Auld Lang Syne

by YIWT

Summary

A few one-shots involving Loki and Drone 3 that take place after the end of Rehabilitation / Family.
Chapter 1

A/N: Deleted and reposted on 10/22/14 due to some, uh, extraneous material in the comments. Plus, a new chapter is up :o) This takes place some years after the end of Family. (If you’ve read at least Rehabilitation you’re probably okay for understanding this. If you haven’t, and for some reason you still want to give this story a shot, there’s a character in here you won’t recognize. He works in a dungeon, where Loki was sent to be tortured because Odin was having trust issues after the end of the movie.).

It was New Year's Eve, and Odin was having a party.

He didn't do it often – once every hundred years or so. It was too big an affair to plan and organize in just one year, and it took far too long to clean up. The whole city sparkled, the palace was decorated in fire and ice and gold, with champagne fountains and edible chocolate sculptures and music and dancing and sparkles and lights.

Loki hated these parties, because he was expected to make nice to Very Important Persons from different realms and different kingdoms – which meant he had to sit down in advance and learn all their names, and their wives' names, and something clever to say to each of them. The studying alone could take months.

This time, though, when Odin handed him a stack of RSVPs he first pulled one out, with a frown, and Loki got suspicious. “Who's that?” he said.

“No one I would ask you to entertain,” Odin answered shortly, and tore the card in half. “It doesn't matter; it's a large party, you can likely avoid one another entirely.”

“Oh.” Loki didn't ask any more questions – he didn't need to. He had been sent on diplomatic missions to everywhere, to meet everyone, and he could think of only one group of people Odin would not ask him to entertain. “I've never noticed them at your parties before,” he said coolly. Why had the dungeon's denizens been invited this time? Because they had done such a good job with Odin's delicate assignment? The idea was disgusting.

Odin made a face. “I have always invited them. Until now they have always had the good sense to decline.” He shook his head. “I cannot imagine why they think they are any more welcome now than usual. They must know how unpleasant I find their work.”

Of course. Because everything is always about you. But Loki showed nothing but a mildly sarcastic smile, and swept into a bow. “Father, you need not worry. I promise I'll treat them no worse than I treat any of your other guests.”

Perhaps remembering the last party, after which Loki had been confined to a tower on bread and water for an entire season while he wrote apology letters, Odin snorted. “If that is meant to reassure me...”

“Honestly – it's been years. Don't worry,” Loki said again, allowing his smile to warm a little, and Odin was suitably reassured.

The Liesmith was getting better and better at his craft.
Loki made nice to party guests halfheartedly for the first few hours. (Drinking all the while.) He scanned the crowds constantly, his ears primed for those voices he remembered so well, because it was better to spot them first than to be caught by surprise.

He knew exactly who he was looking for. The Drones had probably been issued a pair of invitations, like all minor kingdoms with whom Odin had some business relationship, and though he had no idea who one attendee might be, Loki was willing to bet a great deal that the other was Drone Three. *Good to see you, Loki, and you still have suds in your hair.* The creature seemed to like him. And why would he not? Surely most of the spies and criminals he had charge of were not nearly so interesting as the God of Mischief. Surely few of them were so civil and so well-behaved.

It was going on midnight when he caught sight of someone, from behind, of about the right build and color. But the guest wore a decorative headpiece, and sparkling dress robes, and if there were boots they were hidden under the hem. Loki frowned and came a little closer, until he could hear it talking.

Drone Three – for it was – was entertaining an Elvish couple with some story about a failed attempt to cook Elvish food over a Midgard stove. They were giggling and adoring, which made Loki oddly annoyed, and he decided to interrupt.

He sidled closer, but then realized he had no name to call. “Ah... Ahem. Excuse me.”

A hitch in Three's gesturing said that he had heard. After a moment he turned, smiling already. “Prince Loki!” With a perfectly correct, polite little bow. “I was hoping I would see you.”

“Ahh. yes.” Loki returned the bow, and the smile, and raised his delicate champagne flute to sketch a toast. “It has been... some time.”

“It has. It has indeed.” Something in the angling of his body, the intensity of his stare, let his audience know that his attention was elsewhere now – and not returning. The woman touched his arm, the couple bid him farewell, and he returned the pleasantry without turning to look at them. His eyes flickered to the circlet on Loki's brow – not quite a crown, but clearly a sign of status. “You're looking well, Loki. Healthy and proud. I'm glad for you.”

“Mm.” Loki could feel people's attention – the rejected couple and a few other people besides. And Heimdall, of course, whose eyes missed nothing. Suddenly it felt very important to perform for them a little – not to be meek or docile. “And you: so popular! I caught a bit of you chatting with the elves a moment ago; I had no idea you were such a charmer.” He dripped sarcasm.

Three ignored the tone. “Oh, I've been known to make friends in all sorts of places.” He quirked an eyebrow, and then took a long slow sip of his drink.

Loki couldn't let that smugness slide. “You presume too much,” he said, suddenly cold.

The Drone should have been falling all over himself to apologize, having offended a Prince in his own hall. Instead he just shrugged and flashed a theatrical pout. “Not friends? Tell me what we should call each other then. Surely I don't still haunt your nightmares?”

“I'm not afraid of you – I never was,” Loki shot back. And then regretted it immediately, because it sounded like childish bravado... because it was. But it was too late to back down now, so the least he could do was press on and live up to it. “Watch: I want you to ask me something, right now,” he challenged. “Anything. You can't scare me.”

Three heaved a sigh. “I don't want to scare you. But why bait me? You know I can trip you up if I try.”
Suddenly it felt very important to know whether that was true. “Then try,” he insisted. “I call you out.” He hadn't had a serious episode of panic in months, even when he tested himself by remembering things or by sitting with his wrists bound.

Three tried a different tack. “Come on, Prince, this is hardly appropriate. Are you in the habit of issuing challenges to your father's party guests?”

“Actually I am, but that is not the point.” Loki consciously relaxed his grip on his champagne flute because he realized he was very near to crushing it. He lowered his voice. “I mean no insult – consider it a challenge posed to me, if anyone. I would just like to know whether you can still freeze me up with a question. Any question. I want to find out.”

Three rolled his eyes. “Fine. Listen to me and answer with honesty.” The tone had shifted smoothly towards the cool distant drone Loki remembered, and he felt his heart stutter and breath catch, as he grew ready, physically ready to think fast and avoid disaster. “Would you rather do battle against one hundred duck-sized horses, or one horse-sized duck?”

Loki went blank. “Well?”

He tried to process the words, couldn't, choked for a moment. He was trying to envision... a horse-sized duck? “I-I don't... What?” he managed.

The Drone reached out and closed a hand on Loki's upper arm a moment – a friendly gesture, it must look to everyone else, but there was power in the grip and Loki shivered under it. “Not an answer, Loki.”

“I- but-...” Loki shook his head, trying to dissipate his sense of unease. He checked that he was breathing, he tried to remember that he was safe at Odin's party and this was only a test. He made himself laugh. “One hundred...? Really?”

“It's a good question,” Three defended, tone light again, and drained his glass. “It will focus the attention of someone who's wandering, and it gives insight into his state of mind.”

“Does it.” His thoughts were flowing properly again now, so Loki considered. “I'd prefer a horse-sized duck,” he decided at last. “Killing a lot of little furry things isn't very impressive, but the giant duck would make one hell of a trophy; even Thor would agree. We could put the head up on the wall by all his bilgesnipes and bears and what-have-you.” He squared up. “Now: what does that say about my thinking? Explain it.”

“Ooh, inquisitive little Loki wants some inside information. All right.” Three allowed a passing servant to exchange his empty glass for a full one. “Two or three more of these and lords know what I'll be telling you,” he laughed. “In a nutshell: it's good that you immediately envisioned slaughtering the creatures instead of thinking seriously about whether one might pose a threat to you. That's confidence. But I'm less happy that your first thought was for impressiveness and Thor's trophy wall, instead of for yourself. That's thinking I'd hoped you would grow out of.”

Loki finished his own drink, to steal a moment for thought. Two could play at this game. “I see you analyzed that from the perspective of someone concerned for my well-being,” he said, “Instead of noting how you could use it to break me.” He put a hand over his heart and turned syrupy sweet. “Consider me touched.”

Three laughed. “And consider me impressed – you are quick as ever.” A servant appeared with more
champagne. Loki was standing with arms crossed and didn't take one; Three did and offered it to him with a deep bow. He stayed, waiting, until Loki took the glass and gestured for him to straighten. “In all seriousness I would be honored if you would call me friend,” he said. Then shrugged. “But if you won’t, I'll still like you.”

Loki looked him over, and there was nothing mocking in his manner now. “Very well: tonight, temporarily and provisionally, because I am drunk and because most of the party bores me, you can be my friend,” he declared. “We'll see how I feel about it in the morning.”

“Excellent. Your health.” They clinked glasses, and Loki didn't dwell on the absurdity of the toast. “Happy new year, Loki.”

“Happy new year.”

The End.

Let me know what you think!
A/N: Takes place some time after the last ficlet.

There was a Drone in the waiting room that Loki had never seen before. “Can I help you?”
Loki hesitated. “I'm... looking for someone.”
“Staff or subject?”
“Staff. I don't know his name.”
The Drone shrugged. “You wouldn't. What's your name?”
“Mine? I am Loki, of Asgard.” He drew himself up a little as he said it. “The one I'm looking for has worked here at least ten years, and attended Asgard's last New Years party. He's about your height, but a little-”

“Your name is enough.” The Drone brushed its hand over the wall and a grate hissed into view. A communication device? It spoke into it. “I need the contact for a *Loki of Asgard*, please.” After a moment of silence, the speaker crackled and a discordant chattering issued forth.
The Drone frowned. “Oh.” It turned to Loki. “Your contact's a Director now.”

“Excuse me? What does that mean?”
“It means he doesn’t interact with subjects or clients directly. Directors pass their files on to more junior staff, but for some reason in your case he hasn't done so. We're speaking to him right now and he'll assign someone. Have a seat – someone will be with you shortly.”

Loki sat. Serenely. He and Drone Three had gotten drunk together; surely that would entitle him to a face-to-face meeting no matter how important the creature was now.

Before long the door hissed open and Loki surged to his feet. Habit; the sound still made his heart beat a little faster.

“Loki! Good morning!” There was real pleasure in the voice, and even though Three was in his work outfit Loki made himself smile back and shake hands.

“And you – whose name I still don't know!” he enthused, teasing. “Good morning to you as well.”
The greeter Drone was looking extremely impressed by all this – clearly Drone Three had become somebody very important. Loki gave a bow. “*Director* now, I hear? Congratulations. You're looking... er...” *Imposing*? Would that be an insult?

Three narrowed his eyes. “You’re hunting for a polite way to say I've gotten fat, aren't you.”

It was only a matter of time before the Drone found a way to remind him that it had once broken him open and rifled through his mind like a messy cupboard. Might as well beat it to the punch, no?

“Oooh.” Loki gave an overblown sympathetic wince. “Lost your touch? I'm afraid I was thinking nothing of the kind.”
Three made a face. “Yes of course, Loki, feel free to twist the knife.”

Loki cocked his head.

He sighed and explained: “I likely have lost my touch, to some degree at least. I don’t get to do fieldwork any more. But of course, I’m happy to serve however I am needed,” he added primly. Then shrugged. “Oh, well. It’s only a matter of time before I break some rule significant enough to get thrown back to the front lines.”

The Drone wanted to be back in the dungeons. Loki tried not to feel uneasy. “Ah, I see. Well, if your superiors take a dim view of stealing equipment, I might be able to help you with that.” He took out his binding rod to show. “I came here because this is broken. Or perhaps its power has simply depleted? I’ve had no luck with the mechanics or sorcerers of Asgard, so I was wondering if you could help. Fix it, recharge it, give me a new one?”

Three whistled softly as he took the device and examined it. “This? Goodness, this is... old,” he said, clicking it a few times.

“My people gave it to me when... when I left here. It was for splinting.”

“Mm.” Three’s deadpan was perfect. “And those poor shoulders still can’t bear weight after all this time. What a shame.”

Loki opened his mouth and closed it. It hadn't even been a question... but still, somehow, he felt a little nervous not answering it. Certainly much too nervous to lie. “I’ve been using the thing to annoy people,” he admitted. “As well as to bind myself, sometimes, to test my nerves. Well...” He hadn't done that in a while, actually, so he frowned and revised himself. “These days, mostly to annoy people.”

“Well.” Three nodded and gestured the doors open. “We wouldn’t want you unable to annoy people, would we? Please: this way.” He paused. “You are comfortable going downstairs now, are you not?”

*Downstairs.* The euphemisms just got better and better. “As long as you have no plans to do something terrifying, I am fine.”

“You wound me.” With a hand over his heart. Three gestured Loki through the doors and led him down the hall.

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Loki’s mouth was a little dry, but he was all right. Conversation would probably help, so he asked: “Where are we going – an equipment room? I suppose you must have them.”

“We do. But that's not where we are going; we're going to go get you a... floor model. It's not permitted to give these away,” he explained. “It can be hard to account for something vanishing from an equipment room, but no one will notice it gone from a dungeon. Things get damaged or lost during sessions all the time.”

“Ah.”

Eventually Three stopped in front of a wide door. “This one’s fine. No cameras; we can rob it with impunity. Coming in?”

Loki shook his head at first, but once the door was open and the torture chamber fully lit, and the
Drone was calling small-talk to him from inside, he felt too ridiculous and at last managed to step over the threshold.

He held his breath and waited for terror, but terror didn't come. Three was rummaging in a closet and in the meantime Loki walked around the room slowly, touching some of the equipment he recognized.

He pulled out a drawer under a counter and it was full of little jars. Someone had labeled them, in handwriting. *ITCH. BURN. EXTRA BURN. OH MOMMY.* He chuckled, and somehow – barely – resisted the urge to open one up and see what it was.

But when he went to close the drawer there was a heavy metallic *clunk* at the back. Suddenly the jars were not nearly so funny; when he reached back in and felt around... yes, it was a pear. His grip tightened for a moment; he could feel the seams under his hand, they would open, with the key he could feel pressing into his wrist. *Breathe.*

“Careful,” Drone Three said, from behind him. “You shouldn't touch that. After direct contact it'll remember you – and crave your flesh.”

Loki yanked his hand out of the drawer so fast he cut himself, and began wiping frantically against his clothes. Then he saw that the drawer was still partway open. With his heart in his throat he slammed it and held it closed with both hands. He stayed there frozen. If he backed away in horror, which he wanted to do, then he would have to let go, and then it might-...

Laughter.

Drone Three was laughing at him, laughing hard, doubled up and laughing almost too hard to breathe. “Loki,” he finally wheezed. “Really?” He couldn't stop.

Loki's mind caught up with him then and he relaxed so suddenly he almost fell over. Oh, hell: he was falling over. He put his hands on his knees and waited for the dizziness to pass.

“You all right?” Still through laughter.

“That is- sick,” Loki gasped at last. He thought he was fine, but for some reason even as the terror drained out of him his lungs didn't want to inhale properly. “Your sense of humor is... is sick.”

“Maybe. Funny, though.” The Drone's chuckles were more controlled... but ongoing. “Did you imagine it was going to, to leap out at you and-?” He pantomimed with his hands, clap-clap-clapping his way through the air like a snapping beast.

*How dare you,* he wanted to say, *how dare you mock me for this.* But his voice wasn't yet under control and he did not want to speak in a hoarse raw mess, so he took a moment to gather himself. By the time he was able to fill his lungs and let it out slowly, he had calmed down enough that the urge to snarl had passed. Instead he just put his nose in the air and pointed out: “Fuck off; it's easy to laugh at when you've never felt that thing *ripping* at your innards.”

“I'm sure it is.” Loki frowned, but before he could puzzle that out Three went on, with authority: “Now stop scowling; you only looked foolish for a moment. And it absolutely *is* funny.”

Loki noticed that he was clinging to the drawer again, and let go of it with determination. ... And then he waited a second to be sure that all was still and that the tool had not in fact come to life.

Well, now he had looked decidedly foolish for two moments. At that thought he had to smile – a little bitterly. “All right,” he conceded, because it was true. “But don't do it again. You said you wouldn't
terrify me.” But when he thought more carefully he realized that the Drone had actually never said anything of the kind.

Fortunately Three didn't call him a liar. “I promise I won't terrify you again,” he purred instead. “Fair enough? Now, I found you a sticker stick. Are you ready to go?”

Loki nodded, and moved away from the counter with quite a bit of speed. The Drone deftly positioned himself at Loki’s back, squarely between Loki and the imaginary sentient attacking pear, and steered him out of the room with a cool hand on his arm.

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The End.
Chapter 3

A/N: Hi! Long time no see - sorry. I've been distracted by several months of frantic almost-daily Game of Thrones fanficcing, but I think I'm done with that now and can get back to Family. In the meantime, here's this.

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Director:

I need a favor: several days of your undivided attention and absolute discretion about it. I am in straits too dire to put to paper. Please come now. I beg you to come. I will wait for you by the portal.

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Loki was doubled up trying not to moan aloud when the portal glowed and Drone Three stepped through.

They didn’t bother with greetings. “You’re lucky I recognize your handwriting,” the Drone said coolly. “And lucky your note got around as fast as it did. There are dozens of Directors. What’s the problem?”

Loki help up a hand; he could tell the pain was passing again. As soon as it did he straightened. “Can you stay?” he said quietly. Wiped the sweat off his face. “I realize that this is a favor of massive proportions compared to that letter you asked of me last year, but please: I am desperate.”

“So I gathered. I arranged a friend to cover – discreetly – for five days. Will that be enough?”

“The way it’s going I think it will be over much sooner than that.” Loki was able to breathe a little better now. “It’s time. I mean of course I... I should have dealt with it sooner but... I was too mortified to tell anyone. I still am. For months I’ve been-, not, you know. But I need help. Now.”

“You are babbling,” Three said shortly. “Explain yourself.”

He found he could not say it, and had to show. He took off the illusion he had worn religiously for half a year, and couldn't look at himself. Instead he looked at the Drone. It was painful to watch its eyes widen, its brow lift. After a long silence: “Loki... it has been some time since my Foreign Anatomy classes... but I am fairly confident Aesir males cannot bear children.”

“Ordinarily we can’t. Don’t fucking laugh at me. I-.” He couldn’t talk; his guts were twisting. He wasn’t sure if it was the creature again, or just his own revulsion. “I need help.”

“You are about to give birth. Right now.”

The flat calm of a Drone’s voice was exactly what he needed. The panic of the last few hours finally ebbed a little and he could think. “It seems so. How should I know? I’ve never- ah- obviously. I have no experience.”

“Mm. What was the father? Not one of your kind, I presume. Or this shouldn't be possible.”
“No. It was a – please don’t laugh – it was a horse. A giant’s horse.”

“Ah, a horse. I see.” As requested the Drone didn’t laugh out loud... but Loki could sense amusement all the same.

“I coupled with it in the form of a mare,” he snarled. “Not by choice. It’s a long story. In any event, I had no idea this condition could occur when I resumed my usual shape.”

“An understandable oversight – at first. But then…?”

He didn’t want to talk about it, but the Drone was gesturing firmly for an explanation. “I started feeling unwell over the summer,” he admitted. “But it’s second nature to me to spell my stomach quiet when it’s upset. I do it without thinking, without even noticing sometimes. So, it was months before I realized that-- this. And, and I was so sickened I didn’t-- I, I just--” He had to stop stammering. With an immense effort he drew himself up said the rest steadily and with eye contact. “I spelled myself to insensibility and wove a glamour, and I cast the whole thing from my mind. But now it’s time. And I need--” He couldn’t say it again.

“Help.” The Drone let out a long breath and paced the room slowly – as if checking that it was secure. One door – locked. No windows. Finally he turned back and crossed his arms. “Are you requesting a midwife, or an abortionist?”

Loki’s jaw dropped. He was an idiot. But the thing moved – kicked at him – and he shook his head. “Midwife,” he whispered. Hating himself for not having faced the problem promptly. A simple spell, or a knife, and he could have ended this the moment he found out about it. “The other hadn’t occurred to me. I wish it had.”

“It’s a little late now; it would be cruel.” The Drone came close and put his hand on Loki’s pulsating belly; it took every bit of willpower not to pull away. “This creature is ready to live. Whatever it is.”

“Then, let it live – somewhere else. Get it out.”

The Drone nodded. “We can sign you in to the facility and our infirmary will take care of it.”

“No.” Loki grabbed at his arm. (Grabbed. One of them. He really must in be dire straits.) “No one can know. I know, I know your people take their obligations seriously, I know they’d promise discretion and, and professionalism, but I can’t. I cannot face that.” People looking at his misshapen body, poking at it, talking about this, attending to him. His skin prickled at the thought. “It took everything I have even to--” He made a sharp gesture in the Drone’s direction.

But begging was as little use as ever. “If you won’t sign in you can’t come; I will not smuggle you,” Three said implacably. When Loki tried to protest he held up a hand and explained: “If the birth goes badly we’ll have a dead Asgardian prince on our hands with no proof it was his own fault. Unacceptable. I’m not afraid to risk myself, but I won't bring war down on my people.”

Goes badly? He hadn’t even considered that possibility. Though at this point he might welcome it, with the way he was-

He pressed at his stomach; more pains were coming. He would have preferred this to happen as far from civilization as possible rather than right under his family’s noses, but there was not time to argue. “Fine. My old bedroom is out of the way and it’s still got spells on it to keep it hidden. We can go there. I’ll write you a note to cover your own ass in case it--… goes badly.”

“All right. Lead the way.” The Drone gave a smile that almost looked encouraging. “And don’t worry, Loki, it’s going to be fine,” he soothed. Loki would actually have felt a little soothed, except
then his smile twisted and he continued: “Totally routine. Men have been giving birth to horses since the beginning of time.”

It took Loki several tries to pull medical supplies through the ether; the twisting of the creature was distracting him and his magic was going haywire. When he at last could access things he wanted he made no effort at precision; he dumped most of the contents of a Midgard sickroom onto his floor in a heap. “Our healers rely on magic,” he explained in a series of gasps, “So their tools won’t help you. These should be better.”

The Drone began digging through the pile. “I can use magic,” he protested, sounding almost wounded. “Sometimes. A little.” He found a plain white sheet and tucked it in over top of Loki’s dusty bedcovers.

And in the meantime, Loki attacked the pile himself and pulled out the important thing: knives.

The Drone arched an eyebrow when cutting tools were shoved into his hands. “What makes you so certain this is going to be a surgery?” he asked. “Maybe it will all happen naturally.”

“How can it?” Loki snarled. “As you so rightly pointed out, Aesir males can’t give birth.”

“Perhaps not ordinarily. But as you’ve managed to carry the thing, it seems you’ve grown a womb,” Three pointed out reasonably. “Didn’t you get a birth canal to go with it?”

Loki didn’t answer. Couldn’t bring himself to admit that....

But Three figured it out. He drew in a slow breath as if mustering his patience. “Loki. Did you even check?”

This time Loki shook his head.

Without further ado: “Then drop your drawers.” Loki made no move to obey. “Do you plan to give birth through leather? Come on, Loki: take off everything below the waist, and lie down on your back. Against these pillows. Now.”

He stripped, looking anywhere but at his own deformed body as it came into view. He lay down. The pressure was awful and very strange; though his spells sometimes slipped at night (and he dreaded it; he had not had a good night’s sleep in months) he had gotten very quick about shoring them up when it happened. He had never before had to feel this horror for long. “Hurry,” he said. He could hear himself just one short step away from panic, holding it together by only the barest of margins.

Drone Three could surely hear that too, but nevertheless his tone was cool and unhurried. “Conjure something to put your feet up on,” he directed, “So that I can see.”

Loki warped the bedposts with a blast of magic, drawing them down towards himself like evil claws. His ankles were lifted one by one and set up. He resisted the urge to close his legs, and tried closing his eyes instead. Pretending he was somewhere else.

“I have cold hands,” Three warned. “Apologies.”

He sucked in his breath as something touched him, cold hands indeed, sweeping efficiently over his privates. Touching everywhere.

“No. Normal Aesir male anatomy.” Three snorted. “Other than the stomach having sprouted a
horse. Oh, calm down,” he ordered over Loki’s hiss. “This will be over in a couple of hours, and you’ve had worse. You will get through this.”

Will I? He couldn’t bring himself to say it aloud.

But Three answered him anyway. “Yes. Between this equipment and your powers, I’m confident we can handle whatever happens – provided you keep your head together. All right?”

Loki made eye contact, resolutely not looking down at himself. The latest agonizing contraction had passed, but that was worse because now he could feel that the thing was moving around. He wanted to vomit. He wanted to claw himself open and remove it by force. Focus. “All right. What can we do?”

Three answered without hesitation. “We can cut. Here, through your abdominal wall. I’ve never delivered a live baby that way, but I understand it’s not difficult.”

A live baby. Loki didn’t think about it.

What he did think, was that he did not particularly want to be butchered for the sake of this revolting parasite. (Even though he suspected it would come to that in the end. And even though Drone Three surely knew how to do such things without killing his— patient. Which, again, he carefully didn’t think about.). He kept his voice as light as possible. “I suppose that’s one option. But in the event I’m not exactly eager for a vivisection…?”

The Drone sighed. “Can you change yourself back into a horse?”

He shook his head. With this creature sapping him his magic had been unreliable lately, worse than unreliable – and he had no idea what would happen if he tried changing forms with the thing inside him. He would have hesitated to try that on the best of days. “I can’t change forms right now.”

“Can’t change forms,” Three repeated. “All right. Then, can you make, ahem, selective alterations to the form you’re in?”

He cocked his head. “Pardon?”

“How can you grow yourself a cunt, Loki?”

Loki winced. Aside from the fact that he did not particularly want a… “I… have no idea. I’ve never tried to just... do that.”

“Try now.”

He had taken female forms before without complaint (for fuck’s sake he had taken the form of a female horse without complaint!), but somehow this was different. It was more akin to mutilation than disguise, and it disgusted him. He shook his head. “No.”

“I want you to make an effort,” the Drone said coolly. “Do it now, or I will provide incentive.” He raised a hand and Loki saw something glint. Scalpel.

He flinched away – though he lacked the nerve to get up and flee in earnest. “No—”

“Yes. Here, I’ll mark the spot for you: it goes here.”

“AH!” It was only a tiny stinging cut, inflicted with the barest twitch of the Drone’s wrist… but Loki knew it for a warning. Cooperation was the only sensible path when there was a blade brushing his
“All right all right,” he gasped. “Take the knife away. I’ll try.”

“Good.” The knife didn’t move. “But it would be best if you do more than try, Loki.”

Stone-cold fucking drone bastard. “All right!” he hissed. “All right, I will, I’ll do it. I will. Please.” The knife was withdrawn, and though he hated himself for it he did say thank you.

“Loki. Loki, it’s over. You’re done; you made it. Let go,” Loki felt cool hands prying at his. He had a death-grip on the straps above his head, and his hands were cramped so badly that he couldn't make himself release them without help.

“It's out, it's gone, you're doing fine. There's blood everywhere and you wouldn’t win any beauty contests,” Three reported, “But your stomach's not nearly so swollen anymore. Do you think you can look without going berserk again?”

He was too tired to be berserk, so he nodded wearily, and closed his eyes while the blindfold was untied. He squinted into the light.

“And may I assume you're finished screaming?”

He nodded again, and turned his head to let the Drone get at the knot of his gag.

Once he could speak unimpeded, he said: “Your bedside manner...” He paused to clear his throat; it was raw and he sounded terrible.

“...Is not kind,” Three finished for him.

“No. Thank you. Kindness would have made me sick.”

The Drone laughed softly. “I know. Would you like to see your... horse?”

“No really.”

“Well that's unfortunate, because here it is.” Three bent to scoop something off the floor, a big squirming bundle of blanket, and shoved it into his arms. “Congratulations, Mommy.”

Loki shuddered. The creature looked more spider than horse, far too many thin spindly legs, and he had a sudden, overpowering urge to crush it.

He couldn't, though – not with Drone Three watching. Gods knew what the Drone would say to him, after having just expended hours of effort to bring the thing into the world. Anyway, he was supposed to want to love it.

“It's...” Revolting. “What do I do with it?”

Three grinned. “Not feeling any sort of maternal affection?” Loki's only answer was a miserable head shake. “Then, send it to the stables. It's a fucking horse, Loki. What else would you do with it?”

Kill it in front of you.

Three was stroking the thing's head idly with one finger. “It is rather adorable though, don't you think? Look at those little ears.”

As it tossed its head and huffed, Loki began to see that it really was a horse. Not creature, not
parasite... just a horse. The urge to destroy it passed.

Though he would still be glad to never see it again. “Do you want it?” he said.

Three chuckled. “Flattered, but I'm not sure our relationship is quite close enough to justify my adopting your child.”

“Horse.”

“...And I'm not sure adopting a horse is a good idea in the first place.”

“Please stop mocking me.”

“Sorry, but no. Water?”

Loki gratefully exchanged the bundle for a water glass and wished Three would stop watching his hands shake. As soon as he started drinking he realized how absurdly thirsty he was, and once he paused for breath he thought to ask: “How long was I out? I remember up until I asked for straps to hold on to. After that it’s... A storm of nightmare. “...Rather fuzzy.”

The Drone shrugged. “I let you try for a while past that, but you were not doing well. The creature was tangled and kicking – and you were lost in some hell I was much too occupied to talk you out of. Apologies for that. Anyway, when it looked like you couldn't take much more and weren't making any progress towards finishing, I gagged you and went in with a blade. I hope you weren't planning to use that orifice again, by the way. I'm fairly confident I broke it.”

So that's what that pain was. Loki swallowed down a nauseated moan.

“...Of course, on the upside, if you do decide to copulate with any more horses, you can probably do it without even changing forms now.”

At that, he retched. Three laughed and took the water glass away. “I wanted you conscious while we were working, but there's no reason you can't check out now. You've responded well to morphine in the past – would you like some?”

He nodded hard.

“Heal yourself first; you're still bleeding and the volume is starting to concern me.”

While Three bustled around finding him his medicine, Loki worked on not only healing, but also transforming away his unwanted reproductive parts. Marrying that magic was difficult, and so exhausting that his eyes were already drifting closed when the needle pinched him. “Ow-.. Will you-...?”

“I'll stay til you wake up. I have a book.”

“Thank you. I... owe you for this.”

“Nonsense. What are friends for, if not to deliver one another's mutant horse-children?”

Loki glared, and from somewhere mustered the energy to flash a crude gesture as well.

The Drone chuckled. “Now, Mommy, that's just your hormones talking. Go to sleep.”

Loki found himself obeying. As usual.
The End.

So... voila. YIWT’s retelling of the Sleipnir Thing.

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