Shadows of Past Sins

by onyxfyrefly

Summary

First London, now New York. No matter where Loki goes a string of mysterious deaths follow. Now he's forced to team up with a pack of werewolves and an enticing vampire to find the killer before more innocent blood is spilled.

Notes

First things first, take everything that you know about Tony, Loki, and the entire Marvel Universe and pack it away. I took the term 'artistic license' and ran rampant with it. If you're a fan of 'The Dresden Files' by Jim Butcher you might recognize some references but this is not a true crossover.

This is my first FrostIron fic, yay! Please be kind but comments and critiques are always welcome.

You know the drill, I don't own them. If I did it would be a *very* different kind of story.
Enough rambling, enjoy!
Chapter 1

“How’s it going tonight, Doc?” asked Tony as he slipped into the darkened bar.

The bartender rolled his eyes and the nickname and began pouring Tony’s drink. “It was pretty slow until that guy showed up. No one was able to take their eyes off of him and before you know it he was getting dragged onstage and was asked to sing a few numbers,” replied the man while nodding to man who was perched on a stool in between several musicians.

Tony turned and felt his eyes widen slightly at the sight. The only word that was capable of describing the man was stunning. “Who is he?”

The bartender handed Tony a tumbler filled with scotch and shrugged. “Never seen him before.”

“Well, I’m willing to bet that he isn’t from around here.”

The man’s raven black locks, porcelain fine skin and impeccably tailored suit stood out among the bar’s usual patrons. He opened his eyes and Tony was forced to contain a gasp, they were the most intense shade of emerald green he had ever come across and seemed to glow in the dim light.

One of the musicians tried to hand over a guitar and the man laughed while shaking his head. The sound cut through the din of the bar and hit Tony like an oncoming vehicle. In all of his years Tony had never seen a man like that. He moved with confidence and grace yet he possessed a power that drew him in like a moth to a flame.

The musician failed but after seeing their dejected expression the stranger reluctantly took a seat behind a well-loved keyboard. After a few beats he began to play and the noise level in the bar dropped dramatically as the words to the song flowed from his lips. He didn’t have any formal training but possessed a raw talent that enraptured everyone within listening distance. Tony watched as his long fingers moved elegantly across the keys and knocked back half of his drink to wet his suddenly dry throat. The stranger sang of loneliness and heartache and by the time the song ended Tony wanted to find whoever had hurt him and pound them into the pavement.

The roar of applause tore Tony from his musings and he shook his head. Where had that come from? It had been a very, very long time since anyone affected him in this way. He was determined to find out more about this mysterious stranger and was heading his way when an argument broke out among two patrons. With a glance back at Bruce, Tony headed their way and stepped between the two men, placing a hand on each of their chests to keep them apart.

Tony was forced to ignore the stranger as he focused on the two arguing men. He spoke in a measured tone, meeting one set of eyes before moving to the other. His smile never faltered and soon the tension visibly drained from the pair. He offered to buy their next round and by the time he walked back to the bar both men were smiling. It was easy to blame their slightly dazed expression on alcohol and Tony gratefully accepted the drinks from Bruce before heading back to their table.

Loki found a seat in a dimly lit corner and watched as Tony easily diffused the situation. He sipped his drink and suppressed a laugh. Who would have thought that Tony Stark, the Tony Stark was a vampire

As far as Loki could tell, no one knew that he was a vampire. Vampires had just recently “come out of the coffin” so to speak and were still struggling to be recognized in the States, overseas it was
another matter. There were some countries, such as Australia, that couldn’t care less then there were the countries where religion ran deep, such as Ireland, and the vampires were still staying under wraps.

At first glance it was impossible to tell that Tony was a vampire. Loki could sense that he was old but he had adapted to the times and his accent matched those around him perfectly. He also dressed of this era, something that many vampires found difficult. He wore a simple button down shirt, jeans, and boots that probably cost more than the mortgage on the bar yet helped him blend in. Contrary to popular belief, his skin was not deathly pale. In fact he sported a warm tan that spoke of hours in the sun. Loki knew that this is what his skin had looked like before he was turned but to others it would look as though he spent much of his free time outdoors. His hair was cut short and slightly spiked and he had a demeanor that made those around him feel at ease.

He was also one the most deadly creatures in the city.

Loki had immediately known Tony was a vampire the moment he laid eyes on him. It had nothing to do with his appearance and everything to do with the fact that he was a warlock. A very old warlock to be exact. He had just celebrated his nameday and had received several fine gifts. One of those gifts included a ticket to America. Loki needed a break from London and had planned out an excellent vacation to the United States.

Part of Loki wanted to leave, he had spent a good portion of his life in Paris which was a Mecca for vampires and personally he was sick of them. But another part of him was drawn to Tony. When they had locked eyes he had felt an energy pass between them, something he had not felt in decades.

He waited until the inventor’s conversation drew to a close and the bar began to shut down in the wee hours of the morning. Slipping towards the back he smiled when he felt the breeze caress his face, he would be downwind of the vampire.

Loki leaned against the wall and silently mouthed a few words, casting a sphere around them that would keep their voices from carrying. As soon as the spell was finished Tony looked up from where he was climbing into his car and frowned, it seemed to Loki that he could smell the magic. He must have been older than he thought.

With a shrug Tony got ready to slip into his car when a voice made him pause.

“I wonder what Forbes would say if they knew the contender for their number one spot was a vampire.”

Tony jumped and spun around at the voice. He couldn’t remember the last time that someone had been able to sneak up on him and the knowledge unnerved him a bit. He was even more surprised to see the entrancing man from the bar leaning against the far wall.

“What did you say?”

Loki tossed his hair over his shoulder and crossed his arms. “You heard me.”

Before he could blink Tony had lunged forward and pinned him against the side of the building. The dim light was reflected in his eyes which flashed with something dangerous, revealing the predator hidden inside.

“Who are you?” he hissed. As Tony leaned towards the other man he couldn’t help from inhaling his scent and feeling the rush flow through his veins. He felt desire burn through his body but forced it away as he tried to stare down the stranger.
The warlock could feel the rough bricks digging into his skin and attempted to shift his position but Tony held him in an iron grip. He rolled his emerald eyes and sighed. “That’s what I hate about you vampires, you’re always so bloody dramatic.” He let a tiny bit of his will seep forth and snapped his fingers, releasing the spell. Tony pulled his hands away as if he had been burned and unwillingly took a step back.

“What…?”

“My dear,” Loki crooned, his sharp English accent coming out. “Relax. I play for your team.” He held out his hand and a small ball of soft, white light suddenly appeared.

Tony looked at the orb for a moment before throwing his head back and laughing. “You’re a warlock.”

“Handsome and smart, a rare combination.” He doused the witch light and held out his hand. “Loki Laufeyson.”

“Tony Stark.” The vampire lifted the warlock’s hand to his lips and kissed it softly, inhaling his deep scent and feeling the steady throb of his pulse before releasing his hand. “It’s a pleasure.”

“It’s nice to see that not all vampires have lost their manners.”

Tony laughed again and Loki couldn’t help but smile. “Some of us still remember the old ways. And since I have done you such a disservice, please allow me to buy you a drink.” He gave a courtly bow which made the warlock laugh.

Loki smiled and nodded his head. “Threatening me in a dark alley was quite a disservice indeed but I believe a drink would be a nice start.”

Twenty minutes later Tony was leading him into a darkened bar. Loki could feel the energy in the building and knew that most of its patrons were not quite human. After getting settled at a small table towards the back Tony took a sip of his drink and let his elbows rest on the table.

“You said your last name was Laufeyson, forgive me but I have never heard of that name before. It’s certainly not common here in the States.”

It was Loki’s turn to laugh. “I was actually born in Iceland. My mother was a priestess of a clan that worshiped the Norse gods and my father was a warlock so it was no surprise when things started to fly off of the shelves while I was crying in my crib. I was raised in Paris but I’ve lived most of my life in London.” He took a drink of his red wine, which was excellent, and studied Tony carefully.

“So aside from running the largest technological firm in the world am I to believe that the great Tony Stark also has a tendency to slum around in dimly lit bars breaking up fights on a nightly basis?” asked Loki with a mischievous grin.

Tony rubbed the back of his neck and chuckled. “Honestly? I try and avoid confrontation as much as possible. The partons at Banner’s are usually pretty relaxed but it’s always easier to break up any squabbles before Bruce has to get involved. You do not want to deal with him when he’s angry.” Taking a sip of his drink he smirked when he caught Loki’s eyes following the movement of his throat. “It’s one of the only places that in the city where I can go and grab a quiet drink. Yes, now and again I help by breaking up an argument or two but for the most part I can just be alone for a few hours.”

Loki couldn’t stop the sad smile that twisted his lips. “It must be difficult to have so many relying on you and your devices. Why don’t you just hire an assistant? Surely at this point your empire is self


sustaining, I don’t see why you need to personally work on the products you manufacture.”

To Loki’s surprise a slight blush graced the vampire’s cheeks. “Well, I do have an...assistant of sorts that more or less runs my life but I actually enjoy the work and it helps with keeping up with the pretenses, you know?”

The warlock nodded and played with the stem of his wineglass. “White Court I’m assuming?”

Tony frowned and leaned closer. “How did you know?”

Loki shrugged. “You didn’t try to attack me or anyone else, plus you’re too well fed so that ruled out the Black Court. You don’t have the arrogance of the Red Court so I just assumed...”

Tony laughed. “I think that’s the first time someone has said that I’m not arrogant. Give it time, princess, and you’ll be changing your mind. However, you’re correct and you have good instincts.”

The warlock smiled. “Oh, you are an arrogant ass but compared to those within the Red Court you’re practically humble.” Loki leaned back in his seat and watched how Tony's eyes followed the movement of his fingers as they curled around his wine glass. "And you would be surprised how accurate my instincts are."

Loki was more than relieved that Tony was a White Court vampire but he tried not to let it show. There were three distinct types of vampire, each with it’s own ruling group, or court. The Black Court was your stereotypical vampire. Walking corpses with a taste for blood and a severe aversion to sunlight. They hated crosses, garlic, holy water and fell directly into the mold that Bram Stoker had created. No wonder the Black Court had tried to have him assassinated after the book’s release. The man had practically written a how-to guide on killing Black Court vampires.

The Red Court still carried the stereotype of living off of the blood of their victims but that is where the similarities ended. Demons dressed as humans with an insatiable hunger and an ego to match. The Red Court claimed that they were the dominant of the three groups and demanded loyalty and respect from all who surrounded them. Loki had had several run-ins with the Red Court and each one left his skin crawling. Beneath the facade was a monster that was barely controlled and the slightest spark could set them off. Unlike the Black Court, vampires of the Red Court could survive in the sunlight and were annoyingly difficult to kill. The traditional methods didn’t even phase them but Loki was creative...very creative.

The White Court was arguably the most powerful court of them all but don’t let the others hear you say that. Made up of a network of powerful families spanning the globe, the White Court had the money, the connections, the influence, and the power to practically take over the world if they chose. Luckily no one had gotten the urge to move forward with that idea...yet. The vampires of the White Court were the most “human” so to speak. Their appearance was normal and they could function in the sunlight without any problem. Unlike the other courts, they did not survive by drinking the blood of their victims. Instead they fed on emotion, preferably passionate emotions. One simple touch was often enough to lure a human in and the vampire would proceed to drain away their entire being. It didn’t sound bad to an outsider but Loki would gladly be drained of every ounce of blood before letting the White Court get their hands on him.

“Loki?”

The man snapped back to the present with a shake of his head. “Sorry, what were you saying?”

“I was asking what you did for a living. I know you can sing and play the piano but what other talents do you possess?”
That was a loaded question if he’d ever heard one. Add in the roguish grin that accompanied the question and Loki might believe that Tony was actually flirting with him.

“I own a spice shop. I’m an apothecary so to speak. I sell teas, spices as well as more...non-traditional items.”

“Really? So what brings you to New York? In search of some rare spice or herb?”

Loki shook his head. “No, I’m actually on vacation.”

The two chatted for hours. Empty glasses began to fill the table and eventually the noise level began to fall as the partons headed home for the night. Typically it would have been strange to see a vampire and a warlock acting so comfortably around each other but the two had clicked from the start and the prejudices that had been ingrained for centuries were set aside.

Glancing around, Loki noticed that the bar was emptying out. “Do you have the time?”

Tony looked at his watch and did a double take. “Shit. It’s three thirty. I’m sorry for keeping you out so late.”

Loki waved away the worry. “I’m enjoying myself. I’m not going to turn into a pumpkin, that’s someone else’s fairytale.”

After settling the tab, Tony helped Loki into his coat, letting his hands linger on the warlock’s waist for a moment too long, and they headed towards the parking lot. “I must say that this has been an...interesting evening. I didn’t exactly plan on spending my evening with a warlock.”

Loki laughed and the sound made the hair on the back of Tony’s neck stand up. “It wasn’t all bad was it?”

“Well...not all of it.” Tony tried to catch Loki’s eye but it was impossible, every time that their eyes nearly met he would quickly avert his gaze. Finally he couldn’t stand it and gently cupped his cheek, forcing the deep green eyes to meet his.

“Don’t...” Loki started but it was too late.

Brown eyes met emerald and Tony was suddenly locked into place, he couldn’t have looked away if his life depended on it.

Loki could feel himself falling into the depths of Tony’s eyes as the soul gaze began. He watched, his heart breaking, as the vampire’s story began to unfold.

Tony had been a happy young man who shared his father’s trade as a blacksmith when war came calling. He and his father had answered the call leaving his mother and his very pregnant wife, Virginia, behind.

Three years later Tony was the only one to return home. He was already carrying the burden of the loss of his father and was devastated to discover that his wife had died in childbirth and his son had only survived for two days after her passing. After hearing the news his mother had spiraled into a deep depression and had wasted away over the course of the next six months. The night of her death Tony had wandered down towards the docks in a drunken haze with the intent of jumping into the sea below. A dark figure had suddenly seized him and when he woke he discovered that he was a vampire.

Loki saw flashes of memories dance before his eyes, each one coming more rapidly than the other
before they became a single blur. He tore himself away and placed a hand over his heart to calm his rapid breathing.

Tony quickly took a step back and narrowed his eyes at Loki. “What the hell was that? What did you just do?”

“I’m assuming you’ve never been told not to look a witch or warlock in the eye?”

“I have but I thought it was just a myth.”

“It’s no myth. When you meet our eyes a soul gaze begins. It’s exactly what it sounds like, I can see into your soul and you can see into mine.” He shuddered, wondering what Tony saw when he was allowed a glimpse inside.

“I’m sorry… I didn’t know.”

“It’s fine.” Stifling a yawn Loki nodded towards his car. “I should be going. I’m still getting used to driving over here and the last thing I need to do is to fall asleep at the wheel.”

“Want me to give you a ride?”

“I’m fine.”

Tony waited a beat before letting out a slow breath. “Can I ask you something?” Loki nodded and Tony shoved his hands in his pockets nervously. “Can I... I mean... is there...” he let out a breath then shook his head. “Will I see you again?”

Loki raised an eyebrow. “Are you asking me on a date?”

Tony rocked back onto his heels nervously. “You said that you’ve never been to New York and I was wondering if you could use a tour guide.”

The warlock paused to chew over his answer. True, he could use a local tour guide but he wasn’t sure if he wanted a White Court vampire to be that guide.

“Sure... I guess having a local showing me around would be helpful.” He scribbled the number to his hotel on a scrap piece of paper. “Call me before noon and I will have you beheaded.”

Tony nodded and shoved the paper in his pocket. He hoped that the warlock was joking but part of him knew that he was serious. “Until tomorrow then.” He kissed the back of the newcomer’s hand once more which earned him an eye roll and waited until he had disappeared into the night before heading to his own car.

He tipped his head back against the headrest with a sigh. “What are you getting yourself into, Stark?” Yes, Loki was intriguing and funny and attractive but he was also a warlock. The two of them did not mix, it was like oil and water. Yet he couldn’t forget the other’s musical laugh and quick wit. He also couldn’t forget all of the pain and anguish that he had witnessed when he gazed into the deep green eyes.

Loki had lost his family relatively early and had spent a good portion of his life fighting for the power and respect that he currently held. He was dangerous, Tony knew that, but there was something about him that was unique and he was determined to get to the bottom of it.

Shaking his head he put the car into gear but didn’t head home right away. Instead he turned towards a small after hours bar that he often frequented. He needed to be well rested if he was going to play
the part of tour guide but right now he was hungry. He watched as a group of young women stumbled into the bar and grinned before heading inside.
Dawn had nearly reached New York. In the distance the first few rays of sunlight were clawing away at the darkness leaving bloody streaks in the sky.

Feather light wisps of fog began to rise from the Hudson river flowing over the seemingly empty streets of the city. On the far side of the river the fog began to bubble and pool, growing darker and larger and more dense until the image of a cloaked figure was revealed.

Golden eyes glowed within the cowl as they surveyed the city. Despite the hour the streets were still teeming with life. Those miserable insects didn’t hold his interest, there was only one who could make this journey worthwhile.

With a whispered word the man cast out his senses, searching for the one who had brought him across the sea to this spit of land. He briefly touched each consciousness, leaving behind a smear of his sins as he went along.

He had to contain his anger when he realized that the one he sought wasn’t close enough to track. His sources had informed him that his prize had entered the state three days prior, however they had failed to provide him with his most recent location. He could be anywhere by now and he had no idea where to start looking. Blood would be spilled for this failure but that was for another time.

A wicked smile slowly crossed his face as an idea began to blossom. Why go traipsing across the country when he knew exactly how to lure his query in. After all of these years he knew how his mind worked and he knew that eventually that stubborn morality streak would win out and the man would come running. He would rush in to try to save the day and when he did he would be ready. He had been planning this encounter for years, vividly imagining each detail of the moment when he finally took his revenge.

The robed man turned and walked purposefully towards the heart of the city, he had plans to make.

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The next afternoon Tony headed to the hotel where Loki was staying. He had called his room several times but he hadn’t answered. After JARVIS confirmed that Loki was indeed a guest Tony guessed that he was either still sleeping or he had gone out for the day without him.

To his delight he spied the warlock curled up in an overstuffed armchair in the lobby with a newspaper spread across his legs.

“Loki!”
The warlock raised his head and sent the vampire a confused look. “Stark? What are you doing here?”

“You said you needed a tour guide.”

“Right.” He turned back to his newspaper and Tony sat down across from him with a frown.

“Don’t you remember?”

Loki didn’t reply at once, he finished skimming the article before raising his eyes. “I remember but I thought you were just being polite. I didn’t think you’d actually show up.”

Tony couldn’t help but let his shoulders slump in disappointment. “Oh. Well, I guess I should be going then.”

An exasperated sigh left the mage’s lips. “Wait. You did come all of the way out here so the least I can do is play tourist for the day. But let me finish my newspaper first.”

Settling back in the chair Tony took the opportunity to study the man sitting in front of him. He was dressed simply in jeans, boots, and a fitted button-down that showed off his toned physique. His hair was loose and fell in thick waves around his shoulders and Tony was tempted to lean forward and tuck an errant strand behind his ear. Some type of charm bracelet was wrapped around his left wrist and rings of different types and styles adorned each of his fingers. Upon closer inspection Tony spied a delicate gold chain beneath the collar of his shirt ending in some type of gem.

In all he looked like a typical American tourist not a deadly warlock but Tony had learned a long time ago not to judge the proverbial book by its cover. Things were rarely as they seemed and Loki was a perfect example.

He remembered what had flashed in front of his eyes during the soul gaze the previous night and he fought to repress a shudder. He saw a couple being burned at the stake while a screaming young man was restrained in the background. He saw wars, he saw Paris burn, he saw all manners of magical and non-magical creatures fight with and against Loki. He saw fleeting moments of happiness but those were locked carefully away while the darkness ran rampant.

Loki snapped the newspaper and Tony jumped. He rubbed a hand over his eyes and frowned. How old was the mage? He knew that witches and warlocks had an extended lifespan but what he saw didn’t make sense. Loki didn’t look very old, he appeared to be in his early thirties, but his age didn’t match his memories. He was guarded but that was not unusual, anyone of the supernatural persuasion had to be careful. You never knew who or what was lurking around the next corner. But there was something else about him, something that he couldn’t put his finger on...

“Stark? Tony!”

“Sorry. What?”

“Are you ready?”

The vampire nodded and stood. “Sure.”

As they walked out of the hotel Loki’s brow furrowed. Tony had been staring at him since the moment he sat down. It wasn’t the usual assessment either, it felt as though he was trying to get a peek under his skin and see what made him tick. The warlock shook his head, the last thing he needed was someone, let alone a White Court vampire, digging into his personal life.
“I tried calling your room earlier but you never answered and I realized that you didn’t give me your cell phone number,” said Tony as they turned onto a side street.

“I don’t have a cell phone.”

“What?” Tony’s eyes nearly popped out of his head at the confession. He could barely function without JARVIS’ presence and constant assistance of his bots, how could anyone live without a cell phone?

“Delicate technology and magic practitioners do not mix. I tend to fry anything made after World War Two.”

Tony raised an eyebrow. “Seriously?”

“Yep. I already blew two lightbulbs in my room and I don’t dare go near the television, it would probably explode if I tried to turn it on.”

Tony nodded as he attempted to process the information. So much for bringing Loki back to the tower, his magic was far too dangerous to go anywhere near the large arc reactor that powered the building. “So how did you get here? Did you fly?”

Loki shook his head. “I’m usually okay around large pieces of machinery but I don’t want to put anyone else at risk. I took a Way.”

Ways were pathways that crisscrossed the globe and coincided with ley lines. Surprisingly, many of these Ways bridged large cities and states together and with the right words they could be used by practitioners to get from one destination to another very quickly. It had only taken Loki about an hour to get from London to New York and none of that involved a customs check or stale peanuts.

Did you ever hear stories of settlers who said that they just knew when to stop and build their home? It wasn’t a coincidence nor divine intervention, it was the electromagnetic pull of the ley lines. Don’t believe it? Look at where the pyramids in Egypt and South America are built. Their positions are not random, they are perfectly aligned with ley lines.

“Do you ever walk the Ways?” Loki asked while peering into a shop window.

“Rarely. I know of a few out of New York but I rarely have the necessity to use them.”

The warlock frowned. “Why not?”

“What do you mean?”

Loki glanced around and lowered his voice. “You have eternity. Why not go and see the wonders of the world. Why stay here?”

Tony shoved his hands in his pockets as they walked. “I do travel. Not as much as I did when I was younger but I do like to get away as often as I can. But I do have a job and pretenses to keep up.”

“Again I ask why.” Loki paused to sort through a rack of scarves set up outside of a shop.

“Because I like the normalcy. Just because I am what I am doesn’t mean I have to act like all of the others. And please spare me from the whole ‘denying your nature’ speech, I’ve heard it before. I could ask you the same thing. You’re young and you have a long life ahead of you, why stay in London?”
Loki was quite for a long time while they walked and Tony lead them through a maze of side streets lest they be overheard.

“Because it’s home.” He had been silent for so long that Tony nearly missed his reply. “I travel a lot for work, you’d be surprised how difficult it is to acquire certain specimens, and it is nice to come back to the same place after a long trip. My mother owned the shop and it’s really the only thing I have left that was hers.”

The two continued to wander through the city but now the silence between them was strained. Tony could see the stiffness in Loki’s shoulders and knew that the hands in his pockets were balled into fists.

“I’m sorry.” The words surprised both Loki and Tony. He hadn’t planned on speaking, the words jumped out before he could stop them.

“You did nothing wrong. Don’t apologize.” Loki was lying, Tony had hit a chord but he wasn’t about to admit it.

Tony’s wandering eventually lead them to Central Park and they made themselves comfortable on a bench. He watched as Loki leaned back and tipped his face towards the sun. In the warm light his skin seemed to glow and as the wind shifted Tony inhaled the intoxicating scent that surrounded the mage.

What was wrong with him? For the second time in as many days he found himself entranced with the man. He momentarily wondered if Loki was using some type of magic but he quickly discarded that idea. For the first time in a very long time he was genuinely attracted to someone. Shaking his head he chuckled at the knowledge that the first person to catch his eye was also powerful enough to kill him with a snap of his fingers.

“What’s so funny?”

“Nothing.” Tony watched as a couple played keep away with their dog and a frisbee, laughing when the animal tired of the game and snatched the disc out of the air before taking off running. “Did you enjoy the tour?”

Without opening his eyes Loki nodded. “I probably would have just gotten lost or ended up walking in circles. It was nice to have a local’s perspective, thank you.”

Tony smiled and Loki could hear it in his voice when he spoke. “What are you doing tonight?”

“Are you trying to ask me out again?”

The vampire quickly backpedaled. “No...nothing like that. I was just wondering if you would be at the bar again. A friend of mine is going to be in town and he always puts on a great performance.”

Loki cracked open one eye against the sun and glanced in the billionaire’s direction. “I might make an appearance. What time?”

“Probably around eight.”

“Sounds good. Now are you going to show me the sights or are we going to continue to wander around while having uncomfortable conversations?”

Tony laughed and stood. “Alright, princess, you drive a hard bargain but never let it be said that Tony Stark doesn’t deliver.” He extended a hand to help Loki up and after a beat the warlock
reluctantly accepted.

“I never thought I’d say this but I’m starting to miss London. It’s a massive city but at least it’s orderly. This is just chaos.”

Tony snorted. “Control freak. That’s the beauty of New York, it’s chaotic but there’s a beauty to the chaos.”

Loki raised an eyebrow. “Beauty in chaos. Who knew that you were so poetic. Or is this just the famous Tony Stark charm that you use on everyone you’re trying to seduce?”

The mage thought the ever-moving city was fascinating but he was reluctant to say as much. Instead he watched as the tips of Tony’s ears turned pink when the inventor realized that he was caught. Loki laughed as followed the man as they were swallowed by the bustle of the city once more.
“Tony, will you please stop staring at the door?”

Tearing his eyes away he turned towards his companion who was tuning a guitar. “Sorry. Someone was going to meet me here and he’s late.”

“He?” The guitarist raised an eyebrow. “Friend, business acquaintance, or booty call?”

“Shut it, Rhodey. It’s not like that. He’s just a friend...well...I don’t even know if I can call him that. He’s just someone I met here last night.”

“And did you go back to his place or yours?”

Tony rolled his eyes. “I told you, it’s not like that. We went our separate ways last night and today I gave him a tour. That’s all.”

Rhodey strummed a few chords. “Yet all you’ve done is talk about him and you can’t stop staring at the door.”

“He intrigues me. He’s definitely not like anyone I’ve ever encountered.”

“How so?”

“Well...” Tony wasn’t sure if he should tell Rhodey that Loki was a warlock, There was a deeply ingrained animosity between magic practitioners and vampires. Just because Tony had taken a shine to him didn’t mean that Rhodey would. “He’s different, it’s a nice change of pace.”

Rhodey shook his head. “Whatever you say.” He glanced at his watch then stood. “Time to go and earn my keep.”

About fifteen minutes into Rhodey’s set the door opened and half of the heads turned to look at the man who walked in. With dark hair and alabaster skin he stood out yet he moved among the patrons with ease. His nimble fingers nearly missed the chord change when the man sat down next to Tony. So that was the mysterious stranger. Rhodey could understand why Tony was so smitten yet there was something about the newcomer that didn’t sit right with him.

“Loki, you came!”

The warlock took a sip of his drink then took a seat next to Tony. “Well, it’s not like there’s a lack of entertainment in this city but I will admit that I like this establishment.” He nodded towards the front where a young man with a guitar was holding the crowd captive. “Your friend?”

“Yes, his name is James but almost everyone calls him Rhodey.”

“He’s very good. He’d fit right in with some of the musicians from back home.” Tony raised an eyebrow and Loki couldn’t help but laugh. “Don’t give me that look. Not all Londoners are uptight pricks, there’s a fantastic music scene you just have to know where to look.”

About halfway through the set a group of tourists got a little rowdy. One of the extremely intoxicated
female members of the group decided that she needed to document everything with her cell phone and began to take dozens of pictures and videos of everything and everyone. The patrons tried to ignore her but it was becoming more and more difficult.

Tony let out a frustrated sigh and pulled out his cell phone, leaning away from Loki lest he fry the device. “Let me take care of this.”

Loki’s hand on his arm made him pause. “Allow me.” The mage turned towards the intoxicated woman and muttered, “hexus” under his breath. The woman shrieked as her phone all but exploded in a shower of sparks. Several of the patrons couldn’t control their laughter and Loki fought to hide his smile as the woman and her friends rushed out of the bar.

Tony shook his head as he sat back down. “How did you do that?”

“I told you, technology and I do not get along. You should see what I can do to those pricks with the bluetooth headsets.” Tony laughed out loud and ordered another round as Rhodey’s music filled the bar once more.

Despite his misgivings Loki was having a wonderful time. Tony was funny and smart and charming with a self-deprecating humor that actually worked in his favor. As the evening wore on he could feel a flush spread across his body that had nothing to do with the alcohol. The little voice of reason that resided in his head was screaming at him to stop, reminding him that he was sitting at a table with a creature who saw him as nothing more than food. Loki proceeded to pour whiskey down the little voice’s throat until it slid off its barstool and went to sleep.

The two chatted until Rhodey’s set came to a close. Tony ordered a beer and it was waiting for the musician when he arrived at the table.

“Thanks.” Rhodey took a hearty swig then turned his attention to the man at his friend’s side. “James Rhodes”

“Loki Laufeyson. It’s a pleasure.”

Rhodey felt the energy pass between them the moment their hands touched. He looked between Loki and Tony and back before the pieces snapped into place. “Tony, can I talk to you for a second?”

“Subtlety is not your strongest trait, is it?”

The comment made both men pause. “Excuse me?” Rhodey asked.

“You heard me,” replied Loki while knocking back the rest of his drink. “Have a seat before we get any more attention.”

Rhodey sank into his chair and took a pull from his beer. “So you’re a...”

“You can say it, a warlock.”

The word actually made Rhodey flinch. “Alright. So why are you here?”

“Relax, James, I don’t bite.” Loki paused to laugh at his own joke. “I’m on vacation. I’m in New York to enjoy myself, not to hunt down vampires. In a few days I’ll be on my way back to London and you’ll never see me again.”

“How did you know I was a vampire?”
The man raised an eyebrow. “Seriously? I knew you were a vampire the moment I walked in, all vampires have a blood red aura.”

“Really?” asked Tony. Despite his genius and all of his year of research he knew next to nothing about the more magical side of his race.

“I know it’s stereotypical but all vampires, no matter which court, have a red aura.”

“You can read auras?”

Loki nodded. “It was one of my mother’s specialties but I inherited a bit of the talent.”

“You parents were practitioners?” asked Rhodey.

“My mother was a priestess and my father was a warlock.”

“Where are you from?”

“London by way of Paris.”

Warily the guitarist sat back and tried to make himself relax as the man spoke. He hadn’t had the most pleasant experiences with magic practitioners but he quickly discovered that Loki was nothing like what he expected and he surprised himself by laughing at his stories. As the night wore on he found himself more at ease around the newest addition to their party and let his guard down a bit.

“Loki, did you have anything to do with that woman’s cell phone...er...malfunctioning?” asked Rhodey after their empty glasses were cleared away.

The mage gave him an innocent smile. “What makes you think that I had anything to do with that?”

“Well I’ve see cell phones die but never in such a blaze of glory.”

Loki laughed. “It served her right. I must say that I’m so happy that I grew up in an age without cell phones. None of my antics could be recorded and displayed for the world to see.” The man paused as a fresh round of drinks was delivered to their table.

Tony beamed when he saw Rhodey and Loki getting along so well. He had known Rhodey for ages and the two were practically brothers.

Casually, Tony let his arm rest along the back of Loki’s chair. The practitioner raised an eyebrow but didn’t shrug off the gesture. Tony knew that he was leaving in a few days but that didn’t mean that he couldn’t enjoy his company.

Slowly the bar began to empty out as the patrons staggered home and soon the three were the last ones in the establishment. “Well, gentlemen, shall we?” Rhodey gathered his guitar while Loki allowed Tony to help him into his coat.

“Loki, I apologize for my earlier actions. It was great spending time with you tonight.”

Rhodey shook Loki’s hand and the warlock smiled. “No apology necessary. Your reaction was justified. I try not to pick fights when confrontation is unnecessary. Thank you for the wonderful show and if you’re ever in London look me up. I know some great venues that would be perfect for your performances.”

“I will. Tony, I’m in town until Wednesday. Maybe we can get together for a drink on Monday after your board meeting?”
“Sounds good.”

The two watched as Rhodey loaded his guitar into his car and waited until the vehicle disappeared from sight around a corner.

“Did you drive?” asked Tony. The street in front of the bar and nearby parking lot were nearly empty.

Loki shook his head. “It was a nice night so I walked.”

“Can I walk you back to your hotel?”

“Why do I feel like I’m suddenly in a cheesy 50’s movie? Are you going to ask me to the big dance too?”

Tony chuckled and tucked the mage’s arm into his. “Nah, those dances are only fun if someone spikes the punch.”

It didn’t take long before they arrived at Loki’s hotel. “Thank you, Tony. I guess I’ll see you around.”

“Yeah, I guess so.”

Loki should have gone inside and Tony should have turned to go home but neither one moved, they stood in the warm light spilling from the lobby of the hotel with their hands clasped between them. It was cliche and cheesy but neither one could ignore the rush of emotion that passed between them the moment they touched.

Tony traced shapes on the back of Loki’s hand with his thumb, feeling the long fingers tighten slightly around his. Their eyes met without fear of a soul gaze and Tony felt himself falling into the emerald depths once more. This time he didn’t see Loki’s soul but he saw his desire, his passion and something else that made the engineer’s pulse race.

Ducking his head, Loki took a deep breath and let it out slowly. His head was swimming and it had nothing to do with all of the drinks he had consumed that night. He had seen the emotions reflected in Tony’s eyes, for once not hidden by those ridiculous sunglasses, and hated himself for wanting to give in to those feelings.

His resolve nearly broke when Tony gently tipped his chin down and cupped his cheek in his palm. His thumb gently brushed against Loki’s bottom lip and he couldn’t stop the slight gasp from escaping. In that moment he knew he was lost.

Unfortunately that pesky voice that he had previously silenced decided to wake up and started screaming at the top of its lungs, reminding him of his precarious situation. Steeling himself he took a small step backwards. “Goodnight, Tony.”

For a moment it seemed like Tony wasn’t going to back down, that he was going to pull the sorcerer closer but the moment passed and he collected himself. “Goodnight, Loki.” He pressed a gentle kiss to his knuckles then disappeared into the darkness.

Chapter End Notes
It looks like Tony and Loki are getting closer but will they give in? I'm taking bets!

Thank you so much for the support and the next update will be up before the end of the week!
The following afternoon Tony headed towards Loki’s hotel. He hadn’t called but was hoping that he could catch the warlock before he headed out for the day. All night he had tossed and turned as he fought to banish the image of dark hair, pale skin and striking eyes from his mind. In the end he have given up fighting and had surrendered to his desires, finally falling asleep with his seed still cooling on his stomach.

To his delight Loki was curled up in the same chair with a newspaper in his hands. “Good afternoon, Loki.”

The warlock held up a finger indicating for him to wait as he poured over an article. Once he finished he looked up and arched an eyebrow. “Were we doing something today?”

Tony shook his head. “No, I just thought I’d stop by.”

Loki made a sound and turned back to the newspaper with a frown. “Have you read the paper?” Tony shook his head. JARVIS always gave him the morning updates but Tony rarely listened to them. “There was a very suspicious death near the Hudson last night.”

“Really? That’s awful.”

The mage perched on the arm of Tony’s chair to show him the article. “The police are dumbfounded. It appears that the woman died of smoke inhalation but there was no sign of a fire in her home nor was there any lingering smell of smoke.”

“That’s bizarre.” Tony skimmed the article and wondered why Loki was so focused on this woman’s death. “Why is this bothering you so much?”

Loki glanced around to make sure that they were alone. “Because I think someone used magic to kill her.”

“Really? How?”

“It’s simple air magic, well...it’s black magic but it’s still not very difficult.”

Tony watched Loki as he spoke and knew that there was more that he wasn’t telling him. Wrapping an arm around the sorcerer’s waist, Tony pulled Loki to sit next to him in the overstuffed chair. He didn’t protest at the movement and the vampire knew that something about this murder was affecting him deeply.

“What else? What aren’t you telling me?”

Loki let out a sigh and folded up the newspaper before tossing it on a side table. “I think she was a witch.”

“Did you know her?”

The man shook his head. “I recognize the last name though. It could be a coincidence but if I’m right then she was part of a powerful coven that has been in New York for decades.” Tony rubbed slow
circles on the slim man’s back as he sorted through his thoughts. “There’s a dark witch or warlock using their power to kill other practitioners. That’s just so...wrong.” He let his head fall into his hands, allowing the fall of his hair to obscure his face.

Tony was right, this case was getting to him but not because it was a witch who was murdered but because he had seen exactly the same thing in London. There had been a mysterious string of murders around the city but Loki hadn’t paid them any mind. That was until a member of his own coven was found dead in her apartment. The police claimed that it was smoke inhalation but there was no evidence of a fire.

The woman’s murder was what spurred Loki’s decision to go on vacation. He felt like his city, his home, had been violated and he needed to put some distance between it and himself. It looked like he hadn’t traveled far enough. Whoever or whatever was causing these murders had apparently followed him to the States. Why? Why would someone attack his coven? Why would they follow him to America? What did he do wrong? Who did he hurt? Loki had made many enemies over the years and he wracked his brain trying to think of who the killer could be.

His thoughts began to race and he clenched his fists together in an attempt to control his emotions. Tony could see that the practitioner was slipping and glanced around nervously as the lights began to flicker and the television in the lobby suddenly turned to static.

“Loki, you have to calm down.” He could see the warlock fight for control but it was a losing battle. Several lightbulbs within their fixtures exploded with a soft ‘pop’ and Tony made a split section decision. “I’m sorry,” he whispered before gently placing his hand on Loki’s bare arm. As gently as possible he began to siphon off his excess emotions and the feeling nearly made him fall over. Never had Tony experienced such a maelstrom of pain and confusion and anger and helplessness all blended with a dozen other emotions that nearly made him sick.

He kept up with the slow withdrawal until Loki was calm and the chaos surrounding him had settled. The warlock slumped against him weakly and he tightened his arm around the slim frame to hold him steady.

“I should kill you for that,” Loki mumbled.

“I didn’t know what else to do, I...” Tony started but the mage stopped him.

“’S okay,” slowly he sat up and blinked open heavy eyes. “It’s been a long time since I lost control like that.”

“Are you alright?”

Loki sighed. “Not really.”

Tony paused then stood and gently pulled Loki to his feet. He stumbled slightly but Tony’s hands were steady on his hips. “Come on, I want to show you something.”

Carefully Tony led Loki to his car and his eyes were closed the moment he sat down. “How much did you take? I feel like I’ve been hit by a truck.”

Tony glanced over as they drove out of the city. “Not much but you were very upset and the emotions were strong, it’s no surprise that you’re drained.” He squeezed the mage’s knee gently. “Get some rest, I’ll wake you when we get there.”

Loki woke as he felt the car come to a stop. He was feeling much better after his nap but his mind was still a jumbled mess. No matter how hard he tried he couldn’t center himself.
“Where are we?”

“You’ll see.”

Tony led him through a dense group of trees towards a slight rise. When they finally emerged from the treeline Loki gasped. In front of him was a perfect circle of stones ringing the clearing. He could tell that the stones had once been massive but time and most likely vandals had worn them down to stubs.

“What is this place?”

“It’s called the Home of the Elders. Legend says that during the conversion period a group of elders of the local native American tribes came here and prayed to their gods that they should not be forced to convert to another’s belief. There was a flash of lightening and these stones appeared where the elders once stood. The gods turned them to stone so they could forever be as they were.”

“It’s beautiful.”

“I thought you could use some relaxation after this morning.”

Loki turned and gave Tony the first genuine smile he’d shared during his stay. “Thank you.”

“I’ll be over here if you need me.”

Loki nodded and stepped into the circle, immediately feeling the power envelope him. Circles were powerful and were often used by practitioners. They were perfect for keeping things summoned in, or out for that matter. They were also used to gather energy whether it was for a spell or just for personal rejuvenation.

Taking his time, Loki walked around the circle and touched each sun-warmed stone. Each one carried a separate resonance and energy and the power they possessed was incredible. By the time he finished his circuit of the circle his fingertips practically sparked with energy. With a smile he held out his right hand and whispered, “fluer de vida,” laughing when the clearing suddenly exploded with color as dozens of wildflowers sprang to life.

Moving to sit in the center of the circle among the flowers Loki let out a breath and closed his eyes, finally feeling the calm that he had been searching for wash over him.

The sun was low in the sky when he opened his eyes once more. To his surprise there was a wreath of flowers in his hands, he must have braided it during his meditation. He bowed his head and whispered a word of thanks before standing and making his way out of the circle, feeling the snap of power as the circle closed behind him.

He met Tony where he was lounging in the fading sunlight. “I didn’t realize I would be so long, you should have come to me.”

The vampire stood and gave him an easy grin. “You looked so peaceful that I hated to disturb you. I must say, that trick with the flowers was pretty impressive.” He took the wreath of flowers and gently placed it on Loki’s head. After tucking a stray wisp of hair behind his ear Tony smiled. “Beautiful.” On anyone else it would have looked ridiculous but the fading sunlight made Loki seem regal, the shadows of the flowers mimicking the spires of a crown.

Loki turned to look back at the circle of stones, watching the flowers bob in the slight breeze. “Just a bit of earth magic, that’s all.”
Tony could smell the sunshine on the mage’s skin and the flowers in his hair and it took everything he possessed not to pull Loki into his arms right then and there. The sorcerer had looked so lost earlier and now he was practically glowing with power and happiness and joy. It was an image that could prove dangerous.

Loki smiled and tucked a flower into the pocket of Tony’s shirt. He could see the emotions flash through the vampire’s eyes and desperately tried to change the subject as they headed back towards the car. “I meant to ask you earlier, how do you know about this place? It’s powerful but the energy has been eroded. It’s unlikely that anyone would just stumble upon it.”

Tony rubbed his mouth nervously. “Actually, I did stumble upon it. I was...well...let’s just say I was having a bad day and just drove. After awhile I felt like I needed to pull over and I found this place. I spent nearly an entire day in the circle just clearing my head.”

The warlock stopped walking to stare at his companion. “Anthony Stark, you make my head hurt.”

“How so?”

“First of all, you are nothing like most of the members of the White Court that I’ve encountered. You have absolutely no qualms about spending time with a warlock and to top it off you have the ability to sense power that even I cannot detect!”

“Is that a bad thing?”

Loki shook his head and met Tony’s eyes over the hood of the car. “I guess not, I just don’t like being confused.”

Tony grinned and started the engine. “What if I try and ease your confusion over dinner?”

The man paused then shrugged. “After everything that you’ve done for me today I can’t exactly say no, can I?”

“Nope.”

“I believe that’s called cheating.”

“A win is a win in my opinion.”

“Just shut up and drive.”

Chapter End Notes

It looks like Loki’s past is catching up to him. How many more have to die before he finally confronts the killer?

Tony and Loki are getting closer but the closer they get the more dangerous it is. Any thoughts as to who will give in first or will they be forced apart?

You guys are awesome and I’ll have the next part up next week! Don’t forget that comments make the world go ’round!
“This is not what I had in mind when I said I would go to dinner with you.”

Tony chuckled and held open the front door to his mansion. The tower was too loaded with tech that could possibly malfunction with Loki’s magic but the mansion had belonged to his parents and with the exception of JARVIS and a few other touches it was moderately tech free. “You said somewhere private where we could talk.”

“Again with the cheating.”

“Come on in, Loki. You have my word that it’s safe.” This made Loki pause. If any supernatural being gave their word it was set in stone. Bad things, very bad things, happened to those who broke their word.

The warlock gave him a look before stepping into the warmly lit space. Tony stepped to the side to give Loki room and openly admired the way that the sharp suit accentuated the mage’s assets.

Tony smiled brightly when he was caught openly ogling the practitioner’s backside and gestured towards the interior of the house. “Would you like a tour?” Loki nodded and allowed Tony’s hand to rest in the small of his back as the engineer led them around the mansion.

Eventually Tony led them to the dining room which was dark. “Would you like to do the honors?”

Loki rolled his eyes and whispered, “ignus”, with a lazy movement of his hand. At his command dozens of candles sprang to life and cast a warm glow around the room.

“Why are you so interested in watching me do magic?”

Tony poured the wine and paused. “I find it fascinating.”

“Why? You use magic.”

Tony didn’t answer until he had returned from the kitchen, arms leaden with dishes. “My magic is different. I’m always taking, using magic to feed the monster that lives inside of me. You can use magic to give, to bring life.”

Loki was surprised, he’d never heard a vampire speak so candidly. “I can also use it to take, to destroy.”

The vampire nodded. “I know but at least you have a choice. You have the choice to use your magic for good or for evil, to give life or to take it. I will never have that choice. I know this is my lot in life, I know this is the path I was chosen to walk but sometimes I can’t help but wish it was different.”

Loki’s jaw nearly hit the floor and his stomach twisted into confusing knots as Tony spoke. He could hear the pain and the longing in Tony’s voice and it made his chest ache. “You’d be surprised how difficult it is to constantly choose the right path.”

His words made Tony look up. “You’re a white witch, for lack of a better term, there is only one path.”
The warlock snorted. “Do you think all dark practitioners start off that way? Some of the darkest mages I’ve ever encountered started off with white magic.” He took a sip of his wine as he attempted to sort his thoughts. “There is always the temptation, the urge to use black magic. When I’m exhausted or when I’ve nearly used up all of my magic that little voice calls out to me. I know there are stores of untapped power within me, I just need to reach out and take it.”

“Why don’t you?”

“Because black magic changes you. At first there is a rush, a high that you get from all of this seemingly unending power but you become addicted to that rush and will do anything to get that feeling once more. It’s like a drug but worse. You can’t just go up to some dealer and buy power, you have to make sacrifices. The more powerful the sacrifice the more intense the rush. It’s a never ending cycle that destroys you and those all around you.”

Tony watched as Loki picked at his food. Obviously he’d struck a nerve with him once more and he wished that the mage would just confide in him. He knew that there were secrets behind those viridian eyes but he wasn’t sure how to access them without hurting Loki.

The two finished their meal in silence. Once the dishes were cleared they headed into the spacious den, wineglasses in hand.

“Can I ask you something?” It had been quiet for so long that Tony’s question made Loki jump.

“Yes”

The vampire paused then rubbed the back of his neck nervously. “Never mind.”

“Spit it out.”

“Well…this is going to sound stupid but could I see your magic?”

Loki lifted an eyebrow. “You’ve seen me do magic before.”

“I know but something besides blowing up cell phones or lighting candles.”

The man paused then nodded. “Alright.”

He led them to stand in the center of the room. Holding out his left hand he drew in energy and the lights dimmed as he absorbed some of the candles’ power. He flattened out his right palm and whispered, “lumiere”, while pouring a tiny bit of his will into the word. Slowly a ball of warm light began to form. With another whisper he sent the ball gently floating into the room. He snapped his fingers and another ball formed and another until the room was illuminated by the small spheres.

The small orbs dashed this way and that, bouncing off of the walls, ricocheting off of picture frames, twisting their way around both Loki and Tony. They moved seemingly without reason but at the same time there was a silent rhythm that they followed.

Loki watched with pride as Tony’s face lit up with joy when the lights slowly began to change colors, each one moving with its own unique pattern until the room was painted with a kaleidoscope of colors.

“Hold out your hands.” Tony did as he was told and watched as each ball of light began to land on his upturned palms, melting into each other until they were the size of a basketball. He could feel the slight warmth of the orb and felt the buzz of power against his skin and for the first time he didn’t want to take that power, he simply wanted to enjoy its existence.
With a grin he tossed the glowing ball towards the ceiling where it exploded into a shower of sparks that rained down upon himself and Loki.

The warlock tilted his head up to watch the colorful lights and Tony felt something snap. Green eyes glowed with happiness and Tony could practically feel the power radiating off of the pale skin. It was too much for him to take. With long strides he crossed the room and pulled Loki into his arms before rising onto his toes and kissing the mage soundly.

He could feel Loki’s gasp and dimly realized that the candles flared to life once more once the practitioner released his control on them. To Tony’s delight he felt long fingers dig into the material of his shirt and he swallowed Loki’s sigh as the kiss deepened.

Tony tentatively touched his tongue to the seam of Loki’s lips and felt his heart jump when those lips willingly parted for him. He took his time, ignoring the primal need to claim and to take, not willing to frighten the hesitant mage. When Loki finally reciprocated, his tongue delving into the warm depths of Tony’s mouth, the engineer couldn’t hold back his groan of appreciation.

Finally the need from air tore them apart and Tony gazed into the wide eyes of the man in his arms. He could feel the slight tremor that wracked the man in his grasp and prayed that Loki wouldn’t send him flying across the room for his actions.

“I...Tony...I can’t...” said Loki. His head was spinning and he felt as though he had been drugged.

“Give me a reason, one good reason, and I will walk away.” Tony’s voice was rough when he spoke and it made the hair on back of Loki’s neck stand up.

“You’re a vampire.”

“Loki, look at me.” Amber eyes met emerald in a stare that was as intense as any soul gaze. “What you see is me, not the beast. Yes, the monster wants you but I need you. Please, Loki, just trust me.”

The warlock swallowed hard. His heart was beating so hard that he was sure that Tony could hear it and his thoughts raced at top speed through his head. “I...”

“You have my word that I won’t hurt you.” Tony gently stroked his cheek and Loki could feel the slight tremble in his fingers. The vampire was fighting the beast that lived within so he could be with him. The very thought sent a rush through his body.

Loki didn’t reply, he simply wrapped his arms around Tony’s shoulders and pulled him close for another kiss. Tony’s hands tightened on his hips as he pressed gentle kisses along his neck and jaw. The warlock sighed softly and could feel Tony’s smile against his skin.

Without breaking their embrace the two slowly made their way towards the stairs. Tony eventually pulled away and held his hand out. His eyes were dark and his breath was harsh, making a chill run down the mage’s spine.

Loki took a deep breath and for the first time in a very, very long time, he allowed himself to give in as he grasped the outstretched hand and allowed Tony to lead him upstairs.

Outside a storm raged but it paled in comparison to the intensity of the pair that writhed between the tangled sheets. A trail of beautifully tailored garments led to the bedroom that was filled with harsh groans and bitten back cries of passion. Loki was amazed at Tony’s control as the vampire prepared him first with his mouth then with his fingers, wringing breathless pleas and moans from the mage.

When Tony finally slid inside neither party dared to move for several long moments, each fighting
the instinct to take and to possess. As the pair rocked together their magic ricocheted through the room, illuminating the space with splashes of blood red and ice blue magic.

Loki leaned up to capture kiss-swollen lips and swallowed Tony’s moan as he squeezed the vampire’s length buried deep inside his body. Breaking the kiss he stared into the lust-blown amber eyes above him. Even now he could feel Tony holding back, keeping the beast within him at bay. If he slipped, if his concentration broke for even a second the results could be deadly.

The danger sent a thrill through Loki’s body and with a wicked grin he suddenly shifted, rolling them until Tony was on his back. The mage felt calloused hands grip his hips and the threw his head back, his eyes closing as he gave into the sensations surrounding him.

It didn’t take long, the heat between them was too much, and with a broken cry Loki let the evidence of his desire paint Tony’s chest and stomach. With a dozen more brutal thrusts the engineer found his own release and Loki rolled his hips to prolong the pleasure.

With a groan he eased himself onto the bed and was immediately pulled into Tony’s embrace. He barely had enough energy to whisk away the evidence of their passion with a spell before giving in to exhaustion.

Chapter End Notes

So Tony and Loki finally gave in. Can Tony truly control the monster inside or is Loki in more danger than he believes?

Remember that comments make the world go ’round!
Midnight brought a hush to the deserted street. Faint wisps of mist began to form, slowly pooling and gathering until a hooded figure was revealed. Slowly he walked down the empty street, casting out his senses as he searched for his next target.

It took every ounce of his discipline to contain his rage. Despite his efforts the one he sought still had not come to this section of the city. He knew that the witch’s death had been in the papers. She came from an old, respected family and her death had been so mysterious that the press were practically falling over themselves to report it.

Within the cowl a sick grin twisted the man’s face. It had been so easy. Yes, the witch had powerful wards around her home but the small threads of deadly smoke hadn’t tripped the magical defense system until it was too late.

Once the woman had realized what was going on she had fought but it was useless. How could one possibly try and fight smoke? Her magic had passed uselessly through him and he nearly laughed at the ease of taking her life. He had toyed with her until he grew weary then had merely focused his energy around her nose and mouth, watching as her struggles grew weaker and weaker as the smoke slowly drained her life away.

The hooded stranger stopped in front of a house and took a deep breath while gathering his power. If one death didn’t bring his query running perhaps a second one would.

~*~

Loki headed down to the lobby with his luggage and was surprised to see both Tony and Rhodey waiting for him. From the looks on their faces he knew something was very wrong. “What happened?”

The two led him to a less occupied area of the lobby. “Did you read the paper this morning?” asked Tony and Loki nodded. “Did you see the article about the man who died from smoke inhalation without any trace of fire in his home?”

The warlock fought to keep his face impassive. He knew that whoever or whatever was killing these people was trying to lure him in and he was sick of evading the inevitable. Maybe he was wrong, maybe this had nothing to do with him but he had to find out before anyone else died.

“Yes, I saw it.”

“It wasn’t just any man that was killed,” said Rhoday. “It was a werewolf.”

“Really?”

The guitarist nodded. “A friend of ours called me this morning. He was absolutely distraught because the man who was killed was a member of his pack.”

Loki felt his stomach drop. Not only was he headed to Brooklyn to track down this mysterious killer but there was going to be a very vengeful pack of werewolves searching for the same stranger. Why couldn’t anything ever be easy?
“Have you ever seen anything like this? Someone killing supernatural beings with smoke?” asked Tony.

The warlock looked between both men and nervously licked his lips. Should he tell them that he had seen identical deaths in London? That one of his “sisters” had been killed in the exact same fashion?

With a shaky breath Loki shook his head. He couldn’t let Tony and Rhody get involved with this. He had too much blood on his hands already and he would be damned if he allowed any harm to come to these two.

“No, I’ve never seen anything like it.”

Tony frowned. “You’re lying.”

“Drop it.” Loki pushed past them and headed towards his rental car, shoving luggage in the tiny trunk with far too much effort.

“We’re going with you.” Rhodye’s words made the mage pause and turn.

“What?”

“Our friend wants to find out who killed his blood brother. We owe it to him to help.”

Tony took a tentative step closer. “I know there are things you aren’t telling me and that’s fine, you have every right to keep your secrets. But don’t you want to find out who is behind this? Don’t you want to put a stop to it before someone else dies?” Loki was silent and Tony decided to push his luck. “You don’t have to do this alone. If there is something killing people with smoke wouldn’t it be smarter to work together?”

The warlock let out a sigh. “Fine. Let’s take a field trip to Brooklyn but first I have to do some shopping. If I’m going to face this thing I want to be prepared.”

~*~

It was late when the trio arrived in Brooklyn. After getting Loki settled at his hotel they all piled into Rhodye’s car. Soon they were arriving at a comfortable looking home in a neighborhood that had once been run-down but was slowly being invaded by hipsters.

Loki extended his senses and frowned. “Is the whole pack here?”

Tony shook his head. “Most of them are probably out on patrol. How many did you sense?”

“Three.”

“That sounds about right. Ready?”

The mage shrugged his shoulders. He had a feeling that tonight was going to be anything but pleasant. Werewolves and mages rarely spoke to each other let alone worked together. Many practitioners looked down upon werewolves because they used magic in order to shift, they saw it as tainting the art. On the other hand werewolves often saw practitioners as snotty and pretentious, something that was all too true.

Loki had worked with and against werewolves more than once and had both good and bad experiences. Something in his gut told him that this upcoming encounter was not going to go well.

He hung back as Rhodye rang the doorbell. The door was opened a few moments later by a young
man with sharp, intelligent eyes. “Glad you guys could come.”

“Good to see you too, Clint. Where’s Natasha?”

“Watching the back door. Come on in.”

“We brought some help,” said Tony while turning and beckoning to Loki. The warlock came to stand on the porch and nodded in greeting. “Loki this is Clint, Clint this is Loki.”

Clint turned and took a deep breath then frowned at the two vampires. “You brought a warlock? He’s not going to like that.”

Tony shrugged. “He’ll survive. I think he could be useful.”

“How?”

“Because whoever is killing these people is doing it with black magic,” said the mage.

Clint paused then glanced at Tony and Rhodey. Finally he shook his head in defeat. “Alright, come on in but if I suspect for a moment that you’re up to something I’ll rescind my invitation, understood?”

Loki nodded and stepped into the house. Houses were very interesting venues in the magical community. Every dwelling whether it was a tiny shack or imposing mansion possessed a threshold. Not a physical one but one that was made of energy. The more lived in a home was the more powerful the threshold. All magical or supernatural beings were affected by thresholds. Vampires weren’t the only ones who had to be invited into a home, the energy of the threshold affected practitioners like Loki as well. He could enter a house without an invitation but he would leave a good portion of his power at the door. If Clint suddenly decided that he was not welcome he would be stuck inside of a house surrounded by three angry werewolves and two dubiously helpful vampires.

“Where is he?” asked Tony once Clint had secured the door.

“Wearing a hole in the carpet of the living room.”

Hanging back in case he needed to make a quick exit, Loki followed Rhodey and Tony into the living room. In front of the fireplace a tall blonde was pacing and everyone could feel the agitation rolling off of his body.

“Steve.”

The man paused and turned towards Tony. “Man, it’s good to see you guys.” He took two steps towards them then froze. “Who is that?”

“His name is Loki, he can help us.”

“A warlock? You brought a warlock into this? What were you thinking?”

“Steve, calm down.”

“I will not calm down! One of my brothers is dead and your brilliant plan is to bring a warlock?” The young man looked past Tony where Clint was standing. “You! You allowed him into your home!”

“Tony and Rhodey vouched for him.”
Steve snorted. “For all you know he could have them under some type of spell.”

“You know that it doesn’t work that way,” Rhodey interjected. “It’s impossible.”

“And someone being killed by smoke without any type of fire is impossible too.”

“Steve, he can help. He knows how this person is killing with smoke. He said it’s black magic.”

The blonde raked his hands through his hair. “Of course he knows! He’s probably the one behind these murders!”

“That’s not true,” countered Tony. “He’s been in the city with us this whole time.”

Steve leaned closer to Tony and narrowed his eyes. “You stink. Please do not tell me that you slept with him.”

“Steve...”

“You have got to be kidding me! No wonder you’ve been so blinded, you’re thinking with the wrong head! Jesus, Tony. I know you have a reputation but a warlock? Seriously? I thought you had some standards but apparently I was wrong.”

Loki watched Rhodey and Tony argue with Steve and felt his patience fade away. As quietly as possible he slipped outside and started walking towards the main street, surely there was a place where he could call a cab to take him back to the hotel.

“Loki wait!” He kept walking but stopped short when Rhodey suddenly appeared in front of him. “Don’t go.”

“I came to Brooklyn to try and find out who is behind these murders, not to be insulted by some dog.”

“Steve’s opinions are very strong but he’ll come around.”

“What if he doesn’t? I don’t have time for this.”

“He will. If anyone can talk him down it’s Tony. Please come back.”

The practitioner shook his head. “Fine, but the moment he starts running his mouth I’m gone.”

“Fair enough.”

The two walked back in silence. The house was quiet when they returned and Loki wondered exactly what Tony had done in order to calm Steve. After remembering what Tony had done during his panic attack he quickly changed his mind, some things were not worth knowing.

Steve was sitting in a chair in the living room with his arms crossed looking like a petulant child. Tony was softly speaking to Clint and a young woman with brilliant red hair. The trio cut off their conversation and Tony sent Rhodey a look of gratitude.

“Loki, you already met Clint. This is Natasha.”

The young woman nodded in his direction. “Tony says that whoever did this killed them with black magic, is it true?”

“I think so. The spell wouldn’t be too difficult, it’s just a manipulation of air. The practitioner would
have to infuse their will into the spell and the darker their intentions the darker their will would
appear hence death by smoke.”

“Sounds like you’ve put a lot of thought into it.”

Loki nodded. “I’ve never seen someone use air magic like this before. It has to be very controlled
and concentrated plus the practitioner would have to guide the spell from outside of the victim’s
home because they wouldn’t be able to cross their threshold.”

“Do you know who is doing this?” asked Clint.

“No but they’re powerful. It takes a lot of concentration to perform such delicate magic.”

“How do we find them?” asked Tony.

“I need to go to the last victim’s house. I should be able to pick up their aura and I might be able to
track it. Even if I can’t track it I’ll know what their aura looks like and I’ll recognize it if I see it
again. I should also be able to read their energy signature and see exactly how they put this spell into
play.”

“No, absolutely not,” interjected Steve. “I don’t want anyone going near Bucky’s house let alone a
warlock.”

“Do you want to know who is behind this or not?”

Steve paused. “Why can’t you go to the scene of the first murder?”

“It’s too old, I won’t be able to read anything.” Steve was silent and Loki took a breath to ease his
frustration. “You are more than welcome to accompany me but the first step is letting me examine the
scene. I will do my best not to disturb anything and you have my word that I will treat the home with
the upmost respect. This is the only way I know to try and pinpoint our killer.”

Steve sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “Fine, let’s get this over with.”

Chapter End Notes

The cloaked figure strikes again! Hopefully they can find and stop whoever is behind
the murders before someone else dies. *points at the warnings* I make no promises.
In the end Steve, Tony and Clint ended up accompanying Loki. There was some grumbling because he made them park several blocks away but he didn’t want to draw any unwanted attention.

Loki cast out his senses, searching for any traces of dark magic. It didn’t take long before he found something. In the center of the street, directly across from the house was a residual pool of dark magic so foul that it made his stomach churn.

“Stop.” The three accompanying him froze. “Fan out to watch the area but don’t come any closer or your magic will interfere.”

Narrowing his focus, Loki concentrated on the dark pool of magic. To his senses it was bitterly cold and had a slimy, greasy feel. Whoever was casting this magic had gone off the deep end in a big way. Over twenty four hours had passed and the fact that this much magic was still left behind told Loki that the practitioner was strong. A slight grin quirked his lips, strong but not smart. One of the first skills a magic user learned was how to conserve their magic. The strength of a spell relied heavily on its efficiency. The spell that this mage had used was strong but wasted a lot of energy.

Loki frowned at the thought. It didn’t make sense. How could one practitioner cast a spell of this magnitude on their own? Even with all of his years of experience and training he wouldn’t have been able to pull off a spell like this, the sheer amount of energy needed would kill him. It would take two or most likely three mages to put this type of spell into motion yet there was only one energy signature.

He shoved that thought to the back of his mind and focused on the pool of energy once more. Eventually he could see the faint glow of the user’s aura appear in the darkness. The cool blue hue that was associated with magic users shone brightly but something was very wrong. Woven throughout the aura were thick threads of black and even though they were faint they seemed to be writhing and twisting. It reminded him of a spider’s web and he didn’t dare move any closer, for all he knew it could be some type of trap.

Once he had memorized the pattern within the aura he turned towards the house. The front door was still covered with police tape and the structure already looked lonely and abandoned.

Loki closed his eyes and concentrated before opening his eyes and using his Sight. Anyone who had even the smallest bit of magical talent had a Sight. Some called it the Third Eye or a chakra but it all had the same purpose, it gave the user the ability to see beyond the physical world. One could see things are they truly were, no spell or veil could hide from a witch or warlock’s Sight. Using one’s Sight carried a high risk, however. Whatever was seen, no matter how beautiful or horrific, could never be unseen. It was permanently etched in high definition technicolor on the user’s psyche.

Loki took a moment to simply take in the house’s appearance. With his Sight the deep green aura of the werewolf shone brightly but the rotten blue aura of the dark mage ruined the image. He could see the wisps of smoke that led from the street into the home as if they were fresh and decided to test a theory.

Holding out his right hand he whispered, “caligo,” and focused his will as small tendrils of mist began to spill from his palm. To his three companions the mist was faint but through his Sight it
blazed with a cool blue light. The mist began to gather and Loki could physically feel when it hit the home’s threshold. Holding out both of his hands he pushed while searching every inch of the house for a breech.

The house was solid and he closed his eyes for a moment to banish his Sight before opening them once more and narrowing his focus. He decided to concentrate on the front door since that is where the attack had begun. After a solid minute he knew that he might as well be pushing against a brick wall. There was absolutely no way that he could penetrate the threshold.

With a curse he released the spell and wiped the sweat from his forehead. It looked like he was going to have to eat his words and admit to Steve that he was right, what had been done was impossible.

He waved his three companions over and they headed back to the car in silence. After getting settled Tony turned to him with a hopeful expression. “Well? What did you get?”

“A headache,” mumbled Loki. “I need to think about this for awhile. I’ll explain when we get back.”

A handful of aspirin and a hot toddy helped soothe the mage and he found himself surrounded by an eager group of supernatural creatures. “So what did you find out?” asked Steve.

“You were right…the spell is impossible.” The room was deathly silent. “I have no idea how the practitioner was able to get through the threshold and manipulate such a delicate spell. I tried something similar and exhausted myself after less than a minute and that was after the threshold had been broken.”

“Could it be more than one person?” asked Rhodey after he found his voice.

“Possibly but I only found one energy signature and one aura.”

“We only found one scent too,” added Clint.

“Was there anything else you could find out?” Tony asked as he tried to sit down next to Loki but the mage was up and moving in a flash.

“The practitioner is strong but they’re sloppy. It’s rough magic. I’d say they learned from experience versus being properly trained. It takes a lot of strength to pull off a spell like this, that little experiment winded me, so they would have to take time to rest. Most likely several days at least.”

“Do you know who is behind this?” asked Steve. Loki shook his head. “Do you know how they did it or why or when they’ll do it again?” Each time the warlock answered in the negative. “So we know nothing, brilliant.”

The room was silent and eventually Natasha stood. “Back to the drawing board, I guess.”

Loki’s eyes widened at her words. “Say that again.”

The young woman frowned. “What?”

“Whatever you just said, say it again!”

“Back to the drawing board, I guess.”

The warlock tossed his head back and laughed making everyone wonder if he had pushed himself a bit too hard. “They’re drawing!”

“What?” asked Tony.
“I know how one practitioner is casting such a powerful spell on their own, they’re drawing from the elements around them. I’d bet my magic that they’re an elemental, a practitioner that has a little raw talent but has to rely on the elements around them to fuel their spells.” Loki’s eyes were bright as he spoke. “The first murder was near a river wasn’t it?”

Several cell phones came to life as they checked the facts for Loki. “Yes,” replied Clint. “She lived a few blocks away from the Hudson river.”


Loki frowned as he tried to picture the house in his head. “There were puddles on the ground. Did it rain last night?”

“Yes, there was a massive thunderstorm.”

The mage beamed. “The mage used the storm to cast the spell.”

“You can do that?” asked Rhodey.

Loki nodded. “It’s very dangerous but it’s possible. I’ve done it in order to pull off a spell that would normally have killed me and so have a couple other practitioners that I know. I had a very interesting hairstyle afterwards and smelled like burnt toast for a week but I obviously survived.”

The excitement in the group was palpable. “Alright, we know how they performed the spell but do we know why?” asked Steve. Once more the room fell silent. “Then I suggest we go and find someone who does.”

“Who would that be?” asked Tony.

“Blind Mag.”

Chapter End Notes

Now we know how the cloaked figure is killing people we just have to find out who. Cookies for anyone who can name the movie that's referenced!
“Who?” asked Tony.

“Blind Mag,” replied Steve. “She’s a seer.”

Clint shuddered. “She scares the hell out of me.”

“What does she do?” asked Loki, trying to determine what type of creature that they were dealing with.

“She can read people, their past and their future.” Steve glanced at his watch. “It’s late and she doesn’t like to be kept waiting.”

The group ended up in an old, dark part of the city where the houses were so close together it was difficult to breathe.

The three werewolves led the way while Loki walked between Rhodey and Tony at the rear. It seemed like they walked forever before Steve stopped in front of a nondescript door.

Before he could knock a voice came from within. “Don’t just stand there, child. Come in and bring your companions.”

Clint jumped at the voice and a slight smile quirked across Loki’s face as they entered the small house. It was a tight squeeze but they all managed to fit. Tony stood slightly behind Loki and let one hand rest on his hip, the mage brushed off his touch and though he couldn’t see it Loki knew the engineer was frowning.

Steve sat down on a cushion directly across from the woman. The seer had dark hair that flowed in every direction and her eyes were covered by a thick cloth reminding them of the vision of blind justice.

“You have my sympathies at the loss of your brother,” said the woman.

The blonde nodded. “Thank you, he will be missed.”

“He’s running with the hunt on the other side now.” Steve didn’t reply he just swallowed hard. “And the pups, getting stronger and smarter?”

Natasha and Clint made a face. “Pups?”

Mag sent them a crooked smile. “You’re still young. You may run as full grown wolves but you have much to learn.” The woman turned to ‘look’ around the room. “You’re traveling with mixed company tonight.”

Steve nodded. “I want to find out who killed Bucky and why so I brought in some others to help.”

“I can see that,” said the woman with a laugh. She turned serious once more. “He is the only one that can help you defeat him.”

“Who?”
“The one you trust least. Even with his help the creature’s defeat may not be possible, I see death in your future.”

“We’re strong, we can win,” replied Steve.

“You cannot but I know you, you will fight until the last breath.” The woman paused then turned her head. “Loki, will you please come here?”

The warlock tried not to jump. In essence he was facing just another witch. If he was correct then Blind Mag was a sensitive. Sensitives were closer to the flow of time than most people. They could read a person’s past without a soul gaze and they could often see various outcomes for an individual’s future. It was a horrific gift to be bestowed with. They could see the past and the multitude of possible futures for every person that they came into contact with. More often than not they would gouge their own eyes out in an attempt to make the visions stop. Loki had met a couple of sensitives over the years and they always terrified and amazed him.

Slowly he sank onto the cushion that Steve had recently vacated. “You’re walking into a trap,” said Mag.

Loki twisted his hands in his lap, a habit his mother had never been able to break him of. “I know.”

“Still you move forward, why?”

“I have to know who is doing this and stop them before anyone else dies.”

“He’s been waiting a very long time to confront you.”

Loki frowned. “Who?”

“The Shadowman. He’s been following you all of these long years waiting for revenge.”

“Revenge for what?”

“A sin runs through your veins.”

The color drained from the warlock’s face. “My blood? My...my parents? What did they do?” He shook his head. “You’re wrong. It was so long ago that it’s impossible to be someone from their past.”

“You are not the only one who is cursed, child.”

It took all of Loki’s willpower not to pass out and he swallowed hard as his vision grayed at the edges. “I’m not cursed,” he whispered.

“Cursed, gifted, enchanted...they’re just words. But the Shadowman is coming for you. You will not be able to win this fight. You will die and those around you will perish as well.”

“You’re wrong. The future is too fluid for that.”

“Every thread that I see ends in your demise.”

Loki forced himself to keep his voice steady. “If I die I’m taking him with me. Where can we find him?”

“He will reveal himself to you soon. Be careful, he has made a deal with those on the other side and has become infected with powers that he cannot control.” Mag reached out and gently patted Loki’s
hand. “I do not envy your journey but your intentions are true. Trust those around you and perhaps your fate can be changed.”

The warlock nodded and was up and gone faster than the others knew he could move. “Let him go,” said the seer. “Tony, a word?” The vampire sat down and couldn’t help but glance behind him at the door, he desperately wanted to run after Loki. “Your devotion will be his undoing.”

The seer’s words made his head snap around. “What?”

“Your feelings are clouding your judgment, your instincts are dulled. You are distracted and you will be the one to kill him.”

Tony felt a chill run down his spine. “I would never hurt Loki.”

“You will not be the one to strike the final blow but you will be the one to lead him to his death.”

“You’re wrong.”

Mag shook her head. “You are the only one who can unravel this thread but either way the man will die.”

Tony couldn’t listen anymore and quickly made his way out onto the street. He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, searching for Loki’s scent. The man was fast and had nearly made his way back to the car but Tony was faster and the man nearly fell when he stopped directly in his path. Loki stumbled and Tony steadied him with his hands on the mage’s arms. He shrugged him off then started walking again.

“Loki, either stay here and tell me what is going on or I’ll make you.”

The warlock’s eyes hardened. “I’d love to see you try.”

“Come on, Loki. What was Mag talking about?”

By now the others had joined them and the warlock knew that there was no way out. “I don’t know who this Shadowman is, I swear I’ve never heard the name before.”

“What about that bit about revenge for something your parents did?” asked Rhodey.

“She has to be wrong. I’m not saying that my parents didn’t have their share of enemies but for someone to hold a grudge for this long is impossible.”

“Why is it impossible?” asked Clint.

“Because my parents died a very, very long time ago.”

“Loki. Why did Mag say you were cursed?” Steve’s voice was soft yet it cut through the fog like a knife.

“I’m not cursed,” replied the sorcerer. He tried to hide the slight tremble in his voice and failed.

“Then what is it?” asked Tony He could see that Loki was shaking and wanted nothing more then to take him into his arms.

The man raised his head and his emerald eyes seemed to glow in the dim light. “I’m immortal.”
Please remember that this is in a different universe. Loki is essentially a human with magic and has a slightly longer lifespan but nothing compared to the MCU.

Thank you guys for all of the comments and kudos, it makes me smile!
For a beat it was silent. Finally Tony managed to find his voice. “You’re immortal? How is that even possible?’’

Loki leaned against the rough wall behind him. “When I was eighteen my mother was getting ready to initiate me into her coven when word came that they had been betrayed and the townspeople were coming for them. She was part of a pagan coven and though paganism may be a recognized religion now but back then it was almost worse than witchcraft. My parents had anticipated an event like this and had transportation out of the city ready for the four of us.”

“Four of you?” asked Natasha. “Who else was there?”

Loki sighed and ran a hand through his dark locks.” My little brother, Thor. He was only seven at the time and was practically glued to my side. He was fascinated with magic even though he didn’t have much skill.”

Rhodey frowned. “How is that possible? Both of your parents were powerful, how did Thor not inherit their skill?”

“Thor is adopted. My parents took him in when he was an infant after his mother suffered a breakdown. His mother was a witch but her power was unstable and my parents adopted him in order to give him a secure home. We looked nothing alike, he had bright blue eyes and golden hair but we didn’t care, as far as I was concerned he was my brother.” Loki paused and a slight smile tugged at his lips as he gazed into the past.

“When the word of the betrayal reached us my father managed to get me out but was caught while trying to go for my mother and Thor. There was a scuffle and somehow Thor disappeared. I searched for him for months but I never found a trace of him. It was as if he had simply vanished.”

Loki ran a hand through his hair. “My parents were sentenced to be burned at the stake. The members of the coven helped disguise me so I could be there in the crowd. If my parents were going to die I wanted to see it, not hear it through rumor.

Somehow my parents knew I was there and managed to pull off the most powerful spell I have ever seen. They declared that when I reached the peak of life time would stop, I would never age another day. They transferred all of their power to me, infusing me with my mother’s unique skills and my father’s light and dark magic. I’m probably the most powerful warlock on the planet but I’d give it all up in order to be with them again. I was eighteen, a grown man! I should have died with them that day.”

The warlock swallowed hard to hold back his tears. To this day he could still smell the acrid smoke and feel the searing pain as the spell hit him. “They wanted me to live long enough to find the one who betrayed them and to be powerful enough to stop them when the time came. Ironically, it only took a few months to find the witch that betrayed us and the coven put her to death. Even though my parents’ wish was fulfilled I still watch each year pass by, I see those that I love age and die yet I never change. Despite all of my power I was never able to find Thor. I will never forgive myself for that failure.”

When Tony next spoke his words were very soft. “Loki, how old are you?”
“I was born in 1880. My mother spent time in New Orleans before I was born and studied under Marie Laveau, the strongest voodoo priestess the world has ever seen. I didn’t get the honor to learn from her, I was less than a year old when she died.”

“That’s impossible. You’re lying,” growled Steve.

“It’s amazing how powerful the combination of love and desperation is.” The werewolf clenched his jaw and Loki sighed. “Fine.” Taking a deep breath he let his eyes meet the blonde’s.

For a second he felt time stop as he tumbled into the sky blue orbs as the soul gaze began. Steve had once been a carefree young man who turned a blind eye to the growing decay of his neighborhood. The crime rate had risen and each day was more dangerous than the next. He had played it off, knowing that things would somehow get better when tragedy struck. His beloved fiancée, Peggy, was killed in a crossfire on her way home from work one day.

Steve had been devastated and angry, wanting revenge on those who had torn his family apart. He heard whispers of a way to become stronger, to be able to defend himself and those around him. In a darkened bar he met a mage that showed him how to unlock the magic that was already within him.

From that day forward he was determined to turn his old neighborhood around, to make it safe once more and to help those around him in any way that he could.

The images began to blur and race before Loki’s eyes but it was Steve that broke the gaze first. They both were breathing hard and the werewolf’s face was pale, Loki always wondered what people saw when they looked into his eyes.

“Do you believe me now?” Steve shakily nodded his head. “Good.”

“What about the Shadowman?” asked Clint. “You parents put a spell on you but how could this practitioner stay alive for so long?”

Loki shoved his hands in his pockets. “My guess is that he sold his soul.”

“If only,” replied the mage with a wry chuckle. “No, I have a feeling it was someone or something much worse. Most likely one of the fairy queens or a demon.”

Steve laughed. “He sold his soul to a fairy, I could think of worse things.”

Loki turned on the werewolf. “Really? Have you ever met a fairy, a real one? I’m not talking about the little pixies that zip around and pull pranks I’m talking about the real deal. They look just like grown women and are the most beautiful, desirable creatures you will ever lay eyes upon. They also have more power in their little finger than the six of us combined.” The blonde fell silent. “Of course it could be a demon but I doubt it, a demon would come after me himself. They wouldn’t use a human to do their dirty work.”

“Could one of the fairy queens make someone immortal?” asked Clint after a beat.

“In a way, yes,” replied Loki. “They could stop the clock but only for so long. If the Shadowman has made a deal with one of the fairy queens then this situation is much more dangerous than I thought. He has to kill me or the queen will take away his immortality. He’ll race through the years in an instant, it’s a horrible way to die.”

“Now what?” asked Rhodey after a long, uncomfortable silence.
“You heard Mag, he’s supposed to contact me. I suggest we all get some rest and I have some work to do. If he’s coming to kill me then I intend on taking this bastard down with me.”

Chapter End Notes

Timelines? Cannon? Who needs 'em!

So now we know Loki’s secret. Stay with me, the Shadowman will be making his presence known sooner rather than later.
Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

I'm feeling generous so I thought I'd update a little early.

See the end of the chapter for more notes.

Loki sat down on the end of his bed with a sigh. This was it, he was going to die. The idea didn’t bother him nearly as much as it should. For decades he had waited for his body to age, for his powers to wane but he stood frozen as the world moved around him. He missed his family and was looking forward to seeing them once more. He just had to figure out a way to keep the others safe in the process.

He didn’t ask what Mag had discussed with the others but it had rattled Tony. The vampire had reached for him briefly in the lobby but turned away without another word. Loki wasn’t sure what to think about the handsome vampire but he didn’t have time for that. Perhaps if he managed a miracle and survived then he’d spare a thought for him.

For a moment he considered contacting his coven. If he was going to face such a powerful mage he would have preferred to do it standing side by side with some of the world’s strongest practitioners. Instead he had three werewolves and two White Court vampires. It’s a good thing that Loki didn’t gamble because his luck sucked.

“Maybe I can track him...” he mused then shook his head. In a city this large it was impossible to track someone’s aura. There was too much interference and he would be wandering around for days while more people died in the process.

Blind Mag said that the Shadowman would make himself known to him and that didn’t sit well with Loki. He could pull off some powerful magic on the fly but when he had time to prepare he was a force to be reckoned with. Of course if this mage had been following him for decades he would know that.

Damn.

“Come on...think...” Loki tried to piece together as much about the Shadowman as he could. He had sold his soul in order to gain revenge for something that his parents did and he preferred to kill using air magic. He wasn’t properly trained and was forced to use the elements to aid him.

It wasn’t much but it was a start. The warlock bounced his knee, a habit his father had failed to break in him, as he thought. Air magic was difficult to counter. Loki typically used fire magic, a simple acceleration of particles to produce heat or light. Fire magic was nearly useless against air magic because they countered each other. Air fueled the fire and fire superheated the air. The same went for earth and water magic, they each were canceled out by air. There’s a reason why those are the four main elements of magic, you know, they balance so perfectly that it hurts.

Loki’s thoughts were racing as he let his head sink into his hands. A blinding headache pounded behind his eyes and he knew that he should sleep but there was no way that he would rest in this state. He toyed with the amulet at his neck, a gift from his mother, as he tried to find a solution. “I wish you were here, mother, I could certainly use some help. They’re going to die and it’s all my
fault.”

~*~

For nearly a week Loki refused to leave his hotel room. He studied and brewed potions and tried to forget that he held the fate of five individuals in his hands. The warlock had pushed all thoughts of the others from his mind as he tried to prepare for his inevitable meeting with the Shadowman. Tony only called once and that was to make sure that he hadn’t fled the city, apparently he was doing Steve’s dirty work.

Loki had finally exhausted himself when the shrill ringing of the phone tore him from the first decent sleep he had gotten in days.

“Something better be on fire or someone better be dead,” he growled into the phone.

“He’s been spotted. We’re on our way to the hotel,” said Tony and Loki was up and moving before the dial tone hit his ear.

Despite his exhaustion his eyes were bright when the car stopped in front of the hotel. “Where was he seen?” he asked as Rhodey hit the accelerator.

“Near an old warehouse district,” replied Tony.

“How cliche. How long ago?”

“One of Steve’s scouts spotted him less than an hour ago. Steve and the others will meet us there.”

Loki nodded and stared out of the window at the blurred cityscape. “You don’t have to come with me.”

Rhodey glanced at him in the review mirror for a moment before blasting through an intersection. “Yes we do.”

“It’s my burden...”

Tony interrupted him. “It’s not just about you anymore, Loki. When Bucky was killed the game changed. We’re going to help whether you like it or not.” The vampire squeezed his knee and he turned his head away. Loki knew that the future was not set in stone, at a moment’s notice their fates could change. But something told him that the seer’s predictions would be coming true sooner than anyone thought.

Due to Rhodey’s driving it didn’t take long for them to reach their destination. They parked a few blocks away and walked in silence as Loki cast out his senses. The Shadowman had been here, the mage could feel the oppressive weight of his magic pressing against his temples. His aura was visible but faint, Loki might be able to track him but it would be difficult with so much ground to cover.

He turned a corner and stopped short. Steve was standing between two massive dark wolves, one with brilliant eyes and the other with a darker set. He knew that it was just Natasha and Clint but the sight was impressive to say the least. “Any sign of him?” he asked.

Steve shook his head. “No, but we did find something.” Loki stepped closer and saw a small piece of black cloth that had been snagged on a loose nail.

“What is it?” asked Rhodey.
“A breadcrumb,” replied Loki with a frown. “He knows I can track him with this, he’s luring us in.”

“How?”

Loki didn’t reply. Instead he reached into his pocket and produced a small piece of chalk. After drawing a large circle around himself he gently picked up the piece of fabric and placed it inside the circle with him. Kneeling down he touched the circle and forced a tiny bit of his will into it, the others could practically feel the snap of the magic as it closed around him. Drawing a knife from his boot he pricked his thumb and allowed a tiny drop of blood to soak into the dark cloth. He whispered, “suivre”, and after a moment an eerie blue white light began to emanate from it. A heartbeat later the light was gone and Loki smudged the chalk with his foot, breaking the circle.

“Did it work?” asked Steve.

The warlock nodded. “Follow me.” He closed his eyes and opened them again with his Sight. The twisted blue and black aura of the Shadowman flared to life in front of him, leading them directly into the warehouse district. “I swear, is there a handbook they give to bad guys with criteria they have to follow? Cheesy name? Check. Abandoned warehouses? Check. If he has a maniacal laugh I’m leaving.” One of the wolves at his side huffed and it almost sounded like a snort of laughter which brought a slight smile to his face.

Loki lead the way flanked by Natasha and Clint while the other three brought up the rear. “Keep your eyes open, we’re getting close.” Several twists and turns later the practitioner’s aura faded and Loki held up a fist to stop them. After closing his Sight he took a look around. They were surrounded by huge shipping containers on all sides. It wouldn’t be difficult for Tony or Rhodey to jump to the top of one and even the wolves could probably make it in a single leap but he wouldn’t be able to make it without a little help from his magic.

“So glad you could join me.”

The voice made their heads almost comically whip around. Directly across from them a figure emerged from the shadows. Well, that’s not exactly true. A figure made of shadows stepped forward and Loki raised an eyebrow. “Really? You sent a projection? Too afraid to face me?”

“It is not yet time for us to meet. I simply wanted to give you a small taste of my power.”

Twin growls made the group snap their heads to the side as two sets of eyes began to brightly glow a sinister red. The warlock shook his head in disgust. “So you raised a couple of demons. I know toddlers who could do more impressive feats for a cookie.”

The shadow figure twitched and Loki knew that he had hit a nerve. “You are just like your mother, constantly running your mouth.”

“I’m more like my mother than you know.” Holding out his right hand Loki muttered a word and sent a searing bolt of heat towards the shadow. For an instant he could feel the Shadowman’s will pushing against his own but without anything to draw from he was nearly powerless against the him. The shadow seemed to scream before being ripped apart as Loki’s magic overcame the other mage’s.

“Amateur,” he said before joining the others. The two demons were slowly creeping closer and unknowingly the group formed a line with Loki in the center.

“Impressive,” remarked Tony without taking his eyes off the demons. One looked like some kind of frog or toad while the other looked like a wildcat on serious steroids. “Now what do we do?”

“We fight,” replied Loki. He heard a sound at his side and glanced over to see a dark blonde wolf
join the others.

“Don’t wizards fight with wands or something?” asked Rhodey.

Loki’s grin was downright wicked. “Some use wands but I prefer something a bit more...substantial. The saying is true, size does matter.” Tony choked at his words and tried to cover his reaction with a cough. Loki held out his left hand and a staff began to materialize in front of their eyes. It was pitch black and covered with white runes and symbols. “Whatever you do don’t turn your back on them and be careful, it looks like the toad spits.”

They could all feel the shock when the Shadowman released his control on the creatures and the two groups ran at full tilt towards each other. The toad jumped at Loki and he swung his staff like a baseball bat, hitting it dead center and sending it flying. Before it could land Tony and Rhodey were on it, landing blows at an inhuman speed.

The other demon made a sound very similar to a housecat when it’s tail has been stepped on and jumped several feet in the air. “Ignis!” Loki yelled and lobbed a fireball at the creature. It was faster than he anticipated and he missed his mark but managed to burn a substantial portion of its right flank. The acrid stench of burned hair filled the air as he went running across the space once more.

It was obvious that the Shadowman didn’t know Loki was bringing company because the two demons he raised were minor ones. If he had been alone then he would have been in a world of hurt but with the assistance from the others it didn’t take long for the battle to shift in their favor.

Loki heard Clint, or was it Natasha?, make a sharp sound to get his attention and he turned and headed where the three wolves had the cat-like demon surrounded. It was horribly wounded yet bared its teeth and hissed at them. “Come on guys, aren’t you supposed to chase it up a tree or something?” he asked.

Steve made a sound that he was pretty sure translated into an obscene word and he drew in his will and pointed his staff at the demon. “Cover your eyes!” he warned before yelling “zelde!” A blinding blot of lightning shot from his staff and hit the demon right between the eyes. The creature let out a scream and dissolved into millions of tiny pieces of ash that caught in the slight breeze.

“Loki!”

Rhodey’s call made the warlock spin on his heel and he watched as the other demon grabbed Tony and threw him against one of the shipping crates. The vampire left a huge dent and fell to the ground with a sickening thud.

“Have I mentioned that I hate frogs?” He started to run towards the demon and felt the three wolves catch up with him. “I can’t hurt it with my magic, it’s going to take brute force. Wear him down until I can finish him off.”

He hung back while the three wolves went to Rhodey’s aid. Keeping one eye on the battle he hurried to Tony’s side. Placing a hand on his chest the sorcerer let out a breath of relief, he was alive.

The sound of something wet hitting the ground reached her ears and a moment later Rhodey cursed. Apparently the creature did spit some type of acid. Luckily the vampire had only been splashed with a few drops but he held his left arm close to his body.

Glancing up, Loki suddenly got an idea. “Rhodey, fall back and keep an eye on Tony. Steve, push him to your left about ten feet and hold him there!”

The demon was strong and fought them for every inch. Loki ran to assist the wolves and even
though his magic bounced off its hide it annoyed the creature enough to make it step back a few feet. He could tell that it was going to spit again and Steve was right in its trajectory. Taking off in a dead sprint Loki shook the bracelet on his left wrist free and dove between Steve and the demon. The wolf braced himself for the bite of the acid and was shocked to see the venom dripping off of the shield that Loki had created in front of him.

While the demon was screaming its frustration Clint and Natasha took advantage of its distraction and managed to knock it off its feet. Before it could move Loki pointed his staff at the ground below the creature and hissed, “revenir” while pouring his will into the word. The concrete began to melt back into its natural elements causing the heavy demon to sink into the muck.

“Back up! Get clear!” yelled Loki. The runes on his staff glowed red as he pointed it at the shipping container above the demon. “Ventus anima!” the warlock yelled and the container began to rock as it was pounded by the winds he commanded. He let out a cry and the container finally came loose, falling directly on top of the trapped demon. Loki turned and crouched while activating his shield bracelet once more, feeling the shockwave and debris bounce off of the shield.

His ears were ringing from the volume of the crash and he didn’t hear his companions calling his name until they were right in front of him. He let the shield fall and slowly came to his feet, feeling a hand on his arm to steady him.

“Are you alright?” asked Steve.

The werewolf’s presence startled the mage. “Yes, I’m fine. You?”

“I’m fine...thanks to you. I owe you one.”

Loki nodded in response. “I’ll remember that.”

The two walked over to where the others were waiting, sheltered behind another crate. “You certainly know how to make a statement,” said Rhodey. The wounds on his arm were nearly gone but Loki could tell that the fight had taken its toll.

The warlock glanced back at the fallen container and chuckled. “I know, this is why I can’t have nice things.” He knelt down where Tony was sitting with his back against a crate. “How are you feeling?”

“I’m fine.”

“You took a hell of a hit, are you sure you’re okay?”

The vampire took the mage’s hand in his own, his fingertips gently grazing the tender skin of his wrist. “I told you, Loki, I’m fine.”

Tony smiled slightly then tipped his head up to meet Loki’s eyes. His eyes were almost black, the pupils so dilated that the warm brown hue was nearly gone. Loki snatched his hand away and stepped back quickly. “Lair, you’re not fine...you’re hungry.” Tony’s smile faded as he staggered to his feet. “I’m going back with the others, we’ll meet you at Clint’s house.”

“Loki wait...”

“I’m sure someone heard that crash and we need to be gone before the police arrive. I’ll see you there. Come on, let’s go.”

Without another word the warlock turned and began to walk off, the three werewolves flanking him.
Tony watched him go and swore before turning and heading in the opposite direction.

Chapter End Notes

I'm terrible at writing action, I hope it wasn't too bad.

Thank you guys for all of the support, it means the world to me!
Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

The ride back to Clint’s house was silent. Loki was trying to replay as much of the battle in his mind as possible to try and find more of the Shadowman’s weaknesses. The others were wondering what they had gotten themselves into. They wanted to find Bucky’s killer but had no idea that they were going to be drawn into such a dangerous situation.

Once they reached the house Loki stopped them. “Now that the Shadowman knows that you’re involved it wouldn’t hurt to be a bit more cautious.” He reached out towards the home with his senses, going over the entire structure twice before nodding towards the door. “All clear. Remind me tomorrow and I will place wards around the house. Between the wards and the threshold nothing will be able to get in.”

The warlock sank into an overstuffed chair with a sigh. He was going to be sore in the morning. It had been a long time since he’d had to actually fight, he usually relied on his magic to win the day.

“Are you alright?” asked Clint while handing him a mug of coffee.

“I’m fine, just tired. It’s been a while since I’ve had to fight and that last spell took a lot out of me.”

“That was impressive,” commented Natasha while sitting across from him. “How did you do it?

“I used his own trick against him, it was just air magic.” He glanced at his companions. “Are you guys okay?”

“Just a few bumps and bruises, nothing that we can’t handle.”

The group sat in silence for several minutes until Steve spoke up. “How did you create that shield around us? I didn’t hear you cast a spell.”

Loki held out his left wrist. “With this. Each charm is an enchanted shield and the band is enchanted as well with a defense spell. I can create a shield without it but the charms help focus and strengthen the spell.” He sipped his coffee and glanced at his companions. “I don’t have to actually say anything in order to cast a spell, it just helps me focus.”

“Really?” asked the blonde.

“When you learned how to shift you had to actually speak the spell, didn’t you? But as time went by it became second nature and now you can just shift without even thinking about it, right?” The three werewolves nodded. “The same is true with my magic. I can cast basic, everyday spells with just a thought but more powerful or intricate spells require a bit more concentration. Of course sometimes I’m just lazy and use the words so I don’t have to use as much effort with the simple things.”

The warlock placed his empty mug on the table and held out his left hand. The three wolves watched in silence as the black staff appeared in his hand once more. “How do you do that?” asked Clint.

Loki grinned. “I have to have some secrets. I learned it from a friend that lives, literally, in the middle of nowhere. He’s one of the most powerful wizards that I’ve ever met. He knew that I hated carrying around this thing so he showed me how to call it when I need it. He also taught me how to cast the spell without speaking so if I’m ever in trouble I can call it without making any noise.”
“What are all of those symbols?” asked Natasha.

“What do I suddenly feel like I’m at show and tell?”

“Sorry...”

He waved off the apology. “I’m just teasing you. There are runes and spells carved into the staff. The spells are mostly force and energy related to enhance my strength if I actually fight with it. The runes help focus the spells I send through it and amplify them. I can cast powerful spells without it but the staff makes them more precise.”

Slowly he examined each inch of the staff, making sure that it wasn’t cracked or chipped. Once he was convinced that it was still solid he waved his hand and it faded into nothingness.

“Why did the Shadowman lure us in like that?” Steve suddenly asked.

“He was trying to lure me into the confrontation in order to test my strength and wear me down. I don’t think that he was expecting me to bring company.”

“Why didn’t he just fight you?” asked Natasha. “Why raise the demons?”

The warlock settled back in the chair. “I think he’s trying to show off his power by raising the demons but that feat isn’t very impressive at all. Almost anyone with any amount of magical talent could raise a demon or two without breaking a sweat.” He paused and a grin quirked his lips. “He knows that he can’t fight me without anything to draw upon. We weren’t near a body of water and the skies were clear so he had to rely on his own magic and I must say that he is pretty weak. I could shatter his projection with a thought.”

“What will he do next?” asked Clint.

Loki sighed. “I wish I knew. I would guess that he’s going to change the game again now that you all are involved. He’s going to up the stakes so you guys need to be on guard at all times. I would also guess that he’s going to wait for it to rain so he can draw off of the power of the storm. He’s not naturally strong but he has learned how to amp up his power to a terrifying scale. He might try and draw me into a confrontation near a body of water but that’s too public. If he’s going around calling himself the Shadowman I’m going to assume that he doesn’t want to be in the spotlight.”

The group chatted on and off but it was late and Loki could feel the effects of the battle on his body. He sat up with a start when Clint gently touched his shoulder. “There is a free room down the hall on the left, why don’t you try to get some rest?”

Loki shook his head. “I’m fine. I want to wait until Tony and Rhodey get back so we can decide our next course of action.”

“It’s obvious you’re exhausted and you need to rest. The Shadowman could attack at any minute and we need to be ready.”

“Damn you and your logic,” muttered the warlock while slowly coming to his feet. He could feel each and every one of his years weighing on him as he trudged down the hall. The room was small but there was a bed with clean sheets and that was more than enough for him. He was asleep mere moments after his head hit the pillow and to his relief he did not dream.

It was several hours later before Tony and Rhodey returned to the house. After checking in the two decided to get some rest and regroup in the morning.
Tony stood in the doorway and watched as Loki slept. When he was fighting he seemed invincible and larger than life but now he seemed small and vulnerable. “Are you awake?” he whispered, not wanting to disturb the others.

“No...” Loki mumbled and Tony chuckled.

The vampire sat on the edge of the bed and smoothed the mage’s hair back. “I’m sorry about earlier...”

“’S fine...”

“No it isn’t, I don’t know what came over me. You know that I would never do anything to hurt you.”

Loki turned to face him. “Apologize tomorrow, I’m too tired to care.”

The vampire chuckled and gently caressed his cheek. “Alright.”

Loki blinked open heavy eyes. “Are you staying or are you on guard duty?”

Tony smiled slightly. “Natasha is watching the door, I suppose I could stay.”

The warlock didn’t reply he simply burrowed down under the covers. A few minutes later the bed dipped with Tony’s added weight and Loki rolled towards him, tucking his face into Tony’s neck.

The vampire pulled Loki close, he was soft and warm from sleep and Tony was very glad that he had fed earlier that evening. Even though he swore he would never hurt Loki there was something about the warlock that tested his control.

To his surprise Loki tilted his head up and let his lips find Tony’s. The kiss was long and slow and Tony didn’t want it to end. Apparently neither did the warlock. Loki’s tongue teased the seam of Tony’s lips and the vampire was helpless to resist. The mage raised himself up on one elbow to deepen the kiss and Tony happily sank back into the pillows, his fingers tangling in long ebony hair.

When they finally broke apart for air there was a flush on the mage’s cheeks and the vampire’s pupils were blown with a different type of hunger. Tony bit back a groan as Loki’s lips found his neck. His hands tightened on the warlock’s hips as a thigh was pressed between his own.

“You do know that we’re in a house full of individuals with enhanced hearing, right?”

Loki chuckled and whispered a word, a moment later the room was deathly silent. “Don’t you remember the night we met? Silence spells are ridiculously simple.” He pointed towards the door and the deadbolt engaged with a muffled ‘click’. Tony’s laugh melted into a moan as the mage began to kiss his way down his body.

The sun was just starting to rise and Tony watched the shadows stretch across the ceiling. He pressed a kiss to the top of Loki’s head and rubbed slow circles on his back, smiling as the mage curled closer. In the back of his head he heard Blind Mag’s warning but shoved it away. There was no way he could ever hurt Loki. They were going to defeat the Shadowman and prove the seer wrong. Fate was never set in stone and he was determined to keep Loki safe no matter the cost.

Chapter End Notes
It's a bit of a filler but at least you got some Loki and Tony time!
When Tony woke the next morning Loki was gone. He wandered into the living room and frowned. “Where’s Loki?”

“Outside with Clint placing wards around the house,” replied Steve between bites of his breakfast.

Tony nodded and headed towards the kitchen. About twenty minutes later Loki and Clint joined him. “Since you are the owner of this house the wards are specific to you,” said the warlock while stealing Tony’s bacon off of his plate.

“So what do I have to do?” asked Clint while trying not to laugh at the vampire’s expression.

“Nothing. The wards are like a security system. You’ll know when someone is approaching and if someone would try to force their way in they will get a rather nasty surprise.”

“How will I know?”

“You just will. They’re linked to your aura so you’ll be alerted even if you are sleeping.”

The werewolf took a moment to process the information and nodded. “Alright, sounds simple enough. Thank you again, Loki.”

The man waved off the compliment. “It’s the least I could do. You’ve been dragged into this mess because of me, the least I can do is help you watch your back.”

Loki glanced around and noticed that everyone was finally awake and gathered in the living room. He went to join them and felt the silence fill the room. “I wanted to thank you all for your help last night, I probably could have defeated the two demons on my own but they were fast and strong. Without you the Shadowman could have killed me without even facing me.”

“This is our fight too,” replied Steve. “I don’t know why he wants you dead but I have every intention of ripping him limb from limb for what he did to Bucky.” The other two werewolves mumbled their agreement.

“Tony and I have known Steve and his pack for a long time, if they’re in this fight then we’re in it too,” said Rhodey.

The warlock bowed his head in thanks. “I am in your debt. No matter your intentions you did save my life last night.” He waited a beat before continuing. “Now comes the part that I hate...waiting. As I said last night, the Shadowman used a lot of his power to raise those demons and sending the projection. He’s going to have to rest and recharge. He’s also going to change his plans because he knows I’m not here alone so please be on your guard. I know you’re all strong and powerful but we’re dealing with dark magic and a practitioner who hated my parents so much that he sold his soul just so he could live long enough to try and kill me. To say he’s unstable would be a bit of an understatement.”

“So what do we do?” asked Natasha.

Loki sighed. “We wait. Go on with your lives. Take extra precautions but don’t let him stop you
from living. Just know that at any moment he could strike and now he might not go after me. He might attack one of you in order to draw me out. It’s obvious that he likes to hurt people so please be careful.” The mage rubbed his eyes. “I’m not sure what his next move will be but be ready, I have a feeling that a confrontation is on its way.”

“Do you think we should stay together?” asked Clint. “Tony and Rhodey are staying here and there’s plenty of room for you.”

A smile crossed the mage’s face. “You’re asking me to stay cooped up in a house with two vampires and three werewolves? Thanks but no thanks. I’ll be fine at the hotel. The Shadowman might be able to track me there but it’s too public for him and if there happen to be other magic users staying there then he’d really be in trouble.”

“Do you need a ride back?” asked Tony as Loki stood and began to gather his things.

“Sure.”

The ride to the hotel was short and Loki rolled his eyes when Tony insisted on escorting him up to his room. To ease the vampire’s nerves he extended his senses into the room and informed him that it was safe.

“Wait, I forgot something.”

Loki frowned. “What?”

“This.” Tony reached out and pulled Loki into his arms, one hand sinking into his hair while the other arm wrapped around his waist as their lips met in a heated kiss. The warlock didn’t resist and felt the solid weight of the door press into his spine. Neither one wanted the kiss to end and they fought to make it last. Finally the lack of air tore them apart but neither one moved, they clung to each other as their hearts raced.

“Stark, I don’t have time for this,” said Loki. His head lolled back as Tony placed kisses along his neck and jaw.

“Time for what?” Tony nipped lightly at Loki’s neck and heard his breath catch.

“This.” He gently pushed at Tony’s shoulder and the vampire pulled back slightly to meet his eyes. “There is someone out there that wants me dead and I should be trying to stop him.”

“And how exactly are you planning on stopping him?”

For once Loki was at a loss for words. His mouth moved for several seconds before any sound came out. “I don’t know. But...”

Tony kissed him gently. “No buts.”

“You heard Blind Mag. I’m going to die no matter what I do.”

“Exactly.”

Loki frowned. “What are you talking about?”

“If your destiny is to die then why not make the most of the time you have left?”

The warlock let the idea roll around in his head for a bit and against his will a slight smile tugged at his lips. “Once again foiled by logic.”
Tony grinned. “Glad you decided to see things my way.” He leaned in for another kiss but Loki ducked away with a laugh.

“If I’m going to play along with your carpe diem bullshit then I need a shower and food and coffee then we can carpe diem all you want.”

The vampire shook his head. “Fine. I’ll meet you back here in an hour?”

“It’s a date.”

When Tony returned Loki was clean, fed, and highly caffeinated. The mage slid his sunglasses on and followed the vampire onto the street. “So where to?” asked Tony.

Loki shrugged. “I’ve never been here before. Let’s just wander. If I’m going to die here then I might as well see as much of the city as possible.” Tony frowned at the choice of words and headed towards an older neighborhood that was full of unique shops.

The two spent the majority of the day ducking in and out of shops, hitting the occasional bar and people watching. Loki had a running commentary of both locals and tourists alike and more than once Tony had to turn a laugh into a cough. The warlock had a dry, sarcastic sense of humor that would seem irritating to most but Tony was always curious to see what he would say next.

They purposefully avoided any areas near water. It reminded Loki too much of the young witch’s death and since the Shadowman’s preferred to cast near water it seemed wise to steer clear. The last thing they needed was to be caught off guard.

After lunch Tony led them towards Prespect Park. Loki took a deep breath of the clear air and felt a tiny bit of his stress fade. He would never admit it out loud but Tony was right. Tomorrow was never promised to anyone. Just because he was immortal it didn’t mean that he couldn’t be killed. He was just as likely to be hit by a car as he was to die at the hands of the Shadowman. Of course as far as he knew there weren’t any demonic cars trying to hunt him down. Okay...bad example.

His mind was a million miles away and he jumped when Tony gently took his hand in his own. He glanced down at their joined hands and raised an eyebrow. The vampire simply smiled and kept walking. Loki shook his head and allowed Tony to lead him through the park. He felt like he was a teenager again, strolling through the park hand in hand with his beau. The action seemed to make Tony happy though so he decided he could deal with a little affection.

They sat down on a bench in the warm sunlight and Loki smiled slightly when Tony’s arm wrapped around his shoulders. He let his head rest on the vampire’s shoulder as they watched the flow of people within the park.

Eventually the sun began to set and the weather turned cool. The park was nearly empty as the two stood. Tony wrapped an arm around Loki’s waist and felt the mage lean into him. He pushed all of the stress and worry from his mind as they chatted about where to get dinner.

They settled on a tiny gastropub that was known to have an excellent band. One of the musicians recognized Tony and soon he was being pulled towards the front despite his protests. Loki laughed and cheered him on as he led a popular song that had been on the radio just a few years ago.

After a few more songs Tony beckoned to Loki and the sorcerer shook his head wildly. Unfortunately he was outnumbered when many of the patrons began to chant his name. “I hate you,” he hissed under her breath as Tony patted the seat behind a piano. The vampire grinned then quickly explained the chords to the next song. Loki was a natural and kept up with the musicians even when
they tried to throw him off.

The noise in the pub died down when he began to sing and people’s mouths dropped open when Tony chimed in with the accompanying harmony. It was like they had been singing together for years and after each song ended the crowd was cheering for another.

Eventually the two were able to make their escape and walked down the street laughing and still singing. It had been a very long time since Loki had allowed himself to just let go and have fun. He hated the fact that by the time he had finally found someone that helped him open up he was practically on death’s door.

Loki was pulled from his musings by Tony suddenly grabbing him around the waist and pulling him into a deep kiss. The mage’s arms wrapped around his shoulders as he lost himself in the moment.

“Why do I feel like I’m in some cheesy romantic comedy?” Loki asked as they broke apart for air.

“Are you calling me cheesy?” asked Tony. He tried to look serious but was failing miserably.

“Did I stutter?”

“I’m hurt.” Tony placed a hand over his heart and Loki rolled his eyes.

“Please. I’m sure you’ve been called worse.”

The two playfully argued the entire way back to Loki’s hotel. Once again Tony insisted on accompanying him to his room and wasn’t satisfied until he gave the all clear.

Loki kissed Tony gently and smiled. “Thank you for today. It’s exactly what I needed to get my mind off of everything that has been going on.”

“You’re welcome.”

Tony pulled Loki close and the warlock felt himself falling into the warm brown eyes in front of him. Almost without thinking he tilted his head down and tasted Tony’s smile as their lips met. Unlike their encounter this morning there was an urgency, a need to their kiss. Loki dug his fingers into Tony’s shoulders as the vampire nipped and kissed at his neck. Tony’s hands spread across Loki’s back and hip in an attempt to pull him closer and Loki made a sound in his throat that made his blood turn to fire.

Amber eyes met emerald as their owners fought to catch their breath. Loki suddenly turned and tried to unlock the door to his room. It was nearly impossible because his hands were shaking and Tony wasn’t helping. The vampire’s hands gripped his hips as his lips pressed burning kisses across his neck. The mage nearly dropped the keys when Tony’s teeth nipped at his earlobe and Loki felt his chuckle rumble across his skin. In retaliation he rolled his hips back and smiled to himself when a hiss left Tony’s lips. Finally the door opened and the two went stumbling into the darkness.

Loki held up a hand and Tony growled low in his throat, he wasn’t in any type of mood to be kept waiting. With a grin Loki hung the ‘Do Not Disturb’ tag on the door and firmly locked the door behind him before placing both hands on Tony’s chest and pushing him backwards. He grinned at the vampire’s sprawled form on the bed before slowly stalking closer, looking ever bit as dangerous as Tony knew he was.

As their bodies came together, sweat slick skin gliding beneath eager hands, the two lovers could feel something new forming between them. There was a feeling of desperation tainting the air and through neither one was willing to voice it, deep down they had a feeling that this would be their last
night together.

The two fought for dominance, neither one willing to submit to the other. Teeth sank into tender skin as nails raked against bare flesh hard enough to draw blood. Their magic sparked and ricocheted throughout the room as their lovemaking reached a fever pitch.

Loki rolled his hips to prolong the pleasure rushing through his veins as he slowly stroked Tony’s softening length, milking every drop of the vampire’s release. He let his head fall forward and ignored the shaking of his hands as he used a spell to clean them up.

Stretching out, he let his head rest on Tony’s chest and could hear the rush of air through the vampire’s lungs as he came down from his high. Something heavy settled in the pit of his stomach and no matter how hard he tried he couldn’t force it away. The mage knew that his final meeting was approaching and on that day his destiny would be decided.

Chapter End Notes

We're nearing the end, folks, but just wait...it's about to hit the fan!
Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

The phone was ringing.

Wait.

Why was the phone ringing?

Loki let out a groan and rolled over, fumbling with the phone before finally getting the damn thing off the hook. “Yes?”

“Loki?” asked Clint.

“Who else would it be?”

“Is Tony with you?” The young man’s voice made the warlock take notice. At the mention of his name the arm around the mage’s waist tightened and a kiss was pressed against his shoulder.

“Yes. What’s wrong?”

“Umm...nothing’s really wrong but...can you guys come over?”

“Of course. We’ll be there soon.”

“What’s going on?” asked Tony. His voice was rough from sleep and Loki forced himself to focus on the matter at hand and not the hard length pressing against his backside.

Loki shook his head with a frown and used every ounce of his willpower not to grind his hips back against Tony. “I don’t know. Clint sounded strange on the phone. Come on, we better get over there.”

Tony watched as Loki stood and appreciated the way that the sun seeping through the curtains played across his bare skin. The vampire shook his head and sighed. The Shadowman had the fucking worst timing.

It didn’t take long for the two to arrive and when Clint answered the door his expression was somber. “What happened?” asked Loki.

“You need to see this,” replied the werewolf while leading him into the kitchen.

The others were standing around the kitchen table where two newspapers were spread out. One was the local paper but the other didn’t belong. “Did you touch it?” asked Loki while extending his senses.

“No, I don’t think so. It was inside of the local paper. As soon as I saw it I dropped them both and called you.”

Loki frowned as he slowly examined each inch of both newspapers. Finally he let out a slow breath. “They don’t have any magic associated with them, maybe it was a mistake.”

“Loki, look at the second paper,” said Steve. His voice was tight and he couldn’t make himself meet
the mage’s eyes.

The warlock stepped closer and felt his stomach drop to his feet. The second paper was a copy of his local paper from London dated several weeks ago. In bold letters the front page announced the mysterious death of a young woman who died of smoke inhalation without any trace of fire in her apartment.

“Have you seen this before?” asked Clint.

“Yes, it’s my local paper.”

“I thought you had never heard of the Shadowman,” said Natasha.

Loki swallowed hard. “I didn’t know his name until I came to the States.”

“But you did know of him?”

“Yes and no. There were mysterious deaths occurring around the city but there was never one suspect. The authorities were dumbfounded and I tried not to get involved.”

“People were dying in your city, how could you not get involved?” asked Rhodey.

“Do you know how many people are in London? We get millions of tourists a year. To top it off it’s a nexus for the supernatural community, there are more allegiances and feuds than I can keep track of. I’m not even the head of my coven so even if I wanted to investigate these murders I would have had to go through them first.”

The vampire frowned. “You’re not the head of your coven? Why?”

“Because I’m immortal. Not everyone in the coven knows but if I was the head of the coven I would always be the head. Once appointed you will never lose the position unless you are killed or if we vote to remove you.”

“Why didn’t your coven investigate?” asked Steve.

Loki shrugged. “Most of the deaths didn’t occur in our neighborhood, we didn’t want to overstep our bounds and start poking around in someone else’s territory.”

“What was so special about this death?” asked Clint. He waited a beat and answered his own question. “You knew her, didn’t you? The death that’s in the papers, she was in your neighborhood, wasn’t she?”

The warlock wrapped his arms around himself and nodded. “Yes, I knew her.”

“How well did you know her?”

Loki swallowed hard as the memories came flooding back. “She was a witch in my coven.” His voice shook and he forced himself to control his emotions. “She was just a child, only twenty five with her whole life ahead of her.”

“And your coven didn’t investigate then?”

“Yes, after Amora died they did investigate but I wasn’t part of it.”

Steve ran a hand through his hair. “You claim to be so powerful yet they didn’t ask you to help, why?”
“Because I was too emotionally involved. I was helping train Amora, she was my apprentice.”
Loki’s voice dropped to a whisper. “I was the one who found her.”

“I don’t believe you,” said Steve. It was obvious that he was losing his patience and everyone could feel the tension in the room. “Your apprentice was killed and you don’t investigate? If it was me I would have investigated whether I was allowed to or not.”

“Well I guess that’s the difference between me and you,” snapped Loki. He turned away and leaned against the counter. “I did look into her death, I wanted to figure out if a practitioner could use air magic to kill someone.”

“That’s why you knew how Bucky was killed,” said Natasha.

Loki nodded. “When I figured it out I was nearly sick. Magic is a beautiful gift and I couldn’t imagine someone twisting something so precious into a weapon.”

Steve shook his head. “I still don’t understand. When the witch was killed in New York by the same method why didn’t you look into it? I’m sure you saw the connection.”

The warlock closed his eyes for a moment, remembering the sick panic that flooded his body when he saw the article in the paper. “I did make the connection and I panicked.”

“It’s true,” said Tony, speaking up for the first time. “We were in the lobby of the hotel and his powers nearly got away from him. I had to siphon off some of his emotions just to keep him from destroying the hotel.”

Natasha’s eyes widened. “You did what? Loki? How could you let him do that to you?”

“He didn’t have a choice. I could feel myself slipping and I couldn’t contain my power. People would have gotten hurt if he hadn’t stepped in.”

“What is it with you two?” said Steve. “Don’t you see what’s going on here, Loki? Tony is using you. He’s pulling your focus away from these deaths.”

Loki frowned. “What are you talking about?”

“You know how the White Court works. Once a vampire has fed from you, even once, they exert a certain amount of control over you.”

“Yes, I know but...”

“But nothing. For all you know Tony is working with the Shadowman.”

“That’s outrageous,” interjected Rhodey.

“Is it?”

All heads turned towards the dark haired vampire. “Come on, guys. Listen to yourselves, you’re getting worked up over nothing. Until he came to New York I’d never met nor heard of Loki. Why would I be working with someone who has a personal vendetta against someone I’ve never met? Plus, I was with you guys here in New York when the murders were being committed in London.”

The group looked uneasily at each other and Loki refused to meet Tony’s eyes. The vampire reached an arm out towards him but the warlock flitted away. “Loki, you knew I had to help you that day. You said it yourself that without my help people would have gotten hurt. I have never once allowed
the beast to take over, I’ve never done anything to hurt you.” He let out a sigh and raked his hand through his hair. “We’re all tired and afraid of what might come next. Why don’t we just walk away before we say or do something we’ll regret.”

“You’re good at that, aren’t you?” said Steve.

“What?”

“Loki was with you when the witch was killed, right?” Tony nodded. “And instead of investigating what did you do? You screwed around, literally, until someone else was killed.”

Steve took a step closer to Tony and everyone could feel the tension spark between them. “A man was killed because you decided getting him into your bed was more important. That man was my brother and because of you he’s dead!”

“Steve calm down,” said Rhodey. “This isn’t Tony’s fault. You’re just looking for someone to blame.”

“Damn right I am.” A growl started low in the blonde’s throat and the hair stood up on the back of Loki’s neck as he felt his magic begin to rise.

“Stop!” yelled the mage. He poured a tiny bit of his will into the word and for a few seconds everyone froze in place. “This is ridiculous. I thought you all were friends or at least allies. Yes, this situation is terrible and innocent people died but ripping each other limb from limb isn’t going to bring them back.”

Loki took a moment to look over the group and shook his head. “You heard Blind Mag, the Shadowman is coming after me. I don’t know why but it’s time for this to end. I won’t let you destroy yourselves over something that I did.”

“No, I want him to pay for what he did to Bucky,” said Steve.

“And he will.”

“You can’t stop us, Loki,” said Clint.

“I know but I can at least keep you from following me.” The warlock closed his eyes and drew in his will. “Disparaître,” he whispered. There was suddenly a rush of air which sent the two newspapers flying and within a heartbeat Loki was gone.

“I’m going after him,” said Tony.

“You won’t find him,” countered Natasha.

“I have to try.”

“Why are you doing this?” asked Rhody.

“Because Loki means something to me. When I look at him I feel things that I haven’t felt in decades. I’m not going to let him face the Shadowman alone.”

“Don’t you remember what Blind Mag said? You’re going to be the one to kill Loki.”

The vampire shook his head. “I don’t believe her. Not all prophecies come true. I would never hurt him.”
Rhodey took Tony by the shoulders. “Listen to me. You have to stop this. Blind Mag isn’t a prophet, she’s a seer. You heard her tell Loki that this was a trap and that he would die. Tony, you’re doing exactly what Blind Mag predicted! You’re letting your emotions for Loki blind you.”

Tony yanked himself from Rhodey’s grasp. “No. You are the ones who are blind. Loki may be powerful but he’s scared and feels so guilty that he is willing to sacrifice himself in order to make things right. More than once he has told us that this wasn’t our fight, that he would do this alone but we didn’t listen. The other night he fought with us and probably saved all of our lives.” He paused to look at the group but no one would meet his eyes. “We’ve all lost people we cared about and I’m sick of it. Yes, I might die but I’m not going to lose Loki without a fight.”

Without another word the vampire turned and headed outside. He didn’t know where Loki had gone but he was hoping that he could track the mage’s scent from his hotel room. As he rushed through the streets he couldn’t ignore the sick feeling in his gut that told him that he was too late.

Chapter End Notes

This is the beginning of the end. The team is falling apart and Loki has disappeared. Hopefully Tony can find him before it's too late.

Remember that comments and kudos feed my fragile ego!
Chapter 14

Tony slowly opened his eyes with a groan. His head was throbbing and even the weak light in the room sent a stabbing pain through his eyes. How much had he had to drink? This was like his usual hangover on steroids. Taking slow breaths he tried to remember how he had come to be in his current situation.

After leaving Clint’s house he had rushed over to Loki’s hotel. The young woman at the front desk informed him that Loki had checked out but it didn’t take much persuading for the woman to give Tony a spare key.

The room was empty but his scent was still fresh, he hadn’t been gone long. Before he turned to leave something made him pause and he took a slower glance around the room. He could still feel the energy within the space and could practically see their shadows ghost through the room.

Closing his eyes he allowed the memories from the previous night to flood his mind. The feeling of Loki’s lips, the taste of his skin, the soft cries that filled his ears, the scent of his desire. The images were so vivid that Tony swore that Loki was in the room with him.

He sat down on the edge of the bed, the sheets still tangled from their lovemaking, and scrubbed a hand over his face. In a way Steve was right, from the moment that he saw Loki he had desired him but it was more than that. The way he smiled at Tony’s terrible jokes, the gleam in his unique eyes when something caught his interest, the quiet confidence that he exuded, the power that thrummed under his skin...it all drew Tony in.

The vampire sighed and shook his head. He was falling in love with a man that he was destined to kill. He knew that life was unfair but this was a whole new level of fuckedupness.

Tony knew that with each passing moment the odds of finding Loki dwindled. Taking one last glance around the room he headed downstairs and into the city. He was surprised that he could actually follow Loki’s scent through the crowded streets. He had claimed to not want anyone to follow him yet it wasn’t too difficult to do exactly that.

After hours of wandering back and forth Tony realized that he had been duped. Loki had somehow cast a random trail of his scent throughout Brooklyn in order to throw off anyone who was looking for him.

Tony swore and sank onto a bench near the East river. Loki was gone. He had no idea how to find him and he knew that’s exactly what the Shadowman wanted. It wasn’t a coincidence that the newspaper from London had been delivered to Clint’s house. The dark mage wanted them to see it and to call out Loki. The practitioner wanted them to begin to doubt Loki and his intentions and the ruse worked perfectly. With one small action he drove wedge between them, shattering already delicate alliances.

The sun began to set turning the water in front of him an array of colors. He watched the colors flow and bend for several moments before deciding to head back towards Clint’s house. Before he could turn to leave he caught a slight scent on the breeze and knew it could only belong to Loki.

Tony rushed across the park, his eyes quickly adjusting to the fading light. A flash of movement on
his left caused him to break into a run and he called out to the warlock. “Loki, please wait!”

He quickly turned a corner and froze, the street was empty and the scent was gone. A frown marred his face. How could that be?

Before he could turn and head back all of the light seemed to disappear within the alley and the shadows suddenly came to life. He didn’t even make it one step before the shadows surrounded him and then there was darkness.

The sound of footsteps brought Tony back to the present. He cracked open his eyes and saw a hooded figure standing across from him. “How nice of you to join the land of the living,” said the Shadowman with a chuckle.

Tony struggled against his bonds and was alarmed at how weak he felt. His arms were shackled above his head and his feet barely touched the ground, forcing him to stand on his toes. He pulled at the shackles once more and felt his stomach twist. The manacles were pure iron.

Iron was the proverbial kryptonite for supernatural creatures. It drained their power and could even kill them. Any other type of metal would bend like clay under Tony’s hands but the iron rendered him helpless. Without assistance he wouldn’t be able to break free no matter how badly he wanted to wrap his hands around the Shadowman’s neck.

“I must thank you for all of your assistance.”

“How did you find me?” growled Tony.

“Ever since our encounter the other night I’ve been keeping an eye on all of Loki’s new friends. I must say that when you two sang together at the bar last night I was truly moved.”

The vampire’s eyes widened. “You were following us?”

“Merely enjoying the lovely music. Loki really should be more careful where he leaves his things though. I suppose I should give this back the next time I see him.”

The Shadowman held up a houndstooth scarf and Tony felt his stomach drop. That’s why Loki’s scent was all over the city. The Shadowman had used his scarf to create a false trail and Tony had fallen for the ruse. Blind Mag was right after all. He had been so distracted that he had walked directly into the Shadowman’s trap.

“I must admit that I wasn’t sure how to lure Loki in but now I have the perfect bait.”

“He won’t come for me.”

“No? I have been watching him for decades and have never seen him act the way he does with you. He may not admit it, but he’s falling in love.”

Tony shook his head. “Loki doesn’t love me, he barely trusts me.”

“He allowed a vampire into his bed, I believe that takes quite a bit of trust.” The Shadowman stepped closer and Tony weakly struggled against the manacles. “He will come for you and when he does I will finally take the revenge I have been seeking for nearly one hundred years.”

~*~

Loki stood at the window of his hotel watching the storm clouds gather over the city. The time had
come, he was going to face the Shadowman at last. His hands shook slightly and he shoved them in
his pockets. He was never one to back down from a fight but this one was different. This time there
was more than one life at stake.

His room service order that morning had arrived with a note. In neat letters he had been informed that
Tony had been taken and would be released as long as he showed up. If he failed to appear his body
would be delivered instead. He was to arrive at sunset at a site north of the city called Fort Crown
Point. Tony would be waiting for him at the training yards. Apparently it was a rather famous site
where hostages were exchanged during war time here in America.

It was also a giant circle that the Shadowman could use to contain his power while drawing from the
oncoming storm that probably contained enough residual energy to power the entire island of
Manhattan for several days.

Brilliant.

Loki closed his eyes for a moment in order to center himself before stopping to jot a quick note on a
piece of paper. He opened the window to his room, tasting the rain in the air, and whispered a quiet
word. The wind responded to his will and tugged the note from his hand, sending it across the city.

With a final glance around the room he grabbed his coat and headed to meet his fate.

~*~

Clint was lounging on the couch, pretending to read a magazine while subtly watching Natasha do
yoga, when the hair on the back of his neck suddenly stood on end as the wards around the house
were activated. In an instant he was on his feet, his enhanced hearing straining to discern if there was
a threat.

Suddenly a thin white envelope slid under the door and the young man frowned. “Guys, you better
get in here.” The other two werewolves joined him and peered over his shoulder as he slowly
opened the envelope.

Tony was taken by the Shadowman three days ago.

He has agreed to release him if I meet him at Fort Crown Point at sunset.

I know this is a trap, if the Shadowman fails to kill me Tony probably will, he hasn’t fed in days.

I don’t want your help, I don’t want you involved, but Tony is your friend.

If I fail you have to come to his aid, he will be too weak to fight the Shadowman alone.

It has been an honor to fight by your side and I am truly sorry that I have failed you.

Loki

Clint read the letter three times then let out a slow breath. “What do we do?”

Steve raked a hand through his hair. “I want nothing to do with Loki but he’s right, we have to help
Tony.”

“Guys, look outside. There is a massive storm rolling in. Do you think we can take the Shadowman
if he has the power of the storm to draw from?” asked Natasha.

“We can only hope that Loki wears him down before we get there,” replied the blonde.
“And if he hasn’t? What if the Shadowman kills him as soon as he arrives?”

“Then we die trying. Loki saved my life, I owe him a debt. Clint, call Rhodey. It’s nearly sunset and it will take us a while to get there especially in this weather.” The distant rumble of thunder made him turn towards the window. “Let’s just hope we’re not too late.”

Chapter End Notes

Next up is the final showdown! Will Loki be able to rescue Tony or will Blind Mag’s prediction come true?
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Loki paused at the worn main gates of the fort and glanced around. The surrounding landscape was flat which meant that the Shadowman would have plenty of time to watch him approach. He was sure that wards had been placed throughout the ruins that would track his progress. Of course that also meant that the Shadowman wouldn’t be able to flee undetected or call in any assistance because Loki could hack his wards. The warlock could twist the Shadowman’s defense system for his own benefit without his adversary noticing. Sometimes being a sneaky little shit had its advantages.

The warlock squared his shoulders and began to pick his way through the ruins, casting his senses out for any traps. The Shadowman might have had the upper hand but Loki was a powerful warlock and the energy of his parents flowed through his veins. His mother, Farbauti, was a priestess and had taught Loki how to store energy and to use the energy that constantly surrounded them. The amulet at Loki’s throat and the rings on his fingers were enchanted and stored kinetic energy. Each time he moved a tiny bit of energy was transferred into the talismans. He also had the ability to draw power from anything whether it was living or not.

Loki’s father was a once a dark warlock, a wizard who had gone dark but had been brought back over to the side of the light by his wife’s love. Laufey taught him how to fight and how to cast powerful evocations otherwise known as quick and dirty magic. He drilled preparedness into Loki’s head but also taught him to be flexible and to use what was around him to gain an advantage.

Over the years Loki had fought all manner of natural and supernatural beings and lived to tell the tale. There was a measure of peace and order in London now but there was once a time where one had to fight for respect and honor. Loki had never backed down when challenged and he wasn’t going to start now. Just because one seer saw his demise didn’t mean it was true.

The mage paused at the entrance to the training grounds and watched the storm roll in. He had literally raced the storm but it seemed like his reckless driving had bought him some time.

“So glad you could join me.”

The voice made him turn and he crossed his arms over his chest. “Don’t you know any other greetings?” The Shadowman didn’t reply and Loki rolled his eyes. “Is this your first time or something? If not you should know the drill by now. You let me see the hostage, I plead for his life, you give me an answer you know I won’t agree with, we fight and I go home and have a drink.”

“You talk too much.”

Loki shrugged. “I like the sound of my own voice. Now let me see him.”

The Shadowman stepped to the side and Loki forced himself not to react. Tony was chained to one of the stones that made up the ring enclosing the grounds. Even from a distance he looked weak, he was slumped against the stone and his normally warm skin was deathly pale. Loki’s jaw tightened when he realized that the chains binding him were iron. The metal was slowly draining Tony’s energy away and if he didn’t do something he would be dead in a relatively short amount of time.

Keeping one eye on the Shadowman, Loki slowly walked towards Tony. He had to give the other practitioner credit, he was clever. With Tony chained to the stone he was now part of the circle. He
knew that the Shadowman would use the circle to channel his power but if Loki tried to use magic to disrupt the circle it could backfire and kill Tony.

The warlock knelt at Tony’s side and shook his head. “You fool, you’re going to get me killed.”

The sound of his voice seemed to rouse the vampire. “You shouldn’t have come.” His voice was hoarse and Loki tried to ignore the bruises that bloomed across his skin.

“I know. This meeting was inevitable but I wish you wouldn’t have gotten involved.”

“I’m sorry, Loki, I...”

“Hush. Apologize later, I have some ass kicking to do.”

The warlock stood and faced the dark mage. “Is this this part when you beg for me to let him go?” asked the Shadowman.

“No.”

His response seemed to catch the other off guard. “What?”

“You and I both know that he hasn’t fed for days. If you let him go he’ll come after me. He’ll fight it but eventually the beast inside will win.” He paused and grinned. “Of course it could be fun. I’ve heard that when a White Court vampire feeds off of you it’s the biggest rush you’ve ever felt. You don’t even care that you’re dying because it feels so fucking good. I’d much rather go out with a smile on my face than waste my magic on you. And trust me, Tony knows exactly how to put a smile on my face.”

The Shadowman was obviously getting frustrated with Loki and that was exactly what the warlock wanted. “You are infuriating! Always with an answer to everything. You have a mouth like your mother and the arrogance of your father.”

Loki chuckled and leaned back against one of the larger stones ringing the space. He could feel the energy thrumming against his skin and discretely began to draw from it as he spoke. “You have an unhealthy obsession with my parents. They died over one hundred years ago, what could they possibly have done to you?”

“It’s what they stood for, they were an abomination to all magic users!”

Loki frowned. “They wanted peace. They helped practitioners overcome their darker natures and helped people find ways to work together. How was that an abomination?”

The Shadowman practically growled. “They were powerful. They could have run the entire city. They could have made it a haven for those who had power instead they taught magic users how to hide, how to blend in with the mortals.”

“That’s how it had to be. No matter how much power they had they were outnumbered.” A memory tugged at Loki’s brain and he fought to clear away the cobwebs. “You sound like someone I used to know. Frigga, a witch in my parent’s coven, she was always saying things like that.” At the mention of the name the Shadowman visibly twitched and Loki’s eyes widened. “Frigga was the one who betrayed my parents. You knew her.”

The man nodded. “I knew her very well but I was forced to live most of my life without her.”

Again Loki wracked his brain, he knew this tale sounded familiar. Suddenly the memory hit him like
a physical blow. As if on autopilot, he began to recite the story. “Frigga had a son but not long after the child was born she had a complete mental breakdown and the child was taken from her. The child was adopted by the most powerful family in the city and was raised to be one of their own. When they were killed the child disappeared. Everyone thought he was dead but the body was never found.” It took every ounce of willpower for Loki to stay on his feet. This couldn't be happening. Any moment now he was going to wake up in Tony’s arms and all of this will have been a nightmare.

The warlock licked his lips and swallowed, attempting to wet his suddenly parched throat as he raised his eyes to meet the Shadowman’s. “Thor?” he whispered, his voice shaking like the nearby leaves.

The Shadowman pushed back this hood of his cloak revealing the face of a young man that couldn’t have been a day over twenty five. He had his mother’s bright eyes and fair skin but the hatred he possessed seemed to twist his features into a demonic mask. “Did you miss me, big brother?”

“I...how...what happened? Father went back for you but you were gone. After they were killed I searched for you for years but the trail had gone cold. There wasn’t even a trail to begin with.”

Thor snorted. “For years my mother had been trying to get me back. She got help and was ready to prove that she could be a good mother once more but was blocked at every turn by our...no...your parents. When you were forced to run she saw an opportunity and secreted me away to her estranged husband’s estate.”

Loki’s eyebrows nearly disappeared into his hairline. “She left you with Odin? He is the darkest mage I’ve ever met. You were how old? Seven? And for years all you were told were lies dipped in hatred. No wonder you’re so twisted.”

The man sneered. “He told me the truth about your family. How my mother sacrificed herself by going to the townspeople and telling them what was really going on in the city. How the coven killed her for her actions.”

“Because of her my parents are dead! They were trying to help people and Frigga turned the entire city against them. My coven had to scatter and I had to go into hiding. I had to fight tooth and nail just to regain any type of status within the city. To top it off I was cursed with immortality because my parents wanted me to find their killer. I should have died decades ago but I’ve been robbed of the opportunity to see my family again because of something that your mother did!” Loki swallowed hard and fought to control his emotions. He would be useless in a fight if he was upset.

Thor let a wicked grin spread across his face. “Well, it seems like we actually have something in common, brother. You want to see your family again and I want you dead.” The mage held out his right hand and Loki could see the tendrils of smoke seeping from between his fingers.

“Fuck that. If I’m going out it will not be by some brat who is having a century long hissy fit.” Loki reached out with his left hand and his staff materialized between his fingers. “You’ve had a decades to plan for this day, let’s see what you can do.”

Chapter End Notes

So now we finally know who the Shadowman is. Some of you guessed it already but now you know why he’s so twisted. Next up...the battle!
Thor spat out a word and the field separating them was filled with dark smoke. Before the smoke could reach him Loki held out his left hand and shook his shield bracelet free. “Ventas” he whispered while merging his magic with that of the bracelet. The smoke Thor had summoned stopped as if it had hit a wall and began to rise.

The moment that the spell was cast Loki began to move, using the smoke as his cover. He rushed as quietly as possible around the field until he was standing behind Thor. Raising his staff he swung it hard but the dark mage somehow sensed him and turned at the last moment. Loki still managed to connect and Thor fell to the ground, the smoke he had summoned slowly dissipating.

The warlock quickly put some space between them but fell to the ground when his feet were yanked out from underneath him. He turned and sat up to see a thick rope of smoke wrapped around his ankles. “Ignis,” he hissed while bringing his staff down on top of the smoke. The rope melted away and he heard Thor swear in pain.

As he scrambled to his feet he realized that Thor was pouring his own will into the smoke and using it as an extension of himself. It was clever but also dangerous because any damage Loki did to the smoke would damage the mage as well.

Loki didn’t have a lot of time to process this knowledge. His extended senses sent him diving to the ground as bolt of lighting slammed into the stone directly behind him. He could feel the first drops of rain splash against his skin and knew that the storm had arrived. The time for throwing taunts and insults had passed, he either had to fight or die.

Instead of coming to his feet he pressed his right hand into the ground and felt the stores of power that had accumulated over the centuries. Thor wasn’t the only one who could draw power from another source but instead of relying on the deadly power of the storm Loki was going to use something a bit more stable.

A glance at Thor showed the mage with one hand reaching towards the sky while the other was extended towards him. “Revenir,” said Loki while focusing on the ground at Thor’s feet. He drew quite a bit of power in and felt it release in a rush as the ground suddenly opened beneath Thor and swallowed him up to his waist.

The spell he had been preparing went astray and the sky was illuminated with the blast that had been meant for Loki. Drawing more energy from the earth, Loki searched for any type of life that existed near the circle. It didn’t take long for him to find exactly what he was looking for. “Vida grande,” he whispered. A slithering sound filled the air as dozens of vines that covered the stones suddenly sprang to life and began to grow. They raced across the ground and began to wind around Thor who was struggling to free himself.

Loki slowly pushed himself up and paused when a sound caught his attention. He turned and felt his stomach clench when he saw Tony. The energy from the battle had roused him and he struggled against his bonds, the beast inside of him craving a taste.

The warlock spared a glance at his adversary who looked more like a topiary at the moment then rushed to Tony’s side. He was careful not to touch him as he knelt down. “Tony, listen to me. Don’t
fight. You’re going to hurt yourself more if you struggle.”

“Loki...please, I can’t stand it. It hurts.”

“I know it hurts but the more you struggle the more pain you’ll be in.”

“The beast...it wants out. Oh god it hurts. Make it stop, please,” the vampire begged. He opened his eyes and Loki swallowed hard. They were completely black and he could feel himself falling into them.

Loki shook his head to clear it and looked at a spot over Tony’s shoulder. “I can’t.” Before he could say another word an explosion rocked the ground and knocked Loki onto his back. He quickly rolled and covered his head as pieces of earth rained down onto him.

Coming to his feet he saw the crater where Thor had been imprisoned but so sign of the dark mage. “Loki!” Tony screamed and that was all of the warning he had before his head exploded in pain. He turned away from the blow but the force sent him to his knees.

“I wasn’t a fan of your methods but I must admit that they’re most effective,” sneered Thor while tossing the bloodied rock to the side.

Loki scrambled away on his hands and knees, trying to will the world into focus once more. He reached out and felt one of the large stones in front of him. The buzz of power was comforting as he hauled himself to his feet. The world was still spinning but his senses warned him when he felt the massive surge of energy hurtling across the field.

The warlock held out his left hand and formed a shield around himself as the spell slammed into him like an oncoming train. The wind was knocked out of his lungs as he was forced back against the stone. He poured his will into the shield but could feel Thor’s spell pressing relentlessly against him. Loki was strong but his concentration was slipping. If he took his focus away from the shield even for a moment he would be crushed like a bug on a windshield.

Of course that could be a distinct possibility anyway. His shield bracelet glowed a bright blue in the darkness but it was being pushed to its limits. He could feel the heat of the bracelet began to sting and he knew that eventually it would melt, taking most of the skin on his wrist and hand with it.

Without letting go of the focus on his bracelet, Loki took a deep breath and punched his shield, igniting the power stored in the rings of his right hand. Again and again he punched, using the stored power to counter the spell. For a few moments it seemed to work, Thor’s spell was forced back nearly halfway across the field but before he could ready another punch the dark mage retaliated.

Loki felt his teeth rattle in his skull and felt something inside his torso shatter like glass as he flew across the field and slammed against the stone once more. It took all of his power to focus and hold onto the shield as the world swam around him. Tapping into the power of the talisman at his throat his shield began to glow violet as the magic stored within the piece of amethyst began to merge with his own. Over the raging storm he heard Thor’s sick laughter and felt his stomach twist. It was over. His wrist was burning and he knew that he couldn’t hold out any longer. There was no way that his magic could overcome the staggering power of the storm. With a ragged breath he steadied himself, getting ready to unleash his death curse.

Every witch and warlock possessed a death curse, a spell that was locked deep within and could only be released when they had met their end. It was an extremely powerful spell which unleashed every
ounce of power that the practitioner possessed. It was how his parents had cast their immortality spell and Loki knew that the death curse would kill Thor without a doubt. Unfortunately it would also kill Tony but at the moment he was out of options.

Loki closed his eyes and counted down from ten, drawing in his focus as he did. Before he finished the countdown a deep growl reached his ears and Thor suddenly yelped in pain.

Letting his shield fall Loki slid to the ground. He took a moment to try and catch his breath, feeling the cool rain soothe his burned wrist. He knew he should get up, Thor would be coming for him, but he just wanted to rest for another minute.

A smell caught his senses and his nose wrinkled in disgust. Why did it suddenly smell like wet dog? Blinking open his eyes he saw a massive wolf standing over him. The wolf turned and its bright eyes were illuminated by a flash of lightening.

“Natasha?”

The wolf nodded and turned towards the center of the circle where Clint and Steve were taking on Thor. The two worked well together, one would draw Thor’s attention while the other would attack. It was obvious that the mage usually fought with magic because the physical assault threw him off guard.

Loki knew that it was only a matter of time before Thor found a weak spot and he had to be ready. The distraction that the two were causing was going to be his only chance at gaining an advantage.

Using the stone behind him Loki tried to stand and sat back down with a hiss, there was something very wrong with his knee. It felt like there was gravel grinding against the joint. He wasn’t much of a healer but over the years he had learned a thing or two about battlefield injuries. Placing his hands on either side of his knee he drew in his will and whispered “san doule”. The relief was immediate as the pain disappeared. He hadn’t healed the wound, only tricked his body into not feeling the pain.

Natasha nudged him with her head and he wrapped an arm around the strong shoulders allowing the wolf to help him to his feet. It took a few moments for him to catch his breath and he forced himself not to panic when he realized that he couldn’t. He knew that he was badly injured, possibly even mortally, but there wasn’t time to dwell on it. The spell that he had used on his knee wouldn’t help, it would numb his lungs and diaphragm and he would suffocate. All that he could do was push the pain to the side and pray that he could stay conscious long enough to take down Thor.

One of the wolves yelped in pain but Loki ignored it as he leaned against Natasha. Thor was too distracted with Clint and Steve to control the power of the circle of stones and Loki planned on claiming that power as his own. As he turned a touch to his arm made him gasp and he wrapped an arm around his torso as his body was flooded with pain.

“Jesus, Loki, what happened?” asked Rhodey.

“I’m fine. Natasha, go help the others. We’re running out of time.”

The wolf nodded and loped across the field, her teeth bared. Loki watched her go then turned towards Rhodey. “I don’t have time to explain but I need your help. I have to get to each of the stones before Thor realizes what I’m doing.”

“Thor? As in your long, lost brother?”

Loki shook his head. “Long story. Let’s go.”
As quickly as they could manage the two walked around the outside of the circle, pausing to allow Loki to touch each stone and infuse it with his will. There were sixteen stones and by the forth one it was obvious that Loki was in serious pain. His face was ashen and when he coughed Rhodey could smell the blood on his breath.

Wordlessly Rhodey swung the man into his arms and he knew Loki was in agony because he didn’t complain. They quickly made their way around the circle and the last stone they had to activate was the one Tony was chained to. “I need to be in front of this stone so I’m inside the circle when it activates,” explained Loki.

Rhodey nodded and moved to stand next to Tony, trying to ignore his companion’s current state. The vampire’s wrists, chest, and arms bore ugly burns where he had struggled against the iron chains.

Loki paused then touched the stone pouring a bit of his will into it and feeling the circle snap shut around them. Tony practically howled and arched as if he had been touched by a live wire when his body recognized Loki’s power. It took everything that Loki had to ignore the painful cries as he turned his attention towards Thor.

The three wolves were circling the dark mage and all four looked worse for the wear. The wolves were all bleeding and missing patches of fur here and there. They all walked with a slight limp and Steve couldn’t put any weight on his front paw at all. Blood ran from countless bites and slashes that covered Thor’s body and one of his ears was missing.

Loki wanted to make a Mike Tyson joke but the cough that tore through his lungs made his vision blur with pain. He spat and ignored the copper taste of blood that filled his mouth.

“Put me down, it’s time to end this,” he said but Rhodey paused.

“Are you sure?”

The warlock nodded and swayed as Rhodey placed him on the ground. “Be ready to grab Tony and run.” The vampire gently squeezed his shoulder and nodded.

In the distance Thor raised his hand and it was almost comical when he realized that he no longer possessed the power of the circle to focus his spell. His eyes widened when he saw Loki striding across the field towards him.

The warlock pushed with his right hand and the three wolves went tumbling outside of the circle. The action knocked Thor off of his feet and it became obvious that he was more seriously injured than Loki had first believed.

He quickly turned and muttered “zelde” while pointing his staff at the stone where Tony was chained. A thin bolt of lightning shot down and turned the padlocks into a melted pile of slag. The vampire shook off the chains and drunkenly staggered to his feet. Before he could take a step Rhodey grabbed him and held him tightly. Loki pushed the two outside of the circle with his magic and turned back towards Thor.

The dark mage struggled to his feet and even in the darkness Loki could see the fear in his eyes. “You’re going to kill me, aren’t you?” he asked.

“I don’t want to. I have wonderful memories of you. You were my friend, my brother. I was looking forward to teaching you magic and watching you grow.”

“Then just let me go.”
Loki shook his head. “You know I can’t. If you had just sought me out, just come to me then maybe we could have figured this mess out. But you killed innocent people, including my apprentice, just to get my attention. I can’t let that go.”

“Turn me over to your coven, let them decide. Please, Loki, my brother...don’t do this.”

Once upon a time Loki would have looked upon the man in pity. But that time was gone. He was dying, he could feel his life slipping away with every heartbeat. For a moment time seemed to slow down. He could see the three wolves pawing at the circle, trying to break down the invisible shield that separated them. On his other side was Tony, nearly mad with pain and hunger, struggling wildly against Rhodey’s grasp.

He could also see the ball of energy that Thor had been forming while pretending to plead for his life. The ball flew through the air towards him and with a thought Loki’s staff reappeared in his hands. He swung the staff like a bat and hit a home run.

The orb flew right back towards Thor who didn’t have time to deflect it. It hit the mage in the center of his chest, knocking him off of his feet and slamming him into the stone behind him. “Vida anima,” Loki hissed and the vines he had called forth earlier sprang to life, surrounding Thor and securing him firmly to the stone. The mage struggled but he had been weakened and the power Loki used was too strong.

The warlock’s legs nearly gave out and he leaned on his staff to support himself. This was it, he was done. He barely had any magic left and his body was failing. Turning his face to the sky he felt the cool rain kiss his skin and allowed himself to enjoy the sensation for a moment. This last spell would probably kill him but the thought didn’t fill him with fear, it was time and there were worse places to die.

Taking a deep breath he reached upwards with his left hand and pointed his staff at Thor with his right. He could feel the wild power of the storm all around him and told himself to focus. He drew in more and more power, letting it fill every inch of him. His hair floated around him and sparked with static as he gathered even more power.

For a split second Loki didn’t see the Shadowman, he didn’t see this wicked caricature, he saw Thor: the little boy he used to watch after his studies when their parents were busy at work, the little boy who was fascinated with his magic, the little boy who cried over the death of a pet frog. Loki wondered if he could save him, if he could turn him towards the light in the way that his mother saved his father. Then he saw the hatred flash through his eyes and knew that his brother was gone. Some souls cannot be saved.

With a cry Loki unleashed the spell feeling the power course through his body. It was so powerful that it brought him off of his feet and he fought to control the magic. Thor’s scream seemed like it was a million miles away but Loki didn’t let go, he held on until there was nothing left.

The warlock collapsed to the ground like a rag doll, feeling the rain mix with his tears until everything around him faded to black.

As soon as Loki fell the magic surrounding the circle fell as well. The three wolves ran to his side ignoring the charred corpse that was once the Shadowman. There was a rush of energy then Natasha reached out a trembling hand, desperately trying to find a pulse.

“Is he alive?” asked Steve while cradling his wrist close to his body.

“Barely but he’s fading fast.”
Before anyone could speak Rhodey’s voice pierced the air. “Guys, look out!”

The three turned to see Tony racing across the field with Rhodey in pursuit. The vampire easily pushed the three werewolves to the side and dropped to his knees next to Loki’s body. By now Rhodey had caught up to him but a hand on his shoulder made him pause.

Tony was shaking so hard they could hear his teeth rattle but when he reached for Loki his touch was gentle. It took every ounce of his self control to keep the beast at bay and it was a losing battle. He tucked the sorcerer’s wet hair behind his ear and caressed his cheek. “He’s dying.”

“We have to get him out of here,” said Clint.

“It’s too late,” whispered Tony.

“No it’s not,” argued the werewolf.

“He’s in so much pain. I could make it stop, I could make him stop hurting.”

“No,” said Natasha. “There’s still time.”

Tony shook his head slightly. “He’ll die before we even get him to the car.”

“Isn’t there something we can do?” asked Steve.

“If there was something I could do don’t you think I would do it?” snapped Tony as he ran a hand through his hair and shook his head. “He can either die in pain or he can die in peace. Unless one of you can manage a miracle those are our only choices.” He gently took Loki’s hand in his own and felt the pulse in his wrist slow.

The members of the group all looked at each other hopelessly. They had all hoped that Blind Mag’s prediction was wrong but it seemed like Loki’s fate was coming true before their very eyes.

Finally Steve spoke up. “Tony, Loki is your lover. He’s obviously someone that you care deeply about. I think you should make the final decision.”

One by one the others nodded. Tony took a deep breath and closed his eyes. “I’d like to do this alone.”

Slowly the others walked away to give Tony the privacy he desired. Loki had fallen on his side and Tony lay down behind him, his arm carefully circling the mage’s waist. He found Loki’s hand and threaded their fingers together. For a moment he allowed himself to imagine that they were curled together in his bed not in the mud in the middle of a rainstorm.

“Loki, I don’t know if you can hear me but...I...I’m falling in love with you.”

Swallowing back tears, Tony closed his eyes and called upon his power.

Chapter End Notes

*runs and hides behind her pillow fort* Don't kill me! I warned you! Also, there's still 2 more chapters until the end. Loki's not dead yet (just kinda mortally wounded) so don't give up on him!
Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes.

It was quiet.

Loki slowly turned in a circle with a frown.

The space he inhabited was bare. Not dark, not light...just empty.

“What is this place?” he asked, not expecting an answer

“Between.”

The voice made him turn and his eyes widened. “Mother?”

A woman began to appear before Loki’s eyes. Her eyes were a brilliant shade of green, just like Loki’s, and a bright scarf held a fall of ice-white hair away from her face. “It’s good to see you, my son.”

“How are you here? How am I here? Where are we?”

The woman smiled. “Always with so many questions.” She gently caressed Loki’s face and the warlock closed his eyes at the familiar touch. “As I said before, we are in between worlds. A place between life and death, between one breath and the next...a place where you must make a choice.”

“What kind of choice?”

“Whether to stay or to go.” The deep voice made Loki turn.

“Father.”

The older man smiled, his eyes crinkling at the corners. “It’s good to see you, son.”

Loki crossed the space and hugged Laufey tightly. “I’ve missed you. I’ve missed you both so much.”

“We missed you too. There is so much that we wanted to teach you, to tell you but there wasn’t enough time.” Farbauti crossed the space and joined the embrace. The family stood together holding each other for what seemed like forever but for Loki it wasn’t long enough.

“How are you here?” asked the warlock.

“Magic, of course,” replied his father. “Nothing is impossible when you put your mind to it.”

The group stood together in silence, enjoying the fact that they were together once more. “You said I had to make a choice,” said Loki after reluctantly pulling back.

His mother nodded. “Loki, you’re dying.”

“What?” Loki shook his head as he tried to remember. The battle came back to him in flashes, he felt the pain of his injuries and the final surge of energy as he drew from the power of the storm. Then there was nothing.
“Your body was severely injured and you drained away nearly all of your magic. Your spirit still lives but now you have to chose to stay here or to go back,” said Laufey.

“How can I be here? Does everyone get a choice like this when they die? Did you have a choice?”

Farbauti shook her head. “No, not everyone gets a choice. My love, if we could have stayed with you we would have.” The older woman took Loki’s hands in her own. “You always stirred things up no matter where you went and this was no exception. When you and Thor fought your powers awakened spirits that had been dormant for centuries. They’re called the Guardians. Their origins surpass even the Native Americans that once roamed this land. They have a power that I have never seen before. The Guardians can heal your body, they can make you whole again but only if you choose to do so.”

“What if Tony turns me?” inquired the mage.

The broken look on his mother's face made something sharp twist inside of him. "He can't. Tony is powerful but you're too far gone. You would never survive the change. Only the power of the Guardians can bring you back."

“What if I don’t want to go back?”

“Then you move on,” said Laufey.

“What’s it like?” Loki asked.

The mage smiled at his son, in his eyes he was still a curious little boy. “It's perfect. There’s no pain, no enemies, no fighting.”

“Is there magic?”

The man chuckled. “Yes, there’s magic but only white magic. Any darkness is immediately banished. No one can harm you there.”

Loki glanced back and forth between his parents. “Does it hurt?”

“Does what hurt, my dear?” asked Farbauti.

“Letting go.”

The priestess wrapped an arm around her son’s shoulders. “Yes and no. Physically it’s painless. It’s just like falling asleep. But I won’t lie to you, it’s emotionally agonizing. You have to let go of everyone you’ve ever formed a bond with...everyone that you’ve ever loved. You don’t get a chance to tell them goodbye or to tell them how you feel, it’s just over. Depending on the strength of the connection you can sometimes feel it break and that in itself is torture.”

“Is that how it felt when you left me?”

“Yes. It was like someone was ripping my heart into a million tiny pieces.”

Loki shook his head and ran a hand through his hair. “I don’t know what to do. I’m so tired of fighting and running and just...existing. I’m so tired.”

“I know you are,” said his father. He squeezed his son’s shoulder gently. “Can I ask you a question?” Loki nodded. “Do you love him?”

Loki sighed. “I don’t know.”
“He loves you,” said his mother.

“I know,” replied the warlock. “I would never give up paradise just for one person, no matter how much they loved me. You know that.”

His mother smiled slightly. “I know you wouldn’t.” The woman looked at her son’s conflicted face and felt her heart tighten. “I can’t make this decision for you but perhaps I can help.” The priestess waved her hand and two images appeared. The one on the right showed a landscape bathed in sunlight, birds sang and wildflowers bobbed in the breeze. Loki could practically feel the warm wind caress his skin and he knew that the air would be pure and clear. In his heart he knew that is what peace looked like, it was something he had longed for his entire life yet never achieved.

The image on the left showed the aftermath of the battle. The three wolves and Rhodey stood to the side nursing their injuries while Thor’s charred corpse began to disintegrate in the background. Loki was shocked to see himself in Tony’s arms. His body was limp and lifeless, his skin was pale and his lips were turning blue. The vampire held him as if he was made of glass and even in the rain he could see the tears running down Tony’s face.

Standing between his parents Loki took their hands in his own. He looked between the two images and felt his parents hold him close.

“Our time is short,” said Laufey. “You must choose.”

Loki looked between the two scenes and felt his chest tighten. On one side was a life of purity, of magic, of love and an eternity with the family that had been stolen from him. He would be free of all of his burdens. He would never have to hide or fight or run again. He would finally be at peace.

On the other side was a life of pain, uncertainty, danger and the knowledge of his family’s fate weighing on him with every heartbeat. But on that side was Tony. The wonderful, infuriating vampire who had awakened something in him that he thought was long dead. They could live dozens of lifetimes together and for the first time in his life Loki was finding himself looking forward to the future.

It was an impossible decision but Loki could feel the magic tethering him to the space waning. Drawing in a shaky breath Loki closed his eyes and made his choice.

Chapter End Notes

So what do you think Loki chose? Did he choose his family or Tony? Just one chapter to go, thanks for sticking with me!
Chapter Notes

It rains often in London but it seemed appropriate that it was raining today. In fact, it had rained every day since their arrival from New York. Tony sighed as he watched the drops race down the window pane. It seemed like mother nature herself was crying.

He wanted to cry too but he didn’t have any tears left. Closing his eyes and taking a long drink from the bottle in his hand, he tried to push the memory of the past few days out of his mind.

After the battle with the Shadowman Tony knew that Loki’s time had come. He could feel the mage’s body screaming in pain and the agony was too much for him to bear. Tony knew he couldn’t save him, Loki’s injuries were too severe and he wouldn’t survive if Tony attempted to turn him, but at least he could make Loki’s last moments as painless as possible.

Typically when Tony fed there was a rush, a euphoria that flooded his body but this time was different. It was as if the beast inside was reluctant to feed. He forced himself to slowly absorb Loki’s essence, easing his pain as each heartbeat brought him closer to death.

Finally only one tiny spark remained. Tony paused, praying that somehow there would be a miracle and Loki would fight his way back from the edge of death. Unfortunately that miracle never came. Tony swallowed against the sick feeling in the pit of his stomach and drew in the last of Loki’s power. He saw the practitioner’s final breath slip through his lips and turn to mist, slowly rising into the air until it was gone.

Without realizing it a sob left the vampire’s mouth. He curled around Loki’s lifeless body, his tears turning to steam against the cold flesh. He wanted to apologize, he wanted to beg him to come back but his mouth couldn’t form the words. Finally he had nothing left. No more tears, no more cries...only pain.

When he raised red-rimmed eyes he saw the others standing in a rough circle around them. Each one had their head bowed in sorrow and respect.

Even though he was still weak Tony carried Loki’s body back to the car then to Clint’s house. Steve called to inform Loki’s coven of his death and to ready them for his arrival. With shaking hands Tony cleaned and dressed Loki then loaded him onto the makeshift stretcher the others had constructed.

Under the cover of darkness the group headed into a worn part of the city and opened the Way that would lead them to London. Steve, who had a broken wrist and couldn’t carry much, lead the way with a light while the other four carried Loki’s body down the long tunnel.

It was a macabre sight, the five were still bruised and splattered with mud and blood from the battle. Yet they held their heads high as they acted as Loki’s pallbearers, carrying him home for the final time.

Three members of Loki’s coven were waiting for them when they arrived. It was early in London and the three women helped the weary group transport Loki’s body to a secure location.

Healers were called in and everyone’s wounds were tended to. The healers knew that there were wounds that they would not be able to heal so they attempted to do their job as quickly as possible.
and move on. The one gift they did bestow was an elixir that caused a dreamless sleep and the five weary warriors were extremely grateful. The last thing they needed was a night spent doing battle in their sleep.

The next day the coven sat with the group and listened in shock as they explained the battle between Loki and the Shadowman. Tony was the only one who knew the full story and the entire group was floored when the details were revealed. It was agreed that Loki died a hero and the others were commended for their assistance. Even Tony received praise, the members of the coven knew that he had been trying to ease Loki’s pain and appreciated his selfless actions.

All of the gratitude and thanks fell on deaf ears. For the first time in centuries Tony had found someone that he cared for, that he loved. He’d only known Loki for a few weeks but it felt like a lifetime. Now he was gone. Not only was he gone but Tony had been the one to kill him. Thor had mortally wounded him but Tony was the one that extinguished that final spark, he was the one that felt him die.

Despite the rain Loki’s funeral was held in style. Instead of mourning their fallen comrade the members of Loki’s coven celebrated his life. A lively band led the way as the street was filled with the members of the coven, Loki’s friends, and many bewildered yet highly entertained tourists.

Magic practically flowed through the streets that day as the practitioners within the funeral procession filled the air with spells. The spectators thought they were special effects but the locals knew the scent of magic and took a moment to bow their heads in respect when the group passed by.

Loki was put to rest in his family’s crypt. After his parents had been burned at the stake members of the coven secreted the remains away and eventually entombed them in one of London’s most famous cemeteries. Prayers and spells alike were said and when the heavy door was shut there was a silence of finality in the ‘boom’ that resonated.

After the service a reception was held with music, food, and lots of laughter as Loki’s life continued to be celebrated. Tony knew he should join the festivities, not wallow in his sorrow but at the moment he didn’t care.

He headed outside and began to walk, not knowing or caring where he ended up. The rain had slowed to a mere drizzle and he could see the steam rising from the streets. Eventually he stopped in front of a store. The windows were dark but the doorknob twisted easily beneath his hand. Tony took a slow breath and after a beat he headed inside.

The moment that he stepped through the door he was hit with a scent that was uniquely Loki’s. There was always something about him, a scent that Tony could never place. Looking around Tony’s stomach twisted when he saw the sign above the door. ‘Laufeyson’s Spices & Teas’.

This was Loki’s shop.

Tony wondered how sick his subconscious was to bring him here of all places. Despite his misgivings he slowly wandered around the shop, pausing to read a label or to smell a dried herb.

Everything in the shop reminded him of Loki. The empty coffee cup on the counter, the scarf thrown over the back of a chair, the books piled onto sagging shelves. There was no doubt that this shop was the warlock’s.

On the counter, next to the cash register, was a book that had been left open. The ace of spades was used to mark the page. Even though his heart was breaking into tinnier pieces by the moment, Tony leaned across the counter to read the text.
‘To see a world in a grain of sand
And a heaven in a wild flower
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand
And eternity in an hour’

“That’s always been my favorite poem.”

The voice made Tony jump and his face paled. “Loki?”

“Who else would it be?”

Tony rubbed his eyes and shook his head. “This is impossible. You’re dead. I...I killed you.”

The mage smiled sadly. “Yes, I am dead but you were not the one who killed me. Thor saw to that. He shattered my ribs and caused them to puncture both of my lungs, I drowned in my own blood. On top of that several of my vertebrae were crushed and my nerves were severely damaged. You helped ease the pain of my death but I would have died anyway.”

Tony felt his head swim and leaned against the counter. “How are you here?”

“Magic, of course.”

“Why are you here?”

The warlock paused. “I wanted to say goodbye and also to say that I’m sorry.”

The vampire frowned. “Sorry for what?”

“I don’t have time to explain all of the details but as I was dying I was given a choice. There was a power that could have healed my body and brought me back or I could choose to move on. Obviously I chose the latter.”

“Why? Why didn’t you stay? Was it me? Was it something that I did?”

Loki shook his head. “It wasn’t you, you’re wonderful and caring and I’m so lucky that I did get to know you even though it was for such a short amount of time.”

“Then what was it?”

“It was my time.” The sorcerer held up a hand to halt Tony’s response. “When my parents cast that spell on me they did it so I could find their killer and bring them to justice. They had no idea that the one who betrayed them would be found in a matter of weeks. I should have aged like a normal mage and at this age I should have been old with waning powers. I should have been mentoring the next generation not going to the front lines to fight.” Loki sighed and crossed his arms over his abdomen. “I was so tired of fighting, I was so tired of...well...everything. My immortality was a curse.”

“And mine isn’t?” Tony spat. “Do you think that I like what I have become? I didn’t have a choice either.”

“But you once told me that you’ve accepted your fate, that you are at peace with the hand you have been dealt. I was never at peace with my lot in life, each day was a burden not a gift. I know it sounds cowardly but I do not regret my choice.”

Tony sighed and ran a hand through his hair. “It’s not fair. I love you.”

“I know. You have no idea how hard it was to leave you. I miss you.”
The vampire swallowed past the lump in his throat. “I miss you too. What am I supposed to do, Loki? I’m immortal, I could live for centuries and each day I have to go on living without you.”

Tony wasn’t sure but he was fairly certain that the spirit in front of him was crying. “Tomorrow isn’t promised to anyone. I thought I would live forever yet here I am.” Loki paused and met the broken brown eyes of his former lover. “You’re going to go on living, Tony. You have too. Maybe you’ll find someone who can mend your heart and if you can’t then you can wake up each morning with the knowledge that when the time comes I will be waiting for you.”

Loki’s image was growing fainter and Tony reached for him. To the vampire’s surprise he could actually feel the warlock in his arms. He closed his eyes and breathed in his scent one last time. “I love you, Loki.”

The warlock smiled slightly and even though Tony couldn’t see it he could hear it in his voice. “I love you too, Tony, and remember that I will always be by your side.” For a heartbeat they held each other tightly then he was gone.

Tony wiped his eyes and glanced around the shop. Loki was right, before he knew it they would be together once more. Before he left he grabbed the book of poetry and tucked it into his pocket and headed back outside. It was time to gather the others and go home. He had said goodbye to his love and it was time to move on with his life. As Tony walked he felt the pain in his chest ease and knew that even though he couldn’t see him Loki would always be with him and when the time came the mage would be waiting for him.

Plus, he had plans to make. Loki’s tale of Thor’s upbringing had lit a fire inside of him. Already he was puzzling out ways to help with adoption within the magical community and to ensure that no one would have to go through such desperate lengths to see their own children. He also had ideas about strengthening the bonds within the community, it was time for old grudges to be cast aside and for everyone to work together. After his time with Loki he was forming an idea of how to improve technology so practitioners didn’t fry the equipment with their very presence.

As Tony rattled off ideas to JARVIS via his cell phone he caught a glimpse of ebony hair out of the corner of his eye and smiled. Loki would be by his side every step of the way and he was determined to make his lover proud.

"JARVIS? How much is Loki’s shop listed for?" When the AI replied Tony grinned. "Go ahead and make the purchase then contact the head of Loki's coven, we need to schedule a meeting." It wasn't much but Tony knew how much the shop had meant to the mage and he would do everything in his power to make sure it was taken care of. For the past few years Tony had felt lost but now the determined gleam had returned to his eyes and he was going to make the most of the time he was given, knowing that each day was a step closer to joining Loki once more.

Chapter End Notes

*peeks out from behind her pillow fort* I warned you! I have a tendency to kill off characters and I never promised a happy ending.

I hope you guys liked it, this was my first multi-chapter FrostIron fic and maybe...someday...perhaps I will write another. Thank you so much for the kudos and lovely comments, it means the world to me!
Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!