Fire Ants

by Artemis_Dreamer

Summary

In which Clint drinks something that he REALLY wasn't supposed to, and a secret that Tony REALLY didn't want revealed is... well, revealed.

Notes

WARNING:

Besides the fact that this is unadulterated nonsense, it also contains whump/minor abuse of a secondary character - namely Clint Barton.

Please keep this in mind if you're a huge fan of that character.

See the end of the work for more notes

Sometimes, “enemy” is a meaningless title. Especially when the enemy began as a broken man who made a few mistakes, and no longer has any real inclination left towards (serious) harm or (major) destruction.

This goes double when the team in charge of taking down the enemy has no inclination to uphold the conflict either, and if anything has actually come to hold a tentative friendship with the (partially-mended) enemy.

In this particular case, the enemy was Loki, and the team was none other than the Avengers.
So yeah, the two sides were on good terms. Loki would give the team a good two-week heads-up on any invasion plans; the team would call ahead to make sure the god wasn’t in the shower before they busted into his latest lair; all injuries in their spats were minor at worst; and most importantly, the trickster was actively dating Tony Stark (Avenger extrordinaire).

The couple had enough wild nights together to make up for all the nights that old Captain Goldilocks spent sketching at home – and that’s saying something.

The team really wasn’t sure what they did, but they also REALLY didn’t want to know.

It had to be epic; come on, we’re talking about a god and the billionaire party prince of Manhattan. However, Tony never really seemed all that worn out. None of the limping, griping, or miserable hangovers that had been the norm before he had met Loki.

A mystery for the ages.

The key to the mystery was Loki’s “hangover elixir”, a viscous red liquid that tasted utterly revolting, but cured all pains of the mind and body without fail.

See, there was a deal. The trickster could be as rough on his lover as he so chose. He could encourage Tony to stay out until six in the morning, could propose a 70-proof vodka drinking contest, or come up with some TERRIFYINGLY kinky idea for bondage sex.

He could be this rough, and the billionaire just flat-out revelled in the unbridled hedonism.

The condition of the deal? One vial of the elixir, given to the billionaire before they parted for the night (or before Loki left in the morning).

Tada! Consequence-free hard-core partying. The ultimate indulgence for two self-absorbed, lustful, and decidedly irresponsible lovers. It was what made their relationship work, albeit very smuttily.

That about brings us up to speed. So…

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Tony was slumped over the marble breakfast bar in the Avengers Tower kitchen, nursing a cup of black coffee. The vial of red elixir lay near his “World’s Sexiest Genius” mug, ready to be consumed.

Call it sympathy coffee; when he wanted to remind himself of just how lucky he was to have a deity for a lover, he’d force himself through the first hour of wakefulness without his cure.

(Never mind that it was past noon, he had actual work to do, and he was so hungover that he might have actually still been drunk.)

It was about then that the last person that Tony wanted to see swaggered into the kitchen. That freeloading son-of-a-bitch, Clint Barton. Sure, the billionaire was putting the entire team up in the tower, but he couldn’t help but take exception to the insufferably smug and abrasively rude Hawk.

Knowing that Clint was probably still sore about that time last week when he’d been locked out on the penthouse balcony in the rain, the billionaire instinctively closed a hand around the vial.

Being a frickin’ international spy, Barton noticed the movement easily, and reached over to snatch the tube from the billionaire’s half-hearted grip. Trust the bastard to screw up a perfectly good afternoon of sympathy coffee.
“Watcha’ got?” Clint sing-songed, knowing how much that habit irritated the billionaire.

“Ngh.” Tony grumbled “-t’s my hangover cure. Give it.”

“And why would I do that? Three hours in a thunderstorm, remember? My boots are still soggy, Iron Dork.” The archer groused.

“Because you secretly love me?” Iron MAN asked, trying to arrange his tired features into something endearing-looking.

“Wouldn’t want to make your precious Loki-pokey jealous.” Hawkeye sassed back. (He still didn’t really approve of Tony’s relationship with the criminal.) With that, he uncorked the vial and slugged back the contents in a single gulp.

“Ha!” The archer crowed victoriously, as if he’d just beaten the best time on the team obstacle course, as opposed to having stolen a hangover cure from a partially-drunk man.

His victory celebration was to be short-lived, however.

A creeping sensation of burning pain traveled through his body, spreading down his limbs and intensifying as it spread. Clint doubled over in pain. The pain became the sensation of being fiercely bitten by thousands of fire ants, agonising and maddening. Clint fell to his knees. The sensation became that of having been set on fire, live flames searing his limbs from the inside out. Clint screamed.

Tony practically had a heart attack, his coffee sloshing out of the mug as he jumped in surprise (and promptly tried to block out the continued screaming, which was doing no favors for his hangover headache).

The team came running into the room, saw Barton in pain, Stark not in pain, and would have jumped to the logical conclusion of “next step in their feud”… had it not been for the horrified expression on the billionaire’s face.

Bruce found himself at the front of the pack. “Tony?” He inquired uncertainly, before edging away from the scene. This was stressful, and stress was not good for the Other Guy.

“If this is the next stage in your ridiculous prank war, then I think you’ve-“ Steve began to lecture, but Natasha cut him off.

“Captain,” she snapped, voice cutting through the cacophony as she darted to Clint’s side. “This is not the time; we have an Agent down. Stark, what happened?” All business, as usual.

The genius was speechless for a moment, her brusqueness jarring in contrast to his dazed and hungover state. Thor took advantage of this opportunity to stuff a dishcloth into the archer’s mouth to muffle the downright horrific screams. (Steve spared the thunder god a disapproving look, but did not complain.)

"I... dunno.” Tony slurred, genuinely at a loss; he drank Loki’s cure practically every-other night. It was downright humiliating for the genius not to have the answers, but this time he simply didn't.

Turning up her nose when she realized that Iron Man was drunk, Natasha made to return her attention to her fallen comrade.

“Wait wait wait.” Tony slurred, “I know who knows.” Fumbling for his StarkPhone in his pocket, he pulled it free and pressed a familiar – very worn out – speed dial button.
One ring.

Two rings.

The team was glaring at him impatiently, Steve trying to ease Clint’s rigidly curled and spasming body into a more natural position.

Three rings. (Please answer.)

Loki answered the phone. “Anthony?” He inquired curiously, tone unconcerned.

“Putting you on speakerphone,” Tony replied, pressing the appropriate button. “We’ve got a problem, and you, Obi-Wan Kenobi, are our only hope.”

Yikes – he was referencing Star Wars. That was always a fair benchmark for how stressed the billionaire was. Typically, he never revealed his fondness for the films, lumping them with all of the other “nerd stuff” that he openly scorned but secretly enjoyed.

… Okay, off-topic. A wandering mind was also often a reliable measure of stress.

“The problem being?” The trickster’s calm tone was at odds with the chaotic tension in the Tower kitchen.

“Clint may have drank your hangover cure.”

The jaws of the Avengers dropped as the seemingly banal cause of the Hawk’s suffering was revealed. Their jaws dropped further at Loki’s alarmed response.

“What?! You allowed someone other than yourself to drink the elixir??”

“He stole it…” Tony grumbled childishly.

“Enough.” The trickster had become terrifyingly serious. “What is Barton’s condition?!”

Tony motioned to Thor to remove the gag. He did, allowing a few gut-wrenching screams to pierce the air, before promptly shoving the gag back into his mortal teammate’s mouth.

One could practically hear the colour draining from Loki’s face just over the phone. “Fools,” he spat. “Secure the Agent and keep his legs elevated – I will appear to you shortly.”

The god hung up, and the entire team tensed up. Loki was coming, while the Avengers had one man down. They may have had a sort of friendship with the (bluntly-labeled) villain, but the trust was not absolute. This could easily mark a return to his prior levels of malevolence, and be an attack on the significantly-weakened team.

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Loki appeared, in ten seconds flat. Pausing only momentarily to glare witheringly at his lover, he made his way to Barton’s side – the archer had been hoisted onto the kitchen table as if it were a stretcher.

The second that the trickster was within a foot of the table, a hammer and two pistols were brandished threateningly; Loki raised his hands.

“Hold your quarrel. I can save him, if you ALLOW ME TO PROCEED!”
There was something that resembled panic in his tone. He did not truly hate the Avengers, no longer wished to kill them, and was alarmed by the thought of what being responsible for the Agent’s death would mean for his relationship with Anthony.

The Avengers slowly lowered their weapons and took one step back.

Loki stepped forwards, tore out the gag, and laid a hand on the archer’s sweat-slicked forehead. He muttered a word, and said hand glowed with a brief burst of golden radiance – there was an answering glow from behind Clint’s eyelids.

The screaming ceased.

Nodding to the team, the trickster flipped Barton onto his side, as the no-longer-in-agony archer threw up the red liquid (and his breakfast) over the edge of the table and onto the ceramic tile.

“Fuuuuck.” Hawkeye groaned, spitting out a last bit of vomit. “The hell was that?”

Then, he eased himself up into a sitting position, and his eyes landed on the still-shaken Iron Man. The Avengers took a second instinctive step back as they saw Tony’s hackles rise, temper flaring to match Clint’s.

“You,” Barton spat, “are a fucking bastard. Again, the hell was that? Liquid pepper spray?”

“Bastard?! M’ parents were married, you grabby fuck.” Tony retorted, slightly missing the point.

Loki stepped between the furiously glaring men and motioned for calm – it just figured that the so-called “sociopathic villain” would be the only one trying to diffuse the situation (no thank you to the cowering team).

“Barton, you are a fool.” Loki snapped, ignoring the snarl that this comment brought to the Agent’s features. “That elixir contained far too much magical energy for a mere mortal to consume. Why you would even dream of drinking it… the energy would have consumed your frail body from the inside out.”

Turning to his lover, Loki gave him a glare that was perhaps less venomous than the situation warranted. “And you, you utter-“ He broke off the sentence with a sigh, then moved to press a quick kiss to Anthony’s jawline.

The trickster would never admit it aloud, but he was amused – seeing Barton suffer had been a rare treat, and he owed this sadistic little pleasure solely to his lover. (His villainous tendencies were perhaps not so far beneath the surface as others might believe, and torture HAD once been among his favorite pastimes.)

“Yeah… but you love me.” Tony gave a shaky smirk, confidence returning as his nerves were soothed by the familiar affections of the trickster. His speech, however, was still clumsy and enveloped in a drunken stupor.”

“Was there ever any doubt?” Loki smirked back, nose wrinkling at the pungent alcohol smell. Then, reaching up his sleeve, he procured a vial identical to the one that had poisoned Clint – the usual appearance of the cure. “Now, I assume that you will desire this.”

“You’re a lifesaver, Frosty.” Tony grinned lopsidedly.

At this point, the team’s archer had a minor freak-out, and waved for the attention of his comrades. He gestured emphatically towards the vial, back to himself, and made a choking motion. (Hooray
for pantomime.) The team instantly understood.

“WAIT!” Steve’s panicked exclamation rung out just as Tony’s hand closed around the glass tube, the Avengers rejoining the conversation as they saw what seemed to be a blatant attempt to murder their teammate.

The guns were pointed back at Loki, along with a hammer and now a bow. “That looks like the same liquid that poisoned Agent Barton. What are you playing at?” The surprisingly aggravated Natasha demanded.

Loki rolled his eyes. “Are you all tragically deaf?” he inquired scathingly. “This “liquid” is only harmful to mortals.”

Four pairs of eyes blinked in confusion, but a look of horror dawned on Thor’s face. “Brother, you did not!” The thunder god boomed in distressed tones.

“I did,” the trickster grinned back wickedly.

Tony sighed, watching this veritable car crash in slow motion as he slugged back the shot of vile viscous liquid. Yup, the same old hangover cure – apparently his silver-tongued lover was actually telling the truth.

“…would someone happen to have an explanation?” Bruce asked, voicing the question on everyone ELSE’s minds.

“Has Anthony truly not told you-“ Loki began, but was cut off by Thor, who had pushed his way to the front of the group and assumed a threatening stance.

“Immortality is meant to be the highest of honours, brother! Do you not see that this mortal is undeserving?”

Tony assumed an exaggerated hurt expression (undeserving, my ass – he was the most brilliant and handsome man on the planet) and pouted a bit, while four jaws dropped for a second time.

“To clarify-“ Bruce began, but he too was cut off, by Clint.

“Iron Dork is immortal?!” He squawked, his high-pitched exclamation sounding alarmingly avian.

“No,” Loki responded smugly, draping a protective arm around Tony’s shoulders. “He is a god.” Those dropped jaws just about hit the floor.

“A GOD?!” Steve, Nat, Clint, and Bruce exclaimed. Thor repeated the words in a dull and disbelieving tone. Realization was rapidly forthcoming to the members of the team, swiftly followed by disgust.

“We’ve been protecting him for nothing,” Dr. Banner sighed tiredly.

“All this time, the man has never been in any actual danger.” Natasha spat, thoroughly irritated.

“I can’t believe that you would withhold this information, Tony. It would have been vital to the team!” The Captain berated disapprovingly. Then, turning his attention to the god of mischief, he spoke more tentatively. “This isn’t another trick, right?”

“No tricks, His reason for not telling you is beyond me, but Anthony stark is a fully immortal deity, and is well beyond all Midgardian harm.” There was a fair measure of smug pride in Loki’s
tone, pleased with the development of his lover’s decidedly mischievous streak – yes, things were much more amusing this way.

(A whine of ‘I was getting around to it’ from Tony. Now that his hangover had been well and truly cured, he was back to being considerably more vocal.)

Thor loomed closer to his unconcerned adopted brother, his face an alarming shade of red. “You have disgraced the purpose of immortality, brother, and made a mockery of godhood!”

“He pleases me, Thor.” Loki took a step forward and laid a taunting finger on his brother’s breastbone, eye to eye with a glare that most would find terrifying. “I wish to keep him.”

(A smirk of ‘damn right’ from Tony, followed by a grumble of ‘not a pet’.)

“SEXUAL INTERCOURSE,” the thunder god boomed, loud enough that the whole of the tower could probably hear it, “is not a fit reason for DEIFICATION!”

It was Tony who replied, stepping forward to nuzzle against Loki, so that his head rested on the crook of the taller god’s collarbone – the very picture of smug contentment.

(Damn, did they ever look perfect together.)

“Tough luck, Point Break.”

You could practically see the steam rising from the thunder god’s furious crimson face, his hand twitching on the handle of Mjolnir.

“If godhood was only for the deserving, Thor, then you would not have been born a god.” Loki smirked viciously, knowing just how to push his adoptive brother’s buttons.

“And what of yourself?” Thor challenged. “On both Midgard and Asgard, you are a common criminal.”

Loki’s smirking mask gave way to a momentary flicker of pain, and his lover immediately stepped to his defense. It was usually the trickster who assumed the protective role in the relationship, oftentimes overlooking the strength with which he had gifted Tony.

Still, the billionaire was quite a sight when defending his lover from raging assholes – or in this case, a raging asshole brother.

“There is NOTHING common about Lokes.” Tony snapped, winding an arm around the trickster’s slender waist. “He’s flawless; he’s the hottest being alive. He’s pleasured and fucked me in every possible way, and ways that I didn’t even know were possible. That alone should qualify him to be a god.”

Loki blushed lightly at this rigorous defense, and his Man of Iron’s blunt use of sexual terms. The man who had once been mortal was defending HIM, a many-millennia-old deity. Amusing, flattering, and one of the nigh-infinite reasons why he (would never admit that he) loved Tony.

Thor was finally speechless, removing his hand from the hilt of the hammer and turning his glare into a resigned glower.

(Loki didn’t feel particularly guilty about this – his idiot brother did not deserve to appear superior, ever.)
“So, Lokes,” Tony grinned seemingly forgetting that the team was still in the room. “The Mouseketeers are going to take a while to cool off, and I’d rather not be around two pissy assassins.”

“Are you proposing that we go for a few rounds, Anthony?” Loki inquired suggestively.

“Drinks, yeah, you insatiable son-of-a-bitch.” A fond insult, as Tony caught Loki’s wandering hand and saved the assembled Avengers from having to see the relief-giddy god give the billionaire a kitchen handjob.

(Yes, seriously. They’d done many, many dirty things in front of far more terrifying audiences.)

“Implying that you are anything less than insatiable?” Loki smirked.

“You got me there,” Tony shrugged, smirking back unapologetically. Then, he paused to eye the increasingly irate-looking team before continuing. “… and I think we’ve got a good reason to leave right about NOW.”

“Indeed.” Loki replied, biting his tongue to avoid adding an old-fashioned ‘let us be off’.

A glow that the team recognized to be a transportation spell was forming around the two men, and most of said team was still too shell-shocked to really try and stop them.

Bruce, however, snuck in a question just as the spell seemed to be taking effect.

“What is Tony’s deific portfolio, anyway?”

The spell ceased, the glow fading to nothing. “Want to tell them?” Tony grinned mischievously as he addressed his lover, giving Dr. Banner an instant pang of regret for even asking.

“Oh, no. The honor is yours.” Loki replied, wearing an equally amused expression.

“Well, Brucie-baby, I’m now officially the God of Science, Hedonism, and Sex.” Yeah, it wasn’t possible for the genius to be any more smug than he was in that moment.

“Well,” Bruce nodded. “A bit unconventional, but appropriate.”

The other team members collectively rolled their eyes. This just proved that Thor had had a point – it really looked like Loki hadn’t taken this “deification” thing particularly seriously. (Then again, neither he nor his lover took anything seriously outside of the bedroom; not even on the battlefield.)

“So,” Clint asked, as the pause grew into an awkward silence of watching Tony gaze fondly at his lover while subtly moving a hand to grope said lover’s leather-clad ass. “Are you two assholes going to get going or what?”

“Sheesh.” Tony grumbled.

“So impolite.” Loki sniffed.

“Well?” That was Steve now, an air of hostility settling over the team as they came to realize just how much trouble Stark’s little secret had really caused them over the nearly three years that he and the trickster had been a couple.

“We’re going, Spangles,” Tony smirked. “Unknot your tights.”
With that decidedly childish comment, the spell began to take effect once more, the bodies of the two men blurring out of existence – only Natasha, with her quick wits, realized that Tony was in fact the one casting the spell.

… Oh great. Because what Iron Man really needed was MAGIC.

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The lovers would proceed to spend their afternoon and evening in a bar that the billionaire “just so happened” to own, before stumbling off to Loki’s apartment for several glorious rounds of drunken sex.

The hangover cure would be administered in the morning, just like it was on every other morning that the trickster spent with Tony. In a sense, things were proceeding as if the team had never discovered their secret.

Though, from there on out, there were many more Iron Man suits being sent to the scrap heap, many more disapproving glares from the team, and many MANY more blunt force trauma injuries.

(There was also that amusing incident in which someone who-shall-not-be-named talked SHIELD’s junior agents into worshiping Tony. While it was fun to be revered, trying to talk them into also worshiping Loki was perhaps a step too far.)

Those who are fans of our hapless Clint Barton need not worry about the unfairness of it all, however.

A playful sort of comeuppance was promptly served, in the form of a jar of Bolivian fire ants being introduced to Tony Stark’s underwear drawer.

Which is – god or not – a far worse torture than it sounds.

That’s just how life and love would henceforth play out for Tony Stark, the Norse God of Science, Hedonism, and Sex.

FIN

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End Notes

… and I wrote this while completely sober.

I had way too much fun with this one - it expands on some of the concepts introduced in my earlier fic "On Good Terms", at least in terms of the hero/villain relationship.

Any comments or feedback are most welcome. Thanks for reading!

(Just a heads up that this will probably be my last fic for a while; I'm moving house, and things are starting to get really crazy.)

Please drop by the archive and comment to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!