Unofferable, Part I - Emergence

by AnMorrighan

Summary

The unexpected arrival of an injured Midgardian child clinging to life causes a ruckus on Asgard. The princes, Thor and Loki, are somewhat intrigued by this unusual guest, unsure as to how and why she ended up in such a state. What they did not expect, however, was the turn of events her appearance would inevitably cause.

Notes
So, this is my first fic both on this website and, well, ever. The whole thing is written and complete – about 28 chapters worth – so I thought I might as well throw it up here and see what people think. Feedback, comments, and all that would be greatly appreciated because I'm new and slightly anxious haha. There's also a Spotify playlist below to listen to as you read if, like me, that's your kind of thing. Apologies if it seems slow, but I had to set the scene before getting the ball rolling… If feedback is positive, I might post the other chapters in some form of a consistent schedule! You can find the fic over on my Tumblr too: unofferable-fic. Also, apologies for any spelling mistakes – I ain't got no proof reader! Enjoy!

Arrivals

Evening had just settled upon Asgard. The bright sun hid itself behind the clouds as the stars and moon took their turn out in the open, their mild light glinting off the smooth surfaces of the palace. All was quiet and calm, the only noises coming from the gentle wind and palace guards on their usual patrol.

The great noise and extravagant light of the Bifröst being used cut through the calm atmosphere, signalling the return of Queen Frigga. Heimdall stood guard as always and regarded the woman in his usual monotone, but his greeting went surprising unacknowledged. The Queen walked with haste and purpose, carrying a small form in her arms. Bloodstains covered the front of her formally elegant dress and a limp arm hung over the edge of the body, swaying as she walked. As was his duty as guardian sentry, Heimdall informed Frigga that she would have to speak with the King before bringing outsiders (let alone mortals) into their realm, but his words fell on deaf ears. Her expression was a mixture of determination and purpose, with the smallest dash of fear that he could easily see. As guards marched up the rainbow bridge to escort her back to the castle, they paused together, having finally noticing the body she carried as she hurried towards them.

“Send for the healers,” she commanded them, slightly out of breath. “And tell them that their services are urgently needed.”

“My Queen,” one guard began, looking between her and the body. “Have you been injured?”

Her tone never wavered beyond that of a regal, just queen. “It is not me who needs help, it is this child. Go, now!”

One guard did as informed while the other two began to accompany her into the Asgardian Palace. Their offers to carry the child, a small girl, were rejected several times. The halls of the castle echoed with the sound of urgent footfalls on the marble floors, some of the guards and maids curiously looking at the reserved commotion as it passed them by. Hushed words were exchanged at the sight of an unconscious mortal in the palace.

This was how I first ended up in Asgard; a defenceless child on the brink of death, carried in the arms of a loving queen. Nifty, huh?

As Frigga made her way towards to Healers’ Wing that was already being prepped for the arrival of some mysterious child in need, word from Heimdall that the Queen had brought a mortal into Asgard quickly found its way to King Odin in his throne room. Frigga knew that he was informed when she arrived at her destination to find the entrance guarded by two of the King’s personal guards.

“I am sorry, my Queen,” one of them said robotically. “But the Allfather has ordered for us to bring you to the throne room, along with the Midgardian.

“This child needs help,” she replied, holding on to whatever patience she had left. “I am your queen and you will stand aside.”

Neither of them flinched. “They are the King’s orders that you be brought before him.”

“Take me if you so insist, but the girl needs to be seen to.”

“Not until you have spoken with the King.”

Finally, Frigga’s patience snapped. “She will die if not tended to.”
Finally, Frigga’s patience snapped. “She will die if not tended to.” Neither of them spoke a word, instead giving her blank stares from beneath their helms. Seeing that there was no way she would be able to get them to let her through, she allowed them to escort her to the throne room where her husband waited for her arrival.

The walk was a rushed one, mostly because of Frigga’s insistence. As the minutes ticked by, she grew more and more concerned for the small being lying limp in her arms, breathing shallow and shaky. She peered down at her occasionally, the girl’s face hidden as it was nestled into her dress. Although the soldiers were brimming with curiosity, none of them dared to question why their queen had come back from Midgard with one of the inhabitants, an injured one, at that.

The huge doors to the even larger throne room were pushed open, revealing the mostly vacant Valaskjalf. A lone figure resided at the end of the room, sitting proudly upon the golden throne. Odin remained seated with his spear, Gungnir, in hand as his wife was led forward, clutching the little girl’s body tighter to her chest. Her dresses trailed along the stainless floors, her own journey to the steps reflected back up at her. Upon arrival at the lower steps, the guards bowed before stepping aside, leaving Frigga to stand before her husband.

Odin silently regarded her for a moment before he spoke in a booming voice. “My wife, you are aware of the rules and restrictions that are upheld in relation to outsiders being brought through the Bifröst, are you not?”

What kept Frigga calm was that his tone was not condescending or negative, but that of a King who has to do what was expected of him.

“I am aware, Odin,” she replied, remaining polite but ignoring all formalities due to the urgency of the situation. “As you know I am, but such an urgent situation required immediate action to be taken. She would have died if left on Midgard and she will still die here if we do not help her.”

Odin leaned forward in his throne, his steely gaze landing on the girl in his wife’s arms. “And why would you insist on bringing a lowly Midgardian back with you to Asgard? What significance is she to you?”

“None, my King,” Frigga replied, both her gaze and stance confident. “But I would not leave behind a defenceless child to perish alone when she could be saved.”

A look of recognition flashed over Odin’s features for a fraction of a second before it just as quickly disappeared. That split second of silent interaction spoke more words than any of those around them could comprehend.

Odin didn’t get a chance to respond, as the sound of the doors bursting open interrupted the conversation. Both the King and Queen’s attention was drawn to the end of the hall as Thor and Loki made their way towards them, the latter walking slightly behind the former.

“Mother!” Thor called her in delight. “We had heard of your return!”

“My sons,” Frigga greeted them, somewhat despondently as they got closer.

Confusion covered the two brothers’ faces as they spotted the limp form in their mother’s arms. Loki’s brows furrowed at the sight of blood on her dress. “Mother, are you alright? Have you been hurt?”

She shook her head, soothing his worries somewhat. “I am well, Loki. It is not my blood.”

“What have you brought with you?” Thor asked inquisitively once he had confirmed that she was
unhurt and peered at the child. “Is it a slave? Or a runaway? Is it alive?”

“She may not be for much longer if she doesn’t get the help she needs.” Frigga turned her attention back to Odin, who had been silently observing the exchange. “Please, Odin.”

“Tell me what happened,” he answered and remained seated. “Tell me where you found her.”

There was a brief pause before Frigga began her tale, detailing how during her trip to Midgard, she had taken to walking around the cities in the early hours of the morning when they were mostly deserted, disguised as a mortal woman. She enjoyed the peace and quiet, but the tranquility of the city was disrupted when she spotted something unusual behind a dumpster in a filthy alleyway. What had compelled the queen to investigate what she saw in that alleyway she wasn’t sure, but her feet had brought her closer to have a look before she could contemplate why. It was there that she discovered the frail and broken body of the Midgardian girl, shivering uncontrollably in both pain and the cold. Frigga asked the child if she could hear her as she took in the bruises on her face. Glistening eyes met her gaze before her lids shut again, slipping into unconsciousness. Already involved in this child’s affairs and unwilling to leave her there to die in the cold, Frigga took it upon herself to save this young life, even if it meant questioning her own King. After her owl healing abilities were not enough, she had no choice but to bring her back to Asgard.

Thor and Loki listening intently, looking between the girl and their mother in amazement.

“And were the medical facilities on earth not suitable for this case?” Odin asked in exasperation. “That is what doctors are for, after all.”

“Coming here with the child was far quicker than finding a hospital and Asgardian healers are the finest in all of the Nine Realms.”

“A Midgardian…” Loki murmured to himself, amazed by the little mortal before him. Having always had an interest Midgard and its people (not to mention all of the realms), he was somewhat pleased with his mother’s rash actions. He had little to no time for mortals, considering they were beneath the Aesir, but he couldn’t help but be fascinated by their simple ways.

“And those healers are reserved for Asgardians alone. She is mortal, therefore she does not belong here. Guards, take her back to Midgard immediately.”

At their king’s command, two guards quickly approached Frigga with the intention of fulfilling his orders, but she held the girl tightly to her chest.

“Odin, I speak to you as both your wife and a mother. If you send this girl back to Midgard, then she will die before anyone can help her. While here, there are healers capable of saving her now. If you send her back, you will have the blood of an innocent child on your hands. Mortal or not, she is but a child.”

There was a long pause as Odin contemplated her words. Their sons remained silent and glanced between the two, wanting to add their own opinions, but knowing it was better to keep their mouths shut. Frigga stared at him, her eyes overwhelmingly intense and intimidating. She was pleading silently and for a moment, it appeared as though her efforts fell upon deaf ears.

This was how Frigga saved my life.

“You may take the child to be healed,” Odin announced calmly, his expression unreadable. “Once she is well again, she will be returned to Midgard.”

The tense atmosphere in the room instantly melted away. Loki’s eyes grew wide – he hadn’t been
expecting such an act of kindness from his father. While he could be a just king when needed, mortals were strictly forbidden in Asgard.

While Thor offered to help Frigga carry the girl, Loki hung back and observed instead. He preferred not to get too involved in the whole situation, while it seemed that his mother already was; she calmly refused Thor’s assistance and carried the child to the healing wing herself. Upon arrival, she was placed on a table and surrounded by Eir and the finest healers Asgard could offer while Loki watched from the corner of the room. Thor approached him whereas Frigga remained by the girl.

“What do you make of this, little brother?” Thor asked, his arms folded across his chest.

Loki merely shrugged. “It would seem that mother has somehow managed to briefly change father’s stubborn opinion on mortals in our realm. I must admit, her argument was impressive.”

“She is only one little mortal.”

“Indeed. I am not overly fond of children, no matter the race.”

“What harm could she possibly do?”

“Very little, I would imagine. She can’t be more than six or seven years old.”

“She is still a babe,” Thor laughed. “She is no threat to us. And once she is fully healed, she will be returned to Midgard.”

Loki let out a snort. “I’m sure that Father cannot wait for that day.”

The tall blonde leaned casually against a nearby pillar with a smirk. “Perhaps you will get to interrogate the child all about her insignificant life before she leaves.”

Loki gave his sibling a wry look. “Why in the name of the Norns would I ask this girl of her life on Earth?” What exactly was he insinuating?

“Loki, Loki, Loki,” the God of Thunder chuckled, shaking his head. “You are always stuck in your books, reading everything there is to know about the Nine Realms and its inhabitants. When you should have been out sparring with Sif and I, you read about other worlds and went to seiðr training with mother. Suddenly a Midgardian appears in our very home and you’re telling me that you have no interest in questioning her at all?”

If Loki said that his brother was full of it, it would be a blatant lie. While he found his ignorant comment about reading and seiðr highly irritating, he had to admit (at least, not out loud) that he was a little bit curious about her world. The words never escaped his mouth though. “You are aware that this child is probably going to wake up traumatised, depending on how she ended up in that state?”

Thor’s response was a shrug. “Still, it’s an opportunity I doubt you would willingly let pass by.”

They were silent for a moment, watching the scene before them as it played out. “Mother seems to have taken a shine to the little mortal, hasn’t she?”

Loki rolled his green eyes. “You speak of her as though she is a house pet.”

“I only jest! But you cannot deny that mother seems to be attached already.”

Watching Frigga hold the girl’s hand as healers inspected her injuries, the youngest son of Odin replied. “That attachment will fade presently. Soon enough, she will have to leave this place.”
“Perhaps she will keep her,” Thor pondered aloud.

Loki scoffed. “Father would sooner give up the thrown to the Frost Giants than let a mortal remain in his halls. And I would also imagine that her guardians on Midgard are looking for her.”

“Would you not enjoy a Midgardian pet? They are a weak race in comparison to ourselves.”

“That may be so, but you know how Mother feels about slavery. She would never allow it, nor do I desire it.”

Thor shrugged dismissively and pushed himself away from the pillar he had been leaning against. “I suppose so. Alas, I have more important matters to attend to. I’m already late for my sparring match with Lady Sif. Don’t hover over the mortal too long, brother.”

Loki watched his sibling leave and then turned his eyes back to his mother. Frigga remained next to the platform where the girl lay surrounded by working healers. The child’s vital signs all appeared on floating holograms. Certain healers sieved through them, pinpointing problems that showed up on a body chart.

“… head trauma,” he heard one inform another. “… two broken ribs… bruising and laceration…”

“This Midgardian received a harsh beating,” Eir agreed, her voice a little louder so that Loki could hear. “I am surprised she has clung to life this long.”

“She is a fighter, it would seem,” Frigga said, stroking the small hand with her thumb. “Will she survive?”

“Her chances are high now that she is on Asgard. Had she been brought back to her own planet, she would have perished, no doubt. That being said, I’m unsure as to when she will wake up.”

“Then I will remain her for as long as I can,” the Allmother replied, watching the girl attentively. “You are welcome to stay as long as you desire, Your Grace.”

It was a short while after this when Loki decided to step forward. “Mother? Would you ask that I remain with you?” He wasn’t sure whether it was concern or curiosity, but he found himself preferring to stay where he was.

Frigga tore her gaze away from the child and settled it on her own offspring with a smile. “It would please me greatly to have you here by my side, my son.”

He made his way over and took a seat next to her. With her free hand, she took his in her grasp, squeezing gently. He returned her smile with a small grin of his own and squeezed back.

“Where has your brother run off to?” Frigga asked after a moment.

“He left to spar with Lady Sif in the training yards,” Loki replied, gauging her reaction.

She laughed gently. “I should have guessed as much.”

They sat in silence as the healers worked attentively. Loki kept his gaze on the child, getting a real look at her for the first time. She had thick mousy hair, falling down to just past her shoulders, which appeared knotted and frayed in the ends. She was slim — worryingly so — and her top and bottoms were covered in dirt and small dapples of blood here and there. She was wearing a dark blue garment that looked like a short tunic with a hood attached while also being a few sizes too big for her. When his eyes found their way to her little freckled face, he was met with an array of
cuts and deep bruises. Two lacerations in particular on her upper lip and right brow were sure to leave scars, even with Asgardian healers on hand. Her expression was blank in her slumber despite the gravity of her injuries – beneath all the bruises and dirt, her face still contained the innocence of a young child.

“What could have done this to her?” Loki asked his mother, overwhelmed with confusion rather than sadness. “She is but a child and a mortal. They are utterly defenceless and inept at this stage in their short lives.”

Frigga shook her head slowly. “I do not know, Loki. I cannot understand it myself. Perhaps when she awakens we will get some answers.”

“Perhaps.” Despite not being ridiculously upset for the mortal, he couldn’t help but feel sorry for her when he thought about how harmless she was. What… thing could possibly have the motivation and the malice to strike something as defenceless as she?

He turned to his mother. “You do not know her name?”

“No. Hopefully that is another piece of information she can enlighten us with when she awakens.”

For a moment, Loki pondered what she would be called. Something dull probably, like most other Midgardian names… But her little bruised hands caught his attention and he immediately grimaced. He was the God of Lies and Mischief, the Trickster, the Silvertongue, but such unnecessary violence as this was never in his favour. There were some things that he would never and could never understand. At least the girl had survived her ordeal. He was a Trickster, but not heartless.

“The healers do not know when she will awaken,” he commented. “Do you think she will stay in this state for long?”

The Queen shrugged, a dark look passing over her fair face at the thought. “I can only hope that she will rouse soon, but if time is what she needs to heal, then so be it.”

“She is very… little,” he said absentmindedly.

Frigga nodded her head gently. “So very little and frail indeed. Mortals are so delicate.” She paused briefly to let out a shaky breath. “I fear that she may not survive her ordeal.”

Tearing his gaze away from the girl, Loki looked at his mother. “She is surrounded by the finest healers in all of Asgard, so I imagine that the stakes are already in her favour. Logically, she would have perished in her own realm, but not now. And little does she know, the Allmother sits patiently by her side, guarding her and wishing her a speedy recovery.”

Their gazes met and Frigga smiled at him. Not a grin or a smirk, but a genuine, happy smile. He couldn’t lie; seeing her pleased with him made him feel utterly elated.

“My son,” she murmured. “You are kinder than you give yourself credit for.”

Despite enjoying her affections, he let out a snort and spoke with a voice laced in sarcasm. “Kind? I am the Trickster God, I am not known for my kindness, nor my love of children.”

“What others think of you is irrelevant to me. I am your mother and I know that you have a kind heart, Loki, you just seldom show it.”

He bowed his head gently, feeling a warm sensation in his chest. Something that Frigga could always make him feel — acceptance, joy, a connection with someone else. He couldn’t possibly
count all the times that Thor and his friends rebuked and teased him for his choice of combat and seiðr practice when he was but a child. It was the warm embrace of his mother’s arms that had made him feel like he somewhat belonged. When Odin favoured Thor for his brute strength in combat, Frigga was there to encourage Loki’s illusions and teach him the ways of the ancient art of seiðr. And now having lived for over a thousand years knowing that he was not as valued as his brother and that he was not as kind and gentle as she claimed, he still went to her and she still made him feel loved.

He grinned at her. “Well, I know better than to argue with a strong-willed woman; it would be impossible to change your mind.”

“Nothing would ever change my mind.”

They descended into a comfortable silence as the healers worked away on the Midgardian, taking special care to look after her in the Allmother’s presence. Loki could feel his mother gently stroking her thumb against the back of his hand. Looking down he noticed that she was doing the same with the girl’s.

“While we do not know her name yet,” Frigga declared some time later. “We must refer to her somehow.”

This somewhat piqued his interest. “Did you have anything in mind?”

Peering at her lithe form on the table, healers probing gently at cuts and bruises, Frigga said. “Nothing of yet, but maybe I will be struck with inspiration before she wakes.”

Loki remained seated beside Frigga until the healers had done all they could and explained their progress in short but helpful detail. He stayed by her side when she squeezed the girl’s little hand in her own and assured her that she would not wake up alone in a foreign world. That she would be there to help her.

He remained by her side because he loved Frigga and because this little Midgardian had successfully latched on to his attentions, whether he liked it or not.
Awakening

Chapter Summary

Loki and Thor clash as brothers sometimes do, and there are urgent developments with the injured Midgardian.


A/N: Part of this chapter was inspired by Stjarnavetr by the very talented renlem. If you have not read that fic yet (though I would find that hard to believe!), get on it!

A full week passed since the Midgardian’s arrival, and a full week was how long Frigga had spent in her company. The girl was unconscious according to the healers, but stable and improving, which was happy news. Sometimes Loki visited to check up on his mother, but also to see if the mortal showed any signs of waking up. He couldn’t deny that while he wished he could sit down and quiz her relentlessly on all-things-Midgard, her presence sometimes made him uneasy. She was foreign and new and not what he was used to. He rarely encountered children on Asgard (mostly due to his distaste of them and their uncertainty of him), let alone ones from different realms. He asked little and said little about her when questioned by Thor.

“Perhaps the reason for the mortal’s slumber is that she wants to avoid the inevitable onslaught of questions from you once she awakens,” he teased him one day in the training yard.

Loki rolled his eyes from his rather comfortable spot on the benches. He kept his gaze on the book in his hands, carefully reading it. “If you truly think I’m that attached to a Midgardian I do not even know, then you are more dimwitted than I originally thought.”

He heard a groan from his brother, but kept his head down. “Brother, I only jest and your retort is always so harsh.”

“He’s a trickster,” Fandral said dryly as he held Sif off in light combat, steel-on-steel ringing out in the courtyard. “You should expect nothing less from him.”

“He jests,” Thor replied with amusement. “I have known my brother for a thousand years. I know he does not mean the things he says.”

Suppressing an eye-roll, Loki mumbled and he turned a page in his book. “You have such flawed faith in me, brother. It is somewhat sickening.”

“Lokiiiiti,” Thor drowned out. “Come and spar with me. It has been so long since we have been in combat against one another.”

“Ask one of your other pets to spar with you.”

There was a tinge of impatience in Thor’s voice, but his tone remained jovial. “Hogun and Volstagg are away attending to business in Vanaheim and Fandral currently holds all of Lady Sif’s attention.”
“Oh, now I find it very hard to believe that Fandral holds all of her attention,” Loki muttered under his breath, smirking to himself as he read a particular paragraph on mastering shapeshifting. He could feel the most dangerous female warrior in all of Asgard staring daggers at him. She never really got over the whole hair-cutting incident, so he was used to these venomous glares.

Thor’s voice grabbed his attention once more, obviously missing the underlying meaning in Loki’s words. “You have had your head buried in that book since we arrived hours ago. Come, it will be fun. Spar with me and I do not mind if you use your magic this time.”

Now Loki dragged his eyes up to meet his brother, sending him a sarcastic look. “Really? Because I do believe the last time the use of magic aided me in besting you, you called me cheat.”

At his comment, Thor’s face fell somewhat, but still he persisted. “And this time, I will try not to. Come.”

While he would have rather stay where he was in his comfortable spot, Loki slowly got to his feet with a heavy sigh and set his book down on the bench. While he would never let Thor know, there was a small part of him that yearned to best him again and to relive the happiness that came with such a small victory. “I suppose I can get back to my learning later if it means I can embarrass you now.”

“That is the spirit!” Thor cheered, raising Mjölnir above his head in delight.

Loki sauntered casually onto the courtyard, pulling a dagger from a sheath on his side. He twirled it between his long digits. Around him, the Einherjar noticed his approach and some paused in their actions, eying the two brothers as they stood opposite each other.

“Perhaps it would be best for us to use the wooden swords,” Thor reasoned, eying the dagger in Loki’s hand.

“And maybe no using duplicates of yourself either.”

“How thrilling,” he replied dryly and returned his blade to its sheath.

Fandral handed two wooden swords to Thor, the latter tossing one across to Loki. Catching it easily, the younger Son of Odin gripped it tightly in his hands and locked his gaze on to Thor. As they began to circle each other in the yard, Thor’s demeanour clearly showed how eager he was for a fight. It was rare that Loki ever agreed to training with his older brother. Fighting was to Thor what seiðr was to Loki; while it had been bred into the former, the latter remained indifferent, planting his feet carefully on the stone ground and waiting for an opportunity.

Loki feigned strikes every now and then, hoping to tempt Thor into attacking.

Thor was the first to lunge. Loki dodged it comfortably. They began circling again, a small smirk former on the eldest brother’s lips. Again, he struck and again Loki avoided it with relative ease. As Thor swung a third time, Loki saw his chance to begin a counter attack with his own swift movements.

The brothers continued on that way, both gods avoiding and holding off oncoming strikes. Every now and then, the swords got closer and closer to their targets, sometimes skimming a limb or shoulder. The longer this went on, the more their bodies strained to continue. Loki could feel his arms beginning to protest and as sweat covered his forehead.

A particularly hefty swing from Thor that connected with his sword left his arm shaking, the shockwaves ripping through the wood and into his hand. The youngest Odinson was disciplined in his fighting techniques, having been taught by Frigga to be swift and concise when the time called for it. As she explained to him when he was but a child, he was built much lither than Thor, and thus magic and agility would be his best approach.
Soon, the Einherjar went back to taking no notice of the sparring princes and returned to their own training. The ones who remained transfixed were Sif and Fandral. These occasions were few and far between, but usually ended in a verbal argument that was even more entertaining than the fighting.

Loki was the first to land a successful blow, countering one of Thor’s movements. The smack as wood met bone made him grin and drew one or two heads in their direction. He struck Thor painfully on his leg — more specifically, on the shin — causing the God of Thunder to grunt and momentarily drop down on one knee. The God of Mischief stood there in delight, like a snake toying with its prey.

“Brother, this is a marvellous sight to behold,” Loki snickered. “Bested by a trickster.”

Loki’s words had a visible effect on Thor’s whole demeanour, for he gritted his teeth and hoisted himself got back to his feet. “I am not bested yet.”

“‘Yet’ being the key word in that sentence,” Loki said and swung again. “A few more moments is all I need.”

This time, Thor was ready. He deflected Loki’s sword with brute force and very nearly connected with the Trickster’s chest. It was when Loki had failed to dodge his next lunge that wood met his shoulder. While it was not a vicious blow, it was enough to cause him a small pang of pain and a slight bruising to his ego.

“You were saying, brother?” Thor gloated, grinning widely.

With a growl, Loki recomposed himself. “Do shut up. Your strike was weak. Why don’t you hit me properly?”

With careful precision, he landed a few softer hits on the Thunderer’s back and arms, goading him into leaving himself vulnerable. At one point, he landed his sword on Thor’s fingers with a crack and the weapon nearly fell from his hand.

“Hey!” Thor grunted, his cheeks red. “That fucking hurt!”

“Oh, apologies,” Loki retorted. “I thought the point of this match was to, you know, strike each other?”

“That was a cheap shot and you know it.”

Feeling his irritation taking hold, the God of Mischief turned to his seiðr for assistance. He felt the familiar sensation of its power seep through his fingers and build in the palm of his hand that gripped the sword. He waited for his brother to make a move. Inciting anger with words usually did the trick.

Eventually, Thor lunged, taking the bait.

Loki crouched low to avoid the swinging sword and, timing his counter perfectly, struck Thor in the chest. The combined force of the seiðr and Loki’s own strength sent his sibling flying backwards.

Sif and Fandral stared in disbelief. Loki relished to seeing his brute of a brother on the ground after a rough landing.

“Loki!” Thor roared, trying to hastily get up again as his rage boiled over. “Loki, you fucking little—!”
“I beg your pardon?” Loki replied, feigning innocence.

“Do you think I am a fool?” Having regained his footing with Fandral’s quick assistance, he walked straight up to his younger brother. “You used seiðr! Did you think that I would not notice? First, there was the cheap shot on my fingers, and now this! You are playing dirty.”

“Wait, wait,” Lady Sif insisted, placing her hand on Thor’s chest before the sparring practice turned into an all out brawl. “Calm yourself, Thor.”

Unfazed by his sibling’s outburst, Loki rolled his eyes. “Thor, I do believe that you permitted me to use my seiðr.” He paused, awaiting a reply, but presumably Thor had forgotten his earlier admission in his current state of embarrassment. Loki continued on when he didn’t receive an answer. “You must always be prepared for whatever may happen in battle, as Father would say. Surely you should be able to handle it. I think you are just vexed that I bested you.”

Thor spluttered, fumbling over his words in his rage. “Y-you… I — you cannot—!”

“I do enjoy seeing you so lost for words.”

“Well, if you insist on sparring in such a manner, then why not make it a fair fight?” Thor growled and immediately called Mjölnir to his hand.

Realising this was escalating at a rapid pace, Fandral was quick to grab his arm. “Now now, there is no need for this!”

Loki’s joy at the sight of his brother so dreadfully irritated was cut short with the approach of one of the Einherjar who addressed them both.

“The King and Queen request your presence is the healers wing,” he explained, expression blank.

“Did they say why?” Thor asked shortly, glaring at him.

“No, your Highness. They ask that you would both come immediately.”

“Very well.” He threw his sword to the ground with a clatter and turned to Loki. “We will continue this later.”

“I wait with baited breath,” he said, setting his weapon down.

The pair made their way to the healers wing in the company of the guard who left them once they reached their destination. They entered swiftly, Thor barging in first as Loki rolled his eyes. Knowing immediately where their parents were residing, the brothers walked to a small room away from where most patients were kept. This little room had become the home of the unconscious Midgardian girl. It had been Frigga’s request and one that the healers didn’t argue with; a peaceful environment would apparently be beneficial as her battered body slowly healed.

Upon entering, they were greeted with the sight of Odin and Frigga standing by the girl’s bedside, speaking in hushed tones. They turned around upon Thor and Loki’s arrival.

“My sons,” Odin acknowledged them with a small smile. “How are you both?”

Their father had always been severe, and he had usually acted as such. For as long as Loki could remember, Odin was a serious man, but he imagined that such characteristics came with being the Allfather. That being said, he did show a caring side to his sons, but always seemed to favour Thor. Loki never felt unloved by his father, but he showed his praise enthusiastically when Thor
won a sparring match or showed his physical strength. Loki didn’t exactly excel in these things; his fights were usually won by careful planning, cunning and the aid of his seiðr. What he didn’t have in physical power he made up for with intelligence and his silver tongue. While Odin didn’t dismiss these qualities, he didn’t exactly rejoice in them. When he sang Loki’s praises, they were usually more reserved. Because of this, Loki craved his father’s acceptance and felt rejected when Thor was commended.

It was Frigga who saw Loki’s passion for seiðr and encouraged his practice. She was the one who first taught him and continued to do so even when official tutors were employed for the task. She made a habit of bringing him books from the library when Thor went on adventures with his friends and left Loki behind.

“We are well, Father,” Thor answered for them both. “How fairs the Midgardian?”

“She is improving everyday, it would seem. Your mother has informed me that the healers have taken measures to hopefully make her recovery a hastier one.”

Loki peered at the sleeping child over his brother’s shoulder. The bruises and wounds on her hands and face had finally healed, but the cuts on her upper lip and right brow had scarred as he predicted, the skin tender and red. She lay on the bed facing upwards and had been changed into a light nightgown by the healers so that her Midgardian clothing could be washed. They were to be disposed of originally, but Frigga asked for them to be kept, figuring that the girl would appreciate a bit of familiarity in such a foreign world.

“Do they know when she will awaken?” Loki asked, trying to appear aloof with his hands held behind his back.

“Sooner rather than later,” Frigga said.

Thor barked. “Loki cannot wait to hound the girl for information on her home-world.”

He turned to his brother with a grin plastered on his face and Loki threw him a dirty look. “I am sure that even a child — a Midgardian, at that — would be better than you at holding a conversation that required some amount of intelligence.”

Thor’s smile deflated and he was immediate in his retaliation. He turned swiftly on his feet and addressed his sibling. “Brother, how dare—”

“Thor,” Odin’s voice sounded, stern and commanding. The god froze mid-step. “It would be wise to refrain from causing a scene in such a place. Control yourself and know that his words are only jests.” He walked towards his eldest child and placed his hand on his shoulder. “Come, I called you here so that we could discuss our hunting trip planned for next week. We will speak more in the gardens.”

Loki watched his father and brother begin to walk from the room, feeling slightly disheartened. He called out before he thought better of it. “Father, do you not require my presence also? Am I not to attend the trip?”

Loki never even liked these hunting trips and had he been also been asked to come and discuss it in their company, he probably would have rejected the invitation. But seeing them leave without considering him was a painful experience that was all too familiar with him.

Odin paused in the doorway and turned to look at him. “Of course you are to attend, but your mother has asked for you to remain here with her. She requires your assistance.”

With that, the two men turned and walked from the room. Loki faced his mother curiously,
looking between her and the girl. “What do you ask of me, mother?”

“I am needed in Valaskjalf,” Frigga explained. “We have visitors from Alfheim and it is I who must address them. While I know that it is my duty to address the Light Elves, I do not wish to leave the girl alone in case she awakens.”

Loki sighed, feeling a tingle of nervousness ascend his spine. “So, you wish for me to remain here with the mortal and babysit?”

“I know that it is not as entertaining as discussing hunting with Odin, but I would be very thankful for your assistance.”

He looked at the child uncertainly and immediately disliked the idea of being alone with her. “Why not ask Thor?”

She smiled softly and stood before him, placing an affectionate hand on his cheek. “Loki, as much as I adore your brother, I think we both know that his booming voice and enthusiasm would make her jump out of her own skin.”

The Trickster grumbled at this and placed his hand on hers. He reluctantly said with a heavy sigh. “Go address your elves. I will remain at her bedside.”

“Thank you. Call the healers if needs be.” She placed a quick kiss on his cheek and glanced once more at the child she had clearly grown attached to before hurrying from the room.

Loki was left standing alone.

Well, he thought to himself. I am not entirely alone.

The silence that descended on the room seemed to say otherwise. For a moment, the god was left perplexed as to what he should do. His experience with children was limited, let alone unconscious ones…

Exhaling slowly, he sat himself down in the seat that Frigga usually occupied next to the bed. At first he grumbled and put his feet up on the bed, leaning back to try and get comfortable. He shut his eyes and spoke aloud. “Here I am, stuck inside and looking after a half-dead mortal. Splendid.”

He stayed there for a while before he opened one eye to see her unmoved form still in the bed. He placed his feet back on the floor and leaning forward with his elbows resting on his knees and his hands clasped in front of him, he gazed at the girl. Her chest slowly rose and fell back down, her sleeping face blank and unaware. His eyes fell on the IV connected to her right arm.

“What company you are. I will be honest though, even in an unconscious state, you are somewhat less irritating that Thor.”

He watched her for a long moment, his thoughts wandering from when she would wake up to when Frigga would come back and he could leave and retreat to his chambers. He wanted to be as far away from this room as possible if she was supposed to come to soon. He would be horrific in such a situation — what would he even do? Comfort her? The thought was daft to him. He wouldn’t even know how to go about comforting a traumatised child. He hoped that she would never wake up in his presence — he didn’t want the hassle or the hindrance. He turned his gaze from her and instead focused on his hands.

Hours passed, longer than Loki had been hoping for. Every now and then, Eir or one of the other healers walked through the room, but he was mostly left on his own. It was incredibly boring and he resorted to practicing some seiðr to stay occupied. He focused his gaze on his hands, holding
them half an arms length apart. With his brow furrowed in concentration, he tried to pass long wisps of glowing light from one hand to the other, like slowly-moving stars. They varied in colours from light reds to deep blues and the longer he did it for, the stronger the light emitting from them grew. Eventually, the room was beautifully coloured, reflections of rainbows bouncing gently off the walls. As the colours slowly morphed into each other, he drew his gaze away from his hands and to the light show around him. The little dots of light now began to glide around the room at his command. Loki watched them, soothed by what was happening before him and proud of the fact that *he* had created such a beautiful thing to see.

A small scream from his side broke his concentration.

His head darted to his left and he locked gazes with the bluest eyes he had ever seen.

The trance broken, the calming lights immediately fizzled and went out.

*This was how I first met Loki.*

The little Midgardian held his gaze, her mouth dropped open in either amazement or horror; he couldn’t quite tell. Neither of them said a word. Loki had no idea how he should even respond to her. The only sound in the room was that of the girl’s erratic and hazy breaths. They stared at each other, both waiting for the other to make the first move. Somehow, Loki felt a little powerless in such an unfamiliar situation.

*What kind of a god cowers before a Midgardian babe?* he asked himself, still unmoving.

It seemed that the girl was the braver of the two, for she moved first. He didn’t get a chance to speak before she sat up and drew her knees to her chest. She crawled backwards to the furthest corner from him on the bed, her eyes darting erratically around the room. She shook violently, noticing the unusual tube in her arm. Loki’s eyes grew wide when she made to grab it and he stood up and clasped his hand as gently as possible around her wrist.

“Do not touch that,” he said, more gruffly than he had intended.

When her terrified blue eyes landed on his face, he knew that he had made a mistake. He felt his expression grow softer, but the damage had already been done as soon as he had grabbed her.

He quickly tried to remedy the situation. “Hush, child—”

An ear-piercing scream tore from the girl’s throat. The unexpected noise made Loki flinch and immediately release her once he was sure she would not touch the IV. Tears rolled down her red cheeks and he body shuddered as uncontrollable sobs raked through her. Both annoyed and worried by the girl’s state, he spoke again in the most patient tone he could muster.

“You must be quiet, little one. Stop it!”

His words only seemed to distress her further, for her cries rose and her tears flowed freely. So much for his silver tongue.

“*Mammy!*” she cried out and tried to get away from him. “*Mammy! Mammy!*”

She screamed the strange word over and over and it didn’t take long for Loki to realise that he could not calm her alone. While he was sure that her cries had already drawn attention, he needed this to end faster.

“*Eir!*” he called, aiming his voice for the door the healer had previously disappeared behind. “*Come quick, Eir! Help!*”
It wasn’t long before Eir burst into the room followed by three other healers. Loki couldn’t step into the corner of the room fast enough when they came to the child’s bedside. Eir was the one who took the reins and tried to hush the girl’s cries, which was not an easy task.

“You are safe here, child,” she said gently, trying to usher her away from the corner of the bed. “No one can hurt you any longer. We are here to help you.”

Loki watched from the shadows as they eventually managed to calm her by distracting her and explaining that she was in a place called Asgard. It seemed to work and now she no longer screamed but just sobbed with little whimpering and a wobbly bottom lip. Her eyes often roamed to Loki and he could see the mix of confusion and fear in them when she did. He said nothing, not knowing what to say. The girl never said anymore either.

Eir noticed how she continuously looked at him as if he was a threat and decided to ease the tension. “You are truly special to receive such a royal welcome. That is a prince; Prince Loki. His mother, Queen Frigga, is the one who brought you here.”

He clenched his jaw and looked at the stone ground beneath him, feeling the girl’s eyes on him again. When Eir began to tell the girl all about the royal family of Asgard and helped her to lie back down, Loki had had enough.

“I must go inform my mother of this,” he said and left the room before he got a reply. His long legs brought him to the safety of the palace halls as quick as they could. He slumped against a wall when he was alone and took in a deep breath, not realising he had even needed it. His heart was thumping in his chest. After getting his breath back, he made for the throne room to find Frigga.

Having just finished seeing the Light Elves off when he found her, Loki quickly brought her back to the healers wing.

“The little one, she is awake,” he explained and that was all that needed to be said.

She had seemed shocked but happy by his news and followed him eagerly. Having reached their destination, he was relieved to hear only quiet murmurs coming from the child’s room. When they entered, the girl looked up at them with a start, focusing on Frigga.

With a gentle smile, the Queen approached her bedside and took a seat. While the child flinched slightly, it was nothing like how she had been before. Loki noticed her red eyes, tear-stained cheeks and trembling lip but kept his distance.

A hush fell upon the room as Queen and Midgardian looked at each other.

“Greetings, little one,” Frigga said, her tone calm and gentle. The warmthness of her voice and the air about her seemed to ease the girl, who was no longer trembling. “I am Frigga. You are safe here now, I will ensure it. You have no need to fear any longer.”

At that moment, the little girl’s eyes briefly flicked in Loki’s direction, but he noticed that when she looked back at his mother, there seemed to be an unspoken trust between them. The girl appeared almost comfortable in her presence and he knew that Frigga had meant what she said.

No harm would come to her and Frigga would make sure of it.
We see the aftermath of the Midgardian's awakening, and she and Loki find that they have some small things in common.

Thanks to everyone who left kudos, comments, or even just read the first two chapters! I'm so glad there are people out there enjoying the story. We could probably all do with some happiness after the stress ball formally known as Infinity War...

Hope y'all enjoy chapter 3!

Playlist (https://spoti.fi/2FpATiF): “Falling” (Loki’s Theme) — Angus MacRae, “Team” — Lorde

The rousing of the Midgardian child seemed to be news that was rejoiced in the palace, even by Thor and Odin. While in the first week after she woke up she shied away from anyone who wasn’t Frigga or the healers, she no longer burst into tears at the sight of others. She was very wary of Loki still, which he found almost insulting. What made it worse was that although she had been terrified of Thor at first — mostly due to his thundering voice and huge frame — she had eventually relaxed a tad around him after more time had passed.

But not Loki. She just stared and stared. Nothing more.

Her first meeting with Thor had very nearly been a disaster as he became too excited at the sight of her up and about. Not realising that he was so damn loud and that he towered over her almost caused her to leap into Frigga’s arms. It was a number of days before she didn’t mind him being in her room.

Nearly two weeks passed, but still she would not speak. It didn’t matter who spoke to her or what they said. Questions were answered with a nod or shake of the head, something that frustrated Loki to no end. It seemed that his plans to ask about Midgard had been dashed entirely. He tried to avoid the healers wing at all costs and only went there when Frigga requested his presence. It was usually just to keep her company and an attempt on his mother’s part to help get the girl used to him. While she was still healing, she was able to move about the room after another few days and eat small portions of food and drink.

But there was still one question that received no answer from the girl. You would only get a blank stare if you asked.

“What is your name?”

An answer was never given, no matter who asked or what the circumstances were. It seemed to be information that the girl did not want to share. It was because of this that Loki’s unintentional
nickname took official effect. Having nothing else to call her, she was referred to as ‘little one’, a fitting name in his opinion. She was painfully shy and anxious in company and jumped at loud noises. She also kept wearing the dark blue jumper that she had originally arrived in. Eventually, two weeks from the day she had woken up, people stopped asking for her name.

As time progressed, Frigga began to walk her around the palace, trying to get her used to the strange new world this girl had found herself in. She was sometimes accompanied by Frigga’s handmaidens, who were just as gentle with the girl as the Queen was. When they walked through the great halls, the child kept a firm grip on the hand that Frigga offered her. She seemed to take to women faster than to men. She cowered at the sight of the Einherjar and the other workers and servants in the palace, but eventually warmed up to Thor and Odin and would accept their company on said walks. That being said, the girl was hesitant to leave the palace itself and Frigga had yet to coax her out into the gardens.

Loki normally avoided the pair when they went on their quiet strolls, mostly because he did not know how to be around the girl. In the back of his head, he was still convinced that she hated the sight of him. His brother wouldn’t let him live it down.

“You avoid her as though she is rampant with disease, Loki!” Thor would say to him.

To these comments, Loki usually just responded with a sigh.

* * *

It was on a clear and calm morning a month after the girl awoke that Loki had been on his way to the library. He intended to find some books specifically on Midgard and its geography, but was confronted by Thor, who stood in the halls with the little girl at his side. He had a huge paw encasing her delicate hand.

“Brother!” he greeted them once he noticed his younger sibling’s arrival. He gently nudged his companion and pointed. “Look, little one. It appears that Loki has chosen to join us.”

The girl looked up at Loki, who towered over her. She brought her free hand that remained covered by the long sleeves of her jumper up to her mouth and stared at him. After a moment, she lowered her gaze to the floor.

Loki’s brow piqued at his brother’s word. “Greetings, Thor. I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but I have no such intention of joining you both where ever you are off to.”

“No need to be so harsh. Where were you going?”

“To the library.”

At these words, the child perked up slightly and looked up at Loki again. Both brothers noticed the change in her demeanour and Loki was somewhat surprised by her reaction.

“Has the mention of our library grabbed your attention, little one?” Thor asked happily, but the disbelief was evident in his tone.

She nodded and looked between them, silently begging.

“Would you like to see it?”
Another more enthusiastic nod.

Thor grinned at his brother. “It would seem that she shares some of your passions, however dull they are.”

“I had not taken her for a reader,” Loki replied, studying the girl carefully. “I did not even know she had the ability to read.”

“Perhaps that is because you refuse to spend any time with her.”

The Trickster rolled his eyes. “There is no point. As soon as she is well, father will demand that she is returned to Midgard.”

“You have already said that father will not go through with such a demand. I hope we get to keep her.” Thor smiled at the girl at his side with a look resembling a proud owner admiring their pure-bred dog.

“She is not your pet!” Loki snapped suddenly feeling distressed at the thought.

“I thought you did not care for her?”

“I don’t, but mother promised that she would keep her safe and well treated.”

Thor considered his words, clearly amused by his sudden protective nature. “So be it.” He turned back to the child. “Well, I had not planned on a detour as I am supposed to meet with Lady Sif and the Warriors Three in the dining hall, but it seems that she wishes to visit your favourite place in the palace.”

The three of them walked towards their destination, their pace slow to accommodate the Midgardian. Once inside, she seemed amazed by the sight before her. Loki watched as she gazed up at the massive bookshelves, clearly torn between running to grab whatever pieces of literature she could and staying by Thor’s side out of apprehension. Rays of sunlight swept in through the tall windows as they made their way around. Loki noticed that no one else was present.

“This is where you spend all your time?” Thor enquired, looking around him in surprise.

“Yes. It is one of the few peaceful places in this palace.” Loki approached a shelf and ran his fingers along the spine of a huge leather-bound book he had been reading the night before.

“But it is so… dusty.”

His eyes rolled against his own accord. “By the Norns! When was the last time you have even been in here, Thor?”

The God of Thunder barked. “I think it was when we were children and our Political History tutor was trying to explain the importance of such knowledge on all the Nine Realms.”

“Arvid never did manage to hold your attention,” Loki mumbled under his breath as he tried to remember where most of the Midgardian texts were kept.

“Don’t be afraid, little one,” he heard Thor say behind him. “Go and look around if you wish. It is only us in here.”

Throwing a quick glance back, he saw the girl gently release Thor’s hand after a hesitant expression and slowly moved away from his side. She gazed up at the bookshelves, marvelling at the sight before her. Loki eventually turned away and headed off in the direction of the
Midgardian books. He took his time, taking in the passaged around him and pausing every now and then when a book title or design grabbed his attention. He left his brother and the girl to their own devices, concerning himself only with the task ahead of him.

He found the Midgardian texts easily enough. They were located at the end of an aisle in the corner of the library, one that was usually empty and untouched by others in the palace. Loki rarely encountered others when he brushed up on his Midgardian history. Since he was so small that he had to climb up shelves to reach the highest books, a lot of his time had been spent here. It was usually quiet and only the people who came here were eager to learn and gain knowledge of the Nine Realms. Here, he could be himself and read alone, instead of being constantly interrupted for not sparring in the training yards. He stood still in the aisle for a moment, scanning the shelves specifically for books on the geography of earth. Pulling a particularly thick book from its spot on the shelf, he turned it over and gently wiped off the dust that covered it with his hand. He flicked through the pages quickly before approving of it. When he went to reach for another, he sensed the presence of another in the aisle with him. He turned and his green eyes met blue once more.

She stood at the other end of the aisle, obviously hesitant to approach with him staring back at her. He gazed at her for a moment, making sure to keep his expression neutral but not unwelcoming, before bringing his attention back to the books on the shelves. A full minute seemed to pass before he heard the gentle pitter-patter of her feet on the stone ground. She was getting closer ever so slowly. Loki could feel her eyes still on him. She reminded him of a cat; ever vigilant, watchful. She placed her feet carefully on the ground, every step making sure to keep the distance between them. Her body was tense, always worried about making a mistake or getting too close. The intention behind keeping his eyes on the books before him was to reduce any unnecessary nervousness she felt around him, not that he cared very much. He was so used to people being skittish around him when he was in a poor or mischievous mood. He was used to people treating him differently.

A tiny gasp sounded from behind him. It drew his attention away from a text on ‘the great Renaissance artists’ and back to the girl. She stood a bookshelf away, her neck craned up and her little mouth agape. Loki assumed that had spotted a title or interest. Her next movement confirmed his thoughts, for she hesitantly reached an arm up towards her target. The limb stretched but couldn’t reach. Even when she tried on the tips of her toes, the book still alluded her. She stared up at it and kept trying, despite the fact that she would obviously never be able to claim it.

*Mortals are so very pathetic at times,* Loki thought as he watched her fail at every attempt and while he would usually never pay heed to another in this library, he couldn’t stand to see the child struggle when the thought of getting a certain book consumed her so.

With a sigh, Loki put his books down on a nearby table and walked over to where she stood. His approach caused her to retreat a couple of feet very quickly, like she had been caught breaking a rule.

He looked blankly between the girl and the shelf he presumed her target resided. “Which one were you trying to reach?”

She stared back at him, her lips slightly parted, blue eyes glassy, but said nothing.

His tone was somewhat sarcastic. “Now would be a delightful time to start speaking, little one. I will get the book for you — it’s pathetic just watching you trying to reach it yourself.”

She didn’t answer him, but instead pointed up at the shelf that he was eye-level with. He looked between the books and her before pointing to one.

A shake of the head.
He moved one to the left.

Another shake.

To the left again.

She shook her head.

Another move to the left.

A nod. A very sure and quick nod.

Loki pulled the book from its hiding place. It was small, leather bound and brown, covered in even more dust than the ones he had been looking at. On the back of it imprinted into the leather was a small, red dragon. The book seemed dwarfed in his large hand and the gold-tinted title on the front cover caught his eye.

“The Hobbit,” he read aloud, looking it over. He had neither heard of it or read it before, but it seemed that the girl had. Loki would admit that he had ventured to the Midgardian fiction section of these shelves before him in the past, but had not known of this little book’s existence.

He looked up to find her watching him carefully, holding on to the sleeves of her jumper. She was waiting patiently, it seemed. Knowing that a question about the book wouldn’t receive an answer, he simply approached her cautiously and held it out to her. She regarded him carefully, reaching out a tentative little hand to grasp the book. Once he released it, she held it tightly against her chest. She looked down at it in awe, all of her attention now focused on the book.

This was how I found a little piece of home in such a faraway place. And he had helped me, whether he knew it or not.

“Why do you cower?” Loki asked suddenly, before he could stop himself. His outburst brought her gaze back to him, but he wasn’t answered. “You act as though I would strike you for desiring the book. Why do you cower from me? Tell me.”

The girl stared up at his towering form, resembling a tiny, delicate bird surrounded by the huge bookshelves. Her eyes were momentarily glassy and Loki feared that his exclamation would cause a fresh batch of tears from her. Fortunately, she never got the chance.

“Little one!” Thor’s voice boomed through the tranquility of the library. “Come! We have stayed long enough in this dull place. I must meet with the Warriors Three and Lady Sif.”

The loudness of his voice almost caused the Midgardian to jump out of her skin, but Loki noticed that her grip on the text remained so tight that her knuckles went white. With her head down, the girl turned and quietly made her way back to his brother, much to his annoyance. Loki grabbed his books once more and followed, keeping a distance between himself and the child. Thor stood by the doors, poking at a small book on a nearby desk with a look of very clear distaste. He seemed relieved when he looked up and saw their approach.

“She… she is taking a book?” he asked Loki, noticing said text in her scrawny arms.

“It would seem so,” the raven-haired prince replied and made his way to the door.

“She chose it herself?”

“Yes,” Loki snapped. He wasn’t eager in any way to discuss his exchange with the girl.
As the three of them walked out the doors and down the corridors of the palace, Loki could hear Thor speaking to the Midgardian behind him. “Do not waste all of your time with books, little one. Loki was foolish enough to do so before our mother began to train him in knife-combat. When you are bigger, I will start to train you myself. You will be able to say that the finest warrior in all the Nine Realms taught you to fight!”

*Leave it to Thor to spoil something that need not be fixed, Loki thought. She needs to be a bit more social, yes, but if she wishes to read then allow her to read, you infuriating imbecile!*

For a while, Loki couldn’t help but listen to Thor ramble on and on about battles he had been in and fights that he had won. The younger prince made sure that he was ahead of them the entire time they walked, but his frustrations were very well near boiling point. He was so close to turning and speaking his mind to Thor when distant voices caught his attention. Ahead of them, The Warriors Three and Sif rounded a corner and appeared in view.

Loki cursed under his breath and halted in his steps, causing his brother to almost barrel into his back.

“Thor!” Volstagg called upon seeing them. He noticed Loki eventually and greeted him briefly before turning his attention back to the God of Thunder. “We’ve been looking for you. Have you forgotten your promise to meet with us?”

“Apologies, my friends,” Thor chuckled, stepping ahead of Loki. “I was distracted but on my way to meet you all.”

“Is *that* what kept you?” Fandral asked, pointing to the girl that was behind the brothers, her hand still held in Thor’s.

Thor looked down at her fondly, oblivious to her discomfort. “Ah, yes. The little one wanted to explore the library so I chose to humour her.”

“You were in the library?” Sif asked, her eyebrow piqued with curiosity.

“It seems like the little one is taking after the Trickster,” Fandral laughed heartily.

“Now there shall be two mischief-makers strutting about Asgard,” Hogun sighed. “How delightful.”

“You speak of me as though I am not present,” Loki said through gritted teeth, biting back a snarl. He felt Thor place a hand on his shoulder. “Brother, they only jest. Come, we should make our way to the dining hall.”

Thor’s suggestion was immediately met with silence from both his friends and his brother. Volstagg was the first to speak.

“You do not intend to bring the child with you, do you?” the burly man asked.

“And why would I not?”

“Thor, you cannot bring the girl with us,” Sif said, trying to keep her tone even. “Have you forgotten that after our meal we will be making our way to the forests outside of Asgard? It is not safe to bring her there, especially after the ordeal she has been through.”

“Sif is right,” Fandral agreed, looking between the child and Thor. “Not only would she be in danger out there, but she would be a hindrance!”
"I did not intend to babysit a Midgardian this afternoon," Hogun grumbled.

Volstagg stroked his ginger beard thoughtfully. "Nor I. It’s not safe. Keeping her here in the safety of the palace would be best."

"I do not fear for her safety," Thor scoffed with a roll of his eyes. "She will be in the company of the finest warriors in all the Nine Realms! She will learn from the best."

Fandral let out a chuckle. "Judging by how tightly she is holding that book in her arms, it would seem that she shares more of the Trickster’s interests than ours. Perhaps she would benefit from spending time in his company instead."

Loki was seething. He had enough. They constantly spoke of him a though he wasn’t there. He was rarely ever addressed directly and if he was, it was usually an insult or a jest. His fists were clenched so tight around his books that his knuckles were white. "You intend to leave the girl behind with me while you all go gallivanting off into the forests like a bunch of imbeciles? I am not a babysitter."

From beside him, Thor spoke up again. "Well, they do make a fair point, Loki. It is about time you bonded with her. Midgardians are also forbidden from wandering around Asgard while unattended."

The God of Mischief whipped around to face his sibling. "You do not wish for us to bond! All you want to do is go off and pretend to be a powerful warrior with them! You feign interest in her safety when you all want for her to be away from you."

Loki could tell that his words had impacted his brother a little more than a common squabble, but he was beyond caring. He was fed up with being left behind and now he was being left with a child that wouldn’t even speak.

Thor’s gaze was levelled on him, his eyes calculating carefully. When he spoke, his tone was oddly even. "Perhaps you should take her back to your precious books. Tell mother that we will return tomorrow." Before he continued, he released the girl’s hand and ruffled her hair with his huge hand. She shrunk away slightly, but managed to look up at him for a few seconds. "Do not be intimidated by Loki, little one. His bark is far worse than his bite."

Without another word, Thor walked passed them both and his companions followed quickly after him. No goodbyes were offered from them. Instead, they began to laugh and talk loudly amongst themselves before they rounded the corner and left Loki and the girl with only each other’s company. He stared at the spot where they had disappeared and the Midgardian stayed silent; although he expected nothing less. Turning on his heel and staring down at her, he let out a sigh and addressed her.

"Perhaps spending less time with them will be beneficial," he explained, agitated. "You are less likely to be so moronic when they are not around to influence you."

The girl didn’t respond, but managed to gaze back at him as he spoke. Shoving the books under his arm, Loki strode in the opposite direction Thor had gone, leaving the girl on her own. He did not care what she did, he just wanted to be away from people and be in his own company. That was all he wished for that day, but it seemed like the Norns were against him.

Whenever Loki wanted to be on his own and read, he made his way to Frigga’s gardens. More specifically, he made his way to a section where no one but he ever seemed to tread. It was a small, secluded part on the outskirts of the gardens, surrounded by tall hedging and a large cork tree. Under its branches was where he usually sat, back perched against its trunk and a book in his
hands. As a child, he spent a lot of his time here when he had been left alone and had a fight with his brother, or when Odin scolded him. Under the ever-changing leaves of this tree and clematis that grew up its sturdy trunk, he read stories of adventures he could escape in and studied seiðr and literature so that he could improve the talents he had. Under the leaves of this tree, he grew up alone. Under the branches of this tree, he educated himself. And he loved it.

He settled himself on the grass against the tree trunk, flipping open the book specifically on Midgardian geography and delving into its pages. Eying a map that showed the layout of the planet to its entirety, he took note of the names of both countries and continents (some of which he already knew), the Norse ruins spelling it out plainly for him beside their French, Spanish, and English (the languages used by large populations of Midgard) names. His eyes swept from left to right, a single finger tracking his movements.

Canada, the United States of America, Mexico, Columbia, Peru, Brazil, Morocco, Mali, Algeria, Portugal, Spain, France, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Germany…

He had been sitting there for less than half an hour when he heard approaching footsteps, however gentle they were. His green eyes looked up expectantly at the track that led to his spot. He smirked, noticing the rustle in the hedges.

“It is not wise to try to sneak up on the God of Mischief, little one,” he called out, looking back down at his text. Once he had wet his finger on his tongue and turned a page, he spoke again. “Emerging from your hiding place would probably be the best decision, you know.”

… Pakistan, India, China, Thailand, North Korea, South Korea, Japan…

He received no verbal reply; he had not expected one considering he knew who his pursuer was. He resumed examining his maps as she slowly appeared from behind the hedge, her Midgardian book still in her arms. She stopped a fair distance away from him, but he didn’t look up. He had a funny feeling that she was following him to his hiding place. He had hoped that she would tire of him and go her own way, but that seemed to be wishful thinking. Both of them held their ground and neither spoke. The only things that sounded in the garden was the rustle of the leaves in the light breeze and the flick of the pages of Loki’s book.

“You are terrible company,” he commented dryly, glancing up as he finished reading the map.

She remained standing beside the hedge, watching him cautiously. If she was watching for a single, a sign that he approved of her being here, then he didn’t know what to say to her. She still stood some distance away and he remained in his seat.

“Do you intend to just stand there all day?” Loki asked, green eyes boring into her. “And still, you do not respond to my questions. I do not know why I am surprised. You have barely made a peep in the weeks you have spent here on Asgard. Perhaps a trickster god such as myself can rouse a peep from you.”

Loki didn’t need an explanation as to why he chose to do what happened next. His excuse was that he was the God of Mischief and Lies; he got enjoyment from playing pranks on others and seeing their reactions when he did so. With a small wave of his hand, two branches that rested on the ground a few feet from him roused to life. He felt the seiðr course through him and watched as the branches wriggled and morphed into two black snakes, no bigger than his forearm. They slithered towards the girl, their bodies moving like a meandering river through the grass. He smirked as she looked down and noticed their approach, jumping and clutching her book to her chest. What surprised Loki was that she didn’t cower in fear, but merely jumped from surprise. Once she had gathered herself, the girl gazed at the magical snakes in wonder as they made their way passed her and into the hedges for shelter. She craned her head down at the spot where they
disappeared and Loki’s smile fell.

“Well, that was a disappointment.”

His voice caught the girl’s attention and she looked at him with wide, shell-shocked eyes.

Finally finished with playing games, he let out a sigh and continued on. “Sit down and read your book if you so insist. Just… stay quiet and don’t disturb me anymore. I come here for some peace, not to look after a mortal child.”

He kept his head down, as if it was focused on the pages in his book, but his gaze came up to watch her and she slowly sat herself on the grass beside the hedge, her legs crossed. Her body was still tense — anyone could see it, but she seemed to be trying to relax. She stared at him for a moment before she set the book in her lap and opened it up. With his eyes still on her, he noticed that the Midgardian was trying to find a specific page before she began to read. She was halfway through the book before she found her desired point and finally started to read.

And so they sat together in silence, flicking through their books under the leaves of the cork tree until the sun gradually set beyond the horizon and the stars came out of hiding. Under the leaves of this tree, the tension between them gradually faded and drifted away with the evening’s breeze.
Bonds

Chapter Summary

The little one and Loki have an inconvenient encounter, and Odin displays his expert parenting skills.

Chapter Notes

It wouldn’t be a Loki-fic without some brotherly bonding and Odin being a bit of a jerk, now would it? They really don’t have the best family dynamic... As always, thanks for the continued reading!


Thor did indeed return the following day with his comrades as promised, carrying the carcass of a huge boar. Obviously their return was thus praised by Odin and the boar was taken away to be prepared for a feast that evening. No mention was made of them having left the Midgardian in Loki’s company, although the Trickster never expected for it to be brought up. Only Frigga expressed genuine concern in the girl.

Loki left the feast early that evening, not so much out of bitterness for his brother, but mostly for feelings of inadequacy in his company. As usual, Thor’s actions were met with the highest praise and he was ignored. While his actions were not often met with praise from his father, he still loved him and his brother dearly. They were his family after all. His mother protested against his exit, but he feigned a headache and took his leave quickly.

Wandering slowly through the corridors in the direction of his quarters, Loki continuously clenched and unclenched his fists, breathing heavily. His frustration had gotten the better of him and he needed relief. Ahead of him, he spotted one of the many servants in the palace cleaning the floor. Upon closer inspection, he noticed spilled wine and a forgotten goblet lying not too far away. He approached her slowly, the way you might approach a skittish deer. When she noticed his footfalls, she looked up from scrubbing the floor. He recognised her a bit; he had probably had her before. She would do.

He flashed a brilliant smile at her. “Hello, pet.”

It took all of ten minutes before he had her pinned to the wall with her legs wrapped around his waist. Her skirts were hiked up and she was mewling uncontrollably while he ravished her neck. His silver tongue rarely failed him when it came to relieving himself. While he wasn’t one for relationships or prolonged mistresses, he had needs that every so often required fulfilment. As to whether hearts were broken or feelings were hurt in the process was not his concern. She had asked him to cast an illusion over them — to hide her shame and embarrassment, he assumed — but he hushed her, insisting that everyone was in the banquet hall and that they would not be found.
Loki was in the process of unbuckling his trousers when the maid let out an abrupt squeak and squirmed in his arms. He clutched her so that she wouldn’t fall, but growled impatiently. “What is it?”

He hadn’t intended to sound so impatient, but his hardness was straining painfully against his leather pants. The woman — by the Norns, what was her name? — couldn’t speak, so she merely pointed over his right shoulder. Whipping his head around, Loki once again met a pair of blue eyes that were growing all too familiar with him.

The Midgardian, upon meeting his burning gaze, dove behind the large pillar her head had previously been peering around. He groaned through gritted teeth, the servant squirming in his arms.

“Hush. Do not move.”

“But, your Highness, she saw—”

“And she will not see anything more. Little one! Away with you! Go back to your chambers.”

What is she doing here? he thought. She should be back in the Healers’ Wing in her bed.

He knew that she had not moved after his outburst. He could still sense her presence close to him and it put him on edge. The last thing he wanted to concern himself with was a sickly Midgardian child when he found himself between a maid’s legs. And now she was getting restless and wriggled in his grip. No, he needed this. His frustrations needed to be let out or he would go insane.

The maid breathlessly began. “I think I should—”

“You will do nothing other than remain where you are and be silent,” Loki snapped. “I will handle this.” He looked over his shoulder, catching sight of her hands holding the edge of the pillar. “Little one! If you do not return to your chambers at once, by Valhalla, I will drag you back there myself. It would not be wise to anger the God of Mischief and Lies! Go!”

After a moment of tense silence, the next thing he heard in the hall was the pitter-patter of the child’s bare feet as she ran away from them. Letting out a sigh of a relief and frustration, the god returned to unbuckling his trousers and pulling them down enough so that he could free himself. Before the maid could say anything more about his advances, he continued on as if nothing had happened.

With his needs sated and the maid cleaning the floor once more, Loki made his way through the corridors back to his chambers to be alone. He relished in times like these when the only company he had was himself, the boisterous and noisy banquet behind him. How he truly loathed such occasions sometimes…

As he retraced his usual steps back to his chambers, the distant pitter-patter that had so rudely interrupted his evening before returned. Loki felt the hairs on the back of his neck stand up as he just about reached his door, halting in his tracks immediately. Like his own, the other footsteps ceased. He did not know whether to be somewhat impressed or greatly irritated.

“So,” he began, his voice unusually loud as it echoed of the walls of the deserted corridor. “You think you can sneak up on the God of Mischief, little one? I do not know whether you are foolishly brave or merely stupid, although I am leaning towards the latter.”
He turned slowly, easily spotting the girl as she stood not too far from him, hidden behind a bookcase. As his gaze levelled on her, she emerged from her hiding spot, a guilty look painted over her face.

Loki narrowed his eyes as he spoke. “I will not waste my time asking questions, as I know I will not get a response from you. Go back to your chambers before Odin or someone highly intoxicated stumbles upon you.”

When he turned and opened his door, he knew that she remained unmoved on her spot. She looked anxiously around her, probably fearful due to his harsh words. He looked at her again, the irritation in him well and truly rising now.

“Do you expect me to escort you back?” he snapped, the urge to be alone welling within him. “I have more important things to do than mind you.”

The Midgardian slowly lowered her gaze to her feet, her head hung in shame and her shoulders tense. It seemed that his words had struck a nerve; he could easily tell. But he dared to say that a slight twinge of guilt fluttered in his stomach, slowly growing as he noticed her body beginning to shake. His throat felt dry as he reminded himself of the state that his mother had found this child in. Left down an alley and beaten half to death, by someone obviously far stronger than she. How could he be so foolish? To speak in such a manner to a child who had been savagely attacked only to wake up in a foreign realm? He was the God of Lies, yes, and could be resoundingly harsh and cruel to others at times, but treating this child as such was something that even he could not do with a blank expression. She was annoying yes — even for a mortal — but he was pushing it.

Loki sighed heavily with his hands clenched at his sides. His voice, when he spoke, was a tad more considerate. “Do you know the way back to the healers’ wing?”

Keeping her head down, the girl shook it back and forth, almost ashamed of herself.

I am going to regret this…

“Well then, I will show you the way, if I must”

This warranted a look of uncertainty from her, her glassy eyes slowly finding his. He could easily see the mix of disbelief, trepidation, and relief cross her face, one after the other.

He pulled the door to his chambers closed and then walked off in the direction of his desired destination. An order called over his shoulder for her to stay close to him was not ignored, as soon the girl was walking by his side, being mindful to stay relatively close to his towering form.

The majority of their short journey back to the healers’ wing was most uneventful. The halls were still deserted considering the banquet would wade on into the early morning. There was one point, however, when a group of three or four Aesir men came bounding passed them, ale-filled tankards in hand and their voices booming out slurred songs. They stumbled and spilled their drinks as they went and Loki was momentarily shocked when the girl leapt behind his legs and gripped the leather flaps of his jacket in her little hands. He was surprised yes, but remained cool on the outside and simply kept walking with her close in tow.

Once they arrived, Loki was quick to leave her at her bed.

“Here,” he announced tiredly. “Here you are. Now go to sleep; Eir will unleash Hel upon you if she finds you wandering about.”

Without a word of argument (although it was highly unlikely he would receive one anyway), she quickly started to pull back her covers and climbed into bed.
Loki turned to leave before she had even settled on to the mattress, but quickly turned and pointed a finger at her in gentler warning than before. “Do not follow me without my knowledge again, little one.”

Without another word, he left and finally returned to his own bed for some much needed sleep.

* * *

“You cannot be serious, Thor?”

“Why of course I am, Loki! We have not gone on a bilgesnipe hunt in decades.”

“That is because the last time we ventured on to those plains in search of bilgesnipes, you nearly had your arm torn from your body, Sif was almost impaled through the chest, and I suffered from a concussion that left me unconscious for days.”

“That may be true, but think of the fun we would have. And the reaction when we return with its carcass on our backs!”

“By the Norns…”

Loki could not believe his ears; and he had heard quite a few ridiculous things over the years. Surely after their last encounter with those beasts, Thor would be less excited at the prospect of meeting them again.

A month had passed since the night of the feast and Thor was still walking tall after his successful hunt. Loki had returned to spending his time practicing seiðr and reading under the cork tree. And nearly all of those occasions, the little one had joined him and brought a book of her own. Frigga had stumbled upon them several times when looking for the girl and seemed pleased by their silent meetings. He had been on his way to Frigga’s gardens when Thor stopped him. It seemed that sufficient time had passed for the God of Thunder to have his ego stroked.

Loki’s hesitance didn’t seem to feign Thor in the slightest. “Do not tell me that you are afraid of them, brother?”

“I am less concerned about bilgesnipes as I am about Father’s reaction to such a dangerous venture.”

“Father also disapproves of the little one, your seiðr lessons, and the mistresses whose company we seek,” Thor scoffed, partially surprised. “For a God of Mischief, you seem to be rather uptight about this. I had thought that you would be more than willing to participate.”

Sometimes, Loki had to be honest with himself. While Thor’s company usually left him wanting to wring his neck with his bare hands, they were brothers and he did like spending time with him on days when he was less moronic than usual. He greatly preferred them over days when they fought.

“Come, Loki,” Thor’s voice said somewhat gently, breaking through his sibling’s thoughts. He put a large hand on the back of Loki’s neck so that he could face him. “You have my word that we shall look out for each other. When we work as a team, nothing can harm us.”
Loki sighed heavily, running a hand through his slick, black hair and looking between his brother and the floor of the dining hall. “Will your friends be joining us?”

Thor’s lips slowly morphed into a hopeful smile. “Lady Sif and the Warriors Three are more than happy to participate in the hunt. Is that a ‘yes’ from you?”

Loki’s gaze met Thor’s for what felt like a long time before he spoke. “I suppose it is, as long as neither of us die.”

The roar of delight that escaped Thor made a number of the servants in the dining hall start, and Loki was roughly tugged into an embrace before he had a chance to react. “Excellent! We will return as victorious brothers from our hunt with the carcass of a fearsome bilgesnipe in tow.”

Loki’s arms slowly wound around his brother’s broad shoulders, but he could not push away the anxiety that filled his gut. Call it intuition or whatever else, but somehow he knew that they would not be returning with the carcass of a bilgesnipe.

He prayed that there was some plan arranged by the warriors in taking down such a beast. Otherwise, some of their party may not return at all.

* * *

“Steady, steady!”

“I am fine, you fools! I can walk! It is but a scratch.”

“Thor, you are not fine! That beast very nearly gored you. We need to get you to Eir.”

“My limbs will heal in due time, Loki.”

“You are in a worse state than Volstagg, my man. Loki is right, the healing rooms will be your first stop.”

The band of warriors made their way back to the palace, nearing its front steps as they struggled to help Thor along. Loki and Sif supported him from each side while Fandral and Hogun did the same with Volstagg, whose shoulder had been dislocated and nearly torn from his body. Thor’s head lolled, his eyes squinting in pain. Blood ran down both his right arm and leg, which happened to get caught badly on the antlers of the bilgesnipe they were pursuing. Volstagg received a fierce kick to the shoulder that inevitably popped it right out of the socket. The unusually large beast was in musth and thus even more aggressive than expected. The only reason that Loki, Sif, Hogun, and Fandral remained mostly unscathed was for their agility and realisation that they could not best the animal.

“I could have taken it down,” Thor mumbled drowsily. “I just needed more time.”

“Any more time with that beast and you would have probably been torn in two!” Hogun exclaimed.

“You are just lucky that your wounds will heal,” Loki grunted as he carried his brother through the palace doors. “While I am relieved that you are still alive, Father will be positively livid with you.”
“I think we are all in for a chiding at the hands of the Allfather,” Sif agreed, her voice carrying an uncharacteristic tremble. Loki knew that she was worried for Thor, but the oaf always seemed to be too dumb to notice her affections.

Fandral adjusted his hold on Volstagg and pipped up. “I would rather avoid that, if at all possible. I fear he would set his ravens on us.”

Loki scoffed at his hopeful tone. “I am sure Heimdall has already informed him of our recklessness. Stupid, stupid! I said no good would come of this. We are lucky to be alive.”

“I hate to agree with you, but I think we are rather — as Midgardians would say — screwed.”

The group burst in through the doors, drawing the attention of several Einherjar that looked at them in surprise. They made for the healers wing, Loki gently slapping Thor’s cheek so that he wouldn’t pass out. He thought he would have relished in seeing the mighty Thor so feeble and hurt, but it only made him troubled. Although they moved as fast as their legs could carry them, guards left to inform the Allfather and Allmother of what they had seen. It was when the group arrived at their destination that Odin and Frigga burst in. When Loki handed Thor off to a number of healers, he turned to see the worried expression of his mother and the mix of rage and fear that his father donned. Behind her stood the little one.

“What in the name of Hel happened?” Odin boomed before any of them could get a word out.

Fandral and Hogun were now passing Volstagg on to more equipped healers, so it was left to Loki’s silver tongue to answer him. “Thor has arranged for us to hunt a bilgesnipe. We ventured out to the forests together, but stumbled across a beast in musth. It attacked us, and Thor and Volstagg were injured. We had to carry them back.”

Odin processed these words for only a moment. “Why would you be foolish enough to go after another bilgesnipe after what happened the last time?”

Loki faltered. “I—it was Thor. He said that he desired to bring its carcass back for a feast—”

“And you blindly followed him? Why did you not urge him to forget such stupid fantasies?”

“Father, I did try. I told him not to, but settled on going along to help him instead.”

“And you did a wonderful job of that, Loki,” Odin snapped harshly.

“Odin, don’t,” Frigga urged, rushing over to quickly check on her youngest son, eying his split lip. “My son, are you hurt?”

“No, no. I will be fine.”

With that confirmation, the Queen went to her eldest’s bedside and placed her hand on his head. She addressed Eir and was quickly reassured that Thor would be okay in due time. Loki let out a small sigh of relief. Odin remained on his spot, seemingly furious.

“I did not raise sons who would foolishly run into an unnecessary fight.” He turned to his youngest. “Nor did I raise them to allow the other to run into fights that they cannot possibly win.”

Loki was simply stunned. The Warriors Three and Sif seemed even more surprised. While he was somewhat used to this treatment, he had not expected such an outburst from his father. How was he to blame for this? He helped to bring Thor back alive.

“Father—”
“I do not wish to hear your excuses,” Odin said, halting him immediately. He no longer sounded furious, more fed up with what had occurred.

Frigga was quick to jump to her son’s defence. “This is not his fault.”

The Allfather ignored her, and gave Loki a stern look with his one good eye. “Away with you! Leave and be out of my sight before you displease me further.”

Loki could only stare at his father in disbelief before storming out of the chamber. Behind him, he heard Frigga call his name and plead with him to remain while Odin turned his attention to Sif and The Warriors Three, but he didn’t stay to hear the chiding they were to receive. He flew down the halls, ignoring the small pain of his split lip and the shaking in his knees. He breathed heavily, his nostrils flaring as he neared his favoured destination. He knew not what it was, but only that his body was making the choice of where he needed to go. Soon, he found himself once again in his mother’s garden. As he passed by the hedging, he tore a large protruding branch from the thick bush in his anger. Hurling it with all the fury he possessed in that moment, it shattered into pieces as it struck the trunk of the cork tree. The clematis were his next victim. He tore them from the trunk and grasped the long vine of flowers in his hand before they burst into flames conjured in his rage. He gritted his teeth as he watched them turn to ash between his fingers and fall to the ground. Suddenly, as he gazed upon the remains of the dead flowers, he felt an over-whelming sense of exhaustion before collapsing to his knees.

What do I have to do? Why is nothing I do good enough for him?

He lowered his head, but shed no tears, his body far too tired to complete such a menial task. His fingers gripped the grass and soil beneath him as his gut flipped over and over. His whole body shook beyond his control. Leaning back so that his rear rested on his upturned feet, he breathed deeply and focused on the ashes on the ground. With a sigh he cupped his hands together, a small pile of ashes held within his palms, and concentrated the last amount of energy he had on his seiðr. He felt so undeniably low and useless, something that even pained him to realise, but he tried hard to achieve something of note, however small it may be.

A single clematis flower began to bloom in his hands. Magic flowed from his palms, urging the flower to slowly grow as he cupped it protectively. He watched it intently, feeling some small sense of reassurance that he could make such a beautiful and delicate thing. Staring at his tiny purple creation, some of his sorrows eased their grip in his chest.

The moment was briefly broken when Loki sensed another in his company. Slowing looking up, he was met with the sight of the Midgardian watching him openly. What struck him was that her body no longer held its usual rigidness; she simply gazed at the flower in his hands before looking him in the eye. Her boldness surprised him momentarily and he grew even more confused when the little being slowly approached him and sat down opposite him on the grass, a mere few feet away. He didn’t utter a word, mostly because he knew not what to say, but he certainly never expected her to take the initiative.

“Ellie.”

Loki’s brows rose in disbelief. He saw her lips move, and yet it felt like a phantom. Her voice was so gentle, he wasn’t even sure if he heard her correctly. The confusion on his face seemed to spur her on.

After months of time spent on Asgard, and after recovering from her physical injuries, beneath the branches of their cork tree, the little one spoke for the second time.

“Ellie. My name is Ellie.”
Loki is pleasantly surprised after Ellie finally speaks, and an important decision is made about her future.

Hey, guys! Just wanted to pop in and again thank all of you for reading! I'm genuinely surprised that there are people who like my story haha, because I hadn't really intended to post it in the first place... But look where we are now! Anyway, if people have any comments or feedback with the story I would genuinely love to hear them. I'm eager to see what y'all think about it, be it positive or negative ;) Anyway, I hope you enjoy chapter 5!

Playlist (https://spoti.fi/2FpATiF): “Cherry Wine” - Hozier, “There is Hope Here” — A Dancing Beggar

For a while, Loki remained seated on the grass with the Midgardian — Ellie. His mind could barely process what had just occurred, but he was eager not to scare her away. He could not fathom why she had chosen to speak to him before any other, mostly his mother who had shown her such extraordinary kindness. He could not comprehend it, but he did not back away from her approach. He knew this was a great feat for her, sharing her name with such unfamiliar beings that were not the same as her. Unsure of what to do, he did the first thing that came to mind and held out the flower to her. Ellie gazed at it before slowly reaching out and picking it up with utmost care, as if she could somehow comprehend its fragility and — possibly — its importance to him. Unsure of what to say, he simply nodded and repeated her name.

“It took you long enough,” he said gruffly, but continued in a gentler tone after a moment. “But it is…nice to finally know your name.” The comment made the child nod in agreement.

They sat together in silence and while Loki would not even admit it to himself, it brought him some small sense of joy that she had chosen to share with him — above all others — her long-awaited name.

That evening, Loki returned to the palace with Ellie following close behind. She was still skittish of course, shying away from the towering guards and other unfamiliar men, but she stuck closer to Loki than she normally would. Without another thought, he brought her straight to the healers wing, knowing that his mother would most likely still be at Thor’s bedside.
As they arrived at the doors, Loki turned to face Ellie and spoke to her in the most gentle tone he could manage. “I know it is hard to speak with others after what happened to you, little one, but it is important to tell the Allmother whatever you can. Even if it is just your name and where you resided on Midgard.”

Ellie nodded slowly, her voice wavering as she replied. “Okay, I will try my best.”

He stood awkwardly for a moment, noting her discomfort, although he was unsure of how to banish such feelings. “My mother would never harm you. Remember that.”

Without further hesitation, he pushed open the doors and lead the child to where his mother and brother had been when he left. Sure enough, they were both still there, Thor now resting in the bed. Loki was relieved to see that Odin was no longer there — he imagined that it would be easier on Ellie if he wasn’t present. The mother and son had been speaking in hushed tones, but stopped upon the other pair’s arrival.

“Loki,” Frigga said with a smile. “I am glad that you have returned.”

“I had to come see you urgently,” he replied with a step closer to the bed.

Eying both of them with a air of surprise, she nodded. “So be it. What seems to be the matter?”

“There is no matter. If anything, I think you will be happy with what has occurred.”

Thor now took the opportunity to speak. “Brother, what is going on? I expected you to still be perturbed from the unnecessary hiding Father gave you.”

Loki gritted his teeth ever so slightly. “I was, but this is important.” He looked down at Ellie by his side, who cautiously looked back up at him. He hadn’t noticed that she was gripping the coattails of his armour in her little hand. With a nod, he tried his best to encourage her. “Go on, tell Mother what you told me.”

The silence in the room was palpable. No one dared utter a word. The looks on Frigga and Thor’s faces were enough to convey what they wanted to say aloud: she spoke to you? They waited with bated breath as Ellie looked down at the floor. Slowly, ever so slowly, her gaze rose and settled the Allmother. It felt like a lifetime and the struggle within Ellie was obvious to those who could comprehend it. Her lips parted slightly and, after a moment, a small and timid voice made itself heard.

“M-my name is Ellie,” she said carefully, nervously, as if fearing a lashing out.

The fact that she seemed to be constantly on edge continued to surprise Loki — it was as if she was expecting a slap for speaking to them — but he couldn’t help but smile at his mother expectantly. A relieved grin grew on the woman’s face.

“M-my dear girl,” she said, squatting on the floor in front of Ellie. “It was an absolute pleasure to meet you and to finally hear you, dear Ellie.”

Frigga gently took hold of the girl’s hand, who in turn smiled at the caring gesture.

“By the Norns!” Thor exclaimed, breaking the silence immediately. He tried to sit up as best as he could with his injuries, surprised plastered all over his face. “She speaks!”

“Of course she can speak, Thor,” Frigga replied.

“But she spoke!” he repeated in surprise and pointed to Loki. “To you!”
Loki lowered his head slightly. “I must admit, I had not expected it either, but she obviously knew who would be able to hold a riveting conversation.”

Suddenly, Thor burst out laughing in his bed, causing the girl to jump in surprise. “It seems that you are not as frightening as you think, brother! Little Ellie, I am glad to make your acquaintance. If I was not bed-ridden, I would give you a proper greeting.”

“What a relief for her,” Loki muttered under his breath, earning him a disapproving glance from his mother and a tiny smile from Ellie.

Frigga once again spoke to the child. “Ellie, my dear, would it be alright if I were to ask you some questions about yourself? I understand if you are not yet ready, but you have spent months in our company without explaining what happened to you. How does that sound?”

The Midgardian visibly hesitated, seemingly torn between trusting Frigga with such personal information and reliving a traumatic event, but opened her mouth and answered with as much confidence her little voice could muster. “That sounds okay.”

“Wonderful.” Frigga got to her feet and turned to Loki. “I will take her off your hands for the moment. Perhaps it would best for you to remain with your brother. The less people there are, the better it is for Ellie.”

He nodded with a slight look of displeasure. “While I would rather hear the story the little one has to tell, I suppose I must remain here if you so desire it.”

“It is also for her sake,” she explained and then placed a kiss on Loki’s cheek. “I do not know what you did to make her feel comfortable enough to tell you her name, but I commend you for it, Loki.”

Thor and Loki watched their mother leave with Ellie in tow, the latter son feeling an overwhelming sense of joy at her compliment. He actually smiled genuinely as they left, happy that he had managed to contribute to the girl's healing in a positive way. He did not think that it was possible, but he had helped and he was happy to have done so.

Thor watched his younger sibling carefully. “It has been a while since I have seen you grinning so stupidly.”

Snapping out of his trance, Loki turned to the God of Thunder. “What do you mean?”

Thor merely grinned wider. “You. You are smiling. Smiling beyond your normal ability. Although I can understand why. You must be relishing in the fact that the Midgardian chose to speak to you for the first time. After months of desperate coercion from myself and others, it is you who she tells her name. I’m surprised that your head has not exploded with the air inflating your ego.”

Loki shrugged and sat himself on the edge of Thor’s bed. “It matters not.”

“What makes you say that? It was quite impressive that you got the girl to speak.”

“I did not do anything. She merely chose to speak to me for whatever reason.”

Thor shrugged and sat up more in his bed. “Whatever your opinion on the matter, at least now we may find out how she came to be in the position in which Mother found her.”

“Perhaps we will.”

“And then she will be returned home.”
Loki looked up from his hands to meet his brother’s gaze. “What?”

“That was part of Father’s agreement,” he explained. “That once she was well enough to be returned home she would leave here. Her lack of talking delayed the inevitable, but now that she can explain where she belongs she will surely be sent back. Although, I will admit that I will miss her company.”

Loki frowned. “It does not seem in any way reasonable to return her to Midgard where she was nearly killed.”

Thor’s eyes narrowed slightly. “What of her family? I am sure they will be missing her.”

“Where were her family when she was left in an alleyway to die?” the Trickster snapped.

“While I agree with you on that, it is unfair to make assumptions that we know nothing about.”

Loki looked at his brother in surprise. “Since when have you become so knowledgeable on the subject? You sound like Mother.”

Thor let out a hearty laugh. “That is because Mother and I had the same discussion before you burst into the room with Ellie. I am merely repeating her thoughts on the subject.”

There was a long pause between them, in which Loki thought about Ellie being returned to Midgard.

“Loki,” Thor spoke up suddenly. “About what Father said to you earlier—”

“There is no need to discuss it.”

“Of course there is! You helped to bring me back here. None of it was your fault. I thank you for helping me.”

“It is fine, brother.” Loki said, giving him a faint smile. “I am just glad that you are well.”

“I will be soon,” he agreed. “But do not worry yourself over what Father said. I think he was just worried for me.”

“Of course he was,” Loki muttered in a bitter tone, not at all that Odin would worry and fuss over Thor so much. It was how things were, and how they would always be.

* * *

“Do you think she speaks the truth?”

“Why would she lie about such an accusation?”

“She is but a child, Frigga. Children lie frequently. Especially mortals.”

“They do not lie about such things, Odin. I cannot think of a single child who would lie about something like that. They would need a vivid imagination for such knowledge.”

“Then what do you suggest we do, my Queen?”
“We cannot possibly send her back there after what she has told us.”

“No, we cannot. You know my rules in relation to mortals on Asgard, but to send her back is a death sentence.”

“She will be safe here.”

“Ey, she would be. You say that she spoke to Loki?”

“She told him her name was Ellie, yes. Whether they have conversed further, he did not say. She admitted that we are the only two who know what happened to her.”

“Extraordinary…”

“What do you mean?”

“She must be fond of him.”

“I think he is also fond of her, even if he struggles to admit it.”

“Perhaps so. Well, what shall we do with the Midgardian then? I will leave the suggestions up to you.”

“You trust me with such a decision?”

“I know you care for the girl and while my rules on having mortals in this realm are strict, I am also against sending children to their death.”

“I have a proposal.”

“I am listening.”

* * *

The a few days passed, and one morning, Odin and Frigga sat together in the throne room, waiting for the arrival of their sons. It wasn’t long before the two princes appeared, Thor nursing his arm in a sling and walking with a lip. He had healed relatively quickly once Eir could get her hands on him, but would forever bear the scars of the bilgesnipe that nearly caused him to lose a limb. Loki remained calmly by his side with his arms folded behind his back. They made their way up the long walkway, passing the unmoving Einherjar.

“My sons,” Odin greeted them from where he sat.

The princes bowed their heads as they got to the steps before the throne. Thor was the first to speak. “Father, you wished to speak with us?”

“That I did. In regards to the mortal.”

“Ellie?” Loki piped up in surprise. He had not seen her since he left her in the capable hands of Frigga. She had been essentially been kept locked away in a private room in the healers’ wing. She was permitted no visitors, from what he had heard, but he had kept well away.

“Yes, Ellie. Your mother spoke to the mortal heretofore and learned some of the occurrences that
led to her discovery and condition. Upon these discoveries, we discussed together the best course of action to take and we have come to a decision. As of now, the girl will remain on Asgard and, in time, will take up a role as one of the Queens handmaidens."

“You mean to say that Ellie will be staying with us in Asgard?” Thor asked, smiling widely.

Odin’s face remained as neutral as ever. “Yes, my son. Here she shall remain.”

Loki looked on in surprise while he wore a mask not too different from his father’s. So, Ellie would be staying in Asgard? He could not ignore the small sense of relief that was building in his chest.

“My King,” he began calmly. “May I enquire as to what happened to Ellie for her to be found in such a state?”

There was only a brief moment of hesitation from Odin. “It is not my place to tell you, nor is it necessary to involve yourself in the affairs of mortals. You need not know.”

Holding back the urge to demand answers, Loki merely nodded and looked down at his feet.

“Where is she now?” Thor enquired, looking around the hall as if he expected her to appear from behind a pillar.

“In her new chambers amongst the handmaidens.”

“We should go and visit her, brother,” Thor suggested with delight and turned to his sibling. “To congratulate her on staying with us.”

“You cannot visit her as of yet,” Frigga cut in before Loki could get a word in edgeways.

“Pray tell, why not, mother? She is well again, is she not?”

“Physically, but mentally she still suffers. What she went through is not to be taken lightly. She needs time. You can visit her tomorrow, but allow her to settle into her new surroundings first.”

Odin continued when his wife had finished. “That, and princes should not associate with mortals. You are royalty and she is merely a handmaiden in training. Do not treat her like she is your youngest sibling.”

His comments seemed to catch Frigga off guard, who gave him a look of surprise but kept her lips sealed. When they were dismissed, Thor and Loki left the room together, the latter’s mind spinning with unanswered questions. What had happened to Ellie to cause such distress? He had seen her injuries; she should be dead if not for the Allmother. Who exactly had done such harm to her? What actually took place in that abandoned alleyway?

“It is all very strange,” Thor pondered aloud. “I was sure they would return her to Midgard.”

“As was I,” Loki agreed.

“Surely she has a family that miss her?”

“Perhaps she had no family to be returned to.”

At this, Thor looked dismayed and confused. The concept of having no family was far beyond them. Without any further discussion on Ellie, the brothers parted ways, not before Thor tried to convince Loki to come and spar with his friends. He declined and instead made his way to the
gardens, having stopped by his room to grab a book he had been reading. It wasn’t long before he sat down in his usual spot in the grass beneath his tree. Finding the last page he had read, he began again, lulled into a relaxing mood by the gentle breeze and song of the birds.

Little familiar footsteps were what broke his trance. He looked up and smirked. “Should you not be in your new chambers?”

On cue, Ellie appeared with a book in her hands — the same book she had been re-reading since her first trip to the library. Looking guiltily at him, she shrugged. “Yeah. But I want to read.”

“You snuck away?” Loki asked with mild amusement.

She nodded. “Are you goin’ to tell on me?”

He raised a brow and shook his head. “No, I shan’t.”

She threw him a hesitant look before she crept slowly to her spot by the hedge and sat down. There was a long moment of silence between them before she spoke again. “I like the ladies who help your mammy.”

There was that unusual word again — mammy — that she had called out all that time ago when she first awoke. “My what? What does that word mean? ‘Mammy’?”

She gazed up at him in surprise and Loki couldn’t help but feel like an imbecile for asking a child such a question. “Your mammy, the Queen.”

“Ah, my mother. I see. So the maids are good to you?”

She nodded and looked back down at her book. “Yeah.”

“Good.”

For some reason, this genuinely pleased the prince to hear. In all the time he had spent in silence with this Midgardian, he couldn’t imagine someone being purposely ill to her. He was convinced that she could not have possibly done something to warrant such a beating that nearly killed her. How anyone could bring harm to something so fragile was beyond him.
Loki and Thor band together to entertain an ever-improving Ellie, and more details are revealed about her past.

Chapter Notes

I really enjoyed writing this chapter - the levels of fluff are off the charts. It's probably too much but I couldn't help myself... Let me know what y'all think. Comments are always a delight to read so feel free to post any below if you're feeling it!


“Hi, Loki.”

The prince looked up from tending to his plants when he heard his name being called. The owner of the little voice did not surprise him. “Hello, little one.”

“What’re you doin’?” she enquired curiously after a moment, her hands behind her back as she peered over his shoulder.

“Taking care of these flowers,” he replied as he got to his feet and wiped his hands with a thick cloth. “Have you finished your training for the day?”

A week had gone by since the brothers were informed of Ellie’s situation. After the first day she snuck away from her chambers, Loki had to admit that her stunt amused him, but her urged her to always listen to Frigga because of her continued kindness and patience with regards the girl’s wellbeing. She adamantly agreed to do so and actively partook in all the training the handmaidens were giving her (or so his mother told him). She had not lost her shy and skittish nature, but Loki could see a change in her, however mild it was. She no longer seemed to be frightened of himself or Thor, for that matter. Odin was another story, but he found this understandable. That being said, her headaches and stomachaches persisted. She still urinated in her sleep occasionally and her body remained weedy and weak no matter how much she was encouraged to eat — it continued to be a struggle to gain weight. She still sat with him in the gardens and read in his company. On occasion she spoke, asking him questions about his ‘mammy’ and ‘daddy’ and ‘big brother’.

“Is Thor your big brother?”

“Yes, he is.”

“Do you play games together?”

“Not really. When we were children we played together more often.”
“Do you’s not play together ’cause you’s are grown ups now?”

“I suppose. I do not like his friends and they do not like me, so I avoid spending much time with them.”

“Do you like reading instead?”

“Yes. They would rather not spend time with me anyway.”

“But he’s your big brother! He takes care of you.”

“He does sometimes, little one.”

“Sometimes?”

A pause.

“Do you have siblings, Ellie?”

“Siblings?”

“That is a word for a brother or sister. Thor is my sibling. Do you have any?”

“Oh… No.”

“None?”

“I don’t have any.”

Loki did not push the issue, but he did not entirely believe the child either. There was something in the way she hung her head and avoided his gaze that only confirmed his suspicions.

Either way, Loki returned to his gardening that particular day and Ellie returned to the daisies that held her attention. He glanced at her a couple of times and observed how she plucked the daisies from the grass and began to lace them together. Pinching a hole in their stems with her nail, she strung them together in a long line, over and over, with complete concentration. While Loki got back on his knees and observed her every so often, Ellie never strayed from her work, if you could call it that. He returned to his plants and dug away at the soil, leaving small holes to house some of the newer flowers he had grown with Frigga. When she wasn’t secretly educating him in the ways of seiðr, she encouraged his participation in the various plants that grew in her gardens. He wasn’t complaining; at least here no one bothered him.

He looked up at the sound of approaching footfalls only to see Ellie standing next to him. Her arms were outstretched and in her hands she held a circlet of daisies, arranged and braided together over and over to give them strength and what he assumed was a visual aesthetic. The white and yellow flowers shone brightly in the sunny day and he studied them for a moment before meeting her gaze.

“Here,” she announced shyly. “I made you this.”

He raises a brow at her and placed the flower he held into the awaiting soil. “What is it?”

“A crown,” she stated rather simply, her blue eyes wide with expectation.

“A crown?” he asked, rather suspiciously.
“You’re a prince and princes sometimes wear crowns.”

He shook his head lightly. “I think you are mistaken, little one. In Asgard, crowns are usually reserved for kings.”

Ellie frowned and her arms lowered slightly. “But if you’re a prince, it means that someday you’ll be king, right?”

He stared at her in silence and took his time before responding. “Perhaps.”

“Then here, this can be a crown for a king instead!”

Her eyes shone with hope while her arms were shaking with fear of rejection. Having known the same feeling far too many times, Loki couldn’t help but think of when he tried to impress Odin with his seiðr as a child, only to be met with indignant responses and an order to stop his practices. Not wanting to see the look of defeat on her delicate face, he reached up to take the crown from her. Holding the intricate circlet in his hands, he gave it a once over.

“Do you like it?” she enquired and held her hands behind her back.

“Yes,” he answered with a nod. “It is a well-made crown. Where did you learn to make these?”

She shrugged and dug her foot into the grass. “My mammy showed me how.”

“I see.” He turned to set the crown down on the grass beside him until he caught a glimpse of her slightly hurt expression. Looking between her and his present, he sighed and set it on his head instead. He pretended to shift it until it sat comfortably and showed it off to her. “Well, how does it look?”

“You look like the King of the Garden,” was the reply that came with a small smile.

The fact that he had given her some small ounce of joy just by accepting her gift was enough to put a smile on his face as well. “Well now, the King of the Garden appreciates his new crown. It is a rather fine piece of art.”

Ellie giggled — she actually giggled — and clapped her little dirty hands together in delight. He had never seen her laugh before. A smile here and there was not so rare, but laughter? That was a new one. And he had been the one to rouse such an action from her.

The moment was effectively broken when a distant voice called out Ellie’s name. They both looked up in the direction it had come from, the Midgardian nearly jumping out of her own skin at the sound. It wasn’t long before Thor came thundering from around the corner, grinning widely at the sight of them.

“There you are, Ellie!” he boomed and approached with his signature jaunty walk. “Hello to you too, little brother.”

Loki barely inclined his head. “Thor.”

The God of Thunder ruffled Ellie’s hair with a big hand as he squinted at his sibling. “Why are there flowers on your head?”

Loki’s throat went dry at the realisation that he still wore his homemade crown. Before he was swift enough to remove it, Ellie spoke up.

“I made Loki a crown, Thor,” she explained and tugged on Thor’s hand, urging him to look at her
work of art. ‘‘Cause he’ll be a king and kings have crowns. Not like princes, who only have them sometimes. Do you like it? I made it with the daisies in the grass!’’

The eldest Odinson looked down at the girl with an amused expression. ‘‘It is a well-crafted crown. You should be proud. Perhaps someday I shall take you to the forge and show you how to make one out of real metal.’’

“But Loki likes flowers,” she murmured, bemused at his suggestion.

Thor laughed as he gave Loki another once over. ‘‘It is quite becoming, brother.’’

“Do shut up,” Loki snapped. ‘‘What do you want?’’

“Can I not walk through the gardens without an incentive?’’

Loki barely resisted the urge to roll his eyes. “You never walk in the gardens.”

“True, but I was looking for little Ellie here.”

“For me?” the girl asked and gazed up at him.

“Yes, of course!”

“Why?’’

“Well, I found myself rather bored with the Warriors Three away on tedious political duties, and thought that perhaps you would be up for a game?’’

Her eyes lit up suddenly and she gave him a happy nod. “I wanna play a game!”

Thor seemed elated at the prospect. “Wonderful! How about we play the Frost Giant game? Loki and I used to play that when we were as small as you.’’

“I don’t know that game. How do we play it?’’ Ellie asked, openly displaying her curiosity.

“Well, you can play the game with two or more people. One of them plays the part of the Frost Giant. His goal is to chase the other players around until he catches one of them, then the one who he catches becomes the Frost Giant. But there is one player who is called the Hero. He can fight the Frost Giant and save the other players if he wins. When we were children, Loki usually played the Frost Giant and I played the Hero, isn’t that right, brother?’’

Loki’s only response was a grunt at the memory of that stupid game.

“That sounds like Chasing,” Ellie said, whatever that meant. “But I haven’t played it with heroes and Frost Giants before. I’m too little to be a giant.”

“Fear not, little Midgardian!” Thor announced. “Due to my big stature, I will be happy to play the part of the Frost Giant, you will just have to run as fast as you can!’’

Releasing her hand and bearing his teeth in a playful manner, Thor crouched slightly and raised his large arms above his head. A growl came from his mouth. “A little Midgardian would be delicious for my dinner!’’

Ellie took off immediately, grinning at the God’s ridiculous display. Loki watched in wonderment as Thor followed her on stomping feet and called after her with the most laughable ‘threats’. The girl seemed to relish in the attention, for once enjoying his brother’s boisterous nature. Had he attempted this weeks go, it would not have been surprising to see the child burst into tears. They
bounded around the garden, leaping over flower beds and hiding behind the tall tree trunks. Although he did his damnedest to make sure it wasn’t noticeable, Loki had to admit to himself that it was pleasant to see her running around the gardens after such a harrowing time. It wasn’t so long ago that she was cooped up in the healers wing and unable to move from her bed.

“Loki! Loki, help!” Ellie called, running straight towards him. He jumped when she collided with his legs and hid behind them, effectively putting him between herself and Thor. “You have to play the hero and help me!”

“Ah, I’m not so sure that I want to play,” he muttered and looked at his brother in displeasure.

“But you have to!”

“Loki, don’t be such a spoilsport,” Thor said. “Come, play with us. You have to save her from the Frost Giant!”

And just like that, Thor was in character as the aggressor once more, heading straight for the pair of them. Loki was able to feel Ellie’s hands clutching at his leg as the antagonist got closer and closer. With a wry smile, Loki took a fighting stance and let his inhibitions slip for a brief moment.

“You think that you can defeat me, monster?” the Trickster declared, encouraged by the child behind him. “You will not lay a hand on her!”

“No simple Asgardian can stop me!” Thor retaliated and roared.

“Loki, here!” He looked down to his side to see Ellie holding a broken branch about three feet in length up to him. “Use the sword!”

“Thank you, little one,” he replied before he took the branch in hand and pointed it towards Thor, effectively stopping him in his tracks. “You have been causing havoc for far too long, creature. You will die by my hand!”

“I would like to see you try, Trickster!” was the response before the two brothers collided.

Loki couldn’t remember the last time he had played a game with his brother. Sparing was one thing (and still a rare occurrence) that usually ended in an argument, but right now they seemed to be fairing well. He could only assume that it was due to the presence of a third party, although that had never prevented them from arguing before. Perhaps it was because together they were providing a shy child with some entertainment. However rare it was for them to get on, it still happened on occasion.

After a brief and fake fight, Loki struck Thor on the shoulder with the branch and, with a subtle use of seiðr, had him trip and fall to the ground. The god landed with a grunt and Loki casually placed a foot on Thor’s chest. Ellie laughed at the sight of them and the younger Odinson relished in the moment briefly before moving away from his sibling and allowing him to get back on his feet.

“Was that really necessary, brother?” Thor asked as he placed a hand on his lower back and shifted uncomfortably.

“Of course it was,” Loki answered, grinning. “It was all to entertain Ellie, after all.”

Thor looked slightly displeased, but eventually lightened up when he saw the girl’s reaction. “That is the only time I will allow you to stand on me.”

“Oh, Thor, do refrain from being such a spoilsport.”
Ellie’s training in the ways of being a handmaiden were going well, from what Frigga told Loki. At the supper times, he enquired about her progress on occasion, which seemed to result in disapproving looks from Odin. Thor did the same when not rambling about war or escapades with Sif and the Warriors Three. It was a change of pace from the usual political jargon and war waffle that consumed most conversation over the dinner table, although the Allfather made a habit of cutting the conversation short each time the subject was breeched. The move resulted in a disapproving glance from Frigga but her lips remained sealed. On one occasion, Loki’s inquiry was met with Odin’s fist slamming down on to the surface of the table, rattling every piece of tableware in front of them. Every one of them started and others that had been eating in the dining hall threw wary glances in their direction.

“I will have no more questions asked about that mortal!” Odin spat, eerily low. “No more at this table or elsewhere, for that matter! You are princes and you will not waste your time following that child about. We have more important matters to attend to in this realm, and it is best that you both remember that.”

The rest of this dinner was eat in uneasy silence.

It was the following morning in Loki’s quarters during his seiðr training with Frigga when she brought up Ellie again.

“She still urinates in her sleep.”

Loki looked up from the paragraph he had been told to read about conjuring duplicates. “Really? Why?”

“She suffers from night terrors,” his mother explained calmly. “From time to time, she wakes up in floods of tears.”

“I bet the other handmaidens just love that. I thought she was too old for bedwetting.”

“Loki…” Her tone was very clear: a warning.

“What?”

“Now is not the time to be callous.”

“You know it is in my nature.”

“Nor is it the time for trivial excuses.”

“Trivial?” He smirked petulantly before looking back down at his book. “I think Father would agree with me. Why do you dote over that mortal?”

“Why do I dote? I wish to see her heal and live with some ounce of normality.”

“She will never have normality in Asgard,” he deadpanned. “She does not belong here. Why you even kept her here is beyond me.”

“She is a child who was left to die,” Frigga stated in an equally impassive manner. “Abandoned in
an alleyway and beaten nearly to death, and you wonder why I kept her here? Why I did not leave her there and move on? What would you have done, Loki?”

Now staring up at his mother, he faltered, feeling well and truly scolded for his harsh comments. He loved his mother — there was no denying that — and she loved him, but on occasion she did not hesitate from slapping him on the wrist when deserved. He could not answer honestly and she knew that.

“Father seems to think her to be of no importance.”

It wasn’t a snide remark and he made sure that it didn’t come across as one. He only wanted to understand the reasoning behind the situation.

Frigga sighed gently and took a seat next to him. “Your father is merely concerned for you and Thor. He fears that you will let the mortal distract you from your duties. Part of being a king is knowing when to grant mercy to those who deserve it.”

“Then I cannot see her again?” he asked quizzically. He would never admit it, but he had come to grow somewhat fond — no, used to — Ellie’s silent company in the gardens.

“You may see her,” she reassured him and held on to his hand. “I think that your company has helped her to heal, as well as Thor’s. It would be unwise to cut her off from what is healing her body and mind. She had requested another book to read yesterday and I promised to bring her to the library in the afternoon before my meeting with the messengers from Vanaheim. Why don’t you join us?”

“You run errands with her now?” he asked with a piqued but playful brow.

“When I can. And when she asks nicely, yes.”

He hesitated but nodded after a moment, resigning to the fact that he would like to come along.

“Alright, I will accompany you both.”

“Good. Now, have you finished the chapter yet?”

The familiar cheesier cat grin returned to his face. “It is so hard to read and speak with you at the same time.”

“Remind me to curse that silver tongue of yours later,” she jested and it actually made him chuckle aloud.

“That I shall.”

He spent the rest of his morning in his sleeping attire, practicing his duplicate seiðr with some success, the spell getting stronger and stronger each time. After breakfasting alone in his chambers, he only got dressed when it was time to go and accompany Frigga and Ellie to the library. He found them outside the handmaidens’ chambers, Ellie now adorned in the usual garb for her new position. She stood silently with her hand in Frigga’s, watching him as he arrived. Together, the three of them walked to the library, the Midgardian speaking to Frigga with surprising openness. In the months gone by, she had only gotten more and more comfortable with the Allmother. She rattled on innocently, telling her about her morning where she was taught how to properly prepare a table for an Asgardian feast. While she still loved the play and read books when she could, Ellie rarely complained about the work she had to do. Sometimes she pouted through orders, but never dismissed them. Loki could only assume that she was just happy to be far away from whatever hands had harmed her.
One habit that the little one acquired from the other handmaidens was odd for Loki to see.

“Hi, my Prince Loki,” Ellie greeted him with an awkward bow of the head.

“Little one,” he replied with narrowed green eyes before turning to his mother. “She is to acknowledge us as her superiors now?”

“Fen and Sevda told me that I have to call you and Thor, and your mammy and daddy by new names or I’ll get in trouble, my Prince Loki,” Ellie explained, before Frigga could get a word in edgeways. “I’ve to call your mammy ‘your Majesty’, and ‘Allmother’, and ‘my Queen’. And your daddy is the ‘Allfather’, my Prince Loki.”

Loki grimaced. “It is either ‘my Prince’ or ‘Prince Loki’. You are mixing the two together.”

Ellie frowned and lowered her head sadly. “Sorry, Prince Loki.”

“Do not fret, Ellie,” Frigga whispered, quick to stop her spirit from falling. “You are learning and doing quite well so far.”

In the library, Frigga brought the two of them straight to the Midgardian fiction section and let Ellie root through the shelves to find whatever caught her eye. Loki wandered back to the section on Midgardian history, aimlessly reading the titles on the dusty books’ spines.

“Considering brushing up on Midgard’s history?” Frigga asked from over his shoulder.

He shrugged. “It’s not like it would be worth toiling in. As far as I remember from Arvid’s lessons, they had a nasty habit of frequently killing each other.”

“They have a history of war, not unlike the other realms in Yggdrasil.”

“War over petty arguments and mortals with inferiority complexes.”

“Not all were so, Loki.”

“No, not all. But still quite a lot, if I remember correctly.”

“While there were unnecessary battles, some were greatly needed and resulted in fairer lives for many.”

“I will take your word for it. You have seen some of these wars, yes?”

“Most,” she replied simply and watched as Ellie pulled a book from its place on the shelf. “If I remember correctly, you were adamant about learning all about Midgard, and of what humans had to offer, when you were a child.”

“My Queen!” the girl exclaimed in excitement, her eyes glowing in delight before rushing to Frigga’s side. “I found it! I found it! Can I get this one? Please, please, please?”

Ellie held the blue and gold embossed book up to Frigga and Loki took the opportunity to glance at its title — *The Jungle Book*. On the cover, he saw big, lumbering animals that he recognised as those large Midgardian creatures — *elephants*? — with mortals atop their backs.

“Can I read it?” she asked again as Frigga gave the book a once over.

“It looks very exciting, little one,” she replied with a friendly smile. “Of course you may. We shall bring it to Tadaaki, the librarian, in a moment.”
They browsed through the shelves for a while longer and Loki casually followed as his mother brought the young girl to the section on Midgardian music.

“Do you enjoy music, Ellie?” she asked and pulled a book out from its place.

The little girl nodded carefully, curiosity blooming from her. “I love music, your Majesty.”

“Good. We have a book here and it contains a whole range of old traditional songs from your homeland. I thought it would please you to read them.”

“For me?” Her eyes grew big at the sight of the thick tome, massive in the clutches of her fingers.

“Yes. Come, let us read some of them.”

Frigga ushered them to one of the hearths — more particularly, Loki’s favoured chair during nightly trips to the library — and took Ellie on her knee. On the other, she placed the book and began to flick through the pages.

“What land is she from?” Loki asked, standing a small distance away from them hesitantly, watching the odd scene unfold before him.

“Ireland,” Frigga called back, not lifting her eyes from the pages of the book. “It is a small island within Europe, known for its verdant landscape, music, and dance. Do you know of it?”

“I do, but not much, other than the apparent alcoholism of the Irish.”

The Queen ignored the later half of his sentence. “Then come and sit with us. It will do you no good to stand over there on your own.”

Loki abided by his mother’s request and took a seat on one of the chairs beside them. He sat with one ankle resting on the knee of his other leg and his knuckles resting against his lips. He watched them without looking away for a long time as they flicked through many pages. Ellie’s eye were fixed on them as if they contained the same information as the legendary Infinity Stones. Some songs seemed to hold her attention more than others, but there was one in particular that seemed to grip her more than the rest. Her eyes blew wide again but her brow remained furrowed. Her hands held on to the edges of the book as tight as they could.

This was how I found another small piece of home when I felt as far from it as possible; an old rebel song that would always remind me of my mother.

“My mammy sings this to me,” she murmured, her voice as small and gentle as it had been the first time she spoke all that time ago.

Frigga payed close attention to her. “Does she?”

A slow nod. “When I have bad dreams. She makes them go away.”

The soft crackling of the fire was the only noise in the room. For a while, no one spoke a word. Ellie remained perched on Frigga’s knee, but curled her thin body inwards, her head resting on the Queen’s shoulder. Sensing the need for comfort, Frigga spoke up in her usual gentle voice.

“I may not sing it as well as your mother, but would you like me to sing it for you?”

Ellie nodded again, her lower lip trembling.

Loki observed in silence, undoubtably eager to her his mother singing. It had been quite some time
since she had sung in his presence — the routine of singing both himself and Thor to sleep with old Asgardian lullabies was a fond memory that brought him joy quite often. While he constantly questioned his worth and value in the eyes of his father, he never doubted Frigga. She was a wonderful mother and made him feel truly loved.

Rocking slowly back and forth, she looked at the pages on the book and began to sing the tune as instructed:

"As we gather in the chapel here in old Kilmainham Jail
I think about these past few weeks, oh will they say we've failed?
From our school days they have told us we must yearn for liberty
Yet all I want in this dark place is to have you here with me

Oh Grace just hold me in your arms and let this moment linger
They'll take me out at dawn and I will die
With all my love I place this wedding ring upon your finger
There won't be time to share our love for we must say goodbye

Now I know it's hard for you, my love, to ever understand
The love I shared for these brave men, the love for my dear land
But when glory called me to his side down in the GPO
I had to leave my own sick bed, to him I had to go

Oh, Grace just hold me in your arms and let this moment linger
They'll take me out at dawn and I will die
With all my love I'll place this wedding ring upon your finger
There won't be time to share our love for we must say goodbye

Now as the dawn is breaking, my heart is breaking too
On this May morn as I walk out, my thoughts will be of you
And I'll write some words upon the wall so everyone will know
I loved so much that I could see his blood upon the rose."
Oh, Grace just hold me in your arms and let this moment linger

They'll take me out at dawn and I will die

With all my love I'll place this wedding ring upon your finger

There won't be time to share our love for we must say goodbye

For we must say goodbye."

Loki did not know the story behind the song’s origin — though he made a mental note to research the locations and names mentioned at a later time — but he could not deny the chilling and poignant lyrics of the melody. It undoubtably had an effect on Ellie too, who’s eyes had drifted shut, lashes wet from tears. Frigga’s eyes had also closed, her body still rocking to and fro with the small child in her arms.

While the melody of the Irish rebel song would remain in Loki’s mind for weeks to come, the old tome with its lyrics would remain at Ellie’s bedside for the duration of her time in Asgard.
Settling In

Chapter Summary

Time passes on Asgard and Loki finds himself bonding with Ellie as she grows. Odin, however, is quite perturbed by this development and seeks to put a stop to it.

Chapter Notes

This chapter mostly involves what Ellie has gotten up to in her first few years on Asgard. There's a lot of description and a little less dialogue, but hopefully it will be just as entertaining! There's also still some Odin family drama at the end, but that's a given at this stage really...


For Gods, years are far less significant in comparison to how mortal beings feel about them. While Gods are not immortal, living for five thousand years (give or take), it makes those years far less significant. It was the one thing about Midgardians that always made Loki wonder. They had such little time — how did they get anything done? It was during the next few years that passed by when he observed Ellie as she grew. It was odd for him to see something grow so quickly. He was just surprised that she had actually settled. The girl fell into her roll as a handmaiden relatively well. She was lucky to have a group of Asgardian women that did not mind her presence and were willing to teach her how to stay out of trouble and do her job.

She was not without adversaries. Asgardians did not usually take kindly to mortals in their own realm. Their only purpose was to worship and serve, and seeing a mortal child walking around the palace in the company of handmaidens to the queen was completely unheard of. One of these adversaries was the Allfather himself. Loki saw how Odin looked at Ellie when she was trying to attend to her handmaiden duties. At dinners when the little girl would refill their goblets of wine, Odin’s one good eye looked at her with utter contempt. While it did not seem like he hated the child, he did nothing to hide his displeasure at her presence.

Despite this, Frigga made it clear that Ellie was to be tutored in reading and writing. Her obsession for Midgardian fiction kept her understanding of the English language blooming, but it became evident that she would have to learn how to read Norse ruins if she was expected to get by in Asgard. Loki was sceptical when Ellie told him that every Tyrsdagr she would spend time with one of his childhood tutors — a poet and writer by the name of Caecilia — in order to understand ruins. He thought it to be a waste of time. How could a mortal comprehend such things that were so far beyond anything she knew? But the young prince found himself eating his words when she had progressed from grasping some of the basics to writing and speaking full sentences in a fair timespan.

With her ever-growing vocabulary, some facts about Ellie’s life came to light in conversations between Loki, Thor, Frigga, and her fellow handmaidens. At the time she arrived in Asgard, she
was five years of age. When it came to her actual nameday, she told them that it was ‘July 5th’. After that, Loki brushed up on the month names on Midgard. In her Irish culture, he discovered that they used a Christian calendar. While he could not find a specific match to the exact day, they settled on letting her celebrate her nameday on the fifth day of Sól mánuðr. Frigga sometimes brought her on off-duty visits to the kitchen, so it became a regular occurrence that Ellie was taken there on her nameday and given a small, simple cake with jam and cream. The item just about fit into her little hands, but Loki had seen how large her eyes had become at the sight of it every time.

When she was eight years old (or just about), she was well used to her hard-working handmaiden habits. Her youth did not seem to matter — she was eager to please Frigga and to work with her colleagues. Most of them had accepted her with surprisingly open arms while two or three had been quite sceptical at first. Only when Frigga ordered them to change their attitude was Ellie fully accepted by them all. After time passed, it seemed that the Aesir women’s fondness had become genuine. Some of them were mothers or hoped to be in the future, so they were more than happy to show tenderness to an orphan, even if she was mortal.

At nine, Ellie had grown quickly. She became obsessed with books, music, and tricks, and even managed to lose some of her weak childhood appearance. She no longer shied away from strangers as often as she had. That being said, men seemed to be something she struggled to approach. She still seemed very much afraid of Odin and even guards that wandered too close to her. According to Frigga, the bedwetting had become infrequent but was still present. No matter how many times Loki asked his mother, she refused to tell him what happened to Ellie on Midgard.

“If she wishes for you to know,” she would say. “Then someday she will tell you.”

The fondness that Ellie had for Loki seemed undeniable. When they were both off-duty, she would read with him in the gardens or library, keep him company while gardening, or watch him using his magic during sparring. Since borrowing The Jungle Book, she consistently worked her way through the Midgardian books they had on offer and asked him for recommendations when she finished one after another. The library was updated somewhat regularly by Asgardians that collected texts from other realms. Loki could distinctly recall when Ellie was wading through a pile of new arrivals and discovered a book that would consume her attention every time the next part of the series was released.

“I think you’d like this book, Loki,” she had said when she was halfway through it. “It’s about a boy who uses magic, like you.”

He could not deny that it piqued his interest, however mildly. “Oh, really?”

“Yeah! He finds out that he’s a wizard and gets to go to a school called Hogwarts and learn all about spells and magic and potions with his friends.”

At first he had been blatantly dismissive, but she had insisted relentlessly. It had verged on being annoying as well. So he noted her recommendation and could recall evenings when he had sailed through the story of Harry, Ron, and Hermoine alone in his quarters by the fire, although it was a long time before he indulged in conversations with Ellie about the story.

The introduction to music came soon after the introduction to books. It was by Loki’s own accord that he decided to approach Ellie about another creative pastime. Upon the discovery that the book his mother had previously gifted to her had remained in her possession for over a year, the young prince brought her to another smaller section of the library. There was a particular wing in the library in which a collection of music from the nine realms were housed. The shelves were lined with whatever popular music was on offer over the centuries, but Midgard’s was an array (albeit significantly smaller in comparison to other worlds) of devices called vinyl records, cassette tapes,
and compact discs. Collected by Tadaaki and what few employees he had, the vinyls were what
drew Loki’s attention immediately. They were far more interesting visually in comparison to the
other items that contained their music.

“You like music, don’t you, little one?” he asked, pulling a record from its place on the shelf with
nimble fingers.

“Yeah, Prince Loki,” came the reply from behind him.

“You still have the book that the Allmother gave you.”

“I still keep it beside my bed.”

“I see. Well, if you would be interesting in hearing some more music from your realm, quite a lot
of it is contained in these shelves. However dull a lot of it can be, there may be something in here
that you know.”

“I know songs that my mam used to sing to me,” she explained contently, probably reminiscing
about the past with her family. “She used to play me a lot of songs too.”

“Are there any that you can remember? Titles would be helpful.”

The girl approached him and stood up on her tip-toes to look at the vinyls in awe. “One of her
favourite songs was by a group singing about a girl and they clicked their fingers a lot in the
song!”

Loki rolled his eyes impatiently. “You will have to give me more information than that… When
was the song released, perhaps? What was its name?”

Ellie pondered for a brief moment, her lips pursed together. “Mam said that she first heard it when
she was a little girl. I don’t know what its name is, but the singer kept talkin’ about his girlfriend
for the whole song. He says ‘my girl’ a lot too. I think that’s the name.”

Loki sighed and ran a hand slowly over his face. “Well, I suppose I can figure it out from the
endless information you have given me.”

After a brief word with Tadaaki, a browse through a document that listed popular songs according
to their release date, the Price found what he thought — and damn well hoped — was the record
young Ellie was describing so vaguely. He pulled it gently from its spot near the top of the shelf;
he had to lift the mortal from the fixture when she had attempted to scale it herself.

“Try that again and Tadaaki will bar you from this library,” he had threatened. “That, I do not
what you getting injured in my company — Odin knows my mother will wring my neck for it…”

With the vinyl cover held in front of her, Ellie’s eyes lit up almost instantly.

“That’s it!” she insisted with delighted and gently bounced on her feet. “You found it, Prince
Loki!”

He looked down at the seven inch single in his hands — the title of the song was ‘My Girl’, by a
group of Midgardian men who called themselves The Temptations. Loki thought it was a peculiar
name, but chose to hold his tongue rather than spoil the girl’s delight. He brought it straight over to
the vinyl record player kept on a nearby table.

The hum of the vinyl began once he delicately set the needle down on it. It crackled slightly
before the low, rhythmic bass line started the song. It was followed by a bright guitar riff
accompanied by finger snaps that brought some recognition to Ellie’s expression, and the vocals began soon after:

*I've got sunshine on a cloudy day*

*When it's cold outside I've got the month of May*

*Well I guess you'd say*

*What can make me feel this way?*

*My girl (my girl, my girl)*

*Talkin' 'bout my girl (my girl)*

“I will assume that this is the song you spoke of?” he asked her, as if the delight she expressed wasn’t already proof that it was.

“Yeah, that’s the one!” she confirmed and bopped her head along to the lazy beat. “This is my mam’s favourite song.”

“Is it, now?”

*I've got so much honey the bees envy me.*

*I've got a sweeter song than the birds in the trees.*

*Well, I guess you'd say*

*What can make me feel this way?*

*My girl (my girl, my girl)*

*Talkin' 'bout my girl (my girl).*

*Hey hey hey*

*Hey hey hey*

*Ooooh.*

*I don't need no money, fortune or fame.*

*I've got all the riches, baby, one man can claim...*
He listened to it for a moment. The lyrics made him cringe to a certain extent — the idea that a mere ‘girl’ could make this Midgardian so joyful sounded utterly ridiculous, but he assumed that the song’s words were not meant to be taken literally. At least he hoped they were not. He had never heard such a ridiculous notion and it was just one of the other reasons why he found frivolous emotions to be superfluous.

They worked their way through all the vinyls on the shelves under the genre of ‘motown’. She was particularly fond of a singer by the name of Aretha Franklin and Loki couldn’t deny that her songs were catchy and easy to listen to. She quickly moved on to Nina Simone and Billie Holiday as well. After that first visit to the musical library, it was normal for Ellie to ask Loki if he could take her there again after she finished her duties. Although she should have been in bed, he didn’t necessarily mind accompanying her when it gave him an excuse to avoid some of his more dull responsibilities. Ever the avid learner and worker, he still made more appearances at his lessons than Thor and still made preparations for visits to surrounding realms and villages, even if they were made slightly later than usual. Nightly visits to the library to listen to music and spend time with a child that slowly opened up with a simpler view of life was somewhat fresh. She did not hound him about his duties, did not rattle off about how much she admired his brother, did not bore him with small talk. Whatever she said was about the music.

“What makes that sound, Prince Loki? Isn’t the drums really loud at that part, Prince Loki? Do you like the end of that song, Prince Loki? Doesn’t this song sound like a happy song, Prince Loki?”

“Yes, little one. It is a happy song.”

After Ellie had worked her way through all of the motown vinyls, she moved on to classical music, something that Loki could certainly appreciate. While Midgardian music was average in comparison to Asgardian music, he could admit to himself that composers such as Chopin, Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart were talented individuals and masters at their craft. A peruse through the history books revealed that they accomplished quite a lot in their short, mortal lives.

He grew fond of one piece in particular that he soon had Ellie fawning over as well. Rossini’s The Thieving Magpie was one of the dustiest records on the shelves, but it became a regular song for them to listen to in the library. Loki found it soothing when he had had a particularly testing day. He was dubious to find that it even inspired him in the acts of mischievousness and tricks. It was after witnessing a carefully placed trap over the door of Thor’s quarters which was rigged to drop water over the God of Thunder’s head when he opened it that eight year old Ellie came to Loki to see more tricks. Considering Loki had to hide himself away for a few days unless he wanted a severe beating from his furious older brother, he decided to humour Ellie’s curiosities. During sparring training, he made a show of Thor and the Warriors Three by creating an illusion that turned their blades into live snakes. At breakfast when Ellie and other handmaidens were in attendance, he had birds burst from the pie. In the gardens during a particularly sunny day, he had a storm swoop in on unsuspecting citizens that found themselves chased by relentless rain clouds. Ellie loved the spectacle. Even Thor had found the pie trick amusing — only after he realised the pie had not been ruined and was still edible.

Over time, Ellie tried her hand at small and subtle tricks. She used to secretly place flowers in Thor’s hair when he gave her what she called ‘jockie backs’. He was utterly oblivious when he arrived at political gatherings and feasts with a head full of daisies. Thor, after mild embarrassment when the Allfather chastised him for such ridiculous attire, saw the funny side once he realised Ellie had been doing it. Perhaps it was because she was so young and ‘adorable’ according to him, but she got away with it like Loki used to when he was a child. But Thor wasn’t the only one that
fell victim to Ellie’s schemes.

One morning, Loki found that his socks were sewn closed halfway down. One evening, Fandral’s mead was frozen over in his tankard. Sif’s sword remained stuck behind her shield in the training yard — something Volstagg had found *hysterical* — before she eventually managed to separate them.

The whole farce was rather amusing to Loki as well, even if he wasn’t invincible to her pranks. He dared to say that he was glad to see someone else tormenting the Aesir, especially when it had been *his* influence that encouraged her to do so. Having someone come to him to learn how to trick others was new. Usually, his illusions were received with disgruntled looks and glares, and a ‘that is so typical of Loki’ attitude, but he felt immense satisfaction when cornered by a furious Thor or Sif and being able to say “You have the wrong trickster” with actual honesty.

* * *

“You spend too much time with that mortal.”

“I would say that I spend very little of my time with her, Father—”

“And I am saying that you spend *too much* of it with her. So much so that you are ignoring your duties as a prince of Asgard.”

If the displeasure wasn’t obvious enough in his tone, one look at Odin’s expression was enough to show the annoyance that was boiling inside him. Loki wisely said nothing more, knowing when a smart comment that would really vex the Allfather was completely unnecessary. He averted his gaze to the banquet table, his jaw clenching and unclenching as more scolds poured from Odin’s mouth. The verbal assault did not subside and even though Thor had also spent time in Ellie’s company, Loki noticed that at no point was the eldest Odinson addressed directly.

“You will uphold your responsibilities as princes of this realm,” Odin was still ranting, his temper having subsided but his words still cutting like ice. Around them, the dining hall was still alive with activity; either no one had heard the outburst or they had chosen to ignore it. “Neither of you will waste another minute in that mortal’s company. Human lives are fleeting and their mortality makes them unworthy of your time.”

Only at that moment did Loki have the gall to lift an ice cold stare to meet his father’s. Odin held his gaze without an issue, almost provokingly.

*Go on, test my order. Say that my commands are futile. Say that you will ignore them and continue raising your pet.*

The imaginary taunts in Loki’s mind caused his blood to boil while he remained stoic on the outside. The hall still buzzed, servants calmly walking to and fro from kitchens to tables. When Odin raised his now empty goblet expectantly, it was Ellie who tip-toed over to his side and refilled it with wine. Odin’s eyes remained forward, uncaring of the Midgardian girl filling his goblet, her weedy arms shaking slightly from the large jug in her grasp. Loki observed the exchange with disgust.

*You say this girl is not fit to be in my company and yet she is only fit to fill your cup. Her mortality means she is lesser? Do her talents and intellect mean nothing?*
A voice in his head — this time it was not one of his own creation. It was familiar. It communicated when they could not share words aloud.

*Mother?*

*You must not challenge him, my son. You know you must turn a blind eye to his words.*

*But he speaks of her with such abhor and reprimands me while Thor is let alone!*

Despite Thor opening his big mouth and talking to his father about how he had flourished in his studies of late — something that was utterly laughable — their conversation went unnoticed by the Queen and her youngest son.

*I will speak with him about this later. You need not fret.*

*Perhaps if I was ever bloody listened to, I could fix it myself.*

*Loki, do not—*

“And you will be joining us too, Loki. Have yourself ready to depart overmorrow.”

“Depart?” Loki asked slowly, making sure he appeared to be nonchalant. “Are there certain things you wish for me to bring?”

“If you could leave your snarky attitude and silver tongue in Asgard, that would be about all that is required.”

Odin’s reply cut Loki deeply, although he did not show it to the best of his abilities. He smirked slightly and turned his attention back to his food, which he had been meticulously moving around on its plate since Odin began his assault.

“In all honestly, Father,” Thor began, keeping a close eye between the two them both. “Why is it necessary that Loki and I join you on your trip to Alfheim?”

“As princes, you have duties to attend to before other matters. It seems that lately, your dedication to more personal and ‘recreational’ matters—” a quick glare was sent Thor’s way, who had been spending an increasing amount of time with his friends and various Aesir women in taverns of late. “—have consumed all of our attention, so these political discussions in Ljosalfgard with Frey should remind you of what is important. Having trained there as youngsters, I trust the Light Elves’ ability in teaching you both.”

Thor didn’t seem to joyful, but knew to keep quiet about it. “How long should we remain there?”

“A few months, or until I see you both fit to return.”

While it may not have been visible to the rest of the hall, the strain between the four bodies who sat at the head table was as clear as day to both Loki and Thor. It was also unsettlingly ominous.
The princes’ visit to Alfheim ended up lasting for far longer than they had both hoped for. By the time Odin saw them fit to return, almost a year had passed by. They had missed many an occasion in Asgard as well as Ellie’s tenth nameday — something that Loki knew she wouldn’t be impressed about. Odin had lengthened their stay when Thor had created a ruckus in a local village by getting exceptionally inebriated and accepting a challenge from a surprisingly aggressive group of travellers.

“Thor, there is really no need for you to accept,” Loki had explained, trying to convince him to just let it go as the crowd from the tavern began to gather around them. They cheered loudly, slamming tankards down on tables in delight. Though more reserved than the Aesir, it seemed that the Light Elves were feeding off the buzz created by the lumbering travellers who had initiated the fight in the first place.

‘Come out’, Thor said! Loki thought to himself. ‘We can go and find ourselves some voluptuous maidens for tonight’! All I wanted was a decent fuck and now Thor has to prove just how powerful he is to some other imbecile out to do the same thing.

“Nah ah, Loki,” he drawled, pulling up the sleeves of his undershirt and pausing to hiccup. “This man wants a fight and a fight he shall have!”

“Thor—”

“Get a load of this, fellas!” Thor’s challenger, a burly brute who also hailed from Asgard, declared to his friends. “I am about to beat the God of Thunder at hand-to-hand!”

Thor bellowed in amusement at the comment. “You’re quite cocky for someone who has not felt the force of a strike in the jaw from said god!”

While Loki was also on the verge of being drunk, he was very close to sending the men away with some particularly chosen words that both stroked their ego and subdued his brother in his drunken mess, but it was a sudden lunging punch at Thor from one of the challenger’s friends that caused all the violence to erupt.
“Oh, bugger,” Loki sighed and watched as Thor tossed a body off of his and across the tavern. Chairs flew along with people, drinks splashed everywhere, people yelled and roared as fists met stomachs and boots met teeth. Loki managed to dodge most of the blows thrown his way, bar one that left him with a black eye he covered up with glamour.

“Thor!” he screamed as he reached his older brother. “We need to get out of here!”

“But the fun has only started!” was the delighted reply as Thor threw a man out of one of the windows. The glass smashed everywhere and before Loki could even reach his sibling, he had another man grasped in his huge hands. Even in his intoxicated state, he was still tossing punches left, right, and centre, and effectually subduing his attackers.

“We have to get back to the castle!” Loki insisted and grabbed Thor’s shoulder while the fight waged around them, bodies slamming together like a churning, sweaty sea. “Now!”

“They started it!” Thor scoffed and swung a table into a man charging him. “Who’s up next?”

Loki had had enough and shoved with all his might and with the assistance of seiðr. “Out! Now!”

Once outside in the formerly peaceful night, the battle refrained from spilling out with them. They were lucky that the drunken brawlers were in fact too drunk to notice the reason for their aggression had left. The cool and fresh night air was a welcome change to the sticky and hot feeling of inside the tavern. That and it was always nice not having to dodge numerous punches towards you.

“When Father hears about this,” Loki grumbled as they mounted their horses and began their escape. “He is going to wring our necks.”

“You worry too much, Loki,” Thor slurred with a dismissive wave of the hand while he struggled into his saddle. “We will be fine, you’ll see.”

Loki rolled his eyes and pushed some soaking hair from his face. “I should have gotten a bloody goat to distract them.”

“Oh, yes, brother!” Thor agreed and began to laugh uncontrollably. “The revellers do love it when you tug with the goat!”

Despite the rough night they had, the brothers looked at each other before sharing a laugh on the road back to the castle.

Thor’s confidence ended up being for nothing. While the berating Odin gave them was mild upon hearing about their antics, they were forbidden from returning to Asgard for another five months. Frigga sent a letter from home every now and then, asking for how they faired and telling them of whatever happenings occurred in their absence. Because of their galavanting about in what was formally a peaceful tavern, Frey ordered them to remain within the castle walls for the remainder of their stay, mostly due to Odin’s insistence, so the siblings were forced to obey. The five extra months they had to suffer through ended up being surprisingly quiet. It was hard to create a ruckus when they were confined to the palace. That and the endless mentoring and political meetings they had to attend left them drained.

If Odin’s goal as to leave them regretting their ‘unseemly’ behaviour, he had succeeded.

Loki usually relished in time away from Asgard to explore other realms, but he was genuinely happy to be home when their time was up. The embrace that his mother gave him was a comfort that he had surely missed.
Ellie was more than merry upon their return. She even let Thor pick her up and embrace her when she first saw him again. But Loki was not left out when they reunited — a firm hug around his waist was a surprise, but he didn’t push her away.

“You missed my tenth birthday,” she said dryly as they separated.

Loki rolled his eyes. “Namedays have less meaning to those who have roughly five thousand of them in their lifetime.”

Her eyes went wide. “You guys are so old!”

“I am only just passed my thousandth year, little one, so I am not that ancient yet.”

“But you’re a lot older than me. That makes you old.”

“It would seem that your logic is quite flawed.”

Ellie crossed her arms over her chest and gave him her best pout. “You’re just annoyed because I’m not scared of you!”

He shrugged dismissively. “I never claimed that I wanted you to be frightened of me. That you should recognise me as your God and that you are beneath me, maybe, but frightening you was not part of my intention.”

She let out a little laugh and grinned up at him since he first arrived. “You’re funny, Loki! I missed your jokes.”

“I did not make any jokes!”

No one had said that he was amusing before. It was not a common word people used to describe him, but if saying saucy remarks resulted in her laughter, he wouldn’t mind saying them more often. It was far better to see her laughing than cowering from him.

* * *

A few days later, Loki was strolling idly through the gardens of Asgard with Frigga. They had been in the yard together going through their combat training as usual. While she had taught him how to effectively wield daggers and to win a battle through tactical assault many years ago, she still insisted on refreshing his skills once a week. Two handmaidens followed them at a distance, bringing them cups of water or some fruit when asked.

“What is your opinion on Midgardians, Mother?” he asked her after a brief silence.

“Why do you ask?” was her curious reply.

“I have been thinking on what Father said about them during the banquet when he informed Thor and I that we would be sent to Alfheim. He said that they were of no importance, that their lives end so quickly they are a waste of our time as gods. Do you agree?”

As Frigga contemplated her answer, their footfalls began to sync up, their feet landing in step on the stone path below. “Not entirely, no.”
“No?”

“I do not agree that their mortality makes them unworthy of our time. Yes, we are gods and they are mortals with much shorter lives who, in some cases, worship us as being above them, but I would say that their mortality has an entirely different meaning.”

Loki furrowed his brow and turned his gaze on her pensive expression. “And what would you say it means?”

“Your father believes that a human’s mortality makes them unworthy, whereas I feel that their mortality makes their life precious.”

“Precious?” he scoffed. “Mother, I would agree that Father was harsh in what he said, but you cannot honestly tell me that you believe them to be cherished? Surely they are there to worship us and go about their human lives, while we prolong their existence by keeping peace within Yggdrasil?”

Frigga gently rubbed the arm that he had linked around her own. “My son, look at it this way for a moment. Their lives are short — far shorter than our own. That means that they have a lot to do in such a short amount of time. It also means that we will outlive them. Take little Ellie for example. She has now spent half of her own life here on Asgard with us. She looks up to you, likes playing with you and Thor, likes to read her stories and listen to her Midgardian musicians, but you will see her pass from this world before you do. It is an exceptionally harsh reality when you have bonded with a human, but their mortality will inevitably cause you pain. Yes, your position as royalty means that you are above her in status, but her human life does not make her unworthy of your time. If anything, it makes your time with her more precious. Do you understand?”

He paused and mulled it over. It made logical sense — the less time you had with someone, the more it should be cherished, but he knew his father was firm in his stance. As far as Odin was concerned, mortals were beneath the gods and that was that.

“I can understand your logic,” he eventually said, slowing as they walked around a well-decorated fountain. “After all, she is exceedingly less annoying that I thought she would be.”

“And she also seems to have taken after you in some regard,” Frigga laughed gently, giving his arm a little tug. “I have never seen Thor’s hair so well decorated with flowers before.”

“She may be mortal,” Loki murmured with an air of approval. “But I must admit she has a knack for little tricks.”

“It does not surprise me after all the time she has spent in your company.”

“The less she spends in Thor’s, the better.”

That earned him a mild scold, even if Frigga did recognised his playful tone.

* * *
little one to jump.

“Loki!” she exclaimed before letting out a sigh and visibly relaxing. “I didn’t know it was you. I thought I was caught for a sec.”

Upon questioning her further, she revealed that she had forgotten to get one of her new *Harry Potter* books from the library earlier and managed to sneak from her shared quarters to come and get it. He remained in his chair, brushing over some seiðr notes his mother had given him as the girl went to fetch said book. Three years after his return from Alfheim, Ellie had reached the age of thirteen. Her interest in Midgard — which had just reached its two thousandth year — only grew stronger the more history and facts she learned. After his discussion with Frigga, Loki saw the importance in her words and refused to let Odin’s insistence prevent him from making Ellie’s life in a foreign realm a little easier. She had remained settled thankfully and continued to slowly adjust. The mental scarring from whatever befell her on Midgard remained, but physically she had looked less weedy of late. As a result, he and Thor settled into their old habit of seeing her when they could and the Allfather said nothing about it. As to whether that had anything to do with the Allmother, Loki did not know, but he still assumed as much. He was so transfixed by the sheets of paper, he barely noticed her return.

“Are you studying seiðr, Prince Loki?” she asked with the book tucked under her arm.

“Yes, little Ellie,” he replied, looking up briefly.

“Can’t sleep?”

“I have not yet attempted it.”

Ellie looked between the prince and the book in her hands. “I wish I could do magic.”

“Like your book?” he asked absentmindedly.

“Maybe… But more like your magic — seiðr.”

He scoffed. “It is not exactly a Midgardian practice. There are even few Asgardians who are very familiar with it. The Vanir would be considered the masters of it, even if they are ridiculously arrogant about the fact.”

“Hogun doesn’t seem that arrogant.”

“That is not exactly the word I would use to describe his personality…”

*Perhaps the term pompous ass would better suit him?*

“I know it’s not a very Midgardian thing,” Ellie continued on, seemingly unfazed by Loki’s words. “But I wish I was as good at it as you are.”

He looked up from his studies at her statement, lips pouted curiously. “You wish to learn seiðr?”

She shrugged. “If I could.”

Loki remained in his seat, tapping his fingers and watching the young mortal as she read the back of *The Goblet of Fire*. In his mind, he considered his options (mostly Odin’s disgruntled reaction to said options) before opening his mouth.

“You know,” he began casually. “There are certain Midgardians that are capable of learning the art of seiðr.”
His statement seemed to grab her immediate interest. “Really?”

“Indeed, little one. Certain individuals who trained hard enough and for a long enough time. They dedicated themselves to the art and became shamans with a connection to both good and evil spirits in the world.”

“Would they not practice for a super long time?”

“Well, you could put it that way, yes. It took a lot of practice, a lot of time, and a lot of patience. Much as it was when my mother taught me.”

“Have you ever taught anyone seiðr?”

He shook his head. “Not as of yet. Although I had yet to find someone I thought worthy of learning.”

“So,” she drawled out, rocking back and forth on her heels. “Does that mean you would teach someone? If you thought they were worth it? You would then?”

“Perhaps.” He shrugged slightly and gestured to the stack of tomes on the table. “If my student is willing to study as hard as I.”

“I’m willin’!” Ellie blurted out before he could explain any further.

He assessed her expression — a surprisingly earnest one — before he opened his mouth to answer. “Are you now, little Ellie?”

“Yeah, I am. I would love to learn how to do magic, my Lord, and you’re the best one to learn from, instead of maybe the Queen herself!”

“Oh my, you do flatter me.”

Standing abruptly from his chair, Loki strolled over to the section of the library dedicated to the practice of magic. Being so familiar with this section, he easily found one of the first books he read in relation to beginners seiðr and made his way back over to where Ellie was waiting. Upon his return, she straightened her posture and waited to be spoken to, a habit instilled in her by her handmaiden training.

“Relax yourself. There’s no need for formalities at this ungodly hour,” Loki grumbled and held out the book to her. “If you want me to teach you, then go and familiarise yourself with what you will be learning. Once you have completed your duties and lessons each day, read the history of seiðr, what it consists of, and how you can develop your skill over time. Read chapters one through ten and then come back to me when you have done so. After you have done that much, I can start the basics with you if you wish to continue.”

“My Prince—”

“Loki,” he corrected calmly.

“Prince Loki—”

He groaned loudly. “Just Loki is acceptable at this time of night. It’s a bit late for grand titles, wouldn’t you agree?”

“If you insist,” she said with a nod, and took the book he had offered. She gently traced the intricate design on the cover with a finger, wonderment clear in her expression. “Would you really
do that? Would you teach me how to wild seiðr like you?"

He snorted slightly. “You have to understand, you will most certainly not be as skilled as I; I do have a thousand year advantage over you.”

She frowned at the book, brows furrowed at his comments. “If I can’t practice for as long as you can, then why bother teachin’ me? I’ll probably suck at it.”

At first he thought her words were in jest, but it became increasingly clear to Loki as he studied her disheartened expression that she was being perfectly serious. If she could not study seiðr for thousands of years to master it, if she could never amount to the level of skill that he or other sorcerers possessed, then why bother at all?

… human life does not make her unworthy of your time. If anything, it makes your time with her more precious.

Without another thought, Loki placed a gentle hand on her shoulder. “Whether you can survive one hundred years or one thousand means little to me in terms of learning. After eight years in another realm, you have managed to continue your learnings of Midgardian English and Norse ruins, and have excelled in your responsibilities as a handmaiden. If you want to learn, then I will teach you as much as I can in the time we have. Do not think so little of yourself. You won’t get far with an attitude like that.”

“Sorry,” she replied sheepishly. “I didn’t mean to sound ungrateful.”

He waved his hand at her and took his seat once more. “Worry not. Now, get yourself to bed before the Einherjar find you sneaking about. I trust you to get back in one piece.”

“I won’t let you down,” she insisted, gesturing to the books in hand as she made her way to the massive library doors. She opened it, careful not to let it creak, hesitated, and then turned to face him again with a small smile. “Thanks for that. And for the books too.”

He gave her a nod and answered. “You’re welcome, little one.”

With that, Ellie turned on her heels and slipped out the door, leaving Loki alone once more, reading his notes in candle light.
Lessons and Politics

Chapter Summary

Ellie's seiðr lessons with Loki begin, and two visitors to the palace cause quite an unnerving argument during a royal feast.

Chapter Notes

Holy moley, thanks everyone for 100 kudos! I mean, I was expecting maybe ten when I uploaded the story in the first place, so this was a lovely surprise. Also thanks to those who show support through comments or by just reading the chapters in your free time. It means a lot :) You can also find the story on my Tumblr (unofferable-fic) if you're fancy!


Was Loki in any way surprised when Ellie came back to him with her tasks completed in a few days? Not particularly. Perhaps it was the fact she seemed even more enthusiastic about learning the practice of seiðr; far more than anything else. Their lessons took place one night a week within the library, the room glamoured so that not even Heimdall would know what was taking place. He had reiterated to her more than once about how important it was that no one knew he was teaching her, but she was always subtle when she snuck away from her quarters. On every occasion, Loki would always find that Ellie beat him to the library. He would push open the door to see her listening to the record player, or rereading the chapters he assigned her, and waiting patiently for his arrival.

As it turned out, she was certainly not a natural, although she never claimed to be either. Being mortal already meant that she was at a severe disadvantage. That being said, he persisted even when they both got frustrated with failures. The first thing he introduced her to was being in a state of trance. A trance condition is an importance base for any wood-be beginner in order to block outside distractions.

“Putting it simply,” he explained on their first lesson. “You need to clear your mind before you can focus on casting any spells. A state of trance is something that you should eventually be able to do through your own will alone. There are also methods of enhancing how quickly it can be achieved, like the consumption of specific herbs, or repetitive sounds. Personally, given your fondness for music, I think we should use the repetitive sound as our first method of concentration. More specifically, we will be using the fireplace.”

“The fireplace, Your Highness?” she asked in confusion.

He pointed to the fire that was currently crackling away. “That right there is what you will listen to to help guide yourself into a trance state. I will also always be here to help, so there is nothing that can harm you.”
It was a month before Ellie could successfully enter a state of trance, which was not that bad in Loki’s opinion. At that stage, their lessons consisted of sitting at the fireplace in the library and him helping to ease her into the condition. He always sat back and remained aware of what exactly was going on in her mind.

With the trance ability achieved, he pushed her studies further. Sometimes Ellie would return from banquets or handmaiden duties to find new books glamoured to look like her Midgardian fiction in her bedside locker. Within them contained notes in Loki’s hand:

*Read chapters 17 through 20 — Illusion Casting, Channelling Energy — by next week.*

Once she had a better concept of what was involved in magic and could successfully achieve a state of trance, Loki started with simple illusions — balls of light that formed into simple shapes or forms of animals — and showed her the same way his mother had shown him. Before she could even attempt it herself, he insisted that she gain a better understanding of the specific spell and its runes by reading about it. To sum it up; he showed her what she would able to do, she went and researched it, then they regrouped while he taught her how to do so.

For months after achieving the trance state, there was little progress made. Whether it was due to her young age or mortal status, Loki was unsure, but illusions seemed to be a goal that would not be reached at present. He temporarily put it aside when she got frustrated, but she still insisted on doing her weekly research as he prescribed it. He decided the best course of action was to now focus on runes and their meanings. It seemed that the first massive hurdle was going to be the very first spell Ellie could cast. He believed that once they achieved this, she would learn at an improved rate.

It had been after a particularly taxing day of political duties when he came up with an idea. He was walking through the gardens to clear his muddled mind when he passed by the hedging covered in clematis flowers. He stood for a moment, eying the flowers and the viable seeds within them. Quickly he plucked two from the flower and then made his way back into the palace.

It was at their next secret lesson when he set his plan into motion.

“What is the rune for growth?” he asked as soon as he walked into the library and saw her in the usual seat.

“Berkanan,” she replied assuredly and without hesitation.

“Draw it,” he ordered as he came up to the table.

Grabbing paper and a large piece of charcoal, she drew one large and then looked at him for an explanation.

“Open your hand.” When she did, he dropped one seed into her palm. “Do you know what this is?”

“Uh, a seed, Prince Loki?”

“Yes, from the clematis plant in the gardens. You are going to make it bloom.”

“I am?”

He frowned. “Was there anything unclear about my instructions?”

“Not particularly,” she admitted and eyed the little seed. “Not at all, actually. I just wasn’t expectin’ it to be part of our lesson today.”
He pulled his chair in front of hers, sat down, and revealed the seed he still cupped in his large hand. “This is what we will be focusing all of our lessons on from now on. I will show you how and then you will dedicate yourself to making that flower grow with your magic ability.”

“So I guess cheatin’ with soil is out of the question?”

He snickered at her comment. “Little one, I will know by the energy surrounding the flower as to whether it has bloomed by natural means or with magic. It is an obstacle, one which I believe you will pass with time and patience.” Cupping the seed in both hands, he had her watch as a green light surrounded it. “And a lot of practice.” He saw the emerald light colour her face as the seed grew from its shell. In no time at all, roots shot outwards in search of support and, in a matter of seconds, a fresh purple flower grew in the palm of his hands. “You will eventually come to me with a flower in your hands.”

“That’s so cool!” she exclaimed, gazing down at the little flower. “I haven’t seen you do that since I was a kid.”

“You are still a child,” he corrected as he passed the flower into her hands.

She glared at him. “I am not. I’m thirteen!”

“And I am one thousand and thirty seven years old. That makes you but a fledgling.”

“Hey! That’s not fair. By my standards, you’re an old man.”

“Well, we are on Asgard, so we will go by Asgard’s standards.” He leaned back in his chair, crossed his legs, and gave her a nod. “Now, off you go. You have a flower to bloom.”

***

“I am not that fond of Frey, Loki.”

“Nor am I, Thor.”

“I am not particularly fond of Freyja either…”

“Well at least there are two things we can agree on.”

The royal brothers were whispering back and forth to each other as they marched down the halls of the palace. Their destination was the Banquet Hall, for a celebratory feast to welcome Frey and his twin sister Freyja to Asgard. Frey, god of the sun, harvest, and rain, was the lord of the Light Elves of Alfheim despite being one of the Vanir. Freyja, goddess of fertility and former Valkyrie, was accompanying him much to the chagrin of Thor and Loki. It was known among most Aesir that she absolutely detested Loki.

“I have still not forgiven her for that debacle on Jotunheim,” Thor declared with obvious vexation, already getting riled up.

Loki tutted loudly. “But you made such a blushing bride! Who knew you could look so ravishing in a dress?”

“Now is not the time to test me, little brother,” the God of Thunder growled, resulting in an
ominous overlay of clouds to cover the sky outside. “It was humilitating.”

“I would advise you to stay calm.” Loki whispered with a nod towards a nearby window. “Unless you want to make it very obvious that you are uncomfortable with this gathering.”

Although they were visiting for mostly political means, Odin wanted to make sure that there were no ill feelings left between himself and Frey after the fiasco the brothers had caused on Alfheim. He was more than likely still bitter after having them in his company for a year.

“As much as I abhor the pair of them,” Loki reasoned, trying his best to calm Thor down. “It is but one feast. I am sure they will be off as soon as possible.”

“They would be wise to do so,” Thor agreed and, outside, the overcast day began to slowly clear.

Loki gave him a casual pat on the back as they reached the entrance door to the Banquet Hall. “At least while they are here I can make sure to bring up the fact that they fuck each other on a regular basis.”

Even Thor gave him a skeptical look at that. “Do you really believe that?”

Loki scoffed as the pair hesitated outside the door. “Of course. Freyja would lay with just about anything, if that was not already obvious.”

“I suppose that makes sense. If she will fuck a bunch of dwarves for jewellery then it is not outside the realm of possibility that she would fuck her own brother.”

“And on that note…” Loki trailed off as the Einherjar standing guard pushed the door open at his command. They took their usual seats at the head table, but were mildly perturbed to see Frey and Freyja already seated there too. The Allfather and Allmother were waiting patiently at the head of the table.

“My sons,” Odin greeted them. “Please help me to welcome our guests. You are both familiar with Lord Frey and Lady Freyja.”

Formal greetings were exchanged between the two pairs of siblings, each one sporting fake smiles — all except Freyja — as the feast began at Odin’s command. The servants descended upon the chattering hall, placing massive plates and bowls of food on the tables and filling goblets with the finest wine and ale Asgard had to offer. The handmaidens and pages to the King and Queen attended to the head table, and Loki spotted Ellie among them — being the smallest, she stuck out like a sore thumb — carrying a plate of cooked fish. As per their usual behaviour at feasts, it was all business. Turning his eyes away from the Midgardian, Loki settled his gaze on Freyja sitting opposite him.

“Is that a new necklace, My Lady?” he asked her, gesturing around his own neck.

“Yes, it is, Your Highness,” Freyja answered, reaching across as a plate of bread was set down before her.

“It is quite a piece,” he admired aloud. “And what service did you provide to obtain it?”

Beside him, Thor nearly choked on the cooked meat he had shoved into his mouth. He descended into a coughing fit, downing his tankard of ale in an attempt to clear his throat. The commotion gained both Odin and Frigga’s attention, but Loki simply smirked at the goddess, patiently waiting for an answer.

“I provided gold, Your Highness,” she replied with a look that implied she wished death upon
him, preferably soon.

“Oh, yes. Gold. Of course!”

“Loki…” Odin’s warning was nearly drowned out by Thor spluttering anew.

Loki continued to sit in his seat with a grin plastered on his face as the feast continued. The table had managed to initiate some form of casual conversation while Thor tried to hide the laughs that resurfaced when he remembered his brother’s comments. Their visit to Alfheim was briefly mentioned, but thankfully the subject of the destroyed tavern was avoided at all costs. At one point, Frey held up his tankard to be refilled. Ellie approached without hesitation, jug in hand, and began to pour ale into it. Frey glanced once at her, then did a double take, and made a show of studying her. Loki eyed them carefully from his seat as Frey’s blue eyes suddenly lit up with recognition.

“By the Norns!” the god exclaimed and Ellie nearly leapt out of her skin.

“Frey?” Frigga answered, surprised by the outburst as Ellie scampered away.

“I had not realised that the rumours were true,” Frey laughed, turning his attention back to the table. “That there as actually a Midgardian slave child serving in the palace!”

“No slave,” Frigga immediately corrected before Odin could get a word in edgeways.

Frey let out another laugh. “Well she hardly arrived here of her own accord, did she?”

“No, but it was her choice to remain.”

“Come back here, mortal!” the blonde god boomed. Across the table, both Odinson brothers went rigid where they sat. “Let me get a look at you.”

“I think it is best that the Midgardian is just left to her duties,” Odin cut in.

“No at all, I will not keep her long.”

As per the command, Ellie hesitantly returned to the table, clutching her trembling hands together in an attempt to stay calm in front of the hulking visitor. Loki suddenly felt as though he was looking at a five year old girl again, frightened out of her wits by anyone who came near. The only tell that suggested he was bothered at all was his fist clenched tightly in his lap. Frey’s outburst had also attracted the attention of other guests, who were now peering over at the exchange curiously.

“My my,” he praised, eyes fixated on her. “She is but a babe and working here? Look at the size of her!”

His intense studying of her was doing little to calm Ellie down, who was making an effort of avoiding all eye contact by looking everywhere else but him. Her whole body was quaking beyond control. Loki was fuming.

“How much did you pay for her?” Frey queried, directing his question to the Allfather.

“Nothing. She was not bought.”

“Then how did she find herself on Asgard? Did she ask Heimdall to open the Bifröst?”

His joke earned a giggle from his sister and Loki could hear the growl Thor gave in response.
“You would get a very nice amount for her,” Frey continued on, ignoring the stern looks he was getting. He looked as though he was assessing livestock. “How old is she?”

Frigga answered, but her tone was hard. “Thirteen years.”

“By the Norns, she would sell very well.” As if the air at the table wasn’t tense enough already, Frey pushed Loki’s ability to refrain from stabbing him by grabbing Ellie’s chin in his meaty hand and forcing her to look at him. “She must be unsoiled then, at such a very young age. Unless, of course, the Princes have already used her themselves.”

A resounded boom from the opposite end of the table effectively shut Frey up and silenced the whole hall. Expecting to see Thor jumping out of his seat, spectators were probably surprised to learn that the noise came from Loki’s fist smashing down on the table.

“Ellie,” he snapped. “Refill my goblet, now.”

The girl bolted away from the table to fetch the jug, and the Trickster could feel his brother staring at him in surprise. It was not like him to lose his temper often, but sometimes even the God of Mischief allowed his emotions to get the better of him. For a moment, no one dared say a word, until Frey slowly smirked and spoke up.

“I meant no offence. You must understand; it is quite normal to have Midgardian slaves used for such practices. It seemed reasonable to me that she would be kept for that purpose.”

“We do not have slaves on Asgard,” Odin said with surprising control, although it was obvious to anyone that knew him well that he was perturbed. “She is not a slave and she is here of her own free will.”

“It is such an unusual sight,” Freyja added, idly picking at her food. “Mortals living in Asgard is not commonplace.”

Her brother nodded. “Surely her presence must greatly vex some of the Aesir?”

Ellie once again appeared in the room as Loki stared down the twins across from him. She was quick to reach his side and refilled his goblet with unsteady hands. Taking a sly glance at her, he could see the tears running down her already stained cheeks.

“That is alright,” he whispered to her, softly placing his hand on her arm as a signal to stop pouring. “Thank you, little one. Go and remain in Sevda’s company for the rest of the feast.”

With a quick nod, she disappeared once more as quickly as she could.

“It has never been an issue,” Frigga replied to Frey’s earlier comment, the conversation still continuing. “And we do not think it will develop into one.”

He let out a chuckle. “Surely there are some who oppose her presence?”

By now, the whole hall was listening to the conversation and the air in the room had shifted again. It was no surprise that there would be people who were against mortals being in the realm at all, no matter the circumstance, but it had never posed much of a problem bar snide comments here and there.

“I do not like what he is insinuating,” Thor muttered, making sure that only Loki could hear.

Before he could reply, Frey was still rambling away. “It would not surprise me if there are some who are offended by her being here. Not just on Asgard, but actually working within the palace;
serving the Allmother, no less!”

“As long as she works to her best ability and remains loyal then I happy to have her here,” Frigga spoke, mirroring her husband’s control, but wearing an expression that could kill.

Freyja shrugged. “As long as Asgard is also happy having a mortal amongst them.”

“They have no reason not to be.”

“You speak of her as though she is an unwelcome visitor,” Thor all but growled. “Instead of a child.”

“Child or not, she is mortal,” the goddess replied as she took a swig from her goblet. “And mortals do not belong with the Aesir or the Vanir. As my brother said, they are usually only present to be bought and sold. Otherwise they should remain on Midgard to revere us from afar.”

A few years ago, Loki would have mostly agreed with such a statement. Slavery had never been something that Odin or Frigga had any time for, even if there were other realms that did allow it. As far as they were concerned, those working and serving within the palace could leave at any time to pursue whatever life they wanted. No one had ever been forced to stay. Even Thor — who first assumed Ellie to be some sort of runaway slave upon seeing her in his mother’s arms — had changed his tune. It only took a few flower crowns to do it. But the younger prince had recently learned the importance that could come with being mortal and living such a short life. As far as he was concerned, Ellie had only ever displayed kindness and care towards those around her. She deserved some happiness after the state Frigga had found her in. If working in this palace was that happiness, then he would not wish her away.

“So you would accuse the great house of Odin of having slaves?” Thor very nearly spat. “Who we also abuse?”

Frey laughed at the accusation. “You act as though keeping whores is not commonplace?”

“Is that why you keep your sister so close?” Loki questioned. The look of utter hatred slung his way and the chortle that escaped Thor actually made him grin.

Before anyone else could get a word in, the Allfather spoke above them all. Once he began talking, there was no one who dared to cut across him. “It was unforeseen circumstances that brought that Midgardian to our door, Frey. The Queen found her near death on Midgard, and brought her back so that our healers could save her life. She remains because she is safe here. She is not a pet or a slave. It was merely a benevolent act on the Allmother’s part. When the mortal comes of age, she will be asked once more if she wishes to remain on Asgard, and that is the end of it.”

“Apologies, Allfather, Allmother,” Frey said mildly, bowing his head slightly. “It was not my intention to offend. I merely tried to understand the situation.”

“As you were, Frey.”

What was left of the meal was eat in an uncomfortable silence and Ellie did not make another appearance for the rest of the evening. Loki could hear the murmurs from the other tables, Frey and Freyja’s words having stirred something within some of the guests. They had evidently infuriated Thor as well, who made it quite obvious when he and Loki were retiring to their quarters afterwards.

“Frey is a fool,” he barked, stomping down the hall with Loki at his side.
“That he is.”

“And you were right, Freyja is a fucking slut.”

“I could not agree more!”

“They accuse us of keeping slaves, then they accuse you and I have keeping whores against their will. More specifically, mortal children for that purpose! Can you believe that he said little Ellie would sell greatly? As if we would sell a child to someone like him!”

The Trickster clenched his jaw at the reminder. “I think it is best that we forget about this night and keep both of them away from Ellie.”

“I agree. Although I would very much like to show them how I can use Mjölnir first.”

“You can do so right after I split Frey’s skull with my bare hands.”

Sitting by the fireplace alone in his quarters that night, Loki could not help the unease that had consumed him. The words of the twins remained ingrained in his mind and would not leave no matter what he did. The muttering in the hall bothered him the most. He hoped that the conversation would go ignored by the people, but it seemed they were already gossiping. All he could do was sit and hope that this, as Odin said, would be the end of it.
Loki and Thor set a plan in motion with the help of their friends, and Frey and Freyja’s claims seem to have roused more than just uncertainty within the Aesir.

Again, a very genuine thank you to everyone reading, and liking, and commenting. It's awesome hearing what you guys think, and it seems that the dislike for Frey and Freyja is real. I'll admit, I'm also not their biggest fan...


“You can’t be serious?”

The Warriors Three and Lady Sif wore the most befuddled of expressions, while Thor was stupidly grinning in delight.

“Oh, but I am!” he answered, plucked a fourteen year old Ellie from atop his shoulders, and set her down on the ground.

Loki sat nearby in the training yard, sharpening his daggers as Thor rambled on to his friends, Ellie’s little hand enclasped in his massive one.

“You want to teach the mortal how to fight?” Sif queried, totally baffled.


Fandral gave him a look. “And why is that?”

“She is very tiny and mortal too. Loki and I know that some do not like that she is on Asgard, so it is merely a precaution. Thus I came up with the exceptional plan to train her and you, my most loyal friends, will assist me!”

“We will?” Volstagg deadpanned.

“You will!”

Fandral nearly guffawed. “Why not get the Trickster to do it?”

“He’s helping,” Thor stated bluntly and Loki sent them a particularly menacing grin.

The four of them stared back at him as Volstagg cleared his throat awkwardly. “Oh, no…”

“My friends, if you must know, my brother and I have been on edge since Frey and Freyja’s
comments at the banquet. We would rather teach her some of these skills as a safety measure.”

“Do you think they will act on their comments?”

“Perhaps you should refrain from talking about Ellie as though she is not there,” Loki said dryly, glancing up from his weapons.

Fandral clapped his hands and looked down at the girl. “Alright then… Are you, err, ready to learn how to defend yourself?”

Ellie merely nodded. “Sure.”

“Excellent!” Thor cheered and set his plan in motion.

“Just no snakes this time,” Hogun grunted, giving Ellie the stink eye.

“No tricks,” Loki agreed. “I promise.”

Loki stayed as close to Ellie as he could without getting in the way, making sure that the Warriors Three and Sif did the job properly. While Thor seemed eager to have her swinging around massive claymores, Loki advised that she first learn how to evade attacks, with which Sif quickly agreed. To the passing Einherjar, it was a comical sight to behold — great burly warriors chasing around and trying to grab a slight girl who was doing her best to run rings around them. At first, she seemed uncomfortable with the practice, but once Loki reminded her of the familiar Frost Giant and Hero game, she calmed and listened to all of their instructions.

The lessons took place in-between handmaiden and princely duties, but seemed to be quite successful. The princes would make sure that the yard would be privately reserved to them so that no one would interrupt their sessions. Although Thor’s friends remained ever sceptical of the “Little Trickster”, they settled into their roles as mentors relatively easily. Perhaps now they could get a better understanding of why the Odinsons were so fond of her.

“Little one,” Thor announced one day as they were beginning. “It is time you chose a weapon.”

“You think I’m ready for that?” she replied, clearly intimidated as Thor pulled a massive axe from a weapon rack.

“Oh, I do!”

“Not a chance,” Sif said, pointing to the axe in his hands. “She is not going to be wielding that.”

Thor groaned, the very definition of a petulant child. “But Siiiiiiiiif…”

“She will use something lighter,” she continued on, ignoring his outburst. She quickly grabbed a dagger, a quiver of arrows, and a bow from the rack. “She clearly takes after Loki, so let us work with that.”

Fandral let out a dramatic groan. “Ugh, now there’s two of them…”

“How terrible,” Loki said with a roll of the eyes.

“You will show her how to wield a dagger,” Sif ordered, addressing Loki. “And I will get her started with the bow. How does that sound?”

“Sounds great!” Ellie agreed with a great big smile as Sif helped strap the quiver to her back.

“Let’s get to work!” Thor declared, Mjölnir in hand.
Loki was sure that the Warriors Three and Sif were just delighted to spend their time teaching a Midgardian how to spar. Sif seemed to be the least bothered by it, although she was probably just happy to do it at Thor’s suggestion. The God of Thunder seemed more than happy to have Ellie in the training yard, finally showing her the things that he loved to do.

Much like seiðr training, progress was slow, but the young girl was more than happy to do as her superiors instructed. Although they seemed less than happy with Loki’s presence, one which he made sure to be as overbearing as possible, he stood on the sidelines for every lesson. He had never taught someone how to fight, but he simply used the same formula as before by using the techniques his mother taught him. While Thor usually acted as the antagonist in their training, he found the whole thing to be ‘great fun indeed’. As long as none of them said anything disrespectful to Ellie, Loki remained calm and collected in their company.

* * *

As was per Asgard’s tradition, workers were paid monthly. Pay day was also considered an off day, so all workers usually went to the local markets to spend their wages as they wished. This month, Loki finished his duties early in the day and decided to go down to the market to browse the stalls. He went alone considering his personal hand servant, Radburn, was off duty.

Once he had collected his horse from the stables, he took his time riding to the markets. Usually his trips were most pleasant because no one disturbed him. It did irritate him ever so slightly that some people found him so unapproachable, but it also meant that he could peruse the stalls in the market place without being bothered by others. Sometimes, in the more expensive section of the market, he managed to find books or trinkets that grabbed his attention, or even fabrics that could be used in garments made by his tailors. Although he was fully aware he could get these items for free within the palace, he never saw the harm in giving someone decent pay when he had the gold to spend. It wasn’t like he was going to use it for anything else… It was also useful when it came to finding gifts for his mother, who was quite fond of the some of the more unusual novelties or foreign jewellery you could find there. He would also be lying if he said he didn’t get a kick out of seeing people stare as he made the rounds.

Having dismounted his horse upon spotting some interesting leather-bound books, he spent a short amount of time speaking with the stall’s owner about what she had available to buy.

“Have you received any new Midgardian fiction?” he asked, eyeing the display. “Preferably fantasy?”

“Midgardian fantasy, Your Highness?”

“Yes, that’s correct.”

“There is one book,” she answered politely, seemingly delighted to have a prince willing to buy from her. As she spoke, she rummaged under her stall. “Apparently it’s selling quite well down there. It’s an old book, but it’s popularity has resurged again. Where did I—? Ah! Here it is.”

Loki watched as she lifted a large black tome on to the stall. It was massive — he guessed at least a thousand pages — and landed with a severe thump when she put it down. On its cover was one large gold ring surround by three smaller rings. Within the centre was a gleaming red eye. Alas, it did not have a name on it.
“What is it?” he asked, perplexed as he picked it up.

“I can’t recall,” she admitted. “I think it had something to do with rings, Your Highness. You must understand, we do not have many people asking about Midgardian books…”

“It is alright,” he hushed her, noticing her hands twitching nervously. “I understand.” Without another word, he opened the front cover and began to read the description written on the inside:

‘This special 50th anniversary hardback edition of J.R.R. Tolkien’s classic masterpiece includes…’ ‘Yes, yes, but what is it about? ‘… a sequel to Tolkien’s 1937 fantasy novel ‘The Hobbit’…’ Oh!’

“I’ll take it,” he said without hesitation, reaching to his leather pouch for gold.

The vender seemed delighted that he was taking it off her hands and when she said the asking price, he doubled it without so much as a second thought, then thanked her, and placed the book carefully into his carrying bag on the horse. He proceeded to lead the animal by the reins as he strolled through more nearby stalls that were bustling with customers.

“Prince Loki?”

He looked up at the sound of his name and turned to see the culprit.

“Hi,” Ellie greeted him with a wave, her own carrying bag tossed over her shoulder as she approached him.

“Hello, little one,” he replied with a small smile.

“What brings you to the markets today?” she asked curiously. “I don’t think I’ve seen you down here before.”

“Sometimes I do show my face among the common people,” he joked. “I came to purchase goods; same as you, I presume?”

“Yeah, I got some new clothes and stuff! And I got some ingredients because Fen and Sevda want’a teach me how to bake.”

Only then did Loki notice the two women standing either side of the girl. Fen and Sevda were two of his mother’s longest serving handmaidens who had taken Ellie under their metaphorical wing. It was due to Frigga’s request, but it was no surprise that they were happy to comply, considering they both had young children of their own. It made sense that they would be willing to help the child adjust to life in Asgard. Loki had known them for centuries.

“Afternoon, ladies,” he greeted them with a slight incline of the head.

After greeting him formally in unison, Sevda asked him. “How do you fair today, Prince Loki?”

“Splendid, thank you. It is always nice to take a break from the duties that bore me.”

“Ah yes,” Fen drawled. “Being a prince is so very hard…”

“It is far harder than you could ever comprehend, Fen!”

Sevda let out a chuckle. “Oh, please! Your duties just consist of playing tricks on Prince Thor. Why not spend your day plotting against him?”

“Perhaps he deserves a day off every now and then.”
“I have known you both since you were children and you have never given him a break. You think he deserves one?”

He paused, then shook his head and smirked. “No, he definitely doesn’t.”

Sevda shook her head, but he knew that she enjoyed the talks they had. “Shopping for something in particular today, Your Highness?”

He shook his head. “Not particularly, Sevda. I am mostly here to see if anything catches my eye.”

“Did you find anything?” Ellie piped up.

“I did find an interesting looking book or two…”

“No way! What is it? Anything I know?”

He shrugged. “Perhaps you might know—”

“Here, you! Mortal! Get out of our realm!”

Loki whipped his head around at the sound of shouting. He immediately spotted two men on the other side of the market, staring daggers in his direction. Suddenly, he realised that they weren’t looking at him; their eyes were firmly fixed on Ellie.

The burly, bald-headed one resembled a rabid animal as he continued yelling. “You’re not welcome here, mortal!”

Sevda and Fen immediately stood closer to the girl, sending the two bulls looks that could kill.

“Do you know them, Ellie?” Fen asked.

She shook her head and tried to ignore them. “No, I don’t, I swear.”

“What a pair of cretins,” Sevda spat through gritted teeth. “Mouthing off at a child.”

Fen threw all decorum out the window and shouted back. “Shut your mouth, you fat oaf!”

While the other man kept his mouth wisely shut, Bald-head spat on the ground and refused to stop. “Fuck off, and take that mortal bitch with you!”

At this point, a crowd had formed to watch the insults rolling back and forth. They stared and chattered, most likely putting all the signs together to figure out who was being battered with insults and why.

The sight of Ellie trying to make herself a smaller target to the hateful spew made Loki see red. “Both of you, not another word! Or, by Odin, I will cut your tongues from your mouths myself!”

Having been chastised by the younger prince, both men were quick to heed his words and stop with their harassment. They turned red from what was probably a combination of rage and embarrassment.

Glaring at them once more, Loki turned his attention back to the Midgardian. “Ignore their words. They are fools and I will not let them hurt you.”

No one had a chance to react as the tomato struck Ellie’s cheek with a harsh smack.
She screamed in surprise. The crowd gasped.

“Prince’s whore!”

It splattered on contact, covering all of them in its red pulp. Loki’s eyes blew wide as he hastily wiped it off his cheek and looked down at her. Her whole face was covered in red, both from the damned tomato and the impact of the strike. She looked like a cornered animal, eyes wide and blinking rapidly. Sevda and Fen both stood in shock. When Loki set his eyes on Bald-head — the clearly guilty suspect — he never wanted to wring someone’s neck so much in his life.

He swiftly turned on his heals to do just that when a hand reached around his cloak and grabbed his dagger from its sheath. Surprised, he gaped down and saw Ellie up on her feet, dagger in hand, her eyes focused on the men with utter hatred. Before she could sprint off, he grabbed her in his arms and held her back as she fought him.

“Ellie, no!” he implored her. “Stop!”

“Let me go!” she screeched, her knuckles white with the dagger in her grip.

Fen wisely grabbed her arm to help restrain her. “If you hurt them you will be charged with assault, foolish girl! They are not worth it!”

“You will let me handle this!” Loki growled, passing her off to the two women and taking his weapon back. “You will not ruin your life for this filth!”

Ellie’s body deflated as she stopped fighting, the watery tomato sliding off her face in the struggle. Sevda was carefully wiping it off with the edge of her sleeve as Fen removed it from her flaxen hair — neither woman was concerned with what had hit them; only for the poor girl. The two men looked delighted until they realised Loki had started for them. Before they could run, he knocked them backwards with a powerful blast of energy — it sent the nearby tomato cart flying — and stalked after their fallen figures. Before Baldy could get up, he delivered a precise kick directly to his fat head. Blood spattered his robes and the cobbled road below.

“You would dare to assault a handmaiden of the Allmother?” Loki roared and spat on the man’s oozing head. “She is a child. I would kill you and your friend myself, but I would rather see what the Allmother has in store for you both, you scum.”

The other man dared not move as Loki approached; he simply stared at the gaping wound in the tomato-thrower’s forehead. The Trickster did not hesitate to grab him by the neck and haul him to his feet as Einherjar quickly descended on the small market. Upon seeing the Prince strangling a man with his bare hands, they openly stared at him.

“Prince Loki?” the commanding officer addressed him. “What has happened here?”

“They have assaulted and harassed a handmaiden to the Queen,” he growled and tossed the gasping fiend to the ground, hard. “Bring them to my mother before I kill them, as I would take great pleasure in it! Tell her I will be with her shortly to further explain what occurred.”

“Yes, Your Highness!”

Both assailants were quickly grabbed by the guards and they marched back towards the palace from whence they came. The other guards quickly dispersed the spectators after some insistent crowd control. Loki quickly made his way back to the three handmaidens and his horse when the men were out of sight.

“Sevda, return to the palace with Ellie and remain with her in your quarters until my mother
arrives. The Einherjar will keep you safe. Fen, you will come with me back to the palace and we will inform her of what just happened.”

“Yes, My Prince.”

“But, Loki…” Ellie sniffled and grabbed on to his free hand. “Please don’t leave.”

His brow furrowed at the sudden contact, but when he met her red-rimmed eyes, he squeezed her hand reassuringly. “You will be safe with Sevda. I will not be long, but I must speak with my mother.”

“But—”

“I will be gone but for a little while. I will return.”

“You promise?” she asked and held up her other hand with all digits but her smallest finger clenched into a fist. It was an odd Midgardian gesture, one which apparently meant you were making an unbreakable promise with the person whose finger you clutched with your own. He didn’t understand the logic or reasoning behind it, but he looped his finger with hers.

“I promise.”

With that, Ellie released her hold on his finger as Sevda quickly led her away with a thankful nod towards Loki. Two guards went with them and stayed nearby in case anyone else got involved. The prince quickly guided Fen to his horse and mounted the animal once she was up too. Together they rode to the palace to find the Queen.

* * *

“That evening, Odin’s voice was the only thing booming through the throne room. The attacker and his accomplice — who Loki found out were called Bjorn and Elof — were on their knees before the seated King, hands cuffed securely with thick chains. The Allmother remained incredibly controlled while Fen and Loki stood to the side, glaring and observing the exchange.

“I have heard enough from the countless witnesses, my son included, to make a decision. Considering your hate speech and violent actions, Bjorn, — which I also consider to be directed towards the Allmother — you will be imprisoned within the dungeons below until I see you fit to leave before you are old and frail. Your imprisonment starts at dusk tomorrow. Elof, you will be fined and placed under house arrest for an amount of time to be chosen at a later date. Guards, remove them from my sight. Looking at them through my one good eye is too much to stomach.”

Loki blanched. Beside him, Fen wore the same expression.

Assaults on personal staff of the royal family usually carried far heavier sentences. It wasn’t uncommon to see heads flying or life imprisonment being settled on when the crimes occurred. He had thought that such a sentence would be chosen — that’s why he kept them both alive, for fuck sake! — but now they would both walk free eventually.

“That is an unusually… kind sentence,” Fen whispered with a hint of malice.
"I agree," was his mumbled response, still eying his father in bewilderment. Once the guards hauled the prisoners from the room, Loki was daring enough to approach the throne. “Father? Why have they received such a light sentence?”

“Light sentence, my son?” Odin replied.

“They assaulted and harassed a handmaiden to the Allmother.”

“And I chose a punishment that I saw fit.”

With a glance towards his mother, Loki frown. “Father, I have seen many prisoners sent to the chopping block for such a crime.”

“Then I will explain my reasoning to you,” he offered and stood up with Gungnir in hand. “As a future king, you must learn from the current one, yes?”

“Fen?” Frigga called her handmaiden. “Would you escort me to see Ellie?”

“Of course, Your Majesty.”

Left alone with his father in the throne room, Loki waited anxiously for Odin to begin explaining why he had made such a decision.

“I know that you are aware of the opinions of some people within this realm, Loki. You know that these people do not welcome mortals here at all. Bjorn and Elof are two such people, it just so happens that Bjorn is far more vocal about it. Daring to assault any member of our personal staff is a bold, and incredibly stupid, move. But I do not think that sentencing two men to death for throwing fruit at a mortal is a wise decision. They both have families as well, even despite their violent tendencies. It could very well cause backlash among our people — one that could, in turn, cause attacks against her and possibly other staff to grow in severity. Their punishment is one which should silence their hate, but also not incite anymore of it. Do you understand?”

Loki’s brow creased with conflicted thoughts. Part of him — a very prominent part of him — wanted those mens’ heads on a pike. Families or no, he didn’t particularly care. They hurt a child. They called her a whore. She was defenceless. Her only crime was existing, and this is the punishment she received.

But the last thing he wanted was for Ellie to receive more of these punishments. If giving those men a milder sentence would result in her safety, then he would try to put aside the hate he felt for them and replace it with the affection he felt for her.

“Yes, Father,” he answered with the most neutral expression he could muster.

“Good, I am glad. Do not worry any more over this incident.”

“Of course, Father. Am I dismissed?”

Odin eyed his son for a brief moment before he nodded. It took Loki most of self-control to not briskly walk from the throne room and slam the doors behind him.

***
Unable to sleep, Loki found himself sitting in his usual chair in the library with an open book in his lap. The words remained unread as he played the events of the day through his mind over and over. He had gone to see Ellie and his mother as he so promised — after all, he did do that unusual Midgardian finger-loop thing… He had not attempted to go near the handmaiden quarters since, having just briefly stuck his head in to check on her. Afterwards, he locked himself in his rooms until the sun had gone down. He only left to collect his dinner from the kitchens — leftover stew and bread from the night before — considering the cooks also had the day off. In the middle of the night when most people had gone to sleep, he wandered the halls and wound up here. He had expected to be alone.

The doors opening and Ellie rushing inside was certainly not expected.

“Ellie?”

Her big eyes met his immediately. “Loki! I did it!”

“You did what?” he asked, leaning forward in his seat. For a brief moment, he considered the possibility that she had somehow murdered Bjorn and Elof without anyone noticing.

“The flower!” she cheered, her voice echoing through the library. “I did it!”

She held her open palms out to him and, sure enough, Loki saw a very small clematis flower within them, small tendrils of a ruby red energy surrounding it and gliding through the air. His jaw dropped. He had not expected this tonight. She gently placed it on the nearby table and both of them stared in disbelief and delight as it remained solid and alive.

Pride swelled within him as he looked at the little thing. He had never been so delighted to feel magical energy from an object before. He felt the grin pulling at his lips as he turned his attention from the flower to her. “You did it, little one, as I knew you would.”

Just as he was not prepared for her to burst into the library at all hours, he was not prepared for her to leap into his chair and fling her arms around him. She nearly knocked the wind out of him — she did literally knock the book from his lap — but her lithe arms circled around his neck and hugged him with all the might her frame possessed.

Clearing his throat awkwardly, he flailed his arms for the briefest of moments before he recalled how her whole body shook when those threats were hurled at her; threats for simply existing and living on Asgard…

Loki slowly released the breath he had been holding and wound his arms tightly around her. He promised that he would never let anyone hurt Ellie so long as he lived.

“Well done, little one. You did it.”
Midgard

Chapter Summary

Frigga arranges an impromptu trip to Midgard, and Loki and Ellie have a long overdue discussion about her past.

Chapter Notes

I felt like we might all need some fluff after the last few chapters and maybe some answers too? On a side note (although I'm sure I sound like a broken record at this stage), the positive response to the fic continues to inspire and shock me. Y’all are a delight! This is a long one, so enjoy!


“To Midgard, Mother? Why?”

Frigga looked up from her breakfast to meet the gaze of her younger son. “I think it is a wise move after the market incident.”

Loki sat with his mother in her quarters as they breakfasted together. Odin and Thor had left that morning with a section of the Asgardian army to settle a disruption on the outskirts of the realm. The villages had seen a spike in incidents relating to raiders and groups of outlaws, so the Allfather thought it best to settle it himself with his eldest son in tow. Loki was asked to stay behind at Frigga’s request, so he watched as his father and brother marched away atop horses with the forces of Asgard following behind. She offered to explain why over breakfast.

“What exactly does what happened in the market have to do with us going to Midgard?” he asked.

“There has been quite an unrest among my handmaidens since the attack on Ellie,” she explained, hands cupping her mug of tea. “She seems to have gotten back to her usual self for the most part, but I wish to take her away from Asgard, if but for a day. I think a change of scenery would help.”

“So, we are taking her home?”

“Not home-home, but to another part of Midgard.”

He pouted. “Would it not be beneficial to return to a place with which she is more familiar? Like Ireland?”

“I am against bringing her back to Ireland and I do not think she would be willing to return either.”

Considering his mother’s words carefully before responding, he then frowned and asked. “Does
The subject of Ellie’s time on Midgard before her arrival to Asgard had not been brought up by him in years. In fact, the last time he mentioned it to her was when he asked if she had any siblings that she could remember. After that, he didn’t attempt to bring it up again. He also never asked Frigga about it considering there was no way she would break the child’s trust and tell him all.

“So this is just a day trip to Midgard, then?” he asked. “In the company of Ellie, Sevda, and Fen?”

“Yes, and you, if you agree.”

He didn’t have to contemplate the offer for long. “When do we leave?”

* * *

“Well met, Your Majesty, Your Highness,” Heimdall said with a nod before addressing their company. “M’ladies. I saw you coming.”

The Gatekeeper was stood upon his perch as usual, watching over the Nine Realms in silence. Upon the approach of Frigga, Loki, and the three handmaidens down the Bifröst, he turned to greet them accordingly. They were far more dressed down than usual; Loki and Frigga had used magic to acquire Midgardian clothes — a black suit for him and a long tan winter coat and black pants for her — while the latter gave Fen and Sevda some casual outfits she collected from previous trips. Ellie was once again donning the no-longer oversized dark blue garment that she wore upon her arrival to Asgard — Loki had at that point been informed by the girl that such a garment was called a ‘hoodie’, whatever the Hel that meant.


“Not at present, Allmother,” he replied from beneath his golden helm. “It would seem that all is going as planned with regards to their travels.”

“Excellent, I’m glad to hear it. And how are the mortals on Midgard today?”

“Much is quiet on Earth as well, but they have not had a pleasant year. A conflict within The Middle East has severely escalated and the United States are still reeling after a terrorist attack in one of its most populated cities last month. Although it would seem that things have calmed somewhat right now.”

“Are the Midgardians at war with each other again?” Loki spoke up, not at all impressed by the news.

“I would guess that the most recent attack within the United States will give rise to another war, yes. But that is not where you plan on visiting is it, Your Highness?”

“We make for the city of London,” came the answer from Frigga. “But only for the day. We will wish to return in the evening.”

“As you wish, My Queen.” Heimdall stepped up to the podium key in which his sword, Hofund, belonged. “I am aware that this is not the first journey for Sevda or Fen, but it is young Ellie’s.”
“It is, Protecter,” said girl replied, planting herself close between her fellow handmaidens. She eyed his observatory apprehensively. “Does it…hurt?”

“You will not feel any pain,” he reassured her in his usual baritone voice. “But nausea is a common side effect after one’s first journey.”

Ellie visibly cringed at the thought. “Lovely…”

“It might be in your best interest to hold on to someone. Perhaps the Prince will assist you?”

For someone with such a dull tone, Loki thought to himself. He does love a jest every now and then, doesn’t he?

Loki smirked at the Gatekeeper’s suggestion, knowing it was said in a playful attempt to knock his pride. But he didn’t falter, choosing to reach out and grip her hand in his own. “Gladly.”

“A wise proposal,” Frigga agreed as they approached the opening that revealed the galaxy before them. “You will be fine, Ellie.”

“I haven’t travelled in it for nine years,” the girl replied with a wobbly voice. “I don’t even remember when I got here…”

As Heimdall inserted Hofund halfway into its key, it slowly came to life as bolts of lighting shot from its place to the observatory around them. Ellie jumped and Loki felt her grip on his hand tighten greatly. He ushered her gently towards his mother and wedged her between the two of them.

As streaks of lightening lit up the whole space, he briefly stooped to her level and Fen and Sevda approached as well. “You will be alright, little one. I won’t let you go.”

She met his gaze and, although she still looked very afraid, nodded with some resolution. She offered up the little finger of her free hand and he linked it with his without hesitation. The observatory slowly began to spin around, at quite a slow pace at first, until it picked up incredible speed. Noticing Ellie’s eyes darting around to try focus on something, he advised her to focus on the floor until he told her otherwise. The large beak-like structure atop the observatory moved from its original position pointing upwards until it was now focused towards Midgard. Inside, the noise barely grew at all as the vortex opened before them, the beak glowing bright with white, crackling lightening.

“Safe travels, my friends,” Heimdall wished from his spot on the steps. “Call for me when you wish to return.”

“Hold on, Ellie,” Loki said, gently pulling her closer to him.

With that, Hofund was placed the rest of the way inside the podium and the five travellers were sucked into the rainbow bridge’s gleaming tunnel. On the outskirts of Asgard, five figures clearly shot through the light beam towards their destination. Within the beam, they remained still as they were thrust along at breakneck speeds. Loki stayed focused ahead but for brief glances he threw at the Midgardian to make sure she wasn’t panicking. Frankly, she looked too bewildered to contemplate anything else bar amazement. Suddenly, the light before them weakened and Earth appeared in their line of sight. The planet was approaching rapidly — or rather they were the ones approaching — growing bigger and bigger by the millisecond. The journey lasted for less than thirty seconds, but the grip on Loki’s hand never wavered.

They landed with a bang.
Thankfully, it was in an alleyway as opposed to a busy street. Loki was immediately hit with a strong smell of baked goods as he looked around. He knew he couldn’t really complain — it was only an alleyway after all — but it still appeared quite dingy. Surrounded by tall buildings on each side and hidden from passersby, the five visitors took a moment to collect themselves as the dust from the bridge’s impact settled.

“That was fuckin’ amazing!”

The laugh that left Loki’s mouth was matched by Fen, who chuckled delightedly when the curse word erupted from the exhilarated mortal. Ellie was bouncing on the spot, clutching her hands together and staring up at the sky in amazement.

“How the hell did that even work?” she rambled on, speaking rapidly. “That was so cool! We literally got here in seconds!”

“And where did you learn language like that, little one?” Frigga queried, approaching her with a very motherly expression. Her gaze shifted to Loki, who immediately feigned innocence and mild insult at the thought.

Ellie immediately halted in her tracks and blurted out. “Thor! He says it all the time.”

“No surprises there,” Sevda shrugged.

Beside her, Fen nodded once her laughter died down. “Not at all.”

“Have you forgotten how vulgar Thor can be, Mother?”

She rolled her eyes before leading them down a smaller laneway. “I will have words with him when we return.”

“Can I please be present when you do? I do enjoy the rare occasions when he gets reprimanded!”

“Loki, hush.”

“Please don’t tell him it was me who said it,” Ellie begged, following closely by the Queen’s side. “I really don’t want him to be mad at me after tellin’ on him.”

While Frigga quickly reassured her, Loki was grinning happily. “I would actually encourage you to ‘tell on him’ more often.”

“Loki—”

“Oh, wow!” Ellie’s interruption cut off any conversation that was to be had between mother and son. Loki took one look at the girl before following her gaze to the bustling street that appeared as they exited the alleyway.


Although it was not yet midday in the city, the streets were jam packed with people going about their day. Horns blared and engines revved belonging to the taxis and buses that crawled up the street in heavy traffic. In typical London fashion, the Autumn air had a cold bite to it, but the sun managed to break through what few clouds drifted through the sky. The buildings were quite dull in comparison to the golden structures on Asgard, but that didn’t seem to deter Ellie, who looked around with an open mouth.

“Holy shi— eh, holy moley,” she murmured, fixed to the spot. “This place is so cool. And so
“It is one of the busiest shopping streets in the world,” Frigga explained. “They have massive footfall all year round.”

“I don’t recognise any of the shops.”

“Well, there’s no need to worry about that. We will be finding somewhere to eat instead.”

“I have not had Midgardian food for the longest time,” Fen contemplated as the Queen lead the way to their destination.

Ellie looked up at the admission. “I can’t remember when I last had it, or what it even tastes like.”

“Maybe this will jog your memory,” Sevda suggested, wrapping a comforting arm around the girl’s shoulders. “As the Midgardians say, there’s no time like the present.”

Frigga seemed to know these streets well and guided the group to a residence that wasn’t far from the location in which the Bifröst left them. Frigga explained that it was called a café, but Loki guessed that it was not an English owned property by the unfamiliar language above the entrance way. Despite arriving at lunch time, the café thankfully had space for all of them to dine together.

The God of Mischief’s gaze swept over the room and judged it accordingly. It was certainly no dining hall of Asgard, but there was something quaint about the place. At least the servers were polite and showed respect to their superiors. The place was buzzing with various kinds of people — those in suits on their breaks from whatever work they did, couples out together, lone eaters taking time to themselves, and small families grabbing their lunch. The chatter was continuous but oddly relaxing. It reminded him of the chatter at feasts, but without the random smashing of glasses and cheers for more ale.

On the few occasions he had visited Midgard, he had very rarely eaten there. The clarity of the lunch menu worked in his favour, so he settled on their poached eggs. Ellie ordered the same thing, obviously overwhelmed by all the options on the menu that she wasn’t familiar with.

“Do you know if you like poached eggs?” he asked her as their server took their menus and went off to the kitchen with their respective orders. Beside them, Frigga had descending into a casual conversation with Sevda and Fen about places in London they should visit afterwards.

“Not a clue,” she admitted with a shrug. “But I’m willin’ to try them.”

“Trips to Midgard are rare, so you might as well make the most of it while you’re here, even if it can be severely dull.”

She snorted at his comment. “You’re very harsh towards Midgard. What exactly did it do to annoy you?”

“Nothing, I just find it considerably dull at times.”

“Cause not everyone knows you’re a prince here? Loki, you can be so incredibly pompous sometimes.”

He slowly settled his gaze on her, narrowing his eyes while she acted casual, as if she hadn’t just insulted him for no reason. “Midgard is already a bad influence on you — you’re disrespecting your superiors and we have been here but half an hour.”

The young girl let out a happy laugh as two jugs of water were delivered to their table. “You’re not my superior here!”
“I am your superior everywhere,” he teased as a cup of tea was set before him. “I am your prince, I am your teacher, I am a god. Therefore, I am better than you.”

“But you’re also finicky, mischievous, and arrogant.”

“And you are annoying.”

“I know I am! And I quite enjoy annoyin’ you to no end.”

As he placed a drop of milk in his tea, he smirked at her. “Ah, I have taught you so well.”

“I did learn from the best,” she agreed confidently. “After seein’ you harass Thor for years, I was bound to learn a thing or two.”

“Or three.”

“Or four!”

He stirred his tea languidly before picking it up and taking a sip. “Let us be frank — you are doomed to be as annoying as I.”

“But I actually quite enjoy it,” she replied. “You say that as though bein’ a mischief-maker is a bad thing when it’s your calling card.”

He mulled over the taste of his tea — something called English Breakfast — before he opened his mouth again. “It is not a bad thing at all, though it is not exactly a favourable quality to have. If you haven’t noticed, I am not a popular figure in Asgard.”

“I don’t understand that, by the way. Why are you not more popular?”

He gave her a incredulous look. “You are jesting, no? I’m not exactly well liked for the tricks I pull, or the fact that I usually try to get my own way.”

“Like Thor doesn’t do that too,” she scoffed. “Bit of a double standard, isn’t it? Sure, you’ve pulled a fair amount of tricks on people and you’re a bit of an arse, but you’re also amazin’ at seidr, super intelligent, and a master wordsmith.”

Loki considered her statement for a moment. He glanced across at Frigga and the handmaidens, who were deep in conversation, before setting down his cup of tea and facing Ellie. It was not often he received compliments, although he was rarely looking for them from anyone bar his father, but she always seemed to give them when the discussion came up, much like his mother.

“Did you just say I was an arse?”

“Oh my God, Loki,” she giggled, breaking into a fit of laughter. “You’re ridiculous.”

“I’m anything but ridiculous.”

“Fine then; you’re quite the joker.”

“I know, I do try.”

It wasn’t too long before their food arrived, piping hot and looking quite delectable. While he tucked into his meal without much hesitation — it turned out to be as tasty as it looked — Ellie eyed her own poached eggs on a toasted muffin with apprehension. When she eventually took her first bite, the food disappeared quickly afterwards, leaving behind a mess that had Sevda and Fen
laughing away. The little one seemed to regret nothing, stating that the eggs were ‘amazin’’, as was everything else in the realm.

Frigga paid the bill with the Midgardian currency brought from Odin’s vault and the group left with satisfied appetites to do some more sightseeing. They wandered idly northwards, taking their time in a city that never seemed to stop. Ellie seemed transfixed by the place, stopping to stare in shop windows, or admire a fascinating car that drove by. After spotting a large furry creature Frigga called a ‘dog’, the child’s eyes nearly bulged out of her head. At first they mistook it for a normal wolf, but the mention of its true name reminded Loki that humans had successfully bred wolves into placid house pets over the years. He steered clear of the animal, not eager to get too close to its heavy panting and lolling tongue, but Ellie was sheepishly petting its head after receiving permission from its owner.

“His name is Bobby,” she explained as ‘Bobby’ eagerly licked at Ellie’s free hand, tail wagging at ridiculous speeds. “Don’t worry, he’s very friendly.”

“He’s so lovely,” Ellie mused and scratched his ears.

“He seems like the friendly sort,” Sevda agreed, reaching down to pet his rump.

“By the Nine, the face on you, Loki!”

He glared at Ellie’s jab and shrugged his shoulders. “What?”

“How can you look at him like he just eat your dinner? Look how smushy his face is!”

He cringed slightly as she emphasised her point by gently rubbing the creature’s furry cheeks. His owner merely chuckled. “Not much of a dog person?”

“He prefers horses,” Ellie said before he could get a word in edgeways. Fen practically barked while Loki hung his head. The dog owner, though clearly confused by what was so funny about liking horses, bid them a friendly goodbye and went about her walk, Bobby happily flopping alongside her.

Their stroll eventually led them to a park, which they wandered into at Ellie’s request. The quiet rustle of trees and gentle breeze in the air was a welcome change from the constant noise of traffic that had been so prominent in their visit so far. They walked along its paths for a while before eventually coming across a map.

“‘The Regents Park’,“ Ellie read aloud, squinting at the map’s text. “Have you been here before, Allmother?”

“I cannot say that I have,” she replied.

“Then we should go to these gardens.” She pointed to a location on the map. “Queen Mary’s Gardens.”

“How apt,” Sevda agreed before they set off towards their destination. It wasn’t long before they arrived at said gardens. They passed through the Jubilee Gates, which were quite the spectacle with their grand design, and walked up the main path towards a distant fountain. After a little while, Loki found himself sitting on a bench beside Ellie while Frigga, Sevda, and Fen admired some of the flowers on the far side of the fountain. They sat in silence, bar the constant trickle of water, as he admired the bronze statue within the massive structure. Ellie sat happily, exhaling and watching her breath’s condensation waft off into the cold air. When she pulled the hood over her head, the blue garment caught his critical gaze. He gave it a once over before looking at her content expression.
“Little one?”

“Yes, My Prince?”

He hesitated for the briefest moment, before a fresh wave of determination swept through him. “When you had been on Asgard for but a short time, I asked you one day if you had any siblings. You told me that you did not, but I didn’t believe you.”

Her face grew solemn — only slightly, but he read her well — and her eyes flitted in his direction. “You didn’t?”

“Being the God of Lies, I usually spot them easily.”

There was another silence. Ellie’s knuckles turned white as she gripped the bench edge either side of her legs. “It’s not a complete lie.”

“No?”

“I have a brother. Well, had, I guess.”

His brow furrowed at the revelation, but he still kept himself mostly reserved. “What was his name?”

“Shane,” she stated with a small smile. “He was older too. Way older. Before the Queen brought me to Asgard, he was about thirteen, I think. I don’t remember it very well. But I do know that he loved bein’ the big brother. He didn’t mind helpin’ my mam and looking after me, even if I was being annoyin’. He used to let me wear his hoodie—” She pulled on one of the sleeves. “—when I was sad.”

Unperturbed by the slight envy he felt, Loki pressed onwards. “And why not return home to him?”

Another beat of silence.

In the distance, a dog barked. Someone laughed. The three women remained over by the flowers. “My dad.”

“My father?”

She nodded slowly, eyes fixed on the fountain’s statue. “I don’t have any good memories of him. I mean, I don’t have a lot of memories anyway ’cause I was so young, but the ones of him aren’t good.”

He sighed. “Ellie, you do not have to tell me this if you do not wish to. It’s alright.”

“No, no.” She shook her head. “I should be able to talk about it, I guess. Talkin’ helps, right?”

“It can, with a good friend.”

“Well then this should help me,” she said and hunched forward slightly, hands tucked under her legs. She began to slowly rock back and forth. “I should probably tell you what happened to me right before I showed up, shouldn’t I?”

In the dull light of the overcast afternoon, Loki noted how her blue eyes shone despite it. “I will listen to whatever you wish to discuss.”
“Right, okay.” She steadied herself with a long exhale and then began. “The memories of my dad are hazy. When I was small, he wasn’t ’round much. He was usually workin’ jobs most of the day, but it wouldn’t be a surprise if he came home in a state. I didn’t really understand it at the time, but he drank a lot. Like, a lot. Most of what I remember involves alcohol or him being drunk. I’ve read books that described similar events, so it wasn’t too hard to put two and two together. He gave out to Shane and I a lot when he drank. We never seemed to do anythin’ right, but he treated us better while sober. My mam had it far worse than us. He…” She bit her lip, unwilling to let the tears fall. Loki clutched his hands together as she continued. “He hit her a lot. That was basically constant. If he had a bad day at work, he came home and took it out on us, but obviously she put herself in harms way before Shane and I.

“Music and books were her thing. I think she used them to help us escape from all the shit that went on in that house. She was a great mam, and I can’t fault her for anything. But she lived in Ireland alone — she was from England and left her family to marry my dad. No family, no friends thanks to Dad, so nowhere to go. I dunno if the guards ever took her seriously if she did report stuff, but no one ever came to help.

“One day, I think the day I came to Asgard, Dad had a particularly hard day at work. It’s all a bit blurry, if I’m honest… He came in and immediately went for us ’cause the livin’ room was ‘a mess’. There were just some books on the floor, but he was hammered and angry. I’d never seen him so mad before.” Her tone remained robotic as she described the days events, her face completely blank now. “He took a swing at my mam first and knocked her out cold. I think he tried to strangle her while I screamed and cried, but Shane tried to stop him. He screamed at him to leave her alone, but Dad wasn’t gonna stop. He hit Shane, I don’t know how many times, but he stopped movin’ eventually and then Dad went after me. I don’t remember him kicking me while I cried for him to stop, but I’m nearly sure that he did strike me… ’cause that’s when I blacked out. Next thing I know, I’m wakin’ up in Eir’s medical wing with you sitting by my bed and puttin’ on a light show. I don’t remember anythin’ else.”

Loki was stunned.

For once, his silver tongue failed him.

He was also enraged. This man, her father, would have the audacity to hurt his own family? His children? His eyes were fixed on little Ellie as she rocked in her seat. He couldn’t understand it. How could a parent ever do that to their child to such a severity. Her ribs were broken, her face was scarred forever, because of some monster.

He knew the explanation would be grave, but he was not prepared for this. He could feel his heart beating sporadically in his chest. If he ever found him — that bastard — he would tear the flesh from his bones.

“I’m sorry,” he murmured, attempting to ease some of the pain although he was mostly lost for words. “I am sorry that you had to go through that. No one should experience it, especially at the hands of a parent and at such a young age.”

She nodded in agreement. “Yeah, I know, but you’ve nothin’ to apologise for, Loki. It’s not like you could do anything.”

“If I ever meet him…”

She sat back in the bench, forcing her body to relax after telling such an awful tale. “I don’t remember anythin’ good about him. My memories aren’t clear, but I’m glad for it. I’m glad that I don’t remember more.”
“What of your mother and Shane?”

She winced and hung her head. “I… I don’t know. I’m afraid of gettin’ the answer, to be honest.”

Not wanting to push her and cause more upset, Loki merely nodded. “If you ever want to find out, let me know. I will do whatever I can to help.”

“Sure,” she agreed and finally looked at him from under her blue hood. “Thank you for listening to me. You’re a good friend. At least after all that, I got to meet some really nice people. You guys are all the family I have.”

He briefly glanced at his mother, who he knew was keeping a close eye on the pair. “We will never let anything happen to you again, little one. I meant it when I said so before. I’ll keep you safe.”

He offered her his little finger. She linked it with hers and squeezed.

Their conversation slowly came to an end. While a weight seemed to have lifted from the girl’s shoulders, Loki felt fresh rage boiling in his gut; he truly hated that sorry excuse for a human. But he tried his best to repress the negative thoughts from his mind. They stayed seated on the park bench for a while longer. He let Ellie decide when she wanted to move on again. He would gladly walk by her side to wherever she wished to go.
Chapter Summary

The group enjoy the remainder of their time on Midgard but, as years pass after their return home, it seems that the Aesir’s opinion of Ellie has not exactly improved.

Chapter Notes

This is a long one, but consider it a gift because somehow we’ve reached 2,000 hits? Holy moley! Y’all are the best!


They weren’t walking long before they stumbled across another shop. From the sign, it was referred to as a ‘vintage second-hand’ shop. Upon stepping inside, it became clear that said shops made their living reselling goods donated by their previous owners. Frigga immediately wandered about the place, inspecting the jewellery and trinkets on offer. The shop owner was quite friendly when they entered, encouraging them to give him ‘a shout’ if they saw anything they liked. Fen and Sevda were discussing some of the ornaments displayed within glass cases. Loki found himself gazing over a stack of journals. He was surprised to find some of them were still in good condition and had yet to be written in. A plain black notebook grabbed his attention and he picked it up to inspect its state. As he flicked through its clean pages, an idea struck him. He hung on to the journal to purchase later and was browsing through a massive stack of novels for anything semi-interesting when Ellie called him.

He approached to see her standing in front of a vinyl record player with two small speakers.

“Check it out,” she exclaimed. “It’s not as fancy as the one you guys have in the library, but it’s really nice lookin’.”

“That it is,” he agreed and ran his free hand over its dusty cover. “It doesn’t look as though it’s been used for some time.”

“That old thing?” the owner asked as he walked by carrying a heap of clothes. “It doesn’t work, mate. Think it’s summint to do with the wiring. We were just ’olding it for parts.”

Ellie looked disappointed at the man’s statement. “That’s a shame. I bet it used to sound great.”

“You can take it if you fancy trying to fix it. I was going to throw it out soon anyway. No one is picking it up.”

Loki looked at the girl who had turned and given him her best sad eyes. “I might be able to do something to power it. How much would it cost?”
“Nothing,” the owner replied. “Just take the thing. It’s lovely, but it’s not doing anything useful just sitting in here. I’ll get a bag for you.”

“Thank you so much, sir!” Ellie said delightedly as the man set down the clothes and carried the record player and speakers up to the till. “Prince Loki, am I allowed to buy some records? I exchanged some of my wages for Midgardian currency, so I can pay for them myself.”

“You do not need my permission to spend your wages,” he replied indifferently. “It’s not my place to tell you what you should do with it. I suppose it is reasonable to purchase records to go with your player.”

Ellie looked up at him in surprise. “…My record player?”

“Obviously. You might as well take it to use as you please. It means you won’t always have to go to the library to listen to music.”

The girl didn’t move. She was rooted in the spot, simply staring at him in what seemed like innocent wonder. “And you would…fix it for me?”

“I’ll power it with seiðr,” he explained. “In the same way the one in the library is powered. Why are you making that face?”

“It’s just really nice of you,” she answered and rubbed her arm shyly. “And I appreciate the gesture.”

He shrugged casually. “Yes, well, it would go to waste otherwise.”

“Well while you’re so adamant about avoiding the compliment, I’ll just say ‘thank you’ and keep it simple.”

“If you insi—”

“But can I give you a hug?”

Loki groaned aloud. “By the Norns!”

“I know you’re kinda weird about physical contact—”

“You can’t be serious?”

“Hug the girl, Loki!” Fen ordered from her position. “And stop being such a brat!”

His eyes nearly fell out of his head at her complete lack of decorum. “Did you just call me a brat?”

“I can call you what I want down here; I am older than you.”

Frigga laughed — actually laughed — at her handmaiden’s statement. Ellie, however, kept a passive expression in an effort to win him over. With an impatient roll of the eyes, he allowed her to embrace him tightly.

“Thank you, Loki.”

“You’re welcome, little one.”
After another meal that evening, the group returned to Asgard via Heimdall opening the Bifröst for them once more. Upon their arrival, they were informed that Thor and Odin had yet to return, although all was going as planned on their end. This news brought them all a nice sense of relief. Ellie was delighted with the day she had and hurriedly rushed off to bring her new (old) record player and records to her shared living quarters. She purchased two — a classical piece by Debussy and another by a band called Sister Sledge that she was quite fond of. Loki hung on to the notebook he bought and chose not to reveal it to Ellie until their next lesson.

“Thank you for today,” she said as she stood up from her seat. “I’ll be sure to get through the work you set out. I’ll start it tomorrow after my duties.”

“There is one more thing,” he replied from his own chair. “Sit back down.”

She blanched for a brief moment, before slowly taking a seat. “D-did I do somethin’ wrong?”

“No, why would you think that?”

“You’ve never asked me to stay back after a lesson, so I assumed I fucked somethin’ up.”

“Well, your language is appalling.”

She chortled at that. “That’s rich! I’ve heard you say far worse.”

He grinned widely and said. “I am a god; I do what I want.”

“Of course you do…”

“Relax yourself, little one. You’ve done nothing wrong. I have something for you.”

Without further adieu, he pulled out the notebook from a stack of books on the table and passed it to her.

“A book?” she asked warily.

“No, it’s a shoe.”

The peevish look on her face brought him great joy. “I stand by what I said on Midgard; you are an arse.”

“I just gave you a gift and here you are calling me an arse. Midgard has ruined you. You have no respect.”

“Why would I respect you when I can verbally degrade you instead?”

He shook his head slowly, but still laughed at her answer. “You are taking after me too much. It is worrying. But putting that briefly aside, I got this notebook for you in that vintage shop.”

She flicked through its pages curiously. “I didn’t even notice you buyin’ it…”

“You were distracted with your own dusty find.”

“So… do you want me to use it for seiðr notes?”
He shook his head and leaned forward in his seat, his elbows resting on his knees. “It’s not for seiðr. It’s for your own personal use.” When she looked quite confused, he continued on. “Back on Midgard, when you explained what had happened to you at the hands of your father, you briefly mentioned that you were extremely close with your mother and brother. But because of your father’s behaviour, memories from your childhood have been marred with everything negative and traumatic he did to your family. I think it’s important for you to hold on to what good memories you have from your life in Ireland. You might forget them as you get older, but—” He tapped the cover of the notebook held in her grasp. “—you won’t if you write them down. Think of it as a diary for positive memories. You should not let your sorry excuse of a father ruin what happy memories you have with your mother and brother. So write what you can remember down, no matter how small a thing it may seem. You will be able to go back through this notebook in years to come and hold memories of your family close to you.”

“Loki…” Ellie was stunned. Visibly so. She ran her hand over its front cover with a newfound fondness that warmed his heart. “This is… I don’t really know what to say. I wasn’t expectin’ it at all. You didn’t have to do this.”

“I am aware,” he admitted. “But I know I cannot do much about what happened to you as a child. At least I can help you with the future.”

“You have helped me,” she assured him and reached out to hold on to one of his wrists. “Sure, you were a brazen sort at first, but you have become a good friend and teacher in my time on Asgard. I owe your mother my life, but you’ve also made my life here far easier. I’m aware that some of the Aesir don’t want me here ’cause of how I’m mortal and stuff, but you guys make me feel more welcome.”

“This is your home. No matter what some people may tell you. As you said on Midgard, we are your family.”

“I’m really glad that you’s are.” She smiled at him before releasing her hold on him. “Thank you for the gift, Loki.”

“You’re welcome, Ellie,” he replied and got to his feet. “But I have kept you long enough. You have duties to attend to tomorrow. I’ll accompany you to your chambers.”

His statement left her mildly taken aback as she followed his lead and stood up. “You don’t need to do that.”

“I do. I will not have you wandering the halls alone at night after the incident in the markets. This is not up for debate.”

“I know I argue with you a lot, but I won’t even attempt to argue about this.”

“Wise words. Come, it is late.”

Loki made his way from the library, Ellie close at his side. The usual batch of Einherjar patrolled the halls at night, acknowledging the prince as he passed. He offered his companion his arm and she held on to it gladly as they walked through the candle-lit corridors.

In the silence, Ellie’s hushed voice cut through the air. “I spy, with my little eye, something beginning with H.”

“Please tell me it isn’t ‘hall’?” he groaned. “That would be terribly lazy of you.”

“Nop,” she said proudly, popping the P for effect.
He eyed an Einherji, who stood guard beside a pillar, as they passed him by, then smirked and clicked his fingers. “Helm.”

Ellie groaned and mumbled. “Dammit… Alright, fair win. That was an easy one though.”

“I will be sure to give you a very difficult one. I spy, with my little eye, something beginning with G.”

“G?” she asked incredulously. “Alright, be difficult then…” She looked around, shameless racking her eyes over ever detail in the hall. “Guard?”

He shook his head.

She paused. “Girl?”

He shook his head again and smiled delightedly.

Another pause — longer this time — before she spoke. “Oh! Gold?”

“Correct. Took you long enough.”

“Alright, pal. Considerin’ you’re even more arrogant than usual today; I spy, with my little eye, something being with D.”

“Demigod.”


And Loki did try again, giving multiple guesses that were all dismissed by the mortal. She seemed happy from ‘outsmarting’ him, even though he just saw it as a simple game. That being said, he didn’t mind losing a few rounds if it put a smile on her face. He knew it was only in jest.

“You are going to have to tell me,” he quipped as they reached the door to the living area of Frigga’s handmaidens. “It would be quite unfair to leave me hanging in suspense.”

“Does that mean you give up?” she asked, squinting her eyes.

“If it means you will tell me what blasted word you picked, then I guess I do, yes.”

Making sure the guards were out of earshot, she reached up on her tippy toes and whispered. “Dickhead.”

Loki could only stare, his expression of mix of visible pride and surprise. “Your vocabulary is entertainingly foul for a fourteen year old mortal.”

“At least I’m not a dickhead. Even if you are actually really nice and a good friend.”

He held up a finger. “Excuse you, but I prefer the term ‘little shit’. I just gave you a gift and this is how you repay me.”

“I learn from the best,” she grinned and gave his arm a squeeze.

“Get to bed,” he ordered, pushing her towards the doors. “Before you give me a headache.”

She stood in front of the doors for a moment before turning and addressing him again. “Before I go, you know I’m just teasin’, right? I really do appreciate the diary.”
Sensing the shift in tone and noticing the slight squint in her eyes, he nodded his head and gave her a genuine smile. “I know, little one. Sleep well.”

“You too, Prince Loki.”

With that, she disappeared behind the doors and left Loki in the silent corridor. Alone bar the statue-like Einherjar, he took his time strolling back to his quarters, enjoying his own company and the hushed world around him.

* * *

Ellie’s body was slammed into the dust. Loki stood above her, less than impressed.

“What have I told you,” he began, wiping his sweaty brow. “About focusing too much on disabling the weapon arm and leaving yourself open to being tackled?”

“Not to do it,” she grunted, lying flat on her back and shooting him a glare.

“So don’t,” he snapped. “Get up.”

The young woman did as instructed, hopping back on to her feet and catching her breath. Gently she wiped her daggers on her thigh. “What kinda nameday present is this?”

He raised his brow. “I completed my duties early and asked Fen to cover yours so that you could get some one-on-one training with a master of dual-wielding daggers, and you are questioning the value of your gift?”

She shrugged. “I mean, a new deck of cards would have been nice…” When he shot her a glare, she started laughing. “That was a jest! Obviously I appreciate you trainin’ me.”

“Then disarm me properly this time,” he replied and took a defensive stance once more. With a wave of his hands, he conjured his daggers. “Also, it is not my fault you wore out your last deck of playing cards.”

Ellie nodded, daggers in hand, and then flew at him.

The pair had been in the closed training yard for an hour, practicing hard at Loki’s insistence. He had noticed some small flaws Ellie had picked up and was determined to knock them out of her. He also wanted her to practice fighting against someone also wielding daggers. Lady Sif had done well the past few years training the mortal with the bow and teaching her how to fight a sword-wielder, but another dagger-wielder was a different situation entirely. It was a fight that got close and personal, and far more violent and intense if emotions were involved. It was common place to include wrestling moves in the fight, so they had both been tackled to the ground multiple times within the hour. She had a good concept of anatomy thanks to Sif’s lessons — she knew where to hit and where to avoid — but her physical strength needed to be improved. Even if she was mortal, that would be no excuse if it was a life or death situation. So, he had her training as hard as possible. He also encouraged her using seiðr when fighting to give her a small advantage over others.

In the midst of sparring, Ellie rolled away from Loki to swiftly catch her breath. As they circled each other, he said. “What do you do to disable an opponent?”
“Cut tendons, muscles, or ligaments,” she answered confidently, slashing at his again.

He dodged her attack. “Where do you slash to disarm your opponent’s attacking hand?”

“Inside the wrist or elbow.”

“And?”

“The back of the knee, if possible.”

They took regular breaks, and rightly so in his opinion. While he wanted to train her hard, he didn’t want to exhaust her. He reminded himself constantly that she was significantly weaker than him.

Once again, they were in close quarters. He blocked all of her slashes as planned and praised her when her swiftness and accuracy improved. There were times (however few and far between) when she got the best of him, even if he didn’t enjoy admitting it. When he took a moment to praise her footing, he wasn’t prepared for her to kick his own feet out from under him with the assistance of seiðr. He landed roughly on his back as she appeared above him and held her dagger to his neck.

“That good?” she asked, breathing heavily as she kept him down. Her face was masked in shimmering sweat, but her lips still managed to form a tired smile.

He stared up at her in disbelief. “You cheated.”

“It was you who told me that in battle the cheaters win.”

“That I did,” he agreed and allowed his own daggers to vanish. “Good work.”

“Loki!”

They both looked over to the edge of the training yard as Thor came bounding down the steps.

“Bested by a mortal girl?” Thor observed as he approached the pair, Ellie still with her knee on his chest to keep him down. “Either Ellie is a fantastically quick learner, or you are terrible, brother.”

“Shut up, you oaf,” Loki growled as they both got back to their feet.

“Happy nameday, Ellie,” Thor boomed and pulled the young woman into a crushing hug. “How old are you now? Ten? The big One-Oh?”

“I’m seventeen, Thor…”

“Ah, same thing really.”

“There’s a difference between bein’ ten and seventeen!” she insisted, half laughing at his comment.

“Either way, I come bearing gifts because I am the best gift-giver in this realm.”

Loki groaned aloud and pinched the bridge of his nose. “By the Norns…”

“Ta-da!” Thor held out massive closed fist and opened it to reveal a pack of brand new playing cards. “Here you are, Ellie!”

Loki clenched his jaw and looked away as she thanked Thor profusely for his ‘thoughtful’ gift. He
knew for a fact that there was no possible way his older brother was 
thoughtful. If he knew his family well — which he thought he did — he assumed his mother had something to do with this. While he enjoyed seeing Ellie so happy, it irked him that Thor was the one to have caused it.

“That is not all, either,” Thor continued, looking exceptionally proud of himself.

“No?” Ellie asked, clearly surprised.

“We are going to a tavern for a drink.”

Loki locked his gaze on his brother instantly. “No.”

Both Thor and Ellie looked over in confusion when the growl came from him.

“What?”

He quickly crossed his arms. “You are not bringing her to a tavern.”

“And why not? This is a day for celebrations! And you are coming with us, brother. As well as the Warriors Three and Lady Sif.”

Breathing harshly through his nose, Loki didn’t even bother resisting the urge to roll his eyes. “Yes, because I am sure your friends are very eager to celebrate her nameday. It is not safe, Thor.”

“Hey,” Ellie said gently and placed a hand on his forearm. “It’s okay, Loki. I’ll be with you and you always keep me safe. I’ve never been to a tavern before and it could be fun. Where is the harm in tryin’ new things?”

“You see?” Thor insisted, throwing a large arm around her shoulder. “She speaks the truth! Let us celebrate together tonight.”

Loki, completely ignoring his brother’s rambling, stared at her hopeful expression. The little smile and wide shining eyes were not something with which he enjoyed arguing. He found himself quite unwilling to disappoint her. He knew that she was curious as to how a tavern was run and that that was most likely why she wanted to experience it. He had to reassure himself that it was not because she preferred Thor’s company over his. Eventually, he relented. “Alright, if you really want to, we will go, little one. But you are to remain by my side for the whole night, is that clear? And you will not be drinking any ale.”

She was nodding before he had even finished his sentence. “Yes, of course.”

Thor let out a very childlike groan. “Loki, you are no fun…”

“We will see you tonight, Prince Thor!” Ellie said cheerily, and gently ushered him back the way he came when she noticed the twitching in Loki’s eye.

“We will meet at the stables at sundown!” he shouted as he ran up the steps and disappeared inside the palace.

Loki watched as Ellie turned to face him, grinning wryly. “I know you don’t like their company —”

“Only because they despise mine… And because they are rather boring.”

“Then we will just talk together.” She fiddled with her daggers in her hands nervously, hopping
slightly from foot to foot. “Don’t mind them, My Prince. We can always act how we usually do in each other’s company, just in a different settin’ with more people.”

“By ‘different’, I’m assuming you mean ‘louder and sweatier’.”

She giggled. “If that is how taverns are, then yes. I’m sure Prince Thor means well, so let’s just embrace it for the time being. I love the library and the gardens as much as you do, but maybe a brief change in scenery won’t hurt, right?”

He sighed slowly, eyes fixed on her nervous hands. “Fine, but only because it is your nameday.”

“Great!” she cheered and clapped her hands together. “Will we continue on with trainin’?”

“Yes,” was his firm reply as the daggers reappeared in his grasp. “Get your defensive stance ready.”

Sometime later, Loki and Ellie met Thor at their rendezvous. The horse ride to the tavern was quite short, but Loki had noticed the young woman admiring the changing light and how it affected the golden buildings of Asgard from her seat behind him. He made sure to keep his horse at a slow trot so she had more time to enjoy the surroundings.

The tavern was pleasantly quiet when they arrived, but the Warriors Three and Lady Sif began to hoot and holler at the sight of them. Thor shouted back, greeting them by slapping them hard on the back, while Loki and Ellie slid into their seats at one end of the table. The God of Mischief was quick to grab some of the food on the table — most of which was centred in front of the ever ravenous Volstagg — and made up a plate for Ellie to eat. She thanked him when he placed it before her and got to working on his own.

“My dear friends,” Thor boomed, effortlessly grabbing their attention. He quickly raised his overflowing tankard in the air. “To little Ellie, on her nameday.”

His friends mimicked the gesture and wished her well.

While Loki found the whole thing painfully awkward, Ellie seemed to be enjoying herself. She just laughed when Thor placed a full tankard in front of her and politely requested some water instead. He was happy to see her keeping her end of the bargain, as well as spending most of her time talking with Loki as per usual. Sif was friendly enough to ask how her training was going, even if the gesture was probably done in order to remain on Thor’s good side. As the evening rolled on, the tavern got busier as patrons poured in off the streets. Most were pleasantly surprised to see the Princes and warriors there and sent them pleasant greetings. With more customers came more noise, more drink, and some entertainment. Loki watched, half empty tankard in his relaxed grasp, as a group of bards began some musical numbers. He was not surprised to see Ellie’s attention transfixed on them as well. With an accompaniment of a guitar and cello, a female vocalistic began to sing:

There was a boy
A very strange, enchanted boy
They say he wandered very far
Very far, over land and sea
A little shy and sad of eye
But very wise was he.

At the table, Hogun sat passively and drank away as Volstagg spoke animatedly with him. Fandral sat with a giggling woman perched in his lap. Thor and Sif were chatting idly and asking a server for more drinks when he approached their seats.

And then one day

One magic day he passed my way

While we spoke of many things

Fools and Kings

This he said to me:

"The greatest thing you'll ever learn

Is just to love and be loved in return."

From his seat, Loki noticed a group sitting near the performers. He did not realise at first why his eyes had drifted to their table, but it became clear when he noticed them watching him very closely. Some looked away when they realised he had spotted them, but others remained fixed in their seats. He recognised none of them and would have taken no notice had they not been whispering to each other. Obviously, he was the topic up for discussion. Upon watching where they were peering for longer, it became clear that the innocent Ellie, who still observed the bards delightedly, was also being spoken of.

There was a boy

A very strange, enchanted boy

They say he wandered very far

Very far, over land and sea

A little shy and sad of eye

But very wise was he.

When they started laughing, he leaned back in his seat and set his drink down loudly. It grabbed their attention from across the tavern and some of them quickly shut their mouths. One or two, who seemed more intoxicated than the others, persisted. The evening so far had brought the no trouble, and he wished it could have remained so, but evidently, these men were not impressed with their being here. So he sat, not moving a muscle, not saying a word, just staring at the men with an expression he usually reserved for those he hunted in battle. It was a clear signal to them:
dare try anything and they would wind up bloodied like Elof and Bjorn at his hands. All noise and the goings-on in the place became irrelevant to him as his attention became solely focused on the drinking group. Slowly, their chatter died down and they returned to hushed whispers, turning their own attention away from him and back to each other. Cowering like mice, Loki smirked to see them backing down. He would not hesitate to set them right if needs be. Still, even though they had seemingly taken note of his warning, he could not banish the horrible chill that crept up his spine. The fact he had caught them looking at the young woman with such distain worried him deeply. If anyone at his own table noticed his behaviour, no one passed comment for some time.

Without moving his gaze, he heard a whisper from his side. Ellie had apparently discerned his behaviour. “Are you alright, Loki?”

“Just fine, little one,” he assured her, unmoved. “Go back to enjoying your music.”

And then one day

One magic day he passed my way

While we spoke of many things

Fools and Kings

This he said to me:

"The greatest thing you'll ever learn

Is just to love and be loved in return."

The song came to an end and the crowd erupted into drunken applause. They screamed for more and another song began like clockwork. The rest of the night passed without incident. As Loki noticed that some customers were getting passed the stage of acceptable drunkenness, he finished his drink and called it a night. Ellie didn’t argue with him when he informed her that they would be returning to the palace.

Thor argued their departure with a heavy slur, obviously. “But the night is yet young, brother!”

“As is Ellie,” Loki deadpanned. “So I am bringing her back to the palace.”

“I had fun, Prince Thor,” she assured him and rushed over to give him a hug. “But I am pretty wrecked and fit for bed.”

“Alright then, be boring!” He ruffled her hair with a dopey grin, emphasising his jesting, and turned his attention back to the new drink placed before him.

As the pair grabbed their cloaks and headed towards the door, a gruff voice from across the room cut through all the chatter and music.

“Bringing your whore back to your chambers, Princeling?”

Almost instantly, all of the noise died down.

Loki stopped in his tracks, hand on the door ready to push it open.
Ellie automatically stepped closer beside him.

When he shouted again, the whole place became silent. “I said, are you taking your mortal whore back to bed?”

*There’s always some fool with a loose tongue eager to make an impression.*

Loki turned on his feet slowly and instantly found the man that had an apparent death wish. He knew where he was sitting after all — he had watched him and his friends for some time that night. The Trickster said nothing, green eyes piercing into this stranger as the idiot actually raised his tankard to him.

“What did you say?” Thor suddenly barked, his chair screeching as he stood up. “What did you say, you *piece of shit*?”

Before the eldest Odinson could get anywhere near the abuser, Loki reached beneath his cloak and gripped a small handle. With a flick of his arm, he hurled a knife across the tavern.

He hit his target; the man’s raised hand.

The tankard clattered on to the table as ale spilled everywhere.

The knife imbedded itself — and the hand — into the nearby wall with a resounding thump.

The scream that tore through him was almost as instantaneous as the blood splatter.

“Ellie,” Loki ground out. “Go to Sif, *now*.”

She obeyed without any hesitation and was at Sif’s side as the customers descended into shocked uproar. Whether the commotion was directed at himself or the man currently staring at his ruined hand on a wall, Loki didn’t care. He was too focused on reaching his now trapped prey, whose friends had quickly scattered. One or two remained, too shocked to move from their seats.

He grabbed the knife’s handle with one hand and the heckler’s throat with the other.

A blubbering mess already, he was quick to beg for his life. “Please, *please*—!”

“Say that again,” Loki growled dangerously and squeezed his throat hard. “*Say it. Say it so that I can thoroughly enjoy squeezing the very life from you!*”

All his victim could do was choke as tears streamed down his scarred cheeks and into his thick beard. His free hand desperately clutched at Loki’s wrist, but could not stop the crushing pressure the god was slowly putting on his neck.

Only when Thor called his name did he pay any attention elsewhere. “Loki! Take Ellie back to the palace and let us handle this!”

Although it took all of his self control to release his throat, he knew the little one could not remain here and that his brother was speaking sense despite the amount of ale he had consumed. He doubted this display was nice for her to witness either. After all, she was his main concern. Taking a deep breath, he grabbed the knife, twisted it slowly, and then tore it from the hand without any care for causing less damage, watching in delight as the man wailed in agony. He stared at his now completely useless hand, holding on to his wrist with the other as his panicking eyes bulged from his head.

“Speak another word to her,” Loki dared him. “And I will kill you, I promise.”
The spectators said nothing as he walked to Ellie's side, wrapped a protective arm around her shoulders, and gently ushered her from the quiet tavern. He helped her on to the horse, frowning at her forlorn expression, but assured her that she did nothing to deserve the abuse. She didn’t give him a verbal response, but acknowledge him with a slight nod. While their ride back to the stables was marred with uneasy silence, for once, Loki was happy to leave his older brother a task he knew he could handle.

Still, it did nothing to ease the nagging in his head that Ellie’s treatment would only get worse if nothing was done soon. For the rest of the evening, he did not let her leave his sight until she was safely in her sleeping quarters.
Loki goes about rectifying Ellie's current uncertainty with a thoughtful offer, but they are not yet out of the woods.

Okay, so this is a good 6,000 words long. I apologise in advance for the copious amounts of fluff in this chapter, and for the angst near the end. You should know by now that I live for pain and despair! I'm sorry, okay? Don't hate me! I hope the fluff makes it easier to cope with at least!


After the tavern incident, Loki was reluctant to let Ellie out of his sight again. Of course, telling a teenager what to do was no menial task, and she didn’t seem too happy when he asked her to stay away from the markets. Having spoken to Frigga about it, she agreed that it would be careless for the young woman to walk around unaccompanied. As a result, she was very rarely seen without someone — be it a fellow handmaiden, a guard, or member of the royal family — attached at her hip. Ellie hated it. She hated everything about it; the fuss, the unease it brought her. In her mind, it seemed to further highlight that she did not belong on Asgard.

As if a growing teenager wasn’t bad enough, one with an identity crisis was worse.

It was a solid year of shadowing the girl before Loki reached his limit. While he was annoyed by the whole situation, he was also extremely worried for her sanity and security. Now an official adult (at least by Midgardian years), she seemed even more frustrated about having little time to herself. She kept doing all that she was meant to — attending her tutor lessons, following her duties, training with Lady Sif, learning magic with Loki — but the lack of her own personal time seemed to be draining her.

Of course, ever the bringer of mischief, Loki had an idea.

“Another trip to Midgard?”

“Yes, little one. Would you accompany me?”

It was during a seiðr lesson when he popped the question. She seemed equal parts confused and curious. “Just you and I?”

He nodded. “It would be just for one evening, nothing very extravagant. My mother is busy with duties, as is Thor, I would assume. Plus, I do not think that Father would approve of a trip so soon after the last.”
“He would probably also not approve of just the two of us goin’,” she mumbled, cheeks flushed. “Is it not a bit…inappropriate?”

“Probably in terms of royal decorum,” he shrugged. “But no one is going to find out about it.”

She sat on the floor of the library, legs akimbo and palms open as streams of light came from her fingers. At hearing his last statement, the light quickly vanished. “How will no one know?”

“Did I tell you to stop casting?” he asked, tone returning to its previous severity. “You can hold a conversation and practice at the same time.”

She shook her head and slowly brought the streams of light back to life. “Right well, how do you expect Heimdall to not see us goin’ to Midgard? I get that you have glamour over the library now, but are you tellin’ me you can guarantee the Gate Keeper of Asgard not seeing us leave via the Bifröst?”

“There are other ways to get to Midgard,” he replied, grinning widely. “Ways that only I know about.”

The light in her hands faltered briefly at that. When she collected herself, she looked at him in surprise. “You do? How?”

“God of Mischief,” he declared and pointed to himself. “No explanation necessary.”

She narrowed her eyes at him. “I suppose I’ll have to take your word for it then.”

“Does that mean you will accompany me?”

He leaned forward in his seat as she contemplated his offer for a moment. Slowly, a little smile formed on her lips. “I would love it go back to Midgard… Where will we be visiting?”

“I am not picky…” He shrugged. “Wherever you prefer.”

“You’d let me decide?”

“Obviously. You have to act like an adult eventually.”

“Hey!”

He threw his head back and laughed at the look of utter disgust on her face. “You are so easy to vex, did you know that?”

“I think it’s just exceptionally easy for you to vex me.” She clasped her hands together and tensed her fingers before sending him a glare. “You’re such an arse.”

“And you are stuck with me.”

Ignoring his comment, she began to release some more streams of idly floating light from her hands. He watched her concentrated expression as the light turned into its familiar ruby red shade, colouring her face in a light blush. He stared at her for a moment, waiting a while for a response of some kind, but found himself studying the crease in her brow, her teeth biting her lower lip, and her squinting eyes.

“I have an idea,” she muttered. “But you can tell me if it’s a bad one.”

“What are you thinking?”
She hesitated briefly — her mouth opening and closing — before she eventually spoke. “D’you think we could go to Ireland?”

“Ireland?” he repeated, to which she nodded slowly. He frowned and scratched his chin. “If you desire to go there then I will bring you. Are you sure it will not bring back any bad memories?”

“I won’t really know until I go there, but I think I’ll be okay. I was very young when Frigga brought me here, so I don’t remember too much of what Ireland is like — bar what I’ve read. I’d love to see it again in person.”

“Then we shall go to Ireland.”

She smiled at the statement, even if there was slight anxiety in the gesture. “When?”

“Tomorrow night,” he answered simply. “I will provide you with garments and currency, so do not bother bringing any.”

The last part of her lesson was taken up with Loki explaining where and when they would meet tomorrow night before they travelled together. It was the next night when they met again in the library after most of the palace had retired to bed. Once they met, wrapped in two warm hooded cloaks, he placed a glamour over them both in order to conceal them from prying eyes that included Heimdall himself. Safely hidden, they left the palace on foot. He was insistent on them leaving with enough time to reach the portal in the nearby mountains which lay out Asgard’s outskirts. The hike there didn’t take too long, and Ellie seemed too interested in her surroundings to really complain about the walk. Given the blinding darkness whenever the moon disappeared behind thick clouds, they used spheres of magic light to guide the way. Although Loki knew where these portals lay like the back of his hand, he was more concerned about Ellie losing her footing if her sight was compromised. Having never been outside the city, she had the most dumbfounded look on her face as they neared the towering peaks. Their journey led them to a steep pathway between two sloping mountains. As they scaled the walkway, he found himself needing to rush her along; she paused at every opportunity, peering over the edge of the cliff, admiring a carved statue in the side of a mountain wall, and gazing at the incredible view.

“This is beautiful,” she mused, softly touching the Asgardian carvings on a standing stone that signalled the end of the path. “I had no idea it looked like this outside the city.”

He stopped in his tracks and looked over his shoulder to see her now gaping up at the gleaming moon and stars, her small face barely visible under her hood. He released a breath and then walked up to her. Without thinking, he took hold of her hand and began to gently pull her along. “Come. If you spend much longer stopping to stare at every little detail on this walk, we will never get to Midgard and back in time.”

She didn’t argue with his logic, because obviously he was right, but simply allowed him to usher her away with her hand casually encased in his. He brought her to a slim breach in the cliff face and was happy when she didn’t hesitate to follow him inside. He guided her along, both of them keeping their footing steady and precise thanks to their assisted lighting. The constant drip-drip-drip of nearby water and a light howl of the wind was the only sound to be heard within the cave.

It wasn’t long before they reached the portal. Loki stopped her with a gentle squeeze of the hand and pointed to a sloping opening in the ground below. Ellie grimaced at the sight of the ominous opening.

“Ta-daa!” he declared dryly.

Surprised, Ellie merely pointed with her free hand. “That’s it?”
“What were you expecting?”

“Well, I certainly wasn’t expectin’ a bloody hole in the ground.”

He rolled his eyes. “Right, well would you prefer going in on your own or my helping you?”

Embarrassed by his light scolding, she sighed and mumbled. “The latter.”

“I thought so.”

“How did you even find this? What, did you like, fall into it one day?”

He hesitated with a pout. “No…”

An uncontrollable cackle suddenly erupted from her. “Oh my God! You did not—!”

“That is all irrelevant anyway! Hold on to me, little one. We will go through to Midgard in just a moment. It is just like travelling through the Bifröst, except far less extravagant.”

Quickly wrapping her arms around his waist, she held herself against his side. “Noted.”

“Ready?” he asked, encasing an arm around her shoulders protectively and looking down at her.

“As I’ll ever be!”

Without further delay, he leapt forward with her in his arms, sliding down into the opening. As they slid down the slightly wet stone, purple and orange sparks erupted from around them before they were consumed in blinding white light.

They landed on their rears with an ‘ooph!’ that Loki was pretty sure came from Ellie. Opening his eyes, he was met with thick darkness and his misty breath as he let out a relieved sigh.

“Fuckin’ hell,” Ellie groaned beside him and rubbed her back. “I could’ve done with a smoother landin’.”

“You will get used to it,” he explained and helped her to her feet. “I assure you.”

She quickly looked around in an attempt to get her bearings in the blackness. “It’s really cold here. Where are we?”

“Dublin, the capital city of Ireland. I believe this is your home town, yes?”

Suddenly forgetting her sore back, she sent him a fantastic grin. “Yeah! Wow, that’s amazin’!”

“Thank you, I do try.” He assessed his surroundings for a moment, remembering where this portal dropped them. Right now, they stood under one side of a bridge that crossed over a very small man-made stream. They were surrounded by thick trees and two large bodies of water.

“Looks like we’re in a park or something,” Ellie noted and hesitantly stepped out from under the shelter of the bridge. “Do you know where we are right now?”

“I cannot remember its name, but I do know it’s an enclosed green of some sort. It closes at night, so there are no humans around.”

“What’s that noise?” Ellie asked him, pointing vaguely in the direction of the curiously harsh sounds. “It sounds a bit like London.”
“Vehicles, I would assume. But we will get to that later. Come, we must change from these garments.” With some simple magic, he changed their outfits into that of more acceptable Midgardian dress wear for winter. He stuck with his usual black suit, this time wrapped in a long tweed coat and scarf, while he gave her something similar and complimentary to his own outfit. She ran her hands down the fitted grey coat she was now wearing before securing the wooly hat on her head and the scarf around her neck. A bag he brought with him also changed into a less conspicuous leather satchel. While he could easily do without the gloves and scarf, he thought it best not to rouse suspicion with his choice of outfit.

“Shall we?” he asked, offering her his arm.

She clung to his bicep with her gloved hands and smiled. “Lead the way, My Prince.”

As it turned out, getting out of what they discovered to be St Stephens Green from a nearby map involved helping each other over a fence. There were a few passersby around once they cleared it, but none seemed to really take notice of them as they emerged on to what looked like a junction for a busy pedestrian street. Straight in front of them lay a shopping street filled with clearly closed outlets, their lights spilling out through the glass and on to the brick pavement below. Up above, linked between the buildings on either side, were fantastic light displays similar to the chandeliers in certain parts of the palace.

“Oh, look at those!” Ellie exclaimed. “How pretty are they? It must be Christmas time.”

Loki was surprised when she pulled herself closer to him and pointed at the impressive structures. “They are quite the sight, even for Midgard, I will admit. Do you recognise this place?”

She seemed unsure, biting her lip and shrugging. “I couldn’t tell you. It seems a bit familiar, maybe? But I dunno if that’s from reading or from bein’ here as a kid.”

“It matters not,” he reassured her, unwillingly to let sadness interrupt their night. “Shall we find somewhere to sit and drink perhaps?”

“Yes, but maybe we should find somewhere that is the complete opposite of Asgard’s taverns?”

“Fantastic idea.” He steered her to the right and away from the shopping street. “Let us venture this way, then.”

They were only walking for a brief few minutes when they stumbled across a building that fixed Ellie to the spot so firmly that she tried to physically drag Loki to a halt while walking passed it. Of course, he could have easily been the one to drag her along, but he heeded her desperate pleas to venture into what seemed to be a busy bar and lounge inside. It was a massive red brick structure with white pillars climbing up the sides of large windows that covered the facade of the building. At the main door, below a festively lit black metal canopy with the words “SHELBOURNE HOTEL” displayed above, stood a well dressed doorman. Above it, hung a billowing Irish flag. Incessant jabber and cheering came from the open windows of the bar, along with the distinct sound of music.

“Can we go in there?” she asked him, nodding towards the bustling room.

“I don’t see why not,” he mused. “We are dressed for the occasion.”

“Sweet! But what in Odin’s name is a ‘hotel’?”

“I will explain inside,” he hushed her quickly before approaching and addressing the doorman. “My good man, would it be possible for us to enjoy the entertainment and beverages on offer in
this impressive establishment?"

The man blinked beneath his top hat before he nodded happily. “Of course you may, sir! You’re more than welcome t’go inside. It’s swing night tonight too.”

Ellie’s mouth fell open, not even attempting to hide her excitement. “Swing? Loki, c’mon, we have’ta see that!”

The doorman swung the revolving door open for them with a hearty laugh. “Get her inside before she has a heart attack.”

Loki thanked him, subtly handing him an unknown amount of Irish currency, and ushered her into the warmth of the hotel’s lobby. It was an impressive the sight, even he had to admit it was. They followed the noise of clapping to the left and emerged into the vibrant bar. It was quite the elegant room, decked out in classic art and decor. The bright chandeliers that hung from the ceiling gave Asgard’s palace a run for its money. Behind the bar was a wide array of Midgardian drinks on display; some Loki recognised, others he did not. Off to their right and around the corner of the bar was the band, now in the midst of starting a new song.

Loki gave Ellie’s hand a squeeze and pointed to a small table in the corner that a couple were in the process of abandoning. “Go sit yourself at the table and I will get us some drinks.”

“As you wish,” she replied and went off to commandeer the spot.

He was relieved to see that the Midgardians had various wine on offer, so he tasted a few before settling on a bottle of expensive red wine to bring to the table. Of course, Ellie questioned the decision to buy a whole bottle between them, to which he felt the need to explain.

“Midgardian alcohol is far weaker compared to that which Asgard produces,” he clarified as he poured a glass for her. “I would need multiple bottles before I even start feeling its effects. You, on the other hand, are probably far more susceptible to it.”

“I’ve actually never had a drink before,” she admitted and took the glass in hand.

“Oh, delightful! You are sure to get positively inebriated by the night’s end.”

She chucked at his comment, eying him as he finally removed his coat and took a seat. “I definitely can’t get drunk. I have duties to attend to tomorrow; the Queen has a dress fitting and —”

“Not get drunk? Are you mad, woman? It is somewhat of a rite of passage once you are of age. I would much rather you did so in my company and drinking wine instead of drowning in ale in a dingy Asgardian tavern. Consider this a late nameday present from me.”

While Loki decided against admitting it out loud, he hoped to wipe her mind of the unpleasant experience last year. He wanted her first night of drinking and relaxing to happen in a place where she was free of being judged and harassed. She seemed so at ease in this city, despite its unfamiliarity. But here, no one knew who they were. No one glared, no one yelled. It was refreshing to see her sitting so comfortably as she tried wine for the first time, and the little giggle that escaped her when she realised she actually liked this drink. He also took the opportunity to gift her the book he had bought all those years ago in the market — right before the assault that took place. He had put it off for so long given that every time he looked at it, he relived the upsetting memory all over again. The look on her face was priceless and it brought a massive grin to his face. There were a few ‘you shouldn’t have!’s, but she accepted it gracefully and hugged him in return. It seemed that as the evening gradually progressed, he succeeded in what he came to
do — make her happy and have what the Midgardians referred to as ‘fun’.

They were successfully through the first bottle when Ellie was visibly feeling the effects of the wine. Although she had only had a glass, she was evidently a bit delicate to the alcohol. Loki returned from the bar with another bottle to see her happily watching the band play, tapping her fingers on the table to the rhythm as they started a slower tune.

“Prince Loki?”

“No need for formalities tonight, little one,” he said and patted her hands. “What is it? Are you feeling okay?”

“I’m fantastic!” she declared with a laugh. “But I was wonderin’ if you’d dance with me? Loads of people are dancin’ now.”

He gazed around the room as the music began to build. Sure enough, there were a vast number of people making the most of the small space. Clearly everyone had reached a socially acceptable level of inebriation, although he still thought they looked somewhat ridiculous wearing those unusual red hats with white furry baubles… “You wish to dance?”

“I would bloody love to.”

“Then we shall do as you wish.”

He offered her his hand and subsequently tugged her on to the dance floor just as the singer began the opening verse of the song.

*Those fingers in my hair*

*That sly come-hither stare*

*That strips my conscience bare*

*It’s witchcraft*

*And I’ve got no defence for it*

*The heat is too intense for it*

*What good would common sense for it do?*

They moved about the dance floor with surprising ease, Loki taking the lead with one arm around her waist and the other clutching her opposing palm. She rested her free hand on his shoulder and let him guide the way, despite the alcohol having not yet affected her motor skills. He felt no need to give her instructions. Instead, he let her feel where he would move to next, gently easing her about with signals from his body. Eventually, they settled into a rhythm that allowed them to softly sway together.

*Cause it’s witchcraft, wicked witchcraft*

*And although I know it’s strictly taboo*
When you arouse the need in me
My heart says "Yes, indeed" in me
"Proceed with what you're leadin' me to"
It's such an ancient pitch
But one I wouldn't switch
Cause there's no nicer witch than you.

“I had no idea you were such a good dancer,” she said after he spun her and pulled her back into his embrace.

“I am a prince,” he answered simply. “We have to learn these things, you know.”

“Still, I doubt Thor moves with as much grace as you.”

He chuckled, interlacing his fingers with hers while the band slowly built the music up towards a crescendo. “That much I can confirm. That is one area in which I will always outrank him.”

When the song came to an end, the room erupted with joyful applause. As the group began what they described as ‘songs to match the festive season’, Loki and Ellie took their seats once more and proceeded to finish the second bottle of wine. By the time the lounge was closing, the young woman was not as steady on her feet as when they arrived. The God of Mischief was unwilling to let her wander from his side, holding her close to him as they donned their coats once more and exited the hotel.

The same doorman was still there from earlier in the night and he quickly offered her his hand as Loki helped ease Ellie out into the night air.

The doorman took note of her slightly wobbly form and grinned. “Good night, miss?”

“Oh,” she exclaimed. “It was the best. So good!”

“It would seem that she will need time to get used to drinking,” Loki joked, still holding her against his side. “I suppose the first is usually the most effective.”

“You brought her here for her first drink? Hang on’ta him, miss! He’s a keeper.”

“’M kinda stuck with ’im, t’be honest. But tha’s okay, he’s pretty great.”

“He’s definitely a good one t’be stuck with. Happy Christmas to you both!”

They both wished him all the best before they retreated once more to the park. As it turned out, it was a little more awkward trying to assist a drunken little mortal over the fence, but Loki did not mind having to deliver her to her bedside. Thanks to the glamour, their adventure was a rousing success, and knowing that she had had ‘the best’ time meant it was worth the risk.

* * *
“Why does Frey have to be here?”

“Because life is unfair, brother?”

Thor growled into his tankard as he took a sip, then agitatedly adjusted the neckline of his formal wear. The princes stood on the sidelines of the very busy feast hall within the palace. Much to their chagrin, there was a ball currently in full swing, organised by Odin to ease some political tension between the Aesir and Vanir. It didn’t seem like too big of a deal, but with the ball came the arrival Frey and Freyja. Why they had to be invited, Loki had no idea, but with them obviously came their ever-subtle efforts to stir rumours. For the whole night he had felt eyes on him, judging his every move. He did all that was required of him — he danced with women, he socialised with men of status, he spoke with his father when he had something of note to say — but even still, it seemed as though he was being assessed even more than usual. The brothers usually conversed in between whatever duties they attended to, briefly speaking of their distaste for this whole event before leaving to go and repeat the process. He had yet to speak with Frey or Freyja bar a formal greeting that took place, but the younger Odinson got the feeling that they may have been encouraging the animosity towards him. Call him paranoid, but his gut feeling was rarely wrong.

While he slithered his way through the rambunctious crowds and couples dancing to the ceremonial music, he took it upon himself to eavesdrop on several conversations some distance away with the assistance of seiðr. What snippets he caught brought him no comfort.

“… consorting with a mortal…”

“… Prince Loki is fucking the Midgardian?…”

“… never out of his sight…”

“… Frey believes so…”

“… she is barely of age!…”

“… that harlot probably spreads her legs at the drop of a hat…”

“… does not belong here…”

“… has he no self respect?…”

“… clearly not taking his position as Prince seriously…”

“… what a fool…”

“… unworthy of his status…”

“… Thor would never stoop so low…”

To say his blood was boiling would be an understatement. Each new rumour he heard just set him off more. He kept his facade expertly calm and continued to greet the required guests, but inside he wanted to personally wring Frey’s neck and throw his sister to the wolves. As if people did not doubt him already. As if the Asgardians did not already show him a lack a respect despite his status. Here was yet another reason why he would never be loved in the same way Thor was—

“Prince Loki!”
He turned on his heel to come face to face with the exact person he wanted to joyfully murder. “Frey.”

“Are you enjoying the festivities?” he asked, slurping on his drink with obvious ease. “It is quite the ball.”

“It is quite impressive,” he said with a thin smile, hands folded behind his back. “But I am not overly fond of such big occasions. I prefer ones with less guests, you see.”

“Ah yes, I see. I suppose you are right; these big events can get rather messy if you’re careless.”

Before Loki could contemplate such a comment, their conversation was interrupted with the arrival of a serving girl. Upon laying his eyes on her familiar face, he held his tongue.

“Your wine, My Lord,” Ellie announced quietly, holding out a platter with a single goblet of wine for Frey to collect. She waited patiently, glancing once at Loki in acknowledgement, while Frey looked at her with a malignant grin.

“Actually,” he drawled, side stepping away from her. “I think I have had quite enough to drink for one evening. Perhaps the Prince would be so kind as to accept the wine on my behalf.”

While the pair furrowed their brows in confusion at such a request, Frey began to walk away. With a swiftness they had not been expecting, he walked behind Ellie and elbowed her in the back, sending her tumbling into Loki’s form with a harsh smack. The goblet went flying and wine soaked his formal wear. As both Ellie and the platter clattered to the ground, it drew the attention of the surrounding throng.

“Perhaps you should reprimand your clumsy mortal, Your Highness!” Frey called back before disappearing into the sea of people.

Loki stood fixed to the spot, too shocked to move, arms bent upwards as the stain spread along his chest. He tensed his jaw, teeth tightly clenched, and assessed the damage. Around him, some people murmured while others had the gaul to laugh. What came over him, he had no idea, but the sight of the smirking faces and the embarrassment that went with it was the straw that broke the camel’s back.

“M-My Prince!” Ellie stuttered, struggling to her feet with wide, frightful eyes. “I-I apologise! I was not— h-he hit me and— I did not mean too—”

“You stupid girl!”

No one was prepared from the guttural roar that erupted from the Trickster’s mouth. If the collision had not caught everyone’s attention, his reaction surely had. Ellie could only stand there like a deer caught in headlights.

“Look what you have done!” he continued, pointing to his ruined clothes. “You careless fucking mortal! Have you no eyes?”

“I-I-I am sorry, Prince Loki! Let me help—”

“Do not touch me, servant!” he barked and quickly moved from her as though her attempted touch burned his skin. “Get out of my sight. Go on, get away from me! That is a order!”

The complete and utter heartbreak that appeared in her eyes for the briefest of moments was what made Loki aware of the reality of the situation. As quickly as the emotion appeared, it was gone again, all signs of hurt in her face replaced with stoic indifference that she learned from him. She
apologised once more, voice completely robotic, before she bolted from the hall.

The murmurs of the guests were drowned out as the music slowly began again. He, however, remained stood there like an imbecile while two servants quickly attended to the spilled goblet on the floor. No one dared come to his side to assist him. He did not even know why he was so upset — he could easily use magic to remove the wine — but he was more concerned about his damaged self worth than anything. Evidently, he was far less concerned with his friend’s feelings. He unleashed his anger against the nearest target, which was unfortunately her. For a few minutes he stood there, honestly ashamed of attacking someone who had shown him nothing short of genuine friendship and kindness. Because that’s exactly what Ellie was to him — a dear friend that he had known for thirteen years and most of her short life. Was the acceptance of the Aesir more important than a bond he had already unknowingly formed with someone who seemed to like him for who he was?

He rushed from the hall, slipping around the dancing guests and out the door through which the girl had disappeared. With the door shut behind him, the deserted corridor was significantly quieter with the lack of any other patrons. The music remained mostly audible, however muffled it now was. Thankfully, it meant he could find Ellie by following the sound of short and heavy breathing. He slowly approached a pillar, behind which he saw a pair of feet swiftly tapping against the stone floors. It was clear from her uneven breathing that she was distraught.

“Ellie?” he called gently, peering around the pillar to see her sitting on the floor with her head hidden under her arms, palms pressed down on her head with fingers interlocked. “Are you alright?”

Her head flew up and the sight of her tear-stained cheeks caused the blood to drain from his face. It was as if he was looking at the broken child who arrived on Asgard all those years ago once again.

“I’m sorry!” she cried between gasping breaths. “P-please, I didn’t mean to spill it! I’m sorry! Please, d-don’t! Leave me alone!”

The speed at which she spoke left him stunned. He immediately dropped down to his knees and held up both hands. “Little one, it is okay—”

She scooted backwards and whimpered. She continued on, clearly panicking and not hearing his words. “Please, no! I’m so sorry. Don’t hurt me!”

She crawled back until her back hit the nearby wall, trapping herself in a corner. The only way out was now around him and she resigned herself to cowering there and trying to calm down. Loki allowed her a few moments to gather herself and waited until her frightened breathing slowed slightly. He did not know how long he sat there with her, but he had no problem waiting patiently until she was capable of talking.

“I would never lay a hand on you,” he whispered, still on his knees before her. “You know that. I promise I will not hurt you.”

She eventually met his gaze, eyes red rimmed and exhausted. “I’m sorry I spilled the goblet.”

He shook his head vehemently. “There is no need to apologise. It was an accident and the blame lies on Frey for shoving you into me. I should be the one apologising to you.” He hung his head slightly before confidently meeting her gaze again. “I may have let Frey vex me and took it out on you as a result. You were not the cause of my upset tonight, however you ended up being its target. That was unacceptable of me.”
“W-what did he say to you?” she queried, voice still holding an uncertain quiver.

He shook his head. The last thing he wanted was to upset her further. “It is of no importance. What I do need to assure you is that I would never lay a hand on you, Ellie. I wish only to protect you. I am a trickster, and somewhat of an arse as you repeatedly insist, but you are still my friend. Do you believe me when I say this?”

She didn’t hesitate for long before nodding slowly and clasping her shaking hands together. “I do. Y-you’re my friend too.”

He smiled softly — not a smirk or a sneer, but a genuine smile — and then glanced back at the entrance to the hall. Distant chatter could be heard as the orchestra played on with some classical pieces. He slowly got to his feet and offered her his hand. “How about I make it up to you with a dance?”

She eyed his hand for a split second. “Can you be seen dancin’ with a handmaiden?”

“I do not care what anyone else thinks. I would dance with my friend if she will have me.”

She smiled a bit at that and wiped her cheeks before she let him help her stand up. “I can assure you she would love to dance with you.”

With gentle care, he pulled her body close to his, recreating the stance they took on Midgard last week. With her hand clasped in his, he began to slowly lead her around the empty corridor in time with the piece playing inside. The dancing seemed to calm her down and, once she was totally relaxed, she let her head rest against his shoulder. Without noticing, the pair stood mostly still, completely at ease and moving slightly back and forth on the one spot. Not caring for decorum at that moment, Loki let his cheek rest against the top of her head, enjoying the scent of her hair and lightly stroked his thumb against the back of her small hand.

“I’m sorry they’re sayin’ such things about you,” she murmured suddenly. “It’s not fair.”

He frowned at her admittance, but still continued to rock to the music. “You are aware of what upset me?”

“Yes, I heard them. They don’t whisper when I walk by.”

“Ignore their foolish words. They are clearly not worth the effort.”

“I’ll ignore them if you do too.”

“Of course. Let us remain here a while.”

“I’m not goin’ anywhere, I promise.”

Before he knew what he was doing, Loki pressed a kiss into her hair. While he caught himself afterwards and opened his mouth to apologise, she merely held his hand tighter and continued with their slow dancing. The gesture left him confused, questioning why he had done so, but he chose to force the uncertainty away for the time being. He refused to let the night become a total disaster.

So there they both remained, dancing privately together even as the horde inside burst into applause and one song faded into the next.
Revelations

Chapter Summary

Loki finds himself caught in an awkward encounter with Ellie, and a violent incident within the palace leaves everyone on edge.

Chapter Notes

I've just now realised that the chapters keep getting progressively worse in terms of angst... Perhaps I'm more sadistic than originally thought? Who knows! At least we can all suffer together.


It was a known fact by those who worked within the palace that the princes took women to their chambers when they could. Being a royal didn’t rid you of standard needs, so they usually used their status to bring willing partners to their bed (or any nearby surface, really) quite often. Loki was a little bit more selective in his courtesans and escorts than Thor, who usually chased down women on relentless pursuits if they didn’t immediately bend over, only to toss them aside once he was sated. If he thought they performed well in bed, he would keep them for a while longer, but none ever lasted a very long time before being swapped for another. Loki did not do relationships in any shape or form. If you ended up in his bed, you knew you would only be there temporarily; no feelings, no expectations, no spending the night (unless activities continued until the morning). He didn’t consider his actions to be in any way excessive — usually he had sex to sate himself when the need arose — but lately things had not been the same. Having multiple sexual partners was still good and mostly satisfying, but there was a nagging part of him that no longer got any pleasure from it.

He was in such a situation early one morning with a servant. They were in his chambers and had been since the night before. While it was completely unorthodox for her to still be there, Loki had stopped caring hours ago when he finished with very little satisfaction. He lay there, utterly dissatisfied with the body beneath him. Everything she did was wrong; she tasted wrong, her noises pierced his ears like nails on a chalkboard, her body felt sharp and hard beneath his. He was thoroughly perturbed by the whole thing, so he pulled her back to bed and kept her there until he could find the satisfaction he was looking for. When he noticed the sun rising through his curtains, he gave up and resided himself to the fact that he would not catch the pleasure he sought any time soon.

He lay naked on the bed, his back propped up against some pillows as she rushed around the room in search of her clothes. He barely spared her a glance, burning a hole into his fireplace as he contemplated what had just occurred. Sometimes the servant — or was she a maid? What was her damned name again? — crossed his line of sight when grabbing her wayward garments, but it didn’t distract him from the elephant in the room. Since when did he find no satisfaction in casual sex? He could only assume that she was the problem.
Loki barely heard her when she bid him a good day and, now fully dressed, skittered off towards the door. He gave her no response, too fixed on his own worries, but looked up when she opened the door and hesitated in the doorway. When he saw why, his eyes nearly fell out of his head.

On the other side stood Ellie, her hand raised in preparation to knock, eyes wide as she and the frazzled maid gazed at each other in mutual shock. He hastily pulled a sheet over his waist when she looked at him and went instantly red.

“Astrid?”

The maid — who was apparently named Astrid — stared back at the young Midgardian. “Ellie?”

“M-my apologies, My Prince,” Ellie stammered when she suddenly realised he was still present, looking from the floor to the ceiling and anywhere that wasn’t his exposed frame. “I had been about to knock.”

“You may leave now,” he ordered, addressing only Astrid. “Away with you.”

Visibly irritated by his tone, she took her leave and left them both alone.

“I’ll wait out here, My Prince,” Ellie explained and quickly shut the door to give him privacy.

He stood and pulled on a nearby pair of loose pants when he knew she was not going to open the door until his signal to do so. He put his head in his hands at the thought of what she had just seen — not that his habits were any secret — but he had preferred her remaining blissfully ignorant to them. Nakedness was not something that embarrassed him either, but Ellie was young and innocent and presumably pure, so he was more concerned about whether she would ever look him in the eyes again.

Once he safely had pants on, he called out for her to enter. She came in slowly, making sure he was covered before stepping into his room.

“The Queen asked me to come get you,” she explained, still a little nervous from their encounter. “You’re, eh, late for breakfast with your family.”

“Thank you for informing me,” he replied, arms folded across his chest. “Would you mind just telling them that I overslept?”

She blinked, eyes darting from his face to his bare chest. “Ehh... Okay then.”

A smirk slowly found its way to his lips. “Are you alright?”

“Yes.”

“There is no need to be embarrassed, little one.”

“Excuse me?”

“This is not new behaviour for me. You act as though you have never seen a naked god before.”

She pouted at him, clearly somewhat offended by his jesting. “Probably because I haven’t? And also ’cause I wasn’t exactly prepared to see you with your pants down.”

Whatever confidence Loki had displayed before was nearly wiped off his face. “I’m... sorry?”

“Sorry?”
“You said—”

“I said that—”

“That you have never—”

“It’s not really that big of a deal—”

“But you…” He paused, staring at her for a moment. “Really?”

She shrugged, looking back at him with wide eyes. “Not tryin’ to be smart, but when would I even get the chance to do that? I sleep in a part of the palace with a bunch’a other handmaidens in neighbourin’ rooms and, if you haven’t noticed, I don’t have many male friends.”

He hesitated in his response, trying to choose his next words carefully. “So you have never seen a man naked?”

“No,” she admitted as a flush painted her cheeks. “W-well, I hadn’t up until just now.”

Her confession nearly knocked him for six, even if he hid it with ease. He wasn’t expecting to feel so…proud? Was that what he was feeling? That however awkward, accidental, and embarrassing the encounter had been, he was still the first man she had laid eyes on? His unwarranted reaction concerned him more than the actual situation.

He cleared his throat. “Yes, well, I’m sorry that I have now ruined your expectations for any future suitors.”

That earned a hearty laugh from the young woman. “Hush! You’re an absolute bastard, y’know that?”

“I am merely going to refer to my title of Trickster again to justify my behaviour.”

She rolled her eyes at that. “Well I will inform your family that you will be with them momentarily. Anythin’ else you require before I take my leave, My Prince?”

“Little one, if you ask me such a thing while I am half naked, you are sure to receive an exceptionally crude answer.”

He burst out laughing when her eyes went as wide as saucers. “Jesus. Right, I am takin’ my leave and never coming to your room in the mornin’ again. Goodbye!”

He stood fixed to the spot while he watched her leave. When he was left alone again, he took a seat on the edge of his bed and contemplated all that had occurred. He didn’t have much time to himself before his own handmaiden, Dagny, made an entrance. She greeted him accordingly before asking what he required for the day.

“Just the usual duties,” he replied, getting to his feet. “Thank you. And also draw me a bath.”

“Of course, Your Highness.” With a bow she got to work preparing the bath for him and laying out his clothes for the day.

Loki didn’t care too much for her, if he was honest. She was…fine. Fine at her job, that is. She never really held conversation, apparently having no interest in doing so. She was still new to the position as well, having only begun working for him for the past three years after his previous hand servant of centuries, Radburn, retired from his duties. He had no problem admitting to himself that he missed Radburn dearly — the old man had been quite the confidant to him and had
no problem with holding a conversation, unlike his replacement. Sometimes they still saw each other in the city and greeted each other like the old friends that they were. He supposed at least Dagny wasn’t bad at her job, even if her indifference to him was mildly irritating.

With her assistance, he readied himself quickly and washed the evidence from his stressful night activities from his skin. He left his chambers and managed to make it to breakfast without bothering his father too much with his tardiness. It appeared that Ellie had upheld her part of the bargain.

* * *

Secret trips to Midgard became a regular occurrence for Loki and Ellie since the very first time. Every month they sacrificed a lesson in seiðr to visit different parts of earth. He didn’t mind missing lessons too much, as she was making good progress with her continued studies by reading books he assigned. He showed her the different portals he knew of that left them in on various corners of the globe. In the notebook her gifted her some years ago, she began to keep a tally of the cities they visited together so far:

Dublin, Ireland

Gothenburg, Sweden

Sydney, Australia

Johannesburg, South Africa

Casablanca, Morocco

This time around, they ended up in New York City, a place that nearly sent Ellie into a sensory overload. Loki, however, had been here before on a few occasions, so he was well used to the bustling city and its equally busy inhabitants. All things considered, it was a good destination for someone who wanted to disappear into a city that never sleeps. The relief that came with these journeys always ended up being worth the risk getting there. It was refreshing to wander around a place where no one knew of them and where the risk of a politically-charged assault was practically non-existent.

When asked if there was anything specific she wished to see, Ellie’s reply was simple; exploration would suit her fine. Obviously impressed with the towering skyscrapers and jam-packed streets, she was happy to just walk around for the evening. She made a habit of stopping him whenever she became distracted by an interesting landmark or even a fluffy dog on a walk with its owner. While he made sure to complain because it either annoyed her or roused a laugh, he did not mind stopping every thirty seconds. He began to realise that seeing her happy also made him happy. He found himself smiling when she stood staring up at a towering building mid-construction on Park Avenue near Grand Central Station. Much like the sense of pride he felt the morning of the ‘indecent exposure incident’, he was briefly puzzled by these new feelings. He thought it best to ignore them for both their sakes and continued on exploring the city with her by his side.

While they waded through Times Square that evening, Ellie picked up a newspaper from a local
“What are you reading *that* for?” Loki asked as she unlinked her arm from his to pay the woman.

“‘Cause I want’a know what’s happening on Midgard while I’m here,” she answered simply, wetting her finger so that she could get a better grip for turning the thin pages. “It’s hard to keep up with the news when you’re livin’ on a different realm. We don’t exactly get *The New York Times* on Asgard.”

He linked his arm with hers again so that he could usher her through the crowds while she insisted on reading. “I can assure you that interesting things rarely happen on this heap of rock.”

“I don’t know, Your Highness. This headline sounds fairly interesting to me: ‘*Green Sasquatch Sighted in Canada*.’”

He let out a heavy sigh. “Midgardians and their sasquatch sightings…”

“*Local resident, Elliot Litton, notified local police yesterday of what appeared to be a green sasquatch. ‘It only lasted a moment, but I know what I saw. It was definitely green, and it was big,’ said Litton when describing his sighting.’* What were you sayin’ about Midgard bein’ dull? Because apparently we have massive green monsters in Canada.”

“I’m sure there is a reasonable explanation for such a sighting, be it poor lighting or hallucinogenic drugs.”

Ellie shrugged, furrowing her brows at the report. “I dunno, the police seem to believe him for some reason. They say it could have some connection to a guy called Doctor Bruce Banner, who is apparently ‘on the run’. You know him?”

“I do not,” Loki admitted before a local diner in the distance caught his attention. “But put the newspaper away for the moment. Have you ever had pizza?”

“Not that I can recall. Maybe? Remind me what it is again?”

He grabbed the paper and shoved it into his satchel as he dragged her towards the establishment. “You are about to find out, little one.”

* * *

After having to forcefully drag Ellie from the pizza place, Loki returned with her to Asgard in good time. They arrived back with enough time that they could sneak into the palace without having to rush around. Hidden under his glamour, they wandered back through the silent corridors towards her shared chambers. At first, he was quite uneasy as they walked along in the dim light. He was not sure why, but Loki knew to trust his gut feeling more than anything and, right now, it insisted that something was afoot.

Suddenly, the palace came back to life; it was as if someone had flipped a switch. A group of Einherjar rounded a nearby corner and sped past the pair. Loki was quick to pull Ellie into him to avoid a collision and watched transfixed as one guard yelled orders as the others.

“You three get to the handmaidens’ chambers quick! We will secure the royal family!”

Loki shook his head. “I do not know, but you are not to leave my sight.”

“I won’t argue with you, I promise.”

“We are going to my quarters. Now.”

Placing himself in front of his companion, Loki conjured two daggers as the guards split and went their separate ways. The couple rushed off and made it to his quarters moments before the Einherjar arrived. To cover up the fact they had been awake and travelling about, he used magic to change them both into sleeping garments. If the guards were surprised to see a handmaiden in his company, they said nothing to imply it.

“Your Highness,” one of them began. “We need you and Prince Thor to gather together in the King and Queen’s chambers immediately.”

“What has happened to require such a thing?” he asked, eying them carefully.

“There has been a breach in the palace and an attack on one of the Allmother’s handmaidens, Your Highness.”


The guard looked at her calmly for a moment before speaking. “Someone has been killed.”

She took a step back from the doorway, her face falling. “Oh my God…”

“Your Highness,” the guard addressed Loki again. “We need you to come with us as soon as possible.”

“Then she is coming with me,” he insisted and took hold of her hand. “If one of her comrades has been murdered then she will not leave my sight.”

“Understood. We must move, now.”

“But Loki,” Ellie grabbed a hold of his arm with her free hand. “What about Fen and Sevda? And the others—”

“We already have men posted at the handmaidens’ quarters to safeguard them all,” the guard reassured her. “We will tell you more upon arrival to the the King and Queen’s chambers.”

“We must go,” Loki said softly and gently led her along with the guards stationed at either side of them. “I promise that as soon as the palace is found to be safe again we will go to see your friends, alright?”

Although visibly panicking at the thought of her friends being hurt, Ellie nodded and obediently followed him to their destination. The place was swarming with Einherjar, two stationed at every single door and passageway within the palace walls. Along the way, they came across Thor dressed in his nightwear and in the company of his own escort of guards.

The eldest Odinson let out a relieved sigh at the sight of them. “Loki! Ellie! Thank the Norns are both alright.”

When Thor clapped his shoulder affectionately, Loki returned the gesture. “And you, brother.”

“Are you alright?” Thor asked Ellie after he made sure that his younger brother was indeed
unharmed, touching her arm with uncharacteristic softness.

She shook her head as the first tears began to escape along with a hastily said sentence. “One of my colleagues has been murdered, Prince Thor, and I don’t know if my friends are okay.”

Thor’s gaze snapped to Loki at her admittance. “Odin’s beard… I am afraid I do not know anymore than you both.”

“The Einherjar will tell us more once we reach Mother and Father’s chambers. It is best that we remain calm, especially you.” Loki gave Ellie’s hand a squeeze as they neared the massive golden doors that lead to their destination. Guarded by four Einherjar, they let the princes and their companion enter without delay. Inside, Loki saw his mother and father pacing around by the burning torches. Both of Odin’s ravens were perched proudly either side of the grand bed, cawing incessantly to mirror the Allfather’s internal distress. When they entered, both heads flew up and Frigga didn’t hesitate to run to greet them. She pulled her sons into her arms, sighing in relief.

“My sons,” she whispered and hugged them tight. “Thank the Norns you are alright.”

“We are glad you are not hurt, Mother,” Loki replied and kissed her cheek tenderly while his brother squeezed her hand and turned to greet their father.

“I am relieved to see you are both unharmed,” Odin said and firmly grabbed Thor’s hand. When Loki was released from Frigga’s hold, he gave his hand a squeeze too.

“Ellie?” Frigga suddenly sounded, noticing the girl for the first time. There was no mistaking the confusion but clear relief in her tone. “Are you alright?”

“Y-your Majesty,” the girl stuttered, cheeks tear-stained and her frail body shaking uncontrollably. “Are my friends okay? The guards, they said t-that—”

“Hush, little one,” Frigga pacified her, hugging her gently. “You must stay calm. You are safe here in our company. I am glad that you are unscathed.”

“While I am also relieved that the Midgardian is alive and well,” Odin began, his one good eye narrowing. “Why was she brought here with you both?”

Thor shrugged and looked to his sibling for an explanation. “She was in Loki’s company when I met them.”

“I found her reading in the library,” Loki lied effortlessly. “It was late and passed her curfew, so I thought it was best to accompany her back to her chambers rather than let her go alone. On the way there, the commotion began, and I chose to hide her within my chambers for her safety while we waited for the all clear.”

Odin merely nodded, clearly too preoccupied with the fact his palace had been somehow breeched to really question whether his son was lying or not. It’s not as if Loki had reason to lie either.

“It is good that you found her, brother,” Thor said with all the severity he could muster at such an late hour. “Otherwise she would have been in her chambers alone during the attack.”

“The attack did not take place within any of their bedchambers,” Odin explained gravely. “It was in the corridor outside the chambers of your mother’s handmaids where screams for the guards were heard. When they arrived, they found the body of Astrid. Her throat had been slit. The guards said they spotted a cloaked figure fleeing the scene, but cornered him in the gardens where he took his own life before they could subdue him. They are currently searching the palace for any signs of additional participants.”
Loki faltered and met Ellie’s gaze.

Frigga wrung her hands and took a seat with the girl on the end of her bed. “Oh, Astrid. You poor thing.”

“Who has done this?” Thor demanded, baring his teeth. “Who has the gall to murder a handmaiden to the Allmother within this palace?”

“We do not know, son. The attacker bore no signs of race or rank. He might as well be a phantom.”

“How dare he! Had I gotten my hands on him, he would now be a charred corpse!”

“What do we do now?” Loki asked, trying to remain calm for Ellie’s benefit. He noticed she had gone pale sitting with his mother.

“Remain here until the Einherjar say it is safe to leave.”

“What of the other handmaidens?” Ellie asked, looking to the Allmother hopefully. “Are guards still with them?”

“Yes, they are being kept in their shared living quarters in the company of several guards. No one will get in or out until it is safe.”

Happy with the news, Loki once again asked whatever questions he saw to be necessary. “Did Heimdall not raise the alarm? Surely he saw something?”

“He did not,” was Odin’s simple reply. “He says he saw no one entering Asgard or skulking around the palace until after Astrid was killed.”

Thor was visibly baffled at the thought. “How could he get passed the Gate Keeper who can see across the realms with such ease?”

“Surely some form of seiðr would have been involved then?” Loki pondered.

“It would seem that way,” Frigga agreed. “There is no other explanation for his impressive stealth. He was somehow cloaked, armed to the teeth, snuck into our palace, and murdered an innocent Asgardian right under our noses.”

“Clearly this is not the work of an amateur assassin. Why would he come here? Was Astrid his target?”

Frigga shook her head. “She did not have any enemies that I knew of. I cannot see a reason for her to be killed. She was always loyal to her work and I. My guess is that she was killed for raising the alarm and squandering whatever plans he had.”

“And as to what they were,” Odin sighed, standing before his two sons with a hung head. “I have no notion as of yet. Had the Einherjar captured him, then we might have gotten answers and be less in the dark about all of this.”

With a bang, the chamber doors opened again, and the Captain of the Guard strutted into the room. He kneeled in front of them all before getting to his feet again and speaking. “Your Majesties, we have cleared the palace and found no trace of any accomplices. We are happy to give the palace the all clear for now.”

“Thank you,” Odin said with a nod. “I would ask that you double patrols and add more men
within the vicinity of these chambers, those of my sons, and those of the servants.”

The Captain hit a clenched fist into his armoured chest and nodded firmly. “As you wish, My King.”

“There have been no patrols, no additional men within the vicinity of these chambers, those of my sons, and those of the servants.”

The Captain hit a clenched fist into his armoured chest and nodded firmly. “As you wish, My King.”

“Have your men accompany my sons and the handmaiden back to their quarters, as well. You are to protect them with your lives.”

The group shared goodbyes before they were all herded to their destinations. Once back in his familiar rooms, Loki did not get a moment of sleep. He sat up all night in front of his fireplace, fingers tapping anxiously on a nearby table top. Ellie had seemed eager to see her friends again in order to see with her own eyes that they were unharmed, but Loki detested watching her leave his sight. He was angry with the murderer, with Heimdall, with the Einherjar, with everyone involved in allowing that assassin within the safety of their walls. Had he and Ellie not been on Midgard, she could have been the one to meet his blade. The thought made him ill and furiously angry. His fist clenched until his knuckles went white. He chewed his lip until it bled. What were these emotions he felt so passionately? They drove him mad. Part of him wanted to better understand the way in which he looked at Ellie of late, but another part of him was too distracted by what had occurred that night to worry much more about it. His mind refused to stop thinking of the endless possibilities had they remained in the palace that night. He could not have shut off his brain even if he tried. He needed to know how someone could get passed the fucking Gate Keeper and murder a handmaiden to the Allmother. And yet, he and Ellie had snuck by Heimdall twice that very evening. Evidently, it was something done easily if you had the knowledge to do so. But Loki knew this was not something done haphazardly.

He stared at the flickering flames as they eat the kindling on offer. With pursed lips, he tried to calm his reeling mind and steer clear of thoughts of what could have happened had Ellie been around when the intruder was there. It made him panic and his hands shake.

Thor claimed that he would have left the assassin’s body a charred mess had they met in combat, but this was no match to the rage Loki felt towards this invader. Had he succeeded in whatever his mission was, had he stumbled across Ellie instead of Astrid, had he hurt her… Loki would have made him realise that being burned to a crisp was a generous death in comparison to what he had in store for him. Better yet, he would have done it all with an unwavering smile on his face.
Loki and Ellie take necessary measures after the attack on the palace, and the former has some revelations of his own.

I'm gonna take a break from the angst-fest that is this story to bring you guys some much deserved fluff and feels. Consider it a thank you to those of you enjoying the fic! :)


After Astrid’s murder, the palace became a hive of activity. It was constantly swarmed with alert Einherjar for a few weeks, unsure as to whether another attack was imminent. Eventually the patrols calmed when nothing else came about, but now each handmaiden to the Allmother had been assigned their own personal guard to accompany them between their duties. The handmaidens themselves didn’t argue with it, they were understandably distraught by the death of the comrade and friend, and who could argue with some temporary protection? Ellie had been temporarily allotted a guard by the name of Kirkjabyr. He was an older burly fellow, his face marred with old scars underneath his thick brown beard. Loki had known of him already from his years of service to his family. Though he looked like he would have no problem ripping your head off, he was a surprisingly docile man when the time called for it. He was on Ellie’s good side rather quickly, and she seemed to enjoy his company throughout the day. He had several daughters of his own, so he seemed more than happy to hold conversation with her about anything and everything.

The only issue with having someone in her company meant that Loki’s secret seiðr lessons with her would no longer be a secret. When she asked him what lies she could feed Kirkjabyr, he decided that they could probably get away with it if she said he was giving her extra tutoring in politics. This would have all been well and good, but Kirkjabyr would probably also inform the Allmother and Allfather that their son was spending time with a handmaiden late at night in the library… That would hardly improve Ellie’s image, and the last thing she needed was another rumour to tarnish her reputation. The combat training in the yard would be easier to justify — I need at least some trainin’ in self-defence. What if there’s another attack and I’m cornered alone? — given recent events, so Loki was not worried about her explaining this to Kirkjabyr. Instead, their seiðr lessons would have to remain a secret. He would have no issue casting an illusion spell to make himself invisible; the extra guards on patrol would have no idea when he left his room to go to the library. This would also give her the chance to practice her own illusion casting.

“What if I can’t do it?” she asked him one day as she delivered some books to his chambers, as per his specific request. “What if I mess it up and the Einherjar find me tryin’ to sneak out of my
“You have to practice illusions and seiðr in a real situation eventually,” he replied. “How else do you expect to master it? You will never reach the same level as I, but that does not mean you cannot master magic to the best of your abilities.”

Upon their next weekly seiðr lesson, Loki left his rooms a little later than usual, fully aware that Ellie may need a little bit more time to gather herself and sneak past the guards. While she had been learning magic for only five or six short years, he pushed her hard and focused mostly on illusions and seiðr, so he believed that she could manage the test of making herself disappear to untrained eyes. Upon arriving at his destination, he wasn’t expecting to find her already there, sitting happily beside the record player and listening to some music. As he shut the door behind him, she whipped her head around and sent him a delighted smile.

“I did it!” she whisper yelled, throwing two arms up in the air. “I snuck by the guards and they had no idea!”

“As I said you would,” he said dryly and approached with a rye smile.

“It took a lot outta me though,” she explained. “Is it okay if I take a moment to get my energy back?”

“Of course.” He set himself down in his usual chair and let his chin rest in the palm of his hand. “It is expected that it would take a lot of energy for you to cast an illusion over yourself. It is the same with the more difficult runes and seiðr spells. When my mother first taught me, I too struggled with illusions that now require little effort to cast. Even still, I will require rest if I cast a particularly taxing one. You will slowly learn to adjust, but right now, I wish to focus our efforts on more practical seiðr and illusions.”

“And why would that be?”

“When Thor and I decided it would be best to train you in some self-defence, it was for your protection. When my mother first introduced me to magic, it was playful and fun, but she soon knew that I would be a far better magic-wielder than I would a warrior. I do not fight in the same way my brother does — as you know well — but there was no reason why I could not use magic to assist me in combat. With recent events in this palace, I think it is time I do the same for you. Enough seiðr rituals for the moment, it is time we moved on to what I was taught to keep myself alive.”

Ellie pondered his words carefully, probably realising that this was a dire situation to be in. She understood that in this realm, she needed to find ways of keeping herself alive without relying on the assistance of someone else. If she was caught in the same position as Astrid, she refused to go out without a fight. “That is a fair point. Look, you’re my teacher, so I trust whatever you think is best for me.”

“Good. Then once you regain some energy, we will delve into magical energy, more stealth illusions, strength runes, and weapon conjuring. These abilities will not make you invincible, but they will sure as Hel give you a better chance if the time comes.”

She sat forward in her seat as he listed off each area of expertise. “If they are more practical then I’m excited to get into it. What should we start with?”

With the flick of his wrist, a long dagger appeared in Loki’s grasp. “I think it is practical to make sure you are always armed, little one.”
Ellie eyed the shimmering metal in his hand for a moment. Clearly the severity of the situation had finally hit her full force. Again, he knew she would not be anywhere near a master of the arts, but he truly believed she would try her best, and if that meant her safety was improved, then he would do his best to help her get there.

She met his gaze and matched his smirk with her own. “Then let’s get to it.”

* * *

Much like the first hurdle with making the plant grow some years ago, the first time Ellie would ever summon a dagger would take a lot of time and effort. Obviously, illusions were easier to cast than conjuring something solid that had a purpose. Sessions left her exhausted, and she was usually hidden behind an illusion cast by Loki in order to get back to her rooms. This was understandable and expected, given her mortality and age, but there were moments when he wondered whether she would ever master it. If she did, it would probably cost most of her energy to do it. Alas, they pressed onwards, more determined than ever to succeed. Although they were taking baby steps, progress was progress.

Their trips to Midgard were put on a halt, what with their attention being focused on training and seiðr. Since the incident, they hadn’t even mentioned going again, but now with Ellie’s nineteenth nameday approaching, they agreed to go just once more for the foreseeable future. At her request, they returned to London, England, which was, all things considered, a city with a very different atmosphere at night. She expressed a desire to explore what the nightlife had to offer and, though the sight of some of these Midgardian ‘clubs’ made him frequently grimace in displeasure, he was more comfortable with going into somewhere a little more respectable. With the help of some dressy clothes and conjured identification cards, they found themselves in somewhere called the Roof Gardens, a vibrant club with food and music on offer. Obviously it did not hold up to some of the parties Loki attended on Asgard, but it would certainly do for an evening. After her last drink-related experience, Ellie was eager to try these fancy-looking colourful things called cocktails.

“You remain here,” Loki ordered, eying the nearby bar. “And I will get some for us.”

“Hold on there,” Ellie said, grabbing his arm and getting to her feet. “If it’s alright with you, I want’a go up and buy them.”

“But it is your nameday,” he replied, clearly hesitant. “It is customary to purchase drinks for the one who is getting older.”

Sending him a less than impressed look, she shook her head. “Ah yeah, the god who is over a thousand years old is saying I’m old. Sit down, I’d like to go up and get them.”

“So you are doing something for me for once?” He sent her a playful grin as he sat back down. “I suppose I should let you go up then. These occurrences are few and far between.”

She let out a laugh and said. “You have some neck, Loki.” She shook her head as she left him to his own devices.

He remained seated at their small table, watching her every move from his seat. He knew that he didn’t necessarily need to guard her so intensely on Midgard, but he couldn’t pull his gaze away. She stood at the edge of the bar, fishing through her purse for money while waiting to be served.
He eyed her form, noting how exceptionally well fitted the dress he conjured for her was. He stared unabashedly given that she had her back to him. He probably shouldn’t have done so, considering how long he had known her and how young she was in comparison to him, but it wasn’t like anyone here would judge him for it. They didn’t know that he was royalty, so he didn’t give a single solitary fuck what anyone thought.

She was somewhat timid as a barmaid approached her. He watched as she pointed to a cocktail menu, probably asking what each drink contained. The barmaid seemed happy enough to help and Loki observed as she pointed to two drinks and Ellie nodded happily at the choice. The woman now stood visibly more relaxed as the barmaid got to making the cocktails, moving about to grab ingredients with expert knowledge. It was at this moment when he noticed another figure appear to his companion’s left. The sight of a young man dressed to the nines in a dapper suit made Loki clench his fist on the table top, but he remained seated, unwilling to get up and cause a scene. Perhaps Ellie would dismiss his advances — it was clear by the way his eyes never left her that he was ‘interested’. Over the blaring 80s music, Loki wasn’t sure what the man said as he gained her attention. Her expression was confused at first, and she hesitantly shook his hand when it was offered, but the more the man spoke, the more she relaxed. Loki was, of course, reacting in the opposite way. When the man roused a small chuckle from her, the Trickster was seeing red. As the barmaid placed the cocktails down on the counter and asked to be paid, the man had the audacity to take out his wallet, but Loki watched in amusement as he was profusely turned down and Ellie handed the server the money.

Loki had crossed the room in a matter of seconds. “Allow me to help.”

Ellie, somewhat surprised by his arrival, stuttered before saying. “Oh! Eh, t-thanks, Loki.”

“You know this guy?” the admirer asked, clearly a local given the accent, and gesturing to the prince.

“She came here to this establishment with me,” Loki replied before she could get a word in edgeways. “And you are…?”

Now closer to him, he made an apt assessment of his features; sharp nose, defined jawline, piercing grey eyes, dark hair with light matching stubble. He supposed he was somewhat conventionally handsome, if Midgardians were into that type of specimen. “Richard. And I believe she said your name was… Loki?”

The God of Mischief had no issue with staring this ‘Richard’ down. “Indeed, she did.”

Ellie looked between them, baffled by the behaviour. She handed Loki his glass and took up her own. “Okay, well—”

“Yes, we should go back to our table before someone else commandeers it. As you were, Robert.”

“Oh, it’s Richard.”

But Loki was already pulling Ellie towards their table, in no way eager to correct himself. Ever so polite, she called back that it was nice meeting him before following Loki again.

“What was that all about?” she demanded irritably.

“What?” He looked innocent. “I merely assisted you in bringing the drinks to the table.”

“Ahhh now. You might as well have threatened Richard with the way you were glarin’ at him.”

“I was concerned for your safety; his intentions were ill.” He took a sip of his drink. “That is not
bad. Have you tried yours?”

“Don’t change the subject—”

“It is very fruity.”

“Loki—”

“But it is! Try it.”

She sighed heavily. “I wasn’t gonna run off with him or anythin’, even if I probably could.”

He set his drink down and clasped his hands together. “Look, when we are on Midgard, you are my responsibility, even if you are an ‘adult’ here. I am cautious because neither of us knew that man. Not only that, but my mother would have my head if I lost her mortal handmaiden on this planet.”

She studied him for a moment before a small smile slowly grew on her made-up lips. “Aaaahhh, okay. You’re just doin’ that to appease Queen Frigga. Sure thing.”

“I would hardly wish to upset my mother…”

“Would it kill you to say you wouldn’t want anythin’ to happen to me?”

“Possibly,” he muttered and took another gulp of his cocktail. “What is this beverage called?”

“The server said it was called a Sex on the Beach, or somethin’.” Finally she took her first taste and her eyes went wide. “Oh my God, that’s delicious! You weren’t messin’ when you said it was fruity.”

“I’m sorry,” Loki began and held up a hand. “Are you going to ignore the ridiculous name you just called it?”

“I’m more concerned with how it tastes, if I’m honest.”

“How impractical,” he said, contemplating the activity in his head with a scowl. “It would be so sandy and uncomfortable.”

“Oh, so I can’t discuss galavanting off with Richard, but you can talk about havin’ sandy sex? Double standards, Your Highness.”

“That mortal is a fool considering he thought he had a chance to court you in the first place. And I think it is fairly clear that fucking in a place with copious amounts of sand would be—”

“I’m not gettin’ into this with you,” she insisted. “The next round is on you for puttin’ such horrid images in my innocent head.”

Ever since that night, Loki found himself watching Ellie as she worked more that usual. The way he studied her form on Midgard left him constantly eying her as she went about her day. Be it during lessons, serving their food, or cleaning the halls after festivities. He couldn’t tear his eyes away. If he was honest, at least within his internal monologue, he would say that she was… attractive? Could he say that? Was that something controversial considering she was but a young mortal? There was no question that she had become a woman in recent years and had certainly… grown into herself.

Okay so, yes, Loki would admit that he did find her physically attractive, but he wasn’t immune to
attractive individuals, that was certain. He usually found it quite easy to make his way through numerous partners before he lost interest and moved on. But that was where his problem lay — using Ellie for his physical needs before throwing her out of his chambers seemed strangely harsh and unfair.

Sitting under their tree a few days after they returned from their trip, Loki and Ellie idly flicked through separate books while enjoying each other’s silent company. On that quiet day, they chose to spend their time in the gardens. Every now and then, he heard a small giggle from her direction. At first, he ignored it, focusing his attention on the writing before him. He wet his finger and turned the page as another giggle was stifled. His eyes levelled on her only to be met with her biting her lip, trying to hold in the laughter as she read her — apparently hilarious — book. She never noticed him looking, and her gentle chuckling continued while he found himself grinning at the sight. Every now and then, his attention would return to his own book, only to be dragged back to her every time she let out a happy snigger. Every time she came into view, Loki couldn’t help but admire her smile. He allowed himself to stare, noting how every time a particular line would tickle her, she would place the tips of her fingers on her lips. It was such a gentle gesture, one that he had come to love seeing. There was no way he could stop the smile that came to him. The sight of her so carefree and happy relaxed him. Dare he say seeing her happy made him happy. For once, he didn’t feel ridiculous admiring her features and thinking of how far she had come. If he could, he would never look away.

And so they sat together in silence, flicking through their books under the leaves of the cork tree until the sun drifted from behind the clouds and came out of hiding. Under the leaves of this tree, Loki realised that his feelings had grown slowly over time. So slowly, in fact, that only now did he realise he cared for this woman in a way that he didn’t think possible. For now, he could not let his worries consume him, not when she was there before him looking so effortlessly beautiful and content. The tension within him gradually faded and drifted away with the evening’s breeze as his eyes never strayed from that which made him feel an unfamiliar warmth and calmness. He hoped the sentiment would never leave.

* * *

When Loki was alone with his thoughts, or just without Ellie in his company, he found himself thinking a little clearer than when she was nearby. He knew that he was better off staying away from her and just ignoring these new problematic ‘feelings’, but there was still a part of him that shamelessly drew pleasure from her presence. After a busy day attending assemblies with his father and brother, he resigned to his chambers and drank himself to sleep, only to be rudely awoken by Dagny knocking on his door. With a groan he pushed himself to a sitting position and called for her to enter.

When she let herself in, he received a formal nod. “Good morning, Your Highness.”

“Good morning, Dagny,” he replied somewhat gruffly, remaining sat in his place.

“Do you require anything else other than standard services today?”

He shook his head, lost in his resurfacing thoughts. “No.”

Saying nothing else, Dagny got to work and didn’t acknowledge him unless spoken to first. To be fair, he appreciated her withdrawn nature for once, as it let him think he was the only one in the room. Loki was aware that Odin would probably disown him if he knew any of this. He already
hated that he and Thor both saw Ellie in whatever free time they had. As if the fact he had befriended a Midgardian was bad enough, he also had to find her attractive. As if he wasn’t already a disappointment.

*How swell.*

While he relished Ellie’s presence, he wondered if there was a way to get what he wanted without further distancing himself from his father. Being on a friendly basis with her was already bad enough, but he was never one for strict rules that were detrimental to his own desires anyway. There was probably a way around it, similar to how he began to teach her self-defence. Another way in which they were required to spend time together, one that they could manage without having to constantly cloak themselves.

*Now that would be ideal.*

The rustling of Dagny laying out his clothes on his bed drew him out of his head. Obviously she had no clue about his internal feud, and why would she? It’s not like they ever spoke about anything other than if he needed her to draw a bath. She was rather boring, if he was blunt, which he *always* was. But he was stuck with her until she retired, just like Radburn before her, and he was genuinely not looking forward to the probable century for which she would be around…

As they usually did, the clogs in Loki’s head began to turn with new ideas beginning to take shape. Slowly, he settled his gaze on Dagny and found himself sneering at her back. She went about her work as always, completely unaware of what he was now planning. If there was ever a way for him to obtain his own selfish needs, however foolish they may be, he always found it. The Trickster sometimes thought that his best schemes came about quite suddenly. Now he was almost sure of it.
Dread

Chapter Summary

Loki sets his plan in motion, but subsequently realises that he's in too deep.

Chapter Notes

I suppose given Loki's self realisation, we've reached a new point in this story, if that makes any sense? I wasn't too sure how it would be received, so any feedback (positive or negative!) would be amazing :D Either way, I hope you's enjoy another chapter!


Loki was determined. He was also confident.

He usually managed to get his way when he used his silver tongue. He thought it would seem like a fair request if he expressed his points without error. With Odin in meetings with the Einherjar generals in relation to the palace’s new security, the youngest Odinson asked to breakfast with his mother. She was obviously more than happy to have him and embraced his company. Unfortunately, she also made the suggestion that they invite Thor, who rarely dined with them both. Frigga knew that Loki enjoyed spending time with just her, but she sometimes insisted that his brother was included. Although these occasions were infrequent, this one in particular slightly vexed Loki. If he was to execute his plan, he wished that imbecile wasn’t there to throw him off. Alas, he did enjoy a challenge, and Thor’s presence would certainly make the encounter more interesting.

“Mother?” Loki addressed her, pausing mid-meal when there was a lull in conversation.

Frigga gave him a pleasant smile. “Yes, my son?”

“I wish to request a new handmaiden.”

“You do?” she replied, unsurprisingly inquisitive about his statement. “What is wrong with Dagny?”

He sighed slightly and set down his cutlery. “I tire of her. She is not a hard worker and she has left me constantly dissatisfied with her laziness and petulant attitude.”

“Attitude?”

“Who are you talking about?” Thor asked, looking perplexed.

“Dagny?” Loki’s reply merely received a pout. “My handmaiden? Thor, she has been working here for centuries…”
“Maybe I know her to see,” he mumbled and went back to eating. “Is she bad at her job?”

“Yes, I find her to be lazy and insolent. I was willing to give her time after she replaced Radburn, but her skills are simply not up to par. She is frequently late, resulting in my own tardiness, and is incapable of taking care of my armour. Not only that, when I reprimand her about these things, she is disrespectful and, evidently, not listening to my criticisms.”

“She sounds terrible,” Thor snorted. “I am surprised you have not turned her into a fruit fly, brother.”

“I have certainly been tempted…”

“I have never had a problem with her before,” Frigga pondered aloud. “And approved her in the position because of that.”

Loki shrugged. “I am sure she was suitable at first, Mother, but now I find her work to be completely unsatisfactory.”

“So you wish to request a new personal maid?”

“Of course,” he answered with confidence. “If I am to be a prince and possibly a king someday, then I wish to surround myself with workers expressing standards as high as my own. Is that not reasonable?”

“Of course it is,” she replied with a nod of agreement. “One should surround themselves with people they can rely on.”

“Exactly. I do not mean to be so harsh with Dagny but…she is rather awful.”

“You really do not want to spare the maid’s feelings,” Thor laughed and downed the rest of his water. “I am sure her ears are burning in your chambers right now as she struggles to change your sheets!”

Frigga rolled her eyes at that. “Loki, if you are insistent on having a harder working handmaiden, then Dagny will be removed from her post and replaced with another. I could place her with my own women to see how she fairs.”

“Then would I receive one of your handmaidens as a replacement?”

His mother watched him curiously, considering his statement for a moment. Thor continued to eat, uninterested in their chat and more concerned with his emptying plate. He called the attention of Fen, who stood nearby, requesting another fresh loaf of bread and bowl fruit. She left to go fetch the food from the kitchens, leaving the trio alone in the privacy of the Allmother’s chambers.

“I suppose you might as well,” Frigga said. “If I will be taking her back on.”

“I require someone who I know is a hard worker and will do as I ask when I ask, and to my desired standards. Your handmaidens are exceptional at what they do, so I would imagine they could assist me better than my current one.”

“I agree. As you wish, Loki.”

“Thank you, Mother.” He grinned, taking a bite of his apple. “If it is alright with you, may I select my new handmaiden myself?”

“By Odin,” Thor cut in. “You are so very fussy, brother.”
“I prefer the term ‘particular’."

“You have someone in mind?” Frigga asked.

Loki knew how this conversation would play out. He had an idea as to how his mother would respond to his information and requests, so steering the conversation in his desired direction was proving to be doable. “Well, there are a few that I know quite well from their years of service, and they are familiar with me and my expectations. It would be logical to pick one who already has some idea of the job requirements.”

“A reasonable statement.”

“I thought so too, Mother.” He grinned as he took a sip of his water. “What of young Ellie, then?”

He was prepared for Frigga to question his choice, but he wasn’t prepared for Thor to start choking on his last piece of bread. “You wish to employ the little one?”

Loki shrugged and answered dryly. “Obviously, as I have stated.”

“But…why?”

“That I have also stated already.”

“Do you think Ellie will be okay with your choice?” Frigga asked, concern evident in her tight lips. “Given recent events with rumours and such?”

“I would never let anything happen to her,” Loki answered confidently. “Not to mention she is well looked after in Kirkjabyr’s company. The change may be a positive one for her.”

“If she agrees, I will allow it. But if she wishes to stay in her current position, then there she will remain.”

He nodded his head firmly. “Of course. Her wishes should be taken into consideration.”

“I am sure she would rather take on an angry bilgesnipe than deal with your mood swings,” Thor chortled. “Gods preserve her; she may not survive.”

“Oh, dear brother, I am firm in the belief that I am easier to deal with than your constant feasting, revelling, and whoring. She would have to scrape the courtesans off your chamber floors.”

Thor’s goblet was smashed back down on the table with a clatter. “Another word, Loki, and I will throw you from the balcony—”

Frigga shook her head and cut across before they could begin arguing. “Both of you, hush! All I ask for is a civil breakfast this morning. Surely you can both manage that without fighting?”

“He is the one who is always stabbing me—!”

“It is not my fault that you are an easily fooled imbecile—”

“You know how much I love snakes—!”

“You would have no idea that you are brothers,” she sighed, giving them a stern look to stop the arguing. “No idea at all. I will pass on your offer to Ellie, Loki, and inform you of her decision.”

“Thank you, Mother.”
At that moment, Fen returned with fresh food and set it down on the table. Thor was distracted by the arrival, so he let the Trickster’s comments go with a grumpy expression. Thankfully, there were no more arguments for the duration of the meal, and Loki was pleased with how he voiced his concerns.

Although, a part of him feared that Ellie would reject his offer. It was something that, up until this point, he had not even considered. He forgot that she had friends within Frigga’s handmaidens and had settled in her position over her short life. What if she was comfortable? What if Thor’s comments rang true and she did not wish to deal with his finicky nature? Another part of him considered using his silver tongue to convince her to take the position if she refused. He could do it — he knew he could — but that was risky. He definitely enjoyed getting his own way through honeyed words, but convincing Ellie to work for him if she did not wish to left a horrible taste in his mouth. While he feared — dare he say her decision genuinely worried him? — her rejection, he could only hope that it would go his way without a need to intervene.

As it turned out, he didn’t need to voice his convincing opinion. Frigga informed him of Ellie’s decision — she accepted without hesitation.

With Dagny’s departure, Loki was the one to introduce Ellie to her new duties as his personal maid. She remained impeccably formal as he explained what he would require of her each day. While he used to feel indifferent as to whether she addressed him formally or informally throughout their friendship, now he found his mind drifting elsewhere when she called him ‘My Prince’. Although this had been the point, had it not? To get closer to her and to have her near him whenever he required it? Now that she was his own employee, she had moved to a new single room next to his chambers. Would having but a wall between him and his desire work for or against him? Surely time would tell, but right now, he was just happy to show her what she would do each and every morning after sunrise. The thoughts of Ellie being the first person to greet him as he woke filled him with nervous excitement.

He was still not sure if this would work in his favour.

In fact, the first time she came into his room, he had still been asleep with his head buried in the pillow. He raised himself up on his elbows and turned to squint at her. Even in his bedridden state, she remained politely formal.

“Good mornin’, Prince Loki.”

“Good morning, little one,” he said, his gravely voice all the more present at this hour.

“How’d you sleep?”

He cleared his throat and held a pillow against his bare chest. “I have had better nights.”

“Sorry t’hear that,” she replied with a frown as she moved to open his curtains. “There’s nothin’ worse than a restless night. I hate to be the bringer of bad news, but the Allfather has requested your presence in the next hour. I thought you’d require time to breakfast on your own.”

“You thought correctly.” Slowly, he sat up in the bed, watching her as she moved about the room. Opening his wardrobe, she selected an outfit and draped it over the back of a chair. “Could you also draw me bath?”

“Of course, My Prince. I’ll do it for you now.”

He sent his thanks as she walked briskly into his washroom and did as he asked. He remained seated as the water began to run and steam seeped from the doorway. When she came back into
his bedroom, she placed a towel down next to him, which he wrapped around his naked waist when she had her back turned. Having her form so close while he wore nothing was probably not the best idea, considering he suddenly felt far too warm, and not due to the heat emitting from nearby steam. He swiftly moved to the washroom before she could notice what his body wanted quite desperately.

Yes, he was still unsure as to whether this was a bad idea or not.

* * *

“You are getting quite sloppy, Ellie!” Fandral called from his seat, wiping a cloth along his sword.

Loki turned to glare at the warrior’s statement. He stood at his apprentice’s side, Lady Sif flanking opposite him, as Ellie followed his instructions and threw her daggers at a nearby target in the training yard. Considering his diversion from seiðr lessons to conjuring daggers, he thought it reasonable to focus her combat training on daggers too, having recently spent a lot of time on archery. Her aim had improved, and he was more than happy with her progress, but it seemed that not everyone was so keen.

“Sloppy, am I, Fandral?” Ellie called, keeping her composure as she threw another knife. “I had not thought so.”

“Well you thought wrong. You can do better than that.”

“Ignore him, Ellie,” Sif said with confidence. “Fandral just thinks that he knows all. Stay focused on your training.”

“Hold your tongue, warrior,” Loki added as he handed Ellie a few more knives. “Or she will cut it out herself.”

Due to a relatively quiet break within the Nine Realms, Loki and Ellie found themselves with an audience during their latest training sessions. With Lady Sif on hand, it meant Loki could leave to attend to his own duties knowing the young woman was in good hands. While he appreciated Sif’s presence, the audience of Thor and the Warriors Three could get irritating. While most of their jests were directed at both of them, the ones Fandral aimed at her alone left Loki far more enraged than usual. Probably due to the fact he had noticed the way Fandral looked at Ellie of late. It was as if he had suddenly realised she was of age and, much like how he pursued and interacted with women on Asgard, he openly ogled her without shame. Not only that, but he had the gall to actually flirt with her at the most inappropriate times. While Thor and Volstagg usually just laughed with a ‘that is Fandral for you!’ attitude, Sif was constantly rolling her eyes, and Hogun was indifferent as always. Loki, however, was cool and calm on the outside and fuming on the inside. The notion that he was not the only one watching the ways her body moved with rapt attention made him remarkably resentful. Ellie never treated Fandral any differently, choosing to pretend as though he was not doing anything, or perhaps not noticing it at all. Or…

As the God of Mischief watched how Fandral leered at her from his seat, his stomach dropped.

*What if she says nothing to send Fandral on his way because she is revelling in the attention?* he thought to himself. *He is called ‘the Dashing’ for good reason — perhaps Ellie finds him attractive like the rest of Asgard.*

As was made evident from their conversation in London, Ellie knew when men were seemingly
pursuing her. She was no fool, that was for certain, but Loki had never considered the idea that she may be infatuated with another, or willingly bed a man who she found attractive. All this time, he was so focused on keeping her close that he forgot she could very well fall for another. Ensuring she became his handmaiden guaranteed nothing in terms of her becoming attracted to him. Perhaps she would prefer someone more attractive by Asgard’s standards. But Gods knew she could do better than *Fandral*.

“You are in a fowl mood today, Trickster,” Fandral prattled on. “More so than usual.”

“That is probably due to your presence here, my friend,” Thor interjected, shouting over at them from where he stood sparring with Volstagg. “You are the annoying one, after all.”

“And you do insist on critiquing our student as if you were the teacher,” Sif added dryly.

“I am helping!”

“*Hardly.*”

“If you think my form is so awful, why not come and be my target?” Ellie announced, then threw a knife near the centre of her training target. “I bet I can hit the mark around you without hurtin’ a blonde hair on your big head.”

Thor let out a roaring laugh while Fandral smirked at her. “I think I will remain in my seat for fear of you permanently marring my beautiful face and bringing the women of this realm to their knees in dismay.”

“I think you mean they would celebrate bein’ free of your constant advances.”

At that, he actually gaped in shock. “Now *that* is uncalled for.”

“Then do not unjustly criticise her form if you do not wish for retaliation,” Loki said with a grin. “What do you expect?”

“I suppose I should expect nothing less,” Fandral muttered and turned his attention back to cleaning his blade. “She has spent so much time in your company, it is only fair that she would start to mimic your harsh jesting.”

“Then maybe keep your lips sealed and your eyes fixed on your blade.”

Fandral narrowed his eyes at the comment, wisely choosing to keep his mouth shut. The rest of Ellie’s training session continued without incident, as did their private conjuration lesson that night in the library. Although still unable to summon the dagger, her ability was ever improving. At present, she could just about conjure the flickering image of the weapon in its familiar ruby red light before she ran out of energy and it disappeared. Progress was slow on that end, but still positive. Now that she was residing in chambers next to his own, they walked back to bed together under his own cloaking spell, easily moving around the clueless on duty Einherjar.

When they arrived at her door, she turned to him and said. “Do you require anythin’ else before bed, Your Highness?”

His eyes bore into her’s as he contemplated answering with complete honestly.

*You, in my bed, beneath me, would be preferable…*

“Not at present, little one. Get yourself to sleep and I will see you in the morning.”
“As you wish,” she replied and timidly opened her arms to him. “Considerin’ you’re in such good form, maybe I could get an informal hug off you?”

While he rolled his eyes dramatically, he answered. “Only because you asked so nicely, considering I find your sentimental gestures to be overtly pointless.”

She chuckled and wrapped her arms around him. “Even if you’re a sassy bitch, I do enjoy annoyin’ you with these ‘overtly pointless’ gestures.”

He hugged her back, despite his aversion for such contact. This embrace, however, was surprisingly pleasant, more so than he had experienced before. Ellie had hugged him on few occasions, but this time it affected him differently. If he was contemplating the feeling of her body pressed against his before, he was vividly imaging it now. He concentrated on how her shape fit nicely in his, noting every supple curve beneath his hands and the arch in her back. He dared not think about her ample chest pressing against his lest he actually die on the spot. He had to hold back the temptation to bury his nose in her hair and kiss her head. When she sighed happily, he had to forcibly clear the lump in his throat and suppress the urge to drag her into his chambers and throw her on to the bed.

_by the Norns, I am a mess._

He said his goodnight quickly, hoping that she didn’t notice his pursed lips or his tented breeches. Once alone and away from prying eyes, Loki was quick to shed his garments with impressive speed before lying down on his bed and staring up at his engraved ceiling. He was wide awake and had no intention of sleeping yet. He had no idea as to whether he would be able to look Ellie in the eye tomorrow, but his hand wandered down his bare abdomen to grip himself without much hesitance. Try as he might to think of someone else, his thoughts remained fixed on his friend as he managed to bring himself pleasure and finish on his own hand for the first time in months. While his erratic breathing slowly calmed, he lay there with an arm thrown over his shut eyes. It was a while before he looked at the mess he left on his chest with mild confusion. Even though he was never one for feeling sheepish in relation to sating himself, this was foreign, embarrassing territory, given the object of his desire was now but a few yards away.

_this may prove to be an issue…_
Risks

Chapter Summary

Loki’s sleepless nights and insistent feelings are finally addressed late one evening in Asgard's library.


Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

A peaceful night’s rest seemed to allude Loki in recent weeks. His mind was consistently plagued with thoughts of Ellie that were new, daunting, and oddly intriguing. He was not used to this; wanting someone for more than just sating himself. He had had many Aesir in his lifetime, but never had he desired to spend time with them afterwards.

Am I being foolish? he thought, laying wide awake in his bed, his eyes boring into the ceiling. I have always vowed never to waste my time with such flippant emotions. Forming attachments is nothing but unnecessary weakness. I do not wish to be dependent on another. It would be unwise to involve myself with her.

But would she even wish him to? Did she feel the same ache in her chest and uneasiness in her abdomen that he suffered with at the sight of her? He had no reason to believe that she actually was attracted to him. She grew up with him from a young age and had definitely formed a fondness of him — that much he could believe — but attraction? He doubted it. He was used to getting his way with the servants and the others that he seduced, but nothing stretched on further than lust. He did not wish for anything more. He would not allow it.

But this Midgardian woman…

With a heavy sigh, he sat up in his bed, feeling an uncomfortable combination of being physically exhausted but wide awake in his mind. He threw his legs over the side and sat with his head in his hands. He would not act on these feelings. He was foolish to think that they were anything but a hindrance to him. He dismissed it as being nothing more than wanting to lay with Ellie out of mere curiosity — he had never had a Midgardian before considering they were so beneath the Aesir.

This is lust and nothing more. All I must do is find a willing servant to find release and I will return to seeing Ellie as the way she once was.

Loki sat for a long time on the side of his bed, reassuring himself that this was the best choice and promising that he would stand by it. Seeing no hope in falling asleep at this rate, he stood up, pulled on a tunic and pants, and left his chambers. He walked around the palace at his leisure, taking no notice of the Einherjar on night duty as he passed them. He didn’t think about his destination or where his bare feet were taking him; he just kept walking, blocking all thoughts of her from his mind. He wasn’t surprised when he arrived at the library, but strolled inside and shut the large doors behind him. Inside, the room was illuminated by the moonlight peaking in through the tall windows. He gazed around and made his way towards one of the shelves, specifically one on the history of Midgard, his bare feet mostly silent on the wooden floor. When he rounded a
corner, he hesitated in perplexity at what he saw.

“Loki?”

Ellie sat in his favourite armchair with a book in hand and her legs pulled up to her chest. A small candle was lit on the table beside her that gave off only a feint glow in the vast space. All she seemed to have on were her sleeping clothes, which only consisted of a light gown. A lump formed in his throat almost immediately.

“Ellie,” he mumbled. “What are you doing still awake?”

“I could ask you the same thing,” she replied with a smile and set the heavy book down on the table. “Can’t sleep?”

His eyes stayed fixed on the floor, but it was truly difficult to tear his gaze from her attire. “Sleep seems to allude me of late.”

“How come?” She sounded concerned, and he didn’t doubt that she also looked it.

“If I knew why, I would probably be able to fix the problem.” He certainly hadn’t meant to sound so snappy, but his silver tongue was working against him that night.

When he stole a glance at her, he noticed the hint of hurt on her face. “Sorry I asked.”

“And why is it that you cannot rest either?” he questioned, hoping he could undo his previous rudeness, and took some hesitant steps towards her.

Stop walking to her, you fool! Stop it!

His feet carried on of their own accord. Tonight, his brain was taking a backseat.

“Over-thinkin’,” she grumbled and scratched her head. “About stuff. Can’t sleep when my head feels like it’s melted.”

“That’s understandable.”

She nodded and let out a sigh. “I was hopin’ reading may distract me long enough to fall asleep, but my mind keeps insistin’ that I waste time thinkin’ about it.”

“So pensive as usual then?”

She gave him a wry look but smiled. “Oh, ha ha ha. Very funny.”

“What are you reading?”

“Seiðr stuff mostly. I thought it could maybe distract me.”

He nodded and stopped next to the table, gently reaching out to run a finger over the book’s spine. “So what exactly is it that has claimed all your thoughts?”

She looked up at him with a smirk. Despite her appearance, he could tell that she wasn’t as relaxed as she made herself out to be. She was fingering the hem of her gown quickly, a familiar nervous tick. “Hey, if you’re not sharing then neither am I.”

He eyed her carefully, removing his hand from the book. She had peeked his interest without question and he wanted to know. “Ellie…”
“Yes, Your Highness?”

“You know I don’t like it when you call me by such titles.” That wasn’t entirely true; nowadays, every time she called him ‘My Prince’, his abdomen clenched hard and he had to think of something else to prevent his breeches from tenting.

“I’m your maid — it’s sorta in my job description.”

“You are more than just my maid,” Loki answered without hesitation, but his reply was met with silence. The pair gazed at each other for what felt like the longest time from their positions. Ellie’s expression was unreadable and Loki was hoping that his was the same. Her lack of any answer only made him regret his words. He was doing an absolutely terrible job of acting like nothing was bothering him and he knew that she was no fool — he may have been the God of Lies, but she saw right through him. She did grow up learning from the best, after all.

If their silence confirmed anything, it was that they both knew when it came to class, his statement was a lie — she was no more than a mortal surrounded by gods.

“I know, we’re friends too,” Ellie sighed and got up from her seat with the large book in her small hands. “I should probably head to bed and leave you to whatever over-thinkin’ you are up to. Apparently you don’t want to talk about it, so I won’t try to help.”

He watched her walk over to the nearest bookshelf and return the book to its rightful home. Loki couldn’t help but let his eyes take in her figure as she stretched upwards to put it away, lingering on her backside. His jaw clenched at the sight and his eyes remained fixed even when she turned back around to walk by him.

“Goodnight, Loki,” she said with a nod as she passed him.

“Wait,” Loki called before he could even think of a reason not to. She froze on the spot with her back facing him, and to keep her there, he added quickly “Don’t… go. Please.”

Slowly turning to face him, he was treated with a look of bewilderment. “It’s really odd hearin’ that word come from your mouth.”

Loki couldn’t help but grin at her comment. “Please? What is so funny about that?”

Ellie tilted her head to the side. “Oh, come on. It’s hilarious.”

“Then at the risk of sounding hilarious, please stay for a moment.”

“If you insist.” She stood in front of him with her arms wrapped around her midsection. “So what’s botherin’ you? Is it your father?”

He knew he couldn’t tell her. He couldn’t possibly let her know that she was the reason he couldn’t sleep at night anymore, that she consumed his dreams to the point of insanity. So he would do what he does best, and lie. “He’s always bothering me, so no.”

“Then Thor, maybe? You’re seem to be getting on well lately though.”

“Thor has somehow managed to be less irritating than usual of late.”

“How about the Warriors Three, then? They’re sometimes able to get your goat.”

At her mention of the group, Loki’s mind began to weave a simple lie that could distract her from the truth. He had to avoid her realising what the problem was at all costs.
He looked at her hard, his lips set in a firm line, and remembered the comments Fandral had been making towards Ellie lately. That could work as a distraction, considering there was even truth in it as well. “I am not overly fond of Fandral at present.”

She listened intently, stepping closer to him. “For what reason exactly? I mean, besides his gratuitous confidence and general cockiness, what’s he done to deserve your displeasure?”

He fixed his gaze on her. “I do not like how he speaks to you.”

Her brow piqued at that. “How he speaks to me?”

“Yes. He is vulgar and his comments distasteful. You do not deserve to be spoken to in such a manner.”

“Umm, when did he say anythin’ inappropriate to me?”

Loki’s brow furrowed at her genuine look of surprise. How could she not realise how Fandral had treated her so ill? Was it possible that she even enjoyed his advances? The thought made Loki’s stomach sick. It was not possible. He refused to believe it.

“For one, in the training yard ereyesterday. He passed comment on your form while ogling you like you were a marinating ham.”

“Oh, that. Well, you know Fandral — he was probably joking. Plus, he’d bed anythin’ with a pulse.”

With a tone matching the sharpness of a blade, he said. “Oh, is it possible that you perhaps relish his advances?” His eyes narrowed as his stomach grew more sickly with each passing second.

Ellie immediately choked with wide, disbelieving eyes. “What? No! Are you insane?”

Loki held his arms out at his sides and leaned in closer to her, expecting for her to retreat back a few steps, but she remained poised on the spot. “I am merely putting two and two together, my dear. You do not dismiss his actions and it appears that you almost delight in them.”

And just like that, she snapped. “I do not enjoy them! What in the name of God makes you think that Fandral or anyone in this Godforsaken realm would ever look at me like that? I’m not even from here — I am a Midgardian! I’m mortal! I’m fucking nothing to you people!”

Towards the end of her short rant, she had begun to scream and her voice cracked. Her outburst shook the whole library and the pregnant silence that followed was almost painful. She breathed raggedly, her shoulders shaking with the anger that welled within her. When she opened her mouth to continue, her voice was almost a whisper. “I was left to die in a fuckin’ alleyway by the person who was supposed to love and protect me, the person who probably killed my brother and mother, and now I’m stuck on a different fuckin’ planet, realm — whatever — where I’m the only one of my kind. I can’t be with a god and a god could never want me. I’d be dead and buried in a bloody heartbeat compared to you lot.”

Loki couldn’t hear anymore of it, and he damn well nearly broke down when he saw the tears roll down her cheeks. He had caused this. He was the one that upset her and it killed him. He immediately wrapped his arms around her and pulled her into a tight embrace. For a split second he could feel her body tense at the contact before she relaxed and wrapped her arms around his neck. With his arms around her waist, he let his chin rest on the top of her head. Her face was buried in his chest and her body shook with unsteady breaths.

“You are not nothing,” he whispered to her reassuringly, hoping to banish at least some of her
doubts. “I do not want you thinking such things when they are so far from the truth. You…” He hesitated when he felt the lump in his throat, contemplated whether he should say it. Would he be taking one large step backwards? “You are not nothing to me, little one.”

He froze, awaiting some response. Any response.

Please say something. Please tell me that you care.

He peered down at her when her head tilted upwards and their eyes met. They were stained red from tears but he remembered thinking how good it felt to have her in his arms and how truly beautiful she looked when she studied him like that. She was inspecting him like something on display, a fine artefact found and placed behind glass to be surveyed in wonder. He hadn’t been expecting it, but suddenly her arms tightened around his neck, pulled him down, and her lips were on his.

He nearly leapt out of his own skin. He vaguely remembered letting out a small yelp at the contact before she suddenly pulled away, but he kept his arms firmly locked around her waist. Now they were both panting heavily.

“I-I’m s-sorry,” she stammered. “I didn’t mean to… I had t-to know what i-it would… feel like. I s-shouldn’t have, I’ve never—”

This time around, his lips cut her off. He took the lead, kissing her with the ferocity that he had been holding inside all those months as it came flooding out. His arms pulled her lithe body as close as it could possibly be against his own. He could remember nibbling on her bottom lip and the mewl that came out of her nearly sent all of the blood in his body straight down south. After what felt like a long time — but not nearly as long as he needed — he pulled away and rested his forehead against hers.

“That may have been what I was over-thinkin’ about earlier,” Ellie admitted between catching her breath with a look of what he could only hope was admiration. She was smiling now.

He chuckled as her hands splayed out over his covered chest. “Kissing me?”

She gulped and averted her gaze, clearly nervous at the mention of the position they were in. “Well, yes, kissin’ you was a thought, but mostly just you. And me. And what you thought of me. I wasn’t sure whether you would want to kiss me.”

He let out a noise that was a mix between a sigh and a laugh. “Oh, little one, I have been thinking of kissing you for some time now.”

“R-really?” she squeaked in disbelief. “You’re not lyin’?”

“I would not lie to you about that,” he insisted and pulled her in for another deep kiss. For a moment, he savoured her taste and grinned when a shiver went up her spine. “I did not know if you would want me. I thought you would want another rather like Thor or Fandral.”

She grimaced at the thought. “Thor? Oh, God, no. I love that guy, but he is in no way my type. Don’t even get me started on Lover Boy either. You’ve been the only one who caught my eye. I just couldn’t imagine a god like you wantin’ me like this.”

His dug his fingers gently into her skin, giving just the right amount of pressure for her back to arch and her body to push into him. “That is a huge relief for me to hear, considering I have wanted you like this for a while.”

“Are you tellin’ me that all this time we have just been tip-toeing around each other, convinced
that the other definitely wasn’t attracted to us, when we were both actually really into it?”

“I believe we may have.”

There was a short pause before they both burst out into a fit of laughter. Loki watched her as her eyes watered with happy tears this time around and felt warmth spread through him, the earlier sickness completely vanishing.

“We’re idiots,” she giggled and toyed with the neckline of his tunic.

“Of the highest order,” he agreed before lifting her suddenly in his arms. She squealed and her legs went around his waist, probably out of instinct more than anything else. Setting her down on the nearby table, he settled between her legs and brushed a lock of hair behind her ear.

“You are beautiful,” he murmured. He truly meant it. She could knock the wind out of him with just a smile.

Her cheeks went pink almost instantly. “And you are extremely handsome.”

“My dear, you flatter me.”

“No, I mean it.” She paused briefly and opened her mouth a few times before closing it again. He merely stared at her and waited until eventually she managed to speak. “Loki?”

“Yes?”

“I know that you’re really experienced in… this stuff, and I’m not. At all. That—” A gulp. “—that was my first kiss. I’ve never courted another. Does my inexperience… does it bother you?”

He gave her a look of genuine surprise. “Hearing that I am the only one to taste your lips is one of the finest things that I have had the pleasure of knowing. And, Ellie, you taste delicious. I also feel inclined to mention that I have no issue with educating you in the more physical aspects of courting.”

He licked his lips and gazed lustfully at her, unwilling to sugar-coat what he was saying. Her cheeks were well and truly crimson now.

“Loki!” she hissed and slapped his shoulder. “You absolute scoundrel!”

“I believe the title of ‘Trickster’ suits me far better, love.”

“If you so insist. But does this means that you want’a court me?”

For the briefest of moments, he hesitated. The instinctive need to flee from any form of vulnerability was rising again somewhere in the back of his mind. But Loki’s physical urges took control of the situation, reminding him how her lips had just felt against his, how her body trembled in his hands…

He wanted this.

He wanted her.

Badly.

He had to make sure that she was his and his alone. No one could ever touch her in the ways that he would. No one could ever look at her like he did. For once, he was not concerned with this ending badly. Right now, the thoughts of her being with someone other than him was the worst
ending badly. Right now, the thoughts of her being with someone other than him was the worst outcome and he refused to let that happen.

He made a decision and he stuck to it confidently. “I do want to court you. You know, I have not been able to sleep lately because I could not get the thought of you out of my mind. It was scary, I will admit, as I have not cared for many people in such a manner before. But now that I have you in my arms, I am rather willing to say that I would much prefer to keep you here as long as I can.”

“But what of your mother and father? Odin is not goin’ to like this.”

“Oh, fuck Odin,” he groaned. “He rarely likes anything. But I will admit you are not wrong.”

“And Heimdall?”

“Darling, what do you take me for? I come to this library at night when I desire privacy, even from his prying eyes. This room is glamoured at this hour as always. He has no inkling as to our escapades in here. Despite that, I think we should keep this a secret, just for the moment.”

“So, a secret. Just between you and I?”

He nodded. “You and I. On that note, I very much want to kiss you again.”

She seemed nervous as he ran a finger over her cheekbone. “I really like kissin’ you, I just don’t really know if I’m any good at any of this.”

He chuckled deeply, leaning in closer to her. “Oh, my dear, you are far better at kissing than you realise.”

Soon, her lips were once more compliant against his and their bodies pressed tightly together. Loki had kissed many people in his life and he prided himself on his ability to make his lovers weak at the knees with just his lips and silver tongue, but never had he drawn such pleasure from merely a kiss. All rational thought and warnings against making himself vulnerable were banished to the far corners of his mind. With her hands in his hair and his teeth on her neck, he could barely form a coherent thought.

The sensation was like nothing he had felt before.

And, by the Norns, did he love it.

Chapter End Notes

THEY DID THE THING! My babies :’D Awh Jesus, it only took seventeen chapters, but hopefully it was worth the wait! I also hope it lived up to expectations. Let me know what y’all think! And, as always, thanks for sticking with me and reading along; it means a lot. More updates soon!
The lovers explore the new and unfamiliar territory that comes with their relationship, and a feast in the palace brings some familiar faces back into Loki's life.


The new lovers met in the library the following night, the night after that, and the night after that again. At silent hours in the deserted room, they need not worry about anyone walking in on them. They usually seized the opportunity to kiss passionately and with abandon. Neither mortal or god held back, and they usually concluded kissing when their lips were swollen and their hair a mess. On every occasion, Loki found his sleeping breeches to be painfully tight but never insisted upon taking it further, despite the tremendous urge to take her in every way possible and make her his. He knew that Ellie had never lain with someone and had no experience when it came to sex or pleasure, so he decided to wait until she seemed ready — unwilling partners were not something he wanted to experience. He took it slow for her sake, relishing in the fact that he would be the one to show her how it felt to be pleasured by another. While it was odd to feel it, he wanted to share pleasure with her; he wanted her to enjoy it. He did care for her, that much he was sure of.

And, apparently, she cared for him too.

While Loki would probably refrain from admitting it aloud, he was enjoying this new intimate development in their relationship. It was as they had been before — very close friends — but now with added physical benefits that he usually took from servants or visiting members of royalty. Now he no longer desired their attention while his mind was so focused on Ellie. Seeing her every morning as she came to go about her duties was a sight he ate up each time. He made a show of staring at her from his bed, watching wantonly as she went about her routine as if he wasn’t eying her like she was his next meal.

“My Prince,” she said with her back turned as she plucked his clothes from his wardrobe. Her tone was sharp.

“Suddenly I am enjoying when you call me by my official title,” he replied, propped up against his headboard. “It is quite titillating.”

Her voice was firmer this time, but he could hear the smile on her lips. “Loki…”
“Oh, my name sounds delicious falling from your lips like that—”

“Enough of that,” she demanded, turning to face him and trying to wipe the smile off her mouth. “You need to get up before the Allmother questions my ability to do my job.”

“But I prefer watching you as you move about the room.”

“I’ve noticed.”

“We have been courting for a few weeks,” he stated, still unmoved on the bed. “Surely you have grown accustomed to my stares?”

“Somewhat,” she replied and gathered his garments in her arms. “But they’re especially noticeable now even when I am servin’ your family and other guests in the dining hall.”

“Do not worry yourself about that, little one. I make sure that no one else notices. My gawking is for you alone. And I am not the only one who stares.”

She placed his outfit on the end of the bed and narrowed her eyes at him. “What do you mean by that?”

“Oh, Ellie,” he snickered. “You are just as guilty as I. If not more so.”

“Did you just—”

“I see it too now,” he continued on. “We may have both been oblivious before, but now my eyes have been opened to how much you blatantly ogle me.”

“Excuse me—!”

“You practically leer.”

She said nothing for what seemed like a long time, merely staring back at his playful gaze with one that was the epitome of fed up and offended for good measure. “Y’know what? Stroke your own ego alone in the library tonight. Evidently, you don’t need my assistance.”

As she went to turn away from the bed, he saw his opportunity and quickly reached out to grab her wrist. Before she could properly react, he pulled her back and sent her tumbling on to the covers. He quickly propped himself above her, caging her in with his arms and preventing her escape. “You are quite mouthy for a handmaiden.”

“I learned from the best,” she sassed, grinning up at him.

“Is this alright?” he asked gently, tone shifting when he realised their position and how unfamiliar it must be for her. The only time they were like this usually involved holding a dagger to one of their throats. Now they were very literally tangled in his sheets.

Her voice was mostly calm, but there was a slight quiver there despite her attempt to relax. “As long as you’re wearin’ undergarments.”

“Would it be a terrible thing if I wasn’t?”

“Loki—!”

“It will not be anything you have not already seen!”

“This is different,” she replied in a small voice, placing a soft hand on his bicep. “And it’s new for
“I know, little one,” he murmured and settled himself down beside her, his arm keeping him half leaning over her form. “We can progress at your pace.”

She lightly ran her fingers over his skin, and he swore the touch left tingles. “Thank you.”

“Can I kiss you?”

“It’s not like you to ask permission,” she replied, leaning up to lightly brush her lips against his.

“I am being considerate. But I’ll take that as a yes.” With a smirk, he captured her lips with his. It was a long moment before he let her up from under him so that she could get back to work. He groaned and lay on his stomach as she moved to draw him a bath. “Must you do that?”

“Do what?” she called from his washroom.

“Be so responsible and dedicated to your work.”

“Yes, I must ’cause your mother saved my life all those years ago and I’m in her debt.” She reappeared in the doorway, grinning wryly at the sight of him on the bed. “So you weren’t lyin’ about wearin’ nothing under that sheet?”

He fixed his gaze on her and slowly got off the bed. Standing with the sheet clutched in front of his waist, he walked up until he was firmly planted before her. “When have I ever lied to you?”

“It kinda comes with your official title as God of Lies,” she replied, doing a very subtle examination of his form.

With a flick of his tongue over his bottom lip, he said. “And yet I do not tell you lies.”

For a moment she was silent, eyes constantly flitting from his face to his chest to the sheet in his fist, knuckles white from the grip. The tension only grew as neither of them made move.

“This isn’t fair,” she grumbled.

“What is not fair?”

“This, you,” she stressed. “You’re distractin’ me while I’m tryin’ to do my work.”

“I am the best distraction I could offer. Unless you want me to drop the sheet as well?”

The way her eyes briefly widened and her cheeks flushed gave him his answer. “M-maybe another time when I don’t have’ta go collect those books you wanted.”

Noticing her distress, he reached his free hand out and held hers gently. “You are aware that you work for me, correct? I can tell you to never mind the books if you wish to stay a moment.”

The hesitation on her part left him waiting with bated breath. Pressuring her into anything physical was not something he would ever do, but he wasn’t about dismiss any advances from her either.

“I think that right now,” she began. “I would be happy to fetch those books.”

“Of course. As long as you are happy doing so.” He kissed her lips softly, earning a smile in response.

“I’m sorry, Loki—”
He was quick to cut her off before she could even start. “There is no need to apologise, Ellie. It is not necessary. As I have already stated, we will take all the time you need. Now fetch me those books while I get dressed.”

When the young woman turned to leave him be, the Trickster stole the opportunity to swat at her rear. He hit his mark and she let out a yelp before looking at him in shock. She fled his chambers, laughing as she went, before he could slap her again.

Loki pondered the unfamiliarity of their current situation as he washed himself. He had never been one for relationships outside of ones that only consisted of sexual needs. He was not usually this playful with his lovers. If he was honest, he had never been playful with them, although he did not use them either. Any relations he had with partners were strictly physical and both parties were aware that no feelings would grow no matter how long they were fucking. Partners came and went as his needs and interests changed and waned. That being said, he never did get involved with close friends. He wasn’t really partial to them anyway — he did not have many friends in Asgard — but he enjoyed having a bond with Ellie that had progressed so. Yes, the whole thing was foreign to them both, but he was enjoying it, whatever it was.

He liked doing things for her, especially things that would make her happy. Knowing that he brought a smile to her face only ever resulted in him smiling as well. The fact of the matter was, he felt good when he brought her joy. He didn’t care whether the arrangement would be disapproved of by his family, or that it was completely impractical and unconventional; he obtained pleasure from it and would continue to do as he pleased. It was the main reason why he continued to bring her to Midgard and why he agreed to teach her magic. It terms of these gestures, he had been thinking of one in particular for some time, and finally saw fit to breach the subject with her.

Upon Ellie’s return to his chambers, he had finished bathing and dressed himself quickly. He sat at his desk in silence, but acknowledged her as she arrived.

With a polite nod, she set the stack of books on the surface in front of him. “Your books, as requested.”

“Thank you,” he said. “But I wish to borrow you for another moment.”

“What do you need?”

“I had a question for you.”

His cryptic reply seemed to set her on edge, but she urged him onwards despite her own caution. “And what would that be?”

“I have thought about our visits to Midgard,” he explained. “And how they have become a normal part of life for us. I wondered if you wished to travel back home to Dublin.”

“We’ve already gone to Dublin,” she said, confusion evident in her expression. “Not that long ago, either.”

“You are not understanding me, little one. I am asking if you would like to visit your old home in Dublin. The one in which you grow up with your mother and brother.”

Ellie’s eyes went wide. “I… What?”

“Here, sit. Let me explain.” He pulled over a nearby footstool and plopped her on to it, hoping that not being on her feet would help to calm her down if the thought of going home was distressing. “When you told me of what happened to you at the hands of your father, you
explained that, due to what happened, you do not know the fate of your mother and brother. If you wish, you and I can go back and find the home from your childhood and, hopefully, discover what happened to your family. I have been thinking about this for a while, and thought it best to ask you sooner rather than later.”

While the air in the room was not a tense one, Loki knew that it was probably the most sensitive subject he could discuss with her. He usually waited for Ellie to bring up her family in conversation on her own accord and listened to her talk fondly of Shane and their mother. Right now, her blue eyes were fixed on him, her hands fidgeting in her lap, one knee tapping up and down restlessly. Before she spoke, she pulled her lower lip between her teeth and cleared her throat. “You would… You would do that? You’d help me find them?”

“Of course, if you wish to. We can speak to my mother about it, if you so desire, and then merely ask Heimdall to point us in the right direction. Then we will know of their fate and you can have closure. Of course this is all merely an idea, and you are the only one who will decide whether we do it or not.”

“It’s a big decision,” she mumbled sadly. “One that I’m not sure I’m ready to answer.”

“That’s alright,” he reassured her, cupping her hands in his affectionately. “You need not make a decision now. How about you take as long as you need to think it over, and then approach me with an answer when you feel comfortable?”

“That sounds reasonable.” She paused, tracing her fingers over the back of his hands. “Please don’t think that I’m ungrateful ’cause I’m hesitant. I just wish to think it over and make sure I’m ready to hear what happened to my family.”

“I understand. Take as long as you need and I will be here when you are ready.”

“Thank you, Loki. You can be rather lovely when you feel like it.”

He laughed at her comment, flashing her a bright smirk in response. “Only when I want to be.”

After a few more moments of thanks and encouraging words, Loki left Ellie to her duties while he went to meet with his mother, his father, and Thor over breakfast. Once everyone was sat at the table, Frigga began the discussion of the upcoming feast. It was a special occasion to celebrate the palace staff and their hard work over the centuries. Guest caterers and servers were brought in to wait upon the staff as they savoured the food and drink. It was something that happened once every so often, mostly at Frigga’s encouragement, but Odin was not against giving the workers the reward and time off they deserved. It was a rather delightful affair and, although formalities remained between the Royal Family and staff, there was a certain amount of lightheartedness in the air. It was a happy occasion, and most took delight in it.

The night of the feast arrived rather quickly; the unmistakable buzz within the palace walls made it obvious. The entire palace staff — excluding the ever-vigilant Einherjar — we filed into the feast hall and sat at the massive tables. Loki and Thor were already seated at the head table with the Allmother and Allfather, watching as each person took their seat. The younger Odinson spotted Ellie easily amongst the rabble, sitting with Fen, Sevda, and her other former colleagues, chatting happily as goblets were placed in front of them. He was thankful to see that Dagny was among them and refrained from treating Ellie poorly since the position change. At the head table, the princes themselves were joined by Lady Sif, the Warriors Three, some distinguished nobles from Alfhheim and Vanahem, and the ever-annoying pair that was Frey and Freyja. Once again, they were invited to the feast, as was standard practice given the ever-tense peace between Asgard and Vanahem. The invitations to special occasions were like a constant boot-licking from Odin, but one that resulted in subtle threats of ‘do not test me’ upon sitting at the table and chatting for some
time. If anything, Loki just relished in the opportunity to piss Freyja off with more insulting comments.

The feast was a rousing success with the servants, but the more informal celebrations afterwards was when the most fun was had. Once there was alcohol involved and the music began, all formalities went out the window. Loki only tolerated the company of Thor and his friends until they drank an excessive amount of mead. Upon wandering through the crowd, he was pleased when he bumped into Radburn. As was customary, staff that had served within the palace for a significant length of time were welcome to join in the festivities.

“My Prince,” the older man greeted him with a fond smile.

“Radburn,” Loki said, offering his hand. “It has been a long time.”

“That it has, and you’re a fool if you think that I am merely going to shake your hand, my friend.”

Before Loki could react, he was pulled into a quick hug, but he merely laughed it off, embracing his former hand servant. “The years have treated you well, I hope?”

As Radburn pulled away, Loki noted his now white beard and the crinkled skin around his brown eyes. Though his body has grown weary and grey over the years, his signature grin was still a familiar and comforting sight. “That they have. I cannot complain.”

The older man was much like Loki in mannerisms and attitude. When he was first employed as his hand servant, the young Prince was surprised to see that they had much in common. With a similar taste in dry humour and little time for the rambunctious nature of Asgard’s warriors, they found themselves engaging in sarcastic banter and enjoying each other’s wit when they went about their duties in close quarters. Although he was never particularly fond of relationships (well, up until now, at least), he offered Radburn whatever advice he had when the latter had fallen hard for a fellow servant girl. He got to witness their blossoming courtship, their marriage, and the birth of their children, up until his friend’s retirement. Now, Radburn’s youngest son, Rainger, was only recently employed as Thor’s new hand servant, having been promoted from his previous position.

“I trust that your family are well? Is your wife here tonight?”

“Quite! Maeve is sitting at the table with Rainger.” He pointed over in the direction he had come from. “I came to see if I could grab you before you were otherwise intercepted by another.”

“What of your daughter?”

“Ah, Bea remains at home with her husband. She is due her first child in the next few weeks.”

“Congratulations, my good man. I don’t doubt that your grandchild will be doted on at all times.”

“How fairs your new handmaiden? What was her name? Dagny, if my memory serves me?”

“Ah, well, I was not overly fond of her, so she was removed from her position.”

“Oh! Rainger never mentioned that. So who now serves the youngest Prince of Asgard?”

“Do you recall Ellie, the mortal girl whom my mother brought to Asgard?”

Radburn’s brown eyes lit up at the mention of her. “Ah, yes! Of course. How could I forget the little one! You were both quite close. How does she fair dealing with your stubborn arse?”

Loki rolled his eyes as the old man burst into laughter. “Were you not my friend, I would
reprimand you for that.”

“Alas, I am, so you will not. Come! My family wish to see you.”

The Trickster happily followed Radburn as he was led to where his wife and son sat. Maeve quickly got up from her seat upon noticing his approach and, much like her husband, pulled him into an embrace as she greeted him.

“It is good to see you again, Your Highness,” she said delightedly, pulling back to get a good look at him. “My, you are as handsome as you’ve always been!”

“You dote over me too much, Maeve,” Loki chuckled, placing a polite kiss on her hand. “It is partially your fault that I am this arrogant.”

“That I can agree with,” Radburn added, handing the prince a fresh goblet of wine. “Her lack of criticism ruined you.”

“Evening, Prince Loki,” Rainger greeted him, following his mother’s lead and standing from his seat. “It is good to see you.”

“And you, Rainger,” Loki replied and shook his hand firmly. “I trust my brother is not giving you too much hassle?”

The younger man laughed at that and merely shrugged. “Whatever hassle he may cause is minute in comparison to his friendly nature.”

“You do not have to compliment that oaf for my benefit.”

“My Prince!” Maeve gasped, shaking her head. “You speak so ill of Prince Thor when you both obviously adore each other.”

“Again, this is yet another statement that proves you think too highly of me!”

“My Prince?” Rainger asked, grabbing his attention again. The young man scratched the shaved sides of his head before speaking again. “I was hoping I could enquire about something with you.”

“And what might that be?”

He gulped slightly. “Your handmaiden, Ellie.”

Loki clenched his goblet tighter at the mention of her name. “What of her?”

“I was wondering — well, hoping really — if she was perhaps looking to court another? Well, I was hoping she would accept me if I were to ask…”

It took Loki all of his strength not to grab Rainger by his collar and threaten to knock all the teeth from his head. Although no one had seemingly expressed an interest in courting Ellie before, given her mortal status, he was not surprised that it would be Radburn’s son who expressed an interest. He had always been a reasonable man, completely uncaring of titles and royal status. It made sense that his children would grow with the same opinion. Evidently, this young man was unconcerned with her mortality. Loki did not know whether the two personal hand servants were even friends in the same way Ellie was with Fen and Sevda. She had mentioned Rainger briefly on one or two occasions, but never to an intimate degree. Despite the fact she may not have an interest in him, the thought of someone else putting a hand on her made his blood boil.
“I cannot really speak for her,” he explained slowly. “I am just aware that I have not seen her court someone before, given her status mostly.”

“That’s a shame,” Radburn said. “She is a lovely young woman.”

Rainger nodded slowly, now scratching his beard in thought. “I suppose all I can do is ask. As long as the request would not anger her.”

Loki pursed his lips together. “I doubt it will anger her.”

*But I, on the other hand, will thoroughly enjoy watching her reject your advances.*

Suddenly, it was like he was back in that Midgardian bar all over again. He said his goodbyes to Radburn and Maeve as Rainger took a breath to steady himself and headed off in the direction of Ellie. Loki slithered around the edge of the crowd, his goblet left behind, as the two servants met on the dance floor. Over the noise of music and laughter, he couldn’t hear their conversation, but he watched as Rainger politely grabbed Ellie’s attention. Excusing herself from Fen and Sevda’s company, she gave the young man a smile as he began to speak. Her expression remained calm and neutral the whole time Rainger spoke, using his shaking hands to make nervous gestures. When he finished speaking, there was a moment of silence between the pair as he waited patiently for an answer. Loki fixed his gaze on his lover as she smiled sadly and shook her head. As to what she was saying, he had no idea, but he hid his grin as Rainger nodded sadly and went back the way he had came. She let out a breath, pouting at the encounter before she searched the crowd.

Their knowing gazes met between the party guests.

When she smiled at him, he found himself doing the same without a second thought.

He could have sworn that he felt lighter.

Loki nodded towards the entrance way that led back to the corridors and it took no time before the pair met in a deserted alcove under the guise of their invisibility.

“Did you see that whole exchange?” was the first thing she asked as their figures reappeared, caged between his arms and the wall behind.

He nodded, his expression soft. “Yes. I had been speaking to Rainger and his parents before he went to speak with you. He actually asked for my advice on approaching you, but I offered him none.”

“Oh, a bad move on his part.” She let out a breath, taking hold of his shoulders and pulling him towards her. “But he had no idea, so you can’t blame him for tryin’.”

Loki looked at her, less than impressed, but shrugged. “I suppose. I was still not very fond of his attempt.”

“It’s not as if I was gonna say yes.”

“I know, but he does not know that you are mine…”

She sighed at his admission, resting her forehead against his chest. “I know, Loki, but we already spoke about that. We both know that we can’t tell people right now, at least.”

He placed a kiss on the top of her head before letting his chin rest in the same spot. “I know. Sometimes it bothers me when others look at you in such a manner, but I guess I’ll just have to kill
“Oh my god, no!” She snickered and the sound made him grin. “Look, if it was a choice between not bein’ with you at all or bein’ with you secretly, I will always chose the latter. So don’t worry about guys comin’ near me — they’ll always get shot down ’cause I have my hopeful eyes set on another.”

“Oh, really? Who?”

“You, you fuckin’ eejit.”

He leaned back and studied her for a moment, languidly pressing his body against hers when he noticed her slightly unsteady eyes. “Have you been drinking, darling?”

“I’ve just had a little wine,” she explained with a giggle. “Don’t worry; I’m nowhere near as bad as I was on Earth.”

“I can tell. You were a mess.”

“Wow, alright then, dickhead.”

Now he was the one laughing at her pouting. “Did I forget to mention that I would make the same choice as you?”

With a roll of her eyes, she said dryly. “Well at least I know that now…”

“And I hope you never forget it,” he insisted. “Now we should be getting back to the party before others notice our absence. Although, given our current position, I think we should take full advantage of this before we return.”

The groan that escaped her nearly had him growling in response. “Then stop talkin’ and c’mere.”

Following her command, Loki firmly planted his lips on hers and enjoyed the brief few minutes they had alone. He had to admit that the time he spent with her was becoming more and more precious, but he had not lied when he agreed with her earlier admission. These moments made the secrecy worth it.

He had not previously believed it to be possible, but he was beginning to think that, if given the choice, he would choose her over and over again.

Loki did not regret his leap of faith for one minute.
Chapter Summary

Loki and Ellie take time out to explore the other more intimate aspects of their courtship.


Chapter Notes

Okay, guys, guuuuuys, GUUUUUYS... For real though, a fair warning: this chapter is mostly NSFW. There is some genuine plot at the beginning and end, but the middle is smut. Literal smut. So if y'all aren't into that, by all means feel free to avoid it! This is also my first attempt at smut, so hopefully it's satisfactory and not insanely cringe even though I think it might be? Ah, who knows. I hope you enjoy it regardless, now don't mind me while I crawl into a hole and try not to think about how people are reading the porn I wrote :) I am a disgrace haha

“I wish to dine with you tomorrow evening.”

Ellie looked up from the conjuration book she was reading. “You do?”

Loki nodded in his usual library seat. “Of course.”

“And how do you suggest we manage that?”

“I have a plan.”

“Of course you do,” she chuckled, marked the page she was on, and then shut the book. “Alright, fill me in.”

He beckoned her to him by patting his lap. Getting to her feet, he was secretly thrilled when she obediently placed herself on his thigh, wrapping her arm around his shoulders and placing the other on his chest for balance. Automatically his hands went around her waist, but upon receiving no objection, he kept them there. For the first time since their confessions, they had met at night in the library to resume their conjuration lessons. It was on Ellie’s insistence of course. Although no further threats or murders had occurred within the palace walls, she was still quite nervous about being caught unarmed. Even Kirkjabyr’s presence when walking back to her room after a hard day’s work didn’t ease her much.

“I shall request to dine on my own in my chambers,” Loki explained. “You will serve me my meal, which in this case, will be a meal for us to eat later together. The cooks won’t question the servings if you say I requested a large meal. You will go to dine with your fellow workers after serving me my food and, once there, you will request a small serving and express that you had a late lunch. After your meal, you will explain to Kirkjabyr that I called on you to transcribe some
private documents for me after dinner. Once he has led you back to my chambers, he will remain outside and suspect nothing from it considering the documents are private. Then we will dine together with the meal I’ve kept warm, and a simple glamour spell will prevent your guard from hearing any conversation that might inform him of our scheme.”

Ellie stared at him in surprise. “Wow, okay. You really thought this through.”

“Do you expect any less of me?” he asked, pulling her body closer to his. “I had to make sure that we were both accounted for and no one would suspect a thing. A simple illusion spell will just make him question where you have disappeared off to. Kirkjabyr is too kind of a man to think that anything less than innocent may be going on behind closed doors.”

“Fair points, My Prince,” she muttered, twirling her fingers through the hair on the nape of his neck. “Then we’ll dine tomorrow night as you wish.”

“Excellent.” He grinned widely before pulling her in for a soft kiss.

* * *

Loki’s plan went down perfectly as expected. Neither Odin or Frigga found his request to dine privately that evening concerning, as it was something he did whenever he felt like it anyway. Kirkjabyr never questioned Ellie’s task of transcribing for the evening either, so he happily accompanied her to the god’s chambers and waited outside the front door with the other Einherjar as she went inside. Once the door was sealed, Loki used glamour to keep them ignorant to the real task at hand.

“Well, you were right,” Ellie began. “It was a good idea to come up with such an intricate plan, because it work perfectly.”

“I did tell you.” He smirked before gesturing to the table. “I hope you find the set up satisfactory.” He was quite proud, to say the least. He had two places set at his table for each of them, with some candelas in the centre. He had fetched her record player and an LP from her room and carefully set the record down, turned the player on, and placed the needle on its ridged surface.

“You like the Cranberries?” she asked in surprise.

“It was the first record I saw in your room that I recognised,” he admitted. “It is more so for your enjoyment than my own, but I find their music tolerable.”

“What a compliment,” she said dryly as she approached him. “Thank you for all of this. I’ve never had someone do somethin’ like this for me before.”

When she kissed him in thanks, he was a little surprised, but found himself grinning like an imbecile. “No need for thank you’s. Take a seat.”

Loki pulled out her chair before he allowed himself to sit down and start eating. He poured them both large glasses of wine, but insisted that she must take it easy with what he was giving her, as it was Asgardian. She didn’t argue with the fact, knowing that she would probably fall unconscious if she drank more than one glass.

Their conversation started off quite light and infrequent between eating their meal. It was a
comfortable silence, even if this was a new setting for them. He was relieved to see that it was not awkward or uncomfortable. As always, their silence did not seem like it needed to be filled. When the conversation did start, Ellie asked him how his meetings this morning has gone. He reiterated the affair to her, sparing no details he deemed relevant. Odin and Frigga had been consumed with a number of political meetings of late with two senators of Vanaheim. Apparently, the realm had been dealing with some unrest in their villages, with attacks from a band of Marauders becoming more frequent. The violence seemed to increase daily, but Asgard was hesitant to involve itself given it seemed that the group’s actions were politically motivated. At first, it appeared to be a small issue, but with its unusually quick escalation, it was important that it was put to rest now as opposed to later. The Vanir were indeed willing to let them assist, even if tensions between the two realms were on edge.

“What d’you think will come of it?” Ellie asked, giving him her undivided attention after finishing her food.

Loki shrugged slightly and picked up his goblet. “I am not sure, but it is highly likely that Asgard will send forces to help deal with the Marauders. They are a relatively small group, so it should be easy enough to stop them with both realms involved.”

“Will you have’ta go this time?”

Finishing off his wine, he fixed his gaze on her before he set it back down. He was no stranger to war and fighting for Asgard. Sometimes he and Thor were required to join Odin and the Einherjar if needs be. On those occasions, Ellie was always worried to see them go, but happier each time they returned unharmed. Now, however, there was more at stake. “Possibly, but as of now I do not know.”

She did nothing to hide her displeasure at the thought, but nodded nonetheless. “I understand that it’s your duty to do so, but I’d still be nervous ’bout it…”

He reached across the table and placed a comforting hand on hers. “I know, darling, but fret not. I shall keep you well informed of any changes.”

“Thank you, Loki.”

“I give you permission to call me by my formal title this evening.”

She let out a laugh at that, using her other hand to sip at her own goblet. “Oh, so now you want me to call you Prince Loki?”

“Only because it is so arousing when you do.”

He stared as she suddenly spat her wine back into the goblet in surprise. Her cheeks flared red as she slowly lowered it back to the table. A stray drop of the red liquid dribbled down from the corner of her pursed lips and, without thinking, he reached across the table and gathered it with his thumb. With his gaze fixed on her, he wrapped his lips around the digit, licked off the drop, then removed his thumb with a pop.

All she did was stare open-mouthed as he grinned deviously.

“Are you okay, darling?”

“Fine,” she said rather quickly. “Totally...fine.”

“Mmm.” He lightly traced his thumb over the back of her hand still held within his grasp. “Are you sure?”
Now she was staring at his hand wrapped around hers. “Yep.”

“Am I not distracting you again?” he asked.

“Yes, you are.”

Wary of frightening her, he gave her hand a tug. “Come here.”

He was relieved when she got up from her seat and approached him without a hint of fear or unease. He noticed how she nibbled slightly on her bottom lip, and gently pulled her to stand between his legs. He assessed her thoroughly, noting nothing to implicate she may be frightened, so he pressed on.

“Do you touch yourself, Ellie?”

She froze on the spot, obviously not expecting the forwardness of his question. “I-I’m sorry?”

The fact remained, he would be as blunt as necessary. “Have you ever touched yourself? For your own pleasure?” When he was met with silence, he pressed onwards with carefully selected words. “I won’t judge you, I am merely asking if you have pleasured yourself before.”

Looking down at him, she frowned. “Eh… Y-yeah, I have.”

He nodded slowly, not even attempting to scold himself for the heat that was blooming between his legs. “And have you pleasured yourself since becoming my handmaiden?”

Briefly averting her gaze, she answered. “Yes.”

“So… you have brought yourself to completion right on the other side of that wall in your quarters?” He gestured behind her to the wall his bed lay propped against.

She breathed deeply. “Yes.”

He bit his lip, his hands slowly settling themselves on her little waist. “I have done it too, little one. At night when you are all that consumes my thoughts, with nothing but that wall between us. Isn’t that interesting?”

“I don’t know if that’s the word I’d use,” she whispered, placing her own hands atop his. “But you could say that. Why are you askin’ me this?”

He licked his lips slowly, resisting the urge to pull her into his lap. “Because the thought of you touching yourself drives me mad. I want to bring you pleasure, Ellie, if you are comfortable enough to allow me. Even if you are not ready for some things, I would like to explore others with you.”

There was a silence between them, much like the comfortable silence when they were dining, but this time Ellie was clearly thinking a mile a minute. He was at least eased by the fact she still didn’t look afraid, and he refused to rush her into answering. If he was to become intimate with her, Loki would never push her for his own pleasure. She was not some simple wench or servant, and she never would be.

Suddenly, she spoke. “Okay.”

Loki met her gaze. “Okay?”

“I’d like to try…be intimate with you.” She hung her head slightly before continuing. “I know I
already told you, but I don’t really know what to do.”

“Little one, look at me. You need not worry yourself with that. Tonight is about your pleasure, so let me handle it.”

“Are you sure? I want to make you happy too, though. It’s not all ’bout me.”

“We have plenty of time,” he reassured her and pulled her down to sit on his lap. “As I said to you already, we will take all the time you need. Now, hold on tight.”

She smiled and wrapped her arms around his neck securely. He stood up from his chair, hoisting her up with his hands on her thighs and carried her towards the bed. He delicately laid her down on the duvet and raked his eyes over the sight before him.

*How much time have I spent longing to have her in my bed? Probably too much… But pace yourself for her sake.*

“Head on the pillow,” he murmured and got on the bed on his knees as she scooted upwards. “If you feel uncomfortable or wish to stop, it is important that you tell me, alright?”

She nodded. “I know, I will.”

“Promise me.”

“I promise, Loki. Now c’mere.”

He resisted the urge to growl and crawled up the length of her, settling down beside her on his elbow. Leaning down to kiss her, she met him halfway. He cupped her face with his free hand and felt her fingers tangle in his hair. When she tugged it lightly, he moaned and draped his body slightly over hers. The familiarity of how well her form fitted into his made him lightheaded, but he kept going, pausing from kissing her every now and then to make sure she was still comfortable. Every time his hands wandered elsewhere, he paid close attention to the reactions her body gave. The little moans that escaped her when he moved his lips to her neck almost instantly made him hard. His hips rutted slightly against her thigh and he inhaled through his teeth at the pleasurable feeling. Suddenly she moved and looked down to his tented pants.

“Do you see what you do to me?” he asked, surprised by how husky his voice was as he spoke. He gently pressed his forehead against hers and sighed. “You are truly beautiful and you do not even realise.”

Apparently lost for words, she simply pulled his lips back down to hers and kissed him with renewed fervency. He obliged gladly, deepening the kiss as he placed his hand on her knee. He felt her jump at the contact and broke the kiss. Looking into her eyes, he waited for her to tell him to stop, but instead, she nodded slowly, cheeks flushed, pupils blown, lips wet and swollen.

With all the care he could manage, he languidly slipped his hand up her thigh, bunching her skirts as he went. The higher he went, the heavier her breathing got. On he proceeded, leaving bumps on her bare skin, and before he knew it, her skirts were pushed above her hips. While his nostrils flared at the sight, her body was consumed with tremors. Her fist clutched at the front of his tunic, her head turning to look away. Only when he gently called her name did she meet his gaze once more.

“It is just me,” he said softly, lips brushing against hers. “I won’t hurt you.”

Only when she gave him another nod did he let his sure hand slide down the front of her undergarments.
The gasp that came from Ellie when Loki made contact with her bare core nearly made him finish right there in his own pants. He shuddered at the sensation, pure content filling him at finally being able to touch her. With deft fingers he slowly explored her, indisputably proud with the wetness he discovered and delighting in the sounds she made when he slowly rubbed her in circular motions. Her eyes snapped quickly shut and her head fell back against the pillow, leaving the expanse of her neck at his mercy. He sucked at her skin, noting how his fingers were growing slick the more he touched her.

“Is this what you do?” he breathed, face pressed into the side of her neck. “Is this how you touch yourself?”

She let out a whimper — a sound Loki decided he needed to hear daily for the rest of existence — and struggled before answering. “Yes.”

He groaned at that, loving how his words made her body shiver. “And is this better? Do you prefer when I touch you like this?”

“Yes,” she gasped, a little insistently this time.

“And what do you think of, hmm? When you pleasure yourself?”

“You.”

The admission made him proud. So fucking proud.

He kissed her again, this time with a passion he struggled to control, and slid a soaked finger inside her. She jumped at the intrusion, letting out a startled moan into his mouth, and he pulled away to check if he had hurt her.

“Did I hurt you?”

Her wide eyes flitted between his face and the hand between her legs. “No, no. I’m okay, just s-surprised.”

He tutted and reclaimed his previous position of hovering over her. “Surprise? That’s all I’m rousing from you? That is simply not good enough. I’ll have to work a little harder.”

He was met with no resistance inside her, and patiently began pumping his finger in and out, relishing in her heat and tight grip of her muscles. With swift movements, his thumb reached upwards to continue stroking her gently, drawing what sounded like a whimper of his name from the young woman. He would never forget her face below his when he touched her — when she was first touched by another — her harsh breathing, her blown pupils, the look of desire and amazement when she moaned at the contact against her sensitive bundle of nerves. Her nails dug into his bicep as his thumb rubbed slowly, finding a smooth but torturous rhythm.

For the first time, Loki noticed that she was far too covered for such an occasion.

“This needs to come off,” he stated, reluctantly removing his hand from her core and reaching for her blouse. She didn’t protest as he swiftly undid its bindings, but she did grab his hand when he tried to move the fabric and reveal her naked chest. He paused, waiting patiently as she stuttered.

“I-I’m a little nervous,” she admitted, her voice uncharacteristically small. “I don’t think I’m… much to look at.”

“Ellie…” He placed a lingering kiss on her cheek and nuzzled her nose. “I meant it when I said
you were beautiful. Please do not hide from me.”

After a moment of steadying herself, she nodded, and allowed him to part the garment and leave her bare. He allowed himself a moment to stare before cupping a breast in his hand.

*By the Norns…*

“You have nothing to be nervous about,” he reassured her as his hand slid its way back down between her legs. “I promise.”

He resumed his previous goal with ease, settling into a rhythm that roused soft noises from her and made his chest swell. He took his time, probably driving her mad, but began to notice how her whole body was beginning to tremble.

“Loki, please.”

Another digit suddenly probing at her entrance brought her to life. He kissed her deeply and slipped his tongue into her mouth as his finger did a similar movement between her legs. He couldn’t remember very well, but he was almost sure that she pulled on his hair. Slowly, he trailed his lips down her neck, along her collarbones, and her chest. When he found the spot he had been searching for within her, her whole back arched off the bed. He knew she would think the gasp she let out was unbelievably embarrassing, but in that moment all he cared about was this beautiful woman and pleasing her until she couldn’t remember her own name.

“There we are,” he said, grinning and breathing heavily. “Oh, how I have been dying to see that look on your face. You are such a good girl.”

She didn’t respond, which he took as a good sign, so he continued his exploration until he took a nipple between his lips and sucked with such ardour that Ellie cried out beneath him. Between his mouth on her breast, his fingers inside her, and his thumb determinedly coaxing her towards the edge, her release was swift. Quite suddenly she let out a choking sob and her whole body went ridged. Loki adored the feeling of her inner muscles clenching down rhythmically on his fingers and fixed his eyes on the look of pleasure on her face. Only when he pressed his forehead against hers did her eyes open again and he couldn’t help but smirk. While he observed as the pleasure slowly seeped from her body and left her weak with satisfaction, he kissed her lips softly, fingers still deep within her and moving slowly, steadily, ensuring she was wholly sated. When he gently removed them, he leaned back from her just enough so that she could see him put them into his mouth and suck them clean. The metallic taste only furthered the need to use his mouth on her. Ellie’s jaw practically fell open.

“You look beautiful when you come,” he whispered and leaned back down. “And you taste delicious.”

The latter half of the sentence was said with a growl before his lips met hers again. Left dumbfounded by his compliments, she could only attempt to kiss him through the shock, also probably noticing the taste of her own release on his tongue.

“Did you enjoy yourself?” he asked, unable to wipe the smile from his feature. “I mean, I would like to think that you did from what I could tell.”

She chuckled, the sight of which made him so happy. The fact that she felt comfortable enough and satisfied in his company was like a gift that furthered his own joy. Her voice was quite rough as she spoke. “I did. I don’t think I have the words right now, ’cause I kinda feel like I’m meltin’, but thank you, Loki.”
“Thank you for trusting me, Ellie.”

She haphazardly threw her arm on to the pillow above her head and studied him. “Your hair is all messy.”

“Probably from you running your hands through it, love.”

“I know, but I’ve never seen it so fluffy and unrestrained before.” She reached up and gently twirled a lock hanging in front of his face. “It’s all curly.”

He rolled his eyes, tenderly running a finger down her chest. “I just had you finish on my hands and all you can say is I have curly hair?”

Noting his jesting, she shrugged. “It’s very curly.”

He hummed in response and settled himself above her, enjoying the calm atmosphere.

“I like how this feels,” she admitted, running her fingers over his back.

“How what feels, exactly?” he responded, rubbing his nose gently against hers.

“You on top of me. It feels good…and safe.”

Loki couldn’t do anything else other than smile at her words. He simply couldn’t form a response. It seemed that she was doing that to him a lot that evening; leaving him speechless.

“Hey.” She grabbed his attention again, interlacing her hand with his. She visibly hesitated before she spoke, her brow furrowing quickly before settling again. “I love you.”

Oh.

If he thought he had been silenced by her before, he had no idea…

He said nothing.

He could barely even form a word in his head let alone aloud.

He thought hearing those words from her lips would make him feel lighter and alive, but all he could manage was panic.

He realised his feelings for her a long time ago, but it was never something he had managed to admit out loud, let alone to her face. His face remained blank, but inside he was uncontrollably anxious. It only grew worse when a gradual frown of embarrassment appeared on Ellie’s face.

Eventually she broke the painful silence, probably upon realising that he wouldn’t be doing it himself. “D’you think I could try pleasure you now?”

Her words confused him momentarily, temporarily breaking him out of his shock. “Sorry, what?”

“Can I touch you?” she tried again, reaching down for the straining bulge in his pants. “I-I don’t really know how, but you could show me what you like?”

He grabbed her wrist without thinking, halting her in her advances instantly. The look she gave him nearly broke his heart — she was worried, she was shocked. Obviously his sudden change in demeanour had not gone unnoticed.

“No,” he said, clearing his throat. “No, do not worry about me. Tonight was about your pleasure.”
“But I—”

“Another time,” he added and released his hold on her. “There is no rush.”

Now feeling embarrassed by his behaviour and her confession still making him hysteric, he got off her and back to his feet, hastily averting his gaze from her nudity. He heard the rustling of clothes behind him while he poured two glasses of water and knew that she was covering herself again. While he was completely wrapped up in his own emotional dilemma, he knew he was most likely making her feel horrid. This furthered his apprehension, but he couldn’t gather the courage to face her. If he did, he would only hear her saying those words to him all over again.

He quickly handed her a glass as he downed his own, then got to clearing the table, something he never usually did himself. Her eyes settled on him, burning a brand into the back of his head, but he refused to look at her.

“Let me help clean up,” she stated, a small quiver audible in her tone.

He heard her set down the glass and approach, but shook his head. “I can do it.”

She sighed heavily. “Look, Loki, ’bout what I said—”

“Can we not discuss it?” he snapped.

“But you won’t even look at me!”

His hands began to shake as his panic consumed him. Before he could stop himself, he slammed the plates back down on to the table. “Because I cannot!”

He had not meant to raise his voice. He truly had not. But he was a coward.

Ellie stepped back from him immediately, staring at him in shock. The glassy look in her eyes told him that she was holding back tears. Shouting was the worst thing he could have done and they both knew it.

“I should go then,” she muttered and quickly turned and sped out the door as her body began to quake. “Goodnight.”

The deafening silence that she left behind was what broke Loki. The record finished playing long ago. As his own frustrated tears began to fall, the plates were flung into the nearby walls, bringing their evening to an unplanned end.
Loki had royally fucked up.

He was sure of it.

Unable to sleep, he paced throughout the night. He contemplated on more than one occasion going to Ellie’s room to attempt some form of an explanation, but couldn’t rationalise one. What could he tell her? That he didn’t know how to say he loved someone? That he never had before? That wasn’t a lie, and perhaps it would have been a good place to start, but what if he did speak to her only to be turned away? What if Ellie, like so many others in his life, decided he was not worth the time or effort? What if his outburst was the final straw for her? The thought of not having her affection or friendship genuinely made him feel ill, and yet so did the idea of avoiding her altogether and giving up now. Surely he could talk his way out of this. He didn’t earn the name Silver Tongue for nothing! As he cleaned the shattered ceramic plate shards from his floor, he contemplated what to say.

When morning came, he was ready to face her, to explain himself.

*I was caught off guard by your admission*, he repeated in his head. *But I apologise for my handling of the situation. I should not have shouted at you—*

The knock on his door came and he cleared his throat. “Come in.”

His frown deepened when Sevda came into view. “Good morning, Prince Loki.”

Standing there in stunned silence, he took a moment to answer. “Eh, good morning, Sevda. Where is my handmaiden?”

“Ellie is feeling poorly this morning, Your Highness,” she explained, already at his wardrobe.
“Kirkjabyr fetched me this morning to work in her stead.”

“Poorly?” he repeated, gaze shifting to the wall that separated their chambers. “Where is she?”

“In her room. We already offered to fetch Eir for her, but she declined, explaining that she would feel better after some rest. I’m sure she will feel better in no time, My Prince. Do you wish for me to draw you a bath?”

“That won’t be necessary, Sevda. Just my clothes will do fine.”

“As you wish. The Allmother expects you soon for breakfast.”

He muttered his thanks and dressed once she had left. He paced for a few more moments, already knowing that Ellie’s illness was a farce, an excuse not to be near him. He would be lying if he said the thought of her not wanting to be around him wasn’t upsetting. When he left his rooms, he hesitated in the hall and turned towards Ellie’s chamber door. Kirkjabyr stood on guard, his expression patient as always. Feeling rather impatient himself, Loki quickly approached the guard.

“Your Highness,” Kirkjabyr greeted him with a bow of his head. “It is good to see you.”

“And you, Kirkjabyr,” the Trickster replied. “I wish to see how Ellie fairs, if you would kindly let me in.”

Beneath his brown beard, the guard frowned. “I’m afraid she requested to be left alone, Your Highness. She needs her rest; you know how frail mortals can be.”

Loki’s expression remained blank despite how mad he was at not being permitted to see his lover. Her request at privacy be damned, he needed to speak with her! “I understand, but a few moments will do no harm.”

The large man’s face only showed his own concern as he shook his head. “With all due respect, I think it is best that she is left alone. I know you are just concerned for her wellbeing, but, speaking from my own experience with my daughters, she will be right as rain in no time!”

“Regardless, I wish to see her.”

“My apologies, Your Highness, but she is to have no visitors; by order of the Allmother.”

“I beg your pardon?”

Kirkjabyr nodded. “The Allmother has informed me to let none enter without Ellie’s consent so I’m sorry, but you cannot see her.”

Loki’s gaze flitted from the guard to the door, knowing that Ellie could probably hear everything being said and still chose to keep him out. With a sigh, he regarded the older man, turned on his heel, and left defeated.

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Thor wore his most infuriating grin later that same day. “So, to war?”

Loki didn’t hide the look of displeasure from his face. “It would seem that way…”
It seemed that this day was determined to break him. Everything that could possibly go wrong was doing just that. After breakfast, he and Thor were called to a gathering with the Allfather and Lieutenants of the Einherjar to discuss the Marauders situation in Vanaheim. Odin had finally decided that it was best to answer the realm’s calls of assistance and send in troops. Doing so would hopefully ease some of the ever-present political tension and save lives in the process. A win-win, as Midgardians say. Odin had also decided that his sons would join him. Of course, Thor was always delighted to smash something with that stupid hammer of his, while Loki was less than eager to leave with Ellie not speaking to him. For once, he was not enthusiastic about being chosen by his father when it meant leaving her behind after a fight. Due to depart tomorrow at dawn, he knew that his outburst had truly come back to bite him in his royal arse.

“We will have a splendid time!” Thor boomed, slinging his arm around Loki’s shoulders as they traipsed through the halls. “It has been so long since we went to war together, brother.”

“Wars are not usually described as ‘splendid’, Thor,” Loki replied. “I am nearly positive that no king as referred to a war as ‘splendid’ it the history of the Nine Realms. You know what Father always says about that.”

The eldest Odinson shrugged dismissively. “Well they sound like no fun anyway. That is besides the point; it has been so long since we went to war together! You and I, fighting side by side!”

Loki had to admit that Thor’s eagerness to spend what he considered quality time together was flattering and comforting, but he was still reluctant to leave while on bad terms with Ellie. On any other day, he would probably be happy with his brother’s sentiment.

“You must excuse me, brother,” he explained. “I am not exactly keen to go to war right now.”

“And why not?” Thor asked, completely baffled. “We get to kick arse. Together! It will be great!”

“I suppose…” Loki looked down at his hands, not bothering to hide his pout. He only looked up when a massive hand slapped against his chest, halting him in his tracks.

The God of Thunder stared at him for a long time, face contorted to express his confusion. “What is the matter with you? You have been especially mopey today, more so than usual.”

Loki merely shrugged in response. “I did not sleep very well last night. I am merely tired.”

For once, Thor didn’t look entirely convinced. “If you insist. Alas, I am excited for us to fight alongside each other again! This calls for a celebration.”

“A what?”

“A celebration. One involving enough mead and ale in which we could drown!”

The prospect of drinking until he couldn’t remember his own name sounded appealing to Loki. If there was one sure thing about Thor, it was his ability to get himself and his friends excessively drunk. Usually, Loki would rather deal with a wild bilgesnipe than be around that drunken rabble. But today, on the other hand…

“That’s not a bad idea…”

“Really?” Thor nearly fucking squeaked. “You want to?”

Loki shrugged, trying his best to act casual. “Well, yes. I had no other plans this evening.”

“Excellent!” Thor cheered, and slung his arm back around his sibling’s shoulders as they set off
once more. “Come! We will go to the Feast Hall and gather the Warriors Three, and Lady Sif, and Ellie—!”

“No!” Loki shrieked before he could stop himself.

“Uh, why not?” Thor asked as he steered them towards her chambers. “Is this because of what happened the last time? We won’t be in a public tavern this time. We shall be much safer in the—”

Loki hushed him with a wave of the hand. “No, it’s not that. She is currently ill, brother, and bedridden. She will not be coming for any… revelling.”

“Ah, that is simply not acceptable! We leave tomorrow, she must come with us.”

“I have already tried to speak with her,” Loki explained with a sigh. “She will not have it. Kirkjabyr is guarding her as we speak.”

“This sounds ridiculous. I will get her out.”

The God of Mischief smirked at his determined expression as her door and ever-present watch guard came into view. “So confident, brother. Good luck with that.”

“Evidently, your silver tongue failed you this time,” Thor chuckled as they approached Kirkjabyr. “Allow me. Kirkjabyr!”

“Prince Thor,” the guard greeted him with a wide smile from his post. “It is good to see you. And you, Prince Loki.”

“Always a pleasure!” Thor clapped him on his armoured shoulder before gesturing to the door. “I am sure you have been informed that we go to war tomorrow on Vanaheim. We wish to see little Ellie and invite her to the Feast Hall to celebrate.”

“That is a lovely gesture!” Kirkjabyr said, still grinning widely. “But I am afraid Ellie wishes to remain alone so she can gather her strength once more.”

“Ah, she will be fine,” Thor insisted. “Nothing that some mead and good company cannot fix.”

“Unless she herself states that she wishes to join you all, I am afraid you will be drinking without her.”

There was silence between the three of them before they turned to stare expectantly at the imposing door. None of them dared speak as they waited for some response from within. They were met with a resounding stillness, much to Loki’s chagrin. Even if he wasn’t surprised by it, there was still a part of him that hoped she would open the door.

“I think that is your answer, Your Highnesses,” Kirkjabyr mumbled with an awkward grimace. “I hope you enjoy your evening despite her absence.”

Thor frowned as he slowly turned from the door, looking at his brother in surprise. “Umm, thank you. As you were.”

As Thor walked away, he mumbled incoherently under his breath. Loki paid him no mind, hesitating to follow for a brief moment. Wary of Kirkjabyr’s gaze on him, he merely looked at her firmly shut door once more before he turned and followed a dismayed Thor as he left.
It had been many years since Loki found himself in this situation. And yet, here he was, drunk off his arse and, dare he say, enjoying his time in Thor’s company. He could possibly say that he was enjoying the company of his friends too. Had he gone mad? No, but he had definitely gotten excessively drunk with the goal of forgetting his argument with Ellie and all the feelings he had for her. This was the best solution he could think of. It was also easier to deal with all these people when he was intoxicated beyond belief. If he wasn’t so insistently preoccupied with his worries about Ellie, he would probably be enjoying his time with his brother even more.

“Loki, I must ask,” Thor said at one point in the evening. He leaned over his tankard with a frown. “What has you so down?”

“What are you talking about?” Loki grumbled, struggling to focus his gaze on his brother. Thankfully, the Warriors Three and Sif were too engaged in their own rabble to notice the discussion.

Thor frowned. “I am not stupid. You are indeed enjoying your evening, but when you stop talking, you stare into your drink as though it holds the answers to every question in the Nine Realms. What is the matter?”

It must have been the alcohol and a mix of desperation that encouraged him to speak of what ailed him. He knew that Thor could be a forgetful drunk if he drank in excess, so he hoped that their conversation would not be remembered. He doubted whether he would even receive helpful advice, but he supposed it couldn’t hurt, could it?

“I may have fucked up severely,” Loki grumbled after a long silence. He kept his voice low despite their intoxication, wary of any other hearing their conversation. “And I’m not sure if I can repair the damage.”

Thor chuckled as he downed his drink. “You say this as though this isn’t a frequent occurrence, brother. Your whole thing is mischief.”

“This was not mischief, Thor. And there was no jesting involved.”

“Well then, what did you do?”

He bit his chapped lips. “I hurt someone. Someone very…dear to me.”

“Oh…” Suddenly, realisation appeared on Thor’s drunken face “Oh! Are you talking about a lover? Are you bedding someone I don’t know about?” The look of dismay on Loki’s face answered the question. “Oh, Loki, you scoundrel! Well? Tell me! Who is the lucky person?”

“Oh she is is not important,” Loki insisted, drinking the last of his ale. “What matters is what I have done to upset her.”

Thor clapped his hands together as two more tankards were placed in front of them. “Ah, so it is a she! That narrows it down to half of Asgard.”

“Brother—”

“I merely jest, relax! Go on, tell me what you did to upset her.”

Gazing into his new drink, the Trickster hung his head in shame. “She told me she loved me, and I
ignored her and shouted at her for telling me how she felt.”

He was met with silence, and looked up to see Thor staring back at him in surprise, hand paused mid air as he was lifting up his full drink to his lips. “You what?”

“Yes.”

“And she loves you? She told you she did?”

“Yes, and I could not even bring myself to look at her.”

“Oh… You were not joking when you said it was serious.”

Loki smiled sadly at him. “This is one of the few times when I am not joking.”

“Have you spoken to her about what happened?” Thor asked, setting his tankard back down in a bid to give Loki his undivided attention.

“No, she…will not speak to me and I am afraid to confront her.”

There was a long pause between them while the rest of the hall bustled with noise. The brothers drunkenly speaking in hushed tones went unnoticed by their friends and the others celebrating around them. They were probably afraid to break whatever spell had befallen the princes — seeing them speak civilly and earnestly was not the most rare occurrence to witness, but no one dared test it by interrupting.

“Why did you not respond to her confession?” Thor asked eventually.

Loki shrugged. “Because I do not know how to do so. I may be called the Silver Tongue, but I am not great at expressing…feelings.”

“Do you love her?” was the simple question Thor posed next, meeting his brother’s gaze. “Because I think that, if you do, this situation could be easily rectified.”

Loki’s fingers clenched around his new tankard as he inhaled and exhaled slowly. With a gulp he spoke, not even needing to consider the truth in his words before he did. “I do. I do love her.”

“Odin’s beard! I am stunned to hear those words leave your mouth! But I am also happy for you, little brother.”

“My feelings do not matter,” Loki grumbled in response. “She most likely never wants to see me again after how I dealt with her confession. If I speak to her, I do not know if I can handle hearing her tell me she wants nothing more to do with me.”

“Loki, if she sees how wonderful you are, and you care about her, then why not give it a chance? I have honestly never found someone who cared about me in that way.” Loki had to hold his tongue, but glanced at Lady Sif nonetheless. “It is a rare thing and you have been lucky to find it. Whoever she is, she must have the patience of the Allmother if she fell for you.”

Loki giggled at that. “I will admit, she is truly something.”

“Then tell her that and stop pussyfooting around the situation. You deserve a bit of happiness, as I’m sure she does too.”

“Thank you,” Loki murmured after a beat of silence. “Speaking with you has helped a lot, surprisingly.”
“That is because I am the big brother and therefore I am smarter.”

Loki rolled his unsteady eyes with a grin. “And there is the Thor I am more familiar with. For a minute there, I thought you were an imposter.”

“Never! No one could ever dare to imitate the mighty Thor, son of Odin, master of relationship advice!”

For the first time in a while, Loki looked at his brother with a fondness that harboured no falsehoods. He wouldn’t admit it aloud right now, but no matter what happened, no matter how many times they fought or disagreed, he loved his brother dearly. “I certainly had not planned on asking you for it, but I am glad I did. Thank you, brother.”

He had not planned, however, on getting so drunk that he had to be carried back to his chambers by that oaf of a brother.

“I can walk, you fool!” he drawled, attempting to unwind his arm from around Thor’s shoulders. “Let me goooo!”

“What kind of big brother would I be if I left you to find your way to your room by yourself?” Thor explained with a heavy slur, stumbling along himself. “I’ll tell you; the worst kind!”

Loki was seeing stars. Everything was blending around him when Thor — Thor, of all people! — had the gall to cut him off. And now here he was, struggling to walk through the halls of the palace even with his equally drunk sibling’s help.


“I fear you may lose consciousness if I let you do that. We are just here at your door now.”

“Ugh, you are no fun, brother—”

“Loki?”

At the sound of his name, the pair stumbled around to face whoever had spoken. The sight of Ellie standing in the door to her bedroom caused them both to gasp aloud.

“Ellie!” Loki wheezed, still clinging to Thor. “It’s you!”

“You are alive!” Thor cried, abruptly dropping Loki to the ground so that he could scoop Ellie up into his arms. “I thought you were dead!”

Loki looked up at them with unfocused eyes from his spot on the golden floors. Ellie was baffled and rightly so; the sight of the Odinson brothers intoxicated to this severity in each others company was completely unheard of. “I am fine, Thor! I was just a little sick is all.”

“You dropped me, you oaf!” Loki spoke with difficulty, still unmoving on the floor. “How do you expect me to stand when my legs refuse to work?”

“You dropped me, you oaf!” Loki spoke with difficulty, still unmoving on the floor. “How do you expect me to stand when my legs refuse to work?”

“What’s wrong with your legs?” Ellie hastily asked. As soon as Thor released her, she rushed to Loki’s side. “Are you alright?”

He whined on the floor like a kicked puppy. “Noooooo. I miss you, darling. I just want to talk to you.”

Her eyes met his, filled with concern and sadness. “Loki…”
The moment was interrupted by Thor as he stumbled over, grabbing one of Loki’s arms. “Ellie! We must assist my brother to his feet!”

Without another word, she helped to pull Loki up. The young prince couldn’t remove his gaze from her. He wanted so desperately to tell her how beautiful she was, and how much joy she brought him, and how when he was drinking with his surprisingly fun drunken brother, all he wanted was her by his side.

“How much have you had to drink?” she asked him, gently cupping his face as his head lolled about.

“This many,” he replied, outstretching his arms and bursting into uncontrollable giggles.

“No, no, no!” Thor cut in, also laughing away as he stretched his massive arms out. “It was at least thiiiiiiiis many!”

“Thor and I drank the hall dry! And we had fun! Can you believe it? He is a big lovely idiot.”

“You are too kind, Loki! And you are a greasy charming sap!”

“Right, I think it’s time you went to bed,” Ellie stated, slinging Loki’s limp arm around her shoulder and wrapping her own arm around his waist. “I’ll help you in.”

Without thinking — although the concept of him being able to think completely coherently with the amount of alcohol in his system was utterly ridiculous — Loki pulled her into a tight embrace. “You are so lovely, Ellie. You are too kind to me.”

“Don’t fret, My Prince. You need a good night’s rest.”

“But I need you,” he all but sobbed, burying his face in the crook of her neck. “You would not come out with us tonight and I missed you.”

“It was unacceptable,” Thor declared, evidently missing his brother’s other admissions. “We leave tomorrow for grand battle and you would not even drink with us!”

“I will drink with the pair of you’s upon your victorious return. Now c’mon, Loki. You’re off to bed.”

“But you’re coming too, right? You won’t leave me alone, will you?”

“I’ll do whatever you wish, My Prince,” she replied gently, feigning professionalism for the sake of Thor’s presence.

“Do you need any help with him?” Thor asked, swaying on his own two feet.

Ellie took one look at him before she shook her head. “I can handle him from here, but thank you.”

“As you wish.” He waved them off as he began to awkwardly bound (well, stumble) down the hall. “Goodnight, my friends! I will have more drinks in your honour!”

Loki paid little attention to his fleeing sibling, his gaze firmly fixed on Ellie beside him. He couldn’t help but notice how lovely she was as she just about managed to open his doors, haul him inside, and then shut them afterwards.

“Where is your guard dog?” Loki queried curiously.
“If you’re askin’ where Kirkjabyr is gone, I told him to return to his family for the evenin’. He’ll leave with the Einherjar tomorrow for Vanaheim; the man deserves a night off from babysittin’ me.”

“That was sweet of you. But then again you are very sweet all the time.”

“Alright,” she sighed, tone a little sharper now that they were alone. “Let’s get you to bed.”

“But I do not want to sleep,” he insisted as she gently sat him down on the edge of his bed. The softness of the surface threw him off for a moment before he steadied himself to meet her eyes again. “I wish to speak with you, darling.”

“I don’t think that’s a good idea,” she murmured and turned to his wardrobe. “Given the amount of alcohol you probably consumed down there. The smell is particularly strong, y’know.”

“I had not meant to get this inebriated,” he admitted, looking at her guiltily as she moved about. “But I wanted to forget.”

“Forget what?”

“How upset you were.” He hesitated as she turned to look back at him. “And your face when I shouted at you.”

There was a tense moment between them while he waited for a response, but she merely looked at the floor and quickly grabbed some of his sleeping clothes. “Here.” She approached the bed and set the garments down next to him “Change into these.”

Even in his state, Loki knew that she was struggling with this situation as much as he was. He didn’t know how to approach it in the right way, even if he desperately wished he could.

As an idea came to mind, he spoke up. “Play that Midgardian music of yours.”

With a surprised expression, she eyed the vinyl player she left behind last night, forgotten after their clash. “Music? At this hour?”

He hiccuped and pointed flippantly to the machine, one eye closed as he tried to focus his vision without much success. “I will change my clothes for you if you merely put on some music for me.”

“If you insist.” She quickly approached the player and noticed the small stack of records he took from her room. “Any specific requests, My Prince?”

“Eh, the one… The one sung by that woman. She talks about…seeing light. Fitz-something? Is that her name?”

“Well, you’re half right,” he heard her mutter under her breath and set the specific record down on the player. He watched in fascination as she carefully placed the needle down on its slowly spinning surface. Soon after, upbeat piano filled his chambers.

His head began to slowly bop back and forth and he did his best to sing some of the words:

“I never cared much for moonlit skies,
I never wink back at fireflies,
But now that the stars are in your eyes,
I'm beginning to see the light.”

“There’s your music,” Ellie said, approaching his seated figure again. “Change, please.”

With an obedient nod, Loki got to work. As it turned out, the many buttons and laces that his clothes required be undone were difficult to manage when the room was spinning. Seeing him struggle with his boots and quietly snickering about the fact that he was a god who couldn’t take off his shoes right now — drunk Loki found this particularly hilarious — she began to assist him. He watched her sadly as she carefully put away each piece of clothing she helped him remove until he was sitting there in his underwear and undershirt. He lifted the shirt above his head and, upon successfully removing it, fell backwards across his duvet. He still sang along with the music in a terribly slurry voice:

“I never went in for afterglow,
Or candlelight on the mistletoe,
But now when you turn the lamp down low,
I'm beginning to see the light.”

“Have I ever told you,” he began, still sprawled out on his bed. “That I understand this song now?”

“C’mon,” Ellie coxed him softly, pointing to his sleeping clothes. “Put those on. And no, you haven’t.”

“Well I do.” He set his gaze on her form, standing in front of him expectantly. “I understand when she says she has seen the light.”

Unimpressed, she crossed her arms over her chest. “Is that so?”

“Yes!” he insisted and tried to sit up but struggled on his stupidly sinky bed. “By the Norns! This duvet is a deathtrap!”

“Jesus, Loki…” Ellie quickly grasped one of his flailing arms and pulled him up with a grunt.

With her assistance, he steadied himself in a seated position once again, but still held on to her hand. He grasped it in both of his, stroking his fingers over her soft skin with a sullen expression. She said nothing and didn’t pull away, so he took it as a sign to go on. Before he knew what was happening, honest words spilled from his mouth. “Sometimes, despite my nickname, I struggle to express how I feel when it is important. I could lie my way out of anything, but when it comes to speaking about genuine feelings, I am a failure. But I think with some liquid courage and this helpful Midgardian tune, I might be able to try.”

She gave his hands a soft squeeze. “Loki, you’ve had a lot to drink; I don’t think we should talk ’bout this right now.”
“Please,” he implored, finally looking up into her eyes in earnest. How he loved her eyes... They brought him comfort he felt he didn’t deserve. “I may be intoxicated, but it does not mean that my words are untrue. I would not lie to you, my darling girl. I want to talk about this. I need to tell you how I feel about you before I lose my courage.

“Ellie, I am so sorry for how I spoke to you yesterday. You did not deserve any of my ill-treatment for merely stating your feelings. You should be able to talk to me about anything, but I...but I was a coward because, truth be told, I have never heard someone say that they love me, not in that way. Nor have I felt that way for someone else. And it did not matter that I realised my feelings for you some time ago — I did not know how to say them aloud. I was...afraid. So I pushed you away instead of telling you that...that I-I, that I fell for you long ago, Ellie, and that I have not felt this way about someone before you, and that I have fallen in love with you because you are, to me, the most beautiful and precious thing in the Nine Realms. I cannot imagine not having you by my side. Today was deplorable because I remembered what it was like to not have you in my company. You are my lover as well as my friend, and I could not bear to be without you. I am so sorry for the pain that I caused you, and I will apologise for it a hundred times over if that is what it will take for you to forgive me. And, if you are unsure as to whether you can trust my admission, I will tell you that I love you everyday until I no longer possess the ability to speak. Please forgive me, love. Please believe me when I say I love you.”

When Ellie’s blue eyes began to well and her lips trembled, Loki’s shoulders dropped in resignation. Without any hesitation, he pulled her in to straddle his lap and heaved a sigh as he wrapped her up in his arms. Feeling her embracing him in response as a sob shook her body nearly sent him over the edge.

“Please don’t cry,” he whispered, clutching her like she might disappear. “Please don’t cry. I cannot bear to upset you further.”

“I love you, Loki,” she wept, her voice muffled as she buried her face in the crook of his neck. “I’m sorry I ignored you. I shouldn’t’ve done that. I should’ve just talked to you ’bout everythin’ that happened.”

“You did nothing wrong,” he insisted and rocked her in his arms. “I was at fault, so do not apologise.”

“Can we please promise to talk to each other about our fears? If we avoid them, we can’t solve them. I promise I’ll try to do so.”

“As will I. I have much to learn from you, and I promise to do it as best I can.”

He could feel her tears wetting the bare skin of his shoulder and his gut twisted for a multitude of reasons. In that moment, Loki could not contain all of his emotions. He was joyous to hear Ellie say she loved him, he was relieved knowing that she now heard how he felt about her, but he was also hurt to see her so perturbed. He never wanted to be the cause of this sadness ever again. He simply would not. Without thinking, he lay back on the bed, still clutching her body in his arms and ushering them so that their heads lay against his pillows, his sleeping clothes on the duvet long forgotten. They remained there in silence for a long time, simply enjoying each other’s presence and the comfort of finally knowing where they stood. The situation had sobered him up considerably, but he waited until her crying slowed before he spoke again.

“Sleep here with me tonight,” he all but begged, lightly stroking her hair. “Please.”

“No need to say please,” she hushed him, cupping his cheek as her own tears ceased falling. “I couldn’t leave now if I tried. Just let me get outta these clothes.”
He nodded and slowly released her from his firm hold. He watched from his spot on the bed as she hurriedly shrugged off her dress until she was only in her undergarments. Rushing across the room, she shut off the record player, then grabbed two glasses of water which she set down on the drawer next to his bed.

“You'll need those in the mornin’,” she explained and climbed on to the bed. “For the headache.”

He chuckled and pushed back the covers. “I will have no such thing.”

“Your head will be hoppin’ tomorrow.”

“My head has never felt this calm and sure before.” Safely under the duvet, he pulled her into his arms. “If I have a headache in the morning then so be it; I deserve it after the way I treated you.”

“No more ill feelin’s,” Ellie stated, languidly cuddling into him. “We’re okay.”

He kissed the top of her head in the dim light. “We are?”

“Of course. You’re not the only one who can’t bear the thought of not bein’ together.”

Seeing no reason to put it off any longer, he leaned down and placed a soft kiss on her wet lips, the happiness inside him insisting that he do so. The relief that came with her kissing him back nearly had his eyes welling up all over again. He could probably blame his unusual outburst of emotion on the alcohol, or the lack of sleep he had the night before, but Loki knew that the cause of his ardour was a young Midgardian woman that was kind and reasonable enough to listen to his pleas and apologies.

That night, they would hold each other like their lives depended on it. And yet, he was quickly realising that his actually did. She had become everything.

With a wave of his hand and some simple magic, Loki extinguished the bedroom lights and slept soundly in the comfort of Ellie’s secure embrace.
The following morning, Loki’s head was pounding. Or hoppin’, as Ellie previously stated. He could hear her distantly calling his name, but he groaned in response, burying himself further into…whatever he lay upon.

“Loki,” Ellie’s voice whispered from above him. “You have’ta get up.”

“No,” he whined, wrapping his arms tighter around her body. “I do not want to.”

“I know you don’t want’a, but you kinda have’ta. You have an hour before it’s dawn and then you have to go to Vanaheim with the Einherjar.”

He grumbled. His head was throbbing. “But my head…”

“You’ll be okay,” she murmured and began to lightly stroke his hair. “I’ve got you. Do you want me to help relieve your headache with magic?”

“If you would be so kind, love.” He lay there patiently, head resting on her chest and enjoying the soothing motions of her breathing up and down. With her hands carefully cupping the top of his head, he listened as she began to murmur some incantations he had previously taught her. After a few minutes, Loki felt his headache begin to slowly dwindle as the healing rune took effect. Ellie’s level of seiðr was still quite low — she could just about manage to heal tiny wounds or help ease severe ones — but he was incredibly thankful for her assistance. He could have done it himself in no time at all, but there was something very intimate and comforting about having her ease his pain.

“Is that better?” she asked and placed a kiss on his head.
He turned his head so that he could look up at her sleepy face. “Yes. It feels much better. Thank you, little one.”

She smiled back at him. “I’m glad I could help, Loki. It’s just a shame that you have’ta go to Vanaheim.”

“I would rather I did not have to,” he admitted and lifted himself up with his hands. Now they were at eye level with him on top of her. “But hopefully I will not be away for too long. I may have only woken up next to you once, but I do not think I could wake up alone again.”

“This is new for me too, but I’ll admit I could definitely get used to it. Even if you are a needy drunk.”

He groaned and hung his head. “I am not that bad—”

“Are you messin’? Have you forgotten how your legs wouldn’t work and I had to help to t’bed?”

“Oh, shut up.”

“No, it was quite fun and I hope I get to see you in that state again. You couldn’t even get your boots off on your own! You’re lucky you’re so handsome.”

“And you are lucky that I love you.” He raised his head back up and smiled at her. “I hope you know I meant what I said.”

“I know,” she assured him. “And you know I love you too.”

“I can definitely get used to hearing that as well.” Without further hesitation, he leaned in and captured her lips in a soft kiss. Loki could not recall a time when he felt this way. Never before had the embrace of another been so comforting. Thor had — amazingly — been right. This certainly felt worth hanging on to. Carefully, he lay himself atop her and subtly settled himself between her legs. She didn’t fight him, nor did she stop reciprocating when he slid his tongue into her mouth. He felt her fingers delicately trail down his bare chest, and bucked his hips slightly in response.

The movement made her moan into his mouth unabashedly before she broke the kiss and met his eyes. Evidently, she had felt his morning arousal rub against her through the fabric of their underclothes.

“It would seem that you’re more than awake now,” she giggled, lips lightly brushing against his as she spoke.

He grinned deviously at her and nipped at her bottom lip. “Can you blame me when you are the first sight I beheld as I woke?”

“You are a silver-tongued devil,” she muttered and began to slide her hands down his sides. “And you will be the death of me.”

“I am afraid you will be taking me with you, love.”

“Then we’ll go out with a bang, shall we?”

He let out a surprised hiss as her hands clutched at his covered rear, nails slightly biting through the material. If there was any blood left in his body, it had all flown down south. “I like how you think.”
“Then maybe this time you will allow me to touch you?” She nuzzled his nose lightly, hopeful eyes meeting his. “The other night I never got the opportunity to do so.”

“How could I ever deny you a request such as that?” Carefully, he rolled on to his side and cupped her cheek. “You can do whatever you want with me.”

She nodded, brought his hand to her lips and placed a tender kiss on his wrist. “Could you show me what to do? I mean, I have an idea, but tellin’ me what you like would be helpful.”

“Oh, fuck,” he whispered, her mouth making him shiver.

“How’s that?” she asked quietly and kissed his skin harder.

“Wonderful. Don’t stop, my darling girl.”

Before he could stop himself, he pulled the clothes that shielded her top half up to reveal her naked chest. His head lowered to her chest and his lips encased the nipple of the breast that he still gripped in his hand. She hissed in surprise and pulled him harder as a result, causing him to groan loudly, a noise that made her whole body shiver beside him. Right now, the change in pace made him get even harder.

“C-can you do me a favour?” she managed to get out, her voice wavering from his skilled tongue.

“How can I deny you with what you are doing to me right now?” he growled as his length throbbed in her hand.

“It’s embarrassin’,” she insisted with a blush.

“Tell me, please.”

“Could you call me a good girl?” When he gave her a curious look, she felt like an explanation
was necessary. “It’s just… I found it very arousing when you called me that the last time. You
don’t need’ta say it all the time, just the odd time.”

“Of course,” he said grinning. “Could you pull me faster?”

Instead of a verbal response, she began to do just as he requested and his body shuddered in
rapture. His hips bucked again and he couldn’t ignore the swell of pride at the sight of her
grinning and making him so pliant.

“That’s it,” he encouraged desperately as he neared his release. “Good girl… Yes, yes… That’s
— ah! Ellie, I’m close.”

As she ran her thumb over the head of his length, he hissed and grabbed her wrist.

“What’s wrong?” she asked, eyes wide. “Did I hurt you?”

“No, definitely not,” he insisted. “But I really do not wish to finish on your hand.” When she
looked at him in confusion, he went on. “You do not have to do anything that makes you
uncomfortable, but I would love to finish in your mouth instead.”

“Really?” she asked, not in disgust thankfully. “You want me to pleasure you with my mouth?”

He nodded with a smile. “That would be exceptional, yes. And I, of course, will return the
favour.”

Surprising him, she nodded and sent him a rather beautiful smile. “That sounds fair to me! If you
love it, then I’ll give it a go.”

Loki nearly died as she agreed and let out a relieved sigh. “Thank the gods. You are truly
extraordinary.”

His excitement reached new heights as he lay flat on his back and pulled her to kneel between his
spread legs. Still holding him tightly, Ellie met his gaze with a mischievous grin as he assured her
he would instruct her on how to properly please him. Quite frankly, he was already getting off on
how eager she was despite her inexperience.

“So,” she began, crouching over him. “What do I do?”

“Use your hand like you did before,” he instructed. “And take me in your mouth. Hollow your
cheeks and just suck, basically. Use your tongue on the head as well — when that is done right, it
feels amazing.”

She smirked at him as she dipped her head down. “If it feels that good for you, I’ll have’ta do this
more often.”

He growled lowly as she dived right in, licking a strip from the base to the head. He shivered
uncontrollably at the sensation of her tongue on him and quickly slid a hand into her hair. He
brushed it off her face, eager to watch as she lapped at the head. A sigh escaped him as their eyes
met; the hint of mischief in hers sending a thrill through him. If this was something she intended
on doing more frequently, he worried he may possibly die. He struggled to control his hips when
she took the length of him in her hot mouth, throwing his head back as a grunt rose up in his
throat. Carefully he guided her head until she was slowly bobbing up and down, twisting him with
her hand as she went. She seemed to be assessing him carefully, watching him struggle to stop his
body writhing as she sucked him harder. He gnawed on his bottom lip as he realised she was
getting off on seeing him like this; being in control. Giving up on keeping still, he gently began to
thrust into her mouth, careful not to push her too far. Trying his damnedest to remain calm — how
can I do so when her tongue is driving me mad? — he let out a groan as she pulled off him and stroked him slowly. She did this several times, driving him near mad while resting her jaw, locking eyes with him each time. By now, his chest was pumping hard with laboured breaths. With a hoarse voice, he implored for more, guiding her head back to take him in again. The heavy sigh that escaped him when he felt the familiar heat again and the moan that came from her nearly tipped him over the edge.

“Ellie,” he rasped, letting go of her hair. “If you do not want my release on your tongue, you should pull away now.”

She blatantly ignored him and instead picked up the pace until he growled and came, pumping into her mouth with stuttering hips. His head fell back against the pillow as he cursed aloud, breathing heavily as he felt Ellie gently pull away. With one arm slung over his face, he blindly reached out with the other until he felt her grab his hand. He pulled her into a firm embrace as he got his breath back, burying his face in her neck with a sigh.

“Was that good?” she chuckled, with an air of nervousness in her tone.

He pulled back to cup her face in his hands. “You were far better than good for a first try. I think you may have been judging yourself too harshly earlier. That was exceptional.”

“Oh, thank the Norns,” she sighed, clearly relieved. “It’s kinda tirin’ on your mouth, but worth it when I get to see you turn into such a mess.”

“It will hurt your jaw less the more we practice, love,” he murmured suggestively. “We have plenty of time for you to learn.” He quickly pulled her into a hard kiss. Bypassing formalities, he shoved his tongue into her mouth and was met with the taste of his own release, a sensation so erotic that he snarled and flipped her on to her back. Her expression implied that she had not been expecting the sudden shift, but he merely nipped at her lip and whispered into her ear. “Would you allow me to return the favour?”

She stared back at him in surprise. “Uh, you want to do that to me?”

“Well, yes,” he answered with a grin, lightly running his hands up her bare sides. “I have been dying to get my head between your legs since tasting you on my fingers.”

“Oh.”

“Oh?”

“Oh, wow.”

He chuckled at that and began placing open mouthed kisses on her neck. “Your innocence is quite endearing. Say the word, and we will stop.”

Continuing with his movements and tracing his tongue along her collarbones, he felt her wrap a hand around his bicep. “No, it’s grand. I’d like to…try it.”

Meeting her gaze, he saw no hesitance, but asked anyway. “Are you sure?”

She nodded and sent him a wry grin. “It’s only fair.”

He smirked back and began to slide down her body. “Oh, it certainly is.”

Loki briefly broke Ellie’s gaze as he kissed his way down her covered chest, the fabric having slipped back down as she went down on him. Her body was once again overtaken by little
shudders as he mouthed at her breasts through the fabric of her undergarments.

“Take this off,” he ordered gently, knowing she wasn’t entirely confident in herself, and doing his best to relax her.

Thankfully she did as asked and shed the article with less reluctance than before. As soon as she did, he divided his attention between them; kissing, biting, and sucking until she was writhing beneath him. He continued his descent, kissing her stomach and hips for a while until he reached the hem of her underwear. Sensing her anxiety, he made a show of looking at her and began to kiss her through the cloth. She hissed in response, hips moving up of their own accord. Eager to tease her, he turned his attention to kissing and licking the inside of her thighs.

When she whined in response, he chuckled and bit down slightly. “Impatient?”

“You already know the answer to that,” she replied, watching him through hooded lids. “Can I put my hand in your hair?”

“No need to ask,” he assured her and turned his focus back to the task at hand. “I suppose I should avoid keeping you waiting any longer.”

He delicately peeled her underwear down her legs and dropped them on the duvet. He noticed her slight shift in confidence now fully bare to him, but he leaned up and kissed her deeply before assuring her that she was quite a sight to behold. The thankful smile she sent him was enough to assure him he could continue. Keeping her on edge, he turned his attention back to her breasts, groping one with his hand while he sucked on the other. He rolled her nipple between his fingers until she let out a ragged moan. Settled between her legs, he thrust against her, careful to avoid any penetration, but the whimpering the contact resulted in made it hard to resist. Alas, Ellie would not be rushed, and he had no issue with taking his time.

He rubbed against her again, feeling her fingers tighten in his hair as the friction built. The whispers that escaped her only pushed him on.

“Does that feel good?” he rasped and repeated the movement. “Do you like that?”

She nodded and kissed him desperately as he picked up the pace. As soon as he felt her wetness coating his freshly hard length, he slid down her body again. Wrapping both arms around her thighs, he roughly pulled her down the bed until her rear sat perched on the edge and he kneeled on the floor between her legs. He started slowly, making sure that she could feel his breath on her sex before he began, so that she could mentally picture what was about to happen. Bringing his tongue to her nub, he began tracing circles lightly over it, making sure his pace was calm. Her breath hitched at the contact, causing him to laugh but not break his movements. Instead, he began to languidly run a finger along her folds, gathering the arousal that was seeping from her. He experimentally flicked his tongue and, upon noticing how to caused her to mewl without any shame, he repeated it for several minutes until she was wet enough to slide his fingers inside. As he moved his fingers upwards and slowly raked them backwards, a small cry of his name came from her and made him dizzy. Upon seeing the familiar sudden arch of her back, he knew he had found the sought after spot.

“Oh, fuck. Loki—”

Without hesitation, he buried his face between her legs, licking down until he met his own fingers, then moved back upwards and sucked hard. A breathless moan and a tug on his already ruined locks was enough to assure him that he needed to keep going, so he did, kissing and sucking hard as his fingers pressed against her inner walls. They clenched around the flexing digits, assuring him that her climax was near. With his free hand, he reached up to happily grab at her neglected
Unwilling to pull away now, he pressed on until she came hard, moaning a few strangled curses along with his name. He delighted in watching her come undone, a sense of pride welling within him at the sight of her throwing her head backwards in ecstasy. He removed his fingers from her only to replace them with his tongue, eagerly lapping and enjoying the taste of her orgasm. As her breathing died down and her body began to slowly relax, he kissed her thighs and eased her through the dying sensation.

He swiftly climbed atop her again, wrapping his arms around her and placing an affectionate kiss on her forehead. “How was that?”

“Gimme a minute,” she breathed roughly, eyes firmly shut. “Need a sec.”

“Take your time.” He smiled as he brushed the hair from her face as she struggled to calm her breathing. “I am sure your brain needs a moment to gather itself.”

“You’re so arrogant, but after that I can’t blame you.”

“I did assure you that I was not ‘all talk’, as you say.”

“I never doubted you,” she assured him and slowly opened eyes to look up as he hovered over her. “That was…somethin’ else. I know I’m new to this, but I don’t really have the words right now.”

“Exceptional, outstanding, mind-numbingly amazing, the best you have ever had.” He shrugged with a confident smirk. “Any of those would do.”

“I’ll just pick all of the above.”

“Oh, you are too kind.” He kissed her lips, her movements sloppy in the aftermath of their activities. As they parted, he let out a groan. “Why did Vanaheim have to be fucking overrun with Marauders now of all times?”

“I know, it’s shit. But look, you’ll be back in no time.”

“Hopefully. I will be required to remain formal later when I take my leave, but at least I can give you a proper goodbye now.”

“Don’t say it like that. It’s not an indefinite goodbye.”

“I suppose it is more of a ‘I will see you soon’ instead of a ‘goodbye’, as you Midgardians say.”

“I think that’s the cheesiest thing I’ve ever heard you say,” she snickered in delight. “I’m lovin’ this sappy side of you, Loki.”

“I am no more sappy than you are, Ellie. Look, I promise that I will do everything within my power to hurry it along and return to you hastily, especially now that I know you enjoy going down on me.”

She rolled her eyes as she laced her fingers through the hand that he let rest on her stomach. “I’m assuming you mean the oral sex? You’re a simple man, Loki.”

“Not a man; I am a god. God of Mischief and God of Making Ellie Come Violently, it would seem.”

The young woman burst out laughing at his statement, and gave his shoulder a light shove. “You are filthy! Absolutely disgraceful!”
“If I did not have to go off to war,” he began, quickly grabbing her wrists and pinning them above her head. “I would show you exactly how filthy I can be.”

She gulped below him, but he was quick to spot the subtle twinkle of mischief in her eyes. “Alas, it’s nearly dawn.”

“Damn. I guess I lost track of time while I was between your legs.”

“Filth!” she cried, wearing the most shocked yet amused expression Loki had ever witnessed.

While he was relishing in teasing her, he certainly wasn’t expecting the pillow that was launched at his head.

* * *

Later that morning on the Bifröst, Loki stood alongside his father and brother as they prepared to leave with the Einherjar. He and Thor exchanged goodbyes with Frigga, each embracing her and promising to keep the other safe. Odin, having already said goodbye to his queen, sat atop Sleipnir, watching his sons with pride as they assured her they would be home soon. A stablehand hastily arrived, leading the princes’ horses along with him. Thor grinned delightedly at the sight of Gullfaxi, and affectionately stroked his golden mane. Loki took the reigns of his own horse, Skeidbrimir, and lightly ran his hand down his nose. As Thor turned to speak with the Warriors Three and Lady Sif, the youngest Odinson focused his attention solely on his stallion, making sure that all the harnesses and saddles were properly fitted. The people around him bustled around, but the calling of his name by a familiar voice grabbed his attention.

He turned and was met with Ellie carrying his helmet. “I think you might need this for later.”

“Thank you, little one,” he said casually and took it from her. “It would be a bad idea to leave without it.”

“Of course.”

He placed it on his head, enjoying the security he felt when wearing it again. He looked at her for approval. “Well? Do I look menacing?”

She shrugged. “I don’t know if that’s the word I would choose, My Prince.”

“Oh, really?”

She simply winked at him and whispered. “Really. Just promise to wear the helmet when you come home after all the fightin’.”

He looked at her in mild surprise, immediately catching the double entendre. “I never knew you were so fond of the helmet.”

“C’mon. With horns like that, can you blame me?”

“I have created a monster.”

She laughed at his mock-disgust before smiling sadly at him. “Come home safe, okay?”
“You have my word,” he assured her and bowed slightly, knowing that they must be formal to avoid suspicion. He would have to wait to hold her again, even if the thought of doing so drove him mad.

As Thor came lumbering over to say goodbye to Ellie, Loki pulled himself up on to his horse and watched the exchange from atop the tall animal.

“You will watch over our mother while we are gone,” Thor requested and ruffled the handmaiden’s hair. “Won’t you, little Ellie?”

“Of course, Prince Thor. Just assure us that you’ll come back safe and sound, and that you’ll look out for each other.”

“Of course we will! You have my word. Together, my brother and I are a force to be reckoned with!”

Loki couldn’t help but smile at Thor’s excitement, but merely remained quiet as he watched him hoist himself on to Gullfaxi. Rainger appeared with Thor’s helmet in hand, and passed it to him before briefly wishing him luck in his travels. When he wished Loki the same, the Trickster hid his territorial urges behind a smile. He briefly caught Ellie’s gaze and could tell that she knew exactly what he was thinking beneath the fake facade. The two hand servants retreated to the sidelines where Frigga stood calmly. Loki gave her a small wave and let his gaze linger briefly on Ellie as Skeidbrimir followed his orders and began to slowly trot after Odin and Thor. Together, the three of them would lead the forces down the Bifröst and onwards to Vanaheim. After all goodbyes were exchanged, they took their leave. Before Loki was a great distance away, he caught the sound of his mother’s voice from behind.

“Ellie, I would have a word with you, if you do not mind.”

He quickly turned his head to see Frigga looking at the young woman intently.

Ellie’s eyes briefly flitted to meet his gaze before she turned her attention back to the Allmother. “Of course, My Queen. May I ask why you seek my council?”

“I think you and I would both rather we discuss it in private.” She gestured towards the palace with a friendly smile. “Shall we?”

As they walked away from the travelling forces, Loki turned his attention back to the task ahead. As to what his mother wished to speak with Ellie about, he was unsure, but he hoped it would be nothing detrimental now that he could not be there to defend her. He urged Skeidbrimir onward as they settled into a trot, leaving Asgard with a heavier weight on his shoulders than originally thought.
Ambush

Chapter Summary

Frigga and Ellie have an interesting conversation while Loki copes with being away from his beloved for an extended period of time.

Playlist (https://spoti.fi/2FpATiF): “Any Other Name” — Thomas Newman, “I'm Like a Lawyer with the Way I'm Always Trying to Get You Off (Me & You)” — Fall Out Boy, “Black Out Days” — Phantogram

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ellie had not thought she would be sitting the the private chambers of the Allfather and Allmother after seeing Loki off. And yet, here she was, sitting at a table and resisting the urge to nervously wring her hands. She would be lying if she said she wasn’t panicking over the possibility of Frigga knowing exactly what she was doing with her son.

That would be an insanely awkward conversation, given the goin’s on in his bed this morning...

“Tea?” Frigga asked her, cutting through her thoughts.

Ellie nodded calmly. “Yes, please. Do you want me to—?”

“Not at all,” she hushed her, pouring two cups of tea. “I can manage just fine. There is nothing formal about this conversation, little one. It is merely a chat.”

“Merely a chat,” Ellie repeated with a small smile, watching the Allmother take a seat across from her. “Can I ask as to what we’re chattin’ about?”

Frigga paused for a moment, focusing her attention on putting some milk in their cups. While the silence wasn’t doing Ellie’s nerves any favours, she kept her mouth shut and waited for her to start talking.

“Fourteen years ago,” Frigga began. “I brought you here after finding you on Midgard and have never regretted the decision for a moment — not that any parent would if they were a decent person. I know that there have been occasions where your time here has been difficult, but you have grown into your own, and I hope you know that having you on Asgard has been a pleasure. No matter what anyone may say to you, this is your home and you are always welcome here.”

“Thank you, My Queen. Although I acknowledge that there’ve been some difficult days, especially at first, I’ve met some great people who’ve made me feel more than welcome here.”

She grinned at that, holding her cup in her hands. “I’m glad. I think you have settled into your role here in the palace exceptionally and it is good that you have made some friends along the way.”

“Oh, yeah,” Ellie agreed and mimicked her movements by wrapping her hands around her hot cup. “I’m eternally grateful for the friends I’ve made here. They have made my life far more bearable than it could’ve been otherwise. Not only that, but they have been so helpful in terms of
“I think it is safe to say that you are better than merely **good**. After all, you are now the personal handmaiden to a prince.”

Ellie chuckled lightly, masking her unease at the mention of Loki. With a light shrug, she raised her cup to her lips. “I suppose I can’t argue with that.”

“He requested you personally for the position.”

“He did briefly mention that. I was humbled to accept.”

“And how are you finding it? I know Loki is not an easy one to work under.”

Ellie had to suppress the very vivid image of being under Loki earlier in the more literal sense. “He is very particular, I'll admit, but he’s been nothin’ but fair to me.”

“I am glad,” Frigga said with a smile. “The hand servants before Radburn were not his biggest fan. They found him tough to please.”

The young woman shrugged and raised her cup to her lips. “He seems t’be quite reasonable once you listen to what he asks.”

“That is a logical way to look at it,” she agreed, and met her gaze. “I am sure it also helps that he is in love with you.”

Ellie froze, hot tea already scalding her tongue.

Her eyes met those of the Queen, who wore a calm expression, the hint of a smile on her lips. 

**Oh, shit.**

“I’m sorry?” she asked after swallowing the drink. She knew she had to stay calm. There was a reason as to why their relationship was a secret, and she had learned how to lie from none other than the God of Lies himself. And yet, she knew that she had little hope convincing Frigga otherwise. For now, she would carefully assess and play dumb.

The Allmother’s tone was the epitome of casual, as if they were not talking about love declarations and secret feelings. “Loki is in love with you, of course. And it is simply wonderful considering you are in love with him too.”

**Oh, fuck.**

“Allmother, I don’t know what you mean—”

Frigga laughed, taking another sip of her tea. “Come now, Ellie. You know, my son may be a master of lying, but I am one of the few people in the Nine Realms able to recognise his honeyed words. I can see them in you now, so you are better off being honest with me.”

Ellie hesitated, pulse quickening knowing that there was no way out of this. It felt like silence consumed the room for the longest time. She could only stare in disbelief as the Queen patiently waited for a response while thoroughly enjoying her tea. It didn’t matter if she incessantly denied the claim; Frigga knew. “How long have you known?”

Another pleasant laugh. “Probably longer than you both. It seemed like I realised before you two began courting.”
Is there anythin’ she doesn’t fuckin’ know?

“But we were careful—”

“That you were,” she concurred. “I cannot fault you both for the effort put into concealing your relationship, considering no one else has a notion of its existence, but I could see it quite clearly.”

Ellie was baffled. Truly baffled at this confession. “How?”

“It is quite obvious if you know what love looks like. It is not all physical or hushed confessions of adoration; it was clear in how you treated and cared for one another. From the very beginning you latched on to him, and never strayed even when others found Loki to be overbearing or too intense. You saw the positive qualities he had to offer and embraced them. You confided in him and treated him as an equal as opposed to ‘Thor’s younger brother’. Most of all, you trusted him.

“He saw similarities in you as well, knowing that it would be hard for you to adjust here as an outsider. So he stayed by your side when in harms way, and taught you how to defend yourself when you asked for assistance. All these things were clear to me, but it was also too obvious when you were in a room together. Even if it was at a feast of ball, you always looked for each other across the crowds. I have never seen my son look at someone in such a manner, and given your young age, I imagine you have not looked at another similarly either. Do not be ashamed, little one. There is nothing to be ashamed about.”

“You were not meant to find out,” Ellie mumbled, hanging her head. “I’m assumin’ you haven’t had this discussion with him?”

She shook her head. “I wished to speak with you first. That, and I would also rather let him keep thinking he can lie to me.” She rolled her eyes. “How he ever thought he could successfully fool his own mother is beyond me.” Frigga looked at her for a moment and added. “You can relax, Ellie. Why are you so tense?”

“Are you goin’ to tell the Allfather?” she asked. “Because his disapproval was the reason we kept our relationship secret in the first place. He didn’t even like the fact we were friends.”

“I can assure you that my knowledge of your relationship will be kept between you and I. The reason I spoke with you now is because if, in the time Loki is away, you miss him greatly, know that I am here if you need to vent or talk about it. I know you cannot go to your friends about it for obvious reasons, so know that I am here if you need me.”

“Oh.” Ellie sat there for a moment, suddenly happier that they had been figured out. She had never considered the possibility of having someone to talk to in Loki’s absence. She could never tell Fen or Sevda about how much she missed him, but at least Frigga would be there to acknowledge her feelings. “I wasn’t expectin’ that, but I do appreciate it. Bein’ able to talk to you would make his absence easier to manage. Thank you.”

“No need for thanks. Know that your secret is safe with me. I’m glad you have found each other. You both deserve happiness.” She paused for a moment before continuing. “I know that sometimes Loki feels as though he is not Thor’s equal. It breaks my heart knowing that he questions his own worth. I think he sometimes does not realise that we truly do love and care for him — we are his family, how could we not love him? I hope that you have helped him realise that he is more than he thinks he is. Maybe if he sees how worthy he is in your eyes, he will realise how short he has been selling himself. He is certainly not without flaws — as is the case with everyone — but I hope he won’t let his insecurities prevent you from being happy together.”

Ellie nodded in understanding. “Thankfully we’re both gettin’ better at communication, so right
now we’re in a good place. Hopefully it stays that way.”

“Hopefully. But while I may worry over my own son, I hope you know that he really does love you, Ellie. I can see it in him.”

“I do believe him when he tells me of his feelings,” she admitted. “There’s not doubt in my mind there. But I am more worried about…well, Odin, if you must know.”

“What about him exactly?”

Although she hesitated, Ellie knew she could trust Frigga not to spread the information she was sharing. “If he was to find out about my relationship with a Prince of Asgard, I do not think he would allow it to continue. When you look at the whole picture, I’m still but a mortal in a realm of gods. It was somethin’ that I overlooked when I agreed to court Loki, but it is a constant naggin’ in the back of my mind. If he were to demand we cut all ties, how could we go against the order of the Allfather?”

“While your worries are valid,” Frigga began slowly. “Please know that if you find yourself in such a position, I will do everything in my power to hopefully convince my husband otherwise. While Odin may have the priorities of a king, I have the priorities of a mother, and my son’s happiness is my main concern. As is yours, might I add.”

For a moment, all the younger woman could do was look at her in surprise. There was no way she had expected any support from the Queen. Sure, Frigga was a great woman, but knowingly disagreeing with her King for the sake of their happiness was a shock to the system. “Thank you, My Queen. I know you told me thank you’s weren’t necessary, but I need to assure you how important that would be to me. I’m sure Loki would feel the same way.”

“He can be a handful sometimes,” she said with a slight laugh. “But I am delighting in seeing another woman in his life. I am still baffled that that boy thought he could lie to me, but if it was for your sake, then how could I fault him for trying?”

“I would do the same for him, I’ll admit.”

“Of course you would, but that is no surprise, not when you feel that way about another.”

“It’s a new and scary feelin’,” Ellie pondered, lightly tracing the rim of her cup. “But I’m glad that I fell for him. As cheesy as it sounds, he makes it worth the risk.” She momentarily cringed and hung her head. “Ugh, that was painful… Did I really just say that out loud?”

“That you did, but who am I to judge? I understand, trust me.” With a soft smile, Frigga gave her hand a squeeze and then reached for a nearby deck of cards sitting on the edge of the table. “Now, Sevda informed me that your card skills are constantly improving. Let’s test that, shall we?”

Ellie grinned at the casual gesture, appreciating how the atmosphere instantly changed with it. She watched as the Queen drew them a hand each. Taking it happily, they settled into a competitive game. A new ease fell over the young woman, suddenly feeling a lot less worried after Loki’s departure with the addition of a trustworthy confidante.

* * *

A month.
A solid month Loki had spent on Vanaheim helping to solve the Marauder crisis. He knew it wasn’t going to be solved overnight, but the time away from home and Ellie was beginning to grate him. He was kept busy, that much was certain, but his mind drifted at night when the Asgardian forces took their rest. Tonight, however, the Odinson brothers readied themselves to battle once more. Odin was currently arranging a smaller group of forces to take out the last of the Marauders, the remainder of their raiders dwindled down from constant attacks. Thor and Loki were tucked away in one of the royal tents as they gathered their weapons and armour, waiting to meet with their father and be told what the plan was.

“Tell me, brother,” Thor said, twirling Mjölnir in his grasp. “Did you speak with your secret beloved?”

Loki hesitated as he strapped on his vambraces. “Say it louder. I don’t think Mother heard you back on Asgard.”

The God of Thunder actually held up a hand. “My apologies. I will keep my voice down, but tell me, have you?”

“I did,” he replied with a nod. “And she forgave my crass words after receiving a well-deserved apology.”

“By Odin! That is wonderful.” He bound across the tent and pulled his younger sibling into a crushing hug. “I am glad she accepted your apology and I am so happy for you!”

“Alright,” Loki grumbled, awkwardly patting his back. “You can get off me now.”

Thor released him before laying a firm hand on the back of his neck. “You are practically grinning at the thought of her! It is amazing and slightly frightening to see.”

The Trickster waved him off, but couldn’t help smiling. “Alright, alright. Enough.”

“Never! So, does this mean I will get to meet her?”

Loki was quick to shoot him down. “Not a chance!”

“But why?” Thor whined, face having fallen completely. “I need to meet this woman who is seemingly more patient than anyone else in the Nine Realms! She sounds wonderful.”

“That she is,” Loki confirmed and turned back to grab his cape. “And meet her you shan’t.”

“You are cruel, brother,” Thor whinged, mirroring his actions. “Are you afraid I will steal her away?”

While the comment was said in jest — hopefully — Loki still sent Thor a very genuine scowl in response.

Immediately, the older son’s smile fell. “Alright, not a fan of jesting, I see.”

“Not about her.”

“I gathered. All joking aside, if she truly loves you, I doubt she has eyes for any other.”

Loki said nothing in response, but looked at his sibling briefly to let him know he at least acknowledged the statement.

“For what it’s worth,” Thor began as he headed towards the tent’s entrance. “I hope I get to meet
Loki stood gazing at the spot for a moment of two, surprised by the unusually serious tone with which his brother had spoken. He had no idea whether someday he could tell Thor that Ellie was the woman he was so eager to meet. Given the circumstances, he doubted it would ever happen. If Thor ever found out, then Odin and Frigga would be next to hear the news. Then, they would have to kiss their relationship goodbye if Odin had his way. With a heavy sigh, he steadied himself. Quickly grabbing his knives, he headed after Thor, knowing that the sooner they got rid of these Marauders, the sooner he could return to her.

As it turned out, disposing of the last of the Marauders was manageable with their dwindled numbers. Together, with his sons and the formidable Einherjar forces, Odin killed the remainder and pushed what survivors there were out of Vanahem. Thor and Loki survived mostly unscathed, bar a few cuts and bruises. Thankfully, the courageous actions of the Asgardians helped to somewhat ease the political tension between Vanahem and Asgard. The land’s rulers were grateful for the assistance and gave their genuine thanks when meeting Odin in the company of his sons. They were invited to a celebratory feast the following day, a gesture their hosts hoped would accurately convey their gratitude. Odin humbly agreed to attend before announcing that they would take their leave the day after.

Upon hearing his father’s statement, Thor turned to send his brother a suggestive grin. “Did you hear that? You will only have to wait another day before we return home.”

A very genuine smile found its way on to Loki’s face. He wouldn’t have to wait much longer before he saw her again.

* * *

A month.

Really? Did it really have’ta be a month?

While Ellie prided herself on her patience, she was nearing the end of it at this rate. She wasn’t sure what she had expected upon hearing Loki would have to attend to matters in Vanahem, but she hoped it wouldn’t take this long. She was aware they had been away for far longer times — lest she forget the whole year he spent on Alfheim during her youth — but now it was far different. She had grown so used to seeing him daily, and now she had nothing.

Given his absence, Ellie had temporarily returned to her previous position as Frigga’s handmaiden. It was fantastic to work alongside her friends again and their presence did help distract her from the mild loneliness she felt. Thankfully, after being assured by the Allmother that it would get easier as time passed, she grew somewhat used to the new arrangements. She spent her free time pouring over seiðr books, focusing most of her attention on learning how to conjure the dagger that continued to plague her. She was getting gradually closer, even if practice left her feeling completely draining. She had hoped she could have learned how to do it before Loki’s return just so she could see his face when she displayed her new ability. When she wasn’t practicing seiðr, she either spent time in Fen and Sevda’s company, or accepted an invite for tea and card games with Frigga. Despite the fact she was currently not serving the absent prince, she still slept in her private quarters next to his, hoping that one of these days she would wake up to discover he had returned. Unfortunately, each morning proved to be no different from the others, and she had to accept that this was not a quick little trip.
One evening, she sat at her desk, writing into the notebook Loki bought for her on Midgard. As per his suggestion, she took to writing her more favourable childhood memories as soon as they returned from their trip all those years ago. That night, she happily wrote about a particular memory that occurred soon after her arrival on Asgard. Of late, she noticed happy memories from her childhood in this realm slipping into her entries along with those she recalled on Midgard with her family. She was content thinking about them and browsing through the ones she had first written down in detail so that she would never forget. While she sat writing, a knock on her door cut through the sound of the record player. She raised her head and halted writing mid-sentence, the interruption having stopped her flow. When she opened the door, she was surprised with who she saw standing on the other side.

“Dagny,” she said, giving the fellow handmaiden a once over. “What brings you here so late?”

The woman smiled at her and explained. “The Allfather and princes have returned.”

Ellie did her best to hold back a hopeful expression and settled for looking at her with wide eyes. “They have? Are they alright?”

“Just now, yes, and they are perfectly fine. Prince Loki has asked for his handmaiden and I was sent by the Allmother to fetch you.”

“Oh! Alright, one moment.” She quickly rushed to grab her overcoat and shrugged it on before exiting her chambers. “Where are they?”

“In the main courtyard,” Dagny replied as they hurried off through the empty halls, Ellie trailing behind slightly. “Come, we will take the shortcut. The prince seemed rather impatient.”

“No surprises there,” she sniggered as they headed towards the clockwise spiralling staircase that would bring them to one of the palace’s side entrances. Their heels clinked on the floors as they descended the stairs quicky. Ellie carefully hid her excitement, aware that Dagny would probably question her if she displayed anything other than casual happiness and relief at her employer’s return. Inside, however, she embraced the delight she felt at the realisation that she would see Loki again after missing him as much as she did. She couldn’t wait to see him again and thankfully unharmed from the fray. She was sure Thor would demand she finally come drink with them now that they had returned victorious. The thought of hearing all about their battles and adventures on Vanheim over some much deserved drinks made her smile. Perhaps Frigga would call for her and Loki and inform him that his lies were practically transparent to her. Most importantly, she simply relished the idea of pulling Loki into a long sought after embrace.

As they hurried down the deserted spiral staircase, Dagny took the lead and was the first to disappear out the door before Ellie reached it a few seconds later.

Somehow, Dagny was nowhere to be seen once the young woman emerged into the cool night air. She didn’t get a second to question how her fellow worker had managed to disappear or turn to see which direction she had left in before searing pain erupted in the back of her head.

The cracking of her skull rang in her ears, but no scream escaped her in the split second she had.

She never had enough time to call for help.

Even her panic was short-lived.

The pain throbbed and burned through her quickly numbing senses.

The surprise attack left her with no chance.
Ellie fell awkwardly to her hands and knees as her world faded to black.

Chapter End Notes

Well, I apologise for being a hoe for angst, but here we are! ⊂(ัーั▽ัーั)⊃
Ellie’s failure to arrive for her usual morning duties was the first red flag that caught the attention of Fen and Sevda.

“Have you seen Ellie?” The latter asked the former as they waited in the kitchens for Frigga’s breakfast to be prepared. Around them the cooks bustled in their usual rushed manner.

“Not since yesterday,” Fen replied as she set up a tray. “Maybe she slept in?”

Sevda shook her head as she filled a jug of water. “That would be extremely out of character for her. I will go check on her.”

“I am sure you will find her still asleep in her chambers,” Fen reasoned. “I will wait here while you fetch the little one.”

Sevda quickly made her way out of the kitchens and hurried through the halls towards Ellie’s chambers. When she arrived, she knocked on the door and waited for a moment. When there was no response, she knocked on the door again and called out.

“Ellie? Are you awake? We need you down in the kitchens.”

She was met with silence and immediately began to feel uneasy. Sevda pressed her ear against the door and could hear no sounds from within. Cautiously, she tried the door and found it unlocked. She stepped inside, called out again, and took in the scene before her. The bed was made and the room seemed to be completely deserted. She wasn’t in the washroom either. She approached the desk to discover a notebook and pen laying there and the record player sitting nearby having apparently played through until the needle reached the inside of the vinyl. This was beyond normal. Where would Ellie run off to without telling her friends? This was her home — where else would she go? She had never been one for avoiding duties either. It usually took a sudden illness to make her take a day off. No longer liking the looks of this, Sevda rushed back to the kitchens.
“Fen, she’s not there,” she announced as she burst through the door.

Fen looked up from the now full tray. “She’s not?”

“No. I searched the room as well because her door was unlocked. I have a bad feeling about this.”

“Where could she have gone off to?” Fen pondered, lifting the tray with a grim expression. “It is not like her to take a day off without informing anyone. Did she tell you she was going anywhere?”

“No,” Sevda insisted. “She has not said a thing. Her bed did not even look like it had been slept in. I don’t like this. The whole situation fills me with unease.”

Fen watched her life-long friend carefully before speaking again. “Maybe we should inform Frigga.”

“I agree. Let us bring her breakfast to her and ask after Ellie on the way in case anyone has seen her.”

Together the handmaidens made their way to the shared chambers of the Allmother and Allfather. Along the way, they asked any servants in passing if they had seen Ellie. The general response was that no one had seen her or spoken with her since yesterday evening. This did nothing to ease the suspicions of the pair and they walked to their destination far quicker than previously intended.

They knocked and waited to be granted entrance as was standard practice, but quickly began to explain what was happening once Frigga greeted them.

“Good morning, ladies,” the Allmother said with a smile, already sitting at her table. “How do you both fare today?”

“We are not well at present, Your Majesty,” Sevda explained, face stern.

Frigga gazed at them both. “Oh?”

“It is Ellie,” Fen went on, clenching her fingers around the handles of the tray as she set it down on the table.

“What about her?” the Queen asked, tone shifting in severity at the mention of her name.

“We cannot find her. She never reported to her duties this morning and Sevda went to see if she had overslept and found her rooms empty.”

“No one has seen or spoken with her since yesterevening,” Sevda added. “By all accounts, she seems to have vanished, My Queen.”

“And she said nothing to either of you? Did not inform you that she would be leaving for a time?”

Fen shook her head. “She implied nothing of the sort. We thought it best to inform you of this.”

“You both did right in telling me.” The Queen idly began to pick at her left palm, food on the tray left completely forgotten at the development. “I would prefer to know sooner rather than later.”

“What do we do?” Sevda asked just as there was a knock on the door.

As Frigga called for them to enter, the doors were pushed open and in came another one of her handmaidens, a younger woman by the name of Lari.
“Here is your schedule for the day, Queen Frigga,” she announced and approached the table to hand her the sheets. “I apologise profusely for my lateness in delivering them, but my partner never arrived this morning to help me cross check them.”

Frigga looked at her for a moment before accepting the schedule. “It is alright, Lari. Might I ask, was Ellie meant to prepare this with you?”

The handmaiden shook her head. “No, My Queen. It was Dagny, but I have not seen her all morning. She did not arrive for her duties this morning.”

The interest of Sevda and Fen immediately peaked at the mention of another missing handmaiden, while Frigga’s expression grew dark. “Can you tell me, has any other handmaiden failed to report for duty this morning?”

“Ellie has failed to arrive as well, but I have seen everyone else other than those two.”

Frigga quickly got to her feet. “I need you to return to my handmaidens and inform them that both Ellie and Dagny are missing.”

“Missing?”

“Yes. No one has seen or heard anything from Ellie since yesterevening and I have a feeling that this situation is not as simple as two employees over-sleeping. I need you and the other women to inform the few Einherjar that did not leave for Vanaheim of the missing persons while I consult the Gatekeeper with Sevda and Fen.”

“Of course, My Queen.” With a firm nod, Lari rushed out of the room and left the trio alone again.

“Now, ladies,” Frigga began and led them towards the door. “It is time we consult someone better equipped for this matter.”

The three women hurried out of the palace. Whatever guards were left were also bustling about, spreading the news that there were two missing handmaidens. The news was shocking to many — how could not one, but two, handmaidens just disappear? Especially given the presence of The Watcher of Worlds. It all seemed rather unsettling. With the assistance of three mounts, they swiftly arrived at the Bifröst observatory and approached the ever-present figure where he stood.

“I was waiting for you, My Queen,” Heimdall said before any of them could speak.

“Then you know Ellie and Dagny are missing?” Frigga replied, standing next to him with the others.

“I do, but I only noticed that they were not present this morning.”

The women stared at him in surprise and Fen spoke up. “But how? You see all.”

“Whatever incident that occurred and resulted in their disappearance was hidden from me. How, I can only assume powerful magic, but why is far more obvious.”

“They did not want you to see,” Frigga said slowly as she put the pieces together. “This was planned.”

“Planned?” Sevda repeated. “You mean to say that this was a specifically organised abducting of two of the Royal Family’s personal handmaidens?”

“Surely abducting two women at once is a job for more than one person?” Fen added. “Are we
looking at a group?”

Frigga shook her head. “Honestly I cannot be sure. Heimdall, surely there are some things you saw that can assist us?”

“I last saw them both,” Heimdall began. “At Ellie’s chambers yesterevening. Dagny called for her, before they both left together. Where they went I do not know, because that is when my vision becomes foggy.”

“Did you hear what they spoke of?”

“Not in its entirety, but if I am not mistaken, Dagny spoke of the Allfather and the princes’ return.”

Frigga’s brow furrowed. “So Dagny spoke of their return, and then they left Ellie’s chambers together?”

Sevda raised her own brow at that. “Their return? That sounds a bit suspicious to me.”

“Perhaps Dagny wished to prepare for their return and called on Ellie for help?” Fen suggested.

“But that is the thing,” Frigga pondered aloud. “We do not know when they will return. Why prepare for something now when they may not arrive for another week or even month? Heimdall would be the first to know when they will be coming back to Asgard. Dagny surely did not.”

At that moment, the familiar voice of Odin sounded from the podium, requesting that the Bifröst be opened. His voice echoed throughout the dome as everyone turned to stare at the source of the noise.

“It would seem that Dagny was not far off in her estimations,” Heimdall cut in, amber eyes fixed on the Queen. “Excuse me for a moment, My Queen.”

He quickly inserted Hofund into the podium and the observatory came to life. From within the vortex of white lighting, the forces of Asgard slowly began to emerge. Odin, Thor, and Loki arrived at the forefront, looking surprisingly well-rested given the circumstances. They were surprised to see the small audience waiting for them, but greeted them happily none the less as Einherjar poured from the tunnel and made their own way down the rainbow bridge.

“Frigga,” Odin said with a smile and kissed her hand. “I have missed you.”

“And I you, my love,” she replied and hugged him affectionately. “Thank you for bringing our sons back in one piece.”

“We can take care of ourselves, Mother,” Thor grumbled before a grin broke out on his face as she kissed his cheek. “It is good to see you again.”

“I have missed you,” Loki stated simply as she turned to greet him.

Without a second thought, his mother pulled him into a warm embrace. “I am so happy to see you are alright. It is good to have you all home, but…” Frigga hesitated at the sight of her son’s smiling face. She knew what he was thinking — he was excited to be home because he thought he could see Ellie again; he thought she was waiting for him within. She glanced over to see Odin speaking with Heimdall as Thor said hellos to Fen and Sevda. She knew that Loki should be the first to know, and she rathered he hear it from her. “I must tell you something.”

“What is it?” he asked, smile not even faltering as he held her hands in his.
“It is Ellie.” As she explained, the smile slowly fell. “She is missing.”

The look of shock on Loki’s face was vivid and cruel. He did nothing to mask his distress, wide green eyes staring back at her in disbelief. His lips remained parted, unable to form the thoughts and feelings his mind was presumably rapidly experiencing. She hated that this was something she had to tell him; that the woman he loved was missing.

“What?” he whispered.

“She has been missing since yesterevening,” she repeated slowly. “As is Dagny.”

“Yesterevening?” he asked, eyes gleaming as she explained herself. “But…how?”

“We do not know. We have spoken to Heimdall, but he said that he was unable to see the abduction.”

The harsh word made Loki falter, his jaw clenching as his hands shook.

All Frigga could do was grip them tighter and hold his attention. “Loki, I need you to know that I will do everything in my power to find Ellie. I know what she means to you. Do you hear me? I understand. I know.”

Even with the haze of shock and disbelief, he visibly registered her words, meeting her gaze. He was silent for a moment before he nodded, never questioning how she knew of his true feelings, too caught up in this disaster to worry about anything else.

“Do you trust me when I say that we will bring her back?” she asked.

He nodded and blinked away tears. “I do.”

“Good. It will be alright, my son.” She placed a kiss on his forehead before turning to look at Odin. “My King?”

Odin met her gaze, eyes hard. “Heimdall has informed me of the missing handmaidens.”

“Missing handmaidens?” Thor asked in confusion. “Who is missing?”

“Ellie and Dagny.”

“What?” he nearly roared. “But who… When? When did this happen?”

“We assume it was sometime between last night and this morning, Your Highness,” Heimdall explained. “But we cannot be sure.”

“Why not? Did you not see it? Surely you must have seen something?”

“I think it may be best that we discuss this within the palace,” Odin said firmly. “This is a conversation to be had in private.”

“Agreed,” Frigga said with a nod. She quickly thanked the Gatekeeper for his assistance and walked arm in arm with her youngest son. “We will speak of this in our chambers. All of you, bar Heimdall, come with me.”

* * *
Loki had no idea that *this* was what would be waiting for him upon his return.

He had never felt such a combination of rage and despair before.

Now that he sat within his parents’ chambers with his brother, Sevda, and Fen, he could only see red. He had no idea yet as to how this had happened, but he knew that when he found out who was behind it, he would take great pleasure in gutting them like a pig. He could barely concentrate on those around him. They explained what information Heimdall had shared, and they described the state Ellie’s chambers were left in when Sevda visited them, but he still found it exceptionally difficult to focus. How they felt was mostly irrelevant to him. All he could see was red. He paced relentlessly, grinding his teeth and digging his nails into his palms until he broke the skin. The floor seemed to sway beneath his feet. Only when his mother held his hand did he pay attention to what was going on.

“You will be of no use to Ellie if you are panicking,” she whispered. “If we are to find her, we need you to concentrate on the task at hand, Loki.”

He nodded meekly and swallowed the lump in his throat. Frigga was right, of course. If he remained on Asgard like a nervous wreck, who knew what would happen to Ellie. He simply had to be there to help.

“As of now,” Odin began, grabbing everyone’s attention. “We have two handmaidens missing under uncertain circumstances. As two personal workers of the Allmother and Prince, the situation is understandably serious. Not only that, but Heimdall was unable to see when they were taken, due to suspected magical interference.” The Allfather stood in front of the small gathering, hands behind his back and his one good eye flitting between the onlookers. “I do not know what has happened to Ellie and Dagny, but I can assure you all that we will bring them back unharmed.”

“Then why are we just sitting here?” Thor demanded. “We need to go find them!”

“We do not even know if they are still on Asgard,” Fen said. “Heimdall cannot see either of them.”

“If whoever took them was clever enough to hide the event from Heimdall,” Frigga began. “Then it is safe to assume that they are clever enough to leave the realm without him noticing. So unless we figure out why they were taken, the revelation as to where they are is a long way away.”

Thor grumbled and crossed his arms. “How are we supposed to figure that out?”

Loki frowned, notions immediately going to a dark place he had not thought of in a while.

Frigga noticed his worried frown and asked. “Loki?”

He met her gaze and cleared his throat before he spoke. “It is no secret that there are Asgardians who think Ellie does not belong here. They have assaulted her before, both physically and verbally. Is it too much to consider that these events may be connect? Why else would it have happened?”

“He could be on to something,” Sevda agreed. “Lest we forget what happened in the market when she was but a child.”

“Well that would make sense as to why Ellie was taken,” Odin agreed. “But what then of Dagny?”
“Perhaps it was convenience?” Thor suggested. “Maybe whoever took Ellie never planned for Dagny to be with her, and improvised?”

Loki shook his head. “After using magic to stop a powerful Gatekeeper from seeing it all? Accidentally trying to abduct someone while there is another person present seems a bit sloppy, especially given that they have gone to great effort to hinder Heimdall’s sight. Surely they would be capable of watching Ellie to see when she was alone?”

“Unless there was a group of them,” Thor added. “We must consider that possibility.” He thoughtfully scratched his beard. “I can understand the reason for targeting Ellie, but Dagny has baffled me.”

“I am surprised they were even in each other’s presence,” Sevda spoke. “They may have been polite to each other, but they were not friends, not in the same manner we are.”

“Why did Dagny go to her chambers?” Odin asked.

“Heimdall did not hear clearly,” Frigga explained. “But he said it was something to do with your return and that of Asgard’s forces.”

Loki frowned further at that, struggling to control the tremors that shook his hands. “So Dagny went to Ellie’s chambers, spoke of our return in some form, and then they both left together? That sounds…odd.”

“Agreed. It does nothing to calm my nerves.”

“What would Dagny have to say of our return?” Thor asked. “None knew of it except for the Gatekeeper.”

The clogs slowly turned in Loki’s head. The to-ing and fro-ing were driving him mad at this point when all he wanted was answers so they could go and look for Ellie. He refused to think for a second that she was anything other than taken — he would not consider the idea of murder or violence towards her. The thought made him physically ill. And yet in his refusal to consider that possibility, he focused his energy on finding out how and why she was taken from him. The ‘who’ would come later. That being said, Dagny’s involvement in this made him uneasy. Sevda was right — she and Ellie may be friendly, but they were certainly not comrades in the way she was with some of the others. What information could she have that would convince Ellie to leave her chambers at night? More importantly, what was it about **him** that Dagny told her?

Suddenly, the mental clogs clicked into place.

His green eyes grew wide as he cut across whoever was speaking. “What if we are looking at this in the wrong manner?”

“What do you mean, brother?” Thor asked.

“The one day Dagny actually visits Ellie and interacts with her in an informal setting, they both go missing? Not only that, but the subject matter is in relation to our return, that she could not have possibly known in advance. What if she has something to do with the disappearance? What if she orchestrated it?”

“That is quite the accusation,” Frigga reminded him, but allowed him to continue. “But also not an unrealistic notion.”

“Think about it,” he repeated and turned to his father. “Dagny was recently replaced in her position with none other than Ellie, a mortal who has been a constant target by certain Asgardians
because of who she is, and now suddenly both of them have disappeared?”

Silence filled the room as Loki looked at his father expectantly. No one dared to speak before the Allfather made some sort of response. Eventually Frigga prompted him to answer.

“My son,” Odin began, tone anything but amused. “Are you suggesting that you think a servant — one that works personally with the Allmother — plotted to abduct another? A servant we hired to work in this palace? Are you suggesting that we unknowingly hired a worker capable of such a crime?”

“If my theory is correct — and I believe it is — than yes, I am suggesting that.”

“He has a point, Father,” Thor quickly cut in after Loki’s bold statement. “It is possible that she slipped through the cracks in order to harm Ellie.”

“Lest we forget that someone else snuck into the palace and murdered Astrid,” Fen added, expression having grown worried with the conversation. “It is certainly a possibility.”

Again, the Allfather held his tongue and thought over the details he had heard. With each passing second of silence, Loki grew more anxious. He needed to hear something from his father now more than ever. He had no idea how much time Ellie had left, so the sooner they did something the better. He didn’t care what it would take for Odin to listen to him — he would do anything if it meant finding her safely.

I need to bring her home…

He could only watch in desperation as the King stayed quiet, that was until his Queen spoke up in her ever-persuasive tone.

“Odin, her life may be hanging in the balance. Loki is right; this is the best idea we have to go on. If we do not fight for her, no one will. We must not waste anymore time.”

For the briefest of moments, Odin met Loki’s gaze. He did not hold it for long before sighing and then calling over the one guard he had allowed in the room with them.

“Send for Lady Sif,” he ordered. “And The Warriors Three.”

The guard swiftly left with his new orders, firmly shutting the massive doors behind him. Before Loki could get a word in, Odin turned to address both Fen and Sevda. “Ladies, I need you both to inform the Allmother and I on whatever information you know about Dagny. No detail is irrelevant; tell us everything. Even the smallest thing may give us a clue as to where she has taken Ellie.” Quickly, he let his gaze fall to Thor and Loki. “My sons, you will both remain here for the time being. We do not know if there is anyone else involved in this event, so we do not wish to let any other possible spies know that we are on to them. They will continue to think that all we know is they are missing. There will be no developments for anyone outside of this room to hear. I have my most trusted men outside that door — no one will get in or out without my permission. Unless Heimdall sees something, it is up to us to find them both.”

“Thank you, Father,” Loki said quickly, bowing his head in gratitude as Thor mimicked his movements.

With that, the Allfather approached the handmaidens and urged them to begin talking. As Frigga approached to join, Loki looked at her and attempted to convey how important her interference was to him. Unable to say it aloud, she merely smiled back at him, affectionately squeezed his arm, then joined her husband.
Loki released a heavy breath, feeling his heart thump erratically in his chest. He knew well that there was no hope of him relaxing before they found her, but at least this was a start. It had to lead somewhere. It just *had* to.

“Do not worry,” Thor murmured, comfortingly patting his shoulder. “We will find who took the little one, and then we can take turns in tearing them apart.”

Loki shook his head, mouth set his a firm line as he grit his teeth together. “When I get my hands on them, there will be no taking turns. I will skin them alive myself.”

* * *

Ellie continued to fall through never-ending blackness.

She was weak — that she was certain of — because no matter what she did, she couldn’t find a way out. Everywhere she looked, she was met with a pure black abyss staring back.

It felt like a very long time had passed before any amount of energy returned to her body and her eyelids were moveable again. Slowly, her senses came back to her. She could feel the air filling her lungs once more as she tried to breathe. The dizzy lightness in her head remained as she slowly forced her lids open. Temporarily blinded by light, she shut them again and groaned. Her throat felt raw and dry and she coughed for a moment. The sensation made her head pulse as pain slowly bloomed in the back of her skull. She tried to reach behind her to touch her head, but her hands were weighed down heavily by something and her head lolled from side to side.

After some time, she adjusted to the light and slowly opened her eyes.
Truths

Chapter Summary

Ellie gets long awaited answers and takes matters into her own hands while Loki and co struggle to find her.

Chapter Notes

Ellie gets answers, you guys get answers, everybody get answers! Also, thank you’s so much for 5000 hits! Like HOLY MOLEY that was unexpected! Thank you to those still reading, commenting, giving out kudos, and enjoying the story. It's been fun, and we still have a few chapters to go but I'm already getting emotional... If you would be so inclined, I have a Tumblr (unofferable-fic) where I've also have a great time chatting to people about the story. Feel free to say howdy, if you want!


Ellie’s eyes slowly adjusted to the light in the decrepit room she was currently sat in.

When she could finally focus, she took in her surroundings. She wasn’t expecting to wake up in a dark and cold stone room. A thin curtain covered the one window in the place, though it did little to stop light coming inside in several small beams. She woke up on the stone floor, and only now noticed the shackles on her wrists. As her senses returned to her, she followed the trail of the chains that ensnared her and noticed how they led to a metal ring welded to the floor. In the corner was the only piece of furniture in the room; an old, stained, wooden table.

With a shaky hand, she managed to reach behind her head to inspect the damage previously caused by who she assumed was Dagny. While Ellie hadn’t remembered anything else after she blacked out, it was as clear as day that her fellow handmaiden had attacked her. As to why, she had no idea. Was it over the fact Loki replaced Dagny with her? Surely this seemed a bit excessive when she was simply placed back in her former position as Frigga’s handmaiden. And yet Ellie couldn’t figure out any other reason why this would happen. She had done nothing personally to her in the few years they had worked together. Sure, they weren’t friends, but, Jesus, she hadn’t expected this to happen.

Carefully, she prodded at the back of her head and hissed when she felt the lump there. She knew a wallop to the head was no small thing. There was a huge chance that she had a concussion and bruising. With whatever energy she had, she sent some soothing magic from her fingertips into her pounding skull to temporarily numb the pain. A weight slowly lifted off her head, making it a little easier to breathe and try calm herself. Her heart was thumping erratically in her ears as she tried to relax. She knew that was the first thing Loki would tell her. She sat there panicking for what felt like a long time before she could calm down enough to think clearly. With her injury numbed, she had to get up and see if she could figure out where she was. That is was Loki would do.
Placing her hands on the floor, she pushed herself to her feet, legs buckling in protest. The chains just about gave her enough leeway to pad over to the window. She carefully pulled back the curtain to get a peep, but was met with dense trees all around. She couldn’t see any form of habitation in the distance — all she saw for miles was thick forests. Was she still on Asgard? Surely she would be able to see the palace no matter where she was currently held up. The sudden realisation that she may be in another realm brought on a fresh bout of panic. She breathed heavily, eyes burning with oncoming tears. She wiped a shaking hand on her cheek as they began to fall. It wasn’t easy to keep it together in such a situation. Ellie thought her trauma had been put behind her. After her childhood with her father, she thought she would never have to relive it or be a victim of violence from then on. On Asgard, she felt safe. Loki promised to keep her safe and she believed him… Surely he was looking for her? But then she remembered he was away fighting a war on Vanaheim. Obviously Dagny had lied about his return, so she had no idea when he would be back. But surely someone had noticed that she was gone? It had been nighttime on Asgard last she remembered, and it seemed to be early morning here — wherever the hell here is — so some time had possibly passed. Not arriving to her duties would surely be a dead give away. Sevda or Fen would say something considering she would have vanished into thin air. It was the only thought that brought her any comfort and hope. For the moment, she would have to rely on her friends while she tried to find out more about her situation.

The first thought that came to her head was: get out.

“Heimdall?” she whispered hopefully. “Open the Bifröst!” She waited. “Heimdall? Can you hear me? Open the Bifröst!”

She waited a moment, but was only met with silence.

She repeated herself, louder this time, but received no response. For whatever reason, Heimdall couldn’t hear her — or possibly see her at all — in this room. She guessed due to some sort of magic.

The sudden rattle of a key in the door grabbed her attention. It swung open, revealing a rather burly-looking man she didn’t recognise. Ellie stood her ground, staring at him as he stared back, hand wrapped around the handle. For a built guy, there was something particularly slimy about the way he carried himself, but he merely stood in front of the door as another man walked into the room. She had to control herself from reacting at the sight of a familiar face.

“My goodness, little mortal. It has been too long!”

“Frey,” she mumbled in response, gaze firmly fixed on the god standing in the doorway.

“You may leave us,” he ordered, addressing the apparent doorman, who left and swung the door shut, leaving them alone.

“When was the last time we saw each other?” Frey asked, strolling about the room with his hands behind his back.

“I can’t recall, perhaps I repressed the memory.”

He chuckled. “Oh, you are far more mouthy when you are not on the job.”

“There’s no risk of me bein’ sacked right now, I think, so I’ll seize the opportunity to say as I please.”

“Oh, good! I love when they have a bit of an attitude.”

Before Ellie could send another smart retort Frey’s way, the door burst open again and in came a
less than amused-looking Freyja. She slammed the door behind her and levelled her gaze on her brother. “You were not capable of waiting two more minutes?”

Her exasperation did nothing to deter her brother’s delight in the situation. “When have you ever known me to be patient?”

She rolled her eyes before standing at his side and nodding to Ellie. “Well, at least you got the mortal.”

“I did tell you Dagny could manage it, and you doubted me.”

“I doubted her, not you.”

Ellie was tempted to demand answers. Their annoying banter was doing little to calm her. In fact, she was exerting great effort to prevent her hands from visibly shaking at her sides. She stood as still and unreadable as possible, learning from how Loki would act when threatened. It was important that she do as little as possible to aggravate the situation.

“Are you really going to be this ungrateful?” Frey snorted, hands on his hips. “I told you we would get the Midgardian, and here we are.”

A malicious smile slowly broke out on Freyja’s face. She looped both arms around one of his and kissed his cheek. “Brother, I am delighted you did what you promised to do.” She then set her gaze on their silent guest. “So quiet, mortal. No demands as to where you are?”

“I’m guessin’ I’m on Alfheim,” Ellie answered. “Considerin’ that’s the realm in which you both rule.”

“Were they educating you on Asgard?” Freyja sneered. “Odin is more of a fool than I thought.”

Frey shrugged in response. “I agree that educating a Midgardian is a waste, but it would be very unlike Loki to not try smarten her up before bedding her.”

“It has not stopped him before.”

The mention of Loki’s previous conquests left a sour taste in Ellie’s mouth, even if this was not the time or place to be bothered by his sexual history. The more time she spent in the siblings’ company, the more she realised that was a matter of life or death. “Why have you taken me?”

“Ah ah!” Freyja cut her off. “Asgard is definitely not your home. You do not belong there — we did the people of that realm a favour ridding it of you.”

The shackles on Ellie’s weighed heavily as the pair looked at her in distain. “So you go to all that trouble — settin’ a spy within the palace and abducting me — just to take me away from Asgard ’cause I’m mortal?”

“You speak with such self-importance,” Freyja chuckled. “Clearly servicing the Trickster so frequently was an influence on your ego.”
“This is about far more than just you, little mortal,” Frey explained patiently. “It is a matter of principles and personal revenge.”

Freyja took a step towards her. “What do you know of your master, hmm? Of his history with us?” As she took another step, Ellie wisely backed away from her, sliding along the wall to keep space between them. “Did he ever tell you of me? Of my lust for gold? It is something I am well known for, thanks to the Trickster and his silver tongue. I acquired jewels by my own means, uncaring of the price for them. On one such occasion, I travelled to Midgard and happened upon four dwarf smithies, who created the most beautiful necklace I had ever laid eyes on. Pure gold, twisting and weaving, and incised with patterns... I had never desired anything so much and asked them what price I would pay to acquire it. Their request to spend one night with each of them was nothing when I thought of what I would receive in return, so I agreed. Unbeknownst to me, Loki followed me and saw the whole exchange. Of course he rushed back to Asgard and informed Odin of my services — he was never one to turn down an opportunity to lick the Allfather’s boot.

“That night while I slept, the Trickster stole the necklace by Odin’s order, and I woke to next morning to discover the theft. When Odin confronted me…” She paused, her anger boiling over quite suddenly as she screamed. “I was disgraced in front of the entire palace! I was set to marry another god, to remain on Asgard and be showered in wealth and jewels so long as I lived! But Loki would not have it! Odin shunned me, called off my marriage, and forbade me from staying on Asgard! Can you imagine that? A Vanir goddess forced to leave, and yet _you_—!” Freyja quickly snatched for her jaw, but Ellie swiftly ducked despite the awkward chains that impeded her. “—they house you, a fucking mortal bitch, with pride! Your lying bastard of a master is the reason why I am shunned from the gods. He ruined my reputation, he had my jewels taken away, so I assured Frey we would return the favour by taking his favourite whore!”

Ellie said nothing, instead quickly dodging another swipe from the infuriated goddess. With a frown, Freyja grabbed the chains from the floor and reefed at them, sending Ellie sprawling on the ground with a yelp. Her knees cracked off the stone and she had to bite her tongue to stop herself from crying out any louder. Frey quickly stepped in front of the young woman and squatted to get a good look at her now shaking features. He cupped her chin and forced her to look at him.

Without thinking, Ellie muttered. “All of this? All of this to hurt Loki?”

He grinned in response. “Somewhat. We are not his biggest fans, as you know. We did what had to be done.”

“But really? Are you responsible for Astrid’s murder too?”

“That was her own fault. She hindered our first attempt at taking you, but casualties were expected.”

Ellie could feel her eyes welling up at the indifference and lack of emotion she saw in his eyes. There was no compassion in this man — he bore no visible emotion or expressed anything beyond mock delight at the suffering of others. All she could do was repeat herself in disbelief. “All of this? What will you do with me?”

“We did what needed to be done,” he said casually and lowered his voice down to a whisper. He slowly stroked his thumb along her bottom lip. “You are ours to do with what we will.”

Harshly pulling her head away from his grasp, Ellie looked at him is disgust. “You’re both fools if you think no one is lookin’ for me. Loki will destroy you both when he finds out what you’ve done.”
“Are you sure about that?” he laughed. “You think you are the first person we have taken? You are just like the others. Trust me, the masters never follow. Your dear prince will not come for you. We will be the only ones having our way with you now.”

“Lay a finger on me,” she growled. “And you will suddenly find a knife embedded between your thighs.”

“As fun as that sounds, we will have to catch up later. We have a council to attend in Ljosalfgard and must keep up appearances in order to avoid suspicions.” Frey got to his feet and offered his still infuriated sister his arm. She took it, glaring at a silent Ellie who simply stared back. Frey hesitated as he opened the door. “We will be back to get to know you more intimately later, girl. As our property, we will do with you what we please. This is where you belong, little mortal; serving gods until you are rotting in the ground beneath our feet.”

Without waiting for a response, the siblings left her alone in the cold room. The loud locking of the door was enough to signal that she was still well and truly trapped. Ellie struggled back to her feet, doing her best to ignore the burning in her knees and the troubling account she had just heard in detail. Their threats finally settled in now as silent tears streamed down her cheeks. Her whole body shivered as she tried to steady her breathing.

*I have’ta concentrate. I have’ta get out of here before they come back. I have’ta call Heimdall somehow!*

There was no time to waste.

One thing that Ellie seemingly had on her side this time around was Frey and Freyja’s apparent obliviousness to her training in magic and, possibly, combat. Their spies may have reported her physical training, but seiðr lessons with Loki were still very much a secret affair — at least she hoped so. Quickly wiping her tears away, she forced herself to stand up and save herself. She ran her shaky hands along the hard walls, using all the energy she had to find whatever magic was hiding her from the outside world and the Protector’s gaze. Just like how she used to focus her energy by looking into the library’s fire, she shut her eyes and slowed her breathing. Slowly, she felt the pulse of the magic installed in the room. Her hands blindly slid along the wall’s surface until she found where the energy was focused, teaming with life in the corner of the room that was closest to the door. She took a deep breath and placed both hands over the spot. She had no idea for how long she could disable the forcefield that hid her in plain sight — certainly not enough time for Heimdall to open the Bifröst and bring her back, but maybe just enough time for him to pinpoint her location. If she managed to permanently disable it anyway, Frey and Freyja were sure to notice its absence. She simply had to put her faith in her friends and pray that they were looking for her. She would only have seconds.

Carefully, she shut her eyes and focused her breathing. She slowly traced the rune over the place from where the most power came and muttered its name quietly.

In her hands, she felt the energy of the rune shoot from her palms and into the wall. She pushed as hard as she could, focusing whatever energy she had into its magic.

With an unstable flicker, the barrier fell.

* * *
The Warriors Three and Lady Sif arrived to the royal chambers soon after Odin’s request. Thor and Loki brought them up to speed. The God of Mischief was visibly aggravated the longer he spent locked in the room, and was basically inconsolable as they tried to figure out what to do. The Einherjar had searched the palace from top to bottom and found no trace of Ellie or Dagny. The handmaidens searched the latter’s room in an attempt to figure out what exactly she had to do with the abduction. Sevda and Fen told the Allfather and Allmother all they knew about the handmaiden, although it wasn’t a lot to go on.

Loki started pacing again as the hours paced, but Thor never gave up and trying to ease his worries, even when he was anxious himself.

Sif joined in when appropriate. “She has her training, Loki. It will work in her favour. She will know what to do.”

Loki looked up from the floor to shrug at the warrior. “I know she is not entirely helpless, but… she is still mortal, and we do not know what she is dealing with.”

“I know,” she assured him, uncharacteristically placing a comforting hand on his arm. “But we have to put our faith in her right now. I think Ellie is stronger than we give her credit. She can hold her own until we find out more. Then, we all go to find her.”

“Even if the Allfather says otherwise?” Loki asked, tone hushed.

Sif’s eyes briefly flickered to the King. “You know, even though we are meant to be worshipped by Midgardians, we are also meant to protect them. It is our duty to do so, and no one will stop me from carrying that duty out.”

Before he could thank her, two soldiers entered the chambers, bowing before one of them spoke out. “My King, Heimdall has requested your presence at the Bifröst. He said it is urgent, and wishes to speak to you all.”

Loki nearly fell over as he whipped around to meet his father’s gaze. The King nodded firmly and began to walk from the room. “Lead the way.”

The brief journey to the Bifröst was rushed with the use of horses, still somewhat weary after the tiring month they had had on Vanaheim. Loki would have felt bad under normal circumstances, but with Ellie’s life quite probably on the line, the mounts would have to recover later.

As the group reached the observatory and dismounted, Heimdall quickly approached them. “My King, My Queen, I have found Ellie.”

“You what?” Thor roared, grabbing Loki’s arm. “Where is she?”

“Alfheim,” the Gatekeeper replied. “And you need to go to her now.”

There were murmurs of confusion among the group, but Loki’s gut twisted at the mention of her location. “Alfheim? What in the Norns is she doing on Alfheim?”

“I only saw her for a brief moment, but she is being kept in a guarded structure within the forest, some distance from Ljosalfgard. It is being hidden with magic, but its barrier temporarily fell and gave her enough time to call me. By the looks of it, it seems to be an illegal brothel.”

The young prince gulped at the explanation.

“Did you not have enough time to open the bridge?” Loki asked, approaching Heimdall in his concern.
“No, My Prince, but thankfully I had enough time to spot her. I did not see Dagny there.”

“Then let’s go to her—”

Odin cut through the rambling worries of the group. “Loki, you will remain here. As will Thor.”

“What?” both brothers exclaimed in unison.

“Father,” Thor began. “We have to go help her—”

“Neither of you will be going anywhere.” Odin held up a hand to both of them. “I have told you both countless times that you will not involve yourselves in the affairs of mortals. Lady Sif and the Warriors Three will go alone to fetch her.”

“Odin, let them go,” Frigga insisted, sensing the group becoming more unsettled the more he spoke. “Let them help.”

“Not a chance. This is not their fight.”

“You are a fool if you think I will not be going!” Loki yelled, his eyes burning with the welling of fresh tears. “It is our duty to help! Ellie would not be in this mess if we had ensured no spies were within Asgard!”

Odin stared back at his son in shock, his one good eye narrowing as he spoke. “Raise your voice to your King again, boy. I do not care if you are my child — go against my orders and you will be punished accordingly.”

“Loki is right, Father.” Thor cut in, standing surely beside his brother. “Ellie needs our help, and she has served our family since she was a small child. We need to do all we can to protect the people of these realms when they need us. I will go with him, as will our friends.”

Odin could only look between them, mouth hanging open in stumped surprise. His wife calmly placed her hand on his shoulder and quietly backed them up. “Odin, they are right. Ellie is their friend and deserving of their help. She has served us for nearly her whole life. Mortal or not, they will not let any harm come to her. As you always say, an attack on a hand servant to royalty is also a direct attack on us. Do not argue with your stubborn sons, for you will not win.”

There were a few seconds of nervous silence as the King considered his wife’s honeyed words. Loki stood fixed to the spot, chest rising heavily and falling with each passing moment. His panic had been overcome with determination. Now that they knew where she was, all he wanted to do was go find her and destroy the ones responsible for this. He was probably mad, but no one would stop him from doing otherwise. He never once looked away from his father’s face, pleading hopefully that they would be allowed to go. Not that his lack of permission would stop him anyway, but they would need the Allfather on their side going into another realm.

With a heavy sigh, Odin nodded. “Fine, if you are all going to bloody insist as much. Have it your way. Thor and Loki will lead Lady Sif and the Warriors Three to the bordello and rescue Ellie. Meanwhile, Frigga and I will go to Ljosalfgard to inform Frey of what is happening under his nose.”

Relief swept through Loki and he would have stumbled had Thor not pulled him into a rough hug. The celebrations were cut short as Heimdall spoke. “My King, I am afraid to say that I fear Frey and Freyja already know too much.”

“Come again?” Fandral asked, looking around the group.
“When the barrier briefly broke, I was no longer blind to the dwelling in the forest and its inhabitants. Thus I saw both god and goddess leaving the brothel and heading towards Ljosalfgard.”

* Fucking Frey, Loki hissed in his mind. Of course he would be a part of all this! And that fucking whore of his! *

“You are telling me that those two bastards knew about this?” Thor growled, teeth bared.

“Quite possibly,” Heimdall replied. “So I think your best bet is to play that to your advantage. Allow the Allfather and Allmother to go to the palace and distract the twins, while the princes and their soldiers attend to Ellie’s rescue.”

“That’s not a bad plan!” Fandral agreed, grinning widely. “I think our best bet is the Gatekeeper’s tactics. My King? My Queen? What would you have us do?”

“We will have you do as Heimdall suggests,” Frigga replied, approaching her sons and pulling Loki into an embrace. “We will speak with Frey and Freyja while you make sure Ellie is safe. When you have her secured, go to meet us at Ljosalfgard. What do you think, husband?”

“I do not like it,” he admitted. “But it will have to do.”

Loki firmly locked his arms around his mother, whispering his thanks under his breath before pulling away. Frigga cupped his face in her hands and said. “Bring her back, alright? And keep each other safe.” Then she turned and hugged Thor as well while Heimdall readied the bridge for travel.

Loki let out a breath he had been holding and briefly met his father’s eyes before turning his attention to Fen and Sevda. He gently held their hands and said. “Don’t worry yourselves anymore about this — we will bring her home, I promise you that.”

“We know you will,” Fen replied. “Just make sure the bastards suffer for it.”

“I can guarantee it.”

Sevda squeezed his hand firmly. “Good luck, Prince Loki.”

With a newfound resilience, the youngest Odinson turned from the handmaidens and approached the travel portal. Behind him, Thor, the Warriors Three, and Lady Sif followed confidently, already armed and ready to take on whatever was waiting for them on Alfheim.

“It is best if I leave you a short distance from the structure,” Heimdall explained as he locked his sword in place on the podium. “If they know you are coming, we do not know what they will do to Ellie. Alas, I will show you the way.”

“Do as you see fit, Gatekeeper,” Loki ordered, hand firmly gripping the hilt of his knife. “We are ready when you are.”

“For Asgard,” Volstagg said, as was customary, and looked at his comrades while they mimicked his words.

“For Ellie,” Thor added, placing a hand on his brother’s shoulder.

Loki turned his head to meet his gaze, and was met with a reassuring smile in return. With a firm nod, he too grabbed his brother’s shoulder, and murmured. “For Ellie.”
In a flash of white light, Loki felt his body get sucked into the vortex and they were gone.
The Bifröst left the Asgardians in a dense section of forest on Alfheim. Thankfully, it was completely deserted, so the noise of the rainbow bridge went unnoticed. As soon as Loki landed, he took the lead, gathering himself and getting the attention of the group.

“Alright,” he began. “Heimdall said he would show us the way to this structure.”

“Allow me to communicate with him,” Thor suggested, then shut his eyes and focused. A moment passed before he opened them again and pointed into the distance. “To the east, which is that way, until we come to that ridge. Then we follow the mountain face around until we come to a clearing. The structure is being disguised as a cave of sorts, but there is a guard stationed outside.”

“A guard? Would that not rouse suspicions for the cave’s legitimacy?”

“He is apparently dressed as a simple huntsman to avoid such a response.”

Loki peered through the foliage and saw the ridge his brother was referring to. “That looks to be some distance away.”

Thor nodded in agreement. “Heimdall said it would take a few hours, but it was best he left us in the middle of nowhere to avoid detection.”

“If it prevents a risk to Ellie’s life, then he’s right. We will simply move as swift as possible on foot. Keep your heads down and stay quiet. I know it may not be your forte, but we must approach this with stealth in mind.”

“Of course,” Lady Sif agreed, and drew closer to them both. “If it is stealth that will ensure the little one’s safety, then stealth it is.”

“Do not worry, Trickster,” Volstagg cut in with a positive smile, excessively large battle axe in hand. “I know it does not look like it, but we can be stealth experts when the occasion calls for it!”
Loki looked the massive bearded man up and down. “Yes, evidently.”

“Well,” Fandral announced cheerily. “Considering it is your handmaiden we are rescuing, I think it is fair that you lead the way.”

“An excellent idea!” Thor cheered and clapped his brother on the shoulder. “And along the way, we can discuss our plan of attack. You are a master of illusions and stealth, so you can instruct us on what to do.”

Loki nodded in agreement, as Hogun spoke up. “We should get moving.”

“We do not know how much time we have,” Sif agreed. “Lead the way, Prince Loki.”

“Right,” Loki began, and turned to face the distant ridge. “Then let us get going.”

The group headed off together, following Loki’s lead as they went. If he wasn’t so preoccupied with getting to Ellie as fast as possible, he probably would have taken a moment to relish in this change of dynamic. For once, he was at the forefront of Thor and his companions. But, as of right now, he didn’t care. For once, he also wasn’t affected by their attention because his mind was focused elsewhere.

As Heimdall had promised, no one in the group spotted any light elves along the way. The forest they were dropped in was well and truly deserted, so it was safe to assume they were some distance from Ljosalfgard or any of the other cities in Alfheim. Hopefully Odin and Frigga would keep Frey and Freyja occupied long enough so that they could rescue Ellie.

They weren’t walking for long when Loki spoke up again. “It may not be a bad idea then if we dress more inconspicuously. If we are to infiltrate the brothel, we may pass as…customers.”

Thor cringed at the thought, but nodded in agreement. “I suppose that is our best bet.”

“It certainly would be less conspicuous that two princes and a group of warriors showing up for no apparent reason,” Fandral said. “Other than, you know, liberating a prisoner.”

“If this is an illegal brothel,” Lady Sif explained. “Is it possible that there are other prisoners?”

Volstagg raised his brow. “Are you insinuating that Frey and Freyja may be running an illegal sex ring made up of prisoners from different realms?”

“It sounds even more ridiculous when you say it aloud, but yes.”

“That is quite the insinuation,” Hogun said. “Especially given those involved.”

“Hogun is right,” Loki murmured, looking at his feet. “But if Frey and Freyja are involved, they did orchestrate the abduction of a royal handmaiden from within the palace itself after placing a spy within the staff. So the idea of them abducting others is not exactly outside the realm of possibility.”

Thor shrugged. “When you put it that way, it actually sounds quite reasonable.”

Sif replied. “Then we will deal with it when we come to it. It was just a thought, but we should focus our attention on the task at hand.”

“Which is Ellie,” Loki added firmly. “As you said, Sif, if there are others there, we will figure that out when it happens. For now…” He snapped his fingers and instantly the group were each shrouded with a dark cloak. “It is best to hide the armour and look like paying customers.”
“Delightful,” Thor muttered, wrapping the cloak tightly around his massive frame. “I cannot wait to look like a patron for an illegal whorehouse.”

“It is certainly a better disguise than a Jötunn’s blushing bride,” Fandral snorted earning a scowl from the older prince.

“Now is not the time for jesting, boys,” Sif said dryly. “We have a young woman to find.”

* * *

Ellie had no clue whether Heimdall had seen her when the structure’s barrier fell. Judging by the sun’s change of position in the sky, about an hour had passed since she sent her signal, and all she had done since then was slowly pace around the room. Frey had said just before he left that he and his sister would return in due time, but she had no idea how far she was from the castle in which they resided. While she knew there was a lot of responsibility in her friends’ hands, she couldn’t sit idle and let her life be their sole burden. Surely she could do something, even if she was locked in this room wherever the hell she was…

The rattle of the lock in the door broke through her thoughts, and she froze in the spot as it opened to reveal Frey and Freyja, back sooner than she expected.

“So… your council fell through?” she asked dryly.

“It did, actually,” Freyja replied. “Not that it is any of your concern.”

“But it does mean,” Frey drawled, slamming the door behind them. “That our schedule for the rest of the afternoon has been blown open.”

As the god and goddess stared at her, a shiver ran up Ellie’s spine. It wasn’t in the same way Loki looked at her — this was purely predatory and aggressive. Against her better judgement, she took a sly step away from them.

“Would you look at that, brother,” Freyja said with a menacing grin. “Suddenly her sarcasm is nowhere to be seen.”

“That is a shame,” Frey mused, rolling up his sleeves. “I was hoping you would hold on to that attitude while we had our way with you.”

He took a swing at her, and Ellie dodged it swiftly. She hadn’t, however, expected Freyja to grab at her as well. The hostile goddess wrapped her hand around her hair and pulled hard. Ellie’s scalp burned.

“Scream, please,” Freyja hissed, and roughly grabbed her chin with her free hand. “Scream all you want. No one will help you, little mortal.”

“As soon as he grabbed her, Ellie fought back. She managed to swiftly elbow him in the face, which brought her immense satisfaction, but Freyja was quick to grab her arms, effectively subduing her. The young woman thrashed as much as she could, despite the two gods exerting very little strength to hold her.
“Keep fighting, you little bitch,” Frey hissed as she slammed her down on to the table. “I love it when they struggle!”

Ellie’s back smashed into the cold wooden surface of the table and she yelped, pain shooting through her hip and spine. She kicked out violently, making contact with Freyja’s shoulder. The woman growled, but simply grabbed both her ankles and tied them together with a rope connected to the table. Before she could fight back, Frey grabbed her hands, tying her wrists to each side of the table. As the gods stood back to inspect their handiwork, Ellie struggled against her bindings, the rope burning into her bare skin as she furiously pulled against them. She tried to channel some seiðr to gain some extra strength, but she was worn out from the whole ordeal. Her chest pumped as her body slumped against the table. Her eyes darted around for a weapon while the pair began to laugh.

“This is half the entertainment,” Frey chuckled, hands on his hips. “You can see the panic starting to set in.”

“I think that is because she has realised how hopeless her situation is. How would you like to go first, dear brother?”

“Why, sister, that is very kind of you to offer.” Frey kissed her post-haste before moving around to the end of the table, while she took her place at the other end behind Ellie’s head. Unable to see Freyja without stretching her head backwards, Ellie began to visibly panic, watching Frey undo the belt buckle of his tunic.

“Please, don’t,” she pled without thinking. “Frey—”

“Beg all you like,” he chuckled, shoving his pants down. “It will not change your fate. Come now, you are no longer pure after your relations with the prince anyway. You may as well enjoy yourself.”

“I am sure you will,” Freyja added, lightly touching Ellie’s cheek. “I can guarantee he will leave you far more satisfied than Loki ever could.”

Trying her best to steady out her breathing, Ellie glared back at Frey. If this was to be her fate, and she could do nothing to change it, then let it be swift. However, she would simply have to remind them both of what she would do to them when she got the chance.

“I just wanted to let you know,” she began, hands shaking in their restraints. “To let both of you know, that I’m goin’ to kill you — the pair of you — unless Loki gets to you’s first. And God fuckin’ help you’s if he does.”

Frey looked back at her in mild amusement. “Your threats are empty, mortal. Far more empty than you are about to be.”

There was an unexpected knock at the door.

Everyone in the room froze. Frey and Freyja shared a look.

“Who the fuck is that?” Freyja demanded.

“I don’t know,” Frey insisted, just as the door swung open.

In walked the doorman Ellie had seen earlier. He seemed completely unfazed by the scene before him. “My Lords, sincerest apologies for my intrusion—”

“It best be for good reason,” Freyja spat. “What is is?”
“The Allfather and Allmother have arrived at the castle in Ljosalfgard,” he explained, a slight quiver in his voice. “They are asking to see you both.”

There was a deafening silence in the room, during which, the siblings looked at each other in confusion. Ellie’s eyes grew wide at the mention of Odin and Frigga, and a small amount of hope bloomed within her chest.

*I knew it! I knew someone would be lookin’ for me! Surely they know where I am? Does this mean Heimdall got my signal?*

“Why are they here?” Freyja demanded as Frey pulled his trousers back up.

The doorman shrugged. “They said they wished to speak with you about their victory on Vanaheim with regards the Marauders.”

Frey growled as he fixed his belt. “Oh, for fuck sake…”

“Do they know?” Freyja asked, gesturing to their prisoner. “*Could* they know?”

“There is no way,” he replied surely. “This place is completely hidden from their eyes. How would they ever see it? You would have to know of its existence first to even reveal it.”

*So they have no idea about my magic abilities?* Ellie realised. *This is the lifeline I’ve been waitin’ for. I can use this to my advantage if things go my way.*

Frey grumbled and readjusted his clothing. “Well then, I suppose we must keep up appearances.”

“What about *her*?” Freyja demanded, grabbing Ellie by the hair so hard that she winced again.

“What *about* her?” Frey shrugged his shoulders. “They could not find this place even if they tried.”

“The fact they have come here *at all* is still risky. At least move her to the basement.”

“Would you be more comfortable if I did?”

“Yes!” she insisted and clicked her fingers at the doorman. “You! Move the mortal to the basement and guard the door until we come back.”

“Of course, My Lady,” was his reply, accompanied by a small nod, as he quickly approached Ellie.

“I really do not see the need,” Frey said, shaking his head. “But if it would ease your mind then fine.”

Ellie watched the pair as they began to walk out the door, bickering impatiently as they went. The doorman promptly untied her right arm and she let out a small sigh as the rope strangling her wrist fell to the ground. The burn on her skin relaxed somewhat, but she longed to rub it and soothe the pain. As the siblings disappeared from the room, the doorman halted in his movements. Ellie awkwardly turned her head to look at him in confusion as he scurried to the door. He peered up and down the hallway outside before he quickly shut the door to the room. The look he gave her as he locked the door from the inside did nothing to settle her nerves. All she could do was stare back him as he slowly approached the table, a smirk growing as he studied her. Another shiver ran up her spine as she noticed her skirts had bunched above her thighs in the earlier struggle, so she tried to kick her restricted legs and cover herself.
“There’ll be no need for that, girlie,” the doorman snickered. “No need for modesty in this whorehouse.”

“Girlie?” she repeated, laughing slightly to hide any worry she felt over what he may do. “Who the fuck actually calls people that?”

“You better watch you mouth,” he growled and grabbed her face in his meaty hand.

“Or what? Is this kip the only place you can get off? Because I sincerely doubt the performance of any man who uses the term ‘girlie’.”

“Shut your fucking mouth or I’ll have to fill it to shut you up.”

She wasn’t expecting his hand to connect with her cheek with an ear-splitting crack. It knocked the wind out of her as her other cheek smacked into the table’s cold wooden surface from the sudden force. This sensation was previously known to her.

It had been a long time since she felt the familiar sting of a hand striking her face, but she would never forget it. She could hear the screaming in her head.

“Look at the fuckin’ mess of this place!”

“They will be gone a long time,” the doorman explained, clambering up on to the table on his knees, forcing himself between her legs. “And I’ve always wanted to take a crack at a mortal.”

“I can’t go to fuckin’ work for one day without you’s fuckin’ ruinin’ the house!”

Her hazy mind struggled to focus on what was happening as she felt a hand close around her neck and squeeze. Her attacker’s mouth was moving, but all she could hear was her father and her own screaming.

“I’m sick of this! All I do is try t’look after this family and pay the bills and this is the thanks I get from you? I’ll fuckin’ kill you, I swear to God—!”

She struggled to breathe, the pressure on her neck growing. Above her, the doorman grinned in delight, revealing a set of yellow teeth.

“Don’t you dare lay a hand on either of them!”

The panic in her chest welled, as did anger. Her feet struggled against their restraints, rope cutting into skin, knees trying to shove him off the table.

“Dad, leave her alone! Stop!”

Suddenly, the rage Ellie felt outweighed the panic. Hazy memories of seeing her mother being strangled, of feeling the brutal kicks from her father, of seeing Shane’s still body on the living room floor next to her.

“Get off her!”

Whatever energy that remained within her body exploded, her chest burning with exertion. She screamed in anger.

Her lungs burned.

Her ears rang.
Within her free hand, something solid formed and her fingers wrapped around it automatically. Without knowing what it was, Ellie swung her arm with all the strength she had left at the man above her.

The dagger in her grasp plunged into his neck.

The retaliation surprised him, but not Ellie, who took the moment to tear the dagger out only to stab him again in the chest. And again.

And again.

And again.

An inhuman scream tore from her already raw throat as she ripped the dagger through his gut and his intestines spilled from the gaping wound. With a harsh shove, he fell to the floor with a tremendous bang, eyes bulging and hands shaking as the blood poured from his various wounds and pooled on the floor. In the time it took Ellie to cut through her restraints, he had bled out and ceased moving. With shaking arms, she slid off the table and tried to stand. Slowly, she got to her feet and noticed that her clothes were now soaked with blood; even her feet were stained red from the puddle building on the floor. As a bit of the adrenaline left her, she stared down at the corpse in surprise and looked at the dagger in her hand. She had conjured it. Finally, she had managed to do it, and now it had left her completely drained. Realising she had no time to admire what she had created, she grabbed the keys from the dead man’s belt loop, unlocked the door, and shakily tiptoed out of the room.

*There’s no time to panic. No time to mess around or think ’bout how I just killed a man. I need’ta get out of here before they kill me.*

Dagger in hand, she slunk into the empty hallway, curious as to whether the earlier commotion and screams would draw attention. That was of course dismissed when she heard the sounds coming from different rooms along the hall. The place was nothing to look at, that was for sure, in terms of decoration. It was dilapidated in places, but still held on to some sense of liveability with severely lazy decoration and a stained carpet. She didn’t know where she had been dropped in this apparent brothel at first, or even whether it was an actual functioning house of prostitution. The moans and screams coming from the other rooms were enough to confirm her suspicions of its legitimacy. At least that meant she had some time before anyone came to check on her.

Keeping close to the wall, she snuck along the hall and around the corner, carefully seeing if there was anyone waiting ahead of her. She spotted another man — presumably a guard, leaning against the wall and facing away from her. By the looks of things, he was happily counting some gold coins. Ellie didn’t think twice about sneaking behind him and slitting his throat. He gurgled as she shoved her hand over his mouth and helped to lower his body down to the ground. The coins fell crashing down as well, but thankfully the noise didn’t seem to draw any attention.

Finding a nearby deserted room, she quickly dragged the body and loose coins inside and left him in there for whoever to find. Wiping her dagger on her skirts, she sighed, turned, and snuck down the hall. Rounding another corner and seeing no one, she pressed on and quickly came to a door, one from which no sounds came. Peaking through the keyhole, she saw nothing. Considering her options, she took a deep breath and turned the knob, finding the door unlocked. She pushed it forward slowly and peered around the opening. When she looked at the sight before her, she opened the door fully and stared in shock.

“Oh, my God…”
As Heimdall promised, they had some distance to walk to get to the structure in which Ellie was being kept.

“There it is,” Loki said, pointing in the distance to a cave that came into view. “That’s the brothel, disguised as Heimdall said.”

“Right,” Thor exhaled, surveying the scene from their hiding spot. “I am still surprised there is only one guard outside.”

“With a magical barrier like that one,” Sif began. “There is no need for more guards. They would only draw unwanted attention.”

Loki nodded his head and made sure his weapons were hidden under his cloak. “She is right. And we do not have time to dawdle. It is time we went undercover, as it were. Thor and I shall approach to enquire after their services. You four will wait here until we dispose of the guard.”

“Delightful,” Fandral groaned.

Volstagg mirrored his displeasure. “I too am not looking forward to this, but if it is to save the Midgardian then let us be off.”

The group followed Loki and Thor’s lead and hid in the brush as the brothers set off and casually approached the man at the mouth of the cave. Upon their arrival, he looked them up and down from his seat on a tree stump and spat. “Can I help you?”

“We wish to avail of your goods,” Loki replied simply, as if it were obvious.

“What goods?” the man asked, playing dumb.

“The ones Lord Frey informed us of. We have heard much of their… quality from him. He said we must see it to believe it.”

For once, thank the Norns, Thor kept his mouth shut and let Loki’s silver tongue do the trick. He was half expecting some sort of outburst, but it seemed that Thor trusted him to do it without his help.

The guard eyed them for a moment, eyes flitting between them as he assessed their legitimacy. He didn’t seem to recognise either of them, which was already a good sign. As he squinted at them, he slowly nodded his head, seemingly accepting Loki’s explanation. He got to his feet and stood with his hands on his hips.

“Coin,” he demanded, hand open expectantly.

Without flinching, Loki reached into his pocket and conjured a convincing illusion of a small but heavy sack of coin and then handed it to the guard. “Will this suffice?”

“It’ll do fine,” he grumbled, judging its weight in his hand. “You may both enter. When you do, head straight down the hall and you will be greeted and allowed to select whatever product you wish to pay for.”

“Fantastic,” Loki said delightedly and clapped his hands together. “Thank you, my good man.”
Loki swiftly stepped around the man and headed towards the entrance to the cave, but felt a hand grab his arm.

“I must search you before you enter,” the guard explained, his tone already short. “It is protocol.”

The God of Lies looked at him in mock dismay, frowning deeply. “Really? Come now, there is no need to search me.”

“I would beg to dif—”

Quite swiftly, Thor drew Mjölnir from under his cloak and, with the guards back turned, smashed the hammer down on to the back of his head. He was killed instantly and dropped towards the ground, but Loki caught his body before it could cause any more unwanted noise. He shared a look with his brother, whose face now wore speckles of blood and brain. The sack of money quickly faded from existence.

“Did you really need to do that?” Loki snapped, lifting the man from under the arms. “I could have slit his throat, or something else less...messy.”

Thor shrugged casually and picked up his legs. “I saw an opportunity and I took it.”

The Trickster merely rolled his eyes and chose not to argue further as they quickly carried the man’s body towards the brush and hid it from plan sight. At that moment, the Warriors Three and Lady Sif appeared from their hiding places.

Sif shook her head. “You two cannot go in there covered in blood.”

“Done,” Loki answered and, with a snap of his fingers, he and Thor were clean again. “Now, when we enter, we go in two groups. Thor and I will go first, then the four of you shall enter after five minutes. That should give us enough time to subdue the guards involved in the ‘selection of goods’. Then we split into twos and search every inch of that place for Ellie. Subdue any guards you see — how, I care not — but do not harm any of the workers; we do not know yet as to whether they are here of their own free will. Everyone ready?”

With unanimous agreement, the Odinsons hurried inside, leaving the others to wait before they entered. The pair went through a wooden door and, as soon as they crossed the threshold, the illusion of the cave faded away and they found themselves standing in an empty lobby of some kind. It was certainly not a fancy place by any means, but its carpeted floors gave way to some small amount of sophistication.

“Straight down the end?” Thor asked, repeated the guard’s instructions.

Loki nodded, gazing down the long hallway that led to a set of unguarded double doors. “Straight down the end.”

As they began to walk, Thor spoke up again. “What is our plan when we get inside?”

Loki shrugged. “To subdue the guards.”

“Yes, but how exactly?”

“However you want, I do not particularly care.”

There was a short pause before Thor looked at his brother hopefully, “Why don’t we do Get Help?”
“No.”

“But, brother—”

“Why in the Nine Realms would we ever do that?”

“Because it works every time, and it is fun!”

“It is not fun.”

“Yes it is.”

“It’s humiliating.”

“Do you have a better plan?”

“No.”

“Let’s do it.”

The pair arrived at the door and Loki turned to point his finger at his brother. “We are not doing Get Help.”

“Yes, we are,” Thor said, grinning back at him as he quickly grabbed him and kicked the doors open. “Get help!”

“Oh for the love of…” Loki was quick to play dead once he got a look of the room before them. There were three armed guards, each standing at a corner of the room, but they came barrelling towards the pair as they burst into the place quite unceremoniously.

“Please!” Thor rambled on. “My brother; he’s dying! Get help! Help him!”

All Loki could do as he was flung across the room was go limp. Thankfully, Thor’s throw was precise and he flew into the guards, knocking them all out as he landed on the floor with a painful thud. He muttered a number of profanities as he got back to his feet.

“I told you it would work!” Thor declared with delight.

“It is still humiliating,” Loki growled and finally noticed the other inhabitants in the room. On the far side of the room on a couch sat three women and one man, dressed in clothes that barely left their bodies covered at all. They didn’t scream out at the sudden intrusion, but merely stared at the two gods in complete surprise, mouths open and eyes wide.

“Perhaps they have seen Ellie?” Thor suggested and waved awkwardly. “Hello.”

“Are you workers in this establishment?” Loki asked and squatted down in front of them.

One woman nodded her head slowly. “W-who are you?”

“I am Prince Loki of Asgard,” he explained as his brother got down next to him.

“And I am Prince Thor of Asgard, God of Thunder. Son of Odin, the Allfather.”

“Thor?” the man exclaimed, his eyes darting between them. “And Loki?”

“Oh, thank the Norns!” another woman, a light elf, nearly wept.
“Are you here to help us?” the first woman asked, gazing at them in disbelief.

“You are not here of your own freewill?” Loki asked carefully.

She shook her head. “No! None of us are. We were all taken from our old lives and forced to work in this squalor and service these rats.”

“I fucking knew it,” Thor hissed, gritting his teeth.

Loki’s tone remained gentle as he spoke with the victims. “Who took you? Who did this to you?”

“Those bastards up in the castle! Frey and his whore, Freyja!”

“Well, I’ll be damned.” The Trickster looked at his brother and shook his head. “It would seem Sif’s theory was right. We will help you get out of this place, but first, we are looking for a woman.”

“You are going to have to be more specific than that, Prince Loki.”

“She is young, mousy haired, slim build, about this tall. She has a scar on both her lip and brow. She is a Midgardian, you might have heard guards discussing her mortality—”

“The young woman?” the man suddenly asked, eyes large with realisation. “Yes, I saw her. She was brought her yesterday. Frey and Freyja seemed to delight in her arrival.”

“Brother, she is here!” Thor cheered, a smile nearly splitting his face.

Loki had to force himself not to breakdown. She was here. They might have made it in time.

“Where was she taken?”

“Upstairs,” he said urgently. “That door there will bring you to the staircase. I do not know what floor, but the twins like to keep their most prized product on the top floor.”

“She is important to you?” the elf asked Loki, as he swung around to look at the door to the staircase.

The God simply nodded in response and Thor answered. “She is his handmaiden, but also our dear friend.”

Before anyone could reply, their companions rushed in through the broken double doors. Fandral noticed the unconscious guards and immediately began to tie them up with Hogun’s assistance.

“What is the plan?” Sif asked the brothers, carefully looking over the prisoners.

Loki pointed to the far door. “Thor and I will go upstairs where Ellie is apparently being kept. I want Volstagg to remain here and protect the prisoners from any more of Frey and Freyja’s men that may arrive.”

“Prisoners?” Sif repeated, looking grim.

He nodded. “You were right, they are not working here of their own accord. I want you, Fandral, and Hogun to search this whole floor before following us up each floor at a time. We will work from the top downwards and meet you in the middle. All of the prisoners are to be brought back to this room alive.”

Sif nodded firmly and then gave Thor’s arm a squeeze. “Of course. Stay safe, you two.”
And you, my friends,” Thor answered before he took off after his brother. “We will see you soon.”

Together they ascended the stairs as quickly but also as quietly as possible. On any other occasion, Loki would feel anxious about ignoring the two middle floors and whatever people may be held captive on them, but he needed to get to Ellie first. She was his priority, and nothing was about to change that. As they reached the top floor, the hallway went off in opposite directions.

“Well?” Thor asked, surprising him. “What would you like to do?”

Loki blanked for a moment, needing to shake his head to gather his thoughts. He was in no way used to this side of Thor, the one that was asking his opinion and acknowledging his ability, but he could not spend his time thinking about it with so many lives at stake. “I say we split up. You go that way, I go this way. When we have the floor covered, return here. If we find Ellie, keep her safe, clear the floor, and find the other as quickly as possible.”

“Right.” He nodded and quickly grabbed the back of his younger sibling’s neck in a surprisingly gentle manner, even for him. “Stay safe, alright? Make sure nothing happens and that you get out of here alive.”

Momentarily moved by the gesture, Loki sent a smile in return. “Trust me, I have made no plans to die here today.”

“Good. Now, let us find the little one.” With that, Thor snuck down the hallway and left Loki alone.

He didn’t delay and hurried off in the opposite direction. As he crept along, he carefully avoided any squeaky floorboards or unstable side tables. The first few rooms he found were dingy and empty. He wasn’t sure whether finding them unoccupied was a relief or a worry, but he pressed on. The further he explored, the more occupied rooms he found. Some contained prisoners, who he told to run down to the selection room if they didn’t need to be first cut from restraints. He killed several guards who were otherwise occupied assaulting the workers, distracting them with duplicates or slitting their throats before they had even realised he was in the room. He felt no shame in it, for once he saw the horror and the faces of the captives, he knew they deserved little mercy. And yet, as he searched the rooms, he saw no sign of Ellie, until he found a dead man in one of the empty spaces. The sight surprised him. Had Thor come this way? Upon closer inspection of the bled-out corpse, the stab wounds lay waste to that theory. His mouth went dry and he quickly left the room. When searching another room, he found yet another body with its throat cut. Growing more anxious and impatient, he rushed his search along until he rounded a corner and came to what seemed like the last room on the floor. He listened and heard muffled voices on the other side. With a deep breath and a dagger in hand, he gripped the handle and pushed open the door. What he found knocked the wind from him.

“Loki!”

There was his Ellie, sat on the rag on the floor with two men — captives by the dirt on their faces, skimpy clothes, and cut restraints lying on the floor — staring up at him with wide wet eyes. Beside the door lay another dead guard, his throat cleanly slit.

He couldn’t help himself. The relief poured from him before he could even attempt to stop it. “Ellie…”

She stumbled to her feet, breathing heavily as she threw herself into his arms. The feel of her in his arms once more was the most joy he had felt in years. Here she was, his little Midgardian, alive and mostly well. He locked her in his grasp, burying his face in the crook of her neck as she
sobbed into his chest. “You found me! I didn’t know if you were coming. I didn’t know—”

“Shh, all is well,” he reassured her, even through he felt his own tears soaking his cheeks. “Of course I would come. I could not leave you.” He reluctantly pulled her back a tad, cupping her face to check her over and noting the blood stains on her dress. “What is…? Are you alright? Did they hurt you?”

“Nothin’ that won’t heal,” she assured him. “It’s not my blood. Just some cuts and bruises, and I’m knackered, but I’m fine, I promise. Are you okay?”

“Yes, yes, I am fine. I am just so relieved that you are alright, by the Norns.” He hugged her again, clutching her as tightly as he could without doing her any harm. “I missed you so much, Ellie. I am so sorry this happened.”

“No, stop. It’s not your fault. I missed you too.”

“All is well now, I promise you.” He embraced her, feeling comfort at finally being able to hold her again.

“Loki, the workers,” she spoke suddenly, looking at him in desperation. “The people in this brothel — or whatever the fuck it is — they’ve all been taken from their homes like I was! None of this is legal. Frey and Freyja — they’re monsters. They took all these people here and forced them to work—”

“I know, my love,” he whispered gently. “Thor and I encountered some of them downstairs. They are leaving this place with us too.”

“Thor is here?”

“And the Warriors Three and Lady Sif. We all came to help.”

“I take it this is the prince you told us about?” one of the men spoke up as he stood up and then helped the other up as well. “Your employer?”

“It is an honour to meet you, My Prince,” his friend said, an Asgardian by the sounds of his accent. “Are you here to help us?”

“Yes,” he replied, hands still holding on to Ellie firmly. He knew he wouldn’t be able to embrace her like this once they were in the other’s company again, so he would savour the closeness for now. “Today we are all leaving this place and you will all return to your rightful homes.”

The men looked completely shocked by his admission, but thanked him profusely as he began to herd them out of the room. At that moment, Thor appeared from around the far corner of the hall, followed closely by six prisoners. Upon seeing his brother and Ellie, he nearly shouted out, but still ran to meet them and squeezed Ellie in his arms.

“He found you! Are you well? They did not hurt you, did they?” He made a show of checking her over, noticing the cuts on her wrists and ankles, as well as the blood all over her garments.

“I am fine, Thor, now that you guys are here.” She smiled at him in delight, eyes still spilling with silent tears.

“Then we best leave now,” Thor said, unable to wipe the thankful grin from his face. “Today, no one is getting left behind in this place. Follow me.”

For once, Loki was glad to let Thor take the lead as they retreated down the stairs to meet their
companions. This was because his attention was solely focused on the woman at his side. He couldn’t take his eyes off her and stared unabashedly at her dirty, swollen, and bruised face. This emotion was new to him, but he refused to hide the happiness he felt knowing that she was alive and well. The anger would certainly come later. Once he had a moment to sit and find out what they had done to her, he knew he would see red. But, for now, he simply held her close. She was finally safe again.

Loki kept Ellie firmly by his side as they descended the stairs, although she too had her bruised arm locked around his waist, and it didn’t seem as though anything could tear her away.
With Ellie safely in their company once again, Loki, Thor, and their companions turn their attention to Frey and Freyja.

There seems to be a unanimous vibe within the comments that everyone desperately hates Frey and Freyja, and this makes me genuinely happy because aren’t they actually awful? It’s great! Enjoy another instalment of our favourite Loki trash!


As Loki and his companions descended the stairs, they met Hogun, Sif, and Fandral, who had cleared all the other floors. When they returned to the selection room — which was well guarded by Volstagg — they gathered all the workers found on the premises. With the addition of the six prisoners Thor had herded, and the two with whom Ellie was found hiding, there were now thirty of them in total within the room. Whatever guards that had not been killed in the raid were bound and locked in a nearby closet, ensuring any attempted escape was futile.

“You have no need to fear,” Sif explained, addressing the whole room of workers. “We are warriors of Asgard, and this is Prince Thor and Prince Loki. We will keep you safe and ensure that you are all returned to your rightful homes.” There were small gasps and exclamations of relief from the prisoners. Loki watched as some of them embraced each other and began to cry. “While we discuss what will be done, please do a head count and inform us if there are any missing persons we need to find before we leave.”

The Asgardians gathered together, Ellie still clinging to Loki’s waist. The Warriors Three grinned at the sight of her alive and (mostly) well.

“It is good to see you again, little Midgardian!” Volstagg said with the largest smile of the group. “How are you feeling?”

“Better now,” Ellie replied, squeezing Loki’s side. “Thank you for findin’ me.”

“It was all thanks to the princes,” Fandral snorted. “They were very insistent about running blindly into Alfheim to save you.”

“We were lucky Heimdall spotted you when he did,” Hogun said. “Otherwise we may not have found this place at all.”

Sif nodded in agreement. “I am still wondering why this building’s shield fell in the first place.”

“I put that down to extremely good luck,” Thor laughed, ruffling Ellie’s hair affectionately. “I do
not care why it happened. All that concerns me now is Ellie and these prisoners.”

“And Frey and Freyja,” Loki added. “We still have to deal with them.”

“And how exactly shall we go about that?” Fandral asked. “They are presumably at Ljosalfgard with the Allfather and Allmother.”

“They are,” Ellie confirmed. “They were here earlier, but they left not too long ago when the King and Queen arrived at the castle.”

“Mother informed us to go to Ljosalfgard when we have secured Ellie,” Thor reminded Loki. “Perhaps we should go to meet them as requested?”

“And what of the prisoners?” Lady Sif asked.

“We should bring them back to Asgard for the time being,” Loki suggested. “We can get them checked over by Eir and then consult Heimdall with returning them to their rightful homes.”

Thor nodded his head in agreement. “A reasonable plan. Then we shall move all the survivors once they have checked to see if everyone is present. We have collectively scoured every inch of this place, so hopefully this is all there is.”

“Hopefully.” Loki looked down at Ellie by his side. “The sooner we get you to Eir the better.”

She looked up to meet his gaze, brow furrowed. “What? No, I’m not goin’ back to Asgard.”

“We need to get you to the healers wing, Ellie. You are clearly exhausted and need to be attended to.”

“I don’t care,” she insisted. “You’re all about to go off and confront those two arseholes and I want’a come too.”

“I do not know if that is the best idea…” Sif trailed off, while Thor looked equally displeased at the thought.

“Would it not be good to bring me as proof of what happened? You can’t bring all these victims, so why not just bring me to show Odin and Frigga that you’re not lyin’ ’bout this place? I’ll be safe with you’s anyway.”

“Ellie,” Loki began, voice uncharacteristically patient. “You do not need to see them again. First of all, you’re hurt—”

“So I have some cuts and bruises, what of it? I’ll manage fine in your company. Just…please. I want’a see them. If my presence will help to prove their guilt then I want’a be there. Then as soon as they’re taken away I promise to go swiftly back to Asgard. I would much rather suffer through travellin’ to the city to ensure their capture and preventin’ any of this from happenin’ to someone again.”

Loki sighed heavily, hating the idea of her being anywhere near that pair again, even if she did make a valid point. Arriving at the castle with several witnesses and an actual victim — let alone one that is a servant to the Odinsons — would be enough proof to show that none of this was a lie. He saw the determined look on her marred face; there was simply no way she would step down and return to Asgard before confronting her attackers.

“Brother?” Thor asked hesitantly, cutting through his thoughts. “What would you have us do? I feel as though it is your decision.”
The Trickster shook his head slightly. “I do not like it, but she is right. We need to guarantee that Frey and Freyja are put away for their crimes and the pain they have inflicted on these people. Ellie’s presence could help to do so, and I cannot argue with her. She would not take no for an answer anyway.” He settled his gaze on her before he went on. “So we shall bring her to Ljosalfgard.”

“With that settled,” Volstagg said. “I will bring the prisoners back to Asgard while you all go confront the twins. I will keep them safe and call Heimdall.”

Hogun nodded slowly. “I shall join you. My help would be better suited attending to the captives while you all confront Frey and Freyja. With the Allfather and Allmother present, a fight is highly unlikely.”

“Even still,” Fandral began, patting the hilt of his sword. “If there is one, Lady Sif and I will be with the princes and the handmaiden.”

“Shall we?” Sif asked, looking to Loki for the signal.

“Are you sure about this?” he asked the young woman by his side, giving her one more chance to opt out.

Looking back up at him, she nodded firmly, the hand on his waist squeezing briefly. “I’m sure.”

Thor placed a massive hand on her shoulder. “Then I would say it is time to confront them!”

“Could you both begin to round up the captives outside?” Loki said, addressing Hogun and Volstagg, who immediately got to work. “We should head outside also. Come.”

The other four Asgardians and their Midgardian companion finally exited the building. After them came the prisoners, some of whom squinted at the harsh sunlight. Others took in the fresh air, their eyes glistening with tears. Loki watched them smile for a moment before he moved his attention to Ellie again. It probably seemed obsessive, but given recent events, knowing she was still there brought him comfort. While all he wanted was to get her home and cleaned up, he knew he couldn’t force her; she would sooner tell him that he wasn’t the boss of her. At least he could keep her safe by refusing to let Frey or Freyja near her. Despite her determined speech, Ellie seemed severely run down. She breathed heavily, her grip on Loki’s waist tightening the more they walked. He noticed she was dragging her feet and abruptly stopped moving so that he could speak to her.

“Little one,” he urged, his voice gentle but still serious. “Are you alright to walk? I am not comfortable with dragging you through Alfheim if it is only making your exhaustion worse.”

“I’m sorry,” she wheezed and lowered her voice. Thor, Fandral, and Lady Sif were helping to herd all the rescued prisoners together, giving the pair a brief moment alone. “I… I used everythin’ you taught me to keep myself safe, and I don’t have much energy left.”

He narrowed his eyes at her comment, immediately catching the specific meaning behind it. Of course she could hardly mention their seiðr lessons aloud with the others nearby, but evidently she had used magic to save herself. While there was a large part of him that felt pride at her statement — he would need to hound her once they were alone for every detail — all he could do right now was worry about her physical state.

“Are you capable of walking on your own?” he asked, already knowing the answer.

She shook her head as her lower lip trembled. “I’m fuckin’…” She tried to steady herself and
stumbled, Loki quickly catching her in his arms with ease. Her fingers dug into his biceps as they wrapped protectively around her, tears finally slipping from her red eyes. Her voice sounded raw from her ordeal, and his chest ached as she murmured. “I’m sorry. I’m just so tired. I feel so fuckin’ useless.”

“You have nothing to apologise for,” he reassured her, gently running a hand through her knotted hair. “None of this is your fault, alright? And you are certainly not useless. You just told me that you used all your knowledge to keep yourself alive. That hardly makes you useless. You are a true fighter and I am immensely proud of you, love. Feeling the effects of it now does not mean you are weak.”

Clinging to him, she met his gaze as he slowly lifted her to her feet. “I wouldn’t’ve gotten out if it wasn’t for you and the others.”

“Well then,” he said with a shrug. “We can just say it was teamwork.”

“Are you alright?” Thor asked her, hurrying over to the couple as she tried to steady herself.

“I’ll be fine. It’s just hard to walk after all that happened.”

“Well, you are insistent about getting to the castle…” Without another word, Thor squatted down to his knees, his massive back facing her. He looked over his shoulder when she didn’t move.

“Well?”

“Well what?”

“Hop on!”

“You want’a give me a jockeyback?” she deadpanned.

“Of course! It will be just like when you were a child and I would run around the gardens with you on my back. Come on! You are very light to carry, I promise.”

With a tentative look at Loki, she agreed. The God of Mischief carefully placed her on his brother’s back, who in turn hooked his arms around her legs while she wrapped hers across the front of his chest.

“There we are,” he declared as he got to his feet. “Are you alright now?”

“This is better,” she assured him and let her cheek rest on the side of his head. “Thank you, Thor.”

“My pleasure! Now, lead the way, brother!”

Before they went on their way, Loki waited for Heimdall to safely transport Volstagg, Hogun, and the captives back to Asgard via the Bifrost. The quintet watched as the they all disappeared within the massive beam of electrical light through the sky. In a matter of seconds, they were left alone in the clearing, the imprint of the Rainbow Bridge burned into the grass beneath them. Without further discussion, they headed for Ljosalfgard.

* * *

Their arrival was unexpected, given the reactions from the elves. Although, they may have also
earned such a surprised reaction due to the presence of the Princes, or the fact they were armed to the teeth, or that one of them was carrying a bloody Midgardian atop his back. Obviously the city’s guards immediately questioned their arrival, but given that the Allfather and Allmother were already there, it seemed to justify their presence as well. Unwilling to tell the truth for fear of Frey and Freyja being informed, Loki did what he did best and used some honeyed words to make sure they weren’t impeded by anyone as they headed for the castle. When questioned about Ellie, they simply stated that she was due to receive medical attention within. Most of them hardly dared to question royalty, so when the Captain of the Guard stopped them at the castle grounds’ main entrance, he agreed to accompany them into the war room where their parents currently resided with the twins. Once inside and after the guards confirmed there was a woman working within the castle by the name of Dagny, Loki ordered Lady Sif to find her with the help of two of them. The group split up and moved swiftly, even with the remainder of the squadron following them the whole way.

Upon arrival at the massive door to their war room, the Captain of the Guard was quick to call them. “You cannot just burst through the doors unannounced. I have to inform the Lord and Lady of your arrival.”

Loki looked at the man briefly before turning his attention to Ellie, still perched a top Thor’s back. Her tired, bloodshot eyes met his gaze, and he clenched his jaw.

*Protocol be damned…*

Without another word, he forced the doors open with a harsh shove and abruptly announced their arrival himself.

Inside the room stood their mother and father, Frey, Freyja, and a few officials, one of which Loki quickly recognised as Aelsa Featherwine. Two other guards stood either side of the door, and turned to look at the Asgardians as they burst through. Frey’s head shot up from the war table they were currently stood around to see what the commotion was. Loki met his gaze, and the former’s eyes narrowed.

“My sons,” Odin said casually. “You have arrived.”

“We were not expecting you,” Frey said as they spilled inside and the doors were shut behind them. “Although, we were not expecting the King and Queen either.”

“What is the meaning of this intrusion?” Freyja demanded as the other officials looked completely befuddled. “They are not permitted to be here.”

“We do not take orders from you,” Loki snapped. “Not when you have been committing horrific crimes right under this realm’s nose.”

“What are you talking about, Prince?” Frey deadpanned, looking at Aelsa in amusement. “Still making up stories and creating mischief?”

Loki gritted his teeth. “There is absolutely *nothing* false about these allegations.”

“What is going on here?” Aelsa cut in, stepping forward slightly to address Odin and Frigga. “I was not informed that your sons would be joining this discussion.”

“That is because no one was meant to know,” Frigga replied simply. “We had to be sure we had our facts straight before they made their appearance.”

“Allfather,” Frey began, still laughing. “Would you kindly explain why your sons have interrupted our consultation to spout false accusations directed at me?”
Odin shook his head at the Lord, tone sharp. “Well, if they have come with the proof they set out to find, then I do not believe them to be false.”

“And we have brought it, Father,” Thor boomed and stepped forward to stand beside Loki. With a slight shift of his waist, he revealed a still bloodied and bruised Ellie on his back. “We found Ellie within the brothel, as suspected.”

Loki grinned at the sight of Frey’s smile falling slightly. Beside him, Freyja appeared shocked for the briefest of moments before she hid it again. The officials exchanged looks of obvious concern while Aelsa turned to Frey for answers. “Who is this?”

“This is Ellie of Asgard,” Loki answered before Frey even had a chance. “Formally of Midgard, she has been working in our palace since she was a child and is my personal handmaiden. While I was on Vanahem with my father and brother, she was taken from Asgard against her will and brought here. Her abduction was organised by none other than Frey and Freyja.”

There were a variety of shocked reactions within the room. The guards seemed most surprised, breaking their usually stoic demeanour to look to their Captain for guidance. He stood gawking at Loki in surprise. “Prince Loki, you best supply us with evidence before you accuse the Lord and Lady of your handmaiden’s abduction!”

“Proof?” Loki sneered, turning on the captain, teeth bared in disgust. “Is her beaten and bloodied body not proof enough for you?”

“I cannot just take your word for it,” he snapped back. “Do you have any idea how grave these claims are?”

Loki had had enough. The loyalty of their workers was expected but also bloody infuriating. “Do not speak as though I do not understand the severity of the situation! You might as well be blind if you do not see this to be true!”

“Showing up with a beaten mortal is not proof enough for me, Your Highness!”

“Oh, do you need to see your Lord beat and rape her with your own eyes before you would believe it?”

There was a silence in the room, one no one knew how to fill. Loki simply continued glaring at the captain. Out of the corner of his eye, he noticing Thor slowly getting closer to him. If he had his way, he would wring this arrogant fool’s neck with his bare hands. He was about to insult him further when another voice cut across him.

“Everything Prince Loki says is true,” Ellie insisted, voice hoarse but addressing the whole room. Loki turned to see her still on Thor’s back, but with her head slightly raised and expression grim. “I was attacked by another handmaiden and taken to a whorehouse to be used as a toy by both Frey and Freyja ’cause I’m mortal and apparently—” Slowly, she looked over at Freyja with more hatred in her eyes than Loki had ever seen before. “—I am no more than a whore to be used and abused. They falsely believed me to be Prince Loki’s courtesan and wished to cause him distress by takin’ me away. That, and they’re both fuckin’ deluded, incestuous sociopaths who get off on inflictin’ defenceless prisoners pain.”

“You little cunt,” Freyja sneered, stepping towards her suddenly, a move that caused a reaction from nearly everyone in the room. Loki and Fandral stepped in front of Thor, while Frigga planted herself firmly in Freyja’s path.

“Not another move, my Lady,” Frigga said lowly, face cold and emotionless. “That would be
“I will not stand here while this mortal bitch speaks of my sister and I in such a manner,” Frey growled, now openly glaring at both Loki and Ellie. “I do not care whose handmaiden she is; I will not tolerate it!”

When he turned to walk around the war table towards the guests, it was Odin’s turn to step in. “As my wife previously stated, neither of you will move another inch.”

“I wish to hear more of the girl’s accusations,” Aelsa added from her spot. “Allow her to continue.”

Ellie went on talking without any hesitation, hopefully feeling protected knowing that most of the people in this room were on her side. With some more honestly, she could even turn the others as well. “I was locked away in an illegal brothel along with thirty or so other prisoners. They’d all been abducted from their homes within different realms and forced to service the Lord and Lady and their men for years in some cases. I spoke with them ’bout it as I was escapin’ and they explained that they’d been beaten and raped by both Frey and Freyja frequently. Many other workers had been killed by their hands and those of their men.”

The more Ellie spoke, the more appalled the officials on the other side of the room seemed. The guards began to grow uneasy, not exactly sure who they should believe. Sensing the uncertainty in the room, Loki added his own voice to her argument. “The brothel was hidden under a powerful illusion and that is why it was happening under all of our noses for so long. We were lucky that its barrier fell briefly and gave Heimdall enough time to see Ellie within its walls. My brother and I, as well as the Warriors Three and Lady Sif, explored the brothel and saw its depravity and victims with our own eyes.”

“Where are these victims now?” Aelsa asked.

“Asgard, taken there safely by Volstagg and Hogun. Eir should be attending to them in the healers wing as we speak.”

“I can confirm all the things my son is saying,” Odin said, all eyes in the room falling on him. “We spoke with Heimdall back on Asgard after Ellie and Dagny disappeared. When the building’s magical barrier fell, he saw Frey and Freyja leaving the premises and returning to the capital. Now that my sons and their companions have been at this place firsthand, I am sure they could bring you there for further proof. I would not take these facts lightly, for I will give you my word as the Allfather that they are true.”

“We also have thirty other victims who can confirm the involvement of both of them,” Thor added smugly, nodding his head to the twins.

Loki grinned menacingly at them. “I am sure the brothel guards will confess to your involvement when we have a word with them as well. There are a group of them still at the premises bound and locked away, and waiting to be arrested by you, Captain. Not to mention…”

As if on cue, the door opened and in came Lady Sif and the two squadron guards in her company. Being dragged along behind her was a very worried looking Dagny.

“Right on time,” Loki muttered. “Thank you, Lady Sif. For those of you who are not aware, this is Dagny, the undercover handmaiden who took Ellie from Asgard to Alfheim.”

“I found her trying to escape the castle,” Sif said dryly, glaring at the woman. “And took great pleasure in subduing her.”
Loki noticed the look Ellie was sending her former fellow handmaiden. Her eyes expressed a mix of confusion and rage, but she said nothing before she eventually turned her head away to focus her attention elsewhere.

“Dagny,” Frigga called her. “What do you have to say for your actions? Do you deny your involvement in all of this?”

Looking briefly at Frey, the woman kept her lips sealed. Instead, she simply turned her head away and stared at the floor. She would not talk now, but Loki would do everything in his power to ensure she would later. Then maybe afterwards he would enjoy cutting her tongue from her mouth.

“There are simply too many witnesses for either of you to deny these claims,” Odin explained, addressing both Frey and Freyja now. As he spoke, the guards slowly turned their attention to their employers and approached them. “And so, I order your guards to detain you both for crimes against not only the innocent people of the nine realms, but also for those against the royal family of Asgard.”

For the briefest of moments, Frey and Freyja seemed to consider their options, fight or flight kicking in at the finality in the Allfather’s tone. But the odds were stacked heavily against them, given how greatly outnumbered they were. Loki met Freyja’s gaze and merely smiled at her in response, delighting in finally seeing some panic in her eyes. It did not completely simmer and anger he felt knowing what they did to his beloved, but it helped to ease some of it now that their lives were over. At Odin’s order, the captain approached, having seemingly realised the truth behind the accusations made by Ellie and the others.

“By order of the Allfather,” he grunted, not an ounce of disbelief left in his voice. “You are both under arrest.”

The look of pure hatred that their faces morphed into as they were chained and led from the room didn’t bring any further smiles to the face of either prince. They merely stood together, relieved that the right people had been captured after all they put their victims through. They shielded Ellie with their own bodies as the twins were lead out the door, Fandral following the captain closely by Odin’s order. Lady Sif was also given the pleasure of leading Dagny away. The officials were given their leave, excluding Aelsa who was requested to stay.

“Well,” she deadpanned. “I was not expecting to be so horrified by my meeting with them today, but they have outdone themselves.”

“These past few days have been full of surprises,” Frigga agreed, going to embrace her boys. She placed a gentle hand on Ellie’s swollen cheek and whispered. “I am sorry we could not find you sooner, little one, but I am so happy to see you alive.”

“There’s nothin’ to apologise for,” Ellie insisted with what little energy she had left. Even so, she still managed a small smile. “Thank you for helpin’ me.”

“Aelsa,” Odin began, offering her his hand. “If it pleases you, I would have you become the ruler of Alfheim in Frey’s stead. I doubt he or Freyja will be back here any time soon.”

The elf blanched, momentarily surprised by the request, but quickly righted herself with a firm nod and shook his outstretched hand. “Of course, Allfather. I promise to do a far better job protecting the elves than they ever did.”

“I trust you will do so. The light elves of this realm have always been fond of you. I must also ask if, as Alfheim’s next queen, you approve of Frey and Freyja being tried in Asgard?”
“Oh, I insist,” she replied, shaking her head. “I would rather never see either of them again knowing what they put those people through.”

As the pair spoke, Loki turned his attention back to Ellie. Despite the commotion in the room, her eyes were drifting closed, her head now resting on Thor’s vast back as he spoke with their mother.

“Ellie,” the younger prince whispered and gently touched her cheek. “Ellie, are you alright?”

She mumbled in reply. “Jus’ so tired, Loki. ’M sorry…”

“Are you in any pain?” he asked, fully ready to help numb some of it with seiðr before Eir saw to her.

“Jus’ need sleep,” she slurred, barely able to keep her eyes open. “Tired…”

“Thor,” Frigga whispered. “I think you should pass Ellie off to Loki now. Allow him to carry her back to Asgard and share the load.”

“She is as light as a feather, Mother, but if you insist.” Thor didn’t even question it and turned so that Loki could easily slip Ellie into his arms. She didn’t protest at the movement, but simply pressed her face into his neck as he carried her bridal style. As they exchanged their goodbyes with Alfheim’s new soon-to-be queen, the Trickster felt no shame carrying her along the way.

Thor was less than eager to leave her side, opting to squeeze her hand gently before he chose to walk beside Odin as they left the castle. Frigga firmly planted herself next to her younger son, happy to see the pair reunited and safe.

“You are both safe now,” she assured him in a whisper. “I promise you that they will never been allowed near her again. In the meantime, we best get her to the healers’ wing.”

“May I stay by her side?” he requested.

Frigga smiled softly and replied. “There is no need to even ask. I would not expect you to be anywhere else.”

“Thank you, Mother, for all that you have done for us in the last few days.”

Loki was well aware that their ordeal was not over yet, but now that he had Ellie in his arms again and those responsible finally captured, he once again felt a much-needed wave of relief wash over him.

“Are we goin’ home, Loki?” Ellie mumbled sleepily, eyes already shut.

He looked down at her lovingly, knowing only his mother could see the exchange and would not judge him for it. He smiled as her face showed a genuine calmness he had not seen since before he left for Vanaheim. Her hand tightly clutched the collar of his tunic, and he knew that it would remain encased in her small fist until she awoke.

“Yes, little one. We are going home.”
Healing

Chapter Summary

Loki and Ellie finally return to Asgard and the healing process begins.

Chapter Notes

Apologies for the slight delay in uploading, but I was out on the town last night and the whiskey got the better of me haha. Anyway, it turns out, I lied about chapter 25 being the longest chapter of this fic. Here is the longest one in its nearly 8,000 words entirety... I got carried away, okay? And you'll see why, because I must warn y'all about the graphic smut in this chapter. Feel free to skip if that's not your thing, but if it is your thing, I hope this lives up to expectations and isn't cringe :D Enjoy!

On a sidenote, I uploaded an AU Unofferable oneshot here so aptly named "The Adventures of Steve and Trying Too Hard". If you ever wondered how Loki and Ellie would get on living in the Avengers Compound, then give it a looksie! Consider it a small thank you for 6,000 hits, you beautiful people <3


Loki had never been happier to set foot in the Bifröst’s observatory. He stood there and let out a sigh as he clutched Ellie closer to his chest.

Heimdall came to greet the royal family as soon as they all reappeared from the portal. “I saw you coming and I am glad that you are all well.”

“You have my thanks, Gatekeeper,” Loki spoke, gesturing to the woman in his arms. “Without you, we would not have found the establishment and rescued its prisoners.”

“I trust that they have been placed in Eir’s care?” Odin asked with concern.

“She is attending to them as they speak. Volstagg and Hogun were swift in assuring they were seen to.”

“And the twins?”

“They were handed over to the Einherjar by Anaheim’s Captain of the Guard. They are currently within the prison cells. Lady Sif and Fandral have also remained by their side for observational purposes.”

“There is no better place for them,” Thor grunted.

“Loki and I shall bring Ellie to the healers,” Frigga said. “So that she may be seen to for her injuries.”
Odin nodded his head in agreement. “And Thor and I shall see to ensuring Frey and Freyja are being held accordingly.”

“Your horses await on the bridge,” Heimdall said and returned to standing on the podium to watch over the realms. “I will be here if you require my assistance.”

The journey to the healers wing was swift. Thanks to the horses, Frigga and Loki arrived to see the place packed with the survivors from Alfheim. If they weren’t in beds being inspected by the healers, they were sitting next to their friends who were. The healers seemed unfazed by the large numbers, even with the presence of injured soldiers from their excursion to Vanaheim.

Upon seeing the Queen and Prince approaching with Ellie in the latter’s arms, Eir greeted them. “My Queen, My Prince. I was informed that I should be sure to keep a bed spare for the little one. Right this way.”

Eir led them to a room in which a few other patients — all from the brothel — resided. Loki carefully placed her down on top of an examination table and noted that she was drowsy, falling in and out of sleep since they returned. He resisted the urge to brush her cheek, knowing there were eyes on him.

Two more healers arrived at Eir’s side as she spoke again. “We will give her an examination to check for any severe injuries, but she seems in relatively good health given the gravity of the situation. If she is well, we will clear her to return to her own quarters.”

Frigga thanked them as they got to work, speaking to the mortal as they went, asking her general questions about pain or her exhaustion. The Allmother and her son remained in the room, listening to every word that was spoken between the women. For Loki, the situation was too familiar. He never expected to be standing off to the side again as Eir looked over holograms of her insides for suspected injuries. She didn’t deserve to be in this position again, never mind him. She had been through enough in her fraction of a lifetime, and the realisation made his stomach twist.

“I hope you do not blame yourself,” Frigga whispered, clearly sensing his distress. “This is not your fault.”

“I could have done more,” he insisted guiltily. “I should have done more to protect her from that pair. I should have suspected something was amiss—”

“None of us knew, Loki. How could we? Maybe had we heard of Frey and Freyja’s antics we could have done something, but we had no idea. She would not want you saying such things, and you know that.”

“But how did we not see it? I know I was never fond them, but I did not think them to be capable of this.”

“I know, nor I.” Loki felt her arm slip through his, linking him affectionately. He tore his eyes from the examination table to meet her gaze as she continued. “But we cannot think in hindsight right now. We will learn from these revelations to ensure that this never again happens to the innocent inhabitants of these realms. Thankfully, these men and women are safe from harm and will survive their ordeal because of you, Ellie, and all those involved. You did a good thing, my son, and you have made your father and I so proud.”

He shook his head sadly. “Father thinks her life to be frivolous and fleeting. I doubt he is concerned with her wellbeing.”

“But you know it to be precious,” she murmured, tugging lightly on his arm to emphasise her
“And I doubt that she is more concerned with Odin’s opinion than she is with yours. Nevertheless, he knows that these people are alive because of you, and he is proud.”

He never did manage to word a response for his mother. He tried of course, opening his mouth once and then twice to try reply, but couldn’t for the life of him find the right words. He still didn’t know if he believed her statement. Odin being proud of him was…difficult to comprehend or believe. And yet, while this worry hung over him like the weight of the world, Loki still found himself immensely thankful to have his mother at his side and extremely relieved to have his love back home again. He linked Frigga’s arm tighter in his grasp and squeezed. She responded in kind.

“Thank you,” he murmured. “For accepting how I feel for her.”

With a smile, she said. “There is no need to thank me. You make each other so happy and we cannot help with whom we fall in love. Her heritage does not concern me when I see how she looks at you. I spoke to her while you were on Vanaheim and I know her to be genuine in her feelings for you. She truly loves you. That is all I want for you in this life.”

“Regardless, some would not be so understanding. You have always been considerate with me when others have not.”

“You are my son. I love you and only want for you to be happy.”

“I love you too.” He gently placed a kiss on her forehead and let out a sigh.

Ellie’s examination didn’t last too long. Eir approached them with mostly good news — no severe injuries, no signs of rape, no broken bones. Just a concussion from the blow to the back of her head — which they assisted in healing to the best of their abilities — mild dehydration and exhaustion, small rope burn on her wrists, bruises on her cheek, jaw, back, and hip that would soon bloom, and a busted lip. Other than what healing they did to help, they said that she simply needed to rest and eat for the next few days until she was right as rain. She quickly fell asleep on one of the beds in the room after the examination, and Loki didn’t have it in him to move her back to her quarters. That, and they connected her to an IV to assist with her dehydration. He simply thanked the healers and pulled up a chair to sit at her bedside. Frigga remained with him until she was sought after by a guard sent by Odin. With a quick kiss on the cheek, she left her son to meet her husband.

Loki did not mind — he knew she would probably have to be spoken to with regards the twins — and simply sat in his seat and waited for Ellie to wake. There were four other patients in the room, some of which were also sleeping. Others remained awake and thanked Loki for his assistance in saving them. He politely dismissed their gratitude, insisting that it was the decent thing to do.

“Your maid is a brave one,” a man said from his bed. “Tough for a mortal, but she certainly held her own.”

“That she did,” Loki agreed and studied her sleeping form.

He remained unmoved in his seat for many hours, reminiscing about the time his mother asked him to watch the Midgardian child as she slept in one of these beds years ago. Now nothing could pull him away from this woman’s bedside. He smiled slightly at the thought and looked down at his clasped hands. Slowly he turned his palms facing upwards and focused on feeling seiðr flow through his fingers. Much like it did years ago, glowing wisps of green light erupted from his fingers, gliding upwards through the air. They hovered about Ellie’s bed, slowly twirling around as more trails of green joined them. The patients who remained awake watched in mild amusement, gazing at the light green hue that filled the room and bounced off the walls and floor.
Loki was gazing up at the hypnotic strands of light when a rough, small voice spoke.

“D’you like the colour green, by any chance?”

His attention snapped to the bed and was met with a pair of sleepy blue eyes that made his heart race. Despite her cut lip and swollen cheek, Ellie smiled up at him with such a calm and untroubled expression that he couldn’t help but feel his own joy.

Knowing that they had an audience, Loki simply smiled at her, urging his blurring eyes to hold off any tears until later, and answered honestly. “I love it.”

Obviously she knew what he meant; she knew that it was for her. She licked her dry lips and replied softly. “Yeah, I love it too.”

With her awake, Eir got to examining the woman again. It was far shorter than the last one, and she was permitted to return to her chambers now that her energy was back. Before she got a chance, Thor came bounding in like a clumsy hound. With him were Fen and Sevda, who seemed genuinely relieved at the sight of their friend back home and mostly well. Not expecting any visitors, Ellie’s eyes welled up uncontrollably at their arrival, happily pulling both of them into an embrace. Thor and Loki momentarily took a step back as the trio caught up.

“All is well?” the eldest Odinson asked.

Loki nodded. “All is well. A thorough examination from Eir has shown that she should fully recover in time.”

“What splendid news!”

“Indeed. Once she is finished speaking with her comrades I will bring her back to her quarters.”

“I suppose she must catch up on rest as mortals do. Sometimes I forget that she is far more frail than you and I.”

“Sometimes I too forget,” the Trickster admitted. “It does not cross my mind as frequently as it used to.”

“Well, look at the strength she showed toady. She helped all these people escape and soon they will return to their homes. We can rest easy knowing we did what was right.”

Loki shook his head and grumbled. “I will rest easy when I hear of Frey and Freyja’s imprisonment.”

“I can confirm that they are currently being held in separate magic-proof cells in the dungeons, as is Dagny,” the God of Thunder explained. “Father seemingly intends to bring them to trial as soon as possible, perhaps in the next day or so. You will soon have news that will put you at ease, brother. For now, you can celebrate knowing they won’t get a chance to do this to someone else again thanks to all we did.”

With a clap on the shoulder, Thor finished speaking and flashed Loki a genuine grin. The latter returned the gesture, surprised by the discussion. “It had to be done.”

“True, but that does not mean we cannot celebrate with revelry.”

“Celebrations?” Loki asked in surprise.

“Of course! We had only returned from Vanaheim and then had to leave for Alfheim. There are
double celebrations in order! You must join us later in the feast hall. All of those who assisted today should be congratulated. Perhaps when Ellie is in better health she can join us on another occasion.”

It was an unusual feeling being included in the festivities. For a moment, Loki found himself unsure as to how he should respond. The invitation had been laid out for him, and yet he found his thoughts drifting to leaving Ellie alone that night. Surprisingly, he felt somewhat reluctant to leave her to attend the party with his sibling. “I will see how I feel later.”

Thor didn’t argue, but he did say that he truly hoped he would join them.

Before they left to return to their duties, Fen and Sevda approached the brothers to thank Loki specifically for bringing their friend home. Much like with the other survivors, he simply said it was the right thing to do. How could they have left anyone behind? With the visitors gone, he gently lifted Ellie into his arms with the intention of carrying her to her quarters. She argued against it, obviously, and insisted that she could walk, but he was quick to shut her down and do as he pleased. They were accompanied by guards as they went, one of which was Kirkjabyr, who met them on his way to the healers wing with the intention of visiting the young woman. The Einherjar stayed close and promised to remain outside when Loki took Ellie into his own room, explaining that he intended on keeping her there for her safety while Frey and Freyja awaited their conviction.

“Do you think this is a good idea?” Ellie asked uncertainly as he shut the door behind them.

“They cannot question my decision, little one,” Loki replied with a chuckle. “I certainly intend to keep you in my chambers until your attackers are locked up and the key thrown away.”

“And can I not sleep in my chambers? I’m exhausted.”

“You can sleep in my bed soon, I promise.” As he spoke, he made his way to the bathroom, holding her a little closer now that they were alone. “But first, you need to bathe.”

“Are you sayin’ that I smell bad?” she asked with a small smirk.

“Perhaps. That, and you are covered in filth that needs to be washed off.” He gently set her down on a nearby seat before turning his attention to the large bath in the corner of the room. He turned on the taps, holding his hand under the drain until the water was hot enough.

“Not that I don’t appreciate the gesture,” she said from her seat. “But I don’t really have the energy to scrub all this off me.”

“That is what I am here for,” he replied with a shrug, and sat on the corner of the bath as water began to fill it. When he looked up, he noticed the red tint in her cheeks. “You cannot possibly be shy when I have already seen you bare.”

“I’m not shy!”

“Your blushing would suggest otherwise,” he chuckled and ran his hand through the water. “It has called your bluff.”

“Could you not just clean me up with magic?”

“I would much rather do a thorough and proper job to ensure that your injuries are seen to. Let me take care of you. Allow me this, at least. You have nothing to be shy about. I am merely helping to wash you; there are no underlying sexual connotations, I promise.”
She nodded slowly, hand anxiously grabbing at the ends of her skirts. “I know, I know. It’s just a little new, is all.”

“And that is quite alright,” he reassured her, then got to his feet and slowly approached. “Do you trust me?”

She answered without hesitation. “Of course I trust you, Loki.”

“Then allow me to help you disrobe,” he said softly, holding out both hands. “And then allow me to help you bathe, please.”

Ellie slowly raised her hands to grip his and got to her feet with his help. She sighed and began to undo the ties of her cloak. “You know I can’t say no to you when you look at me like that.”

“Silver tongue, love,” he reminded her as he lifted the garment from around her shoulders. “I am difficult to dismiss.”

“I would say you’re just stubborn, but whatever you say, My Prince.”

A snigger escaped him as he continued to assist her pulling off each layer of clothing until she was stripped down to nothing. He folded each piece of her outfit with care and then laid them aside on the counter top. With an arm around her bare waist, he gently helped her to the bath, which was now just about filled to satisfaction. With his free hand, he turned off the tap, checked the temperature, then hummed in satisfaction, and helped her inside.

She hissed as he did so, and he was quick to check on her. “Too hot?”

“No, no. I just need to get used to it.”

“Let me know if you need the water to be hotter or cooler.”

With her safely submerged in the water so that it covered her to her shoulders, Loki got down on his knees and grabbed a nearby dry washcloth and bar of soap. Ellie watched attentively as he rolled up his sleeves and began to lather up the soap in his hands. They shared a look before he attempted to touch her, but she was quick to give him permission with a nod. He got to work, gently rubbing the bar of soap over each of her arms as she lifted them out from under the water. They chatted idly as he cleaned her, gently scrubbing the bits of dirt and grime from her small body with a tenderness and care that not many knew he possessed. She sat up and leaned forward as he wiped her back, taking special care when he came across a lump, cut, or soon-to-be bruise. He showed even more consideration when cleaning the cuts on her face. Every so often, she would flinch if he needed to clean a particularly sore part of her body, but he was quick to apologise and place an affectionate kiss on her forehead. He took his time cleaning her body, making sure that she was properly attended to in every way. She even allowed him to clean more intimate places when he asked if she’d rather do it herself. It wasn’t as though it bothered him anyway. With her body cleaned and now visibly more relaxed, Loki used his own shampoo to wash her hair. He worked thoroughly and without complaint, gently undoing whatever knots could be found and massaging her head. By the time he had finished rinsing her hair, she was half asleep, so he helped to lift her back to her feet. He didn’t care that doing so resulted in his clothes getting a tad wet, he was more concerned about finally getting her to bed.

“Thank you,” she mumbled drowsily as he used seiðr to dry her off.

“You have nothing to thank me for.”

“But you’re so good to me all the time; that’s definitely somethin’ worth thanking. Do I get to sleep now?”
“Of course you do,” he whispered as he picked her up and brought her into his bedroom again. “You get to sleep for as long as you like.”

He set her down on the bed, forcing himself to tear his eyes away from her naked form, and fetched one of his undershirts for her to wear. Once he helped her put it on, he pulled back the covers and watched happily as she just about managed to crawl up the bed and rest her head on his pillows.

“Are you comin’ to bed?” she asked, eyes half shut as he pulled the duvet up over her.

“How could I ever turn down such an invitation from you?”

“Stop flirtin’ with me and come to bed, you eejit.”

Before he got a chance to reply there was a rather loud knock at the door. Already having some idea as to who it could be, he gave her hand a squeeze before answering it. On the other side of the doorway was Thor, grinning broadly.

“Brother, come!” he insisted delightedly. “Are you not ready to drink until we can no longer see?”

Loki glanced briefly at the bed, noting Ellie’s form under the blankets. Her chest was rising and falling slowly as sleep took her, and the sight relieved the distress he felt at the thought of being separated from her. With a small frown, he turned back to face his brother and answered. “As inviting as that sounds, I will have to join you another time.”

Thor’s face fell as he blurted out. “You are joking.”

The youngest Odinson was quick to hush him with a finger to his lips. When Thor looked at him in confusion, he stepped away from the door and pointed to the bed. “Ellie is asleep and I do not wish to leave her right now. Eir has said she needs rest to recover and I want to make sure she gets it.”

If he was honest, Loki would admit that he thought Thor would argue with him. He was fully expecting him to insist that the mortal would be fine on her own. So he was surprised to see a grin reappear on his bearded face. When he spoke, his voice was in an uncharacteristic whisper. “Do you recall when she first arrived on Asgard? And you wanted nothing to do with her?”

The memory caused a small feeling of guilt to settle in his gut. “I do, yes.”

“And now look at you! You watch over her as though she were family. For what it is worth, I am glad that we befriended little Ellie. Mostly because she has turned you into a softie.”

“That is definitely not one of my traits,” Loki argued.

“Oh, but it is. When once you would have sent her away, now you guard her and threaten to kill anyone who looks at her the wrong way. She has certainly had an effect on you, Loki. She has changed you so much that you are now even courting a mysterious woman whom you told me that you love! Who knew a little Midgardian could genuinely befriend the God of Mischief and Lies. It is quite the tale.”

Letting out a small chuckle, he replied. “Do not think me to be soft just because we are friends.”

“Whatever you say. I must go meet my comrades, but I promise not to tell Father that you let a mortal sleep in your bed. Goodnight!”
With a wink, Thor took his leave and went to presumably drink himself into a coma. Loki merely
shook his head with a smirk and closed the door, shutting the outside world out with it. He was
quick to shed his clothes, feeling his muscles ache with what they had all endured that day. He
crawled into his bed as quietly as he could, hoping he wouldn’t wake the unconscious woman
who already occupied it. At first he hesitated in attempting to hold her, knowing that it risked
waking her when she desperately needed rest. And yet, having her this close to him after what she
had to go through — most of which he had yet to hear from her — sent his heart racing. He
simply rolled over, wrapped his arms tightly around he waist, and settled himself into the curve of
her back. In her sleepy state, she responded by shuffling closer to him. The relief he felt at safely
holding her close was profound and new, but somehow he no longer felt frightened by it. Not
only did he feel better knowing no one could hurt her with him there, the familiarity and comfort
of her touch reminded him that he too was safe with her. Instead of pulling away, he chose to bury
his face in her hair and fall into a relaxing and overdue sleep.

* * *

Ellie’s recovery came with no complications, much to the relief of Loki and others. She never
fought him (well, excluding the first day where he threatened to tie her to the bed if she argued
with him again) and was a model patient. Frigga visited regularly with Thor, but only once in
Odin’s company, to make sure that she was healing well. Neither parent attempted to question his
over-protectiveness — how very dramatic, how very Loki — so the secret couple was left in
peace. Fen and Sevda also visited every day once they had completed their duties. Whenever Loki
had to leave to attend to his own responsibilities, Kirkjabyr remained firmly unmovable from his
position guarding the room and its young inhabitant.

Three days passed by, three days in which Frey and Freyja remained imprisoned and awaiting
trial. It had been delayed, mostly due to the need to wait for all of the witnesses — otherwise
known as their victims — to heal before even attempting to testify against them. That being said,
the disgraced former rulers of Alfheim were safely locked away.

On the evening of the forth night of Ellie’s house arrest, she and Loki had just finished dining
together when she informed him that it was probably time she tell him exactly what happened in
that brothel. He looked up from his goblet of wine, surprised by the sudden statement, but eager to
hear her story. While he never pressured her for answers since her return, the lack of knowing had
nearly driven him mad. He had heard things of course, mostly from others who had spoken to
various victims, but he had yet to hear Ellie’s story from her own lips. So, he sat in silence with a
supportive hand holding hers as she carefully explained all that she remembered. He succeeded in
staying calm when she reiterated the horrific things Frey and Freyja both said and did, how lucky
she had been when Frigga and Odin’s arrival threw their plans out the window. It was obvious in
her glassy eyes and the slight tremor in her free hand that it was painful to relive and tell another. It
was not that long ago when they sat together on a park bench on Midgard where she described her
troubled childhood. When she finished her story, he was quick to pull her into his lap and embrace
her firmly.

“You are so brave,” he murmured, running a hand through her hair. “And I think you have no
idea how truly fearless you are.”

“Fearless how?” she asked with a snort.

“You went toe to toe with two insane gods and you question your courage? Don’t be daft.”
“You’re just biased. You think I’m practically perfect in every way.”

“I can assure you that I think no such thing,” he shrugged, rousing a laugh from her. The sight made him bite his lip and use the hand that had been stroking her hair to lightly cup her cheek, wary of the bruises that had now bloomed in harsh purples and blues. “If you want my honest opinion, I am beginning to realise how truly important you are to me.”

Her laughter died down as she smiled sadly back at him. “I think my time away from you taught me the same thing.”

“I cannot lose you,” he admitted and swallowed thickly. He leaned forward to press his face into the side of her neck for comfort. “I do not care who attempts to separate us — be they a god or otherwise. No one will keep us apart.”

“That is wishful thinkin’ given the circumstances of our relationship.”

“Ellie, look at me.” When she met his gaze, he placed a soft kiss on her cut lips and let his forehead rest against hers. “I love you, and I do not care what happens in the future — I will not let anyone come between us. I do not care if Odin himself forbids it, do you understand? We will take it one day at a time and figure it out together. Even though I sometimes question whether I am worthy of your affections, I find myself far more afraid of living without you.”

“What?” She moved back slightly, eyes wide in surprise. “You can’t be serious! Why do you think you’re not worthy?”

“I… I am not the most desirable one in this palace. I have always been second to Thor in most regards. Getting to know you has revealed to me how truly admirable and beautiful you are, and I am not sure if I am worthy of your love.”

“Loki,” she sighed with a frown. With a tenderness that was not often shown to him, she cupped his face and spoke. “I love you. D’you hear me? I’m so in love with you, with every part of you. It wouldn’t make a difference to me if you were the crowd favourite of Asgard or another servant workin’ in the palace. I didn’t fall for your title, I fell for you, and all of the traits that make you you. I hadn’t planned on fallin’ for anyone, but I realised that you were so dear to me before I could do anythin’ ’bout it.”

He nodded his head. “The whole thing was very surprising and shocking for me too.”

“Also very chaotic.”

“And drenched in vulnerability.”

She smirked at that. “Look at us makin’ ourselves vulnerable and actually openin’ up for once.”

“I am sure this is a sight to behold,” he agreed and leaned up to kiss her before he grew serious again. “You accept me for who I am, and that is not something done lightly around here.”

“Are you forgettin’ that you did the same for me? And yet you think you don’t deserve me… Perhaps I’ll just have’ta show you that you do.”

“And how might you do that?” he asked, voice dropping an octave as he ran his thumb along her bottom lip.

“However you want.”

Loki was quick to pull her in for a deep kiss and Ellie was equally swift in reciprocating. She
seemed unfazed by any pain that bloomed in her cuts from the contact, so he took it as an invitation to kiss her with a passion that had them both gasping for breath. He gripped her hips in his large hands and shifted her body so that she was now straddling his lap. Without prompt she ground herself into his crotch, already jumping at the friction. He moaned unabashedly into her mouth, not expecting the contact that had him shivering. There was a desperation to their movements, hands grabbing at anywhere they could reach, teeth catching lips, gasps escaping them both.

“Ellie,” he warned, guiding the movement of her hips with his hands. “I can’t…”

“Are you okay?” she whispered, kissing along his jawline.

“I am straining to not throw you on to my bed and ravish you until your throat is raw from screaming my name.”

His confession was met with an abrupt silence and his stomach dropped.

*Should I not have said that? Fuck, I think I have scared—*

“Can we do that?”

“What?” he nearly barked, leaning back so that he could see her face clearly.

She smiled shyly as she repeated herself. “I know we’ve already been intimate to a degree, but my experience with the twins has made me release that I want to do this with you, and only you.”

“Are you sure?” he asked, searching her face for any doubt.

“Yeah, I’m sure if you are too.”

Without any other prompting, Loki stood up from his chair. His hands held her to him as her legs wrapped around him for balance. He reached the bed quickly and fell on top of the duvet with her under him. The view only served to make him harder and she reached up to pull him in for another kiss. While he was still hesitant to rush, impatience got the better of her. With slightly clumsy hands, she struggled to undo the ties of his lounge clothing and he watched her until she started to curse in frustration.

“Struggling, love?” he asked in amusement, now kneeling above her.

“This needs to come off,” she insisted. “Your clothes are unnecessarily complicated.”

“Then allow me.” He gently pushed her hands away and striped off his clothes himself. He watched her carefully with every part of his body that was revealed, loving how she was looking at him with unfeigned desire. Once he had shrugged off his underclothes, he began to get to work on her garments. “You cannot allow me to be nude on my own, can you?”

“No, that’s hardly fair.” Though she helped him undress her, he could hear the small quiver in her voice. Knowing she was still nervous about the encounter, he took his time, gently sliding her top off her shoulder and kissing along the skin as it became exposed. He knew the preparation that was needed — for her own sake, she needed to be physically ready for him and he would be damned if this experience was to be needlessly painful for her. As soon as her underclothes were tossed down the end of the bed, he latched on to her breasts, kissing and sucking at them until she was whimpering aloud and gripping his hair. Her back arched off the bed in response and he took pride in knowing there would be marks left over from his actions. He intended to leave marks all over her. He briefly kneeled back so that he could grip the edges of her underpants in his hands. With a nod from her, he slowly slid them down her legs and threw them over his shoulder.
“You won’t be needing them for a while,” he breathed and captured her lips again.

Quite suddenly, he flipped them over so that she was now laying above him. She seemed surprised by the movement and looked down at him in confusion. “I don’t… I don’t know what to do…”

“Shh, it’s alright. You should have more control with it being your first time. Here, lie on top of me.”

She followed his instructions, lying down so that her body was draped over his and her legs rested either side of him. “Like this?”

He nodded his head and brushed her hair out of her face. “Gods, you are beautiful.”

Their kisses grew heated, tongues battling for dominance as Loki encouraged her to do whatever she wanted to him. He held back, fully aware that he could easily hurt her fragile mortal body with his inhuman strength. That being said, he gave her all he had to offer, forcibly rutting his hips up into hers. The feel of her breasts brushing against his naked chest made him growl and grab at her rear with both hands. He squeezed, delighting in the strangled moan she released at the contact. He could feel her arousal coating his solid length as she rolled against him. His heart thumped erratically in his chest as a result, giving hers a run for her money. Squeezing her again, he stooped one hand down and around to touch her. Finding the wetness he was yearning for, he grinned delightedly and slid a single digit inside her heat. A hushed gasp escaped her as she broke the kiss and buried her face into his neck, her hot breaths fanning over his sensitive skin.

“Did I do this to you, hmm?” he snarled, probing her and then stroking her most sensitive spot with his soaked finger. “Look how wet you are for me.”

“Just for you,” she whimpered in a small voice, the sensation almost making her limp.

His slow strokes began to pick up speed as he felt her body react. “Can you come on my fingers? I need you to come before I do anything else to you.”

“Please,” she moaned softly, voice muffled by the pillows. “Loki—”

Not wanting to torture her tonight, he rubbed her until her body tensed and a choked gasp came from her. He groaned in delight as he felt more wetness seep from her as a result of her orgasm, and gods did it only make him want her more. He let her ride it out, prolonging the sensation with gentle caresses and kissing. “You are so good for me, Ellie. What a good girl you are. Sit up for me now.”

Despite her shaking arms she obliged, pushing herself into a seated position on his lap. He took a moment to admire her sitting above him, hair dishevelled and cheeks red. Her breathing was heavy as he pushed himself up to meet her and then scooted them backwards so that he could rest his back against the headboard.

“Are you alright?” he asked, placing light kisses on her cheek.

“Yeah, ’m okay,” she rasped, hugging his shoulders.

“If you still want me, this position will allow you more control.” He settled his hands on her hips, lovingly nuzzling her with his nose.

“But what about…” She cleared her throat. “Protection?”
“I know a spell that I shall use later,” he reassured her. “It will ensure you do not fall pregnant afterwards, I promise. Be at ease; you are in safe hands. Shall we?”

Even when she nuzzled him back and assured him that she was ready, he still felt a tad anxious for her. Despite how desperately he wanted her, despite how hard and leaking his length was against her stomach, he needed for her to enjoy this.

Ellie took the lead, pushing herself up on her knees so that he could slip his length between them. His lips parted automatically as his head pressed against her soaked entrance, hot and wanting and desperate to fill her. With one hand grasping the back of her head so that their foreheads pressed together and the other clutching her hip, he felt her lower herself on to him painstakingly slow. He hissed at the sensation, trying to focus on recognising any discomfort in her eyes. She flinched slightly as the head impaled her.

“You are doing so well,” he praised her, forcing his hips to stay still and wait. “Fuck, Ellie, you feel incredible…”

His praise seemed to spur her on, as she continued to sink herself down on to him, more of him entering her each time. If she winced in pain, he hushed her worries, instructing her to take a moment before continuing. He was big and he knew this. He knew it was uncomfortable for her even with her wanting him so badly.

“You can stop at anytime you want to if it hurts.”

“No, I’m okay. I can do it.”

She was true to her word. In a few moments, most of his erection was buried inside her. The feeling of finally claiming her drove him mad. He relished in it — she was so smooth and snug now that he could feel all of her. He covered her face in kisses, noting the salty taste of silent tears that fell down her cheeks. “You did it, love. There will be no more pain now, I promise.”

“It’s not so bad,” she murmured, hugging his shoulders. “I just feel kinda full.”

“That is completely normal. I can assure you that now you will only feel pleasure. Rock your hips like you did so well before.”

Ever the obedient lover, she followed his instructions and did so. Although he only slipped in and out a little bit, she gasped, looking down to where their bodies now connected. He grinned at her when she turned her surprised gaze to him and repeated the movement.

He grunted roughly as she settled into a steady rhythm, delighting in the sensation. “Fuck, you are so tight.”

His words only encouraged her movements, both of them thrusting their hips together and holding each other desperately. Her body writhed against him as his lips found their way to her chest again. He settled both hands on her hips and began to pump into her at a leisurely pace, panting as he did. The silence in the room was broken only the rustling sheets, the slapping of their skin, and the soft sighs and wanton whimpers from them both. Her walls pulsed around his bare length, the heat in his abdomen growing with each second. He took a moment to savour the sight of her before him, lost in pleasure, lost in him. He would be the only one to see her like this. He would be the only one to make her come.

“Moan for me,” he husked, reaching between them to stroke her in circular motions. “I want to hear you.”

“Oh, fuck,” she mewled, head falling to rest on his shoulder. “Fuck, fuck, fuck. Don’t stop.”
“Are you close?” he asked, forcing her to look into his eyes.

Her answer came in a cry. “Yes!”

Her fingers dug harshly into his skin as she suddenly picked up the pace, overwhelmed by the multiple stimulants. It didn’t take long for her to suddenly climax, her entire body trembling as her eyes screwed shut. Loki forced himself to fuck her through it, gritting his teeth as she nearly squeezed the very life out of him. He couldn’t tear his eyes away from the look of bliss she wore so proudly, lips parted in silent pleasure. Holding off his own undoing, he gave her a few minutes to ride it out before he gently flipped her on to her back, ensuring that their connection wasn’t severed. His arms protested as he bent down to press a sloppy kiss on her full lips; he had only just barely survived not finishing as her heat fluttered around his twitching member. He grasped her thighs and pulled them up around his waist. She was completely pliant under him, even as he began to rut into her again. Now that he was fully in control, his thrusts were more powerful as he slippin in and out of her sex, the evidence of her arousal completely covering both patches of glistening hair on their groins. The sight made Loki’s chest rumble. With his head resting beside hers, grunts escaped him with each stroke of his hips. He was getting closer now. Within his gut the familiar sensation of a coil tightening grew stronger and stronger the more time passed.

“You have to come for me again,” he rasped into her ear. “I’m close. Do you see what you do to me? Do you understand how badly I have wanted to see you come undone beneath me? Will you come with me like a good girl, Ellie?”

The sigh she let out as he spoke nearly had him shooting inside her almost immediately. He ravished her neck, kissing and biting until he was certain she could take no more. He was close now, so infuriating close that it was getting difficult to control himself. He wrapped his arms around her, holding her as tight as physically possible against his sweaty body. With their foreheads pressing together, his lips uncoordinatedly brushed against hers as his eyes snapped shut. Pleasure rippled through him. His abdomen twitched and tensed again.

“Loki, please,” she whimpered unexpectedly. “I want’a feel you. I want you to come inside me. Please, Loki.”

He was stunned. Her words were unexpectedly graphic, and the thought of spilling within her suddenly hit him like a freight train. “Fuck, Ellie!”

His hips quickened, the steady pace he held before quickly succumbing to rapid and stuttered thrusts into her welcoming heat until he lost himself in his own climax. At that moment, she too finished, hands grasping tightly at his clenching rear between her legs. He buried himself as deep as he could as a guttural sob tore through his throat and he emptied himself inside her. The pair breathed heavily together, stunned to near silence by the force of their coupling. Even in his daze, Loki remembered to press a hand against her abdomen and breathlessly mumble the familiar incantation that would ensure she did not become with child. With that out of the way, he rolled out to his side and pulled her with him. He had no idea how long they lay there for, but neither attempted to pull away. Getting his breath back, all he did was hold her tight, stroking her arms and legs while softly snuggling into her.

“Did I hurt you?” he whispered and pressed a kiss into the top of her head as their breathing finally settled down.

“No,” she assured him, resting against his chest. “That was great but also overdue.”

“I agree. At least now we can do that more often. Preferably every day.”
She laughed softly at that. “I’m already onboard with this idea.”

He shifted his body to stand up, but her small hand clutched at his arm to halt him. “Don’t go, please…”

“I was merely going to get a cloth to clean us up, little one. I will be back in a moment.”

“Can it wait until mornin’?” she asked hopefully. “I like lyin’ here with you and I…don’t want’a be on my own after that.”

She wasn’t wrong. Cleaning up could certainly wait until tomorrow and he didn’t want to cause her any unnecessary stress after such an important experience.

“Whatever my love wants of me,” he began, pulling a blanket over them both. “She shall have.”

“Thank you,” she sighed, settling down once again with her eyes already drooping shut. “I love you, Loki.”

“And I, you. Now get some rest. I promise to be here when you wake.”

The God of Lies stayed true to his word. For the first time in many centuries, he refrained from shooing a lover from his bed. He felt no discomfort or abhorrence at being held by another.

Loki had never been so sure of his feelings before.

To put it simply, he was happy.
The next morning, Loki slowly awoke feeling surprisingly well-rested given the events of the last week. As he gradually became aware of his surroundings, he noted the small form of Ellie melded into his own. He could tell by her breathing that she was still asleep. With her bare back pressing into his chest, he softly kissed along her shoulder and tightened his arms around her waist. She mumbled and shifted slightly as he continued to run his lips over her skin.

“Hey,” she greeted groggily.

“Hey yourself,” he replied and trailed kisses up the side of her neck.

“You’re persistent,” she laughed, shivering from his silliness. “How long’ve you been awake?”

He growled, bucking his hips into her. “Too long.”

“What time is it?”

“You’re asking all the wrong questions, love.”

“I know your mind is elsewhere — or rather, I can feel it is — but I’m more concerned ’bout whether you’ll be called to your duties.”

“I already had Thor agree to cover me if needs be,” he whispered. “Mother has agreed to allow
me to spend my time by your side ensuring that you heal.”

“Heal, huh? That’s a weird word to describe what we did last night.”

He breathed heavily and began placing open-mouthed kisses up and down her neck. “You are a little minx.”

“Says the God of Mischief—” she gasped as he bit into a particularly sensitive spot. “Jesus, Loki…”

“Did I mention that I love the sound of my name when you say it like that?” he chuckled and reached up to squeeze her breasts with both hands. “It makes me so fucking hard…”

She only moaned in response, practically melting under his hands. Delighting in her reactions, he shut his eyes and set about seducing her. He rutted into her, the friction causing pleasure to shout through his abdomen. He nearly jumped when he felt her hand grasp his length. He grunted as she began pumping him and hastily slid one hand down her stomach and slipped between her legs.

“Ellie,” he breathed, gently circling her with his fingers. “Are you too sore to—”

She cut him off quickly. “No, I’m fine. Please…”

“Lift your leg. Hook it back over mine.”

She did as instructed without an hesitation, and, after some hasty but thorough preparation, he lined himself up and slid inside her. He was convinced he would never tire of this feeling, or the sigh the escaped her when he filled her to the hilt. Their movements were lazy in the haze of their drowsiness, and their noises slightly more reserved than last night, but Loki found it no less enjoyable. With each thrust of his hips they both whimpered and the knot in his groin grew tighter and tighter. Knowing he was getting closer to his release and feeling her inner muscles fluttering around him sporadically, he ordered her to look at him. Obediently she turned her head to meet his gaze over her shoulder and he smashed his lips against hers in a deep kiss. He persisted until she was coming apart in his arms and he was falling right after her.

He simply could not help himself. After the time he spent pining for her, jealously watching other men take their chances with her, he couldn’t believe that she was completely and solely his to love and care for.

Afterwards, they lay together, clutching each other tight as their breathing slowly levelled out.

“I meant to speak with you,” he eventually murmured, slipping out of her. “About an important matter, but evidently I got distracted.”

“What important matter?” she asked with a slight wince.

“I’m sorry,” he said softly and reached a hand down below to soothe any pain he caused. “I should be more careful.”

She placed her hand over his. “It’s not your fault I’m mortal.”

“No, but it is my fault if I am careless and hurt you.”

“Stop that,” she insisted and sat up. “Loki, I’m grand. Just a little sore, but that’s kinda a guarantee with this sorta stuff. Can you not look so grumpy for two seconds! Do I need to reiterate that I really enjoyed that?”
He grumbled slightly and moved his hand to her stomach. “I am glad you did, but I will be more gentle with you in the future.”

Ellie simply watched him in fascination as he once again said the incantation to prevent her from becoming pregnant. He left her for a moment to fetch a damp cloth from the bathroom and cleaned them both. When he tossed it out, he returned to sit back down on the bed with her.

“So what was this important thing we needed to discuss?” she asked, happily sitting herself in his lap.

He wrapped his arms around her waist and sighed. “Ah, yes. Well, it is in relation to the recent events in Alfheim.”

“Oh.” Her face fell briefly at the memory. “What about it?”

“I wished to ensure that I never struggle to find you again, no matter what realm we are in. At first, I thought we would be safe with Heimdall’s ever-seeing gaze, but now I realise I must take further precautions if he has been hindered by someone’s magic.”

“And how exactly would you manage that?”

“Ellie,” he began, tucking a lock of hair behind her ear. “Have you heard of binding souls before?”

“No, can’t say that I have. What is it?”

“It involves binding a soul to something else, such as a soul to an object, or a soul to a soul, usually to the point where they each have a part within the other.”

Her eyes met his, carefully assessing his words before she spoke. “Alright… Go on.”

“Though not entirely common, it is sometimes an action performed by lovers or soulmates who wish to be connected on a deeper and more spiritual level. Essentially, each person would have a part of the other’s essence within them.”

“What does this have to do with Alfheim?”

“There are many benefits that come with soul bonds. Let us say that you and I were soul bound. We would have a far deeper awareness of the other and a connection that can withstand great distances. With this also comes the ability to physically locate each other from certain distances. This varies from knowing your precise location if you are close by, or the general direction in which you lie if the distance is far greater. Emotions can be sensed and understood, even though we may not be together in person. You will be able to feel what I feel, and I you. Our mind and soul will become permanently connected and this will allow for telepathic communication and visiting the mindscape of one another.”

“That sounds like a serious connection to have,” she pondered slowly, taking in his every word.

“Indeed it is. It is not something to do frivolously. But, my point remains, if we were to consent to this magic, neither of us would ever be in danger of a similar situation than that you had at the hands of Frey and Freyja. I would be able to tap into our bond and locate you if I feared you were in danger. And, unlike the magic used to hide you away, my attempts at finding you can only be blocked by you, if you so choose.”

“And this is something you wish to do? Bind your soul with mine?”
It was something Loki had thought long and hard about. The idea occurred to him the morning after her return to Asgard. He lay in bed while she slept sprawled out on top of his chest, her head slowly rising and falling with each breath he took. He had known of binding magic for a long time from his seiðr lessons with his mother. It was briefly touched upon, but more questions from his younger self led to Frigga going into a deeper explanation of the advantages as well as the risks. Soul bonds had only ever been considered when he was young, foolish, and idealistic. Thankfully he grew out of such idiocy and realised his feelings at that age were fleeting. From then on, the concept of binding his soul with that of another seemed completely ridiculous, but now… Now, with Ellie by his side, he couldn’t imagine a life without her. Somehow, the concept of having a part of their souls forever linked no longer repulsed him. In fact, he somewhat yearned to know that she would become irrevocably his and no other would ever compare.

_Odin’s beard, I have certainly become soft, have I not?_

He smiled at her softly and replied. “I assure you, I would not wish to do it with any other.”

The young woman sat in his lap for a moment, her fingers softly playing with the hair on the nape of his neck. “When did you think of this?”

“A few days ago, and I have been contemplating it ever since. I am familiar with the magic required to join us, but I felt that mulling over it would be wise.”

“Definitely. If it’s alright with you, could I think about this before we do anythin’?”

“Of course,” he assured her and placed a kiss on her temple. “You may take all the time you need, love. Feel free to come to me when you have made your decision.”

“I promise I will. I want’a thank you, though. The fact that you would want to do that with me is a surprise.”

“Do you doubt my feelings for you?”

“No, of course not. But this is quite the step. Bein’ in a secret relationship with a Midgardian is one thing, but are you sure you want to tie yourself with me for good?”

“I am sure. My mother adores you and approves of what we have found in each other — she is the only outside opinion I care about. I already love you and I love being with you, so I am more than happy to continue what we have together. A beautiful Midgardian servant and a prince of Asgard…” He let out a chuckle. “We are quite a mischievous pair, are we not?”

“That we are,” she agreed and let her head rest on his shoulder. “I can’t argue with that.”

“And I would not have it any other way. Now, would you perhaps be up for a walk in the gardens?”

“What?” she all but yelled in surprise. “Are you serious?”

“I think you have suffered your house arrest long enough, don’t you? The healers and I have done our best to ensure your recovery, and you have gotten all the rest they insisted upon.”

“Oh, please! Please, please, _please_! I would love to go to the gardens with you. I’ve missed spendin’ time there.”

“You are not the only one. Come, let us dress and we shall take our leave.”

With a eager kiss and a giggle, Ellie leapt from Loki’s lap and grabbed at the scattered clothes on
the floor. Seeing an opportunity, he laid a swift slap on her bare rear, one that caused her to shriek in disbelief.

“Why?” she demanded in mock horror as she whipped around to face him. “Why must you always slap me?”

“Because I cannot help myself,” he said with a sly grin. “What do you expect of me? To control myself with you sauntering about in the nude?”

“Next time you turn around, I’m gonna slap you so hard I leave a handprint on your arse-cheek for a week!”

“By all means,” he began as he leaned back on the bed to lewdly admire her form. “I dare you.”

* * *

“Are you as excited as I, Loki?”

“I can assure you, brother, I am positively bursting with satisfaction.”

Over a week since Frey and Freyja’s unknown operations were uncovered, the pair were finally standing before the Allfather and Allmother at their trial. Dagny had her trial that morning, and her refusal to speak did not prevent her from being found guilty of various charges including assault and kidnapping, not to mention infiltrating the palace. She was to spend the rest of her life rotting in Asgard’s cells.

In Valaskjalf, the trial of the twins was completely closed to the public to ensure the privacy of their victims, all of whom were gathered to make their testimonies and have their say. Odin and Frigga were insistent that they each had a voice if they so wished. When informed of the opportunity, not one person turned it down. Now, the former-prisoners — including Ellie — were freely gathered in the throne room while Frey and Freyja now stood in shackles. At the foot of the steps leading up to the throne, the siblings were surrounded by Einherjar, each with a handler who kept a firm grip on the chains linked to their seiðr-proof handcuffs. Odin sat atop Hliðskjálf with Frigga on one side, and Thor and Loki on the other.

Standing on his perch, Loki enjoyed the sight of Frey and Freyja no longer sauntering around the palace with goblets of wine in their hands. He whispered to Thor that their new shackles suited them greatly, to which the God of Thunder held back a laugh. Both princes smirked in delight as the twins’ eyes drifted to them and Odin called for the trial to begin. Only when the victims testimonies began were the smiles wiped from their faces. They stood and listened to every single one as person after person was sat on a chair next to the throne and answered Odin’s queries. His tone was soft but authoritative, and reminded Loki of how he used to speak to them when they were but children. There was no ounce of accusation or judgement when he spoke, reassuring them that their experience was being heard and, most importantly, believed. Sitting through Ellie’s questioning was especially hard to deal with, despite the fact Loki had already heard the tale and witnessed half of it with his own eyes. He and Thor, as well as Lady Sif and the Warriors Three, were briefly questioned about what they saw on Alfheim to further legitimise the twins’ crimes. The accused were not given a chance to officially defend themselves, although when originally dragged into the hall, neither chose to deny the charges. There was hardly much point, given the number of witnesses and the fact both Odin and Frigga witnessed the confrontation in Ljosalfgard. That, and the brothel guards were easy to get talking.
The spectacle was purely organised to give all the survivors an opportunity to speak. That, and to show the truth to those who questioned the event’s legitimacy. The sheer severity of everything had some wondering how Frey and Freyja could even get away with such a thing. Surely someone would have noticed? Were they really that corrupt? But the malnourished and injured victims who spilled from the Bifröst that night were proof enough. When once Asgard’s healers were reserved for the Aesir alone, now their wing was flooded with the former prisoners from different branches of Yggdrasil.

“I wonder whether you both recognise the gravity of your crimes,” Odin mused, the two prisoners standing before him. “As all I have gathered from your faces is that you do not.”

“We seem to disagree, Allfather,” Frey replied. “As to what constitutes as a crime.”

“You think your actions to be just?”

“You are a fool if you think otherwise.”

“And what led you to this baffling conclusion?”

“Basic logic,” Freyja cut in, her tone laced with disgust. “We took the mortal because it was our right. She is bound to serve her gods for the duration of her brief existence.”

“We are just as mortal as humans,” Odin explained. “Though our lifespan may be exceptionally longer, we are born and we die. This does not give us a right to ownership.”

Freyja shook her head and gestured a hand to Loki, her chains clinking in response. “And you do not claim ownership over the bitch? She is your son’s plaything.”

Loki found it exceptionally hard to bite his tongue, and he nearly opened his mouth to verbally degrade her before his father replied.

“I can assure you that Loki is nothing like either of you.” The Trickster was quick to look at Odin after that, but he continued speaking with his eyes fixed on the prisoners. “He has never mistreated the girl, and she is free to leave Asgard whenever she pleases.”

“Whatever you say, my King,” Freyja spat, looking away in disinterest. “I do not believe your lies.”

“I do not particularly care whether you do, Freyja. Whatever about the Midgardian, how do you justify the enslavement of your other victims? They come from all realms.”

“We are gods,” Frey insisted, emphasising each syllable. “We rule over a kingdom. They are merely commoners made to serve us. We have the right to do with them as we please. It is our duty—”

“Your duty was to protect the people of these realms!” Odin boomed, losing some of his composure. “You are an embarrassment to your family and all those associated with you, and I have heard enough of these ramblings. I have come to a decision and it was not difficult. Frey, Freyja, for your crimes against the people you were sworn to protect, and the crimes against my family, you are to spend the rest of your lives in Asgard’s dungeons. There you will remain until you both die alone. I consider it a just end that you should be imprisoned for the trauma and subjugation you have brought about through your actions. Guards!”

The combination of satisfaction and relief that Loki felt at those words was immeasurable. He grinned as the twins’ handlers tugged on their chains and began to lead them away to their eternal captivity. When they both glared up at the princes, Loki and Thor gave them an informal wave
accompanied by wide smiles.

“What a wonderful ending for them,” Thor mused, nudging his brother’s shoulder. “It is quite fitting.”

“Indeed,” Loki concurred. “This is a victory for their victims and those who helped their voices be heard.”

“Perhaps they will have peace now that they can be reunited with their loved ones.”

“And hopefully no other that bares any similarity to that pair may have access to power.”

“Even if that happens again,” Thor began and placed his hand on the back of Loki’s neck. “We will stop them together.”

“My sons,” Odin addressed them, rising from his throne to approach. He wore a small smile, something that was an extremely rare thing to witness. “Before we return to our duties, I wish for you to know that I am proud of you both. You helped these people, as was your duty. The Nine Realms are at peace and our strength and willingness to protect those in need is once more acknowledged. I am glad to call you my sons.”

With that, Odin took his leave and was shortly followed by the Allmother, who briefly kissed her sons’ cheeks before going. Loki could not help the shock he felt at the exchange, but Thor seemed used to it. With a satisfied smile, the princes left the hall and the events of Alfheim behind them.

* * *

Another few days had passed when Ellie and Loki finally had their much needed discussion. Having fully recovered, the young woman returned to her handmaiden duties and was happy to settle into her former routine. Despite the fact they knew they would eventually need to speak, there was no air of animosity or unrest between the lovers. In fact, Loki had never been happier. It seemed that the twins’ insistence that he was bedding Ellie had been dismissed after their entire reputation was destroyed, so the Midgardian was happily working and tending to her prince in peace.

On one such evening, Ellie was transcribing some notes Loki dictated while fiddling with potion ingredients at his desk. Her record player — that seemed to be constantly swapped between their rooms — was quietly playing music of her choice, something relaxing by a Midgardian band called Fleetwood Mac that didn’t bother him. He actually found their music to be quite enjoyable and encouraged Ellie to play their records. When he finished dictating all relevant information for her to jot down, he stood up from his desk and began to clean away his supplies.

“You may take your leave, if you so wish,” he said. “Or you are welcome to spend the night with me.”

“I actually wanted to speak with you,” she replied as she set the transcripts down to dry.

“Oh?” His brow piqued. “About?”

“A few things actually. Can we sit?”

“Of course.”
The pair sat down together on one of the couches in front of the fireplace. Loki waited patiently for her to begin speaking, though he felt slightly nervous about where the conversation would go. He obviously had an idea or two about what would be discussed, but there was still an uncertain part of him that worried about the topic. Still, all he could do was wait until she was ready.

“Y’know,” she said, eyes fixed on the nearby record player. “This was my mam’s favourite band.”

“I remember,” he assured her gently. “You told me as such.”

“Yeah, well, I’m not exactly sure if it was — it’s hard to remember — but I did write it into the memory book you got me. It says that she used to sing this song to Shane and I, and I think I can kinda remember that. The memories are fuzzy, but it feels right to me. I think it was one of her favourite songs. I suppose that now, as I’m older and can better analyse a song compared to five year old me, it makes sense that she loved this one. The lyrics aren’t exactly complicated.” She met Loki’s gaze briefly and paused to listen to the music. He followed suit, knowing that interrupting her flow would throw her off. So, he did as she wished; he sat and listened.

“Well, I've been afraid of changin'
'Cause I've built my life around you
But time makes you bolder
Even children get older
And I'm getting older, too.”

“Our mam had to put up with a serious amount of grief,” she continued, voice a little lower. “But she did her best with the hand she was given. I don’t know why she didn’t leave our dad, and maybe part of me is a bit angry that she didn’t, but it couldn’t’ve been easy. Her family were back in England, and I doubt she had friends that supported her. Maybe she was afraid of what he would do to us if she tried to leave. While my memories are fuzzy, I know she wanted the world for Shane and I. That’s one thing I’ll never doubt.

“I didn’t exactly have an ideal childhood, but she did what she could, and I was lucky to end up where I am now instead of another victim of an abusive alcoholic. I don’t regret growin’ up here with you, not at all. I’ll always feel grateful knowing that Frigga insisted on takin’ me in. But the escapade on Alfheim has put a lot of things into perspective for me. I know that my mam never wanted us to fall into the same trap as her. She used to say that even when life threw us horrible obstacles that weighed us down, we had to keep going. We had to push on and overtake them, y’know? She insisted that we could do anythin’ we set our mind to. That’s all I could think about when I was stuck in that room; I had to get out, I had to keep goin’. I had too many good things I wasn’t ready to say goodbye to yet, like you.” Loki wordlessly reached across to hold her hand in his, and she smiled. “Maybe that was why my mam never gave up — she had us, and we were what kept her goin’. I can understand it now that I’ve found you.

“I knew this wasn’t goin’ to be easy, Loki. Obviously I did… Change can be scary, especially when it involves lettin’ someone into your life like this. When you love someone, you give part of yourself to them, and that’s terrifying when I think ’bout it. It’s like havin’ your heart in one hand, and a dagger in the other, and trustin’ your partner not to stab you with it. But it’s somethin’ we all
have’ta do eventually, and I’m okay with that. I’d rather not avoid being with you in the best way possible ’cause of what-ifs, ’cause when I was lost on Alfheim wonderin’ if I’d ever see you again, I knew I’d do anythin’ to be with you. My mam really got dealt a shit hand in some respects, but I think I understand why she brought Shane and I up the way she did. She never wanted her tribulations to define her, to stop her from raisin’ her kids to love music and find solace in amazing fantasy worlds held in the pages of books. I don’t want the awful things my dad did to define my future. I don’t want what Frey and Freyja did to define me either. I won’t let them ruin the good things that I’m lucky to have, especially my relationship with you.

“I know that you offered to bring me back to Midgard to find out what happened to my mam and brother, but I know now that that’s not somethin’ I’m able for right now. I don’t know if they’re answers that I need at this point in my life. Right now, I want’a focus on what’s ahead of me, and I’m really relieved that I’ll get to do that with you. Maybe someday I’ll be ready to ask Heimdall after them, but for now, I want’a spend my time growin’ and living with you. So, if your offer still stands, I’d like to agree to the soul bond and all that comes with it.”

Loki released a sigh, taking it all in. The circumstances of the entire situation were insane. The way in which Ellie ended up on Asgard in the first place was hard to believe. While she was lucky to be where she was, it was by no means easy if the last few weeks in particular was anything to go by. And yet, here she was, unwilling to let past conflicts and tests stop her from growing and embracing the changes that were offered to her. She was right, these things were incredibly unnerving, and yet knowing he would explore them with her made it worth the risk. They couldn’t hide from it forever.

“How could I ever retract my offer?” he asked, squeezing her hand. “I do not wish to let you go, not when I have realised how incredible it is to have you by my side.”

She beamed widely at his response. “That’s a relief. I wasn’t sure if I’d left you hangin’ for too long.”

“Not a chance, I promise. How about it then?” He got to his feet and pulled her up with him.

“You want’a do it now?”

“Of course! There is no time like the present. Why not?”

His excitement seemed to be amusing to her, but she shrugged. “You’re right; why not? After all, I said it was time to embrace the good things in life.”

“Meaning me,” he added with a wry grin. “I also have an apt location in mind to perform the spell.”

“Oh? What did you have in mind?”

“Come, I will show you.”

He ushered her from his chambers, releasing her hand before they pushed open the door. The Einherjar and other servants paid them no mind — it was not uncommon to see a prince in the company of his hand servant. Though it was evening, most servants were simply finishing their duties for the day, and some greeted the pair as they walked through the palace halls.

It did not take them long to reach the gardens, or to reach the tree beneath which they shared so many memories. In the horizon beyond, the sun had just about set, colouring the sky with fantastic reds and oranges that gradually mixed with the navy darkness behind the palace. Once beneath it’s branches and hidden with glamour from the eyes of any passerby, the Trickster happily pulled her
closer to him in a gentle embrace.

“Y’know,” she mused, hands splayed out on his chest. “You insist that you’re in no way romantic, and yet you think to bind our souls together here.”

He rolled his eyes, mostly in jest. “Romance or not, it is fitting, is it not?”

She looked from him to the leaves swaying lightly in the night’s breeze. “It’s perfect.”

Watching her carefree expression as she admired the old tree, he could feel his heart beat a little faster in his chest. This was not only a big decision for her, but it was for him too. That being said, Loki was surprised that he no longer felt afraid of the prospect. His heart’s rapid movement was from excitement; excitement knowing that this wonderful woman was to be bound with him forever.

“I love you, little one,” he murmured and softly kissed her forehead.

He felt her wrap her arms around his waist and hug him tight. “I love you too.”

They embraced for a moment before he leaned back slightly to meet her gaze. “Shall we?”

“I’m ready when you are.”

After years spent growing and learning on Asgard — and after recovering from her physical injuries at the hands of a pair of deluded siblings — the little one happily gave part of herself to the prince who hadn’t expected to find such rare companionship in an abandoned Midgardian. He was right in what he previously claimed; they certainly made quite the pair.

Beneath the branches of their cork tree, Ellie and Loki found each other again.

They found their home.
Epilogue: Home

Chapter Summary

In the safety of the Prince’s chambers, Ellie and Loki enjoy each other’s company on a stormy night.

Chapter Notes


See the end of the chapter for more notes

The fireplace in Loki’s chambers crackled as the wind howled outside and rain pelted against the windows. It was a stormy night in Asgard, mostly due to Thor’s bad mood at the hands of a recent prank played by Loki that resulted in the singeing off of his golden eyebrows. Despite the horrid weather, it had certainly been worth it for the look of horror on the Thunderer’s face. While the palace attempted to peacefully sleep through the ruckus, Loki and Ellie remained awake, hiding together in his room and huddled on his favourite chair. She had never been overly fond of thunderstorms — and neither had he, for that matter — so they had spent the evening playing card games, reading, and talking to pass the time. To help muffle the raging storm, Ellie was insistent about playing some vinyls. Loki didn’t even attempt to suggest otherwise, he merely sat and watched as she planted herself on the floor and gently placed a record on the player.

For most of his adult life, Loki spent restless nights in his room alone when the the thunder storms rolled in. As a child, it was not uncommon for him to go running to his mother for a hug, or even after Thor if he was desperate. Now, he looked forward to waiting them out in Ellie’s company, finding peace at having her close by. He could sense her mild distress thanks to the soul bond, but that meant he could also feel it slowly fade away when they held each other.

As a means of distraction after the deck of cards had been put away, he asked her to tell him all about whatever music she chose to play — the song’s name, the name of the artist, the meaning behind it, where it came from on Midgard… The constant retelling of information distracted the pair for the strong winds and rain.

“And this one?” he asked her as another song began.

“It’s called I’ll Be Seeing You,” she answered, running her hands through his hair. “It’s probably one of her most popular songs.”

“I see. It seems somewhat sad.”

“Yeah, it does. Although I suppose it comes with the territory of the subject matter. It’s still a good song though, even if it seems sad. Oh, actually, here’s an idea!”

Without another word, she leapt to her feet and held out her hand to him. He grimaced at her outstretched hand before meeting her gaze and raised an eyebrow in confusion. “What?”
“Dance with me!”

“No.”

She let out a heavy exhale. “Don’t be an eejit. C’mon and dance with me! It’ll be fun.”

“But I am far more comfortable remaining seated in this chair,” he explained and pouted. “Do not make me move.”

“Don’t be so dramatic. You’d swear I was askin’ you for your arm.”

“You might as well be…”

“Loki, remember all the times there have been parties and gatherings and we couldn’t dance together? Well, humour me, please.”

With a small huff, he slowly stood up and carefully held her hand in his. He slid his free arm around her waist and gently pulled her close. She didn’t speak either, but merely smiled in victory and wrapped her arm around his back. Despite his earlier protests, he was happy leading her as they slowly swayed to and fro before the fireplace.

“Thank you,” she said after a moment.

“There is no need for thanks. If I am honest, I was going to say that you owed me a dance anyway, love.”

She knew his former refusal was mostly teasing, and he was equally aware that it didn’t bother her; such was his way as a maker of mischief. And so, slowly they danced, eyes locked in a comforting gaze until the howling wind could no longer be heard and Loki could focus on nothing but the woman before him.

Chapter End Notes

So... that's that! For part one, at least. For realsies though, as someone who was originally adamant that this fic would never see the light of day, I'm genuinely delighted my friend encouraged me to do otherwise. I don't regret posting it - not by a long shot - and it's been a pleasure to read your comments and go on this journey with y'all. To both the persistent commenters and the sneaky silent readers, thanks for sticking with me and taking time out of your day to read my lil story. It means the world.

I hope to see the lot of you when the sequel comes out! In the meantime, expect another oneshot to tie you's over. Until then, it's been awesome and, from the bottom of my big sappy heart, thank you! x

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