing his target. “Has Thor told you that your place is not on the battlefield, that you should be having little redheaded whelps instead of accumulating scars?” The woman in the very front of the helicopter did not react, not even turning around. She was no fun and Loki didn’t know enough about her to really twist the metaphorical knife. “Thor has said as much to his betrothed before. The poor Lady Sif, I’m sure she is working off her frustrations with Hogun, either in the training yard, or somewhere more private.”

“You shall not disrespect her as such.” Thor growled while gripping his hammer.

“Oh, so you defend Sif’s honor, yet when I call into question Amora’s you have nothing to say? How positively typical of you, Thor.”

“Folks, I’d rather not have my bird hit by lightning,” the pilot said from upfront. “Not all of us could survive that crash.” Loki was genuinely surprised when Thor calmed down slightly, letting his hand slip away from his weapon. Instead he crossed his arms like a petulant child and kept his
gaze averted. ‘Loki’ stared at him for the rest of the trip with a twisted grin in place.
'Loki’ yawned widely as he was jostled inside a large glass cell. Loki stayed outside of the fish bowl, not having any good memories of such prison cells. He was still close enough to maintain the shade.

Loki sat down, leaning against the glass wall as he began a new spell. In a spiral pattern starting from his location wards were slowly put on solid surfaces, invisible to everyone but him. Even Tony wouldn’t be able to see them. They would serve as his eyes and ears since he couldn’t wander around the Helicarrier as he wished to.

It was a sensory overload but he had performed such spells before with good results.

Many of the SHIELD agents were milling around probably ‘wasting government funding’ as Tony put it.

Hill was sleeping on a bunk bed that looked entirely too uncomfortable. Clint and Natasha were sparring. The red head’s movements were more violent than any spar called for. Perhaps Loki’s words had affected her.

Fury was talking with Steve and Thor on the best way to interrogate Loki. They were also arming themselves with plastic weapons filled with tranquilizers, a new toy evidentially. He wondered how Tony would handle them.

Ant-Man and Falcon were nowhere to be seen.

Amora was brushing her hair, a sure sign that she was stressed if Lorelei had told him the truth all those centuries ago.

Loki stopped his outward spiral of wards when he reached the perimeter of the Helicarrier.

Now it was just a waiting game.

And he really didn't have to wait long.

There was an explosion portside, destroying some of his wards, making Loki flinch and almost drop the spell that kept his shade active and life-like.
Agents streamed into the area around his cage and he tripped one simply for the pleasure of seeing him fall.

“Damn it, Jackson, get it together!” one of the other agents shouted, his plastic gun in hand.

“You are all going to die,” ‘Loki’ drawled out, leaning back in the uncomfortable chair they had provided him, also plastic.

“Shut up, you alien freak,” a different SHIELD agent said, his eyes sweeping the area.

“SHIELD hasn’t even gotten a chance to start questioning me and they’re already under attack. I wonder if Tony will just cause this whole thing to crash into the ground. He is called the Gear-Talker after all. It would only take a few whispered words from him and the propellers would grind to a halt.” ‘Loki’ stood and walked closer to the agent, making him tense up

“Yeah, buck-o, then you’d come crashing down with us,” another agent said, stress clear in his voice. The shade moved towards him, still in its glass cage.

“Are you sure about that? Have you all forgotten that Tony has the Tesseract? He can pop in and out of here in an instant.” The shade’s eyes were bright with false innocence.

“If that’s the case then why didn’t he just ‘pop’ in and steal his boyfriend back?” one of the female agents asked. Loki felt rage bloom inside of him. The shade looked at her with a glare, its eyes flashed green just as Loki slit her throat, unseen by all.

“He didn’t ‘pop’ in because he wants to slaughter you all,” ‘Loki’ said as the agent fell to the ground, blood quickly pooling around her. Two agents ran to her side, but it was too late.

“You bastard!” an agent shouted, pointing his gun at the shade despite the thick wall of glass separating them.

“I won’t kill any more of you unless you annoy me.” ‘Loki’ cocked his head to the side, pretending to listen as the real Loki watched Tony through the wards. Even if they had plastic weapons, that didn’t mean he couldn’t use the metal all around him to shield himself from the tranquilizer darts. “Oh yes, Tony is making quick work of your Avengers. He should be here within three minutes. If you value your life you should run. No one would hold it against you.”

The agents shifted uneasily. ‘Loki’ took a seat again and started singing that elf lullaby Tony always hummed. Loki had the shade slip off the magic suppressing cuffs before tossing them aside, making all the agents to either flinch or jump.

The ones that looked back at him widened their eyes in fright.

“Do you really think such a trinket could contain me?” ‘Loki’ teased the weak mortals. Loki waved his hand and the recording devices exploded, sending sparks everywhere. Two agents ran away. Cowards.

Through his wards Loki watched as Tony fought Amora, exchanging spells. She was quickly being overwhelmed. With a slashing motion of Tony’s hand she was pushed back and into a metal wall. Metal snakes emerged from the wall, curling around her limbs and torso. He encased her fingers completely and silenced her with a powerful spell.

“Now stay put, darling,” he teased her and she pouted in response.

Tony cut through four more agents as he made his way to Loki, Jarvis just feet behind him.
Next to block his path were Captain America and Hawkeye. The archer was further back with the super soldier in between them.

“Nice shield.” Tony commented with an amused grin. “How ‘bout another trade? I spare birdbrain’s life and you give me the shield.”

“No way in hell,” Clint responded before Steve could. Tony wielded two swords. Both were red, one with blood and the other by design.

“The offer still stands. Just say the word and I won’t kill him.”

Tony charged forward. Captain America met his first slash, being pushed backwards despite his unyielding posture. Hawkeye shot a plastic arrow which Tony deflected with his other sword. Tony dropped to his knee, slicing low at Steve’s leg. The Avenger hopped up slightly dodging the attack, leaving him unbalanced. Tony leveraged him up and over his shoulder, slamming him into the ground, creating a clear path.

The soldier tried to get up, but Jarvis swooped above him and breathed out fire. It was all he could do to curl up and let his shield take the brunt of the onslaught.

Hawkeye sent out a volley of arrows in quick succession, all of which were kill shots, but either wires shot out from the walls grabbing the arrows or small shards of metal redirected the path of the arrows.

When Hawkeye was in range of the god’s swords he clicked a button on his bow. One end of the string came undone and the frame straightened out. With a quick movement he flicked out the string and it wrapped around Tony’s throat. Hawkeye pulled the bow backwards, tightening the makeshift noose that would cut into the skin of any mortal. Tony slashed one of his swords upwards cutting the wiry string and causing it to dig into his skin, making him bleed slightly.

“Not bad.” Tony commented, touching the small cut on this throat then observing the small drops of blood. “Maybe you’re not as useless as I had originally assumed.”

Hawkeye was holding his straightened bow frame in an expert swordsman’s grip, much to Loki’s surprise. He made a few good attempts, but his weapon was subpar compared to Tony’s swords. The god quickly disarmed him then twisted him around, putting one of his swords to Clint’s throat.

“Capsicle, you ready to—” Tony stopped mid-sentence when he saw Jarvis towering over the prone soldier, wings spread wide and mouth open, ready to spout out even more flames. The shield was completely gnarled from heat. “Damn it.” Tony lowered his sword slightly before slamming Clint’s head against the wall, knocking him out. The golden eagle took off just as the disfigured shield warped further into cords, binding Captain America to the ground. “If only you had been a bald eagle. Now that would have been funny,” Tony mumbled to himself as Jarvis perched on his shoulder.

“Amora, Captain America, and Hawkeye are down. Are you sure you still want to be here when Tony arrives?” ‘Loki’ asked cleaning his fingernails idly. Five more agents ran away, leaving only six.

Loki’s wards spotted Black Widow before Tony did. Her expression was composed as she wielded twin pistols, both plastic and filled with tranq darts. She was just around the corner, eyes closed and waiting for Tony.

She truly did remind Loki of a spider, waiting for her prey to fall into her web.
Unfortunately she did not grasp the concept of what it meant for Tony to be the God of Metal. Loki knew that the other god could sense heat discrepancies of metals. It was one of the reasons he was such a good blacksmith. It was also the reason he could sense her hiding around a corner, her back pressed against the metal wall.

Without even seeing her, metal snaked out from the wall, capturing her and making each of her pistols point towards her shoulders.

Tony rounded the corner and saw her.

“Tasha,” Tony nodded in greeting. He pried one of the pistols from her hand, checking its clip before aiming it at her. “I assume there is enough tranquilizer in these to at least make a god stumble. I wonder what it would do to you, even with that serum that has slowed down your aging and made you stronger.” He thumbed the hammer of the pistol. “Of course, I wasn’t really planning on fighting any of you today, but such is life.” A small wormhole opened and Tony tossed the pistol through it before it closed.

In a quick movement there was a crunching noise and Natasha’s arm shot out, grabbing the dagger off Tony’s belt. She slashed at his throat, but he leaned backwards, just out of her range.

“I guess a weapon for a weapon is a fair trade.” Tony took another step backwards and Jarvis screeched at her. “That dagger is worth a fortune on the more civilized realms. Don’t go losing it.” He moved backwards a bit more, keeping his eyes on her. “And you might want to get that shoulder checked out. I’m pretty sure they’re not supposed to stick out in that direction.”

Tony threw a wall of metal up just as she sent his dagger flying back towards him. His disjointed laughter echoed in the metal halls.

“Thirty seconds to run,” ‘Loki’ sang while tipping his chair back and forth. Four agents made their escape, leaving just two behind. One had a determined look on his face while the other was shaking slightly. “Brave soldiers, even when your comrades abandoned you. How noble.” Loki and his shade rolled their eyes in tandem. The metal door in front of them lurched, causing both agents to flinch. The dark metal slowly grew brighter as it began to melt. “So dramatic.”

When the hole was wide enough to see through, both agents started shooting their tranquilizers.

“Only two guards? I’m disappointed,” Tony said as molten metal jumped, taking down every dart.

“The others ran away,” ‘Loki’ clarified. “It would be a shame to kill them just because of their idiotic bravery. The world needs heroes, after all.” The last bit was said sarcastically and Tony snorted in response.

“Fine.” Two wads of liquid metal flew at the agents, solidifying into cuffs that connected to the ground.

Tony’s eyes narrowed as he looked around the room and then at ‘Loki’. With a sweeping motion of his arm he sent out a wave of magic. The shade flickered and Loki felt the magic brush against him.

“You’re such an asshole,” Tony said while walking over to where Loki was still invisible and seated. He held out his hand and Loki took it, dropping his invisibility spell.

“I did get you a present,” Loki said while letting go of his hand quickly. He looked over to his shade which was holding the magic suppressing cuffs.
“You’re too kind,” Tony drawled out as two portals opened. The shade stepped through the one in the cell and appeared beside them. ‘Loki’ handed the cuffs to Tony before it fizzled out along with the wormholes. Tony examined them for a long moment, mumbling to himself.

“Let’s go home,” Loki said while looking at the destruction around them.

“Home?” Tony’s eyes were alight with happiness.

“Well, I have no better place to go.” Loki looked away from him snootily. From the corner of his eye he could see how wide Tony’s smile was, and perhaps even genuine.

“To home, then.”

Tony looped his arm around Loki’s waist, pulling him through a portal before the younger god could even react.

Chapter End Notes

So I have a Tumblr account now, so that’s a thing.

Also, I posted a new FrostIron story called: Forming a Family
You are by far the most frustrating being in all the realms,” Tony said while dropping Loki into an armchair carelessly. Loki grinned widely, watching Tony mutter to himself as he summoned a rag to wipe the blood off his swords. Something in Loki’s chest was fluttering and light.

New emotions, or perhaps ones that were merely buried long ago, were coming to life inside of him.

“I would assume I am quite worth the effort,” Loki said and Tony paused in his cleaning, turning back in Loki’s direction. There was a gleam in his brown eyes.

“More than worth the effort. That was child’s play and you just let them scoop you up like a baby bird fallen out of its nest.” Tony narrowed his eyes and Loki grinned wider. “I assume you did that on purpose.”

“Of course! Do you think so little of me as to assume that I could be taken so easily?” Loki leaned forward slightly as he spoke.

“Please tell me you at least played hard to get.” The swords in Tony’s hand disappeared along with the bloodied rag.

“Only the hardest.” Loki looked over to Tony’s desk before giving the god a sidelong glance. “And I said the filthiest things to them.”

“I always knew you were one for dirty talk.” Tony hummed in approval as Loki stood, quickly moving into the other god’s personal space. He brushed a hand over the dark chest plate of Tony’s armor, dried blood flaking off. Tony placed his hand on Loki’s hip, pulling him a bit closer. Loki twisted out of his hold, moving to the desk.

“You know next to nothing about me. I have changed quite a bit since your betrayal.” Despite his harsh words, Loki’s tone was almost playful as he poured them each a glass of fire ale.

“I’m more than willing to learn,” Tony said while taking the offered glass. He took a sip, never breaking eye contact with him. Loki scoffed.
“And what makes you think I want to teach you?” he asked while holding up his glass, letting the dim light catch in the red liquid.

“Because, Loki, if there’s one thing about you that hasn’t changed it’s that you love to share,” Tony said with total confidence. Loki was temporary taken aback. Before he could recover Tony was speaking again. “But you don’t share with just anyone. No, you keep that shiny brain locked away.” Tony set aside his drink, moving closer to Loki. “You save your most brilliant ideas for only those who could truly appreciate them. You see how all those outsiders are idiotic and unworthy and you hold your tongue, waiting,” Tony took Loki’s drink from his hands, “waiting, and waiting until you find someone worth showing your mind to.” He took a sip of Loki’s drink. “So punish me for taking that for granted all those years ago, and let me see your mind, claws and all.” Tony leaned up and captured his lips, their armor clinking together. Loki was frozen for a single moment, before he dipped slightly, pulling Tony closer.

“I hate you so much.” Loki hissed as Tony’s lips trailed down to his neck. Tony chuckled. “Good,” Tony whispered, his tongue flicking out. Loki gripped onto the clasps of the other god’s armor, trying to hold back from undoing them. “Because the more you hate me the more you’ll love me.” Tony bit down hard on the side of Loki’s neck, eliciting a startled moan from him. Loki’s hands tightened on the clasps.

“I don’t love you. I won’t ever love you.” Loki’s voice was breathless and at some point his fingers started undoing Tony’s armor.

“How can you hate me so much without loving me?” Tony teased and Loki felt the back of his thighs hit the desk.

“I—hate you.” At some point Tony’s hand had snuck under Loki’s armor, touching the expanses of his abs.

“Liar.” The sound of armor hitting the ground made Loki flinch. “We’re both mad and you’ve only started embracing it.” Tony’s thumb grazed over Loki’s nipple, making him arch into his touch. “Love and hate me. Fall apart into madness as you fuck me then let me fuck you back into our own version of sanity and reality.”

Something in Loki shattered. He clawed at Tony’s clothes, pulling it off and leaving behind bloody lines. His eyes landed on the freshly healed stab mark he’d given him earlier in the day. Loki dug his fingers into the tender flesh, his hand fisting around Tony’s clavicle until he bled. He used his hold to twist them both around, so that Tony was pushed against the desk.

“I hate you so fucking much,” Loki growled out, capturing Tony’s lips before biting down roughly, tasting fresh blood.

“Good, then use your cock to fucking destroy me. If you think you can, that is.” Tony sneered while pulling Loki’s pants down roughly. A burning rage nearly eclipsed his lust, before quickly mixing with it.

“You’ll pay—” Loki twisted him around before he spread Tony’s legs wide, “for every lie,” he pushed into him without preparation, “for every false smile,” he pulled back and slammed into him with all his might, “for every moment we were ‘friends’.” Tony’s pained grunts urged him on.

“Harder! I want to fucking burn!” Tony called out. Loki shoved Tony’s face into the desk and papers. Loki plowed into him, making the whole desk lurch forward.
“Disrespectful, traitor, fool!” Loki didn’t even register that he was shouting as he fucked Tony as hard as he could, one hand on his hip while the other clawed at old scars.

“I used you!” Tony shouted before Loki grabbed him by the back of his neck, keeping him in place. “And then I left you in a pit of vipers—” Tony let out a broken moan as Loki hit his prostate. “Left you to be eaten alive!” Loki bent down and bit his shoulder as hard as he could, feeling his teeth sink into flesh as his cock rammed into Tony for what felt like the hundredth time and the other god met his movements as best as he could while being pinned down.

“I’ll kill you!” Loki shouted, blood splattering on the expanses of Tony’s already marred back.

“They lied to you, we all lied to you!” Loki’s thrusts were starting to become erratic. “But I’m the only one who will ever tell you the truth.” Loki took in a startled gasp, the scent of blood and sweat thick in the air. “I’m all you have left and I’ll never lie to you again.” Loki let out a pained moan as he came hard, his mind temporarily whiting out.

Loki took a step backwards and fell to the ground, his whole body shaking. Tears were mixing with sweat and the blood on his lips and chin. He looked up at the other god who was equally breathless and sitting on the dented desk, still fully erect. Loki tried wiping away his tears, but just ended up smearing blood around.

Tony towered over him for a split second before falling to his knees and gathering Loki in his arms. Loki clawed at him halfheartedly, his mind buzzing euphorically. The door to the hallway opened without prompting.

Loki felt so empty, like all of the filth in his mind had been poured out.

He bit and scratched at Tony, leaving claw marks on the side of his face while laughing maniacally. The arms around him tightened and he hissed and writhed in Tony’s strong hold.

He was dropped onto a soft bed and he immediately started ripping the plush bedspread and sheets. Cold metal suddenly wrapped around his wrists, pulling him backwards and flat onto his back.

“I’ll kill you! I’ll kill you all!” Loki shouted with new energy, his throat and soul feeling raw. Everything was a hazy red as he clawed at the metal cuffs, breaking more than one nail.

“Not today, you won’t,” a figure said, entering Loki’s hazy vision. Tony Howardson.

“I’ll save you for last! Take my sweet time!” There was something in his hand and Loki’s eyes went wide. “I won’t be silenced!” He bared his teeth at Tony, daring him to come closer so he could bite off his cock.

“Hush, let me put you back together.” Tony’s voice was steady, in control.

“No!” Loki shouted, trying to get out of his restraints so he could destroy everything, burn down this manor, Asgard, all nine realms.

“Let me put you back together,” Tony repeated. Something in his voice was making Loki arch off the bed, seeking friction. Tony moved to go between Loki’s legs, but the younger god kicked him in the jaw with a sickening crack.

“I’ll burn everything down! I’ll burn you down—No, I’ll freeze everything!” Loki let out a mad laugh, bucking upwards, but meeting only air. “I’ll use the casket and freeze all the Aesir! All the realms!”
Tony moved to the side of the bed, grabbing Loki by his chin and forcing him to look Tony in the eyes.

“Let me put you back together.” His words were dark, demanding and some of the red fog that blinded Loki receded. Almost without thought he opened his mouth and accepted the ball-gag. He glared silently as cold metal captured his ankles and Tony pulled out a blindfold. “Breathe through your nose.” Loki made a snorting noise of derision. He could easily bite through the ball-gag if he so desired, but the sudden darkness and near silence was making his already racing heart reach a faster tempo.

He kept fighting his metal restraints, causing them to bite into his flesh. The bed dipped and he wanted to shout more obscenities and threats, but the gag muffled him, driving him mad. He could barely move, he couldn’t speak or see. He had no outlet for the enraged energy that was boiling him alive. Magic was at the tips of his fingers and he would implode if something didn’t change quickly.

Loki felt a presence between his spread legs before they shifted, hovering over him slightly. Drops splattered on his chest, too thin to be spit or semen, but too thick to be sweat—blood then. Loki wanted to grin, but couldn’t with his mouth stuffed.

A hand wrapped around his cock and Loki didn’t remember when he had become hard again.

“We’ll take over all the realms,” Tony whispered, his hand slowly stroking Loki’s cock. Loki tried to thrust into his fist, but his hips were pinned down by another metal wire. “First we’ll take over Niflheim. It will fall to us in less than a day’s time.” Tony’s hand picked up the pace slightly and Loki wanted to scream at him for going so slowly. “Then we’ll set things off in Midgard. It will be a slow creep. No one will see it coming until it’s too late.” Wet warmth engulfed Loki’s cock and he moaned through the gag. Tony chuckled, sending vibrations straight through him. “Then Jotunheim. They will bow at your feet.” Tony swallowed him whole again. “Then we will kill Odin.” Loki groaned as Tony shifted backwards slightly, lifting both of Loki’s legs and draping them over his shoulders. “I’ll pop out his last eye and keep it as a souvenir.”

Loki was startled by a slick warmth at his entrance, prodding carefully. He could feel Tony’s facial hair brushing against his pale cheeks. He grinded against Tony’s tongue and Tony did not stop him, instead snaking an arm around his thigh and continuing his stroking again.

Tony removed his tongue and Loki nearly growled in frustration, until two fingers circled his hole once before entering.

“After we have Asgard, Vanahem will follow. Then we’ll rally the other realms, tell them that the Mad Titan is coming.” Tony’s fingers found Loki’s prostate, massaging it slowly. Loki wanted to shout at him to hurry up, to stop his babbling, but his mind was enraptured and his body was moving in sync with Tony’s. “We’ll tell them he’s a threat to all the realms, rally them to our side, and then face Thanos’ forces on Midgard.” Tony’s pace picked up slightly. “Parts of earth will be devastated, and Stark Industries will be there to pick up the pieces.” Tony chuckled darkly and it made Loki’s gut tighten. “Alfheim and Svartalfheim will fall in line.” Tony removed his fingers, leaving Loki’s entrance quivering and legs shaking from want. “We’ll have a puppet king in Muspelheim.”

Loki was suddenly filled to the brim with Tony’s cock, causing his whole body to tense around the welcomed intrusion. The metal that was holding him down was suddenly removed and he wrapped himself around Tony without thought, blindfold and gag still in place.

Tony started thrusting into him at an unrelenting pace. Loki scraped at Tony’s back, burying his
face in the crook of his neck and meeting each powerful thrust. His whole body felt like it was going to shatter.

“They’ll all fall at our feet,” Tony growled out and Loki came, screaming through the gag. With a few more thrusts Tony came while calling out Loki’s name. Loki fell slack under Tony. He felt the ball-gag being removed along with the blindfold, but Loki couldn’t be bothered to open his eyes, too fatigued.

“They’ll fall at our feet,” Loki repeated, curling up in Tony’s arms before falling asleep.

Chapter End Notes

And it only took us 57 chapters for them to finally have sex. lol, slow burns are crazy.
“This is not a date,” Loki said for the seventh time. Tony’s infuriating grin widened as he leaned on the table, disguised as a dark elf while Loki looked like a Niflung. In this form he was much shorter than Tony. He wasn’t used to it.

“This is definitely a date.” Tony winked at him and Loki bristled like a cat.

“No, it’s not,” he mumbled, hiding his blush behind his glass.

“Keep drinking like that and you’re going to get fat,” Tony said to him. Loki let out an indignant noise, but did not stop drinking the thick drink that was both sweet and savory.

“Keep talking like that and your bed will be rather cold and empty tonight.”

“Oh, I thought you knew.” Tony paused and Loki arched an eyebrow in question. “Any bed you’re in is bound to be cold, one could almost say even frosty.” Tony’s eyes were wide with false innocence.

Loki wanted to toss a dagger or two at him, but since they were in a tavern he opted just to shoot a bolt of energy under the table, causing Tony to flinch.

“You will pay for that later on,” Loki warned him, ordering another glass of the decadent drink. “We are here on business.”

“Business and pleasure,” Tony clarified and Loki rolled his eyes. They both fell silent as they ate their meals, subtly listening in on the conversation two tables over.

Niflung dignitaries were chatting with each other freely, not bothered in the least by how their fine clothing stood out in such a dim tavern. The lesser Niflungs didn’t seem to care.

Loki had never been all that interested if Niflheim’s society. He had only ever been concerned with their ruling class and the realm’s wilderness, but now knowing about the structure of their society was key to success. Tony had been very blunt when explaining how their realm was laid out.

It was the least populated realm, connected by nine rivers for each of the nine tribes. The rivers were fast moving and spider web like. Only the Niflungs could safely traverse the rapids. Of the tribes, the Scalvers ruled over the others, having them pay tributes in exchange for protection both
from the other tribes and from Asgard.

The Scalvers tribe was the only one Loki ever had any association with.

“Everyone has ambition,” Tony whispered under his breath. “The other Niflung tribes have been beaten into submission. If we put one of them in power it would be too much of an upheaval. We have to put someone from Scalvers tribe in power.”

“I thought we were going to take over,” Loki hissed.

“There’s more than one way to take over a realm.” Tony pulled Loki’s chair over to his side, the loud scraping noise of its legs drawing the attention of everyone in the tavern. “I’ve already put in place a group that is completely under my control—our control,” Tony whispered into Loki’s ear before trailing his lips down the column of Loki’s throat.

“We’re in public,” Loki warned, but tilted his head to give him more access.

“No one will recognize us in these forms.” Tony practically dragged Loki into his lap. “We could fuck right here on the table.” Loki dug his fingers into Tony’s shirt and chest.

“We’re supposed to be listening.” Loki hated how easily Tony could distract him.

“No, you’re supposed to be listening.” Tony pulled Loki closer. “I already know each of those Niflings’ names, weaknesses, and exactly how to use them.” Loki scowled. “Everything is set in place. All we have to do is push one piece down and all the others will fall.”

“How am I supposed to—” Loki gasped as Tony slid his hand down Loki’s pants. “Can’t listen with—” Loki had to bite down on his own lip to keep from moaning. He abruptly pushed away from Tony. “We’re here on business.”

“We’re on a date,” Tony said automatically. Loki gripped both of Tony’s shoulders, using them to push further back.

“I want to claw your eyes out.” Loki sneered while glancing around. A good portion of the patrons of the tavern were watching them. Tony grabbed Loki’s hips, trapping him.

“That’s one of the things I love about you Loki, you’re a fucking cat.” Said god narrowed his false blue eyes and made a point of digging his fingernails into Tony’s shoulders.

“What was the point of bringing me here if you already have ‘everything set in place’? And if you say it’s for a date I really will kill you.” Loki looked Tony over, taking in his false appearance. Tony’s grin faltered slightly.

“You were raised as a prince, to support Thor. You need to be more than an advisor or second in command. You are a king. We are kings.” Tony pulled Loki back to him. “I want to show you how to be more than an Aesir prince.” Loki reeled backwards.

“So this is just another one of your lessons?” Loki wrapped his hands around Tony’s throat. “I’m not that stupid 1,600-years-old anymore. I don’t need your help.” Tony peeled away Loki’s hands and he was furious by how weak he was in comparison. Tony captured both Loki’s wrists in one hand. He forgot all his combat training and yanked against Tony’s hold feebly.

“You’re making a scene,” Tony said softly, contrasting with his devilish grin. Loki struggled further and Tony used his free hand to grab Loki’s hip, keeping him in place.
Two rough looking Niflungs stood, heading over to them.

“Stay out of this,” Loki hissed at them, a spell on the tip of his tongue. The two Niflungs backed off, glancing at each other warily.

“It’s alright. This is how we always are.” Tony winked at them and Loki felt his anger bristle back to life when the two Niflungs relaxed and went back to their seats. Why did Tony always have to be better than him when it came to other people? “Loki,” Tony’s voice was no-nonsense, immediately making Loki focus on him. “I’m not here to teach you a lesson or to be condescending. I just want you to know how everything came together and how you can do so. I might not always be here to set all the pieces in place. We have to be able to work independently and together.” Tony snuck in a kiss and let go of Loki’s wrists.

“I hate you,” Loki mumbled while sinking into Tony’s arms.

“Good, because the more you hate me the more you’ll—”

“Shut up.” Loki bit into Tony’s neck, drawing blood.

“Fucking cat!” Tony shoved Loki out of his lap and the younger god fell to the ground laughing. “Come on.” Tony hauled him up while slapping down money on the table. Loki let himself be dragged behind him. It was foggy outside, feeling pleasant on Loki’s false skin. The Niflungs’s skin was perfectly suited for their realm.

It began to drizzle and Tony led him to an overhang, shielding them from the rain. Loki slumped against Tony as they both looked at the castle that held the ruling class.

“We should fuck in every palace, in every realm at least once,” Loki said softly, his eyes hooded as he stared at the castle that would be theirs.

“Never heard a better plan in my life,” Tony said, kissing Loki’s jaw line. Loki rubbed his cheek against the top of Tony’s head. “You fucking cat.” Loki rubbed himself completely against Tony.

“I do what I want,” Loki said slyly while pulling away. He walked over to one of the vendors with Tony just a step behind. Loki ordered a slew of different candies and Tony paid for them before the other god could.

“You’re going to get fat,” Tony said before stealing one of the candies.

“For this being a date, you’re really not that charming,” Loki sneered while hoarding his candies.

“So you admit that this is a date.” Tony moved in closer and Loki turned slightly to guard his candies.

“Shut up, you traitorous liar.” Loki picked up his pace, trying to put distance between them. He stopped abruptly and leaned against a wall, crossing his arms and biting his lip.

“Mood swings, just like a cat,” Tony whispered to himself before joining Loki, leaning against the wall. “You know, half the reason we’re here is because I’ve never been able to share all my plans with anyone. I was trying to impress you.”

“Consider me unimpressed.” Loki popped another candy into his mouth.

“Good, because the impressive parts haven’t even happened yet.” Tony began walking away and Loki frowned before following. “This whole realm is divided in factions,” Tony said once Loki
caught up with him. “You’ve only dealt with the very top of the ruling class. Despite the Scalvers tribe being in power for over 100,000 years, their control is still fragile. This whole realm is fragile.” Tony glanced over at Loki. “If we disrupt the current order too much the realm will break and I don’t think either of us wants a broken realm.”

“I feel like you’re trying to make a point, but not quite getting there,” Loki said dryly.

“The key to taking over this realm is a subtle shift in power. It has to be obvious enough to the ruling class, but no one else, especially not the other tribes. The moment any of them smell weakness they’ll try to take over.”

“So what exactly is the plan?”

“I killed the queen off a few years back and the king’s time of mourning is almost up. He loves his daughter, but knows he needs a son in order to keep Niflheim stable. He just remarried a Niflung that I chose myself. I’ve been cultivating her for over 1,500 years.” Tony chuckled. “She is going to manipulate King Scoliver, and go all evil stepmother on his daughter.”

“Evil stepmother?” Loki asked, raising an eyebrow slightly.

“Touchy subject for you?” Tony joked and Loki cast him a glare.

“How can you be sure we can trust her?”

“She wants power. I can give her power. She also knows that I know how to rule, how to make a realm prosper. She’s my student. She’s already pledged fealty to me.”

“How do you know she won’t just turn on you once she’s in power?”

“Because without me she won’t be able to maintain control. She’s a figurehead. Her base of power is mine, though she doesn’t know that. I have spies, Loki, so many spies.” Tony looped his arm around Loki’s waist. “I want you two to meet, but you’re both a bit too catty. You’d be at each other’s throats.” Tony leaned down and bit Loki’s throat softly, making the other god flinch.

“Then where are we heading now?”

“To push over the piece that will set everything in motion.” Tony made a flicking motion.

“And what piece is that?”

“King Scoliver’s brother and head advisor. He’s what you would have been to Thor, had they not lied to you. He’s the steady logic that keeps the king in check. We’re going to kill him.”

“So we’re going to kill the Niflung equivalent of me?” Loki asked while giving Tony an annoyed look.

“Don’t go over-analyzing things.” Tony stopped and backed Loki up against a wall. “He’s in no way as sexy or interesting as you are. He’s a cheap copy and not even worthy of our time.” Tony leaned down and gave Loki a slow kiss that set him off kilter. The bag of candy fell from his hand as he wrapped his arms around Tony, bringing him closer. After a long moment Tony pulled away slightly, still in Loki’s arms. “The only reason I’m killing him myself is because I don’t want anyone to botch it up.” Tony gave him a quick kiss on the lips before pulling away completely. “Come on. Let’s go kill a prince.”
Loki sat in his finely tailored suit amongst the reporters as Tony, in his Dr. Stark glamour, announced to the world that Stark Industries was branching off into medical care. Loki held back a grin as the whole area erupted into chatter as the reporters shouted questions. He answered a few before handing over the press conference to Pepper Potts who was technically the CEO and majority shareholder of Stark Industries.

Loki joined him backstage where Tony was watching various sets of monitors.

“There they are,” Tony said while pointing to one of the screens. It was the view right outside of the building. SHIELD agents were swarming the area, all dressed in black. They reminded Loki of ants. Black Widow and Hawkeye were among them, but none of the other Avengers. “I guess we’ll have to cause a bit more of a ruckus if we want them all to come out and play.” Tony pulled out a cell phone and began typing away. “Nothing a few terrorist attacks can’t solve.” He set aside his phone and whispered a few words. The images on screen changed to different locations around the city. “And we’ll throw in a bank robbery for good measure.” The screens came to life with mayhem and explosions.

“Impressive,” Loki commented, resting both his hands on Tony’s shoulders as he stood behind him. They sat watching as the Avengers were slowly pulled from the woodwork. Loki draped himself over the other god, rubbing his face against Tony’s, enjoying the coarseness of his facial hair before standing up straight. “When shall we strike?” He whispered into the other’s his ear.

“Any moment now. Just waiting for them to bust down the—” On cue the door was knocked down and agents streamed into the room. A portal appeared behind Loki and he pulled himself and Tony in his wheeled office chair through it. Before the agents could converge on them, the portal closed.

They were now in an office building, and from the chaos outside it was evident that they were still in New York.
“What now?” Loki asked while turning Tony’s chair around. Tony reached into Loki’s pants, pulling out his pocket watch. He flipped it open.

“We have a meeting here in ten minutes.”

“With whom?” Loki slowly pulled the watch from Tony’s hand by its chain.

“With some co-conspirators.” Tony tugged Loki into his lap.

“Why are you always so damn vague?” Loki asked, emphasizing his words with kisses.

“I have to keep you intrigued, now don’t I?” Tony began undoing Loki’s tie.

“One of these days I’m going to kill you, Tony Howardson,” Loki said, burying his face in the crook of Tony’s neck.

“I’m too fun to kill,” Tony said as he untucked Loki’s shirt.

“Hardly.” Loki took off his green tie and looped it around the back of Tony’s neck, pulling him closer.

“One day, you’re going to love me as much as I love you.” Tony gripped Loki by his long hair, knotting his hand in it. “And it’s going to piss you off so much.”

“Shut up, you traitor,” Loki whispered, a grin on his face.

“Such a hypocrite.” Tony snuck his hands under Loki’s shirt, feeling old scars. “I remember this scar.” He traced his hand down the front of Loki’s chest, feeling a raised line. Loki scowled, looking away from Tony. “That was a good day for me, and for you, just not at the time.”

“Had I known what I know today…” Loki said, a festering anger opening anew.

“Isn’t that the kicker?” Tony was grinning. “Had I known what I know today we could have been having fun like this centuries ago.” Tony began playing with the buttons of Loki’s shirt. Tony let out a sigh that Loki could not properly interpret. “Unfortunately, we don’t have the time for such activities. It will only put us at a disadvantage if others know of our relationship.” Loki scoffed while getting off Tony’s lap.

“And what relationship is that exactly?” he asked, looking down his nose at the other god. Tony stood from his chair, his business suit shifted into his red and gold armor.

“More than just business partner, more than just friends—”

“We’re really not friends,” Loki said, cutting Tony off.

“Fine, we’re not friends. Lovers then.” Tony’s grin slowly shifted into the one that never ceased to annoy Loki.

“You’re the one feigning love. I feel no such emotion towards you.” Loki summoned his armor to himself, putting up both physical and emotional protection.

“Perhaps not yet.”

Both gods turned towards the door, hearing two pairs of footsteps approaching. Tony stood up and went to Loki’s side, creating a unified front.
The two people that entered the room could not look more different than each other.

The woman was taller than the man beside her, but that was only because of the killer heels she was wearing. Loki had no doubt that they could easily be turned into weapons. Her hair was pitch black with just a tinge of green to it. Her lipstick was green, contrasting with her pale features, yet somehow accentuating them. She wore a pencil skirt paired with a button up shirt. Her formal clothing made her green fishnet stockings and golden broach stand out even more. The broach, which was pinned to her chest, had the form of a golden skull with six tentacles coming from it.

In comparison the man looked innocuous. He was wearing a simple business suit that was clearly off the shelf rather than tailor made. His tie was plain dark blue with slashes of dark red. It was perfectly knotted and centered. Despite being in a unique situation Loki knew that he’d be hard pressed to recognize this man if he was walking down the streets of New York.

“Loki, these are two of my other associates, Viper and Phil Coulson.”

Chapter End Notes

Surprised?
“It’s a pleasure,” Loki said while bowing slightly in false modesty.

“Quite a pleasure,” Viper said. Her smile was blindingly white.

Coulson stepped forward, his hand extended. Loki looked at it for a split second in distaste, before mimicking the motion he had seen on TV, shaking the mortal’s hand.

“It’s nice to meet you.” Coulson’s smile was mild, yet disarming.

“These two play key roles in two of the biggest underground organizations in Midgard,” Tony explained while moving a bit closer to the pair so that he was standing by Loki again.

“And you two want to take over our world.” Though Coulson’s tone was pleasant, Loki cocked his eyebrow at the word ‘our’.

“Better us than S.H.I.E.L.D or Hydra,” Tony said immediately in response. “Besides, I really want to see how you two will shape this world once everything is in place.”

“He works for S.H.I.E.L.D?” Loki asked while sneering, since he doubted Viper worked for the goody-two shoes organization.

“How do you think we met?” Tony asked, glancing over at the other god. “When I was playing Dr. Stark he and Black Widow were put in charge of monitoring me, though they weren’t very good at it.”

“You did have us at a disadvantage.” Coulson sounded like he was making a joke rather than an excuse, and it made Loki wary of him. There was just something off about that human, about both of the humans in front of him.

“It doesn’t matter who we’re publicly aligned with. I know whose side we’re really on.” Viper flicked her hair over her shoulder, the light catching the green undertones in her hair.

“What exactly is the plan?” Loki asked, turning slightly towards Tony.
“They’re both about third in command of their separate organizations. When Thanos comes we’ll kill off those in front of them, putting Viper and Coulson in power. SHIELD will be forced to work with Stark Industries in order to bring order back to this realm. Hydra will spend that time building its power base up—”

“Mightier than before,” Viper cut in. She was expressionless, but Loki could sense glee coming from her.

“SHIELD and Stark Industries will control the whole realm, fighting against Hydra in order to keep the humans busy.”

“They’ll be occupied with the shiny lights of rivalry while we collude behind scenes.” Loki narrowed his eyes at the SHIELD agent.

“What exactly are your motives for ‘colluding’ with us?” Loki rested his hand on a dagger on his hip, causing everyone in the room but Coulson to tense.

“I’ve worked in the bureaucracy for most of my life. I’m tired of living by their rules. I plan to slowly shape the new world with the new SHIELD. Also, part of our deal is that Tony makes sure Hawkeye and Captain America live through the coming invasion. They’ll be instrumental in my new world.”

“Our new world,” Viper emphasized and Coulson gave her a smile that was perfectly fake. She scowled at him.

“I’ll also be giving them both golden apples once Thanos is defeated,” Tony added in.

“Yes, about those apples…” Viper’s teeth glinted—no, her fangs glinted.

The room seemed to shift suddenly. Loki blinked hard as Coulson lurched backwards before falling to the ground. Loki heard a Tesseract wormhole opening, but it fizzled out too quickly for anyone to get through. He looked sideways and saw more than felt Tony grab him, pushing him behind him. Loki stumbled, falling to his knees. His head felt heavy, but he still managed to lift it.

The sight in front of him didn’t make sense. Viper had her arms wrapped around Tony, keeping him in place. Her lips were on his neck, but her eyes were on Loki. She pulled back from him and Loki saw that her fangs were bloodied.

Loki sent out a burst of green magic towards her, but it went wide, missing her completely. She let out a hiss, dragging Tony with her as she took a step backwards. Two men in green outfits and gas masks came in and took Tony out of her arms, lifting him up between the two of them and running away.

Loki let out a small sound that was a mixture between anger and fear.

Viper bared her fangs again, along with a gun that she had somehow hidden away on her person. Before she could raise the muzzle Loki used the last of his wits to cast a spell that pushed her backwards, through the wall, and then protected the room from all intrusions.

Protective green surrounded him and Coulson. Loki fell onto his back, unable to support his own weight anymore. He raised a shaking finger, trying to cast an easy offensive spell to kill the mortal, but before he could he passed out.
Loki woke to the crackling of fire and the smell of smoke. He curled in on himself slightly, feeling nauseous. He turned onto his side and vomited. The acidic taste on his tongue and the smoke choking his throat made his head spin.

He clawed at the ground, trying to get his bearings. The green bubble that coated the walls was the only thing keeping the fire from consuming him and—and the human, Coulson. Loki narrowed his eyes at the unconscious mortal.

Despite his protective spell, heat was seeping towards him. Loki coughed before standing up. He looked around and a deep seated fear came to life. Ever since the war on Muspelheim he had had a well hidden phobia of fire. He was just grateful to the Norns that The Other never figured that out.

His fear was overshadowed when a new emotion he couldn’t identify eclipsed it.

Tony wasn’t here.

Tony was gone and it was that woman who had taken him.

Loki sneered and grabbed the mortal from the ground, lifting him by his collar. Coulson’s blue eyes rolled open.

“Where is he?” Loki hissed out the question. The mortal blinked with great difficulty and Loki let out an annoyed growl.

Whatever had knocked them out was still in effect on the mortal. Loki tested his magic quickly before teleporting them both to the only place in Midgard that he considered safe, Stark Tower.

He dropped the nearly unconscious man onto a couch before pacing, trying to put some order to his chaotic thoughts.

Tony wasn’t here.

Jarvis wasn’t here.

And Loki didn’t know what to do.

He felt like a child lost in a dark forest.

His thoughts flitted to what Tony told him about his childhood, all alone as a 900 years old, wounded and on Yggdrasil. Tony had persevered, and Loki was neither wounded nor truly lost. He just had to calm down. He just had to find a goal, the same way Tony did, then he’d be able to focus.

Once he realized that, the goal was obvious.

He had to find Tony.

With that revelation he paused mid-step and let out a breath of air.

He turned back towards the mortal who was trying to sit up. Loki grabbed him again and teleported them into the lab. He dropped the human carelessly to the floor while heading over to the computers. He had seen Tony use them various times before and found they were quite easy to navigate.

Loki first pulled up a file on Viper, reading through her information quickly. It listed her known aliases, known accomplices, bases of operation, and abilities. He quickly memorized the locations
before looking up Coulson. His file had far less information, but it was more definitive. The human was well trained, first in his class, yet chose field work instead of taking an administrative position.

A twitch of a smile appeared on Loki’s face when he read a note near the bottom of Coulson’s profile stating his admiration for Captain America, one of the two people that Coulson had bargained for cooperation.

Loki had already dug through Hawkeye’s mind while he was under Thanos’ control. His thoughts on Coulson had been fleeting, far more consumed by Black Widow.

He glanced over at the mortal who was slowly pulling himself up. Loki had automatically disarmed him when he first grabbed him. The mortal was patting his side where his handgun had been.

“Good evening, Agent,” Loki said while standing at his full height, his helmet only adding to his height. The human sat up on the ground. “You shall tell me everything you know about this mortal, Viper.” Coulson slowly stood up and Loki allowed it.

“Viper, Madame Hydra—Where are we?” Coulson asked, still under the influence of the gas.

“Stay on topic.” Loki slammed down his scepter, causing Coulson to reach for his sidearm again. Green energy emitted from the bottom of Loki’s weapon and shot around Coulson, binding him in a tight coil.

“She’s on par with Black Widow’s hand to hand combat levels, proficient with firearms—” Loki tightened the coils around him, causing the human to let out a grunt of pain, yet somehow seem completely composed. “Poison! She specializes in poison!”

“You don’t say.” Loki tilted his head to the side slightly, knowing just how insane it made him look. “She poisoned Tony, but I doubt he’s dead. Where would she take him?”

“Hydra has countless—”

“Where?!” Loki let some of his desperation and anger shine through.

“I can get you your answers, but I need my SHIELD resources to do so.” Loki examined the human’s facial expression closely. There was something deceptively calm about him that Loki just didn’t like.

“Know this, mortal, should you even think of crossing me I will not only use all my energy to pull you apart in the worst imaginable ways, but also to torture your precious captain and hawk.” Loki pulled away part of his armor, showing many of his scars. “I know what true torture is, pains that can only be endured by the gods, but I believe with a bit of magic, Loki’s fingers lit up, “I can keep you three alive for decades on end. A lifetime for you all, but the blink of the eye for me.” Loki readjusted his armor. “And just to be certain...” Loki created an illusion of a parasitic slug from Niflheim, “my dear pet will start eating away at your very soul should something happen to me.” He forced the illusion down Coulson’s throat, causing him to gag and fight against his magical constraints. “I will be accompanying you, of course.”

Loki released him before walking over to one of the computers. The human was on his hands and knees coughing as Loki looked through a roster of SHIELD agents. After a moment Coulson composed himself before standing up and straightening out his tie.

“You mages really do have some amazing tricks.” Somehow Coulson’s voice sounded at ease, almost humorous despite what just happened.
“They’re not tricks,” Loki said without looking away from the screen.

“It’s simply a turn of phrase.” Coulson moved closer. “Tony would never partner up with someone if all they had was tricks.” Loki refrained from responding. “That one.” Loki stopped his scrolling. “He’s a Hydra spy.”

“Do you know his current location?” Loki glanced over at the human.

“He’s one of my subordinates.” Coulson glanced around. “I didn’t bring my phone to the meeting since it would have been tracked. Can you teleport me to,” Coulson took over the screen, working it expertly, “this location. It’s where SHIELD assumes I’m at.” Loki narrowed his eyes at the mortal, debating whether another threat was necessary.

Without warning, Loki’s arm shot out and he grabbed Coulson’s tie. There was a flash of green and they were at the location the agent had specified. Loki quickly surveyed his surroundings. It was all very… quaint. A modest apartment, completely unassuming, just like Coulson.

“This is your home,” Loki stated simply, eyeing the large musical instrument in the corner of the room.

“Yes, it is.” Coulson softly pulled at his tie and Loki released him. He watched carefully as the agent opened a drawer, pulling out a different gun and immediately checking its magazine and then holstering it. “When we have this whole thing resolved I will need my gun back. It was SHIELD issued. All equipment is inspected every six months. It would reflect poorly on me if I somehow lost my gun.”

Something about this human irked Loki. Everything about him just felt inherently fake. No one was this comfortable in a situation where a single wrong move could mean death, except for perhaps psychopaths, but Loki could tell he wasn’t a psychopath.

“How likely is it that this Hydra spy will know where Tony is?” Loki asked while poking at a strange sculpture with his scepter.

“Not likely.” Loki scowled at the agent’s frank response. “I was figuring that you could use some of those torture techniques you were talking about to try and get the information, though I’d rather you just kill him and come with me to SHIELD HQ disguised as him. I’ll be able to get into contact with various sources and see if there has been any unusual Hydra movements.” The mortal glanced at his watch. “Unless they have some sort of magic on their side I’d wager that Tony is still in the US, which should make things easier. If there are any outgoing private flights I’ll find them at SHIELD.”

“When we do locate him, we shall use your SHIELD agents and Avengers to attack.” Loki left no room for argument.

Chapter End Notes

Non-consensual drug use.
The Hydra spy had been woefully uninformative. Vivisecting the human did serve to scare some sense into Agent Coulson, much to the god’s delight.

Yet the longer Loki went without seeing Tony, the more frayed his mind became. Fleeting thoughts about the possibility of him being dead would not be silenced. Loki felt like he was being pulled apart, but it was far different than when he was The Other’s victim.

This felt like a parasite, eating away at his soul, feeding off his restless energy and frayed nerves.

Loki refused to put a name to the emotion.

After going over the finer points of the plan, Loki shapeshifted into the Hydra spy—well he shape shifted into how he looked before Loki used his daggers to show him what real pain was.

Coulson made a call, assembling SHIELD agents and the Avengers to SHIELD HQ, stating one of his informants might have stumbled upon something big.

Loki wasn’t too worried about Amora spotting him in his mortal disguise. She may be a mage but illusions were never her specialty. She would never be as good as him, even though she did have a few spells of worth, some that were particularly unique to her. He’d have to be on his guard.

After teleporting Coulson back to his humble apartment they took separate black SUVs. It was pathetically easy to infiltrate SHIELD HQ. They even had colored lines on the wall that led him directly to where he needed to be. Coulson was already there. Loki was pleased to see that they had already noticed suspicious activity at one of the Hydra facilities they knew about. It was offshore, just outside of the US’ jurisdiction, which was most of the reason they hadn’t taken it down yet.

Coulson was making a good argument on why it was important to do so now, making it very clear that a person of interest had been captured by Hydra. Loki would have just used a spell to influence Director Fury, but Amora was in the room, standing with Captain America, Black Widow, and Falcon. Some part of Loki was relieved that Thor wasn’t here. It was one of the off weeks he was in New Mexico. The other Avengers were dealing with the aftermath of the chaos Tony had caused in the city earlier in the day.

Finally the director agreed to the operation. Coulson began dividing the group up and as planned
Loki was in Coulson’s. The different groups were loaded up into different quinjets. Thankfully, none of the humans tried to talk to him.

Loki closed his eyes, trying to sense Tony. He automatically sensed Amora. She wasn’t even trying to hide her magical signature, completely visible to Heimdall. Loki held back a sneer. Once he had Tony back they’d have to check on her. She seemed far too open. They had to be sure that she was still going to follow their lead.

These damn quinjets were moving far too slowly. Loki was certain that Tony could design a far better means of group air travel. Loki knew that he was still selling weapons under the guise of a separate corporation, one that supplied SHIELD.

A tinge on the very frontier of his perception caught his attention. It was Tony, yet dulled.

Loki took in a slow, deep breath, slipping into a meditative state. He reached out for Tony on the dreamscape, but Tony was either not asleep or had sustained too much damage to have his dream intruded. Norns, Loki hoped it was the former.

The other agents looked uncomfortable, but a few of them looked excited. Loki mirrored their expressions, wishing he was as good of an actor as Tony. The other god had fooled all of Asgard, yet Loki was worried about fooling just a handful of idiotic mortals.

The Aesir had called him Spreader of Lies. Somehow that fact was comforting right now.

They finally reached a strange building that jutted out of the sea. Alarms started blaring far below and Loki felt his heart start to race. He didn’t look at Coulson despite wanting to see some sort of reassurance in those deceptive blue eyes.

The humans ziplined down onto the platform of the Hydra base. Loki followed suit, easily figuring out the contraption. His booted feet landed hard on the tarmac, far less graceful than he usually was. He pulled out the handgun he found in the Hydra spy’s apartment, mimicking the movement of the other agents. Loki fell in step with Coulson. The two exchanged a look and Loki started subtly guiding them through the facility, focusing on Tony’s presence.

“I think Howardson is here,” Amora announced over the comlink. Her observation was quickly followed by a stream of expletives from the director.

“Hydra agents do have advanced weaponry. I wouldn’t put it past him to ally with them,” Captain America observed.

“If he’s here it’s likely the other Aesir is too.” Falcon paused. “Should we call in Thor?”

“No, he’s on the other side of the country. Just maintain radio silence until we know the situation fully.”

After a few shots too wide, Loki quickly became an ace marksman with his gun. While all the other agents were in SHIELD issued black jumpsuits and tactical gear Coulson was still in his suit and tie from earlier, not even breaking a sweat as he ducked behind a corner, a bullet barely missing him. Loki was starting to see why Tony had chosen him.

Loki quickly vaulted over a few crates, separating himself from the group. When he was out of sight he transformed into his usual appearance. He let his presence be felt and there was a twinge in response from Tony. Loki kept the small communication device in his ear.

“Loki is definitely here! We need to act fast!” Amora sounded slightly panicked over the sound of
blaring alarms.

Loki sent out bursts of energy, knocking down green clad Hydra agents. With his scepter he cut through the fallen humans, creating gouges in the concrete ground. A crazed giggle escaped him as blood splattered over the wall.

He ran into another group of SHIELD agents, this one led by Falcon.

“Sorry birdy, no time for pleasantries.” Before the hero could react Loki had pounced on him, knocking him to the ground. Loki held up a hand, sending all the agents flying backwards. He was mindful not to kill Falcon as he sheared off the metal wings that had been tucked away neatly. Loki kicked him on the side of his head before killing a few SHIELD agents just for good measure.

“Loki—he’s,” Falcon coughed roughly, “he’s killing both our boys and Hydra-gnats.”

Loki grinned. That would keep them guessing.

Loki went out of his way to kill every Hydra member despite knowing it would mean getting to Tony would take longer than he wanted, but he also knew that Tony would want him to cause as much destruction as possible.

Unfortunately, the facility was a complex myriad of twists and turns. Loki had almost been hit by strange ray guns that protruded from the walls on more than one occasion.

His laughter grew louder with each human he slaughtered. The others knew he was on their comlink now, not that he cared.

“Die! Die! Die!” Loki shouted as he slashed through three humans at once. He loved making them think he was more insane than he actually was. He sounded deranged and the taste of blood on his lips only added to that ecstatic feeling of being above everything, being apart and superior.

He flicked the tip of his scepter, blood droplets splattering in a straight line on the concrete ground. Two Hydra lackeys were staring at him with wide eyes. They pulled out guns. The bullets clinked against his armor—the armor Tony had made him. He couldn’t even feel their impact.

Loki jumped high, just shy of the fluorescent light covered ceiling before he plunged his scepter down, going straight through the mortal’s chest and skewering into the ground. Loki spun and slashed the throat of another human. Before the gurgling human could fall, Loki stabbed him in the lower stomach, pulling his dagger up sharply just as SHIELD agents and Black Widow rounded the corner, catching a glimpse of guts spilling out before Loki disappeared down a different hallway.

He was starting to get annoyed by how long it was taking to find Tony. If Amora found him first, things could become problematic.

Not a moment later he ran into Amora’s group of agents.

“Loki!” she called out, her green eyes wide. There was a mixture of fear and desperation in them.

“Mora-Mora,” he mocked, using the nickname Tony called her. Both her hands shimmered green. The energy coalesced on her fingernails before she made a sweeping motion. Ten parallel lines were cut into the walls and Loki just barely dodged the green whips of magic. “A new trick from an old hag. It matters not.” Loki disappeared his scepter before pulling out eight daggers, one between each knuckle. In an instant they were flying through the air, each hitting a different SHIELD agent that was behind her, none of them were fatal wounds though. “Fight me, let your teammates die, and lose or save those pathetic mortals.” Loki kicked down a solid metal door,
already knowing what she’d do, if only to save face.

He found sleeping facilities and set the bedding alight as an afterthought as he continued running in the Hydra base. He summoned his scepter back to himself when he heard the heavy footfalls of humans. They were incapable of moving silently.

SHIELD and Hydra agents were clashing. Loki ran into the middle of the fray. Simultaneously, ten of his shades appeared, each with a dagger in hand. With perfect precision and in sync they slit the throats of ten humans, five from each side. Loki swung his scepter wide, taking down four more humans as he laughed. His shades disappeared as he teleported down the hall, leaving chaos in his wake.

His blood had yet to be spilled, yet plenty of red coated him, some of which was starting to flake as he sprinted down the winding halls. He slammed through a door, entering a room with scientists and humans on computers. On instinct Loki let out a spell, sending out countless shards of ice, piercing each human in a thousand different places. Computers sparked and Loki glanced at one that showed Tony before it flickered black.

Loki let out a thrilled little noise at the mere glimpse of the other god.

He broke down another door and the metal fixings were gone, a good sign. Loki was getting closer.

Loki’s breath caught when he heard Tony’s drunken laughter.

“Blood on the floor! Blood in my teeth! Every last drop!” Tony was shouting loudly and Loki was certain that SHIELD could hear it through Loki’s comlink. “I can taste it in the air! Today is your last!” Loki pulled off the comlink from his ear, smashing it in his hand as he spotted Tony.

The other god was in a glass cage, strapped down with an IV filled with a noxious green liquid pumping into his veins.

“Howardson!” Loki called out, all his anger and frustration showing through. He cut through seven more Hydra agents. Tony turned his head slightly. His brown eyes were foggy and his skin was pallid.

“Blood, I can taste it! I can feel it!” Tony growled and Loki felt like he was about to burst with the sudden energy he felt at just the sight of the other god. He smashed down the plastic door and noticed a strange hatch and no sign of Viper. “Red is definitely your color.”

Loki easily pulled off the restraints while sneering. Tony raised his hand slightly and it took Loki half a second to figure out what he was pointing towards. Loki pulled out the IV line and grabbed the bag. He lifted Tony who curled around him while laughing before Loki teleported them both away.

Chapter End Notes

Please read If You Want Blood (You Got it), which is Tony's point of view of part of last chapter and this chapter. Hope you enjoy it!
“Sooo, what the hell just happened?” –Every Avenger ever

And now back to our regular scheduled program with silver_drip and Temul!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Sam happily took Steve’s offered hand, groaning as he stood up from the ground.

“I just felt a burst of Loki’s energy. They’re gone,” Amora reported and Sam groaned again.

“I guess this is why they caused all that mayhem in New York earlier, to be sure that not all of us would be here,” the captain mused, looking at his fallen comrades with a frown in place.

“That doesn’t make sense. Coulson, who was your source?” Black Widow asked before grunting. The battle was still on, but it looked like either the Hydra agents had fled or were captured by waiting quinjets or were killed by Loki.

“We’ll discuss that back at the base. Loki could still be listening in,” Fury said before Agent Coulson could respond.

“I swear every time I run into that mad alien I get my ass kicked. I have no idea how I’m alive.” Sam clutched his head, staunching the bleeding. He glanced down at his metal wings that had been effortlessly pulled off.

A fleeing Hydra operative accidentally ran down the corridor they were in. Before he could correct his mistake Captain America sent his shield soaring, hitting the green clad man on the back of the head and rendering him unconscious.

SHIELD medics were starting to swarm in, accompanied by even more agents. Once there were a few treating Sam’s group, Steve and him nodded to each other, going on to continue clearing the area.

The pair had worked together countless times even before the invasion of New York. Shortly after Steve had defrosted he had run into the other man and they had become fast friends, often training together even if Sam couldn’t always keep up. He was only human after all.

It seemed like Loki had taken care of the vast majority of Hydra agents.

“I’m in their mainframe.” Black Widow paused. “There’s water everywhere and it looks like shrapnel cut through most of the computers and people.”
“Scavenge any information you can,” Fury ordered. “We’ll send in the techs when the area is cleared.”

“Some areas are inaccessible due to fires.” Coulson spoke for the first time since the mission began. “Agent Houston is missing.”

“We’ll find him,” Sam said confidently and Steve nodded in agreement.

That confidence quickly waned as they continued down the halls. He couldn’t turn around without seeing some splash of red blood.

“If this was only Loki…” Steve let the sentence wander off and Sam nodded in agreement. They put their comlinks on mute so they could talk without distracting everyone else.

They had both seen Thor fight, but he used only his raw strength and the occasional bolt of lightning. Loki had a whole bag of tricks and Howardson was a whole other matter.

If not for Amora and Thor, Sam would have assumed the Aesir were just bloodthirsty lunatics.

They still weren’t certain what their motives were. They just seemed to appear and cause mayhem before disappearing moments later.

There had to be some method to their madness. Sam was certain of that. Especially since Stark Industries just announced their change of course earlier in the day.

“Why would they attack here, though?”

“I don’t know.” Steve kneeled by a fallen Hydra agent, checking for a pulse but finding none. “I’ve seen Howardson in three forms.” Steve frowned and Sam remained silent. “Howard Stark, Dr. Stark, and Howardson. The only thing they all had in common other than a few physical features was that they were all self-proclaimed businessmen.”

“Do you think this was some sort of business deal that went sour?” Sam asked while moving aside a pile of dead Hydra agents. He hated the feel of blood on his hands, but they needed to find any agents that were still alive or hurt.

“I doubt villains make very good business partners.” They heard a noise behind them, both quickly spinning around. Sam shot his gatling gun, hooking the leg of a Hydra agent and sending him to the ground. Steve quickly subdued him, knocking him unconscious then tying him up. He hefted the full grown man onto his shoulder and Sam took the lead.

“Thor said Howarson’s and Loki’s partnership would fall apart in only a couple of days, but it has been months.” Sam shrugged slightly, reloading his gatling gun and unbuttoning the holster to his SHIELD issued gun on his side.

“Thor also said that they used to be friends.” Steve and Sam glanced at each other briefly before focusing back on their surroundings. The scent of gore was thick.

“How can anyone be friends with—you heard Loki over the comlink. He’s worse than what Jane’s report said after they kidnapped her.” Sam clenched his jaw as they found another dead SHIELD agent. “I’m still getting chills, just thinking about how he laughed.”

“You weren’t there the night Thor told us about when Howardson attacked Asgard for the first time.” They both paused when they saw a SHIELD agent panting and leaning against the wall. Sam immediately started helping him and Steve set down the unconscious man he was carrying.
Steve was a much better medic than Sam was, despite both having taken the mandatory classes. Steve had experience on his side. Sam reported their location through the comlink and a few medics said they’d be there in three minutes.

“What were you saying about the night Howardson attacked Asgard?” Sam asked once they had done all they could for the agent who had unfortunately passed out. His wounds didn’t look life threatening, but neither hero was going to leave his side.

“Howardson spent three years setting up a trap that instantly killed 300 guards and captured Thor’s dad along with some other important people.” Steve looked down at his battered shield. “They’re both insane, but Howard…” Steve paused and Sam patted him on his back. Sam knew how betrayed Steve had felt when he realized Howardson and the man who was his friend and helped make him into the soldier he is now were one and the same. “Howardson is organized. The worst kind of killer.” They were both silent for a long moment. “They feed off each other. We probably would have had Loki captured by now if not for Howardson. Despite all that, Howardson had saved New York, albeit at the price of Captain America’s shield. I just don’t know what to think anymore.”

Before Sam could respond, SHIELD agents and medics appeared. After briefly explaining the unconscious agent’s injuries, Steve handed off the Hydra agent before the pair continued clearing the building.

They came across two more injured SHIELD agents. It looked like most of the dead were on the enemy’s side, not that that made either man feel better. A life was a life regardless of how they spent their finite time.

Natasha said something in Russian loudly that neither man understood.

“We have to get out of here! I tripped a five minute countdown!” Black Widow shouted.

“Everyone pull out now!” Director Fury said needlessly. Sam and Steve were already running back the way they came. Steve ditched his dented shield when they ran into a group of agents. He effortlessly lifted up one of the limping agents.

Sam was briefly grateful that Loki had pulled off his metal wings. It allowed him to carry one of the unconscious, captured Hydra soldiers. Despite that, his chest was still heaving and lungs burning, trying to suck up even the slightest amount of air. The taste of blood was thick on his tongue by the time they made it out of the facility.

Two quinjets were parked on the tarmac. Steve and Sam quickly loaded the agents up into one.

“How many agents do we have left inside?” Steve said over the roar of the quinjet after unmuting his comlink.

“I’m teleporting the last few stragglers onto the quinjet—” There was a popping noise, “that I found.” Amora was suddenly in front of the other quinjet. She had three agents holding onto her. She dropped them and quickly disappeared again.

Amora appeared again with in a flash of pale green. She was clearly exhausted as she dropped off two more agents before teleporting back into the compound.

“We’re running out of time,” the pilot shouted over the noise of the quinjet.

“Just one more—” Amora appeared and promptly collapsed, an unconscious Hydra agent and SHIELD agent with a broken leg still clutched in her arms. Sam and Steve helped them all inside
before the quinjet took off.

One of the buckled in agents tossed Captain America a bottle of water. He uncapped it quickly and helped Amora drink it. She looked absolutely exhausted and the only thing keeping her upright was Steve’s arm around her waist. He buckled her in as the quinjet jostled to the side.

“Any second no—” Black Widow was cut off by a loud explosion. The quinjet lurched and Sam grabbed onto one of the bars to keep from falling over. Some of the other agents weren’t so lucky. When the quinjet leveled out Sam helped up the agents who had hit her head on a seat. Luckily there were a few medics on board that quickly stopped the bleeding.

Steve handed Amora one of the many granola bars that were stocked on every quinjet. She gave him a weak, yet grateful smile before biting into it.

The various agents’ breathing were starting to slow to average paces, but Amora’s was still labored.

“You shouldn’t push yourself so hard,” Steve said to her just as the bright New York skyline came into view. Amora shook her head mutely.

“I can’t. I just have to—” Amora shook her head again and took off her comlink, staring out the window.

Sam quickly downed a water bottle before staring outside. There had been a total of three terrorist attacks earlier in the day along with a bank robbery. Sam was trying to piece everything together, but he was fairly certain he had a concussion from when Loki had kicked him in the head and it was slowing down his thought process.

There were still a few fires burning, but the day’s mayhem had seemingly come to an end.

Through the comlink he heard Fury say that the other Avengers were back at HQ.

When they landed, they were swarmed by medics and agents. Sam moved them aside, wanting to just get the debriefing over with. Amora also refused their help, now able to stand on her own again. Steve thanked them but stated that he was fine.

Black Widow joined them a few minutes later. Her hair was a bit ruffled and there was fresh blood on her outfit, but other than that she looked normal.

It really had been a long day…

Hank and Clint were both already seated at the round table. Hank had a laptop open and was typing away furiously on it. Clint’s legs were propped on the table and he was sound asleep. Natasha sat beside him and his eyes popped open. He gave her a once over, looking for injuries before glancing at the other Avengers. Once they were all accounted for, he fell back asleep.

Amora took a seat across from Natasha’s and Steve sat beside her, handing her another water bottle. She rolled her eyes at him but accepted it. Sam sat next to Natasha, waiting for the director to come in.

Coulson silently slipped into the room, standing in the front, yet off to the side. He was in a different suit and his hair was perfectly combed. Sam admired how composed and at ease he looked.

Director Fury followed him in a few minutes later, looking far less composed. He was scowling.
“Nineteen dead agents. Eight MIA,” Fury said curtly while walking to the front of the room. “The question we need answered is if these four incidents are connected.”

“Four?” Captain America asked, sitting up straighter.

“Howardson’s announcement for Stark Industries, the three terrorist attacks, bank robbery, and the information Coulson got about the Hydra facility.”

“There might actually be five incidences, sir,” Coulson said while walking towards the middle. “There was a report of a large fire in midtown, but that could just be a coincidence since it didn’t fit with the terrorist attacks MOs. The New York Fire Department is looking into it, but I also sent two of our agents to investigate as well.” Fury nodded in approval.

“Howardson’s announcement and what happened in the Atlantic are definitely connected.” Black Widow shoved Clint’s feet off the table and grabbed one of the water bottles that were in the middle of the table. “Clint and I made a positive ID on both Loki and Howardson. A few agents saw Loki at the Hydra compound and Amora said she sensed Howardson.”

“He was there,” Amora had a perplexed look on her face, “but something felt wrong. I’m not certain what, though.”

“I’m more worried about those terrorist attacks,” Hank cut in while closing his laptop. “We haven’t been able to find the source of the blast or any of the bomb parts.” Hank paused. “There wasn’t a lot of shrapnel, either.”

“If I’m not mistaken the attacks did start when SHIELD sent agents after Howardson,” Coulson said. Fury nodded in agreement.

“Hawkeye, what’s your report on the bank robbery?” Fury asked.

“It was pretty standard. Probably could have just left it up to the boys in blue.” Clint began unwrapping a lollipop that he had clearly taken from the bank. “If they hadn’t taken hostages, I would have nailed Loki with one of my new arrows.” Clint popped the candy in his mouth before grabbing an arrow from the quiver beside his seat. He twirled the nearly translucent arrow between his fingers while letting out a hum.

“Loki had the chance to kill me, but didn’t take it,” Sam said after a break in the conversation. “Instead he just tore off my wings and knocked back the agents on my team.”

“He did seem a bit off.” Clint snorted at Amora’s understatement. She narrowed her eyes at him and he looked away quickly, biting into his lollipop loudly.

“Black Widow, did you get any good data while you were at the Hydra facility?” Fury asked, turning his attention to the red head. She fished out a lanyard from beneath her tight fitting top. There was a flash drive attached to the bottom of it. She tossed it to Coulson.

“I got as much as I could. I’m still not certain of if I tripped the self destruct sequence or if it came from an outside source.” Her voice was emotionless and it was only because Sam had known her so long that he could see the tension in her shoulders.

A new lollipop appeared in Clint’s hand. He held it in front of her and she reluctantly took it.

“Thor is flying in. I want everyone’s written reports by tomorrow afternoon. We’ll get the statements from the other agents and begin interrogations for the Hydra agents.”
“I’ll take point on interrogations,” Coulson said and Fury nodded in agreement.

“You all need to get some rest. We’ll have another meeting tomorrow night.”

Chapter End Notes

For anyone who didn't notice I posted another side piece called Seek and Destroy. It's dark stuff set during WWII and can be read whenever.

I'm also pretty sure I posted another chapter for Amora's side story: Whole Lotta Love, but I can't remember if I told you all that or not.
“You probably shouldn’t be drinking that much,” Loki stated blandly while sinking into the tub a bit further. Tony flipped him off while drinking the rest of his fire ale.

“I’m detoxifying,” Tony finally said after letting out a pleased sigh. He set the empty glass on the side of the tub, leaned his head back. The water was midway up Tony’s chest, half covering the large scar that was in the center of his chest. The water was tinged a pearly shade of pink from both the soap and the blood Loki had just washed off, not that either of them really minded.

Loki let out his own sigh, enjoying the warm water and the feeling of Tony’s legs pressed against his own. Some Alfheim tune was playing softly and Loki felt it oddly comforting. With a slow movement Loki swept his hair up and into a messy bun, stray wisps of hair escaped as they always seemed to, tickling the back of his neck and his ears.

He opened his eyes and peeked at the other occupant of the tub. He would think Tony was asleep if not for the way his fingers silently drummed along with the music. With a slow movement Loki swept his hair up and into a messy bun, stray wisps of hair escaped as they always seemed to, tickling the back of his neck and his ears.

He opened his eyes and peeked at the other occupant of the tub. He would think Tony was asleep if not for the way his fingers silently drummed along with the music. Loki pushed off his side of the tub, silent and nearly undetectable if not for the ripples he stirred.

The sides of Tony’s lips quirked up ever so slightly. Loki dipped further into the water, hiding his scowl. He hated when Tony smiled like that.

With the ease of a water snake Loki slithered onto Tony’s lap. Tony still hadn’t opened his eyes as Loki opened the decanter of fire ale, pouring himself a glass then refilling Tony’s. Loki took a small sip before pushing the other glass against Tony’s pattering fingers. Tony’s calloused fingers wrapped around the glass, brushing against Loki’s softer ones for only a second. He took a large swig of the drink, his eyes still closed. His free arm slid back into the water, his hand finding its way to Loki’s hip. His rough thumb swept over Loki’s contours.

Loki took another sip of his drink, his green eyes never leaving Tony’s face. He wasn’t certain if it was the warm water, the ale, or the afterglow of the recent massacre, but Loki felt perfect. He felt content and happy, emotions that were rare after his childhood and, or so he thought, impossible after the Void. Even his myriad of scars didn’t pull at his skin and muscles as they usually did.
He realized that Tony’s thumb was moving in rhythm with the soft music and that somehow made Loki relax even more. He slumped forward, his scarce energy leaving him. Tony’s arm circled behind him until Loki was somehow laying on top of him, curled on his side and head resting against Tony’s chest. At some point Tony had plucked the glass out of Loki’s hand, setting it on the rim of the tub.

Loki could hear his heart, a slow steady rhythm that fell in step with the music. His hooded eyes lingered on the large scar on Tony’s chest. The scar that came from Odin betraying his family, sending dark elves to murder them all instead of facing them himself.

The scar was warped, having stretched as Tony grew out of childhood.

A sword having gone straight through him…

If only that had been the worst of Loki’s injuries.

His revenge would come, though, in time.

Carefully he touched the scar on Tony’s chest.

He was surprised when Tony’s heart rate picked up just slightly.

Tony took another sip of his ale, eyes still closed. His heart rate slowed down again.

For some reason Loki remembered how Tony got each of his most prominent scars despite Tony only having told him once.

A thin raised line that went from his right solar plexus to his left hip. A perfectly straight cut with a sword he had just crafted and sold while on Alfheim. Small scars on his right forearm from when he had taken his revenge on Odin the Unseeing.

Loki brushed his hands over Tony’s ribs. Scars from his time with the Jotuns before he went from prisoner to leader.

He knew that on Tony’s back would be three parallel lines, courtesy of an ash wolf of Muspelheim.

Loki wished that his own scars didn’t have such painful origins, origins in a single room over countless hours.

The arm that was holding him in place and keeping his head above water squeezed him slightly. Loki glanced upwards, not having noticed that he’d closed his eyes. Tony still looked completely relaxed.

Loki blew a few bubbles in the water and he could tell Tony was trying not to smile, even going so far as to hide his expression behind his glass as he took a needlessly long swig of his ale. Loki blew more bubbles, being purposefully loud and causing the still waters to vibrate. Finally Tony chuckled and opened his eyes. Loki stared up at him, feigning innocence.

Tony snorted and finished his fifth glass of ale. Loki sat up and refilled it while topping off his own drink. Loki leaned forward without thought, kissing Tony.

“Your beard is becoming unruly,” Loki whispered, their lips still barely touching. Tony grinned at him, quirking an eyebrow up slightly. Loki leaned back, performing a silent spell to heat the water up again. Tony relaxed a bit before touching his face, tracing the edges of his facial hair. It wasn’t as sharply defined as usual.
“You’re right.” Tony summoned a dagger unlike all his others from beside the sink. Loki was about to move back to his side of the tub when Tony caught his arm. “Would you like the honor?” Loki scoffed in response, freeing his arm. “You know you’ve wanted to have a knife to my throat for centuries,” Tony teased, holding the dagger by its blade and offering it up to the younger god. Loki stared at it for a moment before moving closer and taking the dagger.

“It’s different,” Loki said under his breath while examining the dagger.

“It’s one of my earliest creations and most prized possessions,” Tony said while lathering his face. Loki was transfixed by the simple dagger. He wet the blade before settling on Tony’s lap once again. “Feel free not to kill me.” Tony winked at him and Loki gave him a crazed smile in return before focusing on the task at hand.

Facial hair had never been a problem for him, much to the delight of Thor and his idiotic friends, so Loki actually had to pay attention to what he was doing. Loki was well aware of the design Tony usually wore. Luckily he had steady hands.

He started with the underside of Tony’s chin and upper throat. The sharp edge glided over his skin, cutting coarse hair. Loki could see one of Tony’s veins just beneath the surface, so vulnerable…

“Why is it so precious?” Loki asked after shaving the most defenseless parts of his throat.

“I made two of them when I was in my 700s.” Tony paused. “On the day my family was attacked I had forgotten it at home. It’s natural to wonder what would have happened if I had been properly armed.” They both sat in silence as Loki continued sculpting Tony’s goatee.

“What happened to the other one?” Loki asked when he was almost done. Tony grinned sadly before cringing as the small movement caused the blade to nick his skin. Loki glared at him for moving.

“It’s lost forever.”

Loki washed off the blade before using a soft cloth to wipe off the last of the lather from Tony’s face. Loki accepted the curt answer.

“So Midgard…” Loki said, changing the subject.

“Let Coulson handle the cover up. He’s good at those sorts of things.” Tony waved dismissively while grabbing his drink.

“And the woman?” Loki asked while Tony drank his glass of ale in three long gulps. He set the glass down with a loud clink.

“Viper? Oh, we’re going to hunt her down and skin her alive.”
Doctor's Visit (One)

Chapter Summary

Manipulation is Tony Howardson’s middle name.

Chapter Notes

As always, Temul is a wonderful Beta who makes the world a better place!

Loki found it humorous when they sat around in different realms without trying to hide their appearances. Tony’s real appearance might not be widely known on Midgard, but Loki’s was.

Though Loki wasn’t really all that pleased with who they were here to see. He hid his dissatisfaction behind a pair of stolen sunglasses. This place was bloody hot, but nowhere as bad as the plains of Muspelheim.

Tony was sipping on some sort of tea, which Loki found to be completely out of character for him. Loki scowled at him, hating how much he enjoyed the overly sunny weather.

“Brucie!” Tony suddenly called out, startling everyone around them. Loki’s scowl deepened as he saw the doctor give them both a confused look before recognition set in. He frowned, but didn’t run off as Loki had hoped he would. “Please don’t say you’ve already forgotten me! Do you often meet gods?”

“No, you’re the only ‘god’ other than Thor I’ve met.” Bruce’s eyes flickered to Loki. The god didn’t meet his eyes, instead sipping at his yogurt drink that was oddly cooling. He hated that Tony felt the need to enlist this mortal in particular for help. “What are you doing here, Howardson, and with him?”

“Please, just call me Tony.” Loki refrained from rolling his eyes when Tony smiled in a charming manner that Loki could easily see through. “Don’t worry about Loki. He’s chill.” Tony waved dismissively at the other god. “He didn’t even have to come here today, but he was feeling prissy and didn’t want to stay home.” Loki glared at Tony, silently swearing revenge on him. “Please, take a seat. I’m sure the big news hasn’t reached this side of the planet yet.”

A chair pulled itself out as Tony gestured to the old lady who owned the small restaurant they were eating at. She hobbled over slowly and Tony placed a few random orders as Bruce stood awkwardly. Finally the doctor relented and sat at their table, scooting his chair slightly away from Loki and towards Tony. Loki held back a snide comment.

“I’m not going to sell my soul, if that’s what you’re after,” Bruce half joked.

“Naw, unless your body is part of the deal then we can definitely start bargaining.” Tony winked and Bruce cleared his throat, pushing down a blush as Loki held back his rage. Under the table he felt Tony rest his hand on his thigh, trying to placate him. Loki grabbed his hand and started.
grinding his knuckles. Tony did not let the pain show through, though. “I’m assuming news of Stark Industries’ new direction hasn’t reached Pakistan yet.”

“I don’t watch the news,” Bruce admitted, his eyes flashing to the flatbread that Tony hadn’t even touched. Tony pushed it towards Bruce who hesitantly pulled off a piece, dipping it into a yogurt like substance.

“Thankfully I like giving good news in person. Stark Industries is branching out into the medical field. Unfortunately, we don’t have a lot of people who are both scientists and medical doctors.”

“I’m technically not a medical doctor.”

“You know what sort of instruments and necessities are needed for the poorest communities, though, and that’s where we want to start, helping the communities that are normally overlooked.” Tony took a sip of his tea as the old woman brought out more food and a drink for Bruce, having cooked up the food surprisingly quickly.

“Thank you for your offer, Dr. Stark—Howardson, whatever name you’re going by today, but there’s a reason I keep moving around. I’m not safe.” He looked over at Loki. “I especially don’t want to associate myself with an alien terrorist and the world’s foremost weapons manufacturing corporation.” Bruce made to stand up, but Tony silently lifted his hand, asking for just one more moment.

“I’m going to give it to you straight, doc. There’s a war coming.” Loki almost spit up his drink at Tony’s confession. “Earth is going to be hit hard and there’s no way we can avoid it. The same monsters that mind controlled Hawkeye and Loki are heading here and plan to kill everyone and everything. SI is gearing up for the battle, but we only have weapons while we have nothing for the aftermath. Millions are going to die, even with some of the other realms trying to protect Earth. We need efficient, easy to use and manufacture, medical supplies, if the human race is going to survive. These genocidal aliens have all sorts of weapons, only a few of which you actually saw during the invasion of New York.”

“Why do you even care about Earth and us lowly humans?” Bruce asked, narrowing his eyes.

“Well to begin with, Earth is in my top three favorite realms. This world has the best entertainment and is very open to diversity. As someone who has lived for thousands of years, I appreciate that deeply.” Tony took a bite of one of the dishes and let out a pleased moan. “I also have a ton of friends here and I’m not just going to let them die.” Tony wiped away some of the lentil paste that hadn’t quite made it into his mouth. “Most importantly, Earth is the gateway to the other realms. If the Mad Titan destroys Earth, he’ll just go on to Asgard and all the other realms, leaving me nowhere to live and trillions dead.

“As for the whole going green issue, which is totally cool by the way, I own a nice island resort, haven’t used it since the Cuban Missile Crisis. Give me a day and I can have it set up as the most state of the art laboratory you’ve ever seen. You’ll have a whole island to do yoga, weed, or whatever it is you do to stay calm. A helicopter that flies in every week with fresh groceries and whatever other supplies you need. All very hush hush so you don’t have to worry about the government trying to dissect you. Unlimited funding.” Tony leaned back in his seat, arms held wide open. “Before your lab accident, you were focused on gamma research. You can start back on your research and even try to reverse your lab accident and do whatever other research that catches your fancy.” Bruce was completely speechless.

“That’s… that’s too much,” Bruce finally said.
“Despite how things may seem up close, we’re on the same side. If I had wanted to, I could have conquered this realm back in the dark ages. That’s not my thing. I just enjoy being free, rich, and able to live my life any way I please.”

“Even if that means hurting innocent people?” Bruce countered.

“I assume you’ve only really heard Thor’s version of who I am. Odin killed both my parents and tried to kill me, too. Their government is corrupt with no one to stand up against King Odin. He verbally abused one son for literally centuries while coddling the other. I’d like to think that I wouldn’t kill all those guards if I could go back in time, but I’d be lying.” Tony shook his head, his eyes falling shut. “Not after what he did to my mother.” Tony let out a slow breath opening his eyes again. “That’s in the past, though. There are people alive now that I care about and love, people who I won’t allow to be taken from me.

“I’ve been advancing the technology of this realm for two centuries solely in preparation for this war, but I can’t do everything on my own anymore.” Tony stared at his tepid tea, eyes distant. “I can’t do any of this on my own anymore. I thought I could, but I can’t.” Tony’s shoulders sunk and his eyes became wider, still staring at his tea. “There’s just not enough time anymore and I still haven’t been able to figure out how to counteract their main weapon, fucking poison.” Tony let out a dark chuckle while glancing at Bruce before shaking his head and looking away. “Fuck.” He whispered the word while standing and pulling a wallet from his back pocket. He put down a few colorful bills on the table before gesturing to the old woman who owned the store. “I don’t have time. None of us do.” Tony handed a small slip of paper to the doctor. “I have to get back to my labs. Call this number if you’re interested.”

Before Bruce could respond, the two gods were already walking away. As they turned a corner, a Tesseract fueled portal opened and they disappeared inside of it.

“The poison you were talking about was just that gunk Viper pumped into your veins, wasn’t it?” Loki asked once they were alone and in his study. Tony let out a huff of a laugh.

“Of course.” Loki shook his head slightly.

“This is why I have trust issues.”
“Don’t blame me for your trust issues,” Tony said while pulling Loki’s sunglasses off. “I love when you wear your hair up like this, by the way.” Tony gestured towards the messy bun Loki had thrown his hair into earlier in the day. Loki swatted his hand away.

“Stop trying to distract me.” Loki cursed himself for feeling a blush starting to rise on his cheeks.

“Not distracting, just making an observation.” Tony held his hands up in mock surrender. “You can’t blame me for all your trust issues. Just like 30% of them, at most.” Tony plopped down gracelessly onto one of the arm chairs. Loki remained standing, his arms crossed over his chest.

“More like 70%. You’ve already betrayed and used me once.” Loki looked down his nose at Tony, feeling old wounds open up.

“Oh come on, at least 50% can be attributed to your fake parents.” Tony leaned forward in his seat, forcing Loki to take a step back if he wanted to maintain eye contact with him.

“I knew of your betrayal before theirs. I had never been so devastated before that moment. Besides, I’ve seen the way you manipulate the people around you, how you manipulated Amora and that doctor.” Loki felt uneasy, but he refused to show it.

“Both of those instances were ‘everybody wins’ situations.” Tony reached out for Loki, but he took another step back. Tony slowly lowered his hand, his expression turning serious. “Amora got to be around people that will accept her, Thor and the Avengers got extra protection, and we kept Thor in Midgard. Bruce gets to do research to his heart’s content, he’ll probably invent some awesome life saving device for the humans, and his scientific curiosity will lead him to studying that poison Viper used on me. See, Loki? Everybody wins.” Tony’s voice was soft, persuasive.

“How am I supposed to trust someone like you?” Loki asked after staring at the ground for what felt like an eternity. Tony stood up and Loki didn’t move away when Tony engulfed him in a hug.

“I honestly don’t know,” Tony said and Loki had to squeeze his eyes shut to keep his pain inside. “I don’t know how to act any differently than this. I’ve spent most of my life striving to be who I am today, smarter than my father, as cunning as my mother, running the family business better than either of them ever could. I can barely remember a day where I hadn’t thought of getting my
revenge against Odin, about conquering the realms.” Tony sighed and Loki was fairly certain it was genuine. “I don’t know how not to manipulate people. After all these years it comes so naturally to me.” Loki slowly relaxed in his arms before returning the hug.

“I can’t handle another betrayal, Tony, not even with the promise of revenge on the horizon. What Odin and Frigga did to me… It nearly killed me. It should have killed me, but I’m still alive.” A few tears slipped out and Loki quickly wiped them away with his sleeve before they could be noticed. “I can’t handle being used again, being a pawn.” He clutched onto Tony desperately.

“Never again. I’ll never betray you again, even if it means giving up all my plans, my whole business, my life.” Loki froze in Tony’s arms. “Hey, you’re the one who brought up suicide.” Tony attempted to joke. “Fuck, Loki, do you know how hard it was for me when we were both kids and I had just returned to Asgard? You’re the first person I ever put my guard down around since my parents died. Just hanging out with you were some of my best memories. I didn’t have to be the shrewd businessman or the sly adventurer. I fucking fell in love with you and then that night you kissed me… I realized you didn’t even know who I really was, because even with my guard down I was still holding my tongue, still constantly thinking about how I was going to get my revenge despite knowing how much Odin meant to you at the time.

“And then you hated me, but I was selfish. When I showed up at your 1,700th name day it wasn’t to humiliate Odin, it was because I was depressed. The war was over and I was so alone. I missed you so much. I tried telling you the truth, but you still thought they were your family.”

“I truly did hate you back then,” Loki admitted, though they both already knew that. Tony took in a stuttered breath and Loki knew he couldn’t fake that. That he couldn’t fake this.

“After that I… I gave up on you, Loki.” Something inside of Loki broke and he couldn’t hold back his tears. “I’m so sorry. I should have kept trying to get you away from that toxic place, but I was selfish. It hurt too much to see the hatred in your eyes. And then you were gone and I couldn’t save you.” Tony pulled back from him and Loki realized they were both crying. “And then you reappeared, you son of a bitch.” Both their laughs were muddled by sobs. Tony’s sad grin dropped away. “But you still hated me.”

“I’m sorry,” Loki said automatically, causing them both to laugh.

“Don’t be sorry. I was—and still am—an asshole.” Tony stole a sloppy kiss from him. “I was just glad to have you back, to show you the real me.” They exchanged another kiss. “I’m sorry I ever gave up on you.” Loki pulled him onto a nearby couch, pulling him flush against him.

“I would have never believed you. I was too blind,” Loki said between kisses.

“I’m sorry I didn’t look for you after you fell into the Void.”

“You would have never found me.” Loki’s gut clenched painfully. He felt completely overwhelmed.

“I’m sorry I was too selfish to set aside my plans of revenge.”

“I would have never loved you if you did.”
“And why didn’t you just keep track of her with a buggle?” Loki asked groggily, his head half hidden under a pillow. Loki had no idea how Tony was always awake so damn early, reading the reports that appeared on his side table at some point in the night. Damn Jarvis and his silent wings.

“Her blood is poisonous,” Tony mumbled, flipping over another piece of parchment. “There’s a reason her name is Viper.” Loki let out an annoyed huff, but was quickly mollified by Tony running his fingers through Loki’s curly hair.

“I still don’t understand why we’re not on Midgard right now, scouring the earth for her.” Loki squirmed slightly, excited at the prospect of destroying her. Tony grinned.

“It’s called delegating, Loki. You can’t rule an empire if you micromanage.” Tony still hadn’t looked away from the different pieces of parchment he was reading, not seeing the blooming anger on Loki’s face. In a quick movement Loki had grabbed one of the sheathed swords off the wall and pushed Tony down on the bed. Paper went flying everywhere as Loki pressed the sheathed sword down on Tony’s throat. Jarvis squawked in warning.

“And why do you always have to sound so condescending?” Loki growled at him, applying more pressure, not allowing Tony to breathe. There was a challenge in those brown eyes, but Tony wasn’t fighting back, causing Loki to quickly lose his steam. Loki didn’t struggle as Tony took the sword and tossed it across the room. Neither of them moved to sit back up. “I hate you,” Loki finally said after a very long silence. Tony chuckled. “Don’t you say a word. I will cut out your tongue. I swear it.” Somehow Tony snuck his hand into Loki’s. The younger god quickly snatched away his hand when he took notice. “Stop being so damn loving.” Loki could feel a blush threatening to show itself.

Tony rolled on top of Loki, trapping him before placing a quick peck on his nose causing Loki to lose his fight against his blush.

“I only do it because I know how uncomfortable it makes you.”

Before Loki could react, Tony was out of the bed and retreating into the bathroom. Loki pulled a dagger off the wall and threw it at the door for good measure. He received a loud laugh in return.
Loki hid himself back under the blankets, feeling both frustrated and embarrassed. It was a combination that only Tony could elicit in him. He curled up into a ball, hiding his heated face further.

Loki was surprised when Tony suddenly pounced onto the bed, trapping Loki under the covers. Loki clawed at the fine material until he was free before flipping Tony over and biting his neck.

“You fucking cat,” Tony said through his laughter while wrapping his arms around Loki’s waist. Loki bit him harder and scratched his arm for good measure. “Fuck!” Loki didn’t resist as Tony rolled them over. “If you really want to hunt her down, we can do it together. Just remember that Midgard is only a stepping stone to the other realms.”

“Don’t tell me what to do.” Loki wiggled out of his hold, scratching him again. “Would it be best to go as ourselves or disguised?”

“Now you want my advice?” Tony asked, watching Loki sit in front of a vanity. Loki knew how much Tony liked his hair and that was probably the only reason he hadn’t cut it back to a manageable level, not that he’d ever admit that.

“Well, are you going to answer me or not?” Loki glared at him through the mirror as he worked the knots out of his hair. It would only take a single spell to set his hair right, but he preferred doing it this way when he had the time.

“Considering the search has been narrowed down to three locations…” Tony glanced around quickly. He swiped his finger through the air and three pieces of parchment flew and landed in front of Loki. Each one was a blueprint for a different hidden away building. “You decide how and where we attack.” Tony flopped backwards onto the bed, scrunching even more pieces of parchment.

Loki let out a huff as he set aside his brush and looked at the different images, reading their descriptions. He didn’t recognize the handwriting, but trusted Tony’s source.

“Stealth would be best,” Loki mumbled while brushing his fingers over the different blueprints. One was another facility in the middle of the ocean, another was tucked into the mountains, while the third was a nondescript building in the middle of a city. “Are we still considering Hydra as a potential ally post-Thanos?”

“Post-Thanos?” Tony chuckled while sitting up in bed. Loki scowled in return. “Is that how you want our empire to be measured, the time before Thanos and the time after? Is that how you want our legacy to be in ten millenniums?”

“Legacy?” Loki raised an eyebrow at the word. Tony grinned and slipped off the bed before walking over to where Loki was sitting. Tony began massaging Loki’s shoulders and almost against his will Loki leaned into his touch. Tony’s fingers avoided all of Loki’s painful scars. He purred, causing Tony to chuckle. His eyes fell shut as Tony continued working out the knots from his shoulders and back. It was strange how familiar his hands had become.

“You know,” Tony whispered into Loki’s ear. Loki rubbed his face against his, bending and arching under his touch.

“I know?” Loki asked, shivering under the feel of Tony’s breath ghosting over his bare skin.

“Jotuns of either sex can bear children.”

Loki was out of his seat and wielding the closest weapon he could find in a flash.
“I will cut off your balls,” Loki said while edging away from him. He was holding his hairbrush like a sword, ready to strike out if Tony so much as moved. The older god was grinning like mad.

“Relax, Loki, I would never do that to you.” Tony sat down in Loki’s vacated seat. “Besides, you’d have to be in your natural form if you ever wanted to get pregnant.” Tony made a waving motion, but Loki still didn’t lower his weapon/brush.

“Never, not in a million years,” Loki whispered, placing a hand on his stomach, disturbed at the very idea of something growing inside of him.

“Just something to consider. I have plenty of protégés, but when I’m old and grey I’m going to want someone of my own blood on the throne.” Tony glanced at the mirror, looking at his own reflection.

“No. Absolutely not.” Loki was still clutching his midsection protectively.

“Relax. If it really grosses you out that much we can both have kids from separate women then have our kids marry in order to mix our bloodlines.” Tony leaned against the vanity, his head tilted to the side slightly.

“No—No to everything you’re saying.” Loki threw the brush as he ran to hide in the bathroom.

“Fuck!” Tony said when the brush hit him square in the face just as the bathroom door slammed shut. Loki slid down, sitting on the cold floor and clutching his head. He could hear Tony walk over to just outside of the bathroom. “This isn’t even anything we need to consider until all the realms are ours.” There was a soft thud and Loki was fairly certain that Tony was leaning his head against the door. “Come on out.” Loki took in a few deep breaths, trying to calm down. He slowly stood, but couldn’t bring himself to open the door.

“Why would you even—” Loki cut himself off and wiped away the stray tear that had escaped him. “Setting aside the fact that any offspring of a Jotun and an Aesir would be an abomination, have you forgotten who you are? Who I am?”

“Loki…”

“Have you forgotten that I killed my own father? That Odin and Frigga fucked me up so much that I tried to kill myself just because I disappointed him? We’re… we’re insane, Tony.” Loki was ashamed when his voice started to quiver. “We can’t be parents.” Loki suddenly felt his heart break. He had never even considered having children, not even when he was sane, but now that he knew that he could, but would just fuck them up… It hurt, it hurt so much.

“Loki, my dad was an asshole who locked me up and made me starve until I figured out whatever little puzzle he put in front of me. My mother was devious on her best days and downright insane on her worst—And fucking Laufey, he was more of a father to me than Howard ever was.” Loki cringed at the name of his biological father. “He didn’t abandon you, ya know.” Loki squeezed his eyes shut, not wanting to hear anymore.

“Shut up,” Loki whispered.

“Please come out of the bathroom.”

“We’re insane.” Loki started sobbing and he hated himself for it. “I’m insane. I can’t go a week without having a nightmare. I want to strangle Thor to death even though some part of me still loves him. I love the feeling of drying blood on my hands, seeing blood splatter across walls. I’m not even fit to rule.” Loki gasped. “I’d be an even worse king than Odin.”
“Loki, please come out.” He shook his head silently, holding in a pained whimper. “It gets easier with time. Once we get our revenge, everything becomes a bit easier, a bit clearer.”

“You’re lying to me again. You always lie,” Loki recited the words he’d said a thousand times before to the other god.

“I love you.”

“Don’t say that. You can’t say that to me,” Loki whispered. “Not after everything I’ve done.”

“We’re in the same boat. We were from the very start and didn’t know it.” There was a pause. “I’m going to open the door now.” Loki didn’t resist as the wooden door was pushed against him, merely twisting to the side, allowing Tony to enter. Loki didn’t look at him. “You’re right. We are insane,” Tony wrapped his arms around the other god, “but we’re insane together.”

Chapter End Notes

So that just happened. I'm a bit nervous. What do you think?

PS: The next chapter is my favorite so far.
“This is your show,” Tony said while wrapped in all sorts of furs. Loki wondered if it was the same outfit he had worn when they first saw each other on Niflheim. Loki was wearing substantially less as they looked at the Hydra base that was tucked away in the mountains.

“If you would shut your Norns-forsaken mouth…” Loki let his sentence wander off and Tony was thankfully silent. Loki slowly swayed his hand back and forth, whipping up a snowstorm. Tony shivered violently, making Loki grin.

Jarvis screeched from far above and Loki eased up on the snow slightly.

“All the mortals have retreated inside,” Tony said and Loki nodded, standing up from behind their hiding spot. Jarvis swooped down and landed on Tony’s shoulder, roosting low to fight the chill.

Loki let out another chuckle when Tony grabbed his arm, unable to see in the white out conditions. The sweeping ice blurred everything, but Loki could sense the snowy conditions around them, leading them through the flurries.

Jarvis had already scouted the large Hydra facility from above, finding them the perfect infiltration point. It was a service hatch.

Loki froze the lock, for once smug about his Jotun roots.

“Well done,” Tony said through chattering teeth, “you almost set off every alarm.” Loki shoved him, causing Tony to fall into the snow. Jarvis screeched as he took off and landed on Loki’s shoulder. “Traitors, the both of you.” Tony pulled off his fur cap and tossed it aside before they went through the hatch. Warmth encompassed them and Tony disappeared the majority of his furs. Loki shrugged off his cloak and ran his fingers through his hair, sending ice crystals everywhere, including onto Tony’s face. “You’re such a diva.”

Tony brushed away the ice crystals before unsheathing the two swords on his back. Loki tossed his
Tony let out a huff and followed his lead.

Tony began whispering under his breath, making all the cameras they passed play reruns of the last five minutes instead of seeing them.

His mumbling was a bit annoying, but Loki supposed they both had their specialties. They started encountering humans. Loki felt like just playing with his daggers, slashing throats and nailing mortals to the wall. He was doing most of the killing as Tony tried to sense Viper by talking to the gears.

“So I was thinking…” Tony said in the silent language of the Hvit.

“A dangerous endeavor for one as daft as you,” Loki responded while stabbing a dagger straight through the jaw of a human.

“What if I call you Bed Sled?”

“What in the Norns-forsaken—” Loki abruptly shut his mouth, reeling in his surprise and befuddlement. “How are you even still alive? You’re an imbecile!”

“Bed Sled it is then.” Loki could practically hear Tony grinning. Loki abruptly turned around and socked him in the jaw. Tony held in a chuckle as he stumbled backwards slightly.

“What are you even talking about?” Loki tried hissing at him in the unspoken language, but it didn’t translate.

“Pet-names, Lover, pet-names,” Tony explained while rubbing his jaw. Loki rolled his eyes before turning back around, continuing their search for Viper.

“You will never speak of this matter again.” Loki tried to impart finality into his voice, but doubted that would be any sort of deterrent for someone like Tony. Loki shook his head subtly, trying to get back on task. Bed Sled? Bed Sled? What did that even mean? Even as he killed another handful of humans the little phrase, the pet-name, kept running on repeat in his head.

Bed Sled.

What?

“Of course I could always call you something a little more on the nose, my Dear Snowflake.”

“You shall not.” Despite his best efforts Loki felt his face heating up.

“Maybe my Snow Bunny?”

“Howardson, hear me now. I shan’t be a party to such games.” Loki’s grip on his daggers was almost painful. How had he come to be partnered with such an idiot?

“I love how feisty you are, my Feisty Frostbite.” Loki finally snapped, dropping his daggers, twisting around before pouncing on the other god, causing Jarvis to take off. As Tony fell to the ground, Loki bit his neck just hard enough to draw blood. Tony’s swords clanked on the ground. Before Loki could move back Tony’s hands were somehow in his pants despite the layered armor Loki was wearing.

“What are you doing?” Loki whispered, unable to use the silent language in his current state.

“Shh, I’ve been staring at your ass this whole time.” Tony squeezed Loki’s cheeks for emphasis,
making him squirm. “You wiggle your butt right before you strike, you fucking cat—my Lokitty.”

“Damn it, Howardson—”

“And now you’ve set off the silent alarm.” Tony pouted, still groping Loki. “We could have had a quickie, but you just couldn’t stay quiet, could you?”

“How is this in any way my fault?” Loki asked while roughly pulling himself away from him and righting his armor. He quickly swiped up the dagger he had dropped, not trusting being bent over while Tony was in such a state, while they were both in such a state. His armor was not built to accommodate an erection.

“You know you were enjoying yourself,” Tony teased while picking up his swords.

“I most certainly was not.” Loki started stomping down the hallway, killing the sudden influx of humans that were storming in their direction. “This is exactly why we should have kept things formal, Howardson.”

“Formal is boring,” Tony complained while simultaneously cutting a man at his knees and bashing another’s face in with his elbow. “Take the next left.”

They hacked and slashed in relative silence for a good five minutes before Loki’s thoughts wouldn’t stay silent.

“What does Bed Sled even mean?” Loki asked while casting five shades to distract the humans so he could look at Tony directly. Tony shrugged slightly.

“I don’t know. It’s just the first thing that came to mind. Bed for obvious reasons and sleds are fun.” The two gods completely ignored the massacre that was going on around them as more Hydra agents swarmed in and Loki’s shades put them to an end.

“And what exactly is your fixation with wintery things? Sleds, snow bunnies, frostbite, snowflakes?” Loki’s eyes were narrowed dangerously, solely focused on Tony.

Tony took a step closer and Loki pulled out another dagger in warning.

“This has nothing to do with the conversation we had this morning, if that’s what you’re getting at.” Tony flicked his swords into the air while switching to the silent language. Both swords sheathed themselves on his back. His hands were held up in a mock of defeat. “I personally like that you’re not another Aesir.”

“You like that I’m a…” Anger shook Loki’s whole frame. The daggers in his hands were suddenly encased in frost. “You like that I’m…” Loki twisted down and onto one knee, slamming the daggers into the ground. Everything stood still for a split second as a thousand shards of ice suddenly crystallized in the air. He clenched his hands together while fighting back tears of fury. There was a slicing noise shortly followed by the dull thuds of bodies hitting the ground.

Loki glanced around, startled by his own outburst. All the humans were either dead or dying. His eyes widened as he searched desperately for Tony. Slowly he reappeared, sprouting up from the metal ground.

“We’ll discuss this later. Alright?” Tony’s voice was soft, gentle. Loki gave a flinch of a nod, still stunned by his outburst. “Come on. Viper is this way.”

Loki followed behind him, his fingers flexing back and forth as a tempest of emotions swelled up
inside him, the most dominant ones being fear and confusion.

He knew that Tony was killing every human in their path, but he couldn’t hear or see him. All he could do was focus on his presence and try not to crumble.

Some part of him sensed Viper, and knew that Tony was fighting her. A clash that was quickly followed by the humming of a Tesseract portal.

And then there was silence. Loki forced himself to look up from his own hands.

Tony was staring at a large, vertical cylinder that was attached to the wall. In his left hand was his golden, bloodied sword. His other hand was resting on the large cylinder.

“Tony?” Loki’s voice was weak, breaking in the middle. Tony pulled his gaze away from the cylinder, blinking a few times as he focused on him. Loki licked his lips before glancing away from Tony, feeling oddly embarrassed and vulnerable. He quickly pushed those emotions down before going over to see what had so thoroughly caught his partner’s attention.

As he neared the object, he could sense coldness there, a deep, unnatural chill. There was a small glass pane and Loki could just barely make out the features of a man. Directly below the window in bold letters three words were written:

THE WINTER SOLDIER
Shifting Thoughts

Chapter Summary

Loki’s mind rattles back and forth.

Chapter Notes

*Insert serenade to Temul*

“This… this is mine now.” Tony’s words didn’t quite make sense to Loki, but he was still too stunned to care. A metal chair formed out of the ground and Tony gently coaxed him to sit there. “Jarvis, watch over Loki while I go find some scientists.” The golden eagle swooped over, somehow landing softly in Loki’s lap. He tucked his wings in, roosting low, but with sharp eyes. Loki absentmindedly stroked his head.

Why had he…

All of Loki’s direct magical attacks used to either be illusions or bursts of energy.

He had never studied ice based magic. It was seen as foul, even worse than just being a mage, since ice magic was so closely associated with the frost giants.

Jarvis made a soft cooing noise and Loki looked down at him, concentrating on how soft his feathers felt.

Loki couldn’t even remember experimenting with ice magic as a boy. He had just been so disgusted by it.

Yet it came so disgustingly natural to him. Ever since he touched that damn casket.

And he almost killed Tony with it. The only one who…

Jarvis cooed again and Loki realized that he was crying. He ducked his head, feeling even worse.

Why did he have to be a frost giant? Being a dark elf or even a dwarf was better than that.

But he was a monster now. Loki had to remember that. He had chosen this path with the promise of revenge sweetening his outlook.

He… he almost killed Tony out of anger. He was almost completely alone again, just because of his damn heritage.

And Tony had the nerve to—
Jarvis squawked and Loki realized his hand was fisted in Jarvis’ feathers, pulling at them. He released his hold before smoothing down the ruffled feathers.

Loki snorted.

Tony was glad that he wasn’t an Aesir. Now that he thought about it, that was somewhat understandable. Every Aesir Loki knew was either a fool or a liar, and in Amora’s case both.

Tony was a liar, but that wasn’t the same. He wasn’t the same as the rest.

And Loki almost killed him. The one person that accepted him. The only person that could ever accept him.

He glanced up when he heard Tony’s soft footfalls accompanied by a far louder pair. He quickly wiped away his tears, whispering a word of thanks to Jarvis for sitting with him.

Tony had a human by the collar of a lab coat, similar to the ones Loki saw in old movies. The human was babbling, but Loki couldn’t be bothered to listen to him. Instead he was watching Tony intently.

His eyes were blazing with possibility, mouth slightly quirked into a grin, footsteps unwavering. And then their eyes met and there was a glimpse of concern before Tony’s smile turned soft. He rested his hand on Loki’s shoulder while ordering the human to tell them everything he knew about the Winter Soldier.

Despite his thick layer of armor Loki could somehow still feel Tony’s warmth seeping into him, how his thumb swept back and forth as he listened to the scientist. He could sense Tony’s energy, a familiar pulse that seemed to be the one constant in this warped life.

Tony snapped the neck of the human before starting to gather random items from all over the large room. Tony stood, holding Jarvis’ large form in his arms. The eagle nuzzled against his neck and Loki hugged him a bit tighter. Jarvis was so soft and warm and for some reason he felt like a second heartbeat, whether it was Loki’s or Tony’s heart didn’t seem to matter because he was certain they could both feel it.

He kissed Jarvis and Tony’s eyes snapped over to him and for once it was Tony who was blushing. That was comforting and brought Loki out of his foul mood. He released Jarvis carefully, who flapped his large wings twice before landing on the edge of the large cylinder.

“How can I help?” Loki asked. His voice was still a tad weak.

“I need all those canisters.” Tony gestured to a corner of the room that had matching metal barrels lined and stacked neatly. A Tesseract portal appeared next to them. Loki quickly went to work, lifting two at a time and taking them to a nearly empty room. He saw a star shaped lock on a door and knew he was in Tony’s manor. Loki repeated the process, his eyes periodically flickering to Tony. The other god was sitting in a new metal chair right in front of the large cylinder. He had a look of intense concentration on his face.

It took Loki ten minutes to finish the process. Tony still hadn’t moved. On silent feet he walked to his side, trying to be as noninvasive as possible. He looked through the small window and at the frozen human. He didn’t understand what had Tony so preoccupied. It was just another human, albeit one in a strange situation. Loki didn’t even know humans could survive being frozen like this. Of course he did remember reading the file Tony had on Captain America who had been frozen for many years and survived.
Tony let out a sigh and Jarvis glided off the large cylinder, landing on Loki’s shoulder.

“Wait here,” Tony mumbled before disappearing through the portal.

Loki could see another appear inside the room. Tony pulled out a strange gyroscope that was almost half his size. He set it in the corner of the large room, opposite of the canisters. His hand flickered red before the gyroscope started spinning and letting out a low hum. The portal suddenly grew five times its average size. Red magic stretched from the gyroscope to Tony’s hand as he walked back into the Hydra compound. The god ran his other hand over the wall before punching through it and pulling out a bundle of wires coated in plastic. He brought his hands together before ripping the wires free. He stepped back slightly, the red magic staying connected to the wire and gyroscope. He turned towards the cylinder, raising both hands. The room rattled slightly before the whole wall came off, including the cylinder. Tony backed up slowly, the wall following him until he was in his manor. He slowly set it down, melding it to the wall there. He flicked his hand and the wires connected to his magic were suddenly connected to the base of the gyroscope.

When he was done Tony glanced up and let out a tired sigh. He tilted his head towards the door and Loki hurried to join him in the manor. The large portal fizzled out after he passed through it. Tony was working on the lock and Loki quickly memorized the sequence.

Tony began stripping off his armor as they walked down the hallway. He stopped in front of his study and before Loki could unlock it Jarvis flapped his wings. The star lock spun quickly before popping out, creating a handle. The door opened on its own.

Tony immediately poured them each a large glass of Svartalfheim spiced wine. Jarvis flapped his wings again and a book floated out of one of the drawers in Tony’s desk. Jarvis opened it and began scratching. Loki could see words forming, but was too preoccupied with Tony.

Loki sipped his drink before running a finger around the rim, heating the wine. He repeated the process on Tony’s glass. He nodded in thanks before taking two large gulps.

Tony set aside his glass before doing the same with Loki’s. Tony lifted himself onto the desk before pulling Loki close, between his legs and engulfing him in a hug. Loki stood rigid for a moment before relaxing. He rested his chin on Tony’s shoulder before hugging him back.

“I think we might have been focusing a bit too much on Midgard. After I give Dr. Banner a sample of Viper’s blood I think we should go to Alfheim to conduct a few business deals before heading to Jotunheim.” Loki tensed back up and tried to push away, but Tony just held him tighter. “There’s too much you don’t know about that place. Laufey unified the different tribes during the war against Asgard. Everything fell apart after they lost. Jotunheim may be cold and unpredictable, but it also has unimaginable beauty.” Tony kissed Loki’s cheek. “Just like you.”
Chapter Summary

Manipulation is still Tony Howardson’s middle name.

Chapter Notes

*Throws love at Temul*

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Loki would never admit that he cried in Tony’s arms that whole night and woke up feeling a tad lighter the next morning.

Neither of them mentioned it which was what Loki preferred.

Viper was confined to a dark room with perfectly flat walls and no doors. Some part of Loki rebelled against the idea of keeping someone in such conditions, but he said nothing as Tony picked up the nearly unconscious woman and drew three vials of her blood before dropping her on the ground and walking back out of the portal.

They were both dressed casually as they stepped into the former ocean resort turned lab. There was a pleasant breeze coming off the ocean and the sky was a beautiful shade of blue, almost as beautiful as the beaches of Alfheim.

Tony was carrying a small cooler with the blood samples in it while Loki idly chewed on the end of his sunglasses, his eyes hooded. This place instantly relaxed him. He disappeared his sunglasses, wanting to entwine his arm with Tony’s and lean on him, but he wasn’t certain who was watching or would see them. Instead he just summoned a bag of his favorite candies and began munching on them.

After walking around the beach for a while they found Bruce. He was in a shaded cove, a rubbery mat underneath him as he held some awkward position in which his hands and feet were on the mat, arching his body into a triangle with his rear raised high in the air. Tony made a grabby motion with his free hand and Loki elbowed him in the side with his full strength. Tony let out a grunt of pain, alerting the doctor to their presence.

He rolled forward before turning towards them, looking like he was about to bolt. His stance relaxed slightly when he recognized the pair.

“Are you sure you don’t want some weed? Give me a day and I can have the best stuff imported,” Tony offered with a pleased grin in place.

“I think I’ll stick with yoga for now.” Loki scowled when he saw Bruce’s face flush as he rolled up his mat. “You really should have called. Startling me like that isn’t safe.”
“You have my complete and total faith.” Tony smiled charmingly, the same smile he used when he was making a business deal. Loki refrained from scowling, eating more of his Red Vines instead.

“What do you two always travel together?” Bruce asked as they started walking towards the large building that looked like it had recently been power washed.

“When you’ve been alive for a couple millenniums things get boring. Gods like Loki and me are extremely rare. There are very few mages and even fewer that are also warriors. He’s the only one in the nine realms that can keep up with my rantings,” Tony explained and Loki looked at him with wide eyes, trying to shove down the emotions Tony’s words elicited in him.

“Nine realms?” Bruce asked while glancing at Tony. His brow was crinkled in confusion and there was sand in his hair.

“Nine worlds of varying sizes. Midgard, or Earth as you would call it, is unique. It exists in two dimensions. One that connects it with the other eight realms and another that connects it with the rest of the universe. You could take a spaceship and travel forever and never find the other eight realms. The only way to reach them is through Midgard, which is why Thanos is targeting this place, so that he can destroy the other eight realms.” Loki was surprised that Tony told him the truth. Loki didn’t understand why he trusted this human so much.

“Why is he so set on destroying everything?” Before Tony could answer Loki cut in.

“He is called the Mad Titan for a reason. When I fell into his clutches I was tortured relentlessly, only finding a bit of solace in my dreams, but even that was taken away when he took over my mind,” Loki said while scowling. “Growing up the story my nursemaid told me was that he is in love with Mistress Death and tries to court her by killing countless. If I hadn’t done my best to sabotage his plan while I was under the control of one of his lackeys, this realm would already be destroyed.”

“Loki is a hero, not that anyone is ever going to see him as that. Sometimes the world needs an enemy to rally against. When the real villain appears we’ll lend our strength to bringing him down.”

“And after that?”

“That’s where you come in, with all the medical equipment and ideas you’re manufacturing. This place is probably going to be a mess. Earth is the one realm without magic which is why I’ve been advancing its technology so much these past two centuries.” They entered the large resort and it looked like a much cleaner and well kept version of Tony’s lab in Stark Tower.

“No, I mean what are you two going to do when the battle is over?” Bruce glanced at the both of them and Loki pulled at a Red Vine that was between his teeth, snapping it loudly.

“Loki will probably be exonerated of all his crimes since he was being mind controlled and helped put an end to the Mad Titan. I’ll probably go back underground. I’m a very successful businessman in all the realms. I’m a businessman and adventurer. That’s how I stumbled upon the Tesseract and we ended up meeting. I like living freely even if it means I can’t put down any real roots.” Tony tilted his head down slightly and Loki refrained from rolling his eyes. He was manipulating the doctor again. Bruce had spent years running away, fleeing from the government, never being able to ‘set down roots’. “Regardless, Loki and I intercepted some Chitauri scouts. We’re working on dissecting their technology and magic, but it seems like their blood is toxic. I figured it might unlock a few clues about that poison I left here, assuming that you even looked at it. I know there are a lot more important things on your mind—”
“No, I looked at it,” Bruce said, cutting off Tony’s rambling. “I was actually working on it before I started my daily yoga.” Bruce began leading the way until they ended up in a smaller room with plenty of test tubes and microscopes.

“You know, I can get you some lab assistance if you want. It must be lonely being here all by yourself.” Tony set down the small cooler on one of the sterile empty surfaces.

“No, I wouldn’t want to put anyone else in danger.” Bruce was looking down as he spoke.

“How ‘bout a dog then? My pet eagle has been my constant companion and one of the few reasons that I haven’t gone insane. Isolation is never a good thing.” Tony pulled out a phone before Bruce could respond. Tony abruptly stopped. “You’re not allergic, are you?” Bruce shook his head. “How about a nice ol’ rottie? Stark Industries donates to animal shelters. I’m sure we can find you a very relaxed, well-mannered dog.”

“This really isn’t necessary.” Bruce was blushing again. Loki turned away from the pair, annoyed by Tony’s antics.

“Nonsense—Ms. Potts, I need a dog for Dr. Banner, something big and lovable, but not too energetic. Obviously he has to like warm climates.” There was a pause. “You truly make the world turn round. You know where to ship him when you get the chance.” Tony ended the call with a smile.

“That was too much.” Bruce sounded flustered and Loki snorted just quietly enough not to be heard by the doctor.

“Naw, Ms. Potts is going to use it as a publicity stunt to raise Stark Industries’ appearance. She has a knack for spinning things.” A knack that she probably learned from Tony.

“Uhm, well, thanks.” Bruce hurried over to a different part of the lab as Loki perched on a clean table, eating his Red Vines and watching the pair closely. If Tony’s hands so much as ventured anywhere near the doctor… Well, Loki wasn’t certain what he’d do, but he knew it wouldn’t be pleasant for anyone involved. “This poison is definitely not like anything I’ve ever seen before.”

“Yeah, I guessed.” Tony shook his head slightly. “All this bio-engineering stuff has always been beyond me, even when Dr. Erskine tried to explain it to me.”

“You worked with Dr. Erskine?” Bruce’s eyes practically lit up. “I thought it was your father—Oh, I guess it was you.”

“Yeah, sorry. I wish I could tell you more about the Super Soldier Serum, but I was distracted building weapons for the allies.” Tony shrugged slightly and Loki rolled his eyes for what felt like the thousandth time. Tony really was a weasel of a god. He probably knew everything about the Super Soldier Serum and even had a few samples back at his manor.

“Exactly how old are you?” Bruce asked.

“I don’t know.” Tony glanced at the other god in the room. “Loki, how old am I?”

“Why would I know that?” Loki felt himself becoming flustered, because he did actually know how old Tony was.

“That just seems like something you’d know.” Tony shrugged nonchalantly.

“You’re the one who invaded my 1,700th name day feast!” Loki grabbed an empty cylinder and
chucked it at Tony’s face. Tony moved to the side just enough for the glass object to pass by him and shatter on the wall. “You were even there for my 1,800th name day, you dunce! You’re the one who remembers such things. Not me!”

“I did do that, didn’t I…” Tony mused, inciting Loki’s fury even more.

“How do you even know how much chaos you stirred when you stole me in front of all of Asgard during my own feast?!” Loki summoned one of his daggers before sending it flying at Tony. As he predicted, Tony caught it. “And now you’re being purposefully ignorant just to annoy me.” Loki let out a huff of air as he came to that realization.

He was tempted to knock over some of the very expensive looking lab equipment, but refrained from doing so. It seemed like he’d been doing a lot of refraining as of late. He’d have to teach Tony a lesson sooner rather than later.

“See, he keeps me on my toes.” Tony gestured towards Loki, who refused to look at either of them. “I’m in my 2,800s. I don’t really see the point of keeping track since I never have anyone to celebrate with anyway.” Tony shrugged and Loki just knew that Tony was trying to make him feel guilty for some reason or another. It wasn’t Loki’s job to keep track of such a useless thing. No name day after the 1,800 was important, anyway.

Even so, Loki glanced down at his pocket watch, opening it once then snapping it closed. He still remembered what Tony said to him the day he gave Loki the watch.

“Screw all those rules about not being able to travel between realms as we please. Consider this a gift for all those name day celebrations I missed and any others I won’t be there for.”

Of course the watch ended up being another one of Tony’s ploys, considering there had been a very finely placed tracking spell upon it so that Tony knew where he was. Even still, Loki did sort of want to get him something for all those birthdays he missed, for all those years he needlessly hated him.

A gift for his… Loki refused to use the term Lover. Love and any variation of the word should never be used in conjunction with either of their names, let alone both. Yet partner didn’t seem to encompass what they were now, what they had somehow become despite all the anger and betrayal.

How had he even gotten to this point in his life?

Two years ago he had been a prince of Asgard, disdained, but at least minimally respected.

Now he was a ‘villain’, whatever that meant. Clearly Tony and he were only using their abilities to their full potential. Tony was a master manipulator while Loki was… Norns, how did his thoughts always take him to this place of inferiority? He was Loki No One’s Son, God of Mischief, Spreader of Lies, Dream-Walker. He had killed a conniving queen and single handedly escaped the clutches of the Mad Titan relying solely on his wit and guile. No mage could outclass him.

His eyes glanced over to Tony and the mortal. Tony and Loki had sparred physically, but had yet to see who the better mage was. Perhaps that was how he’d punish Tony for always exasperating him.

Loki looked at his pocket watch again. It had been with him while he was in Thanos’ clutches. Other than the scars and memories it was the only thing he brought back, that and a few daggers that Thor had given him years and years ago on one of his name days.
“Lokitty?” Loki’s venomous eyes snapped up to meet Tony’s. “We’re done here if you’re ready to go.” Loki nodded curtly before hopping off the table and closing the watch.

They were heading to Alfheim now. Perhaps he would find a nice gift for him there.

Chapter End Notes

I'll be posting a side piece called Sympathy for the Devil on Sunday. It's about when Tony first meets Laufey...
Also, for those of you who haven't noticed, I posted a Loki/Tony/Bucky (21K words) story called Coming Together.
Loki doesn’t know how to handle admiration.

Chapter Notes

Thank you, Temul, for always helping me out and being the best Beta ever!!!

Loki really hated how Tony always seemed to know someone wherever they went. They hadn’t even been on Alfheim for ten minutes before some dark elf came up to them and started babbling on about a new potion he had made based off one of their earlier collaborations. Tony was, of course, instantly intrigued and they began discussing the different properties it had.

Loki smothered his annoyance and started walking in the direction of where he assumed the market district was. If Tony needed him, Loki was certain that he’d just send Jarvis to find him.

He hadn’t bothered to disguise himself, almost wanting some Aesir guards to come through the broken Bifrost so he could take out his frustration on them.

Loki paused mid-step when he recognized one of the buildings. He felt a flutter of confusion before glancing around. Had he truly been away from Alfheim so long? After Tony attacked Odin and after the war he hadn’t been allowed to truly leave Asgard… He had resorted to dream-walking.

He looked at the citadel of the House of Hvit, the very same one he and Tony had ventured into in order to retrieve Amora. The city had changed so much.

Loki took a proper look around and felt idiotic for not noticing the changes beforehand. Alfheim had never been this alive before, at least not in his lifetime. There was a mixture of light and dark elves interacting freely when once they hated each other violently. Mixed into the milling populous were a few Vanir, Dwarves, and even a Niflung.

This was not the same Alfheim he roamed while completing the tests of the House of Hvit in order to learn the silent language. That Alfheim was peaceful, calm—stagnant.

This place… this place was a heartbeat, was pulsing life.

“Prince Loki!” someone called, causing Loki to tense before schooling his features. A short light elf with a young child on her hip was waving while making her way through the crowd and to him. She was smiling sincerely, but Loki still looked around for any sort of ambush. “Your Highness,” she dipped her head slightly, “during the war, in the battle of Bergarter, you saved my husband’s life.” Her eyes were starting to water up and Loki didn’t know how to react. “I’m sure you don’t remember, but a fire dancer riding on one of those wolves had knocked him over. He was about to be mauled when you cast an illusion, distracting the wolf and allowing my husband to get away.” The elf’s voice broke and she wiped away a tear with her free hand. “Thank you so much.” She
sniffled while chuckling nervously.

“I was only doing my duty,” Loki said, his voice toneless and expression blank. He wasn’t used to this sort of thing. The elf laughed, her smile contrasting with her tears.

“I wish I could give you something in thanks.”

“That’s not necessary.” He felt awkwardness start to settle in his chest.

“Oh,” she looked at her daughter, “Smasta, show him one of your illusions.” The little girl glanced at Loki with wide, nervous, blue eyes before hiding her face against her mother’s shoulder. “Smasta, show him what you learned from your tutor.” The elf’s voice was slightly scolding and the little girl peeked at her, her bottom lip jutted out in a pout. “Smasta.”

“Fine.” The elf set her daughter on the ground. She held her hands together, palms open and facing the sky. Her blue eyes slid shut and Loki could barely hear her whispering a basic spell. Slowly an image swirled to life in her hands. Green, yellow, and pink slowly came together to form a wavering flower. The moment it became perfectly clear it disappeared. The little girl let out a peep of surprise before hiding behind her mother’s skirt.

“That was wonderful.” He still couldn’t properly infuse his voice with the correct emotions, still in shock.

“Truly spectacular for someone so young and adorable.” Tony’s voice shocked Loki back to reality. He glanced at the other god, not having realized he had slipped to his side at some point. “She’ll be a talented mage someday.” The little girl held her mother’s skirt as a shield between her and the two gods as she peeked at them. Tony dropped to a knee as he pulled out a coin. “Such talent should be rewarded.” He placed the coin in the middle of his hands, the same position she had used. Tony closed his eyes in false concentration as the metal piece slowly shifted into a beautiful rose. He held it out for the little girl. She looked up at her mother who nodded with a smile. With a quick movement the girl snatched the rose out of his hand and hid again.

“What do you say?”

“Thank you?” The girl asked, still hiding behind her mother.

“You’re very welcome.” Tony stood, looking at the light elf. “Please thank your husband for all he did to finally take down Surtur and those monstrous fire demons on behalf of Prince Loki.” Tony tilted his head toward said god.

“Yes, he has my thanks. I surely would have been dead and the war would have been lost if not for the valiant efforts of the elves.” Loki tried to smile and evidently it worked because both elves smiled back. The mother blushed before heading off, her daughter in tow. The little girl was holding tightly onto her new rose.

“It’s easier to be king when the people love you,” Tony whispered into Loki’s ear before pulling back slightly. Loki nodded mutely, still surprised by what had just transpired. “Come on. One of my main businesses hubs is this way.”

Loki walked beside him silently as they wove through the people. His eyes were focused, yet he was not seeing. Finally he spoke.

“How do they not know of my demise? Of my invasion?” Loki hated how weak his voice sounded. Tony bumped shoulders with him lightly, pulling Loki’s eyes to him.
“Very few people know what actually transpired on Asgard. Odin the Unseeing made certain of that. They made your death seem like an accident, that fire dancers somehow got into Asgard and tried to break the Bifrost. You and some guards were fighting them off when the Bifrost shattered. He even had some guards killed in order to make the story more believable. Few pay attention to what happens in Midgard.” Tony shrugged. “It’s all politics.”

“If that elf knew you were the one who started that war…” Loki shook his head slightly.

“I instigated it. I didn’t start it. You were a prince. I was only a lord who wasn’t part of court for even half a decade. Few people saw me as Lord Anthony. To most people that know me I’m Tony Howardson, a merchant. Very few people know I’m the same Howardson who blinded that old fool. When I’m in the realms with my own face I tend to dress in the Vanir fashion, making it even harder for people to make the connection.”

“They’ll hate you when they figure it out,” Loki said and Tony shrugged again.

“Maybe, maybe not. I was supplying both sides during the war, both with weapons and armor that was below my actual skill level.” Tony pulled out a long pipe from nowhere and began smoking it, letting out a pleased hum. “I really liked that anti-heat charm you made, by the way. I incorporated it into most of my designs for the armor the elves and Vanir wore.” As Tony spoke smoke fell from his lips.

“You’re devious.” Loki held back a grin. Tony offered the long pipe and Loki glanced at him. He hesitated before taking it. “You know, before we became partners I hardly drank or ate sweets, and now this.” Loki brought the pipe to his lips, breathing in the smoke and letting it fill his lungs. His insides suddenly felt warm and fuzzy before the sensation gradually moved outwards and he felt like he was encased in a soft blanket.

“Nice isn’t it? I just started selling it. It’s still too expensive production wise so it’s just a luxury good for now.” They were still walking through the crowd. Loki handed the pipe back to him and the sensation slowly faded away.

“I thought you only sold weapons and armor,” Loki said and Tony chuckled around the pipe. He took in a drag before letting it out. The smoke smelled faintly of some food he couldn’t identify.

“Times are peaceful in the majority of the realms, if not a bit tense. I had to diversify my wares.” Tony gestured to the left before turning. “Besides, I like experimenting, though I didn’t make this blend myself.” The alley they were in led only to one building. It was large yet unassuming. Loki would have probably not noticed it if Tony wasn’t leading the way. “You know, before we became partners I hardly drank or ate sweets, and now this.” Tony brought the pipe to his lips, breathing in the smoke and letting it fill his lungs. His insides suddenly felt warm and fuzzy before the sensation gradually moved outwards and he felt like he was encased in a soft blanket.

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Then they reached the large building. There was a lock on the door. Just like the ones in Tony’s manor it opened through a series of twists and pushes, though this knob was discernibly less ostentatious than the bright silver star locks. Tony disappeared the pipe as they entered. Everything was dim.

“This doesn’t look very shopper friendly,” Loki commented dryly.

“It’s a distribution center. About one out of every eight stalls we passed gets their goods from here.
I have actual stores in the better distract.” Tony was unperturbed by Loki’s comment. There were wooden crates and barrels everywhere, all labeled with numbers and letters in various languages.

A door opened and light streamed into the large warehouse as a tall elf dressed in merchant clothing appeared.

“You’re so slow,” he complained while walking over to them. Tony snorted before the pair exchanged a quick hug. Loki would have been annoyed if not for the fact that he was confused. There was something about this elf that was familiar.

“And you’re ugly. How’s your mother?” Tony asked, his hand still on the shoulder of the elf.

“She moved out of the city, lives in a nice cabana I bought her by Nisa Lake.” The elf’s smile was almost blinding with its sincerity.

“I’m glad.” Tony turned slightly in Loki’s direction. “Sibin, you of course remember my dear friend Loki.”

“You mean the prince? Yeah, I remember him.” Sibin’s smile turned slightly mischievous and who he was finally clicked in Loki’s mind. With a practiced movement Loki punched the elf in the face, causing him to go flying backwards, hitting one of the crates. Tony began cracking up before Loki hit him too.

“That’s for giving me a tracked pocket watch,” he said to Tony who had fallen on his rear. Loki turned towards the elf. “And that’s for helping him.”
When I was Young

Chapter Summary

Loki gets revenge for a trick played on him centuries ago.

Chapter Notes

All my love to Temul!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

After teaching both of those fiends a lesson Loki stormed out of the warehouse, determined to walk off some of his anger. He quickly got lost in the crowd, shifting his features to be unrecognizable. He’d find his way home when he saw fit to do so.

Loki stopped at various market stalls, looking at the items ranging from small good luck charms to heavy pelts.

Stupid Tony with his stupid face and endless connections.

Loki just had to remind himself that Tony had been playing this game of conquest since his 900s while Loki was only just now starting in his 2,500s. It only made sense that Tony would have many more connections and perhaps be slightly (slightly) better than Loki at manipulating others.

Norns, Loki had just been a stupid boy when he met Tony in Niflheim. Tony had been orchestrating this whole thing for so many years, including pulling Loki’s strings. He wouldn’t be surprised if Tony was still pulling his strings.

Loki had to even out the playing field somehow.

He stopped in front of a small stall that sold gems and rare minerals. A chunk of hazy, raw sapphire was for sale. He lifted it up, letting it catch the low sun. It was truly ugly.

Loki paid for it (with Tony’s money). After asking around he found the crafting district and the necessary tools he needed. He sat at a nice café and ordered a drink before he went to work on the chunk of sapphire.

He chipped away at it while using a few spells he’d learned from one of his dark elf tutors when he was dream-walking. He was mildly annoyed that the inside wasn’t as ugly or hazy, the complete opposite of Tony’s personality.

Slowly he made a disk before plucking out the middle and forming a ring. A thousand little charms came to mind. A tracking one was necessary, if only as compensation for the one Tony put on the pocket watch all those years ago. It also wouldn’t be remiss considering Tony had been abducted once before. Something that couldn’t be so easily removed…
It wasn’t metal so Tony wouldn’t be able to manipulate it.

Loki hummed in thought as he chiseled delicate runes that were so small they were nearly indecipherable to the untrained eye.

He considered putting some sort of spell of ownership on it, but the thought made him blush and he knew Tony would only tease him for that.

Loki smirked as he added in a few surprises.

Slowly his smile faded as the sun began to set. Tony still hadn’t found him, or maybe he wasn’t even looking. Loki knew he was being childish. He had stormed off and was now expecting Tony to come after him.

Loki just really wanted to be found…

He always wanted to be found, to be seen as more than just Thor’s shadow. To be seen as more than just some lowly mage.

Loki wanted to be found when he was in the Void and especially when he landed…

He could feel that same spiraling madness that led him to kill Laufey and throw himself into the Void edge at his perception.

Before he could spiral out of control, the seat in front of him was pulled out and Tony sat down with a large platter of food.

“Whatcha making?” Tony asked before biting into a sandwich that was dripping with grease.

“How did your meeting go?” Loki asked, ignoring Tony’s question. He blew on the ring, causing sapphire dust to wisp in Tony’s direction. Tony quickly moved his sandwich back, but not his drink. Loki didn’t protest when Tony switched their drinks. He was done with his anyway.

“Sibin is good at what he does. He’s one of my protégés. He damn well better be good at what he does.” Tony took another bite, letting out a moan of pleasure. “He—”

“Don’t speak with your mouth full.” Loki held up one of his needle like tools in warning. Tony quickly closed his mouth, chewing his food thoroughly as Loki went back to chiseling. Tony finished off his meal before speaking again.

“Everything in Alfheim is ready to go. When the time comes it will fall in line and under our control.” Loki glanced up from his work.

“You always sound so confident.”

“Have to be. A finicky salesman doesn’t make a profit.” Tony paused and Loki glanced at him again. He was examining the contents of his drink. “Are you worried about Jotunheim?”

“I wasn’t until you reminded me,” Loki grumbled, focusing on his work again.

“None of them know that it was you who attacked Jotunheim. They’ll be able to tell you’re Laufey’s long lost son by your lines.” Tony shrugged. “We’ll say that Laufey sent you to retrieve the casket.” Tony leaned back in his seat and rested his clasped hands on his stomach, looking completely relaxed. Loki felt a twinge of annoyance, but ignored it. “So whatcha making?”

“Are you blind?” He was in no mood for such lighthearted playfulness.
“Nope, I just really enjoy the sound of your voice. You hiss and purr all at once, Lokitty. It’s very attractive.” Loki refused to look up from his work, even when Tony leaned in close, going even so far as to move aside their drinks. “I can just picture you tearing apart everyone in this café when you hiss like that.” Tony’s voice was low, appealing.

“And what exactly are you, if I’m a cat—other than a dog, you filthy mongrel.” Loki sneered at him despite feeling his heart flutter.

“I am what I’ve always been, an eagle. Sharp eyes watching my prey, savoring the taste even before I’ve caught it.” Tony leaned back in his seat. “That’s how I survived being away from you for so long.”

“You sound like a deranged stalker,” Loki commented, pricking his finger and using his blood to strengthen the runes. His heart was beating faster than he’d like it to.

“Deranged? Sometimes, but not when it came to stalking you.” Tony’s shoulders suddenly slouched. “I should have been there…”

“Shut up. You would have only made it worse.” Loki hated thinking about his brief reign as king of Asgard. Traitors, the whole lot of them. Perhaps he’d go out of his way to kill the Warriors Three before Thanos invaded. He’d leave Sif though. Being betrothed to Thor was punishment enough, especially considering he was off sleeping with Jane Foster.

“When I heard that you were king, Odin the Unseeing was asleep, and that Thor was banished I almost went to Asgard. I was going to finally put an end to Odin. I thought that maybe I’d take over all the other realms, then come to you, offer them up as some means of apology, but I realized it would never work almost instantly. You’d somehow know it was me who killed Odin and you’d fight me at every turn as ruler of Asgard.”

“Why must you always talk about these little ‘scenarios’? They’re meaningless and annoying,” Loki said while putting the finishing touches on the ring.

“It’s just how I think. There’s a million scenarios on how each day could go. I can’t help but think about the days I could have done something different, made things better for you somehow.” Loki ignored his swelling emotions and Tony’s words while putting down money for their meal.

“Regardless, give me your hand.” Tony did so without hesitation. Loki slipped the ring on Tony’s left index finger.

“A gift? You shouldn’t have,” Tony joked as Loki stood. Tony’s eyes lit up with red magic as he read the charms and enchantments put upon the ring.

“I won’t be able to get this off without severing my finger, will I?” Loki glanced over at him, using his height advantage to look down at Tony condescendingly.

“Be grateful I didn’t make you a collar.”

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter might not be posted on time. I have to rewrite it because I can do better!
And you all deserve the best!
Loki felt exposed. Which was ridiculous considering he had been naked in front of Tony hundreds of times by now, but this was different, and not just because they were both wearing clothing. It was more what Loki was wearing than anything else.

Tony was clearly enjoying himself, which just made the whole matter worse.

Years of feeling inadequate for not having the physique of Thor or the other Aesir was still deeply ingrained into him, not that he’d ever admit that. He hated how the long loincloth, almost skirt, made his tall frame seem even thinner. The dark fabric made his pale skin look ghostly.

“This won’t work. I’m far too short,” Loki said while crossing his arms over his chest, wanting to just change back into his proper Aesir clothing.

“Hardly, you’re actually just about average height for a Jotun.” Tony waved dismissively and Loki snorted derisively.

“Don’t try to placate me, Howardson.” Without thought Loki’s hands balled up into fists. “I saw the Jotuns that surrounded Laufey.” Tony laughed, only provoking Loki’s ire. He’d lash out physically, but didn’t want to expose anymore of his skin.

“When you’re king who will you want to guard you? The average looking Jotun or the big scary ones?”

“Regardless, there is a reason they’re called frost giants.” Tony laughed again and this time Loki really did hit him.

“Fuck,” Tony said while holding his shoulder. “What sounds better? ‘Odin, defeater of the Jotuns’ or ‘Odin, defeater of the frost giants’? As usual it’s all politics. The only true giants are the fire giants. No Jotun will ever reach their height.” Tony went back over to one of the chests and began rummaging through it.

“Why do you even have this outfit?” Loki asked and Tony froze.
“It’s definitely not something an old conquest left behind,” Tony mumbled and Loki felt his rage suddenly skyrocket as he stormed out. “Lokitty, I’m kidding! I bought them specifically for you.” Tony quickly caught up with Loki. Tony spun Loki around before pushing him against the wall and assaulting his neck with kisses and soft bites. Loki quickly fell victim to the sensation. “I do find you rather fetching in this outfit, though.” Tony’s sneaky hands pushed up the Jotun loincloth, leaving Loki bare. “Much better access”

“Shut up,” Loki said despite already feeling a bit breathless and pulling Tony closer. Tony’s fingers quickly swept over Loki’s hole, making him shudder, holding onto Tony tighter.

“You’re a giant to me, ya know?” Tony teased and Loki blushed. He hated how Tony loved to talk, even during situations like this.

“Be quiet.” Loki captured Tony’s lips with his own and Tony let out a pleased hum while lifting one of Loki’s legs slightly. Loki gasped as a slicked up finger was slipped inside of him. Tony was always so good at that, pushing into him the second Loki relaxed. Tony chuckled and Loki yanked back his head by his hair and bit into his shoulder roughly. Tony’s chuckle turned into a moan. “I said shut up,” Loki whispered into his ear as another finger was added.

“I can’t be quiet. I can never be quiet when it comes to you.” They’d had this conversation a hundred times before, but it never ceased to leave Loki breathless, or maybe that was just because they were always at some stage of fucking when it happened.

Loki felt the ring he made Tony sweep up his thigh, raising his knee even higher as Tony worked him open. Loki arched into him and quickly hooked his other leg behind Tony, freeing up one of Tony’s hands. Tony hit the right spot and Loki could hear him undoing his pants.

“Just do it already.” Loki kept his eyes closed, not wanting to see Tony’s infuriating grin. Tony gripped Loki’s cock, giving it a long stroke, the ring scraping against him painfully while the rest of his hand felt perfect. The blunt tip of Tony’s cock teased Loki’s entrance. Loki pushed himself downwards despite it causing Tony’s grip to tighten almost painfully. He let go of Loki’s cock, much to Loki’s dismay, and used his hand to brace them further against the wall. Tony started thrusting into him at a quick pace, pushing Loki into the wall and brushing against his trapped cock. Loki let out a keening noise as his prostate was brushed against repeatedly. “Slow down.” Loki’s green eyes opened and were met by Tony’s eyes. “Let’s make it last.” He gave Tony a soft kiss when his pace eased up.

“You’re stalling,” Tony said, his fingers digging into the wall to keep them steady. Loki tilted his head to the side.

“Are you complaining?” Loki asked, trying to keep his breathing even.

“I never said that.” Tony slowed his thrusts even more, almost pulling all the way out every time. “Just remember that you’re the one who wanted to make this last.”

They had never fucked slowly before and Loki realized a bit belatedly why that was. Tony seemed to be in perfect control whereas Loki felt like he was losing his mind all over again.

The controlled pace made Tony’s thrusts even more accurate, hitting Loki’s prostate every time. Loki could feel every detail of Tony’s cock. His hole was quickly becoming oversensitive.

Loki let out the most embarrassing little mewls and he quickly bit Tony’s shoulder to stop it from ever happening again. Loki tried meeting his thrusts to speed him up, but Tony grabbed his hips, pinning him against the wall. Loki bit down on him harder, trying not to whimper.
“Just say the word, Loki, and I’ll speed up.” He felt a bit reassured when Tony’s words came out stuttered. It renewed Loki’s resolve. He shook his head and tried to relax. “Have it your way.” Tony slowed down even further and Loki couldn’t hold back his groan. Tony brought his hand back down and between them, stroking Loki in time with his thrusts.

Loki squeezed his eyes shut, feeling completely helpless in the best of ways. He couldn’t move at all and his mind was unable to process anything beyond the sensation of tightening pleasure and that it was Tony holding onto him. Tears mixed with his sweat. Loki almost felt overwhelmed.

“Shh,” Tony soothed while running a hand through Loki’s hair. Loki felt a twinge of confusion until he realized he was crying softly with the occasional hiccup. Tony moved them off the wall and to the ground before quickly capturing Loki’s arms and pinning them above his head. “Look at me.” Tony’s voice was soft, compelling. Loki forced his eyes open again, seeing Tony’s flushed face and loving expression. “You stubborn bastard.” Loki met him halfway when he leaned down to kiss him. Tony picked up his pace, causing Loki to moan into his mouth. The pressure quickly built up and Loki completely froze as he came. After a few more stuttered thrusts Tony came while moaning Loki’s name.


“This really wasn’t a competition,” Tony said after catching his breath.

“I still won.” Loki curled up against Tony’s side, resting his head on Tony’s rising and falling chest. Tony pulled him a bit closer, kissing the top of his head. Tony chuckled and Loki could feel the deep rumble in his chest.

“We’re still going to Jotunheim today. We just have to wait for the bruises on your arms and hip to fade.” Loki quickly rolled on top of Tony before biting his neck. He hopped up and began walking to his room to get cleaned up, leaving Tony behind on the floor. “You fucking cat!” Tony called after him and Loki just smirked.

Chapter End Notes

So I said that I was going to rewrite this... but my depression hit me really hard (and is still hitting me), but I eventually will rewrite it. Thank you for your patience!
Chapter Summary

Loki’s introduced to his homeland.

Chapter Notes

Thank ya, Temul, for being the best Beta ever.

And thank you all for being patient with me.

The gold laced in his hair was far lighter than Loki’s usual helmet, but somehow felt heavier.

He was wearing an annoying amount of jewelry.

“This is the part where you turn blue,” Tony explained in a condescending voice. Loki shot him a glare while slowly unwrapping the glamour that was plastered to his skin. He’d never shown anyone this side of him, let alone Tony, the only person who accepted him. He knew that Tony had spent many years around the Jotuns, but that didn’t make Loki feel any less self-conscious. Warmth twisted into heat as the color of his skin grew ashen and blue. “If I had it my way, you’d look like this all the time.” Tony ran a single finger up Loki’s side, causing Loki to shudder.

“Don’t touch me.” Loki went to swat Tony’s hand away, but he’d already pulled back.

“Be a dear and don’t give me frostbite,” Tony said dryly, yet was grinning.

“Don’t be annoying and that won’t be a problem.” Loki smiled falsely, tilting his head to the side and staring at Tony with wide, red eyes.

“Well I’m fucked. Might as well just kill me now.” Tony grabbed Loki by his hips, putting them chest to chest.

“You’re lucky I don’t.” Loki could feel the semi-automatic defense system, waiting for him to bristle (like a cat) and freeze anything touching him. Tony kissed his cheek and Loki was fairly certain he couldn’t blush in this form. “And we are definitely not having sex when it’s possible for me,” Loki paused, trying not to spit out the words, “to bear children.”

“Lokitty, you know I’d wear a condom.” Despite Tony’s words Loki peeled Tony’s person away from his body.

“Can we just go to Jotunheim?” Loki crossed his arms over his chest.

“Now you want to go to Jotunheim? Just when things are getting interesting?” Tony tried to nuzzle Loki’s neck, but was deftly shoved aside. “You can top. Just let me get some of that cold lovin’.”
“Absolutely not. You shan’t go anywhere near my lower parts when I’m like this.” Loki went completely motionless. “Oh Norns, can I get pregnant since we had sex earlier?” Loki quickly started pulling his glamour back in place.

“No, don’t worry. It’s…” Tony made a vague hand gesture. “I’m just going to get you a book about Jotun anatomy. You’re fine. Trust me.” Loki slowly let the glamour slip back off, his eyes narrowed dangerously at Tony.

“I’ll cut off your balls if you ever so much as even think of getting me to carry your demonic spawn.”

“So I was thinking of us having a couple kids—” Loki had a dagger in hand and pressed against Tony’s pants in a flash. “A joke, a joke.” Tony held his hands up in surrender while stepping backwards. Loki sheathed his dagger. “I was actually thinking three kids.” Before Loki could react Tony disappeared through a portal. Loki felt the buildup of Tesseract energy behind him and spun around to strike. A twinge of energy where Tony was just standing caught Loki’s attention. He recognized it as the charm he’d put on Tony’s ring. Loki twisted back around, aiming a kick into the empty air. He was met with warm flesh as the invisibility spell Tony was using was interrupted. “Your love—” Tony grunted, holding his gut, “hurts so good.” Loki let out a bark of a laugh as Tony curled in on himself slightly, holding his throbbing stomach.

“You deserve far worse,” Loki said after composing himself and helping Tony stand up straight.

“Probably.” Tony groaned slightly while cracking his back.

“Stop acting so old, you goat.” Loki glared at him as Tony proceeded to stretch, cracking even more bones into place.

“I am old. Unlike your pampered royal ass I’ve spent far too many nights either sleeping on my feet or on the hard ground.” Tony let out a sigh with his eyes closed, not seeing Loki’s scowl.

“Do you really want to have a contest on who has the most painful scars?” Loki asked, daring him to say yes. Tony may have been tortured by the Jotuns, but Loki was certain that was nothing in comparison to what The Other had done to him.

Loki was startled when Tony leaned up and gave him a quick peck on the lips, pulling him into an embrace.

“Not everything is a contest, Lover. I’ve seen your wounds and you’ve seen mine. Let’s revel in the fact that we lived through them and found each other after such a long time.” Loki practically collapsed into Tony’s arms, always startled by his sudden bouts of tenderness and… love. “We don’t have to go to Jotunheim today if you don’t want to.” Loki untangled himself from Tony’s arms, putting on an air of regality.

“All dressed up and nowhere to go? I think not.” Loki brushed aside the mere thought with the sweeping of his hand.

“Loki Laufeyson, former prince of Asgard, prince of Jotunheim, and eventual king of all realms. You are absolutely delicious.” Tony moved to the other side of the room before Loki could react, opening a large dresser. The outfit he pulled out was the darkest black Loki had ever seen before, thin chains of gold adorned almost every inch. Most prominent were the large, dark rubies that created buttons that kept his coat closed. “A gift from your late father,” Tony explained simply when he saw the look on Loki’s face. “He always rewarded loyalty, a trend I hope we’ll continue when the time comes.”
“Of course. Once the realms are ours we shall rule them splendidly.” Loki’s voice was slightly awestruck. He somehow always forgot there would be a time when all would be under their control, in one fashion or another. He watched him dress before walking over to Tony and straightened out his cloak slightly, running his fingers over the golden clasp just under his chin. It was an eagle, an image of Jarvis. Tony pulled on bright red gloves that contrasted greatly with the rest of the outfit. Beneath his cloak was a single red sword, similar in design to the two he usually carried, yet heavier and meant to be wielded with both hands.

“You ready?” Tony asked as Jarvis landed on his shoulder, already roosting low in preparation for the coming cold.

Loki nodded and a portal opened, letting in a gust of winter. Loki felt some of his discomfort ease and was a bit startled by that. Tony walked through without hesitation. Loki took in a breath before following him. He glanced around in confusion, not recognizing this place. This was not the Jotunheim he knew. It was far too civilized.

“What is this place?” There was a low stone wall enclosing what looked to be an ice-garden.

“One of my residences.” Tony narrowed his eyes at Loki. “You destroyed the other one. I had some of my best steeds there.” Tony let out a small disgruntled noise and Loki held back a chuckle, happy that his insanity had caused Tony a bit of strife. “Shut up. I had been breeding those things for centuries. Luckily two foals were brought here by some of my servants since there wasn’t enough space for them there.” Tony made a tsking noise that only made Loki laugh harder. “Everyone needs a hobby.” Tony scooped up a handful of snow, quickly forming a ball and chucking it at Loki’s face. It landed perfectly, slush going in every direction.

“Do you really want to challenge me on my own territory, with the casket in my possession?” Loki held up a single hand, a ball of ice with shards pointing in every direction began forming in his palm.

“I’m no fool, despite what you may think.” Tony turned his back on him, leaving himself completely open. Loki weighed the pros and cons of hitting Tony with it before finally letting it fall onto the ground with a soft thud. He had to act his part as prince after all, and Tony needed to look like the warmonger he presumably was in his realm.

Loki followed him to large stables and could hear noise. He was surprised to see a young Jotun boy, half his own size, shoveling snow out of the way.

“Master Anthony,” the young boy said while bowing.

“Little Phint,” Tony patted the boy on his head. “Is Big Phint here?”

“No, he went to the market when he heard you would be returning.” The boy glanced at Loki before looking back at Tony. “Give me a moment to finish cleaning this up and I shall prepare two mounts.” Loki flicked his wrist and the snow parted down the middle, revealing a cobbled road.

“Our steeds, if you will.” Loki kept his eyes bored despite the hilarious look of amazement on the boy’s face. Little Phint disappeared into the large stables. There was the loud sound of ice cracking.

“These aren’t the horses you’re used to,” Tony warned belatedly as two of the monsters that had chased Loki, Thor, and the others during their brief visit to Jotunheim were led out of the stable. “Frozen wargs. It took centuries for me to breed them down to this size, especially considering they spend most of their time asleep and have a very low mating drive.” Tony elbowed Little Phint
when he was in range, leading the two beasts by their reins, “I’m not too fond of staying out in these conditions.” Tony glanced up at the dim sky. “Even if it is a relatively nice day.”

“Should we expect you for dinner, Master?” the boy asked, his head bowed down respectfully.

“I think not. I have a feeling that we’ll be feasting at the castle. Your family still has free reign of my estate.” Tony’s smile was charming and the young Jotun smiled in return, looking much more at ease. Tony hoisted himself up onto the back of the beast, the frozen warg as Tony called it. Loki followed suit, finding the saddle surprisingly comfortable. He kept his posture perfectly straight as he had been taught to do since he was a boy.

The beasts were easy enough to steer and Loki wondered if Tony had to breed that into him. The last frozen warg he saw was more like a vicious dog than an actual horse.

“A word of advice,” Tony said while moving his warg a bit closer to Loki’s.

“I’m listening.”

“The Jotuns aren’t ones for subtlety or shows of arrogance. If you want respect you’ll have to back it up with strength, magical or physical, it doesn’t matter. The fact that you are Laufey’s son should dissuade the majority of Jotuns from trying to mess with you, especially if you are with me. Just be prepared for a challenge or two.”

“You have a bad habit of telling me things belatedly.” Loki scowled at him before turning his attention back to his surroundings. The city was well fortified with a large wall surrounding it. The houses were fairly small, excluding Tony’s and a few others.

Loki’s mount made a strange grunting noise and began moving off the street despite Loki’s tight grip on the reins. Tony made a hissing noise and the beast got back on the road, letting out a much more subdued grunt.

“I swear you put me back at least three hundred years. These are the rejects. My best steeds were at my mountain villa.” Tony sighed again and Loki rolled his eyes.

“You poor dear. Your life is so difficult. Worry not. If your property here is not to your taste we can always go to your manor back in Asgard, or perhaps that lake house in Vanaheim you keep promising to take me to. I bet you have a damn castle in Muspelheim, knowing you,” Loki groused as his eyes were drawn to the large castle that seemed to jut out of the ground.

“Well I don’t technically own it,” Tony continued, not noticing that Loki was distracted, “but the servants all answer to me when I’m there.”

“Do shut up.” Loki was starting to feel his nerves rear their ugly head. “Is there anything else you forgot to mention?”

“Nothing comes to mind. Just follow my lead.” The ice castle practically loomed over them and they hadn’t even passed the outer gates. “So many fond and terrible memories here…”

“Why wasn’t Laufey here when Thor went on his fool hearted mission to punish the Jotuns?”

“You met him during a week of mourning. That was a war monument you all stormed into.” Tony made a slight waving motion and two of the guards began opening the gates.

“What were they mourning?” For some reason Loki felt a bit of dread building up. Tony glanced over at him and that feeling only deepened.
“Officially it is a memorial to one of the bloodiest battles from the war against Asgard. It is sacred grounds that no Jotun, regardless of what clan they belong to, would fight on.” Loki could see Tony’s suppressed frown.

“And unofficially?”

“The death of your mother. I don’t really want to talk about this right now, but… Laufey didn’t tell me all the details. He loved her dearly, but she was a traitor. She went to the Aesir after they took the casket. I have no idea what she was trying to achieve, but she ended up killed with you carved out of her womb. Her body was delivered to Laufey bloodied and violated.” Tony paused and Loki was lost in his own thoughts. “As I said before, Laufey didn’t abandon you.”

“Are there any half-siblings I should worry about?” Loki felt sick to his stomach. It was just another reason to hate Odin as well as himself for putting an end to his own father and to someone Tony clearly held in high regards.

“None that I know of. After her betrayal he wasn’t interested in any sort of romantic relationship. He was too busy trying to keep Jotunheim from falling apart and fighting clan battles. Instead he had lots of protégés like me, though I was by far his best student.” Tony puffed his chest up and Loki held back a scoff.

“You always think so highly of yourself. It’s very unbecoming.” Loki made an indignant sniffing noise.

“Surprisingly it has gotten me out of more bad situations than it got me into.” Tony led them to the stables that looked to be rarely used, but still in good condition. There were no other animals there and Loki was curious as to how rare these diminutive ice wargs really were.

“Master Anthony,” a Jotun a few heads higher than Loki said, appearing out of nowhere and bowing slightly. Tony nodded in response. “May I ask who your guest is?”

“Most certainly.” Tony’s voice had an air of importance to it that was usually more subdued. “May I be the very first to introduce Loki Laufeyson, sole prince of Jotunheim and my dearest of friends.” The Jotun’s eyes went wide and Loki brushed aside his long hair, revealing the lines on his back that marked his paternal ancestry. “Spread the word and have a feast prepared.” Tony’s voice left no room for argument as he slipped off his bright red gloves and put them halfway in the pocket of his cloak, leaving a bright flash of red there.

The Jotun bowed deeper before running off.

“You really do garner respect here.” Loki wasn’t certain why he was surprised. Tony seemed to have influence everywhere.

“I helped reunify Jotunheim, consolidating the power under Laufey before I went off to other more revenge focused endeavors.” Tony moved his cloak to the side slightly, revealing his sword. “There is one more thing I may have forgotten to mention.” Loki turned to face Tony, stopping him in his tracks.

“What is it now?”

“You may or may not have to kill Blystan, the Jotun chief who took over after Laufey met his end, depending on whether he steps down or not.” Tony shrugged and Loki hit him.
They were led inside and Loki could feel red eyes all over him. It was like a nightmare from his childhood, except this time he was one of the monsters. Tony seemed perfectly at ease, but Loki did take note that Tony had made his sword more easily accessible. Loki wished that he had brought his scepter, though a single dagger would be sufficient to dispatch any opponent, even if he felt the need to not use his magic.

At least now Loki didn’t feel as foolish for his outfit. It seemed to be the norm, although most Jotuns had their hair cut short or completely shaved off, even the females. Had he known, he probably would have cut his as to more easily fit in. Damn Tony and his unspoken love for pulling Loki’s hair. Loki was certain that was the only reason why he didn’t tell him.

Some of the Jotuns were scowling at him, while others hurried to Tony, talking about all sorts of things from the reconstructions going on in the mountains to the latest court gossip.

Loki was pleased to see that he was indeed of an average height in this place, which made Tony’s height below average, not that that was a great surprise.

Loki smirked to himself and was surprised by the reaction he got from those around him. Apparently his smirk was a mirror image of Laufey’s, according to the not so subtle whispering.

A tall Jotun adorned with more gold than any of the others appeared, a scowl firmly in place. He was the tallest by far and was how Loki imagined Jotuns looked like when he was a boy: fowl, unrefined monsters.

“Blystan!” Tony said happily, opening his arms wide as if he was about to embrace him. “You look well!”

“That’s Chief Blystan to you, you little Aesir bilge.”

“Chief for now, perhaps,” Tony said, completely undeterred by Blystan’s ‘greeting’. “But business is always best conducted after bellies are full and minds dulled with good spiced wine.” Tony turned slightly towards the crowd. “I assume my vineyard and winery has not stopped producing.”

“We have plenty of bottles, Master Anthony,” one of the Jotuns responded, but Loki couldn’t see her.
“Wonderful, have a few bottles opened and send a bottle to each of the chieftains’ families. Today is a merry one.”

“As you wish,” the same Jotun responded. Loki could hear other Jotuns’ whispering as they spied the marking on Loki’s back. He had his guard up, but did his best to look completely at ease and powerful, something Tony exceeded at.

“I think I shall give Loki a tour of the castle.” Tony steered the once unknown prince away before Blystan could object. The crowd parted for them easily and Tony greeted nearly every other Jotun they passed. These were Loki’s people, yet they liked Tony more. How very… typical, almost worth laughing about if it wasn’t so tragic.

Loki could feel Jotuns following behind them at a safe distance. He was also aware of how many of his scars were visible with these scant clothes.

“I hate politics,” Loki said dryly. It seemed politics were the same regardless of whether the group was Aesir or Jotun.

“You’ve chosen a poor profession if that is the case,” Tony joked, leading him to a wide open part of the castle. “I spent twenty-eight years locked in the dungeons of this castle. It was only after I met Laufey that I was released from my chains.”

“You couldn’t just flee?” Loki asked, surprised that Tony could ever be at a disadvantage.

“I was very young. There is very little metal in this realm and even if I did escape I’d freeze outside before I found one of the branches of the world tree to escape to. The forges were the safest place for me. It’s the warmest place in the whole city and where I could make myself valuable. Those were some of my darker times, but after I had Laufey’s council things started improving.”

“How old were you?” Loki glanced at him. Would he ever stop being amazed by Tony?

“Mid 1,400s. Lived and fought here till my 1,6-somethings,” Tony shrugged. “Other than Muspelheim and Asgard this is the realm I spend most of my time in. I have a few thriving businesses here, mostly my winery and supply chain of stores. Imported goods sell very high here since Jotunheim is mostly blocked off from the other realms.”

“You’ve really expanded the ‘family business’,” Loki said offhandedly.

“You’re damn right.” Tony grinned, looking pleased with himself. Loki couldn’t fault him for that though. The banished Aesir probably was the richest being in all nine realms. If anyone could take over the realms, it was him. Loki was just glad they were now on the same side.

Tony showed him different parts of the castle, giving him a little anecdote for each one. The whole time different Jotuns followed behind them and Loki made sure that his lines were in full view, marking him as Laufey’s only child. Before the tour could even come to an end they were told the feast was ready.

“Blystan will try to make us sit at one of the lower tables. Don’t be afraid to use violence to get others to move. Just follow my lead. And unlike Asgard magic is respected here so feel free to use it, but don’t be surprised if others use it against you,” Tony warned under his breath as they walked. “No one is at your level of magic, but they probably have a few spells you haven’t seen before.”

“I’m sure I can handle myself.” Despite his words he did feel a bit apprehensive. This was all just another step in their conquest. He had to remember that. He had grown up around underhanded
politics and uppity nobles. The setting was different, but the feeling was all the same.

“So the son of that traitor Fárbauti has finally appeared,” Blystan said loudly as they entered the large, frozen feasting hall.

“Thankfully I was cut straight out of her rather than having to spend another moment in her presence,” Loki said easily, looking completely bored as he walked up to the head table, not even waiting for Tony. One of the largest Jotuns he’d ever seen was seated next to Blystan. “Move.” Loki’s tone was heartless and his hands glowed with green magic just waiting to be released. The Jotun stood, proving to be even taller than Loki had first thought. He didn’t let his surprise show though. “Need I repeat myself?” Loki smiled, for once keeping the crazed look out of his eyes.

“You’ll have to make me move,” the Jotun said, an ice sword forming in his hand.

“With pleasure.” Loki’s grin turned sincere as he launched his attack, pulling out his dagger as he sent a ball of energy towards the Jotun’s gut. The giant of a Jotun blocked the energy ball with his ice sword, but wasn’t quick enough to dodge the dagger that hit him in the chest. In an acrobatic feat Loki swung himself behind the Jotun, using the dagger as an anchor. He held his glowing hand to the Jotun’s throat as he pressed himself against his back, using the chair to reach his height. “Is this enough to make you move? Or shall I continue?” Loki asked loudly so that everyone could hear him. When the Jotun did not immediately respond Loki began dragging his dagger upwards, cutting through flesh and blood.

“I yield,” the Jotun finally said. Loki pulled out his dagger and released his hold, kicking the Jotun away before promptly taking a seat, trusting that the Jotun wouldn’t be so foolhardy as to attack him now that his back was turned away.

From the corner of his eye he saw Tony look at a Jotun that was sitting on Blystan’s other side. The Jotun moved without saying a single word.

“Let’s eat!” Tony said loudly, his smile almost blinding. Blystan was silently fuming, but made no comment as the food was brought out.

The meal was strange fare, but after observing others around him Loki quickly figured out what were mere garnishes and what was actual food. It wasn’t really to his liking, but he ate the majority of it regardless.

Loki recognized the wine from Tony’s extensive collection of alcohol. He noticed that it was not served warm here and refrained from heating it as he usually would. The flavor was both spicy as its name implied as well as having a sweet undertone. Loki would have to ask what Tony used to make it now that he knew it came specifically from Jotunheim.

“Perfectly made. Shtana must still be the head cook. Tell her she has my regards,” Tony said to no one in particular, but Loki had no doubt that the message would be delivered none the less. “On to joyful news. As many of you have already concluded my companion is Loki Laufeyson—”

“And where exactly has he been all these years?” Blystan asked, cutting Tony off mid-sentence.

“I was off doing what many thought was impossible.” Loki dabbed at his lips with a napkin regally before standing up. He casually walked to a slightly raised platform, causing Blystan and those at the head table to have to turn around to properly see. “While you all were fighting over land I was fighting for something far more important, the heart of Jotunheim.” There were a few gasps that turned to many as the casket materialized between Loki’s hands. “Odin the Unseeing made a mistake by stealing me away. He paid for it with both the destruction of the rainbow bridge and the
recapturing of our greatest treasure.” Loki smiled as the casket’s power swept over the room. “I’ve also come to claim my rightful place as chief of all of Jotunheim.”

“This must be some sort of trick,” Blystan said while knocking over his chair as he stood up hastily. “There is no way that’s the real casket. Odin would have had it destroyed rather than risk it falling into Jotun hands again. You probably aren’t even Laufey’s son. You also admit to being stolen by Odin. How do we not know you’re not another one of his tricks?” Tony stood as Blystan’s rant came to an end.

“Though Loki is quite capable of defending himself I feel the need to put my own word in.” Tony spoke softly compared to his usual manner. “Loki hates Odin even more than I do. Odin took everything from him and it was only through Loki’s wits that he was able to escape while damaging both Asgard and Odin. He is the true son of Laufey. If his markings don’t prove that, then take my word for it. And if you even doubt me look at him, truly look at him. Does he not have the same cunning look as Laufey, the same sly grin, and power about him? And let us not forget that Laufey’s magic was nearly the same shade of green. You, Blystan,” he turned towards said Jotun, “you are merely scared, scared of Loki the same way you were scared of Laufey.”

“How dare you say that to me in my own court!” Frost started creeping from Blystan’s feet.

“Surely you see that this is no longer your court, that this is no longer your home.” Tony easily rested his hand on the hilt of his sword, his warning clear.

“If there is to be a quarrel it will be between you and me,” Loki said to Blystan. Their eyes met and Loki was mildly surprised to see a tinge of fear there. It made him even more curious as to who his father was. He’d have to pull a few stories from Tony once they had a moment to themselves again. “Will you step down or shall I force you?” Loki could feel power swell inside of him both from himself and the casket. He disappeared the casket and the glow in the room dulled. “I won’t even use my hard earned prize.” A bit of the fear in Blystan’s eyes faded, but it was still there, making Loki feel even more confident. “What say you?” Loki unsheathed his single dagger, flicking it into the air and catching it easily.

“You have to fight him, Blystan, or your rulership will forever be in question.” Loki could hear the grin in Tony’s voice without even having to look at him.

“I shall easily dispatch this pretender,” Blystan finally said and there was murmuring throughout the room.

“Your fate has been sealed then.” Loki couldn’t help but feel a bit thrilled at the prospect of letting out a bit of his frustrations on someone other than Tony. “I assume there is a better place to do this, though. I wouldn’t want to knock over such delightful wine.” Loki’s eyes flickered over to Tony’s, giving him a brief acknowledgement that caused a few Jotuns to chuckle.

“Of course. Had you actually lived in Jotunheim instead of with those monsters you’d know that.” Blystan began walking towards one of the side corridors, not even waiting for Loki or anyone else to follow.

The murmuring only grew louder as they were led to a large courtyard which reminded Loki of the training yard in Asgard. Evidently the Jotuns and Aesir weren’t really that different. That revelation was the exact opposite of comforting. He hated the Aesir and had an instinctive disgust towards his own kind. He’d have to keep his disgust in check though, lest he alienate his people, for they were his people, or at least he was about to make them his people.

“Are there any particular rules I should be aware of?” Loki asked casually while pulling his hair
back and out of his way. “I’m used to fighting to the death, personally.” The murmurs grew louder.

“We wouldn’t want to make a widower out of Blystan’s husband,” Tony said lazily while pulling his red gloves back on. A Jotun made him a seat out of ice and Tony nodded in thanks. Loki felt a bit surprised. Apparently homosexuality wasn’t taboo here. Perhaps that was because either gender could bear children.

“I shall spare his life then.”

The other Jotun was much larger than him, but Loki could only sense weak magic coming from him. That did not mean anything though. Blystan could simply be concealing his power as to gain an advantage.

Blystan had no real weapon, but Loki could see an ice sword quickly forming in his hand. A sword versus a dagger? Why did this feel so familiar? Loki held back a chuckle.

He’d have to make this quick if he really wanted to have no challenges to his rule. Loki got the impression that Laufey was never questioned in his actions and Loki rather liked that idea.

Blystan’s sword finally solidified and strengthened, yet even from a distance the ice felt weak to Loki, frail and incomplete.

“Hmm,” Loki said softly while flipping his dagger into the air and catching it again. Fighting with ice seemed to be the Jotun way of doing things. His dagger was out of place here. He sent it flying and it landed between Tony’s feet. His lover did not even flinch, only raising an eyebrow and quirking his lips into a poorly hidden smile. An ice dagger in equal proportions as the one he just had formed in his hand. “Are you quite ready?” Loki asked, his tone dull and eyes hooded.

Blystan ran forward, sword in both hands and raised in a battle tested manner.

Loki threw caution to the wind, somehow feeling far more comfortable in this foreign courtyard than he ever did in the training yard of Asgard.

He jolted forward, his dominant hand in a fist and glowing green while his left hand held his dagger expertly. Loki was faster than him.

Everything about this felt right, like this was the way he was meant to fight, with ice instead of metal.

They quickly met near the middle of the courtyard. Loki parried away Blystan’s first blow, then redirected it downwards with the palm of his hand. His dagger shot up, slicing Blystan shallowly from chin to ear. Loki spun to the side as Blystan swung his sword in Loki’s direction. He punched Blystan on his side, sending a jolt through his whole body. Loki grinned when the other Jotun stumbled.

Blystan quickly righted himself. Loki sensed the ground shifting and quickly hopped backwards just as an ice spike jutted out of the ground where he had been standing.

Loki couldn’t help it. He laughed loudly, breaking the near silence of their audience. Blystan’s eyes grew darker before he charged forward, plowing straight through the ice spike he’d created. Loki widened his stance slightly, preparing. He could tell that Blystan was going to put all his power into this attack.

With a battle cry Blystan swung his sword downwards. Without hesitation Loki raised his glowing hand and caught it by its blade while thrusting his dagger into Blystan’s chest. The ice-sword
crumbled under his grip and magic. Loki heard gasps all around the courtyard as Blystan stared at him with wide, shocked eyes.

“This is where you say that you yield,” Loki whispered with a grin in place, the tip of his dagger just a centimeter away from piercing Blystan’s heart.

Blystan looked down to where his chest was bleeding, eyes filled with disbelief.

“I… I yield,” Blystan said and Loki stepped back from him, taking his dagger with him. The other Jotun fell to the ground.

The courtyard was silent for a long moment before it was filled with cheering and clapping.
The Throne of Jotunheim

Chapter Summary

Dealing with the nobles and getting naked.

Chapter Notes

Thanks to Temul, best of Betas.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Loki found the throne of Jotunheim to feel much better on his royal rear than the throne of Asgard ever did, but that might have to do with the fact that it was ice and soothed the slight twinge from the slow fuck he had earlier that day when he wasn’t king of Jotunheim, or Chief of Jotunheim.

Loki also found it humorous that Tony had a seat amongst Jotunheim’s most important families, just as he had once in Asgard. While everyone else’s chairs were ice, Tony’s was made of metal and had a soft red cushion that matched his gloves.

Now, instead of secretly sending notes back and forth with enchanted parchment, Loki could just speak to him as he saw fit to.

Norns, this was already so much better than when he had briefly been king of Asgard. Now there was no one he was trying to impress nor was there anyone to question his rule. Blystan’s whole family had to leave the royal court for two hundred years since he lost his spot as chief.

Loki wanted to revel in it all, but there was important business that needed to be attended to first.

He cleared his throat, not letting his absolute delight show through. Tony could, of course, read him, but was equally talented at hiding his true feelings.

“There is many things we must discuss, but first I would like to hear from all of you, my chieftains. You all knew my father, yet know very little of me. I need you all to trust me as Anthony does.” Loki held back a grin at using Tony’s given name. All the other Jotuns called him that or Master Anthony, not that Loki would ever call him that. Norns forbid that his ego grow any larger. “Ask me whatever you like, but know this will be your only chance to do so. I won’t deal with such questions again.”

Loki and Tony had already put together the perfect story that morning in anticipation of this moment.

“What have you been doing all these years? Laufey mourned you and we all believed you dead,” one of the shorter chieftains said, leaning forward in his seat. Loki read his expression and saw genuine curiosity and confusion there. Perhaps the Jotuns were better than the Aesir in character.

“A very good question.” Loki nodded with false modesty. “I wasn’t aware of my heritage for quite
some time and was just another one of Odin’s tools.” It was the truth, but… “With Anthony’s help we learned of Odin’s trickery. Plans had to be put in place though, time bided.” Loki frowned sincerely. “I acted my part as ignorant fool and helped Anthony get close enough to Odin in order to blind him. Prince Thor was supposed to die, giving me control of Asgard, but as with most things the plan did not go perfectly and he lived. It took me many years to get him out of the way and take over Asgard when Odin was vulnerable. When that time finally came I stole the casket and destroyed the Bifrost.”

“Why didn’t you kill Odin the Unseeing?” a different chieftain asked. It was a fair and anticipated question.

“I still have use for him and Prince Thor, but I shall discuss that later on.”

“What do you plan on doing to Jotunheim now that you’re in control?” a Jotun near the back asked cautiously.

“To make it more prosperous of course. My first official act will be to restore the casket to its proper place. Jotunheim has suffered far too long because of Asgard. With the casket back in our hands and with Jotunheim unified by my father we will be stronger than ever before. The Bifrost is broken and Asgard is too distracted by other matters to even think of interfering,” Loki said before taking a sip of his spiced wine. Maybe it was better chilled.

“Would you like to marry my daughter?” Loki nearly spit up his wine in surprise. Thankfully years of being hit on the back by Thor mid-sip made Loki quite skillful at not letting his drink escape.

“I think not.” Loki sat a bit straighter. “I shall attend to such matters as marriage and offspring later on.” Loki refused to look in Tony’s direction, almost sensing his withheld laughter.

“What is your relationship with the Aesir?” the Jotun to Tony’s left asked. Loki did not fail to see the irony in his gravely spoken question.

“As I’m sure Anthony has been for you, he has been a great help and will be rewarded as such. I have plans for Prince Thor as well as a few other key Aesir, but other than that I have no relationships beyond distaste and hatred. Odin will meet his end by my hand as he killed my father.” Lying really was far too easy and his moniker as Spreader of Lies no longer felt like an insult. How things had changed since he and Tony reunited… “Are there any more questions?” The other chieftains looked at each other before the one Tony informed him was called Smiltán answered for the group.

“No, we are satisfied for now.” The subtlety of his wording did not escape Loki’s notice. He’d have to keep his eye on that one. He doubted anyone would challenge him anytime soon, not after seeing how easily he defeated Blystan.

“Then we shall lay that issue to rest in favor of more pressing matters.” Loki leaned forward. “A great threat is approaching the nine realms, one that shall affect every one of us.” That caught the attention of his chieftains. “I have not been idling away these last two years since I broke the Bifrost. Thanos, the Mad Titan, is nearing Midgard and plans on destroying all nine realms.” Loki felt a bit of annoyance when a few of his chieftains looked towards Tony for confirmation. The Aesir nodded and Loki had to remind himself that despite Loki’s linage and new position they knew and trusted Tony. “I won’t allow such a threat to hinder our realm, especially not after we have just started regaining our former glory.” Loki leaned back in his chair, looking at each chieftain in turn. “This unfortunate truth has burdened me, but plans have already started being put into play. This information is not to leave this room for the time being. I don’t want any undue panic.”
“What are these plans—”

“They shall be discussed at a later date.” Loki quickly cut off the Jotun, making it clear that he was in control. The chieftain nodded slowly and sat back in his chair. “Tomorrow I shall put the casket back in its proper place and we shall have a day of celebration. Once the revelry comes to its end we shall meet again. For now, rest assured that Thanos is still far away. We have time and I will not allow Jotunheim to fall to ruin once more.”

Loki stood, feeling more like a king here than he ever did on Asgard. He left without saying another word.

Dhelfa, one of the Jotun servants that worked in the castle and was one of Tony’s many spies appeared from the shadows.

“Your quarters are this way.” Dhelfa bowed her head slightly as she spoke, gesturing to her right. Loki nodded with a small grin. “Everything has been set up to your specifications and trusted guards are just outside of your chambers. Master Anthony will join you shortly. He has business to attend to first.” Dhelfa continued subtly giving him directions as she walked a step behind him and to his left. Loki easily memorized the layout, putting together a detailed map of the area in his mind. This was his castle now. His realm. It only made sense that he knew it better than anyone else.

A guard opened the large stone door to his chambers, bowing to Loki. Dhelfa followed him in, much to Loki’s surprise. The area had recently been cleaned. Loki watched as Dhelfa placed a silencing ward on the door. Her stiff posture eased and Loki found himself relaxing as well despite himself. She smiled brightly.

“Would you like the tour? This used to be Chief Laufey’s chambers, but Tony had them completely renovated in secret a few months ago. I wish he had told me it was because of you. I swear he never tells anyone anything.” There was an easygoing air about her that made Loki want to open up. He could see how she would be a perfect spy.

“A tour,” Loki said simply. She may be one of Tony’s underlings, but he was not about to show his true self to a stranger. Her smile somehow became even friendlier and Loki really didn’t like her in the least.

He kept his red eyes blurred with boredom as she led him around. The parlor was like every other parlor Loki had seen before, tidy and open for guests. There was a fireplace in his actual room which Loki figured was not there before Tony had it renovated. The ensuite bathroom was luxurious and the walk in closet was filled with both Jotun and Aesir clothing, as well as a few garments from Midgard that Loki had taken a liking to. He hadn’t even realized Tony had noticed, but he should have figured. That damn Aesir was always calculating, scheming.

The only time Loki’s façade broke was when he was lead to a library that was almost twice the size of his bedroom and filled to the brim with books, all for him.

“Some of Jotunheim’s rarest and best books,” Dhelfa explained. “A congratulations gift from Tony.” Dhelfa’s smile turned soft and Loki didn’t know what to make of her expression. “Is there anything else you need before I slip between my own sheets and get some rest after such a hectic day?” Loki waved dismissively at her. “My Chief.” She bowed and there wasn’t a hint of mockery in her words or action. He watched her go, contemplating her role in the scheme of things. She made Loki curious about what spies Tony had in Asgard’s court.

The ward of silence was still in place even after she left, but Loki added a few of his own wards,
not trusting this place yet.

He let his posture slump. It had been a long, exciting day. So much had changed in a short time span. Just this morning he had been fucked against the wall and now he was king of a realm. Somehow things always moved quicker when he was around Tony.

Now was a moment of silence, though.

Loki went upstairs to his room and looked at himself in the full length. He had never properly examined himself in this form.

Most of his scars were bright dashes and smears of white, except for his burns from the war in Muspelheim. They were dark blue. The low arch of lines on his forehead reminded Loki of an elf made crown. The ones on the sides of his face looked like fingers, as if someone was constantly gripping his head. It reminded him a bit too much of the one time his mind truly was held by another.

Loki quickly moved his eyes on, dispelling his own dark thoughts. He turned around and looked at the lines on his back, his ancestral lines. They swirled sharply and were symmetric on either side of his spine. They were almost pleasing to the eye.

With a moment’s hesitation Loki pulled off the scant clothing he was wearing. He half expected things to be different down there, but his cock was still there and his arse hadn’t changed. There was no extra hole or anything and Loki swore to himself that if Tony had been teasing him this whole time he’d pummel him to death.

His raised lines followed the contours of his hips, then twisted around his thighs, once again symmetric to the other side of his body. Midway on the outside of his thigh the line burst in five different directions, two creating a circle around his thigh. Of the three other lines the one in the middle went straight down, ending in a perfect circle around his outer ankle bone. The other two were wavy with no discernable pattern as they evened out with the rest of his skin before reaching mid-calf.

Loki let out a soft sigh, not really knowing what he expected. He quickly grabbed a pair of loose Aesir pants from the closet, pulling them on before sitting in front of a vanity similar to the one in his and Tony’s room.

It was far too cold without the fireplace lit for him to comfortably wear his Aesir skin. Slowly he began undoing all the damn golden ornaments Tony had carelessly laced through his hair. He felt the steady buzz of Tesseract energy accumulating as well as the charm he placed on Tony’s ring. Loki watched in the mirror as a portal appeared and Tony stepped out.

He glanced at the fireplace, lighting it with a wave of magic as well as closing the door so that heat could start accumulating. His eyes slowly settled on Loki.

“I could come home to this image every night and die a happy god,” Tony said with such sincerity that Loki really did blush despite his blue complexion.

“Shut up, you fool.” Loki focused back on undoing all the little clips and pins hidden in his hair. He could see Tony carelessly discard his red gloves and cloak on one of the armchairs while walking over to Loki. Loki’s hands dropped away as Tony began carefully pulling the gold chains from Loki’s dark locks.

“How exactly did you end up having a seat in the chieftain meetings?” Loki asked, his eyes hooded
as he relaxed under the familiar sensation of Tony’s fingers in his hair. Loki’s eyes narrowed when he saw Tony’s mischievous grin. “Well, Master Anthony,” Loki said mockingly, “why is that?”

“You’re going to be so pissed,” Tony mumbled while removing the last gold ordainment from Loki’s hair. “My official title in this realm is Master Anthony No-One’s Son, Lord of War, and Master of Blacksmiths.”

“You are so pompous. Do they even know who your father is?” Loki asked while brushing away Tony’s lingering hands.

“Laufey and the chieftains did, but I disowned Howard and renounced my heritage. It’s not like I needed it anyway. Most Jotuns don’t know who my father was. Laufey made sure of that. No need to remind the population of one of the most hated Aesir of all time.” Tony chuckled while undoing the top buttons of his coat as the room started warming up.

“And how exactly did you acquire the moniker ‘Lord of War’?” Loki scowled as he began brushing out his hair. Tony leaned against the wall next to the vanity, arms crossed and his usually infuriating smirk in place.

“How do you think? I was one of Laufey’s main advisors with all things war, from supplies and logistics, to stratagems and timing.” Tony was preening again and Loki kicked his shin, causing the battle hardened warrior to flinch.

“Explain to me how you even gained Laufey’s confidence.” Loki was starting to feel the fatigue of the day slow him down, though it was more the emotional ups and downs than the actual fighting or fucking.

“By being very, very clever. I spent twenty-eight years just listening and waiting for the perfect moment. You’d be surprised what the guards say around pris—” Tony abruptly stopped speaking. A rare wonder.

“I was either screaming in agony or unconscious. There was nothing for me to hear.” Loki looked at his own reflection, his tone emotionless. Tony’s posture eased slightly.

“I listened, bribed, and gambled my way out of the dungeons. I worked my way to the forges in hopes of somehow using the metals there to make my escape, but metal is such a scarce resource on Jotunheim. There was never enough for me to properly enact any real plan.” Tony pulled off his coat completely and Loki pulled his glamour in place. “Howard’s methods of teaching were harsh, but his lessons stuck.” Tony shrugged before heading to the closet. “There’s a book on the nightstand for you.”

Loki glanced at it.

The book definitely hadn’t been there on Loki’s first inspection of the room.

Tony was a sneaky bastard.

Loki went to the bathroom and quickly completed his nightly routine. Tony didn’t really care that much about his oral hygiene, much to Loki’s chagrin, so he was already in bed.

Loki poured himself a glass of water and dimmed the lights before settling in next to Tony, sitting up slightly so he could read comfortably. Tony quickly snuggled up against him, using Loki’s thigh as a pillow and draping his arm across Loki’s lap. He smiled openly, knowing that Tony was already half asleep. Loki’s smile dropped away as he read the title of the book.
It was the book on Jotun anatomy that Tony had promised to get him. Loki had completely forgotten. With a soft movement Loki brushed his hand under Tony’s chin before following the shave of his beard and resting his hand lightly on Tony’s neck, feeling his pulse beat pleasantly under his palm.

With a bit of magic he had the book hovering at eye level as he laced his fingers with Tony’s, his earlier fatigue replaced with anxiety.

He began at the start, almost being too afraid to just skip to the part he really wanted to know about.

Jotun skin turned lighter to reflect light/heat… raised lines on the back signified paternity while the lines on the legs signified maternity… height was purely arbitrary with no significance on magical abilities… natural inclination towards ice based magic… lines become more pronounced when dehydrated…

He found the answer to what was weighing so heavily on his mind. It took a specific herb that grew all over Jotunheim to open up some part of his biology allowing for the seed of new life to be planted. It wasn’t as specific as Loki would have liked it to be, but it was something.

He flipped the page with a flicker of green magic and was surprised to see all the viable offsprings that were possible. Part Light elf, part Jotun children tended to have a greater affinity to magic and it was the same with dark elf and Jotun mixes. Fire dancers and Jotuns could procreate, but the results weren’t always good. Niflungs and Jotuns were surprisingly incompatible despite their similar climates. Niflungs apparently had an anti-freeze in their blood that did not allow their species to procreate with Jotuns.

Loki’s breathing came to a complete stop as he read about Jotun-Aesir offspring. They tended to be hardier than both their parents, but nothing else was said on the pairing and there were no pictures.

Loki set aside the book, not knowing what to think. He scooted down in bed, quickly becoming tangled in Tony’s warm limbs.

Regardless of what Tony thought… Loki wasn’t fit to be a parent, to bring a child into this world, into this despicable place where lies and betrayals were commonplace. He couldn’t pull a child into this, even if he did want one…

Chapter End Notes

Please read Stairway to Heaven before continuing on.
Loki woke up in the middle of the night. He moved closer to Tony, breathing him in.

A slight noise in the distance caught Loki’s attention, causing him to freeze. An ice dagger formed in his hand and he activated one of the charms on Tony’s ring. It would shock the god awake if anyone got within five feet of him.

Loki slipped out of bed silently and spotted a silhouette near the door. Whoever they were, they were facing away from Loki. With a quick movement he had them pinned to the ground, hands trapped, and his dagger pressed to their throat. He felt his glamour being unwound as he touched Jotun skin.

“How did you get in here?” Loki asked, keeping his voice low so as not to wake Tony.

“Servant’s entrance,” a strained female voice answered and Loki recognized it as Dhelfa’s. “I was just adding more wood to the fire and was going to switch out Tony’s outfit for a new one.” Loki stood up, keeping her hands tightly held behind her as he hefted her up. He let his glamour drop.

“Show me this entrance.” She nodded towards the door of the bedroom and Loki made it crack open.

“It’s downstairs.” He did not release her and still had the dagger in his hand, on guard for any other intruders. She led him to the hallway between the parlor and library. “It’s here.” She used her chin to gesture towards the wall.

Loki paused and felt foolish for not noticing it earlier. The stone was slightly different in shade and there was a silence ward placed upon the small discrepancy of wall along with a few requirements of entry, all of which she apparently met.

“Who else can use this?”

“Just you, me, and Tony,” she said, her voice still slightly pained as Loki refused to release his grip.

“I almost killed you. Never enter unannounced again.” He pushed her towards the hidden door. She stumbled, but quickly caught herself against the wall.
“I’m sorry.” Dhelfa did look genuinely apologetic, but he didn’t believe her. She was a liar by trade.

Once she was gone Loki placed a few more wards on the door, one specifically that would alert him whenever anyone used this entrance.

Loki sighed, missing the absolute safety of Tony’s manor in Asgard. Despite it being in the viper’s nest there was nowhere safer.

Loki turned to go back to bed and nearly jumped out of skin when he saw Tony standing at the very top of the stairs.

“And you call me a cat. You should wear a bell.” Loki scowled while scaling the stairs.

“Why? I’m already wearing a ring.” Tony held up his left hand. “You know, in certain cultures in Midgard this would mean we’re married.”

“It’s too early for your antics.” Loki shoved Tony out of his way, too tired to even blush.

“Mm, my Lokitty, always ready to lash out when the mood strikes you.” Tony followed him back into the bedroom. “Dhelfa can be trusted. She’s worked for me far longer than I’ve even really known you.”

“No one can be trusted.” Loki peeked out of the curtains. It was dark outside, but the sky…

“I can be trusted.” Loki felt Tony’s arms circle around him from behind, felt him kiss his shoulder before flicking his tongue out. Loki pushed him away.

“Don’t touch me when I’m in this form.” Loki pulled his glamour back in place and closed the curtains. He walked by Tony before adding a few logs to the smoldering fireplace.

“How can you still think they’re monsters after spending almost a whole day with other Jotuns?” Tony asked, and Loki was surprised by the undertone of anger in his voice.

“I’m tired. Let’s just go back to bed.” Tony grabbed his arm as he passed by, and Loki yanked himself free.

“No, this is important.” The lights in the room turned on, making Loki’s eyes hurt. He retreated under the still warm blankets. He didn’t hear or sense Tony move for a good five minutes. He finally peeked from under the blankets. Tony was just standing there, arms crossed over his chest, looking at Loki. The younger god quickly hid beneath the covers again.

“Why do you even care?” he asked, his voice muffled by the heavy fabric.

“Other than the fact that you’re a Jotun? How ‘bout the fact that Laufey, the person who I wished had raised me, was a Jotun, before you killed him.” Loki wasn’t used to hearing genuine anger in Tony’s voice. He quickly sat up, glaring at him.

“You’re not allowed to be mad at me for killing him. I—I didn’t know that—” Loki’s words kept faltering. “He meant nothing to me back then and it’s not like I’ll ever know him now.” Tony let out a frustrated sigh and Loki raised the blankets to his shoulders, pulling his legs to his chest.

“That’s not why I’m angry, but it’s definitely not helping the situation.” Tony walked over to a decorative cabinet and opened it to reveal a series of different alcohols. Loki held back a scoff. How very typical of him. The only reason Loki didn’t comment was because he saw that Tony was
fixing two drinks.

Loki accepted the drink and took a sip. He waited for Tony to do the same before he spoke again.

“Then why exactly are you angry?” Loki cupped the glass against his chest as he spoke, holding onto it tightly. Tony looked exasperated as he set down his drink heavily.

“Why do you think? I love you and you’re convinced that you’re a monster. You’re not a monster, Lokes.” The younger god reeled backwards at the use of his old nickname, nearly crushing his glass. “Sorry.” Tony looked away from him.

“I’m not that naive boy you once knew, you once tricked.” Loki’s hand was trembling and he put the glass on his nightstand, spilling alcohol on the book he had been reading the night before.

“I’m sorry,” Tony repeated for what felt like the hundredth time. Loki stared down at the finely embroidered blanket, trying to stay calm. “I stick by my statement, though. You’re not a monster.”

“If you truly think that then you really are an idiot.” Loki’s eyes flicked up to Tony’s before looking back at the bedspread. “Even if I wasn’t a,” Loki paused, trying to keep his tone even, “a Jotun. I’d still be a monster for all that I’ve done.” Loki ran both of his hands through his long hair, tugging at the ends of the strands. Tony was on the bed a moment later, grabbing both of Loki’s wrists and pinning them to the headboard. “What are you doing?” Loki hissed at him.

“Don’t you dare ever hurt yourself.” Tony’s voice was low, a warning unlike Loki had ever heard from him before, one that promised retribution.

“I wasn’t…” Loki’s words trailed off and Tony adjusted his grip so that he was pinning Loki’s wrists with only one hand. He trailed a thumb across Loki’s sharp cheekbones, wiping away tears.

“Tell me what’s really going on here. I’m missing something and I don’t want us to fight.” Tony released Loki’s arms and the younger god quickly crossed them over his chest, pulling his knees even tighter to his chest. “Talk to me, please.” Tony tried nuzzling against Loki’s shoulder, but it only made him withdraw further. Tony leaned back, giving him a bit of room. “We can go home right now if you want to. We can deal with Jotunheim later.” Tony began tracing the design on the bedspread with his finger, fine threads getting caught on his rough skin.

“It’s… it’s not that,” Loki said after a tormenting silence. Tony looked up at him hopefully, making Loki cringe. “Everything’s just so,” Loki seemed at a loss for words. He finally found what he was looking for and felt fresh tears blur his vision. Tony reached out for him, but pulled back when Loki shook his head. “Before everything felt distant, like a game, but now everything is just so real.” Loki’s voice cracked and he quickly hid his face against his knees. He felt Tony pull him into his arms and it only made Loki cry harder.

“We can leave right now and go play with the Avengers again. Remember we have a new toy in the freezer?” Tony joked and Loki chuckled through his tears. “It’s all up to you. We’ll do whatever you want.”

“I’m scared.” Loki’s whole chest clenched painfully as the words he’d been holding back escaped. “I’m so scared.”

“I’ll protect you from the Mad Titan. I swear it.” Tony hugged him tighter. Loki pulled away, quickly wiping away the snot and tears even though he was still crying. He let out a dark laugh while looking at Tony’s concerned brown eyes.

“That’s not what I’m scared of.” Loki closed his eyes and tried to calm down. He gripped his head
and did his best not to pull at his hair. “I’m scared that I’m slowly gaining my mind back, that I’m becoming sane again. I’m afraid that—” the words were stuck in Loki’s throat, “What if one morning I suddenly wake up and I’m completely horrified by all the terrible things I’ve done?” Loki looked at him, desperately searching for some sort of answer, for something, anything.

“Oh Loki,” Tony completely dragged him out from under the blankets and into his arms. “My Lokitty.” He kissed the top of his head and Loki grabbed onto him tightly, burying his face against Tony’s chest and letting out a body wracking cry. “You don’t need to worry about such things.” Tony began rocking him slightly and it was oddly soothing. “I’ll be here for you, no matter what.” Tony gathered up the sheets and draped them over himself and Loki. “Go to sleep and everything will be better in the morning. I promise.” Loki let out a little mewling noise, but felt his earlier fatigue pull at him again. Tony began singing a soft lullaby and before Loki could even consider fighting it, sleep overtook him.
Loki woke up shaking, but in Tony’s arms. Tony was whispering things that made no sense to Loki. He tried to push away but found that his limbs were unwilling to cooperate, instead opting to stay surrounded by Tony’s warmth and scent. Loki eventually acquiesced to his body’s demands and pulled himself closer to Tony.

His shaking eased as Tony’s hand swept up and down his back, somehow always avoiding the scars that pulled at Loki’s skin painfully. Soon Loki was completely pliable and at ease in Tony’s arms. He felt his head being lifted.

A hot mouth met his own, demanding and needy. Loki moaned as he felt Tony pull his hair, making Loki arch his head back almost painfully. Everything about him was just so warm and enticing, he had an almost gravitational pull that wouldn’t allow Loki to think. He wanted those warm, moist lips all over him.

“Mm,” Loki wanted to beg for more, but couldn’t form the words. Tony’s hot breath fanned across his skin as he chuckled, only making Loki want more.

Tony was always so warm, soft, yet coarse.

Loki was turned onto his back and he felt Tony’s hands all over him, caressing, teasing, and his tongue—Loki let out a soft moan—his tongue left quick flashes of pleasure in its wake, never lingering in one spot for long.

Tony bit Loki’s hip and he bucked upwards, grabbing a pillow to muffle the embarrassing noises that kept escaping him. Tony chuckled again and his breath heated up the wet trail of kisses and licks, sending a shiver of pleasure through Loki.

Finally that warm wetness was exactly where Loki wanted it, wrapped around his cock. Loki let out a whimper as he shallowly thrust into that perfection.

Tony laughed and it made the warmth vibrate.

“Mm,” Loki begged, one hand finding Tony’s hair and burying his fingers there. Loki began writhing beneath him, unable to do much else. A hand appeared out of nowhere and began fondling his sack. “Mm!” Loki bit his own wrist, trying to hold back, but that tongue, that throat was
swallowing him whole. His mouth fell open as he let out a broken moan and came.

Tony kept swallowing and Loki felt like this couldn’t possibly be reality.

All too soon that slick warmth and skilled hand were moving away and his hips were lifted slightly as his pants were put back in place.

Loki let out a disgruntled noise that was quickly stifled as he felt Tony crawl back up, their chests brushing together, giving Loki even more of that hypnotizing heat. Tony kissed him slowly before suddenly nipping Loki on the nose. His eyes snapped open.

“It’s time for kings to wake up,” Tony whispered and Loki tried to cover his head with a pillow.

“You be king,” Loki said petulantly. “They like you better, anyway.” It was silly, but he felt like pouting.

“All in due time, Lover.” Loki’s pillow was stolen away and tucked behind Tony’s back as he sat up.

Loki glared at him with bleary eyes. Tony grinned to himself while grabbing the stack of parchments from his bed side table. It was a familiar sight and routine in an unfamiliar place with foreign customs. Tony was Loki’s constant. His anchor to stop him from spiraling out of control.

“You really do need to wake up, though. It’s the first official day of your reign. I’m sure everyone is waiting for some sort of impassioned speech.”

“You do it.” Loki tried to nuzzle his way onto Tony’s lap to return the favor, but his advances were rebuked. Loki made another sad unintelligible noise while pawing at the side of Tony’s pants. He knew Tony was getting hard.

“Alas, I have reports that need to be read. Besides, I’ve always wanted to be a princess, lazily sitting around and looking beautiful as my husband controlled all the realms,” Tony said while sighing. Tony’s eyes focused on Loki. “My Lokitty, I’m not one to coddle needlessly. These blankets can easily find their way to the floor.”

“You’re the only one who’d be affected. I’d just change into my Jotun form,” Loki bragged but quickly stopped when a long pipe appeared in Tony’s hand.

“I think I’ll be fine.” Tony took a long drag before pulling off the blankets despite Loki’s firm hold on them. He chucked them across the room and Loki curled up against him, trying to conserve as much warmth as possible. Tony chuckled around his pipe, flipping one paper over to read its other side.

Eventually Loki did get up, but only after plenty of grumbling.

“You shall pay for that, peasant.” Loki shifted to his Jotun form and whipped up a snowstorm in their large room. Tony placed his pipe on the side table, keeping any papers he wasn’t holding from flying away. A red, translucent shield appeared around Tony and the smoke brushed up against it, unable to escape its soft curves. Loki pushed more snow at Tony, but the shield was unaffected. If he wanted to pierce it he’d have to use ice, but Loki refused to damage such nice furnishings if they were going to stay here for any stretch of time. “One of these days, Howardson,” Loki warned, his voice grave as the snow eased into nothingness. Tony’s lips quirked up, but he didn’t say anything or look away from his reports.

Loki let out a huff and quickly went to the bathroom to get cleaned up. An icy shower felt perfect on his blue skin, but he did have to move fast. He had checked his pocket watch that had appeared
in their room at some point and it was definitely later in the day then he would have liked.

Loki dried and straightened his hair with a well-used spell.

When Loki went back to the bedroom he saw that Tony had retrieved the blankets, but hadn’t relit the fireplace. Loki didn’t really know what to say to him so he opted to just to ignore him.

There was an outfit similar to the one he wore yesterday that he slipped on. He refrained from adding one of the daggers Tony made, feeling like they were no longer necessary for his protection.

The gold accessories that the Jotun nobles seemed to favor were a bit more cumbersome to put on. Jarvis swooped over, landing on the back of the chair Loki was sitting on. The golden eagle had appeared at some point between Loki’s snowstorm and him getting dressed. He was used to the raptor’s odd hours. What he wasn’t used to was the fact that apparently Jarvis was quite talented when it came to hairdressing and somehow easily bobbed and weaved between Loki’s dark locks while holding onto the gold chains.

Loki let out a hiss, batting away the bird as his ear stung painfully. A spider-web thin string of gold was connected to his ear. It dipped just above Loki’s shoulder, ending in a teardrop emerald. Before he could react Jarvis pecked his other ear, piercing his blue flesh with more jewelry.

“I am not wearing earrings,” Loki said while quickly pulling them out. The small holes quickly healed.

“It’s traditional.” Tony waved his pile of reports at Loki as he spoke.

“I saw that painting of Laufey in the main hall. He never wore anything this ostentatious.” Loki’s face became a shade of purple that he found to be completely unbecoming.

“That’s because Laufey was old and past his prime. Even when he was young he could never grow luscious locks like yours. You’re fucking delectable. Nearly every Jotun that likes your gender is going to be drooling all over themselves. Honestly, I’d rather you dress in rags so you’d be less tempting to them, but I’m a pragmatist. Beautiful people can get others to like them easier than ugly people can. A dashing young king will always be favored over an old, gnarly one like Odin the Unseeing.” Tony got out of bed, abandoning his reports while draping the blankets around himself. “Besides, I got you all of these ‘cause I want to see you wear them.”

“And why should I care in the least about what you want?” Loki watched Tony in the mirror as he walked over before hugging him from behind.

“Hm, do I really need to answer that?” Tony reached over Loki’s shoulder and grabbed one of the many gilded boxes that sat on the vanity. He opened it, revealing an emerald encrusted necklace. “Green is your favorite color, isn’t it?”

“I am no woman,” Loki said, ignoring Tony’s question.

“I’m keenly aware of that. In case you forgot, I was blowing you half an hour ago.” Tony began undoing the gold lacing that Loki and Jarvis had worked so hard on. Loki reached up and stilled his hands.

“What are you doing?” Loki squeezed his hand, annoyed at seeing his work undone.

“Changing things up.” Tony was smiling and Loki crossed his arms over his chest, hating how he always seemed to blush around Tony.
“Are you sure you’re not a woman? You’re awfully good at this,” Loki asked after a comfortable silence only broken by Tony’s soft humming.

“Before I was a businessman I was a craftsman. When I was completely alone in this realm and had nothing to my name I still had my hands. In case you didn’t notice, I’m not just a blacksmith. I dabble in a bit of everything.” Loki was surprised when Tony put the jewel encrusted, dangling gold piece on Loki’s head instead of neck. It draped over his forehead, but did not block his sight. “I made this for you. I know it’s ostentatious by even your diva like standards, but I hope you like it.” Tony stepped backwards and Loki was speechless. He stared at himself for a long moment. He brushed his blue fingers over the intricate design, almost feeling Tony’s presence.

Loki’s heart twinged painfully. Yes, Tony teased him, but in the end he was always so devastatingly kind, while Loki… Loki hadn’t even told him that he loved him directly.

“Yes, I like it.” Loki’s eyes were on the vanity table, but he forced himself to meet Tony’s eyes in the mirror. “You know that… that I love you, don’t you?” His voice was weak, vulnerable. Tony beamed and Loki felt some of his anxiety ease.

“I know, and I love you too and I always will. If things ever get bad or you feel like you’re going to spiral out of control I want you to remember that.” Tony paused. “Alright?”

“Alright,” Loki echoed as a Tesseract portal appeared. He recognized it as the inside of Tony’s closet at their home in Asgard.

“I have to make sure everything is going according to plan in Niflheim.” Loki could barely see Tony abandoning the blankets and pulling on layer after layer of fur clothing, his usual garb when going to the colder parts of Niflheim.

“You won’t be here today?” Tony glanced over at him while grabbing the blankets off the ground. He walked through the portal and it started fizzling out.

“We have to be able to work independently and together, remember?” Tony tossed the blankets and they landed neatly on the bed before he leaned down and kissed Loki on the cheek. “Jotunheim is only one piece of the puzzle. If we are to rule over everything we can’t just pay attention to only one realm. We almost made that mistake with Midgard.”

“Yes, I know.” Loki refrained from pouting. Jarvis swooped over and landed on Tony’s outstretched arm.

“Take Jarvis with you.”

“No,” Loki immediately objected, “you’re the one going somewhere dangerous. I’ll be fine.” Loki stood and started heading towards the door.

“I won’t be able concentrate knowing you’re all alone. The past couple days have been grueling.” Before Loki could respond Jarvis started shifting, turning from a golden eagle to actual gold. Tony clipped the armband in place and Loki stared at in the mirror. It looked like Jarvis and he could feel the familiar pulsing life of the eagle against his skin. It was slightly warm, too, as if Tony was holding his arm. “Besides, you can always find me now.” Tony held up his hand, his blue ring catching the light. “Go get ‘em, Tiger.” Tony disappeared through the portal that closed before Loki could say anything else.

The Jotun chief stared at himself a moment longer before shaking his head with a small grin in place.
“What is his obsession with cats?”
Dhelfa was waiting just outside of his chambers when Loki finally emerged from them just shy of midday.

“Chief Loki.” She bowed lowly and Loki noticed that a single gold bracelet adorned her wrist. He was unsure if he should question her about Jotun culture. Tony said he could trust her…

“I know my father didn’t adorn himself as such,” Loki said, once there was no one around.

“Chief Laufey never looked as good as you do in them.”

“Flattery is annoying. Just tell me if I’m wearing too much.” Loki gave her a scathing look.

“For someone of your standings and looks it is almost sad that you do not wear more.” Loki took her response into consideration as they continued walking the halls.

“And my hair?”

“I thought you said flattery was annoying.” Dhelfa’s voice was monotone, but there was humor sparkling in her red eyes.

“What is the punishment for insolence in this realm?” Loki asked, only half joking.

“I shall retrieve you a book on Jotun customs.” Dhelfa nodded to herself. “Your hair is unusual, but you are the chief. It may raise comments, but none that will be said anywhere near you.”

“You shall tell me these comments.”

“As you wish, Chief.” They neared a large set of doors and Dhelfa disappeared off to the side as one of the tallest Jotuns Loki had ever seen before opened the doors. The Jotun nodded his head respectfully and Loki gave him the barest of acknowledgements.

The large hall was already filled with disgruntled Jotun chieftains and their families, all gathered round a long table that had plenty of food on it.

Perhaps it would have been wise to get up at a proper hour. Regardless, he was the chief and they would adapt to him, though he was aware that he’d have to be careful with any changes he enacted. For now he just had to remind them why exactly he was king, or chief in this case.
“Let us make this day a glorious one,” Loki said while grabbing a chalice as he walked to the very head of the table with the best seat, clearly reserved for himself. “We shall toast to a new age! To a Jotunheim united as one and growing under the power of the casket and my care!” Loki lifted the chalice high before taking a sip—and promptly spitting it out. “What is this swill?” he asked while doing his damndest not to blush.

“Slive gravy, Chief,” a pretty Jotun said while handing him a different goblet. She batted her eyelashes at him and he was unimpressed. Loki could hear some of the nobles snickering under their breaths. Loki tossed aside the large chalice, causing it to clang loudly on the stone ground and startle a few Jotuns.

“It will not be without its mistakes though,” Loki joked, smiling in a way that he knew was pleasing. He received a few laughs in return and even more smiles. “As I was saying,” he took a sip of the wine before clearing his throat. “I have brought us the casket and I have broken the Bifrost. The only thing that can hold us back is discord between us.” Loki paused, smiling at the Jotuns, at his people. “We shall stand united and grow strong because of it!” Loki quickly drank his wine before slamming the goblet down loudly and taking his seat. “We shall be the realm we were always meant to be.” Loki smiled genuinely, believing his own words. His sincerity seemed to be catching, because he could see the other Jotuns had hope in their eyes, an emotion Loki never knew he could invoke in others.

Loki ate with a poorly hidden grin as various Jotuns talked to him about what they were hoping the casket would help accomplish.

He kept what they were saying in mind, but inevitably his thoughts wandered back to Tony, to how things would have been if he had never been stolen away from this place. If somehow Tony had still been captured. Would they still have fallen in love? Or would he have been just another Jotun—or worse? Tony said that Laufey was like a father to him. What if Tony had seen him as a brother? That would have been awkward considering Loki was certain that he would have fallen for Tony regardless.

He shoved aside those thoughts, knowing that they’d lead him nowhere good.

When he was full and his people were starting to get restless he stood and told them to follow him to the highest reaches of the castle. Tony had fortified the wide open room with the same protection that was on his manor. Loki easily opened the intricate lock.

There was a single pedestal in the very center. It had no designs or embellishments.

Loki summoned the casket and stood before the pedestal while facing his nobles.

“Few know why Chief Laufey chose this place to build his castle,” Loki said softly as the magic of the casket gently washed over them all. “My father could sense the power here. The connection this place has with all of Jotunheim. He chose this place to build this castle because he knew that someday we would have the casket back. This pedestal is no ordinary rock… It is an uninterrupted column that reaches to the very core of the realm.”

Slowly he lowered the casket onto the stone. The pedestal lit up and somehow the Casket of Ancient Winters grew brighter. The light twisted downwards, runes suddenly appeared on the pedestal, glowing ethereal blue. The light cascaded over the floor, sinking between the stones and traveling into the castle and earth.

The air somehow became crisper, colder. Each Jotun stood a bit taller. Their ash blue skin became richer in color and their eyes glowed brighter.
“Lovely, isn’t it?” Loki asked, hiding his own amazed feelings. He heard mumblings of agreement from the few Jotuns that weren’t stunned into silence by the sudden change. “Jotunheim’s greatest treasure is where it should be once more.” He ghosted his hands over the casket, feeling its power react to his magic. “I won’t allow it to fall into the wrong hands ever again. As such only I will have access to this sacred room.” None of his nobles objected despite Loki reading a few looks of disagreement. “Word of this news and my ascension to chief is to be spread to every corner of the realm. For now, I will take a tour of the city and meet with my chieftains after a celebration tonight.”

Loki gestured for everyone to leave, but Smiltán, one of the chieftains, lingered.

“Chief,” he greeted with a curt bob of his head.

“Chieftain Smiltán.” Loki analyzed the Jotun closer. Smiltán was only slightly taller than him and probably a few centuries younger than Odin. He wore a long gold necklace that covered his navel. Polished onyx stones dotted the ornate gold. All of his fingers had at least one ring on them. “Was there something I said that wasn’t clear?”

“No, I merely wished to accompany you on your tour of the city, unless you have an objection.”

Just another politician, then, but a dangerously ambitious one.

Loki twisted his lips up into a smile, letting just a bit of his cruelty show in his eyes.

“I am in need of a tour guide.” Loki began walking away before Smiltán could respond. The other Jotun quickly moved to follow him.

Once they were out of the room Loki locked the door with a few simple twists. He could feel Smiltán watching the movement closely. Loki held back another smirk. It would do him no good. The lock was brilliantly designed.

If anything ever happened to Loki, the only one who had any hope of opening it was Tony. Even then, it would probably take Tony a few decades despite being the one who designed it. The lock was specifically calibrated to Loki’s magic.

Dhelfa appeared from out of nowhere as they began walking.

The trio walked in silence, with Dhelfa trailing far behind.

Guards tried to accompany them, but Loki waved them off. He felt invincible, untouchable. And it wasn’t just because of his recent accomplishment of becoming chief of all of Jotunheim. Some part of him wondered if this was how that fool Thor always felt.

Loki and Smiltán both paused when the large doors to the castle were opened.

“It has been countless years,” Smiltán whispered. Loki pulled his eyes away from the sky and to the other Jotun. His mouth was slightly agape and his red eyes were wide.

“You didn’t notice it last evening?” Loki asked, raising a single ebony eyebrow. Smiltán didn’t respond, still staring at the dizzying array of colors that swayed and twisted together overhead.

“It never had this much green before.” Smiltán still hadn’t looked away from the colors in the sky.

“Yes, well, the casket was in my possession for quite some time before I could come home.” Loki let his green magic fall from his fingertips, the color matching the shifting light that was painted
from one horizon to the other.

Smiltán blinked in confusion before Loki’s implication became clear. His eyes somehow became even wider.

Loki began walking forward, fighting down laughter. It truly was too easy to fool all these inept barbarians. He could have conquered this realm even without Tony’s help. All it would have taken was a bit of investigation and sly movements and this place would have been his centuries ago; not that he ever wanted this frozen piece of rock. He only laid claim to it now because, as Tony said, this was just another stepping stone towards their ultimate goal.

Why stop at one realm when you can have them all?

Once again Smiltán had to hurry to catch up with him.

“You know this city better than I. Where should we start?” Loki asked, his tone cordial. He had really hoped it would be Tony that showed him around, but it probably was best that he wasn’t here. Loki needed to seem independent, even if some part of him felt a bit lost without Tony accompanying him. He was a bit miffed by how much he missed Tony already.

“Most Jotuns will be traveling back to the city proper at this hour, returning from either hunts or their job. The markets should be lively.” Smiltán’s voice was still slightly amazed.

“A fair assumption,” Loki stated while heading in the direction of the markets, having memorized the map of the capital city a few days beforehand. He could sense Dhelfa trailing far behind them and wondered how that would affect her ability to spy on the other Jotuns. Loki figured that she had been assigned his main attendant, and he knew that Tony had many other spies in his employment.

Loki was once again surprised by the similarities that Jotunheim had with the civilized realms. The market district was disturbingly similar to Alfheim’s. There were stalls set up by different vendors, but instead of the polished wood they were made of in Alfheim, the cheaper ones were made of ice while the more upscale ones were made of stone. The vendors that had actual buildings weren’t as numerous as in Alfheim.

Loki also noticed the differences between the merchandise in Alfheim and Jotunheim. The light elves sold luxury goods in the markets while the Jotuns sold necessities. It made sense, in a way. Jotunheim didn’t have the same abundance of crops and animals that Alfheim or Vanaheim had.

The absence of the casket insured that. Loki had read about it in one of Tony’s books when he’d been researching Jotunheim. The casket had kept the realm thriving, but once it was removed the climate changed slightly, becoming warmer. Many of the scarce crops that could be cultivated had died off. The lack of foliage ended up killing many of the huntable game. The only reason that hadn’t led to mass starvation was because so many Jotuns were already dead due to the war.

Chieftain Smiltán was stopped on multiple occasions by different Jotuns, asking about the sudden change. Smiltán was obligated to introduce Loki as chief and exalt his accomplishments.

Loki refrained from grinning triumphantly, having sensed that whatever plan Smiltán had in place by accompanying him had been foiled.

Loki was startled when the first commoner kissed his inner wrist, before remembering that it was one of Jotunheim’s many strange customs. It showed appreciation and thanks. Loki put on a kind smile every time before reverting to his schooled look of contemplation and regality. His many
years in Asgard’s royal court were serving him well, allowing him to put on a show for many hours without slipping once.

He could tell that Smiltán was in deep thought as they walked to different districts of the city. Evidently Loki was making quite the impression on both the commoners and his chieftain.

An odd feeling overcame Loki, nearly breaking his façade when they came upon a small park where an elderly female Jotun was teaching a group of children magic.

He stopped to observe them for a while, trying not to analyze his own emotions. Two of the children were whispering to each other. Loki gave them a look and they went back to paying attention to their teacher. He didn’t interrupt the lesson despite feeling the need to show the Jotun teacher a better version of a spell she was demonstrating.

Jarvis’ pulsing warmth around his arm pulled him from his thoughts.

As he began walking on, Smiltán spoke.

“We can visit one of the actual schools if it would please you,” Smiltán offered. There was a thoughtful look in his eyes. Loki mentally scolded himself for revealing a bit of his inner workings.

“Another time. Once matters are settled I shall put in place a more efficient means of education.” Loki tried reading the other Jotun’s expression. Smiltán looked slightly confused. “Educated masses may be harder to rule, but as I stated before I plan to make Jotunheim thrive like never before.”

Loki would have to consult with some of the best schools in Alfheim since he would rather chew his fingers off than use Asgard’s education system as a model. Most Aesir weren’t taught much beyond basic math, history through stories, and how to read. The sons and daughters of the nobility were taught in the palace and had private tutors.

He’d also have to look into how the chieftains’ children were taught. A sense of separation and supremacy had to be maintained in order for them not to feel diminished in standing.

It became dark outside, but the skies were still painted with shifting colors. As they walked through the quieter parts of the city Loki saw many Jotuns sitting outside their homes. Children sat on their parent’s laps. The elderly were lively, telling of times when the skies were always this way.

As he, Smiltán, and Dhelfa started making their way back to the castle Loki couldn’t hide his soft smile. Even if he was a monster he had done something wonderful today, something worthy of being a good king.
They arrived back at the castle at the perfect moment. The feast was just being set up and the nobles were gathering in the large room, eager for the free and well prepared meal.

He was greeted happily and could hear chattering about how the different tribes of Jotuns that each chieftain commanded were excited by the sudden change to both the skies and rulership. His people were happy and his chieftains were pleased. Loki already felt like a better king than Odin ever was.

Loki could also see that there was still a few that were not happy by the upheaval in the hierarchy. It would take them time to adjust. The former chief, Blystan, had only been in power for two years as opposed to Laufey’s centuries. Hopefully he hadn’t built up too many allies. If so, they were going to be disappointed. Loki would not let this realm fall out of his hands or control, especially not with Tony by his side.

The feast was lighthearted and Loki easily chatted up various Jotuns, charming them. Tony was right. Many Jotuns wanted him, and for once it wasn’t just because of his standing. Where he was considered thin and gangly in the Aesir court he was considered well toned and handsome here. He no longer felt his smothering uncertainty about his appearance, blue or white.

He was also glad that Tony had adorned him with so much gold and jewels. He was actually wearing a bit less than some of the spouses of the chieftains.

The cuisine was also delightful. Unlike the day before he actually knew what he was eating.

When the feast came to an end his chieftains followed him to a private setting. He wasn’t looking forward to telling them the plan, or at least the plan they needed to know, especially since Tony wasn’t here.

Pensive looks formed on the faces of the chieftains that made up his ruling class.

Loki sipped at his drink as he settled into his seat. The golden armband that Jarvis was in the form of felt comforting and helped steady out his already well controlled emotions. The room became silent, waiting for him to speak.

“The Mad Titan is coming to destroy all nine realms,” Loki stated and he could see the dread on
their faces. There was also a bit of trepidation that they didn’t bother to hide. “As much as I hate it we must join forces with the other realms.” Loki held up his hand, cutting off a Jotun before she could speak. “This is the only way. I have witnessed his power first hand during my travels outside of the realms.” That brought silence to the group again. Travel outside of the realms was possible, but nearly unheard of. The few that left never returned. “I estimate that he shall be arriving in two years’ time.”

“How are we supposed to gather troops—”

“Silence.” Loki paused, looking at the Jotun with cold eyes. When he didn’t speak again Loki continued. “It shall be enough time to, as you say, gather troops. The Bifrost may be broken, but the casket was not the only thing I stole from Asgard.” This evoked a few curious looks. “There is an artifact I stole many centuries ago and hid away on Midgard for when I finally retrieved the casket. It allows instant movement from one realm to the other. When the time comes we shall use that to move our forces along with our allies’ forces to Midgard, which is where we shall defeat Thanos.”

Loki waved his hand, gesturing for them to speak. The room erupted with questions. Loki took another sip of his spiced wine, the wine that apparently came from one of Tony’s vineyards. He kept his eyes slightly hooded, portraying attentive calmness.

Once they realized that no answers could be garnered when they were all talking they quieted down until they were silent again. Loki sat up a bit straighter in his seat, moving his cup to the side with a graceful movement.

“I know of their distance because I can sense Thanos.” He always could. Even if his mental link with The Other had been broken, Loki could somehow still sense Thanos though he actively did not acknowledge it. He knew that it meant Thanos could most likely sense him in return. “I can sense Thanos because I was held captive by him and tortured.” Loki gestured to just a few of his scars. “I only have information on some of their forces. What is known will be distributed to you in a few days. In a week’s time we shall meet again to discuss what troops we have along with different strategies. Master Anthony will rally the dwarves and dark elves to our cause. Muspelheim will join them with a bit of convincing on my part. I have kept Odin the Unseeing and Prince Thor alive to utilize them during this coming war. I have Queen Frigga held captive and the threat of the Mad Titan invading will be enough to convince them to fight. When Asgard goes to war so does Vanaheim. Alfheim will do whatever Svartalfheim does. There has never been a war like this before and there shall be none like it ever again.”

“And what of Midgard’s forces?” Chieftain Smiltán asked. Loki grinned almost coyly.

“They have no choice in this matter. I have already alerted them to the coming threat and started rallying their divided realm. Master Anthony has been supplying their realm with weapons for some time now. They are no longer as helpless as they once were.”

“How do we defeat a monster that Death won’t even accept?” a different chieftain asked.

“That is a problem to which a solution has yet to be presented.” Loki scowled openly. “If this rumor of his immortality is to be believed we must act to find a counter measure. Jotunheim’s best theologians, mages, and scholars shall work on this problem. I shall also seek out an answer in the other realms.” Loki waited for a response, but received none. The various Jotuns seemed to be lost in thought. “We shall adjourn for tonight. I expect that you all will be busy.” Loki stood, leaving his goblet behind.

As he exited the room Dhelfa joined him.
“You did wonderfully today,” she commented. Loki glanced at her with an annoyed look.

“I’m sure you’ll have a more thorough report on my activities for Tony.” Loki picked up his pace and she had to work to keep up.

“I’m not here to watch you. I’m to do as you ordered and what I always do, gather relevant information. The only thing that really changed is my position in the castle as one of your attendants and that I report to you rather than Tony.”

“And what whispered words do you have for me, little spy?” Loki’s thoughts briefly flashed to the spy he once controlled when he could barely control himself.

“Many, but I’d rather be sitting down when I tell you. I’ve been on my feet all day.”

“You’re a disrespectful little thing, aren’t you? I can see why he’d choose you.” Loki’s voice was scathing and Dhelfa made an almost scoff like noise.

“He didn’t choose me. I chose him. I used to strictly work for Chief Laufey but started working for the both of them after Tony gained his favor. I know potential when I see it. I was only a girl back then, but he still accepted me. I was wise to tie my lot in life with his. I used to work in the kitchens, now I have one of the most ‘prestigious’ jobs that a commoner can have.” She looked peeved at the word prestigious and Loki couldn’t fault her for that. Following someone around and attending to their every whim was hardly esteemed. He remembered all the tricks he played on Theia, Frigga’s personal attendant.

There were different guards posted outside of his chambers than the night before. It didn’t worry him. Guards were constantly on rotation in Asgard.

Dhelfa opened the door for him. After closing it Loki warded it himself. Dhelfa didn’t comment, not that he was expecting her to. She followed him up to his room without even asking. The insolent thing.

Loki fixed himself a drink before sitting at his vanity to begin removing the crown Tony had adorned him with earlier.

Dhelfa settled on the long seat next to the unlit fireplace, facing him.

“Well?” Loki asked as she let out a tired sigh.

“A surprising amount of Jotuns adore your hair. I predict that long hair will be in fashion soon.” There was a twinkle of humor in her red eyes.

“You really do start with the most important things, don’t you?” Loki asked sarcastically. “Does that mean you’ll be growing out your hair?” Loki eyed her locks that just barely reached her chin. She ran her hands through her pin straight black hair. It had a shade of purple to it that Loki’s was missing.

“It’s a mandatory haircut. Besides, all that,” she gestured to his hair which he was detangling the intricate crown from, “looks like far too much work for my taste.”

“Lazy and insolent,” Loki said while looking at her in the mirror.

“I also love to disrespect the elderly and steal candy from children,” she joked while glancing around the room.
“Your utility as an asset is steadily declining. Tony would be miffed at most if I disposed of you.” Loki continued pulling the different parts of the crown from his person, annoyed by how simple Tony made it to put on while making it difficult to take off. He had no doubt that Tony wanted to fuck him while Loki wore it and nothing else. It was very typical of him.

“Fine. The former chief and his family left the city as they were supposed to. They’re heading to his territory now. His son won’t be pleased that he’ll be demoted back to second in command again. I sent one of the spies after his group. He’ll send word to me every week. Not every chieftain believes you about the Mad Titan. I’ll make you a list of them when I’m more certain and I’ll keep you up to date on what they think.” Dhelfa tapped her chin in thought before looking in his direction. “There’s not much to report other than that. You’ve only been here for a little over a day.” Her red eyes were steady on him and he noticed that they were a shade lighter than his own. The Jotuns weren’t as uniform in color as he originally thought. “Would you like some help with that? It looks like you’re struggling.”

“No.” Loki snarled at her. She tensed slightly, making him grin. “Tell me of Laufey, who he was as a person,” he said on a whim.

“Where should I start? He was a great chief and was constantly striving to make Jotunheim better.”

“I want to know about his personality, not the things everyone knows.” Loki finally unclipped the last bit of the crown. He carefully placed it back in its gilded box.

“He was a… very shrewd Jotun. His anger was never unfounded. He was quick to punish those who went against him or slacked on the job.” Loki could tell she was measuring her words.

“What of his relationship with Tony?” Loki still didn’t know how he felt about killing Laufey. He didn’t like that it made Tony angry. That much he was certain of.

Dhelfa smiled genuinely.

“You could never tell with those two. Laufey often got fed up with his antics, but never retaliated as he would with his chieftains. Tony settled down after the war to unite Jotunheim and wasn’t here as often. I think Laufey was almost saddened by that. I’ve always worked in the castle, so I don’t know too much of what went on during the war. I do know that Laufey saved Tony’s life on multiple occasions during the war. Tony also had the chance to change sides when things looked bad for our side, but he refrained.” Dhelfa paused in thought. “It was very, very controversial when Chief Laufey freed Tony and actually gave him reign over the smithies as well as traps and armor, but that quickly came to halt when our side started gaining ground. It helped that only a few Jotuns ever knew about him.

“There was a time during the war where the two were at odds, but even I don’t know the reason behind it.” Dhelfa chuckled suddenly. “Even when he was grown Laufey always called Tony ‘Boy’ when they weren’t in front of the nobles. It used to make him so mad. It was the only time I ever saw Chief Laufey joke.” Dhelfa leaned on the armrest of the chair, grinning even wider. “After the war Tony started a few businesses and secretly used some of the profits to support Laufey’s reign and repair the worst war torn parts of the realm. He’s doing it again now. From what I’ve seen of his books everything that isn’t being spent on labor or supplies is being used to repair the parts of the realm that were destroyed last year by Asgard’s latest attack after Laufey died.” Dhelfa’s smile faded. “Tony got here as soon as possible. Everything was in chaos and I could tell he was really upset about Laufey’s death—those damn Aesir.” Dhelfa shook her head slightly with her eyes closed. Loki kept his expression blank. “A few chieftains tried to kill him in order to take over his businesses, since he no longer had Laufey’s protection, but that was their mistake. Tony killed off nearly their whole lines, leaving only the Jotuns that were related to the other chieftains that didn’t
betray him. Once things settled down and Blystan was named chief Tony left again.” She shrugged while looking at the design above the vanity.

“How was Tony after he blinded Odin?” After he crushed Loki. Dhelfa frowned.

“I couldn’t really tell. I heard the news before I saw him. I had expected him to be overjoyed, but he was really subdued. He was only here for a few days. He never stays in one place for long.” Dhelfa smiled, but it quickly slipped away. “I remember the two had talked in private for a very long time, both skipping the feast that was thrown in Tony’s honor. I can’t tell you much. It doesn’t help that I was too excited to do my usual investigating. We still have a big feast every century to celebrate it. I think he’s only attended it a few times.” Dhelfa’s words trailed off as she searched for something more to say.

“Interesting. You may leave.” He waved her off while standing and heading to the closet.

“Chief Loki.” She bowed slightly before disappearing out of the room.

He waited till he sensed her leave through the main entrance before changing his clothing. After putting on a pair of relaxed pants with reindeer on them Loki pulled off the arm band.

Jarvis shifted to his usual form, ruffling his feathers once before beginning to preen, still perched on Loki’s forearm. He petted the golden eagle once, smoothing down some of his feathers.

“Where is your master?” Loki crooned to the bird. Jarvis cocked his head to the side before taking off and landing on a finely polished writing desk. A piece of parchment appeared and Jarvis began scratching at it. Loki quickly walked over to him. There was a single neatly written word.

_Niflheim._

“Do you know when he’ll be back?” Jarvis scratched at the paper again.

_When he is finished with his business._

“You’re a snarky bastard, aren’t you?” Loki grinned slightly.

_I serve Master as he wishes me to._

“So yes.” Loki petted the magical creature’s neck and Jarvis leaned into it before Loki went over to light the fireplace. The fire became brighter as Loki went to get cleaned up a bit.

Loki pushed down his sadness as he brushed his teeth. At some point he had become used to falling asleep with Tony in his arms. The thought of going to sleep alone saddened some weak part of him.

“Work independently and together,” he whispered after washing out his mouth.

His lips quirked up slightly as he stared at himself in the mirror. Perhaps he could dream-walk and see him tonight.

Loki slipped back into the bedroom and into his Aesir form.

Jarvis dimmed the lights as Loki got into bed. The golden eagle was perched in the corner of the room between the fireplace and window. Loki snuggled up to a pillow, staring at the avian. His eyes reflected the flickering firelight. Loki sleepily remembered the first time Jarvis had watched him as he fell asleep, centuries ago in a cave in Niflheim. Back then it had unnerved him, but now
it was comforting.
Loki was disappointed when morning came and he hadn’t been able to enter Tony’s dreams. It was made worse when he realized Tony wasn’t in the bed next to him. Loki frowned while sitting up, taking a moment to gain his bearings.

Jarvis made a soft noise, so different than his usual screeches and calls. Loki nodded in acknowledgement while rubbing the sleep out of his eyes. The fireplace was lit and had fresh logs, courtesy of Jarvis. Loki spotted a stack of papers on his nightstand. It made him smile sadly.

“Work independently and together,” he repeated the words from last night, from yesterday.

His sleepiness was quickly replaced by excitement as he read the title of the parchment that was on top.

*Report of Niflheim*

The actual report was woefully short.

Things were going as planned in Niflheim. Sera, the woman that Tony had helped to marry the king of Niflheim, was pregnant with a litter. Loki didn’t exactly understand the problem, but he trusted Tony to take care of it.

Tony would have to be there for a few more days at the very least.

The reports on the other realms held very little interest for him, but he read them none the less. He secretly wanted to live up to Tony’s expectations of him and the reports were not as dull as the council meetings he used to attend while in Asgard.

Loki felt magic brush against his wards at the servant’s entrance. He recognized it as Dhelfa’s and let her enter. He extinguished the fire and shifted into his Jotun form before she arrived. She was carrying a tray of food.

“Anything happen since last night?”

“Only sweet, sweet sleep.” She placed the tray in his lap. He recognized some of the dishes as the
usual foods he’d have while in Asgard.

“Did you cook this?” Loki asked while poking at it with a fork.

“Just to Tony’s specifications. Is it not to your liking?” she asked while raising an eyebrow. There was something in her expression that he disliked, but nothing he could call her out on.

“I haven’t tried it yet.” Loki cut off a triangle of the meat that was so much heavier than the fare that the Jotuns seemed to favor. He took a bite and chewed slowly, analyzing the familiar honey flavor. “It is passable,” he said after finishing the bite. Dhelfa made a small hmph noise before leaving. “Insolent girl,” Loki mumbled when he felt her exit through the servant’s entrance.

He continued eating, but the silence was starting to wear on him. Loki was used to Tony chattering or at the very least the noise of pages being flipped. All there was now was the sound of his cutlery against the plate.

Silence used to be comforting. It meant that he was finally alone and could be himself without judgment, reading and practicing spells at his leisure. But then there was the silence of the Void, where every thought he could ever conceive had already come to pass. After that there was only his own screaming or fruitless dreams.

Almost every moment since then had been filled with either hectic thoughts or actions.

There was also Tony’s obnoxious music or humming. Those meaningless television shows that made Tony roll his eyes and Loki snort with laughter.

Never silence.

Even in the quietest moments when Loki was drifting off to sleep he could hear Tony beside him, the slow thumping of his heart, his soft breathing, and the rustling of sheets.

Despite the room still being warm from the fire and being in his Jotun form Loki felt unnaturally cold.

“Jarvis, please tell me one of Tony’s musical devices is laying around. This silence is killing me.”

The golden eagle cocked his head to the side. Jarvis swooped over on silent wings, landing on the footboard of the bed. He ruffled his feathers and a small wooden box appeared beside Loki. Loki set his tray aside and picked up the item.

It looked old, too old to have been made by Tony. The design was simple and far too delicate to have been made in Asgard. It had a surprising heft to it. The hinges were well oiled and did not creak despite their age when Loki opened it.

A slow tune started playing and Loki instantly relaxed. It was the same Alfheim lullaby that Tony hummed whenever he was in deep thought or in a serene mood. He usually heard it when they were either bathing together or snuggling in bed.

The contents of the box were surprising. There were many shined pebbles, a feather that was too small and dark to have come from Jarvis, a pressed flower, and a small corked bottle with glowing contents. He turned the bottle around, but there was no label. He examined it closer. It was some sort of dust and it was warm.

With a sigh of relief he laid back down, holding the bottle to his chest, and listening to the music.
Being king was boring and cumbersome.

“Besides, I’ve always wanted to be a queen, lazily sitting around and looking beautiful as my husband controlled all the realms.”

Loki knew that Tony had been joking when he said that, but he was already starting to feel that way. But he’d still be a king. They’d both be kings, ruling equally.

Tony said that he had plenty of protégés, but Loki really didn’t like the idea of an outsider gaining control when he and Tony were old.

Loki suddenly blushed. He really shouldn’t be thinking that far out. Tony had betrayed him before. Even if he said he loved him, it didn’t mean he was telling the truth, although Tony had the chance to take complete advantage of him when they were young, and leave him destroyed, yet he refrained, and this was before he knew of Loki’s true origins and potential as an ally.

Loki squeezed his eyes shut, trying not to cry.

It would have doubled Odin’s humiliation. If their relationship had gone to where Loki wanted it to and the truth came out he would have been labeled as defiled both because any form of same gender relations were seen as untoward and because of the other participant being Tony. He would have been seen as the stupid prince that had been defiled by Asgard’s greatest enemy.

But Tony hadn’t, even when Loki saw all the lust in his eyes and felt the heat of his touches. It could have been so much worse.

The music box stopped playing and Loki wound it back up.

Playing conqueror and villain wasn’t as fun without Tony here.

His mind drifted back to when Tony stole him away from his own name day celebration, in the middle of the feast when everyone could see him.

“There are two options in front of you, Loki,” Tony said while stepping away from the younger god’s prone form and the wrecked couch. “Either you stay in the realm eternal and grow more miserable as the years pass or you come with me and see that there’s more than just Asgard. Regardless I will still pester the All-Father, but I’ll leave your brother and mother out of it. What life do you want to live?”

If only he had accepted that offer. He’d probably be twice the mage he was today. Since gaining his freedom Tony had been supplying him with an endless litany of spell books and wonders. He had never considered going back to Midgard after his first trip there with Tony, yet now it was one of his favorite realms, only second to Alfheim. Somehow, Jotunheim, a realm he never thought would even be worth visiting was becoming his third favorite simply because of how others regarded him.

No one called him a spell tosser or made crude comments about his figure.

And if he had accepted Tony’s offer all those centuries ago he would have never fallen into the Void and perhaps Thanos would not have felt the need to attack the nine realms.

Loki still would have found out about his origins doubtlessly, considering how much Tony favored this realm.

He would have gotten to know his father…
Loki remembered the exact moment when he killed Laufey as clear as if it had just happened. He had been so foolishly pleased with himself. But then in the Void… the doubts were endless. Scenarios of how his life could have turned out if only he had taken a different path cluttered his broken mind.

The music came to an end and Loki gripped the warm bottle a bit tighter.

Why did his thoughts always go haywire whenever Tony was gone? It had only been a day’s time, a blink of the eye to any Aesir, or Jotun in this case—whatever he was.

Loki wasn’t certain. He still felt like an Aesir, but he looked like a Jotun. Yet even when he was in the form of a bird or direwolf he always felt like an Aesir… or did he simply just feel like himself, like Loki?

That thought made him grin sadly.

When he had found out he was a Jotun he’d lost sight of that. He hadn’t known who he was, not only as a species or an individual. Was he still a prince or was he just made to think he was? What if he was just some stray whelp that had grabbed onto Odin’s cape and the king had been too annoyed to brush him off?

By the time he’d figured out he was just a tool he’d already been dangling over the Void. The pain of that revelation had been too much.

Now he was Loki Laufeyson, Chief of Jotunheim, God of Mischief, Spreader of Lies, Dream-Walker, and Tony’s… partner… lover… whatever.

The familiar sensation of Tesseract energy building up caught Loki’s attention. He turned onto his side and felt a gust of air and snowflakes. A moment later Tony appeared, bedecked in his usual furs. He pulled off his mask as the portal closed behind him.

“Lazing around on the job,” Tony halfheartedly scolded as he lit the fireplace. He grabbed Loki’s pocket watch off the vanity and checked the time. “At least you’re awake before noon this time.”

“Do shut up,” Loki said while pulling the covers up to his chin, still clasp the corked bottle. Tony spied the music box and sat down on the other side of the bed. “Go take a shower. You probably have fleas in that ensemble.” Loki scowled at him. Tony rolled his eyes but got up anyways. He paused in the doorway.

“I’ll join you in the tub after I take a quick shower.” Tony disappeared through the door. He didn’t need to contemplate Tony’s ‘offer’, but it always did Tony a bit of good to be left waiting.

Loki looked at the corked bottle a moment longer before putting it back in the music box and shutting it. He took his time disrobing and changing into his Aesir form when he entered the steam filled room.

Tony was singing one of his annoying songs under his breath while in the shower. The tub was steadily filling up. Loki looked at the different soaps, oils, and salts that lined it. He decided on salts that smelled pleasant and reminded him of the woods in Vanaheim. The water turned a translucent shade of green and the top fizzled.

The faucet was wide, filling the large tub quickly. After brushing his teeth, he sunk into the warmth. He washed his hair slowly before plaiting it and moving it out of his way. Just as he relaxed completely Tony got out of the shower, still singing to himself, never able to be properly quiet.
“I thought you’d be gone longer,” Loki stated with his head resting on the ledge, his eyes closed. The water rose up as Tony slipped into the tub.

“I have to get cleaned up somewhere. Might as well be with you.” Loki refrained from frowning.

“So you haven’t set things right in Niflheim yet?”

“A thousand pardons, Chief Loki,” Tony said sarcastically. Loki flicked the water in Tony’s direction, too relaxed to properly retaliate. “How did your first day of being king go, sweetie?” Tony’s voice was condescending, irking Loki.

“Things must really be bad in Niflheim if you’re being this pissy.” Loki opened his eyes slightly. Tony did look a bit more stressed than usual. Loki knew it was really bad when he didn’t receive a retort in response. Loki frowned as Tony remained expressionless. He crawled over to his side of the tub before tugging at Tony’s arm. “Come here.” Tony put up no resistance. Loki couldn’t decide if that was a good or bad sign.

He pulled Tony back to his side of the tub, positioning him between his legs. Tony leaned his back against Loki’s chest, resting his head on Loki’s shoulder. Tony let out a little sigh of contentment as Loki nuzzled against him.

There was a long silence only broken by the soft popping of soap bubbles. Loki could feel Tony’s tension easing away.

Almost an hour later Tony whispered his thanks and Loki fell a little more in love with him.
“You’re a work of art,” Tony mumbled, his lips on Loki’s skin.

“Don’t touch me,” Loki said, too tired to properly fight him or open his eyes.

“When did you start sleeping while blue?” Tony’s hot breath almost burned Loki’s skin. It had been so long since he felt warm, or at least that’s how it seemed.

“Since it’s been a month and a half since you were last here.” Loki pushed away Tony’s face from his chest, realizing he had crawled into his bed without waking him.

“It feels like years.”

“Well, whose fault is that?” Loki finally opened his eyes, glaring at Tony in the dim light.

“Probably mine. Fuck, I love you.” Tony started tracing Loki’s raised lines with his tongue. “I did write.”

“Which is the only reason I haven’t kicked you out of bed.”

“Let me make it up to you.” Tony’s hand was slowly moving downward, towards Loki’s cock.

“No sex when I’m in this form,” Loki grumbled, fatigue and lust warring inside of him.

“Hand job?”

“No jobs. Jobs just lead to sex.” Loki stretched slightly, enjoying the feel Tony’s body against him.

“What a strange economy we live in…” Tony chuckled and Loki enjoyed the small vibrations that moved through him with each laugh.

“Shut up. I’m too tired for your nonsense.” Loki reached for a pillow and contemplated hitting Tony with it.

“Turn over.”
“No sex,” Loki warned.

“No sex,” Tony repeated, giving Loki a quick peck on the lips. Loki growled, but turned onto his stomach. “Mm, Chief Loki, my Lokitty.” He was about to warn Tony off again when he felt Tony’s callused hands on his upper back. His thumbs moved in practiced circles and Loki somehow relaxed even more, feeling his muscles ease almost instantly. “Being king is so stressful.”

“Yes, it is.” Loki’s voice was muffled by his pillow.

“I can tell. Have your chieftains been giving you trouble?”

“I had to knock one out when she kept interrupting me.” Loki felt like he was falling asleep again under Tony’s practiced hands.

“How foolish of her. Has Dhelfa been helping at least?”

“She’s invaluable, but insolent.” Loki paused. “Just like you, but I like you a lot more.” Loki groaned when Tony started working on a particularly tense bunch of muscles. He felt the bristles of Tony’s beard on his neck. “No kisses.”

“Fucking cat.” Tony continued his massage, moving down Loki’s body. Loki let out a pleased sigh. “Go to sleep. I’ll be here when you wake.” Loki briefly considered saying something rude, but before he could, he was drifting into unconsciousness.

When Loki woke he let out a string of curses. Tony’s side of the bed was empty. He sat up abruptly and let out a sigh when he saw the other god.

Tony was in the form of a golden eagle, perched with Jarvis. He could tell them apart by their eye colors. Jarvis’ eyes were a dark brown while Tony’s had a shade of honey to them. Jarvis’ wings were wrapped around Tony’s sleeping form. It took a moment for Loki to make sense of them. He only realized the room was colder than usual because he could see Jarvis’ breath.

“Considerate bastard.” Loki flicked his wrist slightly and the fireplace lit up. That would take too long, though. Loki started reciting a heating spell under his breath, one he had learned while on Muspelheim as he searched for a proper cooling spell during the war.

Soon the room was uncomfortable so he pulled his Aesir glamour on.

Jarvis folded his wings and Tony shook his head while waking. Tony swooped down from the perch, landing on his feet in his actual form.

“There’s something I want to show you,” Tony announced while shrugging off his leather jacket.

“Well, out with it.” Loki was combing his hair with his fingers, not feeling like getting out of bed.

“It will take all day. Do you think everything has been set in place so that you can leave Jotunheim safely?”

“Yes, all the chieftains have fallen in line. The preparations for the war are well underway. I have streamlined nearly everything. Jotunheim will continue to grow even in my absence, though I will need to give word of my departure. I already told my chieftains that I would have to go to the other realms in order rally more troops,” Loki said and his heart fluttered when Tony grinned widely.
“I told you you’d make a great king,” Tony said before disappearing into the bathroom.

Loki couldn’t fight his blush or smile. He fell backwards onto the bed and grabbed a pillow to muffle his giggling. Loki felt so young all of a sudden, young and carefree in a way he’d never been before.

How strange it was… after years of verbal abuse, betrayal, and being tortured, that he’d finally be happy— How could just one compliment make him feel he way he always secretly wanted to?

Damn Tony and his infinite ability to embarrass him in the best of ways.

Loki abruptly sat up and threw his pillow against the bathroom door. He heard Tony laugh loudly before the shower was turned on. Loki rolled out of bed with perfect grace.

He felt Dhelfa’s magic asking for access through the servants’ entrance. He granted it and didn’t bother changing into his Jotun form. He’d given up hiding from her, or rather changing his appearance to fit with what was expected of him.

Her red eyes took in the room, spotting the discarded coat and hearing the shower. She set down the tray of food on one of the tables.

“I’ll grab more food,” she stated simply and Loki didn’t bother nodding. She did whatever she wanted regardless of what he said.

Loki went over to the table and began picking at the food, not all that hungry.

He sighed, abruptly coming down from his high.

Loki joined Tony in the bathroom, quickly brushing his teeth and washing his face. Tony was, as usual, singing to himself. Loki rolled his eyes before finding a regal Jotun outfit to wear for when he addressed his chieftains with news of his departure. He decided to wear the crown that Tony had laced through his hair on the second day of his reign.

Dhelfa reappeared with more food.

“Send word to my chieftains. Tell them that we will be having a meeting within the hour,’ Loki told her.

“You really know how to make my life difficult,” Dhelfa mumbled.

“What was that?” he asked loudly.

“Nothing, Chief Loki. I swear it.” She bowed over exaggeratedly before running off. Loki watched her with narrowed eyes.

Tony came out of the bathroom a few minutes later, shamelessly toweling himself off.

“I scheduled a meeting. Will you be joining us?”

“Sure.” Tony grabbed a roll off one of the trays before heading to the closet. Loki watched him in the mirror as he put on his black outfit, leaving off his heavy cloak until they were in the cold. “I should probably pop on over to my manor in the city, to keep up appearances.”

“True.” Loki refrained from pouting. Tony saw right through him.

“I’ll be back soon.”
“Shut up.” It was entirely unfair that he’d only made Tony blush a handful of times yet Loki seemed to blush at least five times with every interaction they had. A Tesseract portal appeared and Tony just smirked as he went through it. “Annoying traitor,” Loki mumbled when Tony was gone.

He went back over to the table and nibbled at a few pieces of food. His gut was tense with anticipation, wanting to know what Tony had in store for them.

Thus far Tony’s surprises were never of a positive nature. Loki had to trust that this wouldn’t be another one of those occasions, though. Things were going too smoothly for Tony to betray him now.

Loki took a sip of his spiced wine, now preferring it chilled rather than warmed.

Everything would be alright. He had to believe that, or he’d be lost.

When an appropriate amount of time had passed Loki went to join his chieftains. Tony was already seated, chatting with the Jotun Loki had backhanded a few days prior. She seemed to be in a better mood and the room immediately silenced when he entered. He nodded at the various Jotuns as well as Tony.

He took a moment to look at each Jotun in turn. Since he had become chief there had been little strife and Loki had actually built up a power base independently of Tony’s. Not every one of them trusted him, but he knew they’d do as they were told for at least a while during his absence. Thankfully Dhelfa and Tony’s other spies would be here to keep things in order. Dhelfa also had the means to get in contact with Tony if necessary.

“I must venture to the other realms in order to be certain that everything is underway for the coming war.” There were very few shocked faces at his declaration. “We must maintain the unity that my father fought so hard for. I will not allow his dream come to ruin because of petty squabbles. When I return I expect you all to be properly prepared. Indolence and laziness will not be tolerated. How long it will take me to gather the proper forces from the different realms is still to be seen. Do not think that that means I will not be watching.” Loki stood from his throne, not bothering to hear their questions. He knew Tony would smooth things out if any Jotuns were disgruntled.

As usual, Dhelfa was waiting outside of the room for him. She walked a step behind him and to his left. For once she was silent.

“What is it?” he finally asked once the silence started grating on him.

“You, ah, just sounded a lot like Chief Laufey in there. It brought up a lot of old memories. I’m glad that you’re chief now. It seems fitting.” Dhelfa shrugged slightly.

“Would that I could have met him.”

“Jotunheim has a saying: Thoughts of a generation live on in the coming of another,” Dhelfa said and Loki felt a fresh wave of melancholy.

“I shall always have stories, at the very least.”

The rest of their walk was made in silence. He waved her off, not bothering to say goodbye.

Inside of his room he lit the fireplace and went to find a proper outfit so that he wouldn’t stick out. Tony hadn’t specified where they were going, though, so Loki wasn’t certain what fashion he should dress in.
He did find his appetite renewed and decided to partake of his earlier meal.

Tony appeared not long after, haphazardly tossing his ink black cloak onto one of the seats.

“Everything alright?” Loki asked after finishing his bite of glazed baked pear.

“Yup, just ended up getting into a conversation about one of my business ventures.” Tony plopped down onto the bed, removing his thick boots.

“Where are we going?”

“Svartalfheim. No glamours necessary. Where we’re going no one will say anything about your appearance or who you are.”

“That’s not very comforting.” Loki wiped his hands off on a cloth napkin while standing. “We’re not going to another dingy bar, are we?”

“You love dingy bars!” Tony defended while opening a portal to his closet in the manor.

“No, you love dingy bars.” Loki threw a ball of energy at Tony. He yelped as it hit his rear. Loki grinned sadistically while throwing another. A second portal appeared in front of him and before he could react he was hit from behind by his own magic. Loki quickly performed a healing spell on the back of his thigh while staring at himself through the portal.

“I should maim you for that,” Loki threatened while blushing. Damn him and his tricks. The portal behind him and directly in front of him disappeared. Tony was wearing an infuriating grin while lacing up the front of a shirt that was in the Vanir style. Loki let out a huff of exasperation before throwing his hands up and going to his side of the closet in the manor. “I don’t feel like taking off my crown.”

“Then don’t.” Tony replied. Loki had half been expecting him to offer to untangle it for him.

“I won’t.” Loki glared at him playfully before deciding on a pair of trousers and light shirt that he picked up on Alfheim last time they were there. All his other clothes, excluding his Jotun attire would look silly with the crown. Light elves had a way of dressing that always hinted at refinement and riches. He doubted anyone would be wearing anything like his crown though. He pulled his hair back into a loose braid that went down the center of his back.

“Fuckedy fuck. Why do you always have to look so damn tempting?” Tony asked while staring at Loki.

“Why do you always have to be so crass? Weren’t you a lord of some realm?”

“Multiple realms actually. I do what I want.” Tony stuck out his tongue and Loki quickly caught it between his thumb and forefinger.

“And I do what I want.” Loki let go of his tongue before locking lips with him. Discreetly he wiped the saliva on Tony’s shirt before stepping away from him. “Let us be off.” Loki pulled out his pocket watch and clicked on the image of Svartalfheim. The top opened, revealing the names of cities. “Where exactly are we going?”

Tony waved his hand over the watch and a new city name appeared: Beskyttet.

He gave Tony a curious look before clicking on the bottom. It read half past five in the evening.
“Just a lil’ pet project of mine.” The portal to Loki’s room in Jotunheim fizzled out and a new one appeared in its place. The muggy atmosphere of Svartalfheim hit Loki instantly.

“I don’t like the sound of that,” Loki said softly before stepping through the portal.

“Where’s your adventurous side?” Tony asked as Loki peered at the large opening to a cavern.

“In my other pants,” Loki stated dryly.

“Trust me, Lokitty. Your adventurous side is when you’re not in pants at all.” The portal behind them closed.

“What is this place?” Loki could see distant lights in the cavern, but didn’t start moving towards them, instead glancing around. The ground was well worn with a street made out of cobblestone. The sun was just starting to set and one of the three moons of the realm was just peeking over the horizon.

“It’s an entrance to a city that I helped make.” Tony rocked on the balls of his heels slightly, excitement clear in his movements.

“Why do I get the feeling you’re not telling me something.”

“Well, I am a very private person.” Tony shrugged slightly while looking away from him. Loki’s eyes narrowed dangerously. “Okay, fine, geez, you cat. It’s a city I helped build where technology and magic are mixed together.”
Chapter Summary

Btw, I totes built a city.

Chapter Notes

The slowness of getting an update is on me. Lots of bad shit mentally in my brain.

Thank you Temul for keeping me posting! (and for your awesome input!)

“And why would you ever do that?” Loki asked while relaxing slightly.

“Sounded like a good idea at the time. Still is, in my opinion.” Tony shrugged and, dare Loki ever say, almost looked nervous.

“This is important to you,” Loki stated.

“Kinda.”

“So it’s very important.” Loki’s grin became wider and Tony scratched the back of his neck. “Why aren’t you adorable, wanting to show your lover your little project.”

“Shut up,” Tony mumbled while looking away from Loki.

“Tony Howardson, are you blushing?”

“I’m abso-fucking-lutely not.” Tony started walking with purpose towards the entrance.

“How adorable! Aren’t you just the cutest thing in the nine realms?”

“Fuck off!”

“Look at you, stamping around like a dwarf who just learned to walk! Aren’t you just delightful? A little bag of sunshine and rainbows!” Loki quickly caught up with him with his long strides.

“Just be happy I don’t believe in violence, ‘cause you’d be pummeled right now if I did.”

“Why don’t you hit me with your best shot?” Loki sang.

“I knew you stole my StarkPad!” Tony accused while blatantly pointing at him. Loki smirked and hurried on ahead. “Bastard!” Loki almost wished he had left his hair down just so he could flip it over his shoulder.

“I haven’t a clue what you’re talking about.”
“The hell you don’t.” Tony ran over to him and pinched his rear. Loki hopped forward.

“What was that for?” he asked while turning around and walking backwards, eyes wide with false innocence.

“Ya know… Jarvis tells me everything. Everything.”

“He does not.” Loki looked around for the raptor, ready to threaten it if necessary.

“Everything,” Tony whispered, just loud enough for Loki to hear.

“I don’t like going to sleep to silence, but there’s no chargers in Jotunheim!” A snowball formed in Loki’s hand and he hurled it towards Tony. A red shield appeared and mush went everywhere.

“All you had to do is ask. I would have given you a portable charger.” Tony wiped a bit of snow off his shoulder.

“When do I ask for anything?” Loki crossed his arms, still walking backwards without any difficulty.


“Why do I feel like my privacy has been violated?” Loki mumbled while opening the box. It was a portable charger.

“I could make so many jokes right now.” Tony drew out the words.

“Shut up.” Loki twisted around, disappearing the charger for later. He slowed his pace until Tony caught up with him. The mouth of the cavern swallowed them whole. After a few minutes of companionable silence, Loki said, “Thank you.”

“I just wish I could have gotten it to you sooner.” Tony bumped his shoulder against Loki’s arm.

“Stop being nice. It’s off-putting.” Loki waved flippantly at him, pushing down his embarrassment.

“Fucking diva.” Tony rolled his eyes. “Ah, I forgot to tell you.” Tony did not elaborate, much to Loki’s annoyance.

“Yes?” he asked while looking up at the ceiling of the cavern. It was dotted with glowing moss.

“I put our little frozen toy into action.”

“Really, what is it doing?”

“He’s just balancing out a few things. Lining up some dominos for us to knock over.” Tony had a pleased grin in place and Loki ended up mirroring it.

“Dominos? Why would we be knocking over pizza joints? You love pizza,” Loki said while holding back his laughter.

“Don’t play cute with me.” Tony bumped up against him again and Loki felt infinitely happy.

“Tell me about your little city,” Loki said condescendingly.
“First off: it’s definitely not little.”

“You sound so defensive. Is it because you are so short? You dwarf.”

“Are we really going to play this game again? ‘Cause you got the frost part down, but you’re lacking in the giant department.”

“Still taller than you, hmm, now aren’t I?” Loki purposefully moved closer, towering over him. Tony elbowed him in the gut lightly.

“Do you want to know about my city or not?” The entrance was nearly out of sight behind them, but the luminescent moss was lining the cobblestone road, illuminating the area with a soft glow. Loki made a ‘continue’ motion with his hand. Tony snorted. “I started it right after Jotunheim’s civil war came to an end. I didn’t have the money to buy this whole mountain at the time despite my business in Jotunheim thriving.”

“Dhelfa said that you gave most of your profit to repairing Jotunheim and supporting Laufey.”

“That girl…” Tony shook his head. “Yes, that was part of the reason I couldn’t afford to buy a mountain.” Loki held back a smirk at how preposterous Tony’s sentence sounded.

“Go on.”

“As I was saying, I couldn’t afford it, so I went into an underground fighting competition—”

“You must be kidding.” Loki gave him a scathing look.

“Okay, so that didn’t happen,” Tony admitted and Loki hit him on the shoulder, causing Tony to snicker. “I made a bet with the crankiest, oldest, ugliest dwarf you can ever imagine—”

“Liar.”

“Well, I am a liar, but not about this. Long story short: he nearly killed me, I killed him first, the mountain is mine.”

“Clearly you were a storyteller in your last life,” Loki said sarcastically. “If it’s so advanced why are we walking?”

“Kick ass wards.” Tony walked over to the wall and ran his hand over the rock surface. Runes lit up under his palm. “No one can teleport in. Even if the Bifrost was working and they had a Bifrost point in here it wouldn’t work, even the Tesseract can’t teleport us here.”

“That really doesn’t answer my question.”

“I’m getting there. I could have had my car meet us out here, but I wanted to walk with you.”

“You’re such a sentimental fool.”

“I’m your sentimental fool, though.” The pair quieted down when they ran into the first elves. It was just a pair on the side of the road, one dark, the other light. They were practicing magic in a fashion that reminded Loki of his younger days.

“This realm has changed greatly,” Loki commented when they were out of hearing range.

“I’ve been busy.” Loki gave him a curious look.
“Facilitated trade between Svartalfheim and Alfheim, bringing them closer together, got the Hvit sect to allow dark elves to take the trials, King Pendir and Malekith are on good terms because of me, I established safer trade routes on the world tree, and showed them that they didn’t have to yield to Asgard’s every whim.” Tony shrugged. “I also brought all sorts of different technologies from Midgard as well as some of the more recent innovations from the other realms.” Tony chuckled to himself and Loki glanced over at him. “I thought I’d practice ruling a city before I went on to conquering realms.”

“How prudent of you. What wonders are you thinking of showing me?”

“Only the best things! I was thinking we could take it slow at first.” A strange humming in the distance caught Loki’s attention. Tony held up his hand, silencing him. “It’s just a car coming in our direction.”

Tony bumped against Loki, urging him to the side. A moment later Loki spotted the strange vehicle. It was similar to the cars in Midgard, but instead of the smooth metals the humans used, these vehicles had smooth wooden exteriors.

Tony held up his hand, gesturing for the car to stop. The humming quieted down.

“Care to give us a ride to the city?” Tony asked when the slim light elf stopped the car in front of them.

“I thought you wanted to walk?”

“I’m too excited.” Tony smiled happily at Loki. He felt a bit of excitement, too.

“Sure! The name’s Tymr.” The two back doors opened.

“We’re not keeping you from anything?” Tony asked before entering.

“Nope, I was just taking a pleasure ride.” The elf had a goofy smile.

“This is the newest model,” Tony said while running a hand over the paneling. Loki was too caught up examining the device to really pay attention to their conversation.

The seats seemed to be covered in moss, but none of it flaked off as he sat down. He could sense no combustion in the vehicle as he normally could in the ones in Midgard.

The elf started speeding away and Loki enjoyed the wind that the open top design allowed for. It reminded him of soaring through the air as a bird.

The tires of the vehicle had surprising traction on the cobblestone road.

“Surely you jest!” the elf said loudly, bringing Loki out of his thoughts. “You’re Tony Mariason! You’re kidding me right?”

“Sorry, friend. I speak the truth. I thought it was about time I showed one of my business partners Beskyttet. This is Loki.” Tony gestured to the other god in the vehicle.

“You mean like the library?” Tymr asked and Loki looked over at Tony.

“The one and only,” Tony said while staring at him. His brown eyes showed love and devotion that Loki never thought he’d receive. “Is there any way you can drop us off at the corner of Ore Street and Forge Lane?”
“It would be my honor! I have to thank you for the stipends you gave to newcomers for the first three years. It allowed me to set up my bakery on Vise Street across from the shoe shop.”

“I know the place! You have all the best donuts.”

“I learned the recipes from a book in the library. There’s a few added in things, though, to make them my own. Stop by whenever you like. Free donuts anytime, guaranteed.”

“Thanks, I might have to take you up on that.” The two chatted idly and Loki held back a grin at how easily Tony could win over strangers.

He hadn’t noticed before, but the cavern was growing wider. Another one of the strange vehicles passed by them. Its design was larger and had six seats instead of the four that the one Loki currently occupied had.

When Loki first spotted the outskirts of the city he was confused. This was not the dwarven or elven architecture he was used to. Each building was unique in design, yet all had the common characteristic of reaching high above. Some even touched the cavern ceiling.

“How did you…” Loki left his sentence unfinished as he stared at the strange sun that was at the highest point of the cavern. It was dimmer than any sun Loki had seen before, yet it lit the city easily with a soft glow. From the distance he could see that some of the buildings had luscious gardens on top of them.

“We’ll talk about it in the coffee shop,” Tony reassured him while glancing backwards. Loki nodded mutely.

The streets were a strange mess. Moss grew between the cobblestones. Bridges connected buildings, the different styles somehow blinding perfectly in the middle.

Amidst the milling individuals Loki spotted dark elves, light elves, dwarves, Niflungs, Vanir, and even a few fire dancers. Such a mishmash was almost unheard of.

Loki was startled out of his confused thoughts when the vehicle came to a stop. Tony opened the door for him as he said goodbye to Tymr.

The walkways were made out of some sort of strange cork like material. In one of the alleyways he spotted a stray cat, the small domestic breed they had in Midgard.

Strange scents came from every open doorway. When he glanced inside it was clear that they were in a food district.

Loki was so focused on it all, he almost missed Tony turning into one of the simpler buildings. He paused in the doorway when he saw who was sitting at the front of the shop, leaning heavily on the counter, and doing what looked to be a crossword puzzle. It was a fae. He’d never seen one before, but the translucent wings that were tucked behind her back and the lavender shade of her eyes made it clear what she was. He was under the impression that they only lived in the deepest forests of Vanheim and Alfheim.

Tony pulled him into a corner of the room and to a small round table. He glanced at an image on a plastic like menu before placing a strange currency at the edge of the table. Loki couldn’t take his eyes away from the fae. She glanced over at them for a moment. She started rolling her pencil back and forth while still staring at the crossword puzzle. Two of the strange machines behind her came to life, steam coming from the top of one. He felt a burst of magic and two cups of warm coffee were in front of them, along with a small dish of sweets. The money Tony had set out was gone.
When he glanced back over at the fae she was chewing on the eraser of her pencil with a look of concentration on her face as she worked on the crossword.

Tony sipped his drink and let out a pleased hum. Loki cupped the warm mug while glancing at the only other occupants of the coffee shop.

Two young elves, one dark and the other light, had some sort of game set up between them. There was a glass piece that separated two boards. It looked like they were competing against each other, but Loki couldn’t quite make sense of it yet.

“The sun,” Loki began after taking a sip of his drink, “how did you manage that?”

“My mother was the Goddess of Stars,” Tony said with a sad smile. “There were a lot of stars just in random rooms of my manor in Asgard as well as one in the Smithy for forging. It took a few years of study and a couple decades of experimenting, but I was finally able to manipulate one of her stars. I can’t make them like she could, but I can make them grow bigger while still being balanced.” Tony took a sip of his drink and chuckled. “It nearly killed me. What was harder was getting it to move on a set path. It moves in a wide circle and into a hidden area in the ceiling. The very top of the cavern is made out of a crystal I had to have mined and imported from Muspelheim. It’s heat resistant and hazy. When the star is making its loop inside the ceiling some of the light comes through in colorful rays. It’s not as pretty as Jotunheim’s sky, but it’s a close second.”

Tony was trying to hold back a grin and Loki thought he was absolutely amazing.

Loki laced his hand with Tony’s, not caring who saw. Tony blushed and Loki couldn’t look at him, he was just feeling too happy.

They drank and ate in silence for a long while.

Finally, Loki was calm enough to look at him without feeling like his face might break from grinning.

“How long before we got together did you name a library after me?” Loki asked with a sly grin in place.

“At least four centuries ago.”

“You’re hopeless.” Loki would never admit how happy that knowledge made him, despite him being miserable and in Asgard at the time it was named after him. “What do you have planned all in all for today?” Tony shrugged slightly as he finished off his coffee. Loki was eating the sweets at a slow pace.

“Do a bit of shopping maybe. There’s a really good dance club we could go to if you’re up for it. Thought I’d show you the park and the library, and then we could head to our home here,” Tony said while leaning on the table with one elbow.

Smoke formed beside them, spelling out a question.

Would you like a refill?

Loki could see the fae’s eyes on them.

“No thank you,” Loki answered for the both of them. The smoke dissipated. Tony put a bit more money on the table before gesturing with his head for Loki to follow him.
“How does that sound?” Tony asked, picking up on their earlier conversation once they were outside. Loki noticed that the sun had moved slightly and that the distant top of the cavern glittered.

“Wonderful. Can we visit the park first?”

“Whatever you want. Would you like to walk or go by other means?”

“I think… I’d like to fly.”

Before Tony could respond, Loki was in the form of a magpie and circling upwards. He could see Tony watching him a moment before he shifted into a golden eagle and caught up with him. In this form Loki was nowhere as fast as him, but Tony twisted around playfully, occasionally circling downwards to slow down. On his part, Loki soared easily, following the path that Tony would indicate with the tilting of his wings. It was easy enough to find when they were high in the air.

Tony started doing barrel rolls around Loki. He caught onto Tony with his much smaller talons, grasping onto his back. Tony let out a screech, making Loki caw gleefully. He didn’t let go, instead hunkering down on top of him so that the wind wouldn’t push him off. Tony didn’t try to shake him off and Loki laughed internally.

Soon Tony descended in a lazy spiral. Loki let go of him and shifted forms mid-air. He tumbled head over feet before using a bit of magic to right himself and land softly. A moment later Tony landed beside him.

“You fucking cat,” Tony said while touching his back.

“Oh, you poor dear,” Loki crooned condescendingly while touching Tony’s back. There were only three small gouge marks that would easily heal. Nonetheless Loki healed them and cleaned the blood off his skin and shirt. “Do you feel better now?”

“Thanks,” Tony said while rolling his eyes. Loki dug his nails into the still tender flesh and Tony jumped forward. “Fuck!” A Niflung with three children at her side gave them a look. “Sorry.” Tony nodded at her with false modesty.

Loki snorted while looking around.

“Why are all the flowers white?” he asked while scrunching up his nose in distaste.

“That was Mora-Mora’s idea.”

“She’s been here?” For some reason he hated her a bit more because of that fact.

“Yeah, I thought this place could use a female’s touch. She added a few things here and there. She technically owns the dance club I was thinking of taking you to, but someone else runs it.” Tony could easily read the look on Loki’s face. “Cheer up. She’s only a friend. I love you, not her.”

“You have slept with her, though. I saw it in your dreams when I was a prisoner.”

“Really? I never sensed you.”

“Don’t change the subject.”

“Yes, my Lokitty, I’ve slept with her multiple times, nearly every time we saw each other, but you’re the only one I want. I’ll never sleep with her again because now I have you and everyone
else is subpar in comparison.” Tony brushed back a lock of hair that had fallen out of Loki’s braid. 
Loki had his arms crossed over his chest. “Come on. Don’t give me that look. I know you slept 

with Lorelei.”

“Yes, but that was centuries ago. I’m sure I haven’t had as many bedfellows as you have.” Other 
than Tony, Loki had slept with three other people in total: Frandral a few times behind Thor’s 
back, Lorelei before she got married, and a light elf that started working in the library not long after 
the war. A thought occurred to him. “Please tell me that Sonya that works in the royal library isn’t 
one of your spies.” Loki held back a groan.

“You mean the lovely brunette that you were fucking? Nope. She’s not one of mine. I love ya, 
Loki, but not enough to send someone to sleep with you when I couldn’t have you.”

“Thank the Norns.” Loki covered his eyes with his hand, feeling his panic subside. He let his hand 
drop back to his side and saw that Tony was grinning. “So why are the flowers white?”

“Mora-Mora said that they’d look really beautiful and romantic at night when the rays from the 
ceiling cast a mix of colors everywhere. It is a pretty amazing sight during the spring when all the 
flowers are in bloom. She designed the fountain in the middle of the park with my help. It’s made 
of the same crystal as the ceiling and I put one of my mother’s stars into its base, making the water 
catch the colors. It’s probably one of my prettiest creations.”

Tony began walking through the lattice covered walkway. Sweet smelling flowers hung down. 
Now that he was closer, he could see that they were soft shades of pink, orange, and yellow.

“Do I smell Jorda trees?” Loki asked, glancing around for the giant trees that let out a varying 
perfume depending on the season and weather.

“Yeah, they still haven’t reached their full height.” Tony elbowed Loki. “Thankfully, when you 
burned down my backyard in Asgard, some of the seeds survived since this subspecies also 
produces fruit.”

“Be thankful that was the only thing I burned. Should you ever betray me again I’ll make certain 
that all the realms burn.” Loki gave him a crazed look and Tony just smiled wider.

“You’d bring about Ragnarök just because of me? I’m honored.”

“Do shut up.” Loki spotted the fountain in the distance.

It was larger than he expected and people were picnicking around it, laughing and whispering to 
each other happily. Once again he was amazed by the diversity of the individuals in the area. He 

saw another fae, this time a male with cropped hair. He was laying on his stomach beside a light 
elf. He was reading aloud and it looked like the elf was dozing.

His steps faltered when he spotted a Jotun sitting in the shade with a type of fox curled up on her 
lap. He didn’t recognize her, but the fact that there was one here didn’t seem to make sense despite 
him being of the same species.

A pair of Niflung twins were playing tag with a dark elf and a Vanir girl who was far slower than 
them.

In a hammock a dark elf and Niflung were cuddled together, one smoking a pipe while the other 
used her magic to create art with the smoke. A group of onlookers were watching and every so 
often one would toss a coin into the hat that was by the hammock.
It was all so alive and beautiful.

“Why am I not surprised that there aren’t any Aesir around?” Loki asked sarcastically.

“They never bothered to learn how to travel the tree so now that the Bifrost is broken only a few of them can readily leave. The other realms still travel there to trade, but none of them have been paying their tributes since Asgard can no longer send troops out.” Loki hadn’t even considered the economic impact the destruction of the Bifrost would have.

When they reached the fountain Loki sat on the edge. The water was constantly moving, refracting the endless colors beautifully. It was deep and Loki could just barely see words in various languages engraved in the metallic bottom. Tony’s easy going smile faded.

“They’re the names of people I’ve lost, some to war and murder, others to old age and accidents. My mother’s name is on the other side.” Tony glanced over at the other god. “I guess I should probably remove your name, considering I have you again.” Tony reached far into the water, his sleeve becoming drenched up to his shoulder. A few of the individuals in the park gave them a curious look, but didn’t comment.

Loki saw his name light up far to the left. His throat clenched up as the single word faded into smoothness.

“Just ‘Loki’, no ‘Loki Odinson’ or ‘Loki Laufeyson’?” Loki asked, his voice a bit strained. Tony pulled his arm out of the water while trying to read his expression.

“You’re just Loki to me. I fell in love with you when you were an Odinson and mourned for you after I found out you were a Laufeyson, that we could have been allies, but instead you decided to die.” Tony wiped away the wetness from his shirt and arm with a bit of magic. “You’re Loki, the only person in the nine realms that I love, the one I want by my side for all eternity.” Tony was leaning in closer and Loki felt hypnotized. “You’re the one I want to be by my side as we rule the realms.” Their lips met and Loki pulled him closer. He practically dragged Tony onto his lap, just wanting to somehow be closer. Tony gripped the back of Loki’s neck, deepening the kiss. It was slow compared to their usual frantic movements and they only parted because they were receiving whistles from the adolescents and sounds of disgust from the children.

They breathed in the same air for a moment and Tony’s thumb brushed Loki’s high cheekbones, catching a tear. Loki hadn’t even realized he had been crying or even why. He wiped them away while laughing awkwardly.

Tony stood up and offered his hand. Loki let out a snort and rolled his eyes as he tried to compose himself, ignoring his hand. Tony’s grin didn’t falter.

They walked down another lattice covered pathway and Loki laced his fingers with Tony’s.
A Brief Aside (Five)

Chapter Summary

The Avengers get a new assignment.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Everything had been suspiciously quiet for the last two months since the Hydra facility exploded. Steve didn’t know what to make of it.

The whole team was on edge, excluding Amora. She was napping on one of the couches in the living room as Clint and Natasha played chess in silence.

During their cohabitation together Steve had come to learn that Amora was not concerned with what may happen.

He was sketching her sleeping form (with her permission of course) for what must have been the hundredth time.

Steve admired how she never let the past or future get her down. She’d told him more than one story of what had happened to her in the past. She was amazingly resilient. It was one of the reasons he loved her, not that he could properly say so.

Sam walked in while munching on a cookie.

“Hill called,” he said between bites. The two SHIELD agents glanced over at him, Natasha’s hand lingering on a pawn. “We’re to meet up at HQ. She didn’t say why.”

“Mm, what?” Amora asked while uncurling, her eyes hooded.

“SHIELD HQ, not an emergency, let’s go,” Sam summarized while smiling at her. Amora gave him a thumbs-up sign before yawning and covering her head with the throw blanket she’d stolen from an armchair.

“Up, Sleeping Beauty,” Natasha said while walking by Amora. The blanket suddenly fell flat on the couch and there was a honking outside. “I swear she does that on purpose.”

“Shouldn’t have taught her how to drive,” Clint commented while shrugging.

“She can be very insistent.” Natasha’s voice was dull, yet Steve could sense the humor there. Sam snorted at her understatement.

When they walked by the kitchen Steve grabbed a couple cookies to eat on the trip over. He already knew how the drive over would be split. Natasha would drive the other SUV with Clint in the passenger seat and Sam in the back. He’d ride with Amora since he was the only one that could handle her driving style and abuse of magic. Hank was already at the base.

When he got outside, Amora was in a different outfit than she had been in minutes ago. She was
wearing those high-waisted jeans that even Tasha couldn’t pull off. Her blouse was a simple button up. Large horn-rimmed sunglasses, bright red lipstick, and her hair was in a similar style to that which women wore during his time.

She was rocking out to some new band that Steve didn’t understand, dancing in her seat the way only she could.

“Ready for launch, copilot?” Amora asked while adjusting the rearview mirror.

“Read for launch,” Steve said after buckling in.

“3, 2, 1—vroom!” Amora threw the SUV into reverse. Steve lurched forward, biting into a cookie and trying not to grin like a love struck moron. The gate to the mansion swung open, hitting the brick walls. Amora laughed and Steve knew they’d have to replace the gates soon, for the fifth time this month.

The sharp turns and suspiciously all green lights did not deter Steve. He found himself laughing along with her and even sang along with a few of the songs he actually knew. He loved that she sang so freely, even if most of it was off tune.

They screeched to a halt in the parking garage. Amora checked her lipstick in the mirror before hopping out, as always forgetting to take the keys with her. Steve held back a grin and pulled them from the ignition.

She was already standing in front of the elevator, tapping her foot impatiently.

“You forgot to push the ‘up’ button,” Steve said with a smile when he reached her side.

“I shouldn’t have to. You all can make items that communicate with the other side of the realm instantly, yet I have to signal an elevator to let it know I am present? It’s silly. Why don’t they just integrate the technologies? If someone parks the elevator should automatically descend to this level.” Amora let out a huff and Steve just shook his head, used to her little rants. She poked his shoulder. “Don’t you laugh at me, Mister ‘I Like to Run for Cardio’. It’s silly.”

“I’ve offered to take you out with me. You might enjoy running.” It was a conversation they’d had a hundred times before and he wasn’t expecting any new results, even so, he was grinning.

“I think not.” Amora pointedly looked at her fingernails as the doors chimed open. As they entered, she pulled off her sunglasses and hooked them onto her shirt. Under her arm was a small clutch purse that he knew she only carried to appease SHIELD. Otherwise she’d just keep the cellphone, taser, and wallet hidden away more conveniently with her magic.

Amora tapped her foot with the beat of the elevator music. It was strange how easily he could tell her moods just by how she was moving.

The tapping was subdued compared to her usual back and forth swaying whenever any music was on which meant she was either nervous or tired.

“What’s wrong?” he asked while moving a bit closer.

“I felt someone at the edge of my dreams.” Amora stopped tapping her foot and glanced over at Steve. “Dream-walking is a very complex art. I am not skilled enough to venture into other’s dreams safely. Releasing one’s mind with only the barest of connection to the body is dangerous. I know of only five mages that are capable.”
“Loki,” Steve said, remembering one of the villain’s many monikers.

“Possibly. I believe Howardson is capable of doing so, too. When I sensed the strange presence I drifted my dream into an inconsequential memory of revelry.”

“You can control your dreams?”

“Not readily. It takes far too much energy in order to do so. Less restful.” Amora grinned slightly. “Perhaps that’s why Loki was always so grouchy.” Steve’s grin was small in comparison.

“What do you think he wanted?”

“Well, I’m hoping it was one of my teachers, Karnilla, checking in on me. We have a strange relationship.” Amora shrugged and Steve gave her a questioning look with a poorly concealed smile. “No, not one of those relationships. She isn’t to my taste and she was far too duplicitous for me to trust her beyond her tutelage.”

“Whatever you say.” Steve stared up at the ascending numbers and Amora shoved him lightly. He grinned as they exited the elevator.

A golden locket appeared in Amora’s hand. It opened revealing a small clock.

“Bit of time before the others arrive. Shall we get drinks?”

“Sure.” Steve had noticed that when Amora or Thor had spare time before anything serious took place they always suggested drinks. He wondered what that said about Asgard’s culture, but never came to a conclusion.

They easily found a vending machine and he quickly intercepted her before she could just magic out two drinks.

“Such a gentleman,” Amora crooned as Steve paid for the drinks and blushed. He got her an orange juice, knowing it was her favorite. He got another for himself, watching from the corner of his eye as Amora downed a quarter of hers before a flask appeared in her hand, the flask that had an endless supply of tasteless alcohol in it. “Care for a bite?” she asked needlessly.

Steve took a few sips from his orange juice before holding it out for her. She added in just a bit to his juice and he nodded in thanks. It was one of the few drinks that could actually affect him. It warmed him up a bit.

They meandered to the conference room they usually met in. Coulson was already there. His smile became a bit more genuine when he saw the super soldier. Amora scoffed while walking past him.

“Phil,” Steve said while holding out his hand. The agent shook his hand in greeting.

“Steve,” Coulson’s handshake was firm and Steve could never tell if it lingered. He was just happy to be on first name basis with him.

He had a large stack of black dossiers in one arm.

“Need a hand?”

“No, please just take a seat.”

Steve joined Amora, Hank, and Thor at the table. Amora was showing Hank another one of her ‘first spells’ while Thor ignored them, opting instead to text on his phone with fumbling thumbs.
“You must be kidding,” Hank said to Amora.

“They’re as large as a horse. I swear it.” She was conducting an illusion with her finger. It was a cat drawn carriage. “They’re much quieter than horses. Less clopping. Ask Thor. He’ll tell you the truth of the matter.”

“Tis the truth,” Thor mumbled, not looking away from his phone.

“Do they give birth to litters like Earth cats or just single offspring like horses?” Hank asked and Steve laughed. He never understood where he came up with these questions.

“Litters, obviously. They break out of their stable and escape into the forest when pregnant. After giving birth and raising their kittens the mother comes back, assuming it wasn’t killed by a bilgesnipe.” Amora leaned closer to the scientist as he fell into his own thoughts. “How is Janet?”

Hank’s face was instantly colored with a blush.

“I finally asked her on a date,” Hank mumbled while looking at the table. Amora reached over and grabbed both of his hands.

“Splendid! I’m so happy for you two! Your babies are going to be so cute!” Amora was smiling widely and Hank only blushed darker.

“Let’s not think that far ahead. She’s out of my league.”

“Nonsense! There are no leagues, only the brave and those too scared to act! You have made the first step towards love!” Amora threw her hands high and green sparkles shot from them, fading away before they could hit the ground.

“Who gave Amora caffeine? I thought we agreed that after the last incident she’s not allowed any caffeine,” Clint said as the last of the Avengers walked in.

“No caffeine.” Amora held her hand up with her little finger held out. “We made a pinky promise, remember?” Clint gave her a critical look before chuckling. “Why doesn’t anyone ever believe me?” Amora laid her head on the table as Clint went to greet Coulson with a hug. The two agents exchanged small chat as Sam sat next to Steve.

“How was the drive?” Sam asked while trying unsuccessfully to hold back a smile.

“Brisk. I nearly choked on a cookie.” From his other side Amora shoved his shoulder lightly, her head still firmly planted on the table.

“Thor, I thought you weren’t supposed to be back till tomorrow,” Tasha said while sitting across from him.

“I was called in this morning and told to make haste.” Thor frowned.

“Shit must be serious then.” Clint sat beside Thor, stealing the phone from him. The archer hopped onto the table and out of Thor’s arm range. “Jane forgive you yet?” Thor tried to capture Clint, but the agent was far nimbler.

“You are far more bothersome than my brother,” Thor groused while pouncing forward. Clint just narrowly escaped.

“Don’t compare me to that psycho.” Clint pulled out Natasha’s rolling chair and put her in between him and Thor. “No offense, of course.”
“None taken, so long as you give me my phone.” Whenever Thor moved to the right Clint would mirror the action, keeping Natasha as a barrier. She didn’t seem to mind in the least, even when she was spun around twice.

“What phone? I don’t have a phone.” Clint held up both his empty hands and Steve snorted at the frustrated look on Thor’s face.

“Where did you hide it?” Thor asked and Steve and Sam were holding back laughs. Tasha was scrolling through the phone right in front of him, but he was so focused on Clint that he couldn’t see her.

“Alright, it’s time for everyone to calm down. Agent Hill will be here in a moment.” Coulson took the phone out of Natasha’s hands before ushering Thor to the other side of the table. Thor was grumbling to himself, but took a seat nonetheless.

Coulson started handing out the black folders.

“Why weren’t we informed of this earlier?” Steve asked as his eyes went over the list of recently assassinated SHIELD agents and associates. He recognized a few names like Jasper Sitwell and Grant Ward.

“It was on a need to know basis and now you need to know,” Hill said while walking in. She had her own set of black folders.

“What do we know about the assassins and organization that’s behind this?” Natasha asked while flipping through the pages.

“We think the assailant is male, based on the direct nature of some of the attacks.” Hill dropped the different folders in the middle of the table and the Avengers each took one. Inside were graphic pictures and descriptions of the assassinations. Most were sniper shots, but others were things like drowning in bathtubs, slit throats, and broken necks. “They’ve been working up the food chain. We’ve narrowed down his next target to two people, either Director Fury or Secretary of Defense Pierce.”

“How did you come to that conclusion?” Clint asked while tossing aside his two folders.

“By the patterns of the attacks. Fury can take care of himself. Even I don’t know where he is, but he should be checking in in a week and a half. We’re going to split you up into two groups. Amora, Steve, and Sam, you three are assigned to work with the Secretary of Defense. I want you other four to track down the assassin. Clint, I’m putting you in charge of that group. Steve, you’re in charge of the protection detail. We have a quinjet prepped for your group. Coulson will go with you and explain the finer points.” Hill dismissed the group. Steve’s team followed him out with Coulson by his side.

Steve began discussing the finer points of the mission as Amora and Sam commiserated about not being able to make the meal they had planned to cook together that night.

Once on the quinjet the group settled down a bit. Coulson began explaining the layout of Pierce’s summer home and Steve could feel Amora slowly dozing off, leaning on his shoulder despite them both being strapped into their chairs.
He didn’t bother trying to wake her up or move her. He’d tell her the important details later.

They landed on a wide-open, perfectly manicured lawn.

“We already have three SHIELD agents stationed inside,” Coulson informed them. “They’ll be rotated out in three hours and then in increments of six hours. They’re all people you’ve worked with before. Work in shifts.” Coulson nodded at them before going back into the quinjet and taking off.

“Yeah, leave the boring stuff to us as the other group runs around,” Sam complained half-heartedly. Amora threw her arm over his shoulder and pulled him close.

“Things are only as boring as you make them! Let’s have fun!” Amora looped the comlink into her ear and the other two Avengers mimicked her, putting on their own comlinks.

“Amora, how effective are your wards?” Steve asked as they stood outside of the large house.

“They’re wonderful! They’ll deter normal people like postmen and gardeners, but if anyone goes past a certain point I’ll be alerted and then I’ll alert you.” She winked at him before completely disappearing.

“I’ve told her the protocol a hundred times,” Steve mumbled to himself.

“Yeah, because rules and Amora are a match made in heaven.” Sam rolled his eyes while knocking on the front door.

“Hey! I can hear you,” Amora said through the comlink.

“Yeah, I know. I’m sticking out my tongue at you now.”

“Well I’m making an ugly face at you!”

“Enough, you two.”

“Fine.”

“Okay grandpa.”

Steve was about to retort when a SHIELD agent opened the door. Steve recognized her, but couldn’t remember from which mission.

“Coulson should have told you we were coming,” Steve said while smiling kindly. “There’s one more member on our team. She’s scouting the area.”

The agent opened the door a bit further and Steve could see that her gun was unholstered and by her side, which wasn’t uncommon in these sorts of situation.

“Swipe your SHIELD IDs and then you can come in.” The agent gestured with her chin towards a small device on the table. Steve remained facing her as Sam swiped in. They changed positions when Steve went to swipe in. Once they were both positive ID matches the agent holstered her gun.

“Anything you need to report?”

“No, we have a sniper on the roof. He spotted you all come in and knows your teammate is in the woods. Our comlinks are on channel 9.3.”
“9.3, just you and me!” Amora sang and both Avengers had to hold back their laughter. There was a slight click and he could tell she changed channels. Steve and Sam did the same.

“Rollcall.”

“Agent Howser,” the woman in front of them said and her words echoed on the comlink.

“Agent Franklin on sniper duty.”

“Agent Jackson in the safe room with the secretary and his daughter.”

“Falcon here. I’ll join you in the basement, Jackson.”

“Confirmed. Howser, show him the way.”

“I’ll stay on the first floor,” Steve said. From his position by the stairwell he could see the main front entrance and rear entrance along with the door that led to the safe room.

“Agent Amora Nisdottir, Goddess of Dance, Bringer of Highs, and the most fashionable Avenger. I’ll patrol the perimeter while invisible. I’ll keep in contact with Franklin so that he doesn’t accidentally shoot me.”

“Alright team, let’s stay frosty. I don’t want anyone slacking. No napping, Amora,” Steve warned. She let out an almost animalistic sad sound, making Steve grin to himself, happy that no one was around to see how goofy he looked. “Let’s just hope that Clint’s team makes fast work out of this assassin so that we can all feel a bit safer.”

“Okie-dokie!” Amora said, to no one’s surprise. The other agents sent their confirmations.

Steve muted his comlink so that no one could hear him.

He knew that this was where the boring part really came into play. These missions were all about waiting. He kept his mind on task while practicing a few of the simple dance moves Amora had taught him. He was glad that no one was around to see him trip over his feet repeatedly.

It was a good way to burn time as he kept an eye out for any discrepancies.

Three hours passed and the new team was flown in by the quinjet. Steve spied them with the binoculars that were on the side table next to the card scanner. He spotted Coulson and relaxed a bit. The agents walked to the front door and he admitted them after they scanned their cards. He relieved the other agents efficiently and Sam and Steve switched posts, putting him in the safe room in the basement with Secretary Pierce and his daughter.

It was more of a safe apartment rather than a safe room.

“It’s an honor to finally make your acquaintance, Captain America,” Pierce said while holding out his hand.

“Please just call me Steve.” Captain America smiled easily, used to meeting powerful people.

“Thank you for all your service during both WWII and the present.” Pierce clapped his hand over Steve’s, sandwicthing his hand before letting him go. “This is my daughter, Sandy.” Steve nodded at the young lady when she didn’t bother to get up or acknowledge him.

“Rest assured that we’ll protect you. The other half of the team is out there right now tracking down this assailant.”
“You have my total faith.”

“You have my total faith.”

“Steve, something just broke through my wards 200 feet out West of the house. They’re using some sort of magic.”

“Do you think it’s Loki or Howardson?” Steve asked, remembering their earlier conversation.

“No, they could have gotten past my wards without activating them.”

“I’ve spotted a—” Through the comlink Steve heard the sharp noise of a bullet.

“Secretary, I’m going to need you and your daughter to hide in the bathroom.” It was the safest area and only had one entrance. “Don’t come out until I give the go ahead.” Steve gestured for the agent to guard the door while he took point at the stairs. “Report Sam.”

“We’re completely blind. I think Evens, the sniper, is dead.” There was another loud gunshot.

“Fuck! Dubois is dead.”

“Stay low!” Steve ordered. “Amora repor—”

“Spotted him. He’s got a really long gun and is running towards the house! He’s going for the back entrance! I’m going to intercept.” There was the strange buzz noise that always happened when Amora teleported. Something crashed and Steve really wished he hadn’t switched positions with Sam only minutes ago.

“Sam, do you have eyes on her?” Steve pressed the comlink closer to his ear while raising his shield. He knew he had to maintain his position.

“I’m heading their way. He’s got some sort of metal arm.” There was the sound of glass breaking and Steve’s heart began racing. He could hear bodies thumping, but everything else was indistinguishable. Amora cursed loudly.

“His metal arm is somehow blocking my spells!” Steve had never heard her sound so frustrated. There was more crashing and the metal door to the safe room was jostled. He heard Sam grunt and then there was only silence.

“Report,” Steve said. He glanced backwards and saw the SHIELD agent was maintaining his calm, although there was a thin layer of sweat forming on his brow. Steve made a calming hand motion, telling the agent to stay quiet.

The floorboards above creaked. There was a sudden thud that caused both Steve and the agent to flinch.

“Can anyone read me?” Steve asked and received no response other than the agent behind him gulping loudly. He stared at the safe room door and held back a groan when he saw the Stark Industries logo. He really hoped Howardson wasn’t behind all this.

The keening of metal was ear splitting.

“Rogers, what should we do?” the agent whispered.

“Get into the bathroom with the secretary and his daughter.” Steve held his shield at the ready.

There was another loud keening noise. The safe room door buckled inwards. Steve took in a few calming breaths, determined to not let the secretary and his daughter die.
He heard the sliding of metal, but the door did not move. A second later a smoke canister came tumbling down the stairs. With a practiced hand he scooped it up and threw it through the door crevice. There was no noise, but Steve could see smoke tumbling through the warped metal door.

Minutes passed and Steve felt his nerves begin to fray.

“What should we do?” the agent guarding the secretary and his daughter asked.

“Hold your position. We should be getting reinforcements soon enough.” A single bead of sweat ran down his back. His grip on his shield tightened and loosened repeatedly. “Amora, Sam, can you hear me?” Steve felt dread pool in his stomach. He’d lost soldiers before, but this was Amora…

The metal door was suddenly kicked in. Smoke flooded the area, but Steve could see the outline of someone that was too broad to be any of the agents or his teammates. He threw his shield at the assailant.

The clapping of metal hitting metal was jarring.

Suddenly, his shield was flying back at him. With the door to the bathroom directly behind him he had no other choice than to catch it. His hand stung on impact, but he was undeterred. He rushed the descending figure. The figure jumped up slightly, sending down a jolting punch that Steve just barely deflected with his shield. The wooden step beneath his foot cracked dangerously.

A glint of metal shot out and Steve just narrowly avoided the knife. He bashed his shield against the assassin, but he wasn’t pushed back at all.

“You can’t have them.”

Steve’s feet were kicked out from under him and he went tumbling backwards as even more smoke filled the large room. He tucked into a ball as he rolled backwards, quickly springing back to his feet when he hit the bottom. The assassin was on him a moment later, knocking aside Steve’s shield.

A metal fist connected with Steve’s gut, pushing the breath out of him. Steve insteppepd and did a quick uppercut followed by an elbow that the assassin dodged.

It became a flurry of motions. Neither was pushed back and something in the smoke was making Steve feel lightheaded.

The assassin grabbed him by his suit and punched him in the face three times in quick succession.

The assassin surged forward and Steve only barely dodged, grabbing onto his arm and trying to twist it. Captain America was sent flying to the side and onto his back. A flash bang was thrown out as he grabbed his shield, blinding him. He saw the outline of his attacker coming towards him and used his shield to block the assassin dropping his knee down onto Steve’s gut. The shield buckled inwards and Steve let out a grunt.

The shield trapped his right arm and the assassin pinned his left arm down. A metal fist slammed into his face repeatedly until he couldn’t feel the punches anymore.

The weight was lifted and he coughed painfully.

Steve’s head lulled to the side as he tried to blink the stinging smoke and after-images out of his eyes. He struggled to stand up just as the door to the bathroom was kicked down. He tried to tackle
the assassin, but he just wasn’t quick enough. There were two gunshots and Steve didn’t think one of them came from the SHIELD agent.

Light cascaded out of the bathroom and the dark form of the assassin walked out. Steve could faintly make out the noise of a girl crying. The assassin held up his gun, pointed straight towards Captain America. He kept it locked on him as he walked towards the stairs.

Fire was licking at the walls, sparking from the earlier flash bang. Steve was stuck deciding between saving Pierce’s daughter or going after the assassin. He didn’t have to think too hard.

The moment the assassin slipped out of sight Steve was in the bathroom. Both Secretary Pierce and the SHIELD agent were down. He checked their pulses and found only stillness. The little girl was crying in the bathtub. Steve scooped her up along with his busted shield.

He figured the assassin was gone, but he wasn’t going to risk going out there defenseless.

The fire was worse than he expected. Amora and Sam were both knocked out, but luckily alive. The agent with them was dead. He easily hefted Sam onto his shoulder with Pierce’s daughter clinging to him, before grabbing Amora around the waist.

The door was completely gone, allowing him to easily haul them all out. Sandy was coughing through her tears when they reached the open yard. He carefully set down Amora and Sam while still carrying the little girl.

The assassin was nowhere in sight.

Chapter End Notes
Compared to the crisp air in Jotunheim and the unique scent of Beskyttet, Midgard almost smelled putrid.

Loki had his Aesir glamour on as well as the armor Tony had designed for him. Tony was in his own armor and Jarvis was perched on the back of Tony’s seat.

“Are you certain she got the message?” Loki asked while lounging in the comfortable chair in Stark Tower.

“Yup and my spies confirmed it. Also, if you were paying attention you’d notice that there are two snipers set up to our east and due north.” Tony waved in the separate directions. “And now their firing pins are melted.”

Loki ate another Red Vine while refraining from checking his pocket watch for the fifth time. Soon enough the TV came on and showed three quinjets nearing Stark Tower.

“How do you even keep this whole place impenetrable?” Loki asked idly as he stared at the image on screen.

“It’s not as protected as my other homes, but since there are no real mages other than me, you, and almost Amora in this realm I wasn’t too concerned.”

“I love how much you didn’t answer the question,” Loki said dryly.

“Do you really care or are you just filling silence, ‘cause I have days’ worth of that stupid shows you like recorded.” Loki abruptly sat up straight.

“Why didn’t you say so before?!” Loki made a hasty waving motion. “Put one on!” Tony glanced at the screen and it changed to a show about women trying on dresses for their wedding day.

Loki scoffed and put his feet up on the coffee table as he watched with rapt attention. He heard the quinjet land, but didn’t take notice.

“Ha!” Loki said loudly while throwing a candy at the screen when one of the women broke down
crying. The unnerving sensation of Thor being nearby briefly distracted Loki, but the father of the bride to be defending himself to the camera quickly pulled his attention back to the screen. Heavy boots ran into the room and Tony made a waving motion, pausing the show. “I’ll have your head for that,” Loki warned while pulling out a dagger and pointing it at Tony. He heard guns being pulled and glanced around. All the Avengers were there, excluding Ant-Man and Falcon. There were twenty plus SHIELD agents, all with their plastic guns pointed at the two gods. Coulson wasn’t among them. “Right, the meeting.” Loki disappeared his Red Vines and sat up properly. “Howardson, if you will.”

“Right? Where’s Fury?” Tony asked while looking at Commander Hill.

“He’s out on business.” The agent had a very professional look as she held her gun firmly yet pointed at their feet as opposed to their face as the SHIELD lackeys were.

Loki could feel Thor staring at him, but he ignored him.

“Rude,” Tony mumbled while shaking his head. He glanced in Loki’s direction. “This is about the fate of humanity and he just decides to play hooky.” Tony refilled his glass with fire ale while sighing. “No matter. I had one of my associates pick him up earlier.”

Tony pointed towards the kitchen. The pantry door opened and an unconscious Nick Fury fell out of it. Hill gestured for three of her agents to retrieve him.

Other than a large gash and lump on his head the director looked normal.

Tony snapped his fingers and a bucket appeared overhead, dumping ice cold water on Fury and the three agents. Fury sputtered and yanked himself free.

Loki was somewhat impressed that none of the agents pulled the trigger, despite obviously being startled.

“What the hell?!” Fury reached for his sidearm, but it was missing.

“Good morning sunshine. The world says hello!” Tony said cheerily and Fury wheeled around, quickly taking in his surroundings. Hill tossed him a plastic gun and Fury caught it before going to her side.

“Report.”

“Howardson walked into Amora’s dream this morning saying he’d bomb a major city in each country if we didn’t get here by noon.”

“And it’s 11:30. That’s ballsy. I was expecting you to get here an hour ago, personally.”

“We were going to bomb cities?” Loki asked under his breath while looking at Tony. “Can we bomb Nevada? Not just a city, but all of Nevada?”

“What do you have against Nevada? I like Nevada,” Tony said in an equally hushed voice.

“I don’t like how it sounds. It’s just a terrible name—”

“Would you two stop fucking around?! Why did you ‘summon’ us here?” Fury asked, blinking away some of the water that had miraculously stuck to his bald head only to roll into his eye.

“I helped build Las Vegas. We’re not bombing Nevada,” Tony said before turning towards the
director. “Do you want me to heal that wound on your head? I think it’s making you a bit disrespectful.” Behind them Jarvis called out shrilly, causing more than one agent to flinch. Tony stood up, unsheathing one of his swords. “I wasn’t planning on killing anyone today, but I’m more than happy to change my plans if it means not being disrespected.”

“Howardson,” Thor growled out while grabbing Mjolnir. The hammer suddenly fell from his hand, hitting the ground loudly. Tony turned his head to the side and Loki marveled at the look of complete shock on Thor’s face.

“Were you saying something?” Tony asked. His voice was emotionless, but his eyes were blazing. When Thor did not respond, Tony twisted his sword once before sheathing it next to its brother on his back. He walked towards some of the agents and they moved out of his way. He grabbed a bottle and a few glasses off the bar before walking back over. Loki loved how imposing he looked.

“Now let’s talk like civilized folks.” Tony sat down next to Loki and made a hand gesture. The chairs in front of them became all tilted in his direction. “Please take a seat, Avengers and Fury.”

No one moved at first as Tony proceeded to pour drinks. He glided one across the coffee table and the only reason it didn’t shatter on the floor was because Amora caught it with her magic.

“I think we should do as they say,” Amora said while holding the glass and taking a seat. She took a sip and cringed. “Do you perchance have any spiced wine?” Jarvis flew over and landed on Tony’s shoulder. The golden eagle ruffled his feathers and the glass in her hand changed to a goblet. She took a sip of the contents. “My thanks.”

“Anytime. You're a guest, after all.” Despite his words being condescendingly nice Loki could sense that Tony was starting to get angry.

“Thor, stop being a fool and sit down,” Loki said as Thor tried to pick up Mjolnir, “You can play with your little hammer later.” Thor scowled, but sat as far away from Amora as possible. He grabbed one of the glasses off the coffee table and filled it with fire ale and sat down.

Soon after, Captain America sat next to Amora. The goddess softly asked the eagle for a second goblet and it was quickly delivered. Steve gave her an incredulous look.

“He wouldn’t poison us… that’s too juvenile,” Amora said to him and the blonde took the offered goblet. He tried the spiced wine and looked surprised by the flavor.

The other Avengers sat down one by one and Fury finally joined them in the only remaining seat which just happened to be directly across from Tony.

“Good, now where was I?” Tony asked while glancing at Loki. The younger god rolled his eyes.

“Fate of humanity and the like.” Loki shrugged.

“Right, humanity. Long story short: The Mad Titan Thanos is heading for Earth with forces in order to kill all of humanity along with other, more important realms.”

“The Mad Titan?” Thor asked while jumping up, his glass shattering on the ground. Tony sighed while staring at the broken glass.

“That was part of a set,” Tony mumbled, sounding put out. Loki rolled his eyes and cast a spell he’d used to cover up after himself and Thor when they were children. The glass shards came back together perfectly and the split ale disappeared.

“Howardson, Thanos is not to be joked about.” Thor’s voice was booming, instantly reminding
Loki of a time when he used to actually listen to the buffoon.

“Do I look like I’m joking?” Tony stared at him until the prince sat back down. Tony looked over at Fury. “Thanos was the one behind the invasion of New York. Loki was an unwilling participant in it. We shall say nothing more on that matter. All that you need to know is that Thanos is coming with an army and Loki and I plan to meet his forces head on with our own troops.” Tony looked at each Avenger in turn. “This is part of the reason I have allowed you all to live. War is coming to Midgard and unless you want to see the end of all human life you’ll fight, too. If the humans won’t fight then my troops from the other realms won’t bother trying to keep them safe. Their only concern is making sure Thanos doesn’t reach the other realms.” Tony looked at his drink, swirling its contents while he frowned. “Proof of this is being sent to the relevant governments in this realm and I’ve already set up an UN meeting. One of my representatives will be there. A representative from Hydra will be there, as well. They’ve already agreed to fight with us to defeat Thanos and save Earth.” Tony finished off his drink. “Stark Industries will start sending off top of the line weaponry to the countries that agree to fight after the UN conference.

“Stark Industries’ CEO Pepper Potts is in charge of the distribution. Bruce Banner has been working for my science division. When the war gets closer he’ll explain some of the new medical innovations he has come up with. Now get out of my tower before I decide I want to paint the walls with blood.” Loki hid his surprise when turrets descended from the ceiling and pointed at the SHIELD agents and Avengers. They quickly hurried to leave. “And take your ant, too, before I squish him under my boot!”

Jarvis squawked shrilly and beat his wings once. Two waves of red magic came from them. The slashes met in an ‘X’ in the middle of the room and Ant-Man appeared in his normal size. Two SHIELD agents picked up his semi-conscious form.

“That went well,” Loki said when the glass doors slid shut, blocking out the noise of the quinjet gearing up. Tony turned the TV back on and snuggled up against him.
“I can’t believe Loki watches reality TV,” Clint said when they finally got back to SHIELD HQ.

“Really? That’s the most surprising part of today for you?” Natasha asked. They exchanged a look and Clint sighed dramatically.

“Okay, probably not that important in the scheme of things, unless we can somehow use that show to brainwash him…” Clint half joked.

“Not likely. That episode is from three months ago,” Amora cut in, bouncing on the balls of her feet as she exited the quinjet.

“Do you Asgardians all like reality TV?” Clint called after her, but received no reply other than her childish laughter.

“I’m afraid it is true,” Thor said sadly. “I find myself hopelessly addicted to reality TV. Jane is ashamed by it, but Darcy watches it with me.” Thor nodded gravely.

“Stay on task, people!” Fury called to them loudly, pressing a compress to his head. “Thor, I need to know everything you know about this Mad Titan.”

“I know only a few tales of him. I fear that Loki is far more knowledgeable on the lore of our history.” Thor crossed his arms while frowning.

“Amora?”

“I skipped my history lessons!” she shouted. “Surprise piggy-back ride!” Amora jumped onto Steve’s back and the super soldier was jostled forward slightly, yet still caught her.

“Am I the only one that takes things seriously?” Natasha mumbled to herself. Coulson walked onto the helipad.

“Sir, we’ve received an information packet from Stark Industries. I took the liberty of opening it. It
has information on this Mad Titan character.” Two medics were following in Coulson’s wake. One went to Fury, but the director waved him off angrily.

Hank was still a bit out of it from his magical shock, but Amora had reassured them that it would pass.

“Good. Team meeting in half an hour,” Fury said while glancing at the few Avengers who hadn’t gone inside yet. He turned back towards Coulson. “I want everything we know about Bruce Banner. He’s apparently working for Howardson. Also, I got a fingerprint from my assailant. He had a metal arm like the one described in Captain America’s report.” Fury held out the cover of a book and Coulson carefully took it.

“Run it through every database we have. I want to get this son of a bitch. Pierce was a friend of mine.” Clint could tell Fury was starting to get irritated again. Clint was just glad he and Tasha weren’t on that protection detail.

He was still breathless from seeing the being he hated more than any other looking so human. The fact that he talked about bombing Nevada was somehow soothing. It fit with what Clint knew about him and contrasted with the stories Thor told about him every other time he stayed at Avengers Mansion.

He just really hated seeing that psycho son of a bitch. Clint had killed seven SHIELD agents because of him.

Clint felt Tasha brush up against him, her silent comfort bringing him back to earth. He’d properly thank her when they were alone. For now, he knew that she’d understand just by the tilt of his head, the ease of his gate.

The Avengers congregated to the briefing room. The whole situation at Stark Tower had been recorded by various agents so the only one who had to write a report was Ant-Man, but he was still too out of it to give an accurate account. The group knew it would do them no good to head back to the mansion since by the time they got there they’d just have to turn back around.

On the other hand, staying ran the risk of Fury taking out his frustrations on them.

Amora was already dealing out cards when Natasha and Clint entered the room.

At some point Amora had gotten them all addicted to a game she learned in Alfheim. The deck was completely different than the standard playing cards, but by this point they all knew it.

The game had a running score. Amora had the highest score, followed closely by Natasha, Clint. Hank and Sam were tied, Steve only seemed to be getting worse, and then at the very bottom was Thor.

Hank’s score would be left untouched since everyone betted using the 399 points they were given at the very start at the game.

“By show of hands: who thinks Howardson and Loki are full of shit?” Clint asked while raising his hand. Sam made a shaky hand motion and Steve shrugged. Everyone else was staring at their cards.

“I do not think they’d lie about something of this magnitude,” Amora said as she flipped the first card of the deck over, starting the game.

“It could just be a ploy to take over Earth. That was Loki’s original plan before we stopped him.”
Steve laid down three cards, earning him four points. A magical scoreboard was floating back and to the left of Amora. Depending on what Sam put down he could either steal the points and risk having them stolen by the next player or set down cards that would get him a few of his own points.

“Howardson stated that Loki was being mind-controlled,” Thor grumbled, a look of intense concentration on his face that Clint didn’t attribute to the game.

“Either way, that doesn’t excuse his actions after he ‘broke free’, assuming he’s even telling the truth,” Natasha said in a soft tone. It was a bit cruel to say, but it was true and Thor needed to hear it.

“I just want to know who this Thanos dude is.” Clint hated talking about Loki’s possible ‘redemption’ and always switched the subject.

“An undying being,” Amora said as darkness formed behind her and she made her move, earning 24 points. Another figure formed, this one kneeling in front of the form that was quickly shaping up to be female. “Mistress Death does not accept him despite him courting her by killing as many beings as possible. It is the worst love story in all the nine realms.” The goddess slumped forward as her 24 points were stolen by Thor. The figures faded.

“He is a fearsome creature originating from this realm.”

“He comes from Earth?” Sam asked before stealing 45 points from Steve. “On your left,” he whispered to the super soldier who just shook his head in response.

“No, he comes from this realm, but not this planet. This realm is far reaching, with more than one civilization. Earth is just in the very center of it all. Travel far enough away from Earth and you’ll leave the nine realms and Midgard,” Amora said in a dull voice.

“I did not know that,” Thor admitted.

“It is considered the gateway for a reason, Prince Thor.” Clint couldn’t tell if she was teasing him or scolding him. Thor let out a displeased noise that was halfway between a growl and a sigh.

“And who’s this Mistress Death lady?” Sam asked as Clint chuckled to himself while raking in 72 points that no one could steal.

“She is death. What else is there to know?” Amora said before she made an indignant pleading noise when Steve had a chance to steal 42 points from her. He paused, before finally stealing them. She completely slumped against him, mourning as Natasha took the lead.

“So… an assassin?” Clint scrunched up his nose, trying to understand. “Is that her alias like Natasha’s is Black Widow?”

“No, my friends, Mistress Death is the embodiment of death. She is one of the four embodiments. She is known for her scheming and periodically allows others a bit of power over her domain.” Thor frowned deeply. “Those she favors can be granted unimaginable power and become truly immortal. Even before Thanos decided to ‘court’ her, he was strong. Having her blessing has only strengthened him.”

They played a round in silence as everyone let the new information settle in their minds. It was only broken by a gleeful little noise as Amora took back the lead.

“Theoretically,” Natasha said while hiding the scowl that only Clint could see, “if he did attack,
what would happen?”

“With Midgard’s defenses as they are now? Complete annihilation.” Thor set down his cards before scratching his stubble. Jane preferred him clean cut.

The group fell silent again.

Coulson walked in and switched on the projector, heating it up as he connected it with the computer.

“And with Asgard’s help?” Sam asked. It was clear to see how uneasy he was.

“I fear with the Bifrost not working the All-Father would not risk allowing his troops too far from home.”

“Asgard has too many enemies,” Amora agreed.

“Mayhaps if we had the Tesseract to allow quick travel between the points in case one of the other realms attacked, but I cannot see him granting troops otherwise.”

The projector came on showing the SHIELD logo.

“The fingerprint of Fury’s assailant came back with results sooner than expected,” Coulson said, pulling everyone’s attention to him. They set aside their game and everyone turned their chairs to face the front. “The results were startling, but Fury’s facial description matches.”

Clint could tell something was wrong by the curve of Coulson’s half smile. Natasha noticed, too. Her eyes drifted to Steve and then back to Coulson. Clint observed Coulson and saw that his stance was tilted slightly towards Steve.

A man with dark hair and in a WWII uniform appeared on screen.

Steve took in a near silent gasp. Amora gently took his hand into her own.

“James Buchanan Barnes, former member of the Howling Commandos,” Natasha said from memory.

“But— I saw him die,” Steve’s voice was shaking, full of disbelief.

“It was a very clear thumb and middle finger prints.” Coulson’s voice was measured. The image on screen changed to a sketch with the current date on the bottom. It undeniably looked like the lost soldier.

“No, this can’t be.” Steve was staring at the table. “He’s dead.”

“We thought you were dead, too,” Coulson whispered.

“No! Bucky’s dead!” Steve stood up, slamming his fist on the table, causing it to crack down the middle and for the deck of cards to fall over. Amora stood swiftly and engulfed him in a hug. “He just can’t be…” Steve’s voice faded. “I couldn’t see him through the smoke. He set the secretary’s house on fire, he sent down a smoke grenade as if he— No, no, this just doesn’t make any sense.” Steve fell into his seat and Amora wrapped her arm around him again. “This has to be some trick.”

“We only just finished surveying Secretary Pierce’s former residence. We found a blood sample there. It matches a DNA sample we took off one of Bucky’s coats at the museum. I’m sorry Steve, but all the signs are pointing to him being alive.”
“Then why did… why did he attack me? He has to have known it was me.” Steve’s voice was starting to quiver. He leaned forward, resting his elbows on his legs and head in his hands.

“We don’t know why he’s working with Howards—”

“He’s not!” Steve shouted while standing up. “Bucky was… he was a good guy. He’d never…” Steve quickly deflated again. “Even when Bucky knew Howardson as Howard he didn’t like him. He wouldn’t work with those psychopaths.” Silent tears ran down Steve’s face.

“How do we plan on tracking him down?” Natasha asked, trying to bring order to the situation.

“Thus far we haven’t had any luck. After his attack on Secretary Pierce’s home we only found a bit of blood on the doorstep. We’ve already sent agents to where Fury was hiding. If there is a clue to his whereabouts there, they’ll find it.”

Amora was fretting, but it didn’t seem to be directed towards Steve and his distress.

“What is it?” Clint asked, carefully reading her expression, her body language. Amora shifted in her seat away from him. The line of her lips tightened. “You know something about this.” Steve looked over at her with wide eyes while moving his seat away from her.

“No! I don’t know anything about your friend!” Amora’s voice went up a notch as she waved her hands in front of her as if she was dispelling the very thought. Her eyes flitted around the room. “I just… I have a way we may be able to get some answers.” Natasha raised a single eyebrow while keeping her face stoic. Clint could see the assassin putting her emotional defenses up, bracing for a betrayal.

“What have you done now, Enchantress?” Thor asked roughly and Amora cringed at the use of one of her monikers.

“I didn’t do anything— it’s just Howardson gave me a gift,” she turned towards Steve, “this was years before either of you were born. I swear I didn’t know anything.”

“Just tell us how you can get the answers.” Steve’s voice was cold and Amora visibly shrunk.

“He gave it to me in case of emergencies, a way to flee and call for Jarvis…” Amora unclasped her necklace, the same gold one she always wore.

“And you’re just now telling us that?” Fury asked while walking in. “I knew we should have put you through the gauntlet.”

Clint watched on as the small golden pendant seemed to unwind, then twist around her thumb like a small snake. It looked like she simply kissed it, but there was a green spark and then red magic drifted down her hand to her forearm. She held it up and horizontal to the ground. The area directly above her arm started to become distorted. Clint recognized the shade of blue that was sparking. Clint was watching closely, but the golden eagle’s sudden appearance still startled him.

The avian was clutching a pendant in its beak that was identical to the one she’d just used. It dropped it and shrieked menacingly while extending its wings fully. Clint still remembered the one time the bird had breathed fire at Steve, keeping him pinned under a shield.

“I know. It’s alright.” Amora ran her thumb up its beak and between its eyes before petting its neck and back. “Your master seems to be associating with someone that he shouldn’t be.” Amora’s voice was a soft croon.
Clint made a split second decision and lunged for the bird from behind. The eagle somehow sensed him and the tips of its wings were suddenly metal. It spun around quickly and Clint only barely escaped having his throat cut by a bird. Its wings were spread threateningly and the metal slowly spread from ink black at its tips to gold until it truly was a golden eagle.

Clint felt Natasha’s hand on his arm.

“Not now,” she said softly. Clint looked at the avian before sitting back down.

“It’s alright,” Amora whispered running a hand down Jarvis’ back, unperturbed by how its claws had gouged marks into her arm. Clint’s eyes widened. He’d seen her take hits before from bullets, but none of them ever made her bleed. “Please. I need to send a message to him.” She scratched the underside of the eagle’s chin and it leaned into her. Slowly the feathers became normal. The bird hopped over to the table and it repaired it as he landed.

Clint tensed up when Jarvis waved its wings at her and soft red magic swept over Amora’s wounds, healing them up. He scratched at the table and a piece of parchment appeared on the table along with an ornate pen.

There was a blur and Jarvis disappeared with a spark of blue.

“The bird can use the Tesseract,” Fury mumbled. “What the hell are we supposed to do with a piece of paper?”

“It’s enchanted,” Amora stated simply while picking up the pen. She quickly began writing.

Howardson,

I’m here with the Avengers. I really like them. We would like to know about the person you sent to assassinate Secretary Pierce and attack Director Fury.

-Amora

The words faded away slowly.

“That’s some Harry Potter shit, right there,” Clint said, trying to break the tension. It didn’t work, but Natasha briefly grabbed his hand under the table, giving it a squeeze.

Clint let out a silent sigh and nodded in thanks to her.

The tension in the room redoubled as an image started forming. From Clint’s angle it didn’t make sense at first, but then he remembered the description of the assassin that Sam had written.

It was a mechanical arm, and a detailed one at that. On the shoulder was the profile of a bird, presumably a golden eagle.

Why? Was Howardson’s response. Amora bit her lip.

Please.

Both words faded away and Amora was practically gnawing on her lip as the moments passed.

Fine.

Sam and Amora jumped slightly when the paper suddenly shriveled in on itself.
“Oh Norns, I think he’s—” Before Amora could finish her sentence there was a strange buzzing noise and the wall seemed to completely disappear, revealing a new room.

Heat flooded the area. The walls of the strange room were glowing red and Clint wouldn’t be surprised if they were radiating heat.

Molten metal was resting in a crucible above glowing coals. Various tools were hung on the walls along with half-finished projects.

Clint almost didn’t recognize Howardson. Instead of his usual battle armor he was wearing clothing that looked almost rough along with some sort of shiny, flexible apron. Soot was smeared on his face and his hair was sticking to his forehead with sweat.

“Good— what time is it for you over there? Early evening, I guess.” Howardson shrugged and Clint was speechless. It looked like their room had just been torn in half, opening up to the depths of hell, but he could see at the very edges the eerie shade of blue that was the Tesseract. It took the help of scientists and a machine for Loki to do this, yet it looked effortless for Howardson. The only comfort was the fact that Howardson had been researching the Tesseract for years before SHIELD knew of its potential to be weaponized.

“Howardson!” Thor reached for his hammer.

“Really Flash Gordon, if you think I was dangerous in Stark Tower then you have no idea what I can do in my own home.” The molten metal oozed out of the crucible above the fire, slithering over to Howardson’s feet and resting there. Up close Clint could tell it formed a snake. Its tongue flicked out, a shade darker than its body.

“Where’s Bucky?” Steve said while standing up, resting both his hands on the table in a show of self-restraint. Howardson glanced at him for a moment.

“I’m here to talk to Amora. If anyone other than her speaks I’ll likely lose interest and all you’ll ever see of my assassin is either his bullet or knife. Am I understood?” The walls behind him seemed to grow brighter and the snake hissed while baring its large fangs. He turned his attention back to the goddess, his expression softening astronomically. “Mora-Mora, it’s good to see that you’ve settled down a bit. You’ve never stayed in one place for so long. I wonder what’s keeping you around…” Howardson glanced pointedly at Steve.

“This is serious—”

“Drinks before business. I refuse to believe that you’ve forgotten that custom.” Howardson waved dismissively. The metal snake coiled at his feet before reaching its head upwards. Howardson petted the molten metal. There was a loud keening noise and hissing as he pulled a chunk of metal into his bare hands. It quickly took the shape of goblets as the snake eased itself back to the ground, its head reforming. Howardson blew on the goblets and they solidified instantly into a black metal. Howardson wiped them on his apron briefly. “Jarvis,” Howardson called out.

Clint hadn’t even noticed the eagle perched in one of the recesses of the glowing wall until it ruffled its feathers.

Howardson held out the goblet for Amora. She moved around the table and just outside of the portal. The snake slithered towards her and Clint really wished he hadn’t left his bow and arrows in the quinjet. Thankfully it moved past her and somehow grabbed a chair, dragging it to Howardson. He sat in it carelessly before taking a large gulp of his drink.
“Mm, mead… the good stuff, the kind you can only get from the royal brewery,” Howardson said while glancing at Thor. “Thank your father for me when you get the chance.” Coulson grabbed onto Thor’s arm and Natasha put herself between the two gods.

“Tony.” Amora’s voice was pleading. She was gripping her goblet tightly. Howardson let out an audible sigh and his whole frame slumped.

“What is it now, Amora?” He sounded completely exasperated. Amora grabbed a chair and sat across from him, the line separating the two rooms and two realms just between them.

“Who is the assassin?” she asked bluntly.

“Well, when I found him he was labelled as the Winter Soldier, and I didn’t bother changing it.” Howardson shrugged slightly and took a sip of his drink.

“Tony!” Amora threw her goblet at him in frustration and the snake struck out, snatching it out of the air. It was smashed under its molten teeth and steam escaped as the mead evaporated.

“Loki mentioned that Lorelei loved throwing food. I suppose that’s a family trait.” His eyes were narrowed dangerously and Clint saw Natasha subtly reach for her plastic sidearm.

“Tony.” Amora was using a childish pleading tone that every Avenger in the room was familiar with.

“Mora-Mora, you can’t expect me to just—”

“Please.” She leaned forward slightly, clearly pouting.

“Why should I tell you anything? You’re clearly one of them.”

“Tony!” Her voice only became more pleading and Clint’s stomach clinched, having fallen victim to her pleas on more than one occasion. “Talk to me like a friend, not like prey, please.”

Howardson slumped even further into his seat before drinking all his mead in one go. He held up the goblet slightly and Jarvis ruffled his feathers, refilling it.

“Fine, I was out adventuring and I stumbled upon a frozen human with a familiar face. I decided to take him home as a souvenir. Whole story. How are you liking being domesticated?”

“I’m not—” Amora let out a huff, refocusing. “What is his given name?” Howardson looked away from her as he took a sip. He seemed to be contemplating his answer.

“Bucky something. I don’t know. I met so many humans. You can’t expect me to remember every one of their names—”

“Tony!”

“Fine, yes, it’s Bucky Barnes. You know, Mora-Mora, you can be rather annoying when you want to be.”

“Give him back to us,” Amora demanded and Clint was surprised by the strength in her voice.

“Finders keepers.”

“Anthony Howardson!”
“Fuck, Amora. Don’t shout at me.” Howardson rubbed his ear, spreading even more soot. Clint didn’t know how to interpret this side of the god that Thor had told stories of unimaginable cruelty about.

“Then give me what I want.”

“And what will I get in return?” Howardson’s semi-playful tone evened out.

“You’ll get my gratitude. That should be more than enough.” Amora sat up perfectly straight, for once looking like nobility.

Howardson stared into his goblet as he swirled its contents. The golden eagle swooped over, landing on the god’s shoulder.

“He was such a good tool. Fine.” The portal snapped closed.

“Is that it?” Clint asked, but before he could receive a response another portal opened.

Instead of heat seeping out it was now frigid air. The room was dim and there was almost a metallic humming. The molten snake was still at Howardson’s feet.

Clint could see a chair that looked like it belonged in an insane asylum. There was a strange helmet that made Clint’s blood run cold. He didn’t know what it did, and he sincerely hoped he’d never find out.

Howardson turned his back on them as he started typing away on a panel on the side of a metal cylinder.

On the metal cylinder the words: THE WINTER SOLDIER were partially crossed out with green ink, leaving it as: THE WINTER SNORER.

Clint arched his neck, trying to get a better view of the room, but the molten snake hissed at him in warning. He could just barely see the side of another metal cylinder.

Howardson was mumbling to himself under his breath.

“Mint condition… even upgraded his arm. And for what? Stupid Mora-Mora.”

“Don’t pout,” Amora said while still sitting regally in her seat. Clint could see the tension in her shoulders, but it didn’t come through in her voice. “What happened to him?” Howardson glanced back at her.

“I’m giving you the puzzle as a gift and a show of goodwill. Don’t expect me to solve it for you as well.”

The front panel lurched before sliding to the side. Cold fog poured out of the cylinder, ghosting across the floor and into their room. Steve gasped as the unconscious man came into full view.

Amora stood up gracefully, walking into the room and straight to the man, completely ignoring the molten snake. Her hands glowed softly as she touched his face.

The two mages exchanged a look and Howardson shrugged.

Amora easily lifted the human out of the icy cylinder and onto her shoulder.

“You have my thanks.” Amora nodded curtly in Howardson’s direction as she crossed the
threshold that separated the realms.

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” Howardson said while cleaning soot off his hands with a cloth. Amora carefully lowered Bucky onto the table. Howardson eyed the unconscious assassin a moment before glancing at each individual in turn, his sinister grin back in place. “Until we meet again, Avengers.” With that, the portal snapped closed and disappeared into nothing.
“I hate the scent of ash,” Loki complained as Tony wiped soot off his face with a dirty cloth.

“You’ll get used to it.” Tony tossed the cloth at him. Loki made a distressed noise and sent an ice dagger flying, nailing the rag to the wall.

“Go take a shower. You disgust me.” Loki waved him away while looking back at the spell book he had been flipping through. He held back a grin when Tony sighed and went to take a shower.

Loki was still high off his brief encounter with the Avengers, despite the subject matter of his visit. The look on Thor’s face when Mjolnir fell from his hand… it was something Loki would never forget.

Loki was also a bit excited to go to the capital topside city of Svartalfheim. Neither he nor Thor had ever been allowed into the Malekith’s unnamed city. The dark elves weren’t particularly friendly to Aesir or Vanir, but those sentiments were tenfold in the walled off capital city. Before the war with Muspelheim, Jotunheim, and Vanaheim, Asgard was at war with Savertalfheim. The complete devastation laid upon the larger realm was not forgotten by the dark elves.

Malekith was the leader of the dark elves, or at least that was what Loki was taught to believe while growing up in Asgard. Now that he had been to the realm instead of just the capital city of the dwarves Loki could tell that Svartalfheim’s dark elf society was not as united as Loki once thought.

Tony had been more than happy to brag about how he shook the whole realm up. Most dwarves and dark elves weren’t exactly friendly, but they weren’t as outwardly hostile as they were before Tony set up shop there. At first he acted as an intermediary between the two races, showing the beauty of trade. He only made a small profit, circumventing the taxes that the two races put on each others’ goods, getting them comfortable with the idea of buying dwarvian technology and dark elf charms.

After that, he got in close with a few of the biggest distributors of each race, charmed them, made meals, and got the groups to meet each other. There was still the problem of the elves taxing dwarve made items and vice versa.
When they cooperated, the items they made raked in quite the profit. Money created political pull. Items that were made by both dwarves and dark elves didn’t have the same taxes on them.

Joint profit tended to create friends out of old enemies, especially if they were only enemies because they were told to be by their parents and grandparents.

Neither King Pendir nor Malekith had been too happy about that.

From there it was inevitable that the two groups came into contact more often. Malekith had never forgiven Tony for that. It as another thing that made Loki grin. For once there was some noble who wasn’t an Aesir who hated Tony.

Tony came back into the library, wearing some of his more discreet, yet no less effective armor. It had the dull colors that the dark elves tended to favor.

Loki wasn’t planning on dressing so drably. He would dress in the armor Tony made him, the one with an inlaid snake design. It was dark and threatening.

Loki disappeared the book before the armor formed around him as he stood. His scepter formed in his hand and he checked its blade, still as deadly as the day it was forged. Loki’s tongue flicked out, tasting the blade that had tasted so much blood.

He could see lust come alive in Tony’s eyes. So easy.

Loki stalked forward, using the tip of his scepter to tilt Tony’s chin up. Tony was grinning like a mad man, but kept his hands to himself. Loki had a feeling that he had taken care of himself in the shower.

“You ready?” Tony asked as Loki tilted Tony’s chin up even more, blade threatening to break skin.


Tony had an annoyingly pleased look on his face as a portal opened, the hazy plains of Svartalfheim appearing.

The grass crunched under Loki’s boots. He had never seen the high black walls of the capital city in reality, but it matched the drawings he had seen in various books.

Loki knew that they both were walking with an air of importance that stood out compared to the sparse landscape and the few dark elves that were milling about.

The guards outside the gate each had a dog at their side. They were ugly mutts, broad shoulders, permanent snarls, and dark eyes. They moved in tandem with each of the guards they flanked. A guard shifted forward and his dog stood, eyes squarely on the two gods.

“Malekith the Accursed isn’t expecting us. Tell him that Tony Mariason, Lord of Beskyttet and Head of the Kanter Guild is here along with the king of Jotunheim, Loki Laufeyson.” The second half caught the guard’s attention and they gave Loki a confused look. The god grinned maliciously and let his eyes turn red for a brief moment.

One of the guards slipped through a narrow opening by the gate, a dog loyally following at his heels.

Tony turned slightly towards Loki. The younger god gave him a questioning look, not used to him not immediately saying whatever was on his mind.
“So, don’t get mad,” Tony started off and Loki immediately was pulling his emotional and mental guards up.

“What did you do?” Loki hissed at him, his grip on his scepter tightening.

“Amora got in contact and was being all whiny and pleading about our icy assassin. I handed him over, built up some good will, irons in the fire, and the like.” Loki rolled his eyes. “Don’t worry. We still have our other one.”

“Good. I hate the idea of losing an edge up.”

“Lokitty,” Tony said in the silent language causing him to perk up, “we’ll never lose our edge. We’re too good for that.”

“So says you. I’m done being overly optimistic.”

“Don’t confuse my positive words for optimism. If there’s a pair in all the realms, even outside the realms that can take it all over, it’s us. We took over Jotunheim in the span of a day. Niflheim is ours by proxy. I’m practically the de-facto head of Muspelheim. Svartalfheim is slowly falling into our clutches. Alfheim doesn’t care who they’re ruled by, so long as things don’t change too drastically. Asgard will be ours soon enough and with it comes Vanaheim. After the war Midgard will be weak and easy for the taking. It will be entertaining using the Avengers to do our dirty work.”

“And what of Thor?”

“That’s up to you, Lover. I never had a true grudge against him, only his father. I’m sure he won’t be too pleased when he finds out we killed both his parents. He may seek revenge, unless we have something of his that’s will stay his hand,” Tony said while shrugging.

“No such thing exists. You have never seen him at the height of his anger. On the first day of the war he charged into battle with such vigor that he ended up splitting the attacking forces in half through the power of his anger alone.” Loki had heard the tale a thousand-fold and it never ceased to annoy him. The fool put his comrades in danger by breaking formation and having them follow him into the worst of the fray.

“Well, do you want him dead?” Tony finally asked. Loki let out a thoughtful hum, but before he could answer the gates were opened.

Even more ripcord dogs accompanied by guards exited the walled in city. Their expressions were mostly unreadable.

Loki could sense that Tony wasn’t tense. Loki forced himself to do the same.

With hooded eyes he looked around the city as they were ushered inside. Unlike most of the cities above ground the buildings here were uniform and like barracks. Dogs were everywhere, all watching them, the outsiders. The female dogs were larger and Loki could see a small hut where a dog was nursing her pups, all the while snarling.

Jarvis was perched on Tony’s shoulder and more than one of the hounds growled at him. The golden eagle would screech at them in retaliation. It caused the hounds to flinch.

“Malekith loves his war dogs,” Tony commented while reaching up to pet Jarvis.

“I always wondered what that stench was when he came to Asgard,” Loki said under his breath and
Tony laughed loudly, causing even more eyes to be drawn to them.

The further into the city they walked the less Loki liked it. The city was crude and primitive compared to Beskyttet. It looked like the walls that surrounded it not only kept intruders out, but new ideas and innovations out as well.

When they took over the realm Loki would be sure to destroy this city and build a better one in its place.

The main building did not resemble any castle or palace Loki had ever seen before, which made sense considering Malekith never claimed to be king, only ruler of all dark elves. His hold over the dark elves had slipped over the centuries, but he was still considered the leader by the All-Father. It was easier to have a face for the group, not that the dark elf had been to Asgard since Tony blinded the All-Father. Both the dwarves and dark elves had stopped paying tributes. After the war with Muspelheim Asgard had been too worried about upsetting one of their key allies, Alfheim.

Instead of a castle Malekith had what could only be described as a large circular hut that contrasted with the rectangular barracks. The two war dogs flanking the door were twice the size as any of the other ones.

Inside smelled even worse. Loki scrunched up his nose, debating on whether or not he should cast a spell to surround him with a more pleasant scent. The elves all around them looked far too tense though. No need to agitate them further.

They were made to wait in an obvious power play. Tony kept trying to get one of the unmoving guard dogs to come over by summoning meaty morsels and offering them up to them. It was completely annoying, but Loki found it humorous only because of how irritated some of the elves became when their dogs looked in Tony’s direction.

Tony made a morsels float in the air and one of the hounds jumped up and snatched the meat out of the air with a loud chomping noise as its jaws clamped down on it.

“Such a good boy!” Tony complemented while throwing out another piece of meat before an elf could grab the dog by the scruff of its neck. Loki held back a cringe as the dog let out a yelp as it was tossed against the wall. “Such a bad boy!” Tony said in the same condescending voice to the elf that had thrown the war dog.

A door opened and a pleasant looking female dark elf walked out. She gestured to the pair to enter. Loki stood gracefully while Tony waved at the elf guard condescendingly. Loki would have pushed Tony for his continual idiocy, but that was a bit too playful. They had an image that needed to be maintained.

Malekith was sitting in an obnoxious purple chair with inlaid black jewels and flared out feathers. There were four other elves in the room, all dressed in the same ugly uniform as the elves that patrolled the city. The only difference in Malekith’s outfit was that he was wearing a fuchsia colored cape that had shrunken hands fist on his shoulder, keeping the cape in place.

“Aesir pig,” Malekith sneered as he looked at Tony. Loki held back a grin. For once there was someone outside of Asgard that hated Tony. Loki was so sick of everyone practically falling at Tony’s feet. “And Prince Loki.” Malekith’s shrewd eyes looked at the god. “You have grown since we last met.” The day when Odin was blinded.

“Yes, I have grown,” Loki said, undeterred by him. “And it’s King Loki now, of Jotunheim.” Loki let his glamour slip away. “Odin might have forgotten to mention that I am Laufey’s son.”
The other dark elves in the room hid their surprise poorly. Malekith narrowed his eyes as the pair sat down. Jarvis jumped from Tony’s shoulder to a taxidermied dwarf’s head on the wall. The three oversized war dogs in the room watched the raptor closely.

Loki let frost creep from him. It made a soft crackling noise that made one of the war dogs hop backwards before creeping forward to sniff it cautiously. It let out a grunt before sitting back down.

“A Jotun, an Aesir, and a dark elf sit down to talk about an inevitable war… There’s a joke to be made there, but I just can’t think of it,” Tony said as he made himself comfortable in his seat.

“I relish the day when I can finally cut your throat,” Malekith said while a long spear appeared in his hand. “What tale have you spun for us today?”

“No spinning, weaving, or crocheting needed. Only the truth.” Tony leaned forward and smiled charmingly. Malekith was unaffected. “I have already rallied Midgard’s troops and Loki has taken control of Jotunheim and their forces. I have an army on Muspelheim at my beck and call. I need only slit a throat or two in order to have Asgard’s forces working under me. The Niflungs and Vanir will do as they’re told. The Mad Titan is coming and we all need to stand as one. I have means far superior to the Bifrost that can get us to Midgard in order to make our stand there before he can destroy each realm, one by one.” Tony leaned back. “As much as I hate to admit it I need you to gain back some of your power so that you can lead the dark elves when the time comes.”

“Why should I believe a word that you’re saying?” Malekith asked. One of the dogs started growling at them.

“Other than the fact that it’s the truth?” Tony started tapping his fingers against the armrest. “Well if you don’t than I’m sure someone who will believe me would be quite happy to take your place.”

Tony glanced at the other elves in the room and the tension became tenfold.

Malekith’s grip on his spear tightened.

“You insolent child. I am not Odin the Unseeing! I won’t be so easily fooled! Each elf in this city has pledged total allegiance to me!” The other elves grabbed their swords, but didn’t draw them. “And do you know why? It’s because I am a true warrior and leader!” Tony seemed unaffected by Malekith’s shouting. “It’s because I’m not some slick merchant who makes my wealth from finding loopholes, nor am I some spell-tossing Jotu-”

Tony was on the dark elf in an instant, a dagger lodged deep in Malekith’s guts.

“Do not talk to him like that,” Tony whispered into Malekith’s ear, just loud enough for the other elves to hear. Loki sat stunned until one of the elves drew his sword. Loki flung his arms out and ice daggers hit each elf in turn.

Jarvis swooped down and tackled a dog that Loki hadn’t even noticed. With a quick movement Loki swung his scepter low, killing the other two war hounds. He sidestepped to the left, disemboweling an elf that was trying to raise his sword.

The loud noise of the war dog being torn to shreds by Jarvis alerted the guards outside of the room. Loki wheeled around, ready to fight them, but they stopped short when they entered the room.

From the corner of his vision Loki could see Tony heft Malekith up, a dagger to the elf’s throat. The metal from Malekith’s spear had been melted and now was spun around him, making him immobile.

“Why look at that,” Tony said in false amazement. “They really are loyal to you.” One of the
guards took a step backwards and told the dogs to heel. “I must admit that I’m impressed. I somehow forgot how primitive you all are compared to the rest of Svartalfheim. As cute as your little militia is I now see that it has no place in my war.” The beast Jarvis was eviscerating finally died with one last wet grunt. Tony glanced over at Loki, still not having loosened his hold on Malekith. “What do you say, King Loki? Shall we fight our way out of here or should I just kill them all in an instant?”

“You think you can just—” Tony jammed his dagger through the bottom of Malekith’s jaw, silencing, but not killing him. The guards tensed up.

“And perhaps if you had taken us seriously instead of just thinking I’m some merchant and calling Loki a,” Tony paused, guanine anger in his eyes, “spell-tosser we could have gone to war together. You thought too little of us.” Tony twisted the dagger, causing even more blood to come from Malekith’s lips.

“I think I’d enjoy watching this ugly city destroyed,” Loki said conversationally while wiping the blood off his scepter on the sleeve of a dead elf. Tony’s whole face lit up.

“As you wish, Lover.” Two portals opened. Jarvis flew through the smaller of the two before Tony began backing out while still holding Malekith captive. Loki made sure the pair was through the portal before following. It fizzled shut and Tony slit Malekith’s throat. Loki recognized the outer wall of the city. “This will be far more interesting if we had a bird’s eye view,” Tony said as Malekith’s dead form fell to the ground.

Loki grinned, already excited to see what sort of mayhem Tony had in store. He shifted into a magpie and Tony became a golden eagle. High above he could see chaos slowly spreading through the city. Jarvis joined them, a yelping puppy carefully clutched in his talons.

A blue rift appeared in the sky not too far away from them. A few of the elves below spotted it and started shouting indecipherably. The portal opened and bright orange and yellow lava spilled forth onto the city. The sudden heat caused an updraft that Loki’s wings automatically compensated for.

It was almost painful to look at as the lava knocked over the rectangular buildings. Dark elves all dressed in the same uniforms tried to flee, but the molten rock moved fast. The rift continued spitting out lava and globs as big as horses soared through the air, landing indiscriminately.

Loki’s eyes grew wider as the wall soon became an outer casing as the whole city was filled. The portal was closed.

The settled lava darkened, but Loki could still feel the heat.

After staring at it for a few minutes they landed in one of the fields.

“Well, that didn’t go quite according to plan,” Tony said shakily. Loki realized that Tony was sweating not only from the heat, but from fatigue.

Jarvis dropped the howling war pup into Tony’s arms.

“What’s that all about?” Loki asked while gesturing towards the dog.

“It’s good to have a pet, and she might come in handy some day.” Tony shrugged while petting the dog. It was slowly calming down. “You ready to go home in Beskyttet? I could use a bit of rest.” Tony’s smile was shaky and Loki instantly felt concerned.

“Of course.” Loki took the pup from Tony’s arms. A portal slipped open and Loki gestured for
Tony to go through first. He did not protest and they were home soon enough.
Tony collapsed onto a plush chair, a glass filled with alcohol automatically appearing in his hand. “We shall find another way to rally the dark elves,” Loki tried to comfort him.

“I know.” Tony let out a stuttered breath. Loki moved in closer, Jarvis having already taken away the pup to who knows where. Loki summoned a handkerchief and wiped away the worst of the sweat from Tony’s brow.

“This is not a setback,” Loki reiterated.

“I know,” Tony repeated. Loki didn’t like how defeated he sounded.

“Tell me what is wrong.” Loki sat on his lap, straddling his thighs and running his hands over Tony’s shoulders. There were a few stray flecks of blood on his armor.

“The Tesseract, depending on how I use it, can take up a lot of energy.” Tony sighed and Loki began unbuckling his armor. “It’s all the pressure that’s put on the edges of the portal. I opened up that portal in one of the lava lakes of Muspelheim, a secluded one that no fire giants frequent.” Tony paused before taking a sip of his drink. “Opening a portal is like flexing a muscle. I had to push the lava out of the way which wasn’t too difficult. It was stopping the rift from getting bigger as the lava poured out that was difficult.” Tony leaned his head back. “Next time I’ll open it in a shallower lava lake, less pressure.”

“You are amazing,” Loki said, giving one of his rare compliments.

“No, you’re amazing.” Tony’s voice turned cutesy and Loki punched him on the shoulder, just where Loki had removed the armor. Tony flinched, but didn’t complain.

“We should stay the night, float around in that pond you were bragging about.” Loki wiped away more of Tony’s sweat from his collar bone.

“What time is it, Lokitty?” Loki pulled out his watch, brushed his thumb against the image of Svartalfheim, then clicked the button labeled Beskyttet. The hands on the watch spun around quickly.

“7:38, I believe the sun ‘sets’ soon.”
“Perfect, dinner then a dip.”

“And what of that dog?” Loki asked.

“It will be fine.”

Loki pulled Tony up and he groaned, but did not put up a fight. Unlike their manor in Asgard this one’s doors did not automatically lock. Loki wasn’t sure how he felt about that. He liked the security the viper’s nest had, but he also liked how relaxed their time in Beskyttet felt. Instead of walls being covered with weapons they were adorned with paintings and photographs from all over the realms. There was also an inordinate number of pictures of currencies from different realms. It made Loki snort, but he didn’t comment.

The whole city smelled wonderful, and just outside of their home it smelled even better.

Tony had designed the city so that there was only one hill. He, of course, deemed that the proper place to build his manor. It was just at the edge of the city, opposite of the distant cavern mouth. It wasn’t backed against the cavern wall, though. There was a large garden that rivaled the beauty of the city’s park.

The centerpiece was a large pond. It was deeper than Loki had originally suspected. At the bottom was the same glowing moss that lit the entrance of the cavern. The water was deceptively calm. Flashes of color contrasted with the soft glow of the moss. Fish swam about the bottom, eating the small bugs that hid in the moss.

“Perfect,” Loki commented when they reached the edge. He stripped down and went into the slightly warm water. Tony had an almost amused look in his eyes. “Join me or die.”

“Yes, my king,” Tony said sarcastically, removing the last of his armor. His entry into the pond was far less graceful than Loki’s.

There were very few things that Tony could do as gracefully as Loki could.

Perched in a tree was Jarvis. He was the only reason Loki felt safe enough to let his guard down.

He slowly swam to the depths of the pond. He realized that it wasn’t just the fish that were causing the brief colorful flashes. Chips of metal littered the bottom of the pond. Loki quickly breached the surface. Tony was floating on his back, watching the sun slowly roll into the ceiling of the cavern. Loki brushed his long locks out of his eyes before wading over to Tony’s side.

The high salt content of the pond made the pair more buoyant, making it easier for Loki to float along with Tony.

It was peaceful, especially as the sun finally disappeared into the ceiling, casting an array of beautiful colors. The metal on the bottom of the pond seemed to catch every ray, casting it back to the top of the pond.

At some point their hands had joined. Loki had a faint smile as he felt the ring on Tony’s finger.

They floated in silence for a while. The water eased Loki’s muscles. He idly wondered what else was in the water, what sort of minerals were in the deep caverns of Svartalfheim.

He was weightless, but it was far different than when he… … let go, when the Void consumed him. Now he had an anchor. A stupid, vain, and inappropriate anchor, but an anchor none the less.
Jarvis screeched from above and Loki tensed up. Tony squeezed his hand.

“It’s nothing.” Tony let go and Loki was left to drift. Loki summoned a buoy and used it to float on his front. He watched Tony glide through the water.

Loki’s eyes narrowed as he spotted a tall figure standing at the edge of the pond.

Unacceptable.

Loki dove down, sneaking towards the pair, though he was certain that Tony knew he was coming.

He slowly rose back up, barely creating a ripple. His dark hair fanned out around him and his shoulders, with only his eyes and nose exposed. It was a female. Her eyes were purple, which spoke of fae heritage, but she was wingless... A mixed race.

“What do you expect me to do with this?” she asked while holding the war pup away from her body with a look of disgust on her face.

Tony was kicking his feet, creating waves as he held onto the side of the pond.

“Make it into a kickass guard dog.” Tony gave her two thumbs up. She tossed the war dog far into the pond.

“Damn it, Tony! I’m a botanist, not a dog trainer!”

“Ha! Told you you’d like Star Trek!” Tony went to splash her, but she hopped backwards and out of range. The pup was slowly paddling to the edge and Loki felt his suspicion grow. They were far too friendly for his liking. What made it worse was her fair complexion and striking black hair that matched Loki’s. He wouldn’t put it past Tony to fuck a surrogate when Loki still hated him.

“Leah, consider it a new test of your abilities. The ecosystem has been balanced since I introduced cats into the city.”

“Yes, and a vicious war dog will only disrupt that.” The pup made it to shore and Leah pushed him back in.

“The dog will be whatever you train it to be. That’s the beauty of dogs, even ones bred for fighting, they can be trained.” The war pup paddled back over to her and this time Leah didn’t shove it aside. A gold studded leash appeared in hand and around the dog’s neck. The war pup went to shake the water out of its short thistly hair, but she gave the leash a hard yank, stopping it.

Then she walked away and Loki swam over silently.

“Who is she?” Loki asked, grabbing Tony’s shoulders and dunking him under before he could respond. Tony sputtered as he came back up.

“Glorified gardener. She takes care of the park and my estate. She helped cultivate the moss and all the flowers in the park. She lives down the hill.” Tony dove under and Loki followed after him, not finished with their conversation. Loki was more limber and a faster swimmer than Tony. He yanked on his ankle, grinning as Tony came to a near halt. Though Loki was quicker, Tony was stronger, able to pull Loki forward. He would have let out a curse in annoyance, but couldn’t underwater.

Instead, he started lowering the temperature of the pond. Tony glanced backwards and glared at him before gesturing for them to go back up.
Loki frowned, a few bubbles escaping.

“Do you know how much those fish cost?” Tony asked the second they reached the surface.

“They can go to Helheim for all I care.” Loki was scowling, close to snapping at Tony.

“Retract your claws, Lokitty,” Tony teased. Loki splashed icy water in his direction.

“She’s too pretty and looks like a female version of me. Don’t act like you never noticed. You’ve probably slept with her half a dozen times whenever you came here. What is that half-breed anyway? Fae and Vanir? How dare you fuck me vicariously through her!” Loki surged forward, but Tony caught his arms, rendering him immobile in the water.

“First off, and least importantly, Leah is only a fourth fae. The rest of her is light elf. Secondly, I totally hired her because she resembles you and I wanted to fuck her till the sun—” Loki started struggling futilely, letting his anger drive him rather than his years of combat training. “But she’s asexual and not interested in me that way.” Loki stopped struggling and Tony pulled him closer. “Besides, it’s always good to have a bit of eye-candy around.” Loki kneed him in the groin and Tony immediately buckled forward, dunking himself under the water.

“You’re sick,” Loki hissed when Tony reemerged, letting out a painful groan.

“How do you expect our kids to be—” Before Tony could finish he had another mouthful of water and was choking on it.

“Bastard.” Loki kept him under water longer than was necessary, but Tony didn’t struggle. Eventually Loki just let him back up. “We’re not having this conversation again.”

“I was just teasing you—although there is a long tradition in which the firstborn’s name begins with the initial of their father’s last name. So start thinking up names that start with H!”

An icy wave grew high before crashing onto Tony’s head. The force was almost so great that he hit the bottom of the pond. He quickly swam back up, grinning the whole time.

“We have vastly more important things to think about than your imaginary family that is never going to exist!”

Loki pulled himself out of the water and began walking back to the manor, leaving behind his clothes. Tony let out an appreciative hum and Loki grinned to himself despite everything.

“Today’s work is done!” Tony shouted after him. “Can’t keep going all the time. Breaks are necessary! Unless you want to look like Odin the Unseeing” When Loki didn’t turn around or stop, Tony continued. “I never slept with her!” He received no response. “I’ve been working on a gift for you!”

“I shan’t be bought off!” Loki called out, not bothering to turn around. He disappeared, teleporting himself the rest of the way into the manor.

“Should have known a dog and a Lokitty wouldn’t get along.” Tony shrugged to himself before lazily floating on his back again.
Chapter Summary

Loki doesn't like Leah.

Chapter Notes

Much love to Temul, the best Beta ever!

Tony was shifting around pieces on a board. Loki was watching and occasionally adjusting a piece or two when he thought it was necessary. It was a new game of theirs, between making sure all the chieftains in Jotunheim were doing as they were supposed to and that Midgard had taken their warning seriously. Now they were playing war games.

They had settled on Loki commanding all of Jotunheim’s forces. Tony would of course take command of Muspelheim. Originally Svartalfheim’s forces were going to be commanded by a triumvirate, but with Malekith dead that wouldn’t work. The dark elves wouldn’t follow King Fendir. They needed to find a figure head. Tony was already looking for a replacement.

Niflheim would be under the control of Midgard’s leadership since they were so weak and usually specialized in healing and defensive magic.

Midgard’s troop chain of command was far more complex. Ms. Potts and Stark Industries was doing a wonderful job pulling both their political and financial power behind SHIELD, much to the confusion of SHIELD and the rest of the world.

When the war got underway, Fury and Hill would somehow lose their lives, putting Coulson in control as they had promised. From there Stark Industries would rebuild the world under Coulson’s and Ms. Potts’ supervision, as Tony and Loki saw fit.

Alfheim would be led by Loki since they respected him.

Who would lead Asgard and therefore the Vanir was still in question.

Today Loki was playing the part of Thanos’ troops, exaggerating their numbers and power of his forces. Or at least he hoped he was exaggerating them.

They still had to deal with Thanos’ apparent immortality. Tony said he was working on it, but Loki was incredulous. He did not like the idea of leaving such an important aspect to only Tony. They were supposed to be a team. Trust was hard to come by and Tony wasn’t making it any easier.

Loki had to admit that he very much enjoyed their war games. They would rearrange the forces, the locations, alliances, and leaders of the different groups.

Loki was annoyed to admit that Tony was ridiculously good at these war games. Tony credited
most of his finesse to Laufey, which sparked a bit of guilt in Loki.

Loki did have his victories, though. His greater knowledge of spells often took Tony by surprise, filling him with pride.

Loki excelled at small battles while Tony’s usually won when it came to large scale battles at multiple fronts.

Between the imaginary fights were real ones between them, both verbal and physical, yet they always ended one of three ways: Loki would bite and claw at Tony until he was pushed away, Tony would hug him tightly until Loki lost all his will to fight, or, more often than not, they’d end up entwined in each others’ bodies.

Today they were taking a bit of a break. Tony was showing him around the city. It was a beautiful open place and Loki could see himself raising children here.

That thought caught him off guard and he quickly stifled it before it could take root. Such thoughts were foolish, especially with an impending war on the horizon… If he lost and was captured, if he had a child growing inside of him, they would just torture him and his child for all eternity.

Tony showed him some of the factories where magic and machinery were melded, creating an unheard of efficiency that made Loki understand why Tony’s various businesses did so well.

Loki was surprised when Tony altered his will in Svartalfheim and Beskyttet, giving Loki all his property and businesses in the event of his untimely death. He already assured him that most of his properties would be transferred to Loki and to Tony’s protégés.

Loki was beyond angry when Tony mentioned they were going to Leah’s manor. He was even more annoyed when he noticed how close the two manors were. It was just down the hill and much smaller than Tony’s. What took up most of the property were greenhouses.

“I gave her a small star to use on her plants when she thinks it’s necessary,” Tony said offhandedly, not helping Loki’s annoyance.

Loki could sense the part Fae and Light Elf, but he couldn’t see her as they entered a garden.

The foliage and flowers were beautiful, much to Loki’s irritation. Strange plants from all the realms wove together easily. Flowers that only grew in one or two colors were speckled with all sorts of colors. Much to his amazement, some of the leaves had small runes on them that looked like they grew naturally.

Roots waved like snakes, putting Loki on his guard. This whole place smelled strange. He didn’t like it, but Tony seemed to be at ease, even plucking a flower and trying to weave it into Loki’s hair. He swatted his hand aside.

After what felt like aimless wandering they came to a large flower patch with a swarm of lavender bugs. Loki found it dizzying. Magic was at play.

Half the swarm shifted to the side, coalescing. Leah appeared. The swarm was thin behind her as it continued pollinating the strange flowers.

“You’re polluting my ecosystem,” she said while scowling.

“You’re polluting my good vibes!” Tony complained before throwing his arm around Loki’s waist. Loki’s stance became rigid. He wasn’t used to public displays of affection, both because it would
give their enemies ammunition and because it had never happened before. Clearly Tony trusted Leah more than most. That didn’t help Loki’s sour mood. He had to remind himself that Tony had pursued her purely based on her resemblance to Loki.

“How’s our dog doing?”

“Well since you neglected to name her I took the liberty myself,” Leah said as she started walking away. The bugs behind them flew to a small swirling cone, disappearing inside of it.

“And what name did you grace it with?” Tony said while flicking a shrub. It made a hissing noise and recoiled. Tony chuckled.

“Stop poisoning my plants with your dirty hands!” Leah nearly shouted while wheeling around to glare at them. Loki already had his arms crossed and his eyes narrowed. Her light purple eyes flickered to Tony.

“It wasn’t me,” Tony said with obvious false innocence. She scoffed and turned back around, leading the way. “So, what name did you give the war pup?”

“Gram. I refuse to have a useless mutt. I will train her to perfection.” Leah tossed her hair over her shoulder in an all too familiar fashion.

Doors slid open, similar to the ones on Midgard. Warmth eased out. The inside of the strange greenhouse looked eerily like Dr. Banner’s lab, but with countless beakers.

It was rather fascinating, not that he’d ever admit that. He could tell that most of the organic matter that floated and occasionally slithered were plants. Specimens vivisected and under microscopes or strange crystals.

Every so often he’d see a glint from the corner of his eyes. He finally focused in on one. It was an ash-grey chickadee. They flitted around machinery, somehow using tongs to fish out specimens.

“Lab assistants,” Tony explained simply. “It’s just a modified spell made by my ancestors. They’re nowhere near as powerful as Jarvis.” Tony shrugged.

“They do what is necessary.” Leah was looking at a gauge carefully. A chickadee was perched on her shoulder before it flew off and landed on a chart. Its small scratching formed neat handwriting.

“So why are you really here? You haven’t ogled me once and I doubt you’re here to check on Gram.”

“I come bearing gifts!” Tony said in a pompous voice as he held his arms out wide. No one was impressed. Tony snorted while grinning easily as he lowered his arms.

“Just get on with it,” Leah said while looking at some chart. Loki felt some of his hatred melt away. Evidently Tony surrounded himself with people who didn’t put up with his BS.

Tony sighed as the cooler that could quite possibly be the same one he’d given to Dr. Banner appeared.

“A potent poison that rendered even me immobile for a while, along with the antidote. Thought you might find them interesting.” He shrugged nonchalantly and Leah teleported in front of him, leaving a purple spark in her wake. She snatched the cooler out of his hands.

“You’re always such a tease. How is it transmitted?” She was eyeing the cooler, reading the warning label.
“It’s liquid. Any contact with bodily fluids sets it off. You could probably aerolize it if you were feeling particularly nasty.” Tony had that crazed look in his eyes that made Loki’s heart flutter.

“And what do you expect me to do with this?” She was already examining the many vials.

“What? Can’t a friend just give a gift from the goodness of his heart?”

“The only goodness of your heart is standing right beside you.” Leah was already putting small samples in microscope slides. Loki was a bit startled by her comment, but didn’t show it.

“Anyway,” Tony dragged out the word, “a human did most of the research. I had copies of all his work put in your study.”

“What have I told you about putting random things in my manor and property?” She glanced up from the microscope as one of the little birds switched slides for her.

“I don’t know. You threaten me a lot, but now I have a quick escape route in case you sic your plants on me again.”

A Tesseract portal appeared and Loki recognized the valley and pond in Alfheim that they randomly visited and had picnicked at. Leah looked out of it with curiosity. She stuck her hand through it while looking around the blue static edges of the portal. She made an uninterpretable noise.

Loki’s interest was piqued. He’d never bothered to see what was behind one of the portals. He froze when his eyes took in the sight of the Void. It sucked in light, giving nothing back. The blue edges of the portal looked like they were falling into it like water flowing over an edge.

Loki flinched when someone touched his shoulder, threatening to push him back into the nothingness that was almost as bad as the torture he had endured. He spun around, an ice dagger immediately forming in his hand, pressed against his assailant. His eyes were drawn to the single drop of blood that glided down a familiar throat—familiar, one that he had kissed, bitten, strangled… fallen asleep against.

“You must have a death wish,” Loki said as the dagger dissipated.

“I have plenty of data to back that hypothesis up,” Leah added dryly as the portal disappeared.

“Quick change of subject before you both gang up on me,” Tony said in a rush as he twisted around to face Leah. “I found the perfect man for you. He doesn’t know it, but I fed him a golden apple in a smoothie. Once the war is over I’ll introduce you two, if he’s still alive, which I think he will be.” Tony nodded confidently.

“You’re an idiot.” Leah deadpanned and Loki let out a cackle of a laugh. Perhaps Leah wasn’t as annoying as he originally suspected…
One of Tony’s satellites was the first to spot it. A small vessel was soaring through space. It had a similar design and energy signature as that of the Chitauri vessels. It was moving fast and both Tony and Loki were eager to be the first ones to intercept it. Loki because he wanted to feel blood between his fingers and Tony because he was curious by nature.

It had already been scanned for weapons, but had clearly been built for speed and evasion rather than battle. It wasn’t some quick acting bomb that could put a dent in Midgard before their plans could solidify.

Unfortunately, they weren’t the only ones to pick up the signal. Intercepting the spaceship was possible, but not without complications. The pair decided to just deal with the other organizations that showed up as they appeared.

They arrived with a flash and flare. All forms of weapons were immediately pointed at them.

“Just here for the show, boys and girls. You don’t mess with us and we won’t mess with you.” Tony held up his hands with an easy going smile. Behind him a portal appeared, a hoard of ash-wolves with fire dancers on their backs appeared, an obvious threat. Many agents didn’t know what to do. Their superiors motioned for their agents to lower their guns. The Avengers and Fury were there. They looked tense, but in control. Loki could tell that Thor wanted to speak, but for once the oaf held his tongue.

Loki raised an eyebrow in surprise when Ms. Potts appeared, flanked by five guards in Stark Industries uniforms. Despite her looking out of place in her light blue dress, cream colored heels, and perfectly prim hair, she had a presence like no other. She walked with the confidence of a queen, leaving little doubt on why Tony chose her to run one of his many companies. She was just another one of his protégés, but a good one at that.

She cleared her throat in a manner that almost sounded decisive. It drew the attention of everyone around her.

“As of three hours and,” she glanced at her golden watch, “thirty-seven minutes ago Stark Industries owns all 500 acres of this land as well as the airspace above it. We’re testing a new project that the FAA was made aware of two weeks ago—"
“You and Stark Industries can shove it. All that is shit you either bribed, bought, or straight out threatened your way into,” Clint said, his bow squarely aimed at Loki. The archer’s arm wasn’t even quivering under the strain of holding the string back.

“That is not the case, I assure you.” Ms. Potts maintained her professionalism despite a few guns being pointed in her direction. “Now if this group,” Ms. Potts used a pen to point to a group of suits, “would be so kind as to move, then you’ll all be at a lower risk of being smashed under our test flight.” The group looked around uncertainly until one of them with a slightly better suit motioned for them to move.

One of Ms. Pott’s bodyguards handed her a clipboard and a group of scientists appeared.

“This is a matter of national security. We’re going to have to ask you civilians to leave,” a suit said and Loki saw Fury grin.

“We’re not civilians. This is a military practice run by Stark Industries. We are working for them and have the authority to be here.” One of the suits grabbed his phone and started talking into it in a very hushed, angry manner. “Do I need to remind you all that this is Stark Industries’ business, proprietary information, a project approved by the US Air Force and FAA, and on private land?”

“Fuck your government bureaucracy BS!”

“That’s a very Hydra thing of you to say.” Ms. Potts’ voice was strong as she cut off Fury. “Do you care nothing for the rules and regulations that keep this country, this world, in order?” Fury tried to interrupt her futilely. “The constitution was put in place to protect against such tyranny.”

At this point Loki started actively not listening to her righteous speech. She seemed to have things under control and everyone was concentrating on her rather than the two ‘villains’ and the portal behind them.

He was more excited by what was going to soon be delivered to his feet. Would it be a minion or a scout for Thanos? Or would it be another victim that had been lucky enough to escape?

Loki belatedly noticed that Tony was laughing under his breath. Loki was happy and a bit jealous of him. He wished he could have such a positive, light attitude, but their circumstances were so different.

Tony knew of the betrayal that had befallen his family when he was just a child. Though it was no betrayal, now that Loki thought about it. Lord Howard was planning on overthrowing Odin. He’d have to kill off his two heirs to have less threats. Would Frigga have revealed that Loki truly wasn’t her son but Laufey’s in order to delay his death? He doubted it. All he ever was to her was a shield to keep her precious, perfect prince safe. Without Thor what use would she have for him other than to taunt Laufey?

At least if Lord Howard had taken over maybe Loki’s true heritage would have been revealed and he wouldn’t feel such a sense of betrayal towards his former family, one of which he’d already killed, another he planned to, and the last he had very mixed feelings about.

Loki’s circumstances weren’t so different than Tony’s… They had both been tortured, Tony for longer, but Loki more intensely. They never went into detail about it other than passing comments, but Tony admitted he’d rather have his years in Jotunheim’s dungeons than Loki’s year under the care of the Other.

Loki’s betrayal had spanned for years, had been all encompassing. He had been blinded by the love
He was supposed to have for his parents, what he thought he was supposed to feel. Yet he was beaten down both verbally and physically, the former by his whole ‘family’ and the latter by Thor and on rare occasions Odin, before he lost his sight.

His emotions, self-worth, and whole identity were subject to their whims. At least Thor hadn’t known about Loki’s origins. The arrogant prince was just a fool, yet Midgard seemed to be having a positive influence on him.

Loki was pulled out of his thoughts by Tony whistling in amazement. Loki’s eyes went skyward. It looked like a comet, yet perfectly spherical. The tail of the comet like ship was green and purple as it burned.

“Right on time,” Ms. Potts chirped while looking at her watch. Loki heard Tony hold back a snort.

Agents and suits were backing away, not certain of what sort of impact the spaceship would have. Even a few of the more human Avengers looked worried. Fury stood unwavering though, his one eye focused still on Loki and Tony, as if they would attack like rabid dogs.

Loki felt the heat of it just before it slowed down enough not to indent the ground. It was far smaller than what Loki had been expecting. There was scarcely enough room for one occupant.

“Amora, would you be so kind as to perform a cooling spell? I fear I might be shot if I do it myself,” Tony said while nodding in her direction. She glanced at Captain America. He nodded and a second later she was casting the spell.

The pleasant wave of cold felt like Jotunheim when he was in his natural form, making Loki almost long for his kingdom. They’d have to sleep there once this was settled.

There was a series of clicks. Steam came from the crevices of a hatch that appeared. It was just wide enough for Loki to slip in if he ever so chose to, but Tony wouldn’t be able to fit without manipulating the metal.

Suits and agents cocked their guns, but were motioned to keep them lowered.

Fury stepped forward and Loki grinned.

The human was a fool. Even if the newcomer was no threat he wouldn’t be able to understand whatever language he—she used.

A female form pulled herself from the hatch, steam still hiding her appearance. Loki could see dark hair through the fog, and a dagger in her hand. A chunk of her arm and thigh was missing.

“I wonder if she’s here for business or pleasure,” Tony whispered into Loki’s ear. “I really hope it’s for pleasure.” Loki refrained from stabbing Tony somewhere that would bleed profusely. Before he could contemplate how to punish him further, Fury spoke.

“You’ve landed on earth. What business do you have here?”

“Damn,” Tony said under his breath and Loki swiftly elbowed him in the side, where he knew Tony’s armor was the weakest. Tony flinched.

“I come bearing a warning,” the green female said in a language Loki didn’t recognize. Amora quickly translated the message for the others.
“About Thanos, I assume,” Tony said loudly and Loki could see the female’s eyes widened for a brief moment.

“Yes, how did you know?” she asked, her grip on her dagger tightening.

“I was subjected to the Other’s torture,” Loki said in her language, knowing that only those with the All-Speak and her would understand it. “I managed to escape Thanos and the Other. We plan taking my revenge on both of them. We will not allow them to destroy my home.” Loki gestured to Tony who nodded slightly. “You are on Midgard and the nine realms. I can sense Thanos getting closer every day. Presently we are rallying troops from all the realms we can reach. We will not fail.”

“You misunderstand me.” Her posture became lax, almost defeated. “I do not warn you so that you can prepare to fight, but so that you can run. Thanos is truly immortal.”

“Yeah, I kinda have a solution for that, but I can’t talk about it here,” Tony said in her language and Loki looked at him curiously. “There are too many people listening, too many who could use this knowledge against me and our allies. We can and will defeat Thanos.” Tony smiled and Loki almost smiled wistfully in return. Tony’s smile… it spoke of unbound confidence and power. It was one of the things Loki loved about him. “You don’t need to run anymore and we could use any knowledge you have of Thanos’ troops and technology.”

The alien shifted from foot to foot, seemingly not hindered by her wounds.

“Those two are traitors and villains,” Thor said, paining some part of Loki. “Do not trust them.”

“I was under the Other’s control when I was forced back to this place,” Loki explained, still in the alien tongue. “After I freed myself of its clutches I gave these divided societies a common enemy. Now they are working together for the impending threat. We may be villains to some, but we are heroes to far more. Look around and you will see that their technology is far inferior to ours.” At some point Tony had closed the portal to Muspelheim. He opened three more to pristine looking places. “We need you and you need us if we are to ever stop fearing Thanos. Just hear out our plan. If you do not like it we can take you somewhere far away and let you continue your fleeing.” The last part was said softly, almost caringly.

Loki recognized her expression. It was that of someone who had been manipulated for far too long and had only just broken free.

She glanced down at her spaceship.

“We can take that, too,” Tony said. “It’s no problem for me.”

“It is the only thing that has kept me alive,” she said softly.

“Not anymore. We’re here for you.” As Tony spoke Loki saw Thor take in a large breath, about to shout. Loki placed a silencing spell on him discreetly, distracting Thor and Amora. “We can do this together. All you have to do is accept our offer. I can repair your arm and leg and upgrade your ship. Either way you’re better off coming with us than staying here.”

The alien looked at all the different humans that were surrounding her before she hopped down gracefully despite her wounds. A few of the agents raised their guns and the individuals who weren’t using plastic ones had the muzzles melt.

Fury tried to get in her way, but she had him disarmed and on his stomach in less than the span of a second. She twisted his arm, dislocating his shoulder and wrist before she stood. A few SHIELD
agents tried shooting her with their plastic darts, but Loki and Tony had come prepared. Bits of metal hidden under a thin layer of earth flew up, blocking their path or hitting them away.

A few of the Avengers started heading in their direction, but before they could reach them Tony used a portal to swallow up the spaceship and the green female alien reached them. She took Tony’s offered hand and they stepped through a portal leading to his manor in Asgard.
Her name was Gamora, and just as Loki had suspected she had been another one of Thanos’ tools, but instead of being subjected to the Other’s tortures, she was put under Thanos’ knife. Where the Other destroyed and let heal, Thanos tried to improve as much as possible, dissecting every inch of Gamora only to rebuild her. Deconstruct, rebuild, deconstruct, rebuild. She said she couldn’t remember how many times it had happened.

Loki could tell Tony was absolutely thrilled to get his hands on to any technology Thanos directly had a hand in, but he maintained a professionalism that Loki had never seen him use before. He showed a grave seriousness as he worked on her thigh first.

She was malnourished and after eating (as Tony was still operating on her cybernetic leg) she fell asleep.

“This is unethical,” Loki said while sniffing the food Jarvis had served her. It had some sort of sleeping potion in it. Tony glanced up from where he was fixing part of her outer thigh.

“Really? Of all the things we’ve done you’re going to label this one unethical?” Tony asked while chuckling. “I’m just going a bit deeper into her circuitry. She’s mostly alien, except for her limbs, eyes and some of her organs. I’m just figuring out the parts that aren’t made of metal, thought I could do some enhancements on my pet project I have on ice.” Loki was frozen for a moment before he reeled backwards. He felt his world shattering for the third time in his very long life.

“You’re just like him.” Tony paused, giving Loki a confused look.

“What?”

“You’re just like Thanos, with the destruction, the testing on sentient beings, the madness!” Loki’s eyes flitted around and he grabbed a scalpel, too distraught to use his magic to summon his scepter.

“Loki—”
“No! I don’t want to be a tool again, to be just another step to destruction!” Tony still hadn’t moved from his seat and Loki was edging to the door, not turning his back.

“Lokitty, please—”

“No! No! No!” He couldn’t get the door to unlock, not with his back turned to it. “I won’t do it! I won’t be another beast’s tool!” Loki suddenly brought the scalpel to his throat. Tony’s eyes widened and he stood up abruptly, nearly knocking over the stool he’d been sitting on.

“Loki…”

“No. Let me out of this torture chamber or I’ll let myself out.” He pressed the scalpel a bit firmer and a single drop of blood ran down his neck, traveling the length of his collarbone before disappearing beneath his shirt.

“There’s another way, you know,” Tony said softly, his eyes never leaving Loki’s. Tony picked up a pair of scissors and set its point on his jugular. “Kill me if you really think I’m Thanos.” Loki hesitated, confusion entering his chaotic plethora of emotions. “I’m not the same as that monster. Where he aims to destroy I aim to build a kingdom, a kingdom for us both to rule. If you really think I’m like him, then kill me. I don’t want to live without you. I’ve done that for far too many years.”

Loki felt his jaw start to shake in horror and the scalpel fall out of his hand. He quickly rushed over to Tony who stood unflinching, scissors still in place. Loki knocked them away, feeling sick.

“No, please, I’m sorry!” Loki’s vision was blurring with tears. “Don’t die! Please don’t die! I’d be lost without you. I love you.” Loki kissed him with as much passion as he could muster. “You’re nothing like him,” Loki said after they moved apart slightly. “I’m so sorry.” Loki buried his face against Tony’s shoulder. He felt Tony run his fingers through Loki’s long hair.

“I wish we had more time,” Tony murmured. “I want you to be safe and happy, but we’re both sick. When we’re free of the threat of Thanos we’ll have more time for each other. You haven’t had the time to heal from what they did to you. I should have kept that more in mind.” Tony kissed Loki’s neck. “I’m sorry.”

Loki shook his head, unable to form words.

“I know.” He kissed Loki softly. “You want to sit on my lap while I finish repairing her? I promise I won’t go looking through any more of her circuitry other than what’s necessary.” Tony’s voice was so pleasant and Loki could feel his warmth encompassing him.

Loki was picked up by his thighs and he looped his arms behind Tony’s neck, still not removing his tear stained face from against Tony’s shoulder. Tony sat them on the high stool which thankfully had no armrests or back, allowing Loki to completely cling to Tony as he worked.

He held onto him tightly and let out shuddered breaths as his tears slowed down.

*  

After repairing Gamora’s bionic limbs she was teleported to one of the spare rooms and the door was made to stay unlocked.

Once they were alone Tony tried to talk to him, but Loki didn’t want to listen, to look him in the eyes.
Loki felt ashamed of himself for breaking down like an idiotic child. Tony said it was PTSD and that he had it, too, but Loki had never seen him react that way. Tony responded that he had had a lot longer to deal with all that happened to him. He had handled it all in stride, but was still haunted by it all.

Loki knew they both had nightmares, but he doubted that meant much of anything. He’d always had nightmares, just never ones where he woke up screaming, crying, or trying to grab the edge of anything before he fell into the Void again.

When Tony saw that his words weren’t getting through he used his lips to slowly work Loki up into a panting mess.

His tongue flicked over Loki’s nipple before he breathed cool air onto it. His hand was on Loki’s cock, resting in his palm despite Loki’s attempts at thrusting. Tony had him pinned down. Every few minutes his hand would move lower, teasing Loki’s hole before returning to just holding Loki’s cock.

“Just do it already.” Loki’s voice was both broken and demanding. His eyes were squeezed shut, trying to stave off the tears he knew were coming. How did Tony always know what he needed?

Tony didn’t respond immediately, his tongue running up the path Loki’s single drop of blood had made, laving over the now healed wound. Loki let out a pained noise of embarrassment, but he couldn’t focus on his shame for losing his mind briefly, not with Tony so close and doing things to him.

Tony nipped at Loki’s earlobe before kissing his temple.

“This isn’t just about you,” Tony said before practically devouring Loki’s mouth. Loki let out a noise of surprised confusion. Tony pulled back before biting Loki’s neck roughly and brushing his thumb perfectly over the head of Loki’s cock. Tony blew on the bite mark, his hand slowly stroking Loki’s cock. “I need to know that you’re still here with me.” This time their kiss was slow, yet just as deep. “Please don’t ever scare me like that again.”

“I’m sorry.” Loki let out a stuttered moan when Tony slipped in two slicked fingers at once. He pulled Tony into another kiss. “Fuck me however you want to.” Loki’s voice was quivering. Tony was slowly massaging Loki’s prostate, making the god tense up in the best of ways.

“No, we were both selfish. I threatened to take my own life too, remember?” Loki’s nod was a twitch as Tony kept massaging him, building him up. Loki wasn’t certain why he was crying at this point. “Do you want to top?” Tony asked while grinning.

“No after you’ve already got me opened and spread.” Loki punched him and twisted them around so that he was straddling Tony. In a smooth movement he had Tony all the way inside of him. Loki curled forward a bit. Satisfaction, but only enough for him to want more.

He leaned backwards to get a better angle and Tony bent his knees so that Loki could use his thighs for support.

He was already slick from sweat, but he hadn’t realized how worked up Tony was until he started squeezing Loki’s hips painfully with every thrust.

Loki leaned forward and slapped him across the face, not stopping their frantic pace. Tony’s head whipped to the side and Loki let out a hysterical laugh. Tony’s eyes lit up. Loki went to slap him again, but Tony caught his hand and used it to pull him forward and off his cock. Loki let out a
disappointed groan while smiling as their lips met. Tony bit him on his bottom lip hard enough to draw blood before standing and leaving Loki on the ground.

Loki hissed at him and Tony pounced back onto him, bringing Loki’s long legs up and bending them over his body until even Loki’s neck was bent painfully. He had to hold his own cock down to get it into Loki. Tony smiled and Loki began clawing at the ground as the pressure began building up.

When Tony bottomed out again Loki moved quickly, looping his ankles behind Tony’s neck.

“Up.” Loki demanded between gasps. Tony considered him a moment before Loki narrowed his eyes and Tony nodded. As Tony reached down to heft Loki up, the younger god unlaced his ankles from behind Tony’s head. As he was lifted Loki grinded down on him, relieving some of the strain in his own cock. “Table.” Loki was rubbing himself against Tony. When he was set down, Loki laid back. “Fuck me hard.” Loki grabbed onto the edge of the table as Tony immediately complied.

“You’re a demanding bitch, but I fucking love you.” Tony’s voice was rough, somehow turning Loki on even more. He was so close.

“Harder, you fool!” Loki shouted, feeling the whole table shudder dangerously. He was laughing and moaning at the same time. Tony shifted Loki’s leg a bit to get a better angle. Loki stopped breathing and making any noise. His whole body tensed. Tony pushed into him harder and Loki came while letting out his held breath as a whimper. Pleasure cascaded through him.

“Not yet.” Loki was suddenly flipped around, feeling his own come smear on his body and the table. Tony fucked him from behind with Loki’s legs spread wide. He circled his arm around Loki’s hips, grabbing his quickly hardening cock and stroking it.

Loki pushed himself back and forth as their rhythm synced up instantly.

When Tony came he slapped his hand onto the table, creating a dent before he turned Loki over again, swallowing down his cock. Loki moaned loudly, not expecting to be sheathed in that talented mouth and throat.

It only took a few tricks to get him off again.

“Thank you.” Loki whispered, not caring that his back and front were completely covered in drying come.

“No, thank you, for staying.” Before Loki could respond he was teleported into their bathroom to fool around more.
Loki was feeling downright chipper when dinner came around. Tony and Gamora were already seated and drinking. Gamora had been given fresh clothes and looked quite a bit better than she had when they met her on Midgard.

He sat down with the grace he was brought up to show. Jarvis ruffled his feathers and dinner was served. It was a delicious dish that Loki found himself falling in love with while having feasts with his chieftains not too long ago. He held back a grin, knowing Tony had ordered it specifically to make him happy.

The other two dishes on the table were blander in taste. Simple Vanir food of venison white stew and roasted and seasoned vegetables. Gamora dug into her food and Loki remembered how he ate the days following his escape from Thanos and SHIELD’s prison cell. Every bite was cherished yet gobbled down.

After having seconds she leaned back in her seat, looking at the gods who still hadn’t finished their first courses.

“How do you plan to defeat Thanos?” Gamora asked, exhaustion clear in her eyes. Tony ate another forkful of vegetables and Loki gave him a curious look. Tony took a sip of spiced wine and Loki sniffled slightly, voicing his annoyance. They exchanged a look.

“I’m not certain how the idea came to me. It was like a revelation.” Tony relaxed in his seat, a thoughtful look on his face. “If we can’t kill him we can imprison him.”

“You’re foolish to think any prison could hold him,” Gamora said while tensing up. “You wouldn’t even be able to reach him.”

“Imprison is the wrong word.” Tony lifted his goblet, but did not drink from it. “There is a spell that has been forming in my mind, one that would put him in a stasis, freezing him completely, mind, body, and magic.”

Gamora and Loki were silent, thinking about Tony’s idea.
“And this just ‘came to you’?” Loki asked, his green eyes narrowed and body tensed. “It could easily be a planted thought. You underestimate Thanos’ power.”

“Do you really think Thanos thought he was going to lose?” Tony turned his attention to Gamora. “That he would set a trap in case he lost?”

“Thanos does not believe he can lose. If anything, whatever you did to stop him is just a setback and will fuel him to destroying you all. I do not think he would set such a trap.” The three thought about what she said briefly.

“When I think about the spell… there are runes that I don’t know. I can read them because of the All-Speak, but there’s no reason why I should know them other than Jarvis. He said that they are ancient and that he has been collecting them for ages. He also said that while I was delivering the bomb he sent out some of his feathers to survey the area and that he picked up runes from there. He showed me them.”

“I wish to see this spell,” Loki said, abandoning his meal.

“Of course. I want you to work on it. You are by far a better spell crafter than I am. I have only held off on this since you’ve been so busy.” Tony smiled charmingly and Loki could tell that some part of that was a lie.

“I know nothing of magic.” Gamora sighed. “Where is my shuttle? There are things I want to collect from it before I get some rest. I wish to hear more about your battle plans tomorrow.”

“Will after breakfast work for you?” Tony asked, looking more relaxed. Gamora nodded. “Awesome. Jarvis will guide you to your spaceship then back to your room. I know how confusing this place can be.” He was giving a winning smile again.

Loki stared at him until he was certain that Gamora was gone.

“Why did you not show me this spell sooner?” Loki hissed out his question. He hated when information was held back from him.

“I was afraid it was some sort of trap, something to make me fall under mind control like you were.” Loki could tell he was telling the truth. Loki’s white knuckled grip on his armrests relaxed and Loki went to go sit on Tony’s lap.

“Tony, if you ever became mind controlled I would happily hit you as hard and as much as it takes to break you free,” Loki crooned into his ear.

“And that’s one of the many reasons I love you.” Tony gripped him tightly. Loki kissed him lazily.

“Remember when I said I was working on a gift for you?” Tony asked when their lips parted from each other. Loki nodded, relaxing in Tony’s arms despite the armrest diging into his lower back.

“It’s in one of my work rooms.” Tony moved his arm a bit and Loki stood up. Tony looped his arm around Loki. Loki leaned against him, feeling very sated and pliant.

“I love that you make me things. No one ever made me things in Asgard. They gave me armor and weapons, but none of them were really for me.” Loki was feeling a bit drunk despite having next to nothing to drink. Sometimes Tony just made him feel this way.

Tony ran a hand through Loki’s hair. Loki nuzzled against him, practically hanging off him.

They walked to a room that was just across from the smithy. It was a room Loki rather liked. It was where Tony did his inlaying and engraved his runes. It was a peaceful room where he could just
read and ignore the outside world.

Tony twisted and turned the star lock until it opened. Loki let go of Tony’s arm and practically fell onto the couch that he had claimed the first day he saw the room. He laid himself out, one arm resting behind his head while his other hand rested on his abs. One of his legs was swinging idly off the couch.

He could feel and see Tony’s eyes rove over him. Loki grinned.

“My gift?” Loki asked teasingly, his smile growing wider, shaking Tony out of his daze.

“Right, right, right.” Tony nodded to himself and went over to his work desk.

Loki glanced around with hooded eyes. Sharp little tools were hanging above Tony’s work desk, all of which were enchanted. Loki could see a half hidden crown of such finery that Loki nearly gasped in delight. There were small rags strewn about for shining metal. Sketches were all over the walls, only a few were recognizable to Loki. The rest were just blurs of runes and gears.

Tony pulled out a small, nondescript metallic box. Loki could see a velvet interior that didn’t really match the plain box. Tony’s shoulders were slightly hunched and his fingers were as nimble as usual as he moved aside small items that clinked together.

He pulled something out, but quickly palmed it before Loki could catch a glance.

“I was really happy when you made me that ring,” Tony said while walking over, “even though you did it just to be an asshole.” Loki sat up, not denying his claim. “You want to keep track of me and I want you to be as mobile as you like.” Tony opened his hand and a strange ring lay there. It was an octagon, yet the inner part was smoothed out. “I also copied your spell so that you’ll never be able to remove it.” Tony had an infuriating grin on his face, but Loki didn’t react, too engrossed with the small piece of jewelry. He picked it up and tried examining the runes.

“Charms of prosperity. How cute of you,” Loki said after reading the runes. He could tell there was more to it than that, though, especially when Tony snorted and took it out of his hand.

“That are just for anyone who gets close enough to read.” Tony cupped the ring to his chest, “But that should only be me unless you’re killing someone and they happen to know the runes.” Tony let out a huff and Loki blushed. “As I was saying, I want you to be as mobile as you want to be, both for your safety and happiness.” Loki could feel his face heat up further at Tony’s sincere words. “Each segment corresponds to a different realm we have access to. Each ‘charm of prosperity’ corresponds to a realm.” Loki thought about the charms he just read. Ingenuity: Svartalfheim, Wealth: Asgard, Safety: Jotunheim, Pleasure: Alfheim, Health: Vanaheim, Heat Resistance: Muspelheim, Clarity of Sight: Niflheim, Victory: Midgard.

“Clever,” he said simply.

“Thank you, Lover.” Tony cleared his throat, before going back to his explanation. “It channels the power of the Tesseract and depending on how you turn the different segments you have access to three different places in each realm. One of them is always the safety of one of our homes. On Asgard it’s here. You also have access to Asgard’s meadery since it’s pretty rare for anyone to actually be down there, surprisingly enough, as well as the forest.”

Loki carefully took the ring. Each segment had four sides, three with locations, and the last with charms.

“But I thought…”
“I just had to modify a few protection spells. Now the Tesseract can get into Beskyttet.” Tony shrugged as if it was the easiest thing, but Loki had gone out of his way to learn the spell that protected Tony’s city. It was by far one of the most complex things he’d ever seen. To change it to accept something like the Tesseract, something so powerful ... “So,” there was just a hint of nervousness in Tony’s voice, “do you like it?”

“I love it.” Loki pulled him close and kissed him.

“Feel free to show your gratitude through any sort of sexual acts that come to mind, like a blowjob,” Tony said jokingly. Loki let out a breath of laughter before putting the ring on his right index finger so he could easily thumb it if he was caught in a pinch. He felt it bond with his magic and hand, never to leave his person again. “This way, no matter how far away you go or if you’re captured you can always come home.” Loki started tearing up, but refused to show it. “Give it a try.” Loki nodded, unable to speak.

He felt a spark of Tesseract energy when he twisted the segment to Midgard, but nothing appeared. He twisted it again and this time when he felt the spark, he met it with his own magic. Teal energy bloomed from his hand fading into Tesseract blue as it formed a portal just large enough for him to escape through. It lead to the alley by one of Loki’s favorite cafés.

He tried it a few more times, growing giddier with every passing moment. He felt so powerful, so safe, and most of all loved. He paused when Jarvis twisted into existence, an envelope delicately held in his sharp talons.

Tony gingerly took it and Loki continued playing with his gift, admiring every rune and show of craftsmanship. It was a bit nondescript, but that just meant it was less likely to clash with one of his crowns.

Tony suddenly burst out laughing, making Loki almost jump in his seat. Tony was clutching his stomach, still laughing as he held out the letter. Loki quickly skinned it, his eyes widening when he reached the last line.

*Jane Foster is pregnant.*

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