A Knight’s Quest And A Dragon’s End

by MissRomanceJunkie

Summary

After eighty long years the tyrant Howard Stark has finally been removed from power and a new King stands to bring the Kingdom back into a time of happiness and prosperity. Little did Tony Stark know how true that was.

When Steve, his friend and King, informs Tony of his suspicions that their friend James, known as the Winter Soldier and a Knight of the Kingdom, could actually be alive after seventy years presumed dead, Tony wastes no time in searching for him. Even if that means taking a Knight’s vow himself.

However, it soon becomes clear that more than magic stands between Tony and James. Can Tony figure out the truth of things before Howard’s evil plans can reach him from beyond the grave?

(My contribution to the 2016 Winteriron Holiday Exchange, the original prompt can be found in the end notes)

Notes
I absolutely adored writing this, I really could have gone on and on! Hope you guys like it half as much. :D

The first chapter is written from Steve’s perspective and would have been a prologue if not for its size. The second chapter, which is almost three times the length of the first, is written from Tony’s point of view. Also, homophobia doesn’t exist.

As stated, the original (awesome) prompt can be found in the end notes due to spoilers. :)
The moment King Steven had made it through the throngs of well wishers, loud and jubilant as they were after many a jug of mead had been imbibed by all, and two of his guards had closed and secured the doors to his private chambers, he let out a long sigh of relief.

His people were happy and Steve was thankful for it. Eighty years under the rule of a tyrant was finally at an end, he could hardly complain that the people of Acirema were rejoicing. Cheers, toasts and laughter could be heard in every corner of the Kingdom tonight and it was just as Steve had dreamed. Almost, anyway.

When King Howard had taken the throne after his father had passed, everyone had presumed he would continue leading their Kingdom with a fair and just hand, as his father had before him. Instead, he'd used his lineage’s magic to cast the Great Spell over the Kingdom, stopping time so that he would be King forever, never growing old and frail as he had watched happen to his father.

Through his fear of his own demise, King Howard grew paranoid and cruel, even his own son couldn’t talk sense into him and just five years after his father became King, the Prince disappeared.

Tony was a good man, a friend, and his absence had not gone unnoticed by Steve and his brother. After scouring the city for news, they went further out into the Kingdom. As Knights, Steve and his adopted brother James were given a lot of freedom in their comings and goings, under the guise of protecting the realm.

It wasn’t until they reached the desert outpost Azeiristan that they found their friend. Bloody and beaten, Steve had thought the man dead until James had brought his face up with a hand to his chin and Tony had let out a raspy groan.

They’d always been close, Tony and Steve, after their awkward introduction anyway (Steve may have thought Tony a silver spooned cad and Tony may have believed Steve to be a stuck up aristocrat playing at soldiering), but James and Tony were something else. Steve would have called them brothers if he had not already known how James treated his siblings.

No, they were more like two sides of a coin; where there was one, there was the other, so different at face value but made of exactly the same stuff when it came down to it. Steve knew what was between the two men, had known for the last ninety or so years, but as much as he loved them both and could see how they would make each other happy, he’d never felt it was his place to say anything and then… then it had been too painful to think of it at all.

Upon their return to the city, it soon became clear that King Howard had been behind Tony’s disappearance, something Tony had hypothesised himself during their journey back. Tony was Howard’s sole heir after all, the only person who could legitimately replace Howard one day without a war breaking out with the other Kingdoms over succession. However, the King couldn’t say a word as Tony walked up the steps to the castle, the young Prince was well loved by the people for his down to earth manner, always happy to muck in to get a job done.

Steve and James stayed close for the first few weeks, then weeks turned to months and months to years and Howard only grew worse in his tyranny.

Finally, and after many more attempts on Tony’s life, it was clear King Howard wasn’t going to stop. Which was why Acirema’s Knights stepped in. The battle was long and the cost was unfathomable and after the last body fell, Howard was still King.
James was gone, he’d fallen from the castle walls after pushing Steve clear of the collapsing stone and Steve had almost collapsed under the weight of his failure to reach his brother in time. Just a day later and Steve had given his own life to stop a magical weapon that would have destroyed the entire city if not the Kingdom itself. After that, Tony… Tony had given up all semblance of hope and Howard had stood victorious.

Of course, Steve only found that out later, after his supposed death was overturned.

The Captain, they had called him, his title as a Knight. He hadn’t felt like much of one after his return to life and he’d seen what 70 years of Howard’s rule had done to his men.

The Knights were scattered and Tony had retreated from everyone and everything, locked himself away in his workshop with his metals and magics.

Steve had been found in ice but it was through fire that he’d truly felt reborn. Violence had never been something he wanted, but Steve had known from the start that it would be necessary in order to free the people of Acirema, his people.

So he’d gone searching for allies and on his travels he’d heard whispers of many things, chief among them was talk of a resistance, led by a Lady Margaret. It took a while to track her down but after convincing her of his identity and devotion to his Kingdom, she and her resistance agreed to aid him in his quest to reclaim Acirema. With their help, he’d found his fellow Knights and after months of planning, they’d approached Tony.

It had been hard, seeing his friend suffering the fallout Steve himself had slept soundly though. Tony had been so lost, so defeated by life, by James’ death. Steve knew the Prince had mourned him too but the image of Tony’s face when Steve had told him James was gone wasn’t one that would ever leave him. Tony may have grieved for Steve but it was James’ death that had broken him. There was a small, rebellious part of Steve that was glad he hadn’t had to watch Tony suffer through the years, that was glad he himself hadn’t had to suffer because it wasn’t hard to believe that he too would have been broken by it all.

It had taken some convincing to get Tony to join their cause again and a large part of their eventual success was down to Lady Margaret, or Peggy, as she preferred to be called. That was one of the many things the Prince liked about her, he had shrugged off his own names and titles himself.

It had turned out they already knew each other, after travelling in the same circles and attending the same grand banquets. After hearing about what Peggy and her team had accomplished in the city and its surrounding villages, Tony couldn’t deny that they had a real chance to depose Howard. He’d agreed to help on one condition.

Tony refused to be the one to sit on the throne.

He’d explained to Steve in private that he loved his Kingdom but being amongst these courageous people as they fought for what was right, he felt like a coward for abandoning them. Tony had also apologised for not searching for Steve and no matter what Steve had said to convince his friend that no one could have known that the Great Spell would allow him to survive, the guilt of it clearly weighed heavy on Tony’s shoulders.

They had begun their campaign quickly and it wasn’t long before they’d been on the brink of victory; Howard had stood alone by then, no allies left to defend him, and Steve and his allies had the edge both in planning and sanity. King Howard was barely able to scramble up a defense at all, most had been driven away or killed by Howard himself and his army was as tired of his rule as everyone else. Many men and women had defected and soon Steve’s side also had the numbers. The
Captain’s return gave them new hope and the strength to make their hopes a reality.

Only Howard’s magic could have stopped them from achieving their goal but even that had been easily overcome in the end. Howard had either ignored or underestimated the amount of energy it had taken to maintain the spell of immortality over the Kingdom and the few spells he’d managed to cast in his defense had fizzled and died. He should have stopped but his madness must have had too strong a hold on him and so Howard had kept on casting and Tony had stood right next to Steve as they’d been forced to watch the old King literally destroy himself from the inside, barely a shard of bone or lump of flesh left after the spells were done taking their price from Howard.

That had been three days ago. Three days of putting the Kingdom to rights had barely made a dent but Peggy, beautiful Peggy who Steve had finally swept up into his arms the moment their eyes had met after the battle was over, had pronounced official celebrations were necessary.

Tony had wasted no time in convincing the people of Acirema that Steve and Peggy were the perfect people to sit on the throne. Steve had blushed and Peggy had smiled and their official wedding and coronation was set to happen a week from now but all that was icing on the cake. It was also almost completely overshadowed in Steve’s mind by the weight of the other rumours he had heard on his travels, ones that Steve had dared not think about while such a task as overthrowing the King had laid in front of him.

Now though, now he needed to let them out.

“Steve?” His friend’s voice was full of confidence that his presence would be welcome in Steve’s chambers as Tony accompanied his query with a hard knock on the door. Maybe not a Prince anymore, but no one would ever doubt that Tony would have made a great King.

“Well hello to you too, King Steven. Thank you for granting me entry to your humble abode.” Steve rolled his eyes and Tony sniggered at his own teasing. “Peggy was wondering where you got to and I volunteered to drag you back to the party.”

“Ah, I will rejoin them in a moment. I just… needed a moment you know?”

Steve had been trying to gather his thoughts ever since the battle had ended, trying to come up with the best way to inform Tony of his suspicions without raising his friend’s hopes.

“Yeah. Yeah, a lot has happened,” Tony said as he turned away, only to come face to face with the portrait Tony had gifted to Steve for his birthday many lifetimes ago. It was of the three of them together, Tony and James were messing around as they helped out one of the stable-hands with the horses while Steve looked on disapprovingly. Steve could see how the artist had managed to capture his affection for the two men and their antics though, the subtle lift to his lips that assured the viewer he was having just as much fun as the two men throwing hay at each other. Whether it was Tony’s intention to turn towards the painting or not the effect was immediate.

Tony’s inhale rang loud through Steve’s chambers but otherwise he was silent in his sudden stillness, his eyes falling closed.

Steve didn’t want to break the sudden tension in the room. Tony’s pain seemed to be as sharp now as it had ever been and Steve had to wonder if this moment was happening because in every other one, Tony never let himself feel it.

“I miss him,” Tony whispered, the words coming out choked and broken but firm, like it was the
only truth Tony knew.

“I know,” Steve said, knowing he had to tell him, Tony had the right to know more than anyone. “There’s something I have to tell you but I don’t- I don’t want you to hurt any more and I think this could end you.”

Tony turned back to him but said nothing. His eyes though, Tony’s deep brown eyes held so much emotion in them Steve could barely stand to look at them. Despair, loss and pain prevailed but also hope and the smallest amount of relief. It was that more than anything that pushed Steve to speak because if the thought of an end could bring any form of relief to Tony then it was Steve’s duty to prove he still had something to live for and no matter the risks or the doubts that riddled Steve’s mind, he could give Tony that. A purpose in a hopeless world.

“I need you to listen to what I have to say and then you can say whatever you want. Just, listen to me, please.”

Tony nodded but eventually croaked out his assent before perching on the edge of Steve’s writing desk. Steve’s chambers, Steve’s writing desk… none of it felt like that now but he supposed with time, Stark Castle would come to feel like home once again.

“I think James is alive,” Steve said, refusing to string his friend along through his explanation. A twitch in his jaw and the clench of his hand but Tony stayed true to his word and Steve went on uninterrupted. “As I made my way back to the city, there were stories of the Great Knights of Acirema who had all tragically fallen or faded under the King’s iron rule. They were invaluable in my search for our old comrades but there was one story I haven’t been able to shake.

“The same story told over and over by everyone who lived in that one village and oh how I wanted to search out the truth of it but people were gathering around me and momentum was building. How could I risk the mission for what I thought to be fairytale? The people spoke of a castle on the outskirts of the Kingdom and a man gone crazy with isolation who resides inside of it. They say he’s more animal than man after being reborn through terrible magic, locked away by the King after the magic that brought him back failed to bring him under Howard’s control. All the men that knew who had been locked in there had been killed but the whispers had already begun travelling from husband to wife to brother to father to neighbour to tailor and onwards. Until everyone knew who was in the castle but nobody dare speak louder than a whisper about it for fear of the King’s retribution. He would have destroyed the whole village, Tony. They were just protecting themselves.”

“Why do you think it’s…” Tony cut himself off, gaze boring into Steve’s shoulder as he listened.

“The Winter Soldier. That’s who they all said Howard left to rot in there seventy years ago. I didn’t believe them, not really. Perhaps I should have given it more credence after just returning from death myself but it just seemed ridiculous that something I wanted so badly should fall into my lap so easily and as I said, there was so much for me to focus on and so I let it go, pushed it to the back of my mind and left it there for later. It wasn’t until that Witch Doctor you have in your employ, Erskine, told me that it was the Great Spell that kept me alive that I realised it could have done the same for James. Under the right circumstances, the spell can save you from death. I thought- Gods, I don’t know what I thought about the hows and whys of my resurrection but it wasn’t until that moment that I thought that the same might have happened to James.”

“It- it makes sense,” Tony stuttered and he looked like if he wasn’t already sat down, he would have fallen down. “James could really be alive, Steve, James could be alive.”

Tony leaped up from the desk and scrambled towards the doors without a word.
“Tony!” Steve shouted as he grabbed the man from behind, only now seeing the wetness on his friend’s face, the desperation in his eyes.

“Steve, please, I have to go. Where is this village? Tell me!” Tony was trying as hard as he could to get away without physically hurting Steve but ever since becoming a Knight, Steve had been a lot stronger than either of his closest friends, the two men he had always considered his brothers, regardless of blood or titles.

“I will, I swear to you but you must calm yourself Tony, we need time to prepare, to plan our attack. Howard would not have left the castle unguarded, Tony, you know that.”

He could see his words get through to Tony a heartbeat before he saw his friend’s face morph into an expression well known to Steve, one that sent a shiver down his spine and a sigh out of his mouth. Reckless determination.

“King Steven, I, as a subject of the great Kingdom of Acirema, formally request that I be allowed to journey to the far edge of the Kingdom to recover our lost Knight, the Winter Soldier, who has given everything he has to protect this Kingdom and should now be brought home, whatever that entails. I offer up my life and service to you and our Kingdom in return for the honour of carrying out this quest. I swear to serve and protect the Kingdom and its people as a Knight of Acirema for as long as I shall live. Would you give my quest your blessing so that I may prove myself to you and our people?”

Steve was actually, for once, truly speechless. It wasn’t the thought of Tony becoming a Knight that was throwing Steve for a loop, because that was something that had been discussed under starry night skies in the middle of summer when neither of them had ever picked up a sword before. If it hadn’t been for Tony’s royal blood, he’d have gone through the trials at the same time as Steve and James had. No, it was the calling on an ancient, binding law that had Steve grasping for some kind of reply.

In recent times, it had become customary for men who wished to become Knights to attend tournaments in order to become recognised contenders. These potential Knights would then undergo a set of trials that were set up by the King and his advisors and those who passed were named Knights and given titles.

However before recent times, in ages past, those who would be named Knight would seek an audience with the King and propose a quest for themselves, along with a prize to be brought back and the title they sought to claim, that the King would either support or deny. The potential Knight would then go out into the Kingdom and beyond to complete his quest, unable to return to his home and kin until the task was complete, at which point, the Knight would return to the King with the agreed upon evidence of his victory and be named a Knight.

Not knowing what was going to come out of his mouth was definitely something Steve was going to have to work on when he officially became King but until then and since it was only Tony, he chose to say the first thing that came to mind.

“And what exactly do you seek to call yourself, should you survive such a dangerous quest?”

The question caused cracks to appear in Tony’s carefully put together facade, as if Steve didn’t know Tony would march right out the castle gates towards James without a clue where he was going or Steve’s blessing on the matter anyway.

It took Tony a moment to answer but when he did, it was with a smirk and it didn’t take Steve long to see the reason.
“Iron Knight, if it so pleases you your Majesty.” Stark men are made of Iron.

Steve thought it a perfect way for Tony to answer Howard’s haunting taunts.

“It pleases me,” Steve said and grinned at his friend, until reality forced him back to seriousness. “Tony, what you’re asking… If you’d just wait a few weeks I could send an army at your back.” He knew this had nothing to do with becoming a Knight for Tony.

“If it’s him, Steve, if James is alive, he’s been trapped there for decades. Alone, scared, tortured more than likely. I can’t stand to wait another second knowing that. Your army can catch me up when it’s ready, hopefully they’ll be quick enough to meet me and James on the way back and they can give us an escort.”

Steve laughed begrudgingly. “I know you think you’re amazing but even you have limits, both in magic and in your inventions, as genius as they may be. You could die before even making it into the castle.”

“He could die while we try to rally our forces. The Great Spell is weakening Steve, I can feel it.”

For a second Tony’s skin shone like it held the power of the sun underneath it and his eyes became something more than brown, a colour beyond naming. Then it was gone and Tony continued as if the display of his magical lineage had never happened.

“Howard may be gone but the spell has existed so long it is almost feeding itself, it must be because otherwise it would have taken Howard’s life in payment years ago. It was still driven by his malice though and without that hate, that guidance, the Great Spell will be no more. I can’t say when, someone more attuned to their magic probably could give you an estimate but I reckon it won’t be long before children can be born again and wrinkles start appearing on those who celebrate their elder years. When that happens, there will be no more second chances like yours, Steve. I’m not willing to throw James’ second chance away just because I wasn’t willing to try to save him alone.”

Steve sat heavily on the edge of his bed, the fine sheets cold against skin as he ran a hand over them. If he gave his blessing, he could be letting another of his friends die before his eyes when he could have stopped it but if he didn’t…

“Oh, Tony Stark I bestow upon you my blessing and wish you all the best on your quest. You will return with the Winter Soldier or you will not return at all, that is the will of the King,” the formal acceptance came back to Steve easily from his school days although not once had he ever thought he would be using his love of history like this.

“Thank you,” Tony whispered, emotion clear in his words and Steve was up and grabbing the man without conscious thought.

They stood in a tight embrace for a long time, neither speaking which would have shocked any who’d known either of them for longer than an hour. When they did pull apart, they didn’t go far. Hands clasped on each others’ shoulders, foreheads meeting in a hard press, it was almost like a battle of wills where both were wanting for the same thing.

Be safe. Bring him home.
Eleven days and he was finally here, a few short steps away from something he’d never even dared to dream could happen.

He’d managed to make good time really but every hour had felt like another hour too long, another hour someone he cared about was left alone and in pain.

Regardless of the reason for being there though, Tony couldn’t help but look up at the castle with no small amount of awe. It stood strong, the passage of time barely touching the stone walls at all, although from the lack of vines twining up the stonework that was probably more down to the warding spell Tony could feel in the air than the craftsmanship. The whole place seemed cold, full of sharp angles and hard edges, it was a castle meant to intimidate. There was no turning back for Tony though and the eerie stillness of the elaborate prison only added to Tony’s determination.

James was somewhere beyond those walls.

Gods, what must he think of Tony? Left alone to rot for decades, forgotten. Except he hadn’t been, Tony had never forgotten about him, not for a single moment. Instead, he’d just naively believed what everyone else had at the time, that James Buchanan Barnes, named the Winter Soldier as a Knight to the Kingdom of Acirema, had fallen from the ramparts to his death at the bottom of the ravine that surrounded the entire east side of Stark Castle. Tony should have known better, he should have searched for him.

He should never have given up on James.

Guilt had been an unforgiving mistress through the years and Tony had grown cold and bitter. It had all changed when Steve came back. Well, King Steve now, Tony supposed. He wondered what he would feel when the moment came to place the crown on his friend’s head, an act that no Stark had ever done before to someone outside their bloodline.

All Tony felt now at the thought was relief. He’d never really wanted the crown. He’d had too much fun getting into trouble and helping his friends to bail him out of it, although it was nothing more than what he did for them and at the same rate too. Really, considering his two closest friends were both Knights of the Kingdom, that should say a lot more about them than Tony.

When Steve had returned, it was like Tony had emerged from a fitful sleep full of unconquerable demons, ones that Steve had gladly helped to slay. Steve was a good man, the best one Tony knew if he was being honest and he’d been happy to fight by his side to change their world once again. The outcome was decidedly better than the first time they’d tried and Tony was pleased that through the ordeal his friend had found somebody to love and be loved by in this harsh existence. Peggy was a wonderful woman.

Tony had thought to fade again after the war was won, to find a quiet place to continue his research into the immortality spell that plagued the Kingdom but Steve had had other ideas. Becoming a Royal Knight hadn’t been on his to-do list since he’d been a child but it wouldn’t have come as a surprise if Steve had been the one to suggest it.

Hearing about the rumours surrounding James that Steve had heard on his travels had definitely been a surprise, to say the least. Dismissing the possibility of James’ survival was never going to be an easy task for Tony, not when hope had all but robbed him of breath for what had felt like a lifetime at the mere mention of it. But then, the person telling him about it had also been presumed dead so
Tony had felt validated in his hope, if just a little.

There was no way he could have waited to search for James after that, he’d already had to stand by and watch, powerless to intercede, as his people were mistreated over and over through the years. He’d been a coward, no two ways about it and no matter what Steve and Peggy had to say on the topic. James though, James deserved better from Tony, would have expected better from him and now that Tony had come out of the shadows once again, now that his Kingdom was finally starting to heal, he knew he had to do all he could to find his friend.

James had meant everything to him, even if he’d never been Tony’s in the way he’d yearned for. Bringing him home was the least he could do.

All he’d wanted after hearing Steve out was to jump on a horse and ride until he knew the truth of it, until he saw James with his own eyes. Thankfully, Steve had seen reason and granted his request to venture out and hunt James down. If becoming a Knight was a benefit of that, well, it may not have been on Tony’s to-do list but he was hardly going to turn his nose up at the childhood dream come true.

Tony Stark, the Iron Knight. Tony shook his head but smiled at the thought of his father rolling in his grave.

The only way into the castle seemed to be through an archway made of the same stone as the walls that surrounded the main building. There were no iron gates or doors of any kind but then who would need one with such strong magic powered by Stark blood guarding the place.

The villagers had been able to tell Tony more than they had Steve, when prompted with the right questions and motivation of the financial kind. They’d described the spell components their kin had once worked into the walls of the castle and Tony had known straight away which spell his father had used.

Howard had been a despicable man and an even worse father but no one had ever called him stupid. It just made Tony all the more grateful that one of his few weaknesses had been the disdain he’d held for his son. Tony was pretty sure he had never been so happy to be underestimated by his father in his life as he stepped underneath the archway and continued on into the courtyard unimpeded. As he kept walking, Tony could feel the magic of the warding spell flow over him, pushing at his mind and body as it searched for the password that Tony had written in his blood.

Whether Howard had never thought Tony would ever find this place or had simply never thought of his son at all, Tony didn’t have the energy left to care.

Howard’s pride had been his downfall in more ways than one and Tony was just so very grateful that he didn’t have to stop and break the spell, wasting even more time. The magic retreated as painlessly as it had appeared and then Tony stood inside an entry chamber, the room and the castle beyond seemingly devoid of all signs of life, as silent and still as any other long dead thing.

Tony forced himself forwards.

His footsteps echoed as he took careful steps further into the castle and experience stopped him from flinching at the sharp sound of his sword being unsheathed. He wouldn’t put it past Howard to have guards inside and he’d heard something troubling in another nearby village on his way through. Its people may not have known anything about who was being kept inside the castle but the men in the tavern had said that smoke rose from the structure now and then, as if a great fire was tearing through its halls.
Glancing around at the walls of what Tony presumed was once a chamber for holding banquets and celebrations, he’d have to agree. Apart from differing in size, the dark smears of soot decorating the walls were the only things that separated this room from the previous four he’d walked through and couldn’t be mistaken for anything but scorch marks.

Tony’s magic sparked a trail up his back and it was like someone had tugged invisible reins that had themselves wrapped tightly around his neck he stopped so suddenly. He rarely used the gifts of his bloodline but his magic was there nonetheless and Tony would be a fool to ignore the warning it was giving him. Something was in the castle with him, something old and dangerous, something magical.

As he came to what felt like the centre of the building, Tony found himself with a decision that often befell adventurers and potential Knights alike; should he go up or should he go down?

The likelihood was that even though James couldn’t possibly hope to get through the warding, Howard wouldn’t have simply let him roam free around the castle. Therefore, the dungeon was Tony’s best bet for finding him and those were usually found beneath castles rather than in high towers that could be demolished by a well-aimed catapult.

Down it was then.

Even knowing it was impossible for any life to enter the castle that wasn’t Stark born, Tony still expected to smell damp moss and rat feaces as he would in the depths of his own castle. Neither were present of course but perhaps that was why he didn’t notice the rising temperature as he descended until his feet hit hard soil instead of stone and he looked around to find himself in a large cavern.

Tony was lost for words, if only in his own head as it had been at least two days since he’d heard the sound of his own voice. It was doubtful anyone would believe it was possible that Tony could be this quiet for this long but with the castle standing alone for as far as the eye could see, his only chance for conversation would have been with himself or his horse. With his mind focused on the task ahead of him, he hadn’t been as inclined to indulge in either of those options as he usually would be. Tony let his eyes wander around the large space that surrounded him but that was more an impression he got than feedback from what he could see.

Darkness filled the cavern completely and Tony imagined it wouldn’t take many steps away from the stairwell before the little light that descended from it would fail to reach him at all. As it was, Tony could barely see his hand in front of his face.

He cast a dubious eye above him and hoped someone had thought to reinforce the cavern’s roof. A quick calculation only furthered his worries, stone was heavy at the best of times and it took an awful lot of it to build a castle. Before he could consider the best way to search a space he could not see, the sound of movement had him motionless in the space of a heartbeat, one that was picking up speed rapidly now that Tony was focused on it.

Gods he hoped there hadn’t been any bats down here already when the spell was cast.

His prayer was answered when the scuffling sound was followed up by a deep growl and Tony decided he’d have to have a stern talking to himself about getting his priorities in order if he made it out of here alive.

Tony had never been afraid of a fight, he’d been the first to dive into many a tavern brawl in his time even if he wasn’t exactly a prize stallion, not compared to James and Steve anyway. James had held the typical build of a Knight since he’d had his growth spurts in this younger years and Steve had soon caught up when he’d started to train seriously for the trials of a Knight.
It had been James, though, who Tony had always found… eye catching. In recent years, or rather the years before James fell, Tony had begun to think he’d been doing some eye catching of his own. He’d swear to the Gods that he’d felt those beautiful ice blue eyes trained on him a few times, only for them to fall away as Tony had turned to meet them. They’d been building towards something, towards each other, Tony was sure of it but sadly they had been robbed of the chance to see where that path might have led and now… Now Tony would be lucky if James even trusted him enough to get him out of here after all these years.

Tony pushed the bitter tang of regret back down as far as it could go; he couldn’t change the past, he could only try to make up for his mistakes now.

James needed him and he’d be damned if he would let him down again.

He took a deep breath and moved his sword around in front of him, lightly brushing his thumb over the rune to create a magic barrier that he much preferred to lugging around a heavy shield. Besides, Tony’s magic was an extension of himself, making it far easier to manipulate quickly in order to defend himself.

If Tony’s magical intuition hadn’t already told him that whatever was with him in the darkness was sensitive to magic, he’d sure know now because the growling stopped as suddenly as it had started and silence fell over the chamber once again in a tense stalemate.

Tony knew he shouldn’t move, or if he did it should be in an attempt to locate a wall so that he had some hope of sneaking past the creature and reaching James who was probably in another cavern that lay behind the ominous guard Howard had clearly placed here. Despite his suspicions (he refused to even think the animal’s name as it would do nothing but increase his fear) and what his very logical brain was telling him he should do, Tony’s feet had him walking towards the noise before any other part of him could think to veto the plan.

Perhaps his father’s advisors had been wrong after all and Tony was nothing but a simpleton, not a gifted cell in his body. A thought that was bolstered by the fact that Tony was still walking.

He’d been right about the light and a quick glance behind him revealed that Tony couldn’t even see his only way of escape anymore, the smudge of light being easily snuffed out by the inky blackness that pervaded the cavern but still he kept going. The thunderous growling returned and as Tony got closer he could feel it vibrating through his skin and deep into his bones. Finally, when he wasn’t sure if he’d been caught by a spell or if he’d just plain lost his mind, he came to a stop and as he did, so did the sound.

Feet must separate him from the monster he knew was lying in wait. The growling may have stopped but Tony was close enough now to hear other things; the soft scratch of claws on earth, the deep rasp of exhaled air… the painful screech of grinding scales.

He listened and he waited until air that was almost hot enough to singe his eyebrows blew across his face. Then it wasn’t as much a case of waiting as freezing.

Strangely, and a testament to his own lack of self-preservation, Tony found he wasn’t scared. He didn’t know why he wasn’t, he certainly knew he had every reason to be and any sane-minded person would be running for the hills already but there was just something surrounding them, something in the air maybe or perhaps it was in the way it shifted around them that settled Tony somehow.

The sound of movement had Tony tensing but he still didn’t step back, his sword lowered to his side along with the magical barrier.
The burning in his eyes caused Tony to close them before he could register the cause, his hands flying up in added protection against the sudden light. It took a moment and a lot of blinking but when he could open them again, his worst nightmare sat in front of him. Every detail now clearly lit by the two mounted torches that stood either side of the beast, the dragon that stood twice the size of him even as it sat serenely, blinking like Tony had woken him up from a deep slumber.

The dragon wasn’t enough to keep his attention though once Tony realised that the torches also sat either side of a doorway that made Tony’s heart sing with hope and yearning.

James.

He took a step forward without thought only to be stopped when the dragon moved further in front of the exit.

Oh yeah, he knew he’d forgotten something.

The dragon’s scales were a shiny silver and as Tony looked harder he realised they were actually made of the metal itself, however unlikely that seemed. Blood rivulets ran down from the creature’s neck, a combination of the dragon’s own scales cutting into its flesh and the silver brace that circled its neck with long, sharp spikes facing inwards. The smallest movement must be agony for it. A chain ran from the neck brace to the cavern wall outside of the reach of the torches’ light.

The dragon held its mouth closed and for that Tony would be forever thankful but the smoke that trailed from its nose like a warning sign for the fire the creature held within its breast was frightening enough in its own. The dragon’s eyes, though, were more human than any beast Tony had ever seen; a pale blue with veins of silver running through them and enough life in shining out to hint at emotion and thought.

He really should be screaming or brandishing his weapon or something but then the dragon should be reducing him to ash around about now and not giving Tony some light to see by that the dragon surely didn’t need, now that Tony thought about it.

It all served to remind Tony of the tales of dragons he’d read as a child. To him they’d seemed impossible and since no one had ever seen one in living memory, Tony figured they probably were, that all the dragons had either died out long ago or had only ever been a figment of a drunkard’s imagination to begin with.

Clearly, Tony had been wrong.

The stories had always said that dragons were intelligent, if vicious creatures that cared only about gold and land and in some stories, virgins, but Tony didn’t really put much credit to those. His magic didn’t require virgin sacrifices, why would a dragon’s?

All the signs here pointed to Howard having captured this dragon and forced it into servitude, perhaps that was why it wasn’t attacking, why Tony didn’t feel afraid. Maybe the dragon was as much a prisoner here as James.

“I am the Iron Knight of Acirema on a quest to find a lost Knight of my Kingdom,” Tony said as he bowed his head slightly. No matter what his instincts were telling him, the dragon in front of him was beyond dangerous and could kill him with very little effort on its part if Tony wasn’t careful. He would proceed with caution but without unprovoked aggression. “I do not know much of dragons but I swear to free you from this dungeon if you would only help me on my quest.”

The dragon cocked its head in a way that would have made Tony laugh at another time, in another
place. However his eyes kept being drawn to the doorway and nothing about this was funny.

“Please,” he said to the dragon when the creature just continued to watch him, “I just want to find James.”

The moment his friend’s name left his lips, Tony realised he’d made a mistake. The dragon screeched and Tony had to cover his ears or risk damage to them. The creature pulled itself to its feet and even though the cavern wasn’t as high as Tony had originally thought and the dragon was forced to hunch its back against the ceiling, it was still a formidable sight. The new position allowed Tony to see the chains that bound the dragon’s hind legs, the same design as the one around its neck but he didn’t have long to study them as a tail thicker than three tree trunks bound together with rope flew through the air towards him.

Tony dived to the floor just in time, his sword falling from his hand and the sudden disconnect caused the barrier spell to snap leaving Tony winded for a second too long as the dragon moved to loom over him.

“James is dead,” the dragon said, his voice deep and rough and yet comforting and Tony had to be going mad. The dragon’s teeth were in full view now and a smarter man than Tony might have fainted to avoid the imminent death that had to be coming his way but all Tony could do was try to breathe through the pain the dragon’s words caused, perhaps greater than any the dragon could cause with its teeth.

James couldn’t be dead. The spells, the dragon, Howard was hiding something here and it just had to be James. It had to be. He couldn’t be dead.

“I don’t believe you,” Tony said, his voice firm and controlled even with the dragon’s snout close enough to Tony’s face for an Eskimo kiss.

The dragon huffed and the heat of it made Tony recoil but he was already against the ground and had nowhere to go.

“The man you seek is gone,” the dragon said before pulling away and returning to his position in front of the doorway. He curled up like a cat in front of a fire, looking smaller than should be possible after the display Tony had just seen. “If you knew him well, it is best you hold onto your memories and leave this wretched place.”

“I won’t. I can’t.”

The dragon did not move.

“What is it you guard if not my Knight?” Tony asked and blushed slightly at his turn of phrase but the dragon continued to ignore him. “What lies beyond that door, dragon?”

“You will not pass,” the dragon said like the words were being torn from his throat before adding, quieter, softer somehow: “Just go.”

Nothing was adding up and Tony was just about ready to start demanding answers. He took steps towards the dragon, what he was going to do when he reached him, Tony had no idea but he had to get through that doorway. He had to find James. Tony sent tendrils of his magic out towards the dragon, hoping to find a connection there, something to sway the beast to Tony’s cause but both man and magic were stopped by an invisible barrier before they could reach the creature.

The barrier manifested as blue light, magic sparking along it like electricity could be seen as a darker blue, almost purple in its intensity. It was then Tony realised he’d never gotten that close to the door.
before, that when he’d tried to move forward, the dragon had moved to stop his advance. The barrier hadn’t reacted to the dragon at all. The dark blue sparks coasted out and around the doorway and the dragon in a semi-circle until it reached the walls and Tony could see what had been hidden in darkness only moments before.

Around the fastenings where the dragon’s chains connected with the wall were spirals of runes radiating outwards, crossing the edge of the metal and onto earth as if the material made no difference to the potency of the ink used.

Blood imbued with magic.

The blue sparks jumped to the runes and they shone brighter and brighter as the dragon tensed, waiting for something it was clear had happened before. The lights lit up the whole cavern and Tony saw for the first time that piles of armour riddled with fleshless bones littered the edges of the cavern as if they’d been flung from the dragon’s sight before the bodies had even grown cold.

Fear shook Tony for the first time but when he looked back towards the dragon, the creature was whimpering in agony. His claws dug deep into the ground as the blue magic darted up his legs and across his back, a thick line of it circled the dragon’s neck and all Tony felt then was anger. He shot magic bolts from his hands towards the wall fastenings, crude in his endeavour to interrupt the spell but it worked all the same and when the barrier fell, Tony rushed forwards.

“Dragon!” He shouted as he reached out towards the creature, only for him to flinch away under Tony’s fingertips. Blood stained the ends of them when he drew his hand back to himself, all thoughts of his weapon gone from his mind. Slowly he reached out again and the dragon lay still this time, panting through the residual pain. “Hush now, I’m going to take off these chains. The spell is feeding off your magic, once the chains are gone, the spell will be rendered inert. It would be really great if you didn’t try to fry me once I set you free.”

The dragon seemed to shiver as Tony finally rested a careful hand on its neck, just above the demented collar. Taking the otherwise lack of response as permission, Tony tried to be gentle as he searched for the locking mechanism.

He should be thanking the Gods for his luck, he should be climbing over the powerless dragon and leaping through the doorway that could take him to James but this creature, this impossible dragon, had protected him from a pain it couldn’t even protect itself from and for no benefit that Tony could see. Because it was clear now that it had been the dragon’s magic that had pushed him back just out of reach of the spell, even as it was Tony’s own magic that had activated it, bringing the dragon so much pain.

He couldn’t leave the dragon like this, another victim of his father’s cruelty.

The neck brace was seamless but Tony found where it was sealed regardless. He pressed his bloody thumb to the smooth surface but nothing happened. He tried using another finger but again, there was no response.

“This should be working. It was my father’s blood that got me in here, it should work just as well getting you out!” Tony grunted in concentration as he brought as much of his magic as he could to gather in his fingertips. Instead of trying to unlock the seal, this time he forced his magic onto it with the sole aim of breaking it.

Magic fought back, his father’s magic Tony knew, he could taste the vileness it had become at the back of his throat but he kept pushing, he had to. More and more, this felt like the right thing to do. He had to save this dragon.
The metal split with a great crack that echoed through the room as loud as the dragon’s cry that followed it. The two halves clattered to the ground as Tony once again had to cover his ears.

When the dragon fell quiet, Tony opened eyes he hadn’t realised he’d closed and came face to face with ice blue eyes as familiar to him as his own, so alike and yet so different to the eyes of the dragon who was nowhere to be seen. No smile graced the soft lips on the man’s face before him but then he was sitting naked on the cold ground with cuts around his neck and ankles so that was probably to be expected. The latter cuts were long and deep, the spikes of the ankle cuffs no doubt scraping along the man’s skin as they’d been torn off, the chains unable to stretch far enough to follow the changes the man’s body had just undergone. Or so Tony presumed. Everything was starting to feel a little fuzzy.

“James?”

The man watched him, cocked his head as the dragon had and tried to find his voice.

“Who- who is James?”

Tony’s heart sped like the fastest of mares and only by sheer will did Tony prevent it from breaking.

“You are. You are James Buchanan Barnes, the Winter Soldier, a Knight of Acirema. My friend,” Tony’s breath caught at the last and James lifted up a shaking hand to take away the wetness that gathered at the corner of Tony’s eye.

“James is dead,” James said, just as the dragon had, in that same plaintive way.

“But you are James,” Tony said, unable to say anything else, unable to move or shout or breathe. “You’re my James.”

James looked around the cavern but without the barrier, the space had descended into darkness again. Tony was glad, James didn’t need to see what Tony had. His eyes turned back to Tony after a while, to the hand Tony had clenched tight against his own thigh, trying to maintain control of himself.

“Who are you?” He asked and cracks started to tear through Tony’s resolve, his whole body aching from them.

“Tony. I’m- I’m Tony.”

“Tony,” James said, rolling the name around in his mouth for a moment. “Tony. You can not be here.” James pulled away and Tony’s whole body moved to stop the man from putting space between them but James was fast for someone who was so obviously malnourished and starved of sunlight. Still so beautiful though. Tony ached at sight of him.

James’ back met the wall beside the doorway and Tony stopped a few feet away, trying to give his obviously confused friend some space.

“The spell… it has horrible things in store for you. The others… The dragon… The spell made it, me, burn them all. ‘Tony Stark will meet a worse fate’, that’s what he said, the man wrapped in blue, so cold. I knew him. Didn’t I? I did. Long ago, so long… The barrier would have trapped you but I would not kill you. The man said- The man said you would try to get through the doorway and that I mustn’t let you but not kill you, never that. Bigger things in store. Bigger things in store.”

James was huddled against the wall, fingers holding tight onto his long hair. He barely looked like the James Tony knew and- and loved. But it was him. James was alive, just lost it seemed. What he
was saying was terrifying but among the evils were memories and they gave Tony hope still so he
listened and waited for James to find his way back.

“Eventually, you will kill the dragon. You will kill me to get to me and never know. Not until you go
tthrough the door. You must not go through the door! Tony!” James’ distress pulled Tony to him,
unable to sit by and watch. He was thankful when James allowed him to wrap his arms around him,
tucking James’ frame into his own body, his head under Tony’s chin. Tony would keep him safe.
“Through the door is not death, through the door is life everlasting. The Great Spell. When you go in
there, you will feed the spell once again. A cycle will be born and you will live forever. You will live
forever and only then will you know how alone you are. What you have done. ‘Your body once
again human for all to see’, he told me. Over and over again, that’s what he told me.”

“But I wasn’t trapped by the barrier spell. You saved me, James.”

“I… The spell man said… The King said that Tony must live. I knew Tony must live. I knew after
you were trapped, if I let you live, you would die. But you must live and so you could not be
trapped.”

Tony let out a startled breath. “You found a loophole in the spell.”

“I tried to make you leave. Didn’t know if it would work,” James said, his eyes clearing as the final
dregs of Howard’s spell died around them. Magic was like that. It need fuel and it needed direction.
Tony broke the fuel line but Howard was so very clever and dragons are so very powerful and even
now James was saving them both, giving the spell a direction as it faded, forcing the truth to come
out by using the words of the spell caster. As the spell died, so did the hold it had over James’ mind.
Gods how strong he must have been to hold on so long, to retain even the smallest bit of himself over
the years.

“James.”

“Yeah, yeah Tony, it’s me. I’m me.”

Tony cried into James’ chest like he hadn’t let himself since the moment Steve had told him James
had fallen from the castle walls. He sobbed loud and messy and James held him through it. Solid as
always no matter that he was basically skin and bone at the moment. Healers would fix that, get him
back to health quicker than Tony’s magic could even if he did have anything left after breaking the
seal on Howard’s spell.

After a long while, Tony was pulled out of his elated grief by the shaking form beneath him.

“Wha-”

“Iron Knight? Really, Tony?”

Tony blinked and stared and James was bleeding still and Tony had no magic left to help them get
out of here and he started to laugh right along with James regardless. Loud and life affirming and full
of tears of both joy for their reunion and sorrow for their separation and it was so easy to put a hand
to James’ face and press their lips together.

It was a quick, soft meeting of mouths and it held everything Tony had wanted to say for so long and
never thought he’d get another chance to. James’ hand came up to Tony’s shoulder, his thumb
tracing the curve of his neck as they took each other in.

Tony was torn between saying ‘I’m so sorry’ and ‘I missed you so much’ but what came out said it
all anyway.
“I love you.”

James smiled and Tony’s world got a little brighter. “ Took you long enough to tell me.”

Tony smacked James’ shoulder without thinking and sought forgiveness for the small hurt with soft kisses to his furrowed brow. “Well you haven’t exactly been around much,” Tony smirked into the skin beneath his lips. James pulled away but laughter sparkled in his eyes even as his nose screwed up.

“That was low, Tony. Even for you.”

“I can go lower,” Tony said and followed his words with descending kisses down James’ jaw and onto his neck, taking care not to cause further pain to the wounds there.

James hummed as he bent his neck a little to give Tony better access. When Tony made to explore James’ (definitely not forgotten) nakedness, James pulled his hands back up to his chest and took Tony’s face in his palms. The kiss was all warmth and light and so good Tony thought he might truly embarrass himself and cry again. There was only so much James was going to allow before the teasing began but then Tony supposed that’s what he got for falling in love with his best friend.

There was no battle as their tongues met, instead it was like they’d done this a hundred times before; every flick and taste and movement complementing each other’s perfectly. They pulled away at the same time, just far enough to see each other without going cross eyed.

“Gods how I love you,” James said, stealing a kiss and retreating before Tony could convince him to stay. “There are still some things that are screwed up in my head but I know that’s true and has been for the longest time. I love you. It’s what’s kept me going Tony, even when my eyes didn’t recognise you, my soul did. I could never forget you and I’m so sorry I left you alone for so long.”

“You didn’t, it wasn’t your fault. None of it, James, none of it.”

“There are memories from then and before that I can’t reach. I mean I was a dragon, Tony…” Tony watched his love gulp down his emotion, putting it all away for later. Tony wasn’t going anywhere, he would help James face it when he was ready. “Howard is gone?”

“For good,” Tony said, not even trying to hide his relief. “Steve isn’t, although you won’t have known that he was supposed to be so… There really is a lot to fill you in on.”

“I guess I’ll look forward to it?”

“Well, you have a sister in law. I missed the wedding, come to think of it, but between the two of us I’m sure we can make Steve have another one. Even if he is the King.”

“King?!” James’ eyes went wide and Tony couldn’t help but snort before grinning ear to ear.

“Sorry James, if you were hoping to be my Queen that isn’t going to happen.”

“Hey, I would have been happy with life as a Princess but I guess I’ll just have to make do with husband of a Knight.”

It was Tony’s turn to startle but James’ soft, hopeful smile soon pulled him out of it. It took the two a while to come back up for air and only then it was because Tony had caught one of the cuts on James’ neck with his thumb.

“Alright, we can continue this once you’ve seen a healer and we’ve both had a proper bath because
no offense intended James, but we both could use one.”

“Agreed,” James chuckled and this time Tony managed to remember not to nudge him.

Tony stood and helped James to his feet but it was clear the other man wasn’t going to be able to walk, even if his ankles weren’t as bad as Tony had first thought, unless it was left over dragon magic of course. Who knew what kind of mark that amount of time transformed would leave on a man.

“I’m going to have to carry you, aren’t I?” Tony muttered to himself, looking around for his sword as he kept a steadying hand on James. They hobbled over once he’d spotted it and secured it back into its sheath on his belt.

“I thought Knights were all about carrying damsels in distress around in their arms.”

“Alright, one, you’re far from a damsel James. The evidence is laid bare for anyone to see right now.”

Tony would have suggested grabbing some of the clothing off one of the skeletons lying around but he was hoping they could get out of here without such evidence being thrown in James’ face. Besides, Tony had spare clothes in his saddlebag and his horse was one of Acirema’s finest. She’d be waiting for Tony where he’d left her.

“I would make a fine damsel,” James scoffed his offense but wiggled his butt against Tony’s hip in a way that made Tony rush to his next point for fear of jumping the barely recovered Knight.

“Two, you are also a Knight and therefore know that most damsels we rescue are more likely to grab a pitchfork and help you on your quest than allow you to carry them to safety.”

“That one is certainly true. I have a scar to prove it,” James said, rubbing his elbow.

“And three, as much as I love you, lugging around your lanky self is not my idea of a fun afternoon. Surprising as that may be.”

“I think I could make you change your mind about that,” James said, his leer exaggerated but the heat in his eyes had Tony melting.

“Bad James. We need to get out of here.”

“Fine, fine. I suppose our first night together should at least be on a softish bed after all these years of waiting.”

Tony fought the blush hard but James’ grin let him know exactly how much he’d failed.

“Oh be quiet and help me lift you up, will you.”

He still couldn’t quite believe this was James he was talking to, had his hands on as he lifted him up into his arms. He was so light and when their eyes met, Tony saw the insecurity in them. Tony kissed it away before retracing his steps as best he could until the pale light from the stairway could take over their path to the exit.

The room beyond the cavern would have to wait for the army Steve had talked about. They’d have magic users better equipped to contain the Great Spell than what he could manage to do alone right now, until Tony had the chance to dismantle it. As long as no one entered the room, the spell of immortality would continue to fade and even then, it could have been created so that only Tony’s life
force could replace Howard’s. After all, it was clear this castle was to be as much a torture chamber for Tony as it was for James.

They made it to the courtyard with little problem but both men were out of breath and Tony couldn’t wait to get his hands on the water he had hidden away in his pack. He hadn’t wanted anything weighing him down as he’d entered the castle, not knowing what challenges might face him.

“Am I going to be able to walk through that?” James asked, the runes etched into the stone clearer from this side of the archway.

“The spell is only guarding the castle in one direction. Howard never thought you would get out and he wanted me to be able to leave and live a long life of suffering without you,” Tony answered, his voice dripping with hatred for the man who had never deserved the things life had given him, let alone the things he’d taken from others.

“For good,” James spoke Tony’s own words back to him. Howard was gone from their lives and couldn’t hurt either of them anymore.

Tony took them under the archway and around the corner of the outer wall towards the tree where he’d left his mare. He’d get James dressed and then they would ride back to the nearest village and buy another horse for James to travel on, if he was up to it by then.

“Thank you,” James said quietly as Tony put him down and gave his horse a few firm pats to her neck. James wasn’t thanking him just for carrying him out, Tony knew that.

“I couldn’t have done anything else.” The honesty in his words didn’t surprise Tony the way it would have decades ago. He’d wasted too much time trying to hide from this man.

“So tell me then, Iron Knight. What will your next great adventure be?” James smiled as he wrapped his arms around Tony from behind, Tony could feel it against his neck as it made his own lips quirk.

“I’m not sure, Winter Soldier, but I know I’m probably going to need an assistant.”

“An assistant? I think maybe a partner, someone who can keep you out of trouble.”

“Well that’s a hard ask of any man,” Tony joked and James tightened his arms just a little, “I think it’s just the kind of quest I’d like to take,” James said quietly, their laughter turning into something softer between them.

“Yeah?” Tony said, voice rough with emotion.

“Yeah,” James answered and Tony kicked his foot to get them moving back towards home. “Although, I’m not sure the reward I require is anything the King can grant.”

“I’ll do my best to see you are properly rewarded for your hard efforts then, oh fair Knight,” Tony said, looking back at James and stealing a cheeky kiss of his own.

“Mhmm,” James didn’t say anything more for a few minutes but Tony just waited.

“Iron Knight though?”

Tony dissolved into helpless laughter and it was only James’ quick thinking that stopped them both from toppling off the horse.

They may not know what troubles lay in James’ future after his decades long ordeal and the
Kingdom itself had plenty of repair work that needed doing, in all senses of the word, but seeing laughter light up James’ face once again was more than Tony could ever have hoped for. Howard was gone and Steve would be a better King than Tony’s father had ever been, not to mention the wonderful Queen he would have at his side. More than all that though, Tony wasn’t going to be alone anymore, he had the man he loved in his life and neither of them were going anywhere.

They all had a future to look forward too and for the first time in a long time, Tony thought he might actually enjoy his.

“Shall we make haste or would you rather I leave you here for a damsel to rescue?” Tony grinned and waited for his friend’s reply.

“That will not be the origin story of female Knights. It would please Stevie too much.” James looked like he’d swallowed a fly and Tony thought he was the luckiest man on earth. “Besides, there’s no one else I’d rather be cuddlin’ on a horse with.”

“Better not be, I’m the jealous type you know.”

James coughed something out that sounded a lot like ‘understatement’ and as they rode on towards home together, Tony couldn’t help but send a small prayer up to the Gods in thanks for the life they’d given him and the one they’d given him back.

With James alive and by his side, the most treacherous of quests suddenly became conquerable and there was no greater quest to undertake than life itself.

End Notes

Original prompt: Medieval AU. Tony Stark, the Iron Knight, undertakes a journey to rescue the Winter Soldier, who has spent the last seven decades trapped in a castle guarded by a fearsome dragon. Little does Tony know that the Winter Soldier is the dragon.

Kudos and comments are love so don’t be shy, let me know what you thought! :D

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