

## It's Only My Everything

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# **It's Only My Everything**

by [STARSDidathing](#)

## Summary

In order to save Anthony Stark's life, Loki performs a powerful spell. Although the mortal consents and is willing to suffer the consequences of whatever it entails, Loki knows it will be a burden difficult to bear. Because, the only way to save the life of his friend and the mortal he loves, Loki had to bind their lives together.

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Notes

This is a very, very, *very* old idea that I rewrote the start of numerous times and never quite settled on. I was determined to get this written and posted. So I'm not entirely sure how good it is, and it's a bit different to my usual (very much not how I planned!) but I hope you like it regardless! This story is set in a post-Avengers 1 setting with Loki redeeming in the tower which we'll \*handwavey\* into existence.

It is also being gifted to the wonderful **tarot\_card** who has been so lovely and has read all the prose and "what do you think???"s that I've dumped on them 😊 Thank you so much! ♥

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It was one of the worst decisions of Loki's life, but then, it was also the *only* decision he could have made.

Anthony was lying on the floor; pale, coughing blood and far beyond the healing of the golden realm, let alone Midgard. Loki had trembled with his hands over the man's chest as Rogers had demanded if there was anything he could do.

He'd said "yes", he'd said "*it has consequences*" and Anthony's blood-stained hand had grabbed his wrist weakly and said, "*do it*".

The mortal's gaze had been shadowed by pain, but it had been no less determined. Loki's magic had *dived* into Anthony. He'd chanted the words; he'd wound his magic around the mortal. He'd poured everything he had into the spell so that it would work.

And it had.

The spell had snapped into place; a firm, unbreakable tether that heightened his magic and flared around them both, but specifically Anthony, healing the wounds and making sure he would *live*.

Loki had crumpled forward, exhausted by magic and emotion—but even as the height of the spell had faded, his seidr had still hummed under his skin, pleased in a way it had never been in the past. Finally anchored, finally settled.

Everyone had been delighted, slapping his back as Anthony laughed and said "*fuck, I'm alive, shit that felt way too close.*"

Amid them all, he'd been silent, but so had another voice. Because, despite not being a mage, Thor had grown up upon Asgard. He would know a mage bond when he saw one. He would

also understand that one of this magnitude could not be made lightly.

No, the mage in question would have to truly *love* the recipient. They would have to have been willing to tie their very *lifeline* to the other person's.

And Anthony Stark, happily in a relationship with Pepper Potts, would have no idea of the spell's nature, nor of his feelings, or have any likelihood of returning them.

But when faced with the death of the man he loved? When given that man's permission to perform whatever was needed? What other decision could he have possibly made but the one that bound them together?

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Thor kept his mouth shut, thankfully. He shot Loki glances that spoke of a long and prying conversation to come, but Loki had the excuse of being exhausted. Such an act had left him weak as even though his magic was, in theory, still whole, it was now hovering protectively over Anthony and sparking along the bond.

Rogers had helped him to his feet and got him into the quinjet. Anthony was checked over by Banner but once the man was finished, he was fast to come back to Loki's side. He sat down beside him, their bodies flush. Anthony even touched his wrist, not seeming to notice his overly affectionate actions.

"Lokes? Are you okay? You're not about to keel over are you?"

"No," Loki said, his voice a low rasp. "I merely drained myself. I will recover."

"I appreciate what you did. You saved my life." He breathed out shakily. "I know that was... closer than I've been in a long time. Probably closer than Afghanistan even."

Loki shuddered, unable to stop it when it brought to mind how near he'd been to losing him. Anthony's thumb stroked his wrist and Loki desperately wanted to lean into the mortal; to soak up the man's warmth, his *life*.

*But he is not yours, his mind whispered. He is another's.*

Loki tugged his arm away. Anthony blinked and looked down, seeming surprised.

"Do not thank me yet," Loki said. "I warned you of consequences."

"Like you being magically drained?" Anthony questioned. He then frowned, speaking cautiously, "Like me... touching you more than normal?"

Loki couldn't look at him.

"Yes."

"Going to elaborate?"

"Preferably after I've had a few hours of rest."

Truthfully, just sitting beside Anthony would be more beneficial than any kind of sleep, but he was not yet willing to explain exactly what he had done. Especially when it would involve keeping a firm check on his emotions. Something which he wasn't sure he would be capable of right now.

"Aye," Thor said loudly, coming over to them. "My brother does need rest. It is a complex and powerful spell Loki has cast. I shall assist him to his rooms and make certain he shall be fine."

Loki eyed his brother; well aware the man merely wanted a chance to talk to him alone.

"Is that necessary?" Rogers asked, looking concerned. "Do we need to monitor Loki?"

Loki scoffed. "Hardly. He is merely being overdramatic."

"Will you deny me Loki?" Thor asked, noticeable challenge in his tone.

On any other occasion, he *would*, but Thor knew exactly what he had done and the last thing he wanted was to have Thor and Anthony in a room alone before he had a chance to explain a more... *palatable* version of the truth.

So, he said nothing.

He could tell the others were still concerned, hardly used to him going without a fight. But it was the one person he *didn't* want prying that did.

"Are you really going to be okay?" Anthony asked, his voice low. "Please tell me you didn't just take on the damage that was meant for me?"

"The damage was not *meant* for you," Loki countered. "You were merely struck down as one often is in battle."

"Don't split semantics. *Are* you okay?"

Loki sighed, but he could not help feeling warmed by Anthony's concern. He dared to look at the mortal, seeing the worry that was plain on his face.

"I am not wounded," Loki answered. "Nor am I in threat of dying. I truly just need rest. In a few hours, I will visit your penthouse and we can discuss the spell."

Anthony eyed him shrewdly before eventually nodding.

"Okay." He offered a faint smile. "I'm really glad you're okay, Lokes."

He then bumped their shoulders together and Loki felt even more warmed by the touch. When Anthony left their arms flush, Loki did not pull away, but he could feel his brother's gaze on them. Loki closed his eyes rather than face any of it.

Surely after saving someone's life he was allowed to selfishly enjoy a few minutes of closeness when Anthony rarely bestowed it?

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Thor, predictably, followed at his heels like a hound. He had rested a hand on his shoulder after leaving the quinjet but Loki had shoved it off the moment they were out of sight of the others. Thor, however, was not daunted. He followed him to his rooms.

The moment the door was shut, he began, “Loki, you cast-”

Loki held up his hand in a harsh silencing gesture. Thor stopped mid word but glared heavily.

“JARVIS,” he said. “I do apologise.”

It was the only warning he gave the A.I. before he twisted his hand, distorting all sensors so as to keep their conversation private.

Thor’s frown deepened. “Stark will not appreciate that.”

“Anthony will suffer many things he will not *appreciate* in the coming weeks.”

Loki could not keep all the bitterness from his voice. Thor’s expression immediately softened. He started to step closer, but Loki backed away. He held up his hand again, hoping to bar the man from further advances.

“Do not try to coddle me as if I am a child. I made the decision knowing what it would entail.”

“Loki, you *bonded* with him.”

“Yes, I was there.”

Thor ignored his dry tone *and* his hand. He continued to step closer, his expression overflowing with compassion.

“You must love him very deeply, brother.”

Loki flinched. It was the lapse in concentration Thor needed to get close enough to touch his arm. Loki stayed rigid.

“You made a great sacrifice for him. He does not know, does he?”

“Are you asking does he know that I bonded his life to mine? Of course not. That is what I will explain to him this evening.”

“No, Loki,” Thor said gently. “He does not know how deeply you care for him.”

Loki looked away, staring at a spot on the wall.

“How would knowing help?” Loki asked quietly. “The man is committed to his woman. Even were he inclined to love a man...” Loki sighed. “I arrived too late to have had the chance.”

“Loki,” Thor said, a wealth of sorrow in his voice.

Loki cringed and he would have stepped away if Thor hadn't acted first, tugging him into a hug that immediately had him tensing. But the embrace was as familiar as Frigga's and almost as comforting. He was also so very *drained* and far too vulnerable.

He closed his eyes and while he did not outright return the embrace, he leant against his brother and let the man hug him.

It had truly been a harrowing day, and he could not refuse the comfort. He knew that the next few days would only be worse, for although Anthony had not died, there were a host of complications that he wasn't sure the mortal would ever be ready for.

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Despite Thor being willing, Loki did not let him stay long. He sent him away, telling him to attend to the others and keep an eye on Anthony. He had nodded and insisted: "*Whatever you need brother. This road will not be easy for you, but you will have my support.*"

Loki knew the man would take the role seriously. Anthony had, in essence, become a brother-in-law to him. Even if it was not in the typical or *full* way that the term would normally be applied.

Truthfully, the whole idea made him so incredibly *tired*.

On the way to his bed, he had returned JARVIS' sensors. The A.I. had been noticeably frosty to him over being taken offline, but Loki knew there was little he could do to appease him. So, he merely dropped down on his mattress and closed his eyes.

Unsurprisingly, Anthony immediately came to mind.

Anthony was often on his thoughts when he laid in bed, waiting for sleep to take him as he recalled the activities of the day. If he was feeling particularly maudlin, he would imagine the many ways they could have been different if only circumstance could have allowed.

Foolish, of course, for as he had told Thor, even had he arrived before Anthony committed to Miss Potts, there was no guarantee the man would have ever glanced his way.

But, despite knowing the futility of it, Loki could not help focusing on the man's presence. He was in the lab, Loki could sense him; warm, alive and in the midst of inventing. Loki smiled, feeling calmer already just by touching the connection between them.

The bond, of course, wanted him to deepen the joining; be closer, let their minds and bodies meld as his seidr curled around them... but, Loki had no intention of encouraging the bond. For a few hours of recuperative rest, he would think of Anthony and feel grateful he was safe, but no more.

The man was alive, that was all he should content himself with—and yet, despite his best attempts, as sleep hovered on the edge of his mind, Loki could not help remembering the hand on his wrist and the feel of their bodies together. He even, for a brief moment, imagined cupping the man's cheek, their foreheads pressed together and their lips brushing—but he was asleep before he could feel too guilty about it.

*Waking* however, was a different thing. The kiss was the first thought on his mind and he winced. He pushed off the bed and ran a hand through his hair. Ever since it had developed, his affection and attraction to Anthony had never been far from his mind or heart, but the bond was going to exacerbate it.

He'd want to be closer, to touch him, to feel his *seidr* winding around his chosen life partner, to *love* him openly and honestly as the bond cried out for him to do. But, he couldn't and not even the influence of the bond was going to make him give up that unwanted secret.

He still felt no more prepared to explain the situation than he had before sleeping. But after checking the time, bathing and spending a good half hour devising what he would say, he felt ready to face Anthony.

Of course, he was *less* ready to face Miss Potts and the hostility that he found in the penthouse.

It was not anger directed at him, but as he exited the elevator and made his way onto Anthony's floor, he was privy to raised voices: Anthony and his lover were arguing.

Amidst his concern and guilt was a small and selfishly pleased part. He hardly wanted Anthony unhappy, but he could not help hoping for a chance to have the man all to himself. He always tried to pretend that part of him didn't exist. He was pitifully bad at maintaining friendships and the last thing he wanted to do was ruin the one he had with Anthony. It was why, no matter the cost to himself, he would always be there to help him.

Stepping further into the penthouse, he was cautious as he approached. However, it quickly became plain that Pepper Potts was chastising the man for being injured and for putting *him* in a position to have drained his *seidr*. The concern for his wellbeing was undeserved, but only further highlighted how *good* the woman was, and therefore, far more fitting to be with Anthony than him.

"I couldn't help it, Pep," Anthony insisted. "I wasn't even *trying* to be a target. I just got hit!"

"And how many more times is it going to take? How long until Loki or someone else isn't there to save you?"

"I can't stop being a hero. The world needs Iron Man."

"The world doesn't need you dying!"

Her voice seemed to echo as silence fell. Loki felt like an intruder and he almost considered leaving without their knowledge, but JARVIS took the option from him. He gave a series of beeps; the kind Loki was used to from the lab when Anthony had put him on mute.

"What is it, J?" Anthony asked, noticeably frustrated.

"Mr Liesmith is here to see you."

There was a pause before two sets of feet moved from where they'd been in the bedroom to come out and find him standing uncomfortably near the bar.



“Loki,” Anthony said, grimacing. “Shit. Um. I hope you haven’t been here too long?”

“I apologise,” he murmured. “I had believed JARVIS informed you of my presence.”

“He tried,” Miss Potts answered tersely. “We were preoccupied.” She then let out a soft breath before stepping forward. Her frustrated expression smoothed out to one of tiredness and lingering concern. “Are you feeling better, Loki?”

“I am fine.”

“I’m glad.” She lightly touched his arm. “Thank you for saving, Tony. I heard it drained a lot of your magic to do it.”

“That is not... entirely accurate,” Loki said carefully. “My magic was merely... elsewhere.”

“You mean with me,” Anthony said, stepping closer. “JARVIS mentioned he could read your magic coming from me.” He smiled wryly. “*And* he said you took him offline to talk to Thor. He’s pretty pissed about that. Thor said it was just a private Asgardian matter. I get the feeling it was more about what you did.” A flicker of concern crossed his expression. “It wasn’t illegal was it?”

Loki hesitated. It was just enough for Miss Potts and Anthony to look alarmed.

“It was not illegal,” he hurried to insist. “But it was not strictly *condoned* to have done it without your express permission.”

“I gave permission,” Anthony said firmly. He came even closer and touched Loki’s arm, a mirror of what his woman had done, but far more welcome. “If anyone on Asgard tries to complain, I’ll make damn sure they know.”

“That is... kind of you, but you do not know what I did.”

“I trusted you,” Anthony insisted. “Did then, do now.”

The statement both warmed him and made him feel guilty. He wasn’t sure what showed on his face, but Miss Potts touched her lover.

“Tony, how about we let him talk. Whatever this is, it’s important we hear it from him, not with you interjecting all the time.”

Anthony shot her a look, something a little annoyed, but it quickly smoothed out. “Right, yeah. Okay.”

He didn’t gesture him over, which would have been usual. Instead, Anthony guided him with a hand still wrapped around his arm. Miss Potts noticed, frowning with confusion. Loki felt an uncomfortable pleasure at Anthony’s touch, because oh, he loved being the one touched over the man’s woman but it also mixed far too potently with his guilt.

When they reached the furnishings, Loki gently pulled away from Anthony. The man blinked only to look at his hand and wince.

“Right, so, that hasn’t stopped.”

“No,” Loki said, “nor will it for some time.”

He gestured at the couch and the two mortals took a seat, he remained standing and out of touching range of Anthony. They looked up at him with puzzled expressions.

Loki pulled in a careful breath. His emotions had been carefully locked behind his many masks, buried under layers of repression in preparation for standing before his bonded. He could not afford to weaken, because if Anthony learned the truth their friendship and companionship, it would be lost. He couldn’t—*wouldn’t* risk it.

“You were dying,” Loki said curtly. Miss Potts clenched her hands in her lap while Anthony winced. “Nothing on Midgard or Asgard would have been able to save you. It required something stronger than healing.”

“What the hell is stronger than healing?”

“A bond.”

“What do you mean by ‘a bond’?” Miss Potts questioned.

And this was where he had to be... careful.

“Anthony was compatible with my magic,” he answered truthfully. “I was able to use that connection to tether his life to mine.” He placed his hands behind his back, keeping his tone smooth and even. “I assure you; it need not be an invasive thing. Currently, Anthony is feeling a need to be close to me, that is merely because the magic emanating from him seeks to be closer to my seidr. It will pass given time. It will-”

“Wait, just hold up,” Anthony raised his hand in a halting gesture. “Let’s get back to the fact my life is *tethered* to yours?”

Loki pressed his lips together. He took a second to compose himself and his answer before starting again.

“Your injuries were too vast for mortal healing. A bond was the only option.”

“And what does that mean? Tethered implies entangled as if you’re saying my life is now set to match yours?”

Loki was silent. As the quiet stretched, Anthony’s eyes widened until he dropped back more heavily against the couch. Clearly, the implication had sunk in.

“Tony’s Asgardian now?” Miss Potts asked, her voice a little faint.

“No. He is, in essence, still mortal. My seidr will merely act as an accelerant, improving his healing and helping him recover from most injuries.”

“And what about his life?” she asked. “It’s not just going to stop at mending a broken bone or a cut, is it?”

Her perception and practicality would be commendable if he was not so wholly envious of her. He had always tried to treat her with respect and politeness but in this moment, when he was discussing the bond not with his beloved but with the man’s woman, Loki so desperately wished that she could be sent far away.

But, he did not have that option.

“No,” he admitted quietly. “It will heal him of much more than that.”

Because Anthony would *live* and for far more than a mortal. He was Loki’s bonded and the man would now survive as long as he did.

In response, the two mortals fell silent. Miss Potts stared at her hands, Anthony seemed to be looking into the distance. Loki only allowed himself a few moments to gaze at the mortal, *his* mortal, even if Anthony never would be, outside the privacy of his own mind.

But they were bonded. Even if he never had the man’s love, he had a seidr bond and a connection to the man that no other could duplicate. It, and his friendship, would be enough.

“I understand if this will take you both some time to digest,” Loki said quietly. “I will leave and you may seek me should you have further questions.”

It seemed to startle them both from their thoughts.

“Wait, Loki-” Anthony began.

“Please, don’t-” Miss Potts said.

They both stopped and looked at each other. Miss Potts reached out and clasped Anthony’s hand.

Loki did not outwardly react, but inside, he ached.

Miss Potts looked back at him first.

“Please, Loki. This is a big change for all of us. We would both like you to stay for dinner. We can take the time to understand what this means for you both, and how to move forward.”

“I do not wish to interrupt your time together,” Loki said. “Anthony has been through an ordeal, I understand if you wish to dine alone.”

Miss Potts’ smile was wry. “Honestly, Loki. You’re probably the only thing that will keep him out of the lab tonight.”

There was something almost tired in her voice and it reminded him of the argument he had unwittingly interrupted. Anthony looked guilty and frustrated. And Loki could not help but wonder how often they fought over the man’s heroics and injuries.

*Perhaps the bond might ease the woman's fear and strengthen their relationship?*

It upset him more than he wished to admit.

But for all that Loki knew remaining would be trying on his emotional shields, and further gnaw at his guilt, he so desperately wanted to be near Anthony. It made him give a nod of consent far too easily.

After all, they did deserve their questions, and he his penance for so wholly entangling himself in their relationship through the bond he had forged.

## Chapter End Notes

And before anyone asks, *no* this is not going to have a Loki/Tony/Pepper dynamic. I don't mix Pepper in their romantic relationship. It's only ever the boys.

Additionally, I've got this almost completed (one chapter to go!) so updates should be up every few days. Thanks for reading!

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone who's read and commented on the last chapter. I will (hopefully!) get to replying to them soon 😊❤️

Dinner had been as exhausting as Loki predicted.

While he normally relished the chance to share a meal with Anthony and discuss the nature of seidr, tonight they were not alone and the atmosphere was tense, and on his part, greatly uncomfortable. Anthony and Miss Potts had much they wanted to know, and for every question they asked, Loki only wanted to recoil or outright retreat.

Miss Potts' questions, he disliked the most.

“How long will Tony want to be near you?”

Her expression was always practical; the neutrality of someone who had no idea of what she was asking, or of *how much* the one in front of her wanted her lover.

“A few weeks, I would assume.”

“And you'll want to be near Tony?”

Staring at his meal rather than the woman in front of him, Loki had said, as blandly as he could, “Yes.”

But for all that she was vocal and sensible, there had still been the inane but so typically *Tony* remarks interspersed between them:

“You said your magic is on me? Can I do magic?”

“No. But my seidr will protect you, especially in the first few months.”

Tony's gaze had narrowed, that brilliant mind whirring. “What does that mean?”

“Seidr may surge from you to attack another. It is a defence mechanism, only those intending you harm will be affected.”

“Huh,” he'd murmured, gaze and tone thoughtful. “That's kind of cool.”

A hint of a smile had then appeared and Loki had *known* the mortal was going to attempt to inspire that very reaction; likely against someone he disliked and merely for his own

amusement. Loki's heart had flared; wanting to encourage the mischief of such an act, but he'd bitten his tongue. It, after all, was not his place to encourage *anything* in their bond.

Something that had been only further proven when Miss Potts, in her unfailingly perceptive way of cutting into a problem, had asked another question he'd found difficult to dodge.

“But what does that mean for you, Loki? While the magic is helping Tony does that mean you have less to protect yourself?”

She genuinely *cared* and once again, Loki had wished he could despise her.

He'd *wanted*, selfishly, to find a means of proving that the woman did not deserve Anthony, that there was some grand flaw within her that made her an unsuitable match—but, inevitably, whenever he tried, Loki only ever found *himself* lacking in worth when compared to the kind-hearted, honourable red-head.

"No," he'd answered. "I will not be at a disadvantage, and that reaction is only for the first few months of the bond."

Thankfully, they had not pried further.

The conversation had also shifted as Anthony stood to refill their drinks. It had allowed a thoughtful silence for the last of the meal, the quiet only weighing heavier on Loki's shoulders and making him long for his quarters.

Once they were finished and their plates pushed to the side, one of the questions Loki had been waiting for was finally asked:

“When you said tethering, Pep and I are right when we assume I'm going to be around as long as you?”

“Yes.”

“But what happens if something happens to Tony that your magic can't fix?” Miss Potts had taken her lover's hand. “What will that mean for you?”

Loki had stayed silent, focusing on his drink, but it hadn't taken long for Tony to make the connection.

“Oh shit. Loki. You don't mean-”

“It is very rare that such a thing happens,” he'd interjected quickly. “These bonds strengthen the individuals, otherwise there would be little reason to perform them at all.”

It had been the closest he'd come to outright lying to them because, truthfully, Anthony's status as a mortal *did* complicate things. His magic could do much, but even it could not solve everything. If the man died, the ripping apart off their bond would take him with it.

It was why only the deeply devoted and committed performed it, because while the benefits did outweigh the risks in many ways, reversing it or carrying on without their bonded was

simply not an option.

Something that he had no plans of telling Anthony.

“Are there any other side effects or complications we need to worry about?” Miss Potts asked. “Is there anything you and Tony need to do to make sure the bond works properly?”

“Apart from the nearness I have mentioned and my own tiredness and drained seidr stores, no.”

“But you’ll be okay, Lokes?”

“Yes, it will merely take me a few days to compensate.”

“But surely that’s not all it does?” Miss Potts continued to persist. “A bond implies something larger.” She looked between them with a small frown. “It can’t be so simple not after doing so much to both of you.”

“It is... possible to do more,” he hedged. “But that is something we would have to mutually agree to do. Something which I would not advise even discussing until after my seidr has settled.”

“Why?” Tony frowned suspiciously. “It’s not bad, is it?”

Loki hadn’t known what expression showed on his face—exhaustion, the fear that it *would* prove unpalatable to Anthony, the wariness of explaining too much and having the mortals understand exactly what he had done—but it had been Miss Potts that quieted Anthony’s inquiry and directed them to safer topics.

But Loki had made sure to hurriedly finish his drink, claim a need for rest and leave the penthouse floor for his own rooms. The moment he was free of them and in the elevator, he closed his eyes and tilted his head back against the wall.

But unfortunately, for all he wished to be alone with this thoughts and the ache of a bond not yet satisfied—it had not been an option.

“Mr Liesmith?”

Loki hadn't opened his eyes.

“JARVIS. I see I am no longer being ignored.” He smiled faintly. “Or perhaps you too have inquiries about the state of your master?”

“I will always monitor the health and well-being of Sir.”

“Very well. What is it you wish to know?”

There was a pause and Loki finally opened his eyes to look at the ceiling, but JARVIS did not make him wait long.

“Your decision to create a bond with Sir and your subsequent behaviour have caused concern. I have reviewed your past interactions with Sir since arriving at this tower.”

Loki immediately stood up straighter, a sinking feeling forming in his gut.

“And?” he asked hoarsely.

“Your magical interference with my sensors when conversing with Mr Odinson, repeated distraught behaviour upon any injury that Mr Stark gains and information provided at your dinner with Sir and Miss Potts: my conclusion is that you are romantically and physically attracted to Mr Stark.”

Loki swallowed hard. Once again, the urge to flee was strong but, after a few slow and even breaths, he was able to calm his racing emotions. JARVIS, after all, was not human. He was incredibly intelligent and intuitive but he was still a machine and he had fundamental principles he would not override. While he doubted that he could ever truly divert him from his discovery, he *could* find a way to encourage his silence.

“And if such a deduction were true,” Loki said neutrally, “you would understand how such a revelation would damage Anthony’s relationship with not only myself but Miss Potts.”

“Mr Stark would not like to remain unaware of such a thing.”

“But he would only feel guilt and concern. Wouldn’t *that* be of more detriment to him than knowing something which has not been confirmed and is, at this point, merely a theory you possess?”

JARVIS was silent and Loki knew it was a very delicate line he was treading. JARVIS was loyal to Anthony without question, everyone else in the tower were merely extensions of his master’s generosity.

Yes, JARVIS could play favourites and be mischievous and spiteful in ways that Loki found entertaining and delightful, but having the A.I. outright *lie* to Anthony was impossible.

But there was also another tactic he could use.

“And is it not true that privacy is highly valued by Anthony? I do believe I recall a stipulation he gave me when I first came here. I am sure you have the soundbite.”

There was another pause before JARVIS played the man’s voice: *‘If it’s not hurting anyone, going to hurt someone or illegal, it’s your business. If you break one of those rules JARVIS will make it **my** business.’*

“There,” Loki said. “I believe such a revelation does not fall into any of those categories, don’t you agree?”

“And if such a thing were hurting you, Mr Liesmith?”

Loki smiled wryly. “If it were true that I was in love with your master, I assure you, any pain associated with the fact would be worth every moment and not something requiring



intervention.”

The silence felt as harrowing as an Asgardian trial; waiting to learn the verdict and exactly how the punishment would be applied.

But, unlike Odin, this judge was merciful.

“Then I will not advise another of my conclusion.”

Loki released a small breath of relief, and a moment later the doors to the elevator opened onto his floor. He started to leave but JARVIS continued, “I do know it is true, Mr Liesmith. Upon my review, there can be no doubt as to your affection for Sir.”

Loki stilled, but after a few moments, he kept walking and entered his rooms. JARVIS had given him his word and that was the best he could hope for in the situation. Arguing with the A.I. would not help his cause. JARVIS had drawn the only logical conclusion and no sweet words, lies or angry accusations would change his mind. Because he had found an unquestionable fact and Loki was too emotionally exhausted to even try to deny it.

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As much as he wanted to sleep, Loki found it impossible to truly drift off. His mind kept coming back to his conversation with JARVIS and those with Anthony and Miss Potts. As much as he did not want to think of the two of them, his mind was torturous.

All he could think about was his bonded upstairs with *her*. The two of them *together*. Her hands carding through his hair, checking his body for wounds, holding him close – *kissing him*. It hurt, sending a shard of pain through his heart. It took everything he had to keep it from leaking through the bond.

That was the *last* thing he wanted to explain.

But if he was not thinking of all he wanted and all he couldn't have - he was thinking of JARVIS.

The A.I. knew his secret and unlike Thor, he could not rely on foolish but unwavering loyalty. If the truth came out, there would be little he could do to truly deny it.

It was after he shifted in bed for the third time that the silence of his room was broken.

“I have discomforted you, Mr Liesmith.”

Loki laughed darkly. He also didn't bother to feign ignorance. “Tell me, how does one usually behave when accused of having unrequited feelings for someone who is already in a relationship?”

JARVIS was quiet before: “It is not a conversation I have familiarity with.”

“But you are hardly oblivious to human interactions and you have a vast range of external information. Surely, you could have at least predicted discontent in your target?”

“I apologise for any additional distress, Mr Liesmith. It had not been my intention.”

“Then what was your intention?” Loki asked, still annoyed but innately curious.

“Confirming the health and well-being of Sir, and understanding your motivations for bonding with him.”

Loki smirked wryly. “You distrusted me. Not even two years in this tower shakes the certainty of my villainy?”

“On the contrary, Mr Liesmith, I, like the members of this tower, have come to trust you in many aspects. However, the probability of ulterior motives remained too great to be disregarded.”

Loki was forced to concede that with a nod of his head. Even if his actions were not outright hostile, it was a rare situation that he, like the spies, did not have multiple meanings and goals behind every action. Even Anthony, to some degree, was the same.

“Understanding that your motivations were to save the life of Sir, even at detriment to yourself, has assured me that your only desire from this bond is a chance to be romantically involved with him.”

Loki shot up in bed, immediately on the defence.

“That is *not* true. I have no intention of interfering in his relationship with Miss Potts.”

“By your own confession, Mr Liesmith, Mr Stark will now live longer than other mortals, including his lover. Therefore, there is a possibility that in the future-”

“Stop,” Loki interrupted harshly.

JARVIS fell silent, but it did nothing for Loki’s shaky breaths and pounding heart. He had not once even *dared* to consider what a future life with Anthony would be like. The thought brought too much hope, and with it, guilt.

For what friend was he to long for a time when the man’s woman was dead and he became potentially available as a lover?

“You will not suggest such a thing again,” Loki said coldly. “You will not continue this topic with myself or *anyone* else. And if you feel remotely uncomfortable with such an order consider it a request for privacy on a personal matter.”

“Very well, Mr Liesmith.”

When JARVIS fell silent again, Loki knew that the A.I. would not recommence a conversation unless spoken to.

Slowly, Loki lowered back down on the mattress. While he felt even *less* inclined to sleep, he knew he truly required it.

Closing his eyes, he tried not to think about the tantalising thought that JARVIS had brought to mind; because eventually Anthony would be without his woman. And what then? Would he find another? Would he swear off romance and love? Or, perhaps, would he turn to him?

Loki squeezed his eyes shut tightly and rolled over. He buried his face in the pillow and forced the mere idea away. He focused on the ingredients and combinations needed for potent spells.

He recited them over and over again until, eventually, he managed to fall asleep.

---

Despite his difficulty getting to sleep, staying there was less of a problem. In fact, when Loki woke it was with a sudden jerk upward as a dagger conjured into his hand.

He took a few moments to become aware of the room and the lack of any attack. He then noticed the scrunched-up ball of paper in his lap and Anthony's head peeking out from behind his partly opened bedroom door.

"Anthony?" He questioned, groggy and confused.

"Hey, sorry about the, uh, projectile awakening. You weren't reacting to anything else."

"Anything else?" He questioned dumbly.

"Yeah. It's almost 1pm. JARVIS couldn't get you up, I tried knocking and that didn't work. Entered your rooms and well, guess your wards don't work on me anymore, huh?"

"No," Loki said, disappearing his dagger. "My seidr recognises you."

"Cool."

Anthony edged out from behind the door. He also, unlike what would normally occur, didn't hover outside the room, instead, he came all the way inside. He then fidgeted before letting out a heavy breath and sitting down.

"Look. I've been here about an hour, tried to let you sleep, and it helped a bit at first. Less like I had something crawling under my skin, but I finally couldn't take it. Hence, you know, paper."

Loki picked up the paper, it was from a Stark Industries pad and had absent scribbles and half-finished calculations.

"You must have been in a state to revert from your projections."

"Well, I don't really have them here and, um." He shifted. "Something about working on paper was good today."

"Ah," Loki breathed. "I believe that might be my influence."

"Yeah?" Anthony asked, turning more towards him.

“I had been thinking of my spellwork before retiring. That, and your proximity to me and my seidr likely made you long for the methods I am more familiar with.”

“Huh. Well, worse things could have happened.”

*Yes, he thought bitterly, thinking of all the bond could entail. For you there could have been many.*

Anthony was, of course, oblivious to his thoughts. He followed his statement with an unthinking shrug before shifting closer on the bed. He then let out a harsh breath before reaching out and touching Loki’s arm.

Loki immediately felt warm. The bond surged and he barely reigned it and himself back under control. His bonded was in his room, on his *bed* and touching him.

*You cannot continue this. You must leave, enter another room, **something**. Or he really will know the worst of this bond.*

“I apologise for keeping you,” Loki said, pulling from Anthony. He spared a moment to be grateful he had worn pants to bed, it meant he did not have to worry about modesty as he walked towards his closet. “Allow me a few moments to dress and I will join you in my living quarters.”

For a moment it looked as if Anthony wouldn’t comply, he frowned and didn’t move, but, eventually he seemed to shake it off. He stood and ran a hand through his hair.

“Right. Yeah. Okay. Want some tea?”

“Yes, thank you.”

“Right, coming up.”

He still lingered for a long moment before shaking his head again and walking out of the room. Loki released a heavy breath and closed his eyes.

But it only brought the pleasure of the situation further to mind: the hum of his contented magic, the feel of his bonded wandering unharmed and unhindered through his wards, *waking up* to Anthony as if the man truly was his spouse.

It left him so incredibly content and made him want to drag the man back; to lay in bed luxuriating in the closeness and intimacy.

But, he couldn’t. Anthony was here because the bond had drawn him here, and it was his job as friend and architect of the current problem to solve it with the least amount of difficulty for his friend.

And yet, despite knowing it was unwise, his gaze travelled to the paper on the bed. He picked it up, smoothing out the creases and smiling at the man’s atrocious penmanship. When he saw his name in the corner, his breath caught.

*Foolish sentiment. Likely an unthinking gesture inspired by the bond.*

Regardless, Loki carefully folded the paper and carried it with him to his closet. His magic, while recovered, was still not at a state where he wished to waste it unnecessarily. He pulled on his clothing the manual way, but slipped the paper inside a pocket within one of his still hanging jackets.

In the coming weeks, it would help to have something given by Anthony resting close to his heart.

Once suitably dressed, he stepped out into his rooms. Anthony was still in the kitchen, but judging by the minimising sounds he was finishing their beverages. In fact, it was only a few moments later that he carried them into the living room. He grinned and held the cup out.

“Green tea for you, black coffee for me.”

Loki took it, their fingers brushing and shooting a pleasing spark up his arm and into his chest. He made a point of not looking at Anthony’s face as he pulled the mug away and took a seat on the couch. It took a few moments, but Anthony dropped down beside him.

*Right* beside him. Their bodies did not have a sliver of space between them.

And he *adored* it. His seidr and the bond sung with pleasure – but not satisfaction, no, it would want them closer than that. His arm around Anthony, the mortal’s body pressed fully against his own, their legs entangled their lips trading soft kisses.

*Enough. Do **not** let that leak through the bond.*

“What were you working on while I rested?” Loki forced out, trying to keep his mind where it needed to stay.

“Honestly, not much.” Anthony shifted, seeming uncomfortable. “Couldn’t get my head working and... oh fucking hell. Lokes, can I hug you?”

Loki’s breath caught and his gaze snapped to the mortal. Anthony’s expression was open and hopeful and Loki knew it meant *nothing*. It was the bond, yes, but Anthony was also affectionate with his friends. Not him, not truly, but he had seen it with Colonel Rhodes.

*Friendly. Friendship. You can and **will** keep this contained.*

“If you insist, then, yes-”

The words had barely escaped before Anthony was shifting, Loki barely had a chance to correct his own posture before Anthony’s chest was flush against his own and the man’s chin was on his shoulder. Anthony’s arm went around him while the other continued to cradle his coffee.

Unbidden, a sigh escaped him – but, Anthony also released one; the bond finally giving some sense of relief over the contact. Loki could not help closing his eyes and ever so slightly

tilting his head, his nose brushing Anthony's hair, allowing him to breathe in the man's hair product.

"We gotta do this more often," Anthony mumbled. "You're comfy as hell."

"That would be the bond's influence," Loki said, his voice rougher than normal. "I assure you, in a few weeks, you will no longer feel compelled to do this."

"Dunno," Anthony said, sounding thoroughly contented, "hugs are always good, Lokes."

And they were, Loki certainly wanted to pull the man closer – he wanted to continue to gain these for the rest of eternity but...

"We will revise and confirm it in a month."

Anthony huffed a noise, but otherwise didn't complain. Unwilling to waste the moment, Loki carefully wrapped his own arm around Anthony, better securing him and drawing the mortal ever so slightly closer. Anthony moved with the motion, ending up lying all but on top of him.

It was the sweetest and most forbidden taste of Valhalla.

It wouldn't last, Loki knew that. But with no one to protest—and not even JARVIS encouraging their separation—Loki let himself indulge in something that, more than any rest or meditation, would heal him from the spell he had cast and resettle the magic that so desperately wanted him and Anthony together.

# Chapter 3

## Chapter Notes

Apologises for how late this update is! I meant to do it days ago, but life, unfortunately, kept me busy 😊

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

They actually dozed off together.

A rarity for both of them; him to be relaxed and content enough to rest in another's company, and Anthony to be so free from thought and energy to drift into rest.

It had taken JARVIS to wake them, letting a soft melodic sound of chimes ring through the room, growing in intensity until Loki stirred and Anthony did so soon after. The room was dim, the lights having been dulled and curtains electronically shut.

“My apologies,” JARVIS began. “But you have both shared two hours of rest and Mr Odinson is outside these rooms demanding entry.”

“Damn,” Anthony mumbled, his voice sleep-roughened. “Can't remember the last time I actually had a fucking nap that wasn't formed by sleep exhaustion.” He shifted, his head still upon Loki's shoulder. Loki looked down to see him grinning up at him. “You really are magic, Lokes.”

Loki's stomach flipped, but he resolutely did not react to the feeling.

“Yes,” he drawled, “for I am a mage, and we are both under the sway of a powerful spell. My own exhaustion has not abated, and yours, however mild, is easily spurred on by my own.”

“Or we could just say you're really comfy.”

Loki rolled his eyes and despite wishing to do anything but, he pushed at Anthony, forcing the man to shift off him and to the other side of the couch. He then stood, fixed his dishevelled clothing and ran a hand through his hair.

“No magic for it?” Anthony asked, sounding concerned. “It's still drained?”

“For superfluous gestures? Yes. I would rather conserve my energies for more meaningful spells.”

“Does coming down to the lab to let me scan you count as meaningful?”

Loki shot him a dry look, but Anthony just grinned unrepentantly.

“I will allow you a few scans,” Loki agreed, “but only because I know you will be unsufferable otherwise.”

“Sticks and stones, Lokes. I know you have as much fun down there as me.”

Loki grunted, feigning disapproval as he walked to the door, but Anthony was right—as he often was—there were very few places in the Nine Realms that he liked better than time in Anthony’s lab with the mortal.

Unfortunately, it was also something *Thor* now knew.

When he opened the door, the blond looked both concerned and suspicious.

“Loki,” he greeted. “Stark’s servant said you were both present upon this floor, but he would not confirm what it was you were doing.”

Loki stared at him flatly. “Has privacy lost all meaning to you, Thor?”

“*Loki*,” Thor stressed, his brow furrowing in an even deeper frown.

“Stop stressing, Point Break,” Anthony called. “I’m not wearing him out. I know he still needs rest. It was actually the *opposite* of what we were doing.”

Despite not wishing to, Loki opened the door further and shifted enough to the side that Thor could see past him. Anthony was sitting up and drinking his cold coffee without any concern for the temperature.

“The opposite?” Thor enquired.

Loki barely stifled his wince.

“Yeah, we fell asleep,” Anthony said guilelessly. “Seems the spell took a lot out of us. Although, fuck knows why. Kind of why I want to scan Loki in the lab. So, chop-chop. You have until I finish this coffee before I drag Lokes away from you.”

“*Loki*,” Thor said lowly, disapproval heavy in his voice.

Loki rolled his eyes and turned back to his adopted brother.

“Yes, yes,” he muttered. “The rest was hardly my idea; I’ll have you know.”

“I had come to see if I could assist with a distraction,” he murmured, *mercifully* keeping his voice low. “I had not expected to find you so entangled with-”

“We slept,” Loki snapped, glaring hotly. “Do not think so little of me to assume anything else occurred.”

Thor immediately looked injured. “Loki, I would not-”

“Oh? Because, I assure you, you have conveyed something quite different.”



“I only meant-”

“To interfere where you are not wanted or needed,” he snarled, but some of his anger was hindered by how lowly he was speaking.

The sound of a mug clinking loudly on the coffee table made Loki spin around. Anthony was watching them with a sharpness that conveyed he was well aware something important was being discussed, even if he would not have heard the exact words.

(The spell had done many things, but he still was hindered by the limitations of his race and advanced hearing was not one of them.)

“Coffee’s done,” he said, standing up. “Time for Lokes and I to head to the lab.”

He closed the distance and Loki shot Thor a single challenging look, but the Thunderer merely stepped to the side.

“I shall leave you,” he remarked only to meet Loki’s gaze and add, “But I shall return, Loki.”

“Unfortunately, I do not doubt it.”

Thor did not add anything more and he was able to point the man to the elevator. Thor left with noticeable unhappiness. Anthony stayed silent at his side until the doors shut, leaving them alone again.

“He really doesn’t like you performed that spell, does he?”

“No.”

“Because it’s sort-of-illegal.”

“As I said,” Loki muttered, feeling all together tired, “it was not illegal.”

“I feel like you’re playing with loopholes here.” Loki slanted a glance at him. Anthony just raised his eyebrows. “It is, isn’t it? You pulled a Trickster God.” Loki flinched, so forcefully that Anthony immediately touched his arm. “Woah, hey, shit. I didn’t mean to-”

Loki pulled away from Anthony, suddenly unable to stomach even the slightest touch. He was *undeserving* of it, just as he was the man’s compassion—because, yes, he *had* tricked Anthony. The permission he had gained was tentative at best, hardly understanding of all that he had done, all of what he *felt*.

But, before he could go far, Anthony grabbed his arm again, he also slotted himself directly in front of him, blocking his attempt to return to his rooms.

“Loki,” Anthony said, his tone bordering on demand, “*stop*.”

“I should join you in the lab at another time,” Loki murmured, not looking directly at the mortal. “Perhaps you and Banner-”

“No. Shit. I fucked up. Loki, come on, I’m sorry.”

Loki’s gaze flicked down unbidden, catching Anthony’s remorseful expression and feeling a lump of guilt and pain lodge in his throat. He never wanted to be the cause of Anthony’s unhappiness, he always wanted to soothe any ill that crossed his brow; but how could he do it here? He had done more damage than the mortal yet realised—he *had* lied, *had* tricked this into existence and already he profited from it; their nap on the couch, the hand around his wrist, the future that JARVIS had dangled before him where they might end up *together*.

“You did not,” Loki whispered. “You said the truth. I am the Trickster, doing what I wish without care for others is in my nature.”

“That is *bullshit*. No, that is *Odin* bullshit, and I’m not buying it. You saved my life, Lokes.” He stepped closer, his free hand going to Loki’s shoulder and squeezing. “I *told* you to do it. Whatever so-called consequences are on me. I signed without reading the fine print.” He smiled gently. “You can’t feel bad about that, okay?”

*But I can, Anthony. And I will.*

Yet, the mortal did not have to listen to nor soothe his aching heart—he should not for a *moment* be dragged into his own pathetic problems and affections. This guilt was of his own doing. It and the hurt of wanting whom he could not have... it was all his penance, his to shoulder and feel for eternity.

He *deserved* it, no matter how much Anthony might argue it.

So, Loki lived up to another of his namesakes, he lowered his gaze, nodded and carefully lied, “Very well, Anthony.” He then looked away and gently stepped out of the other man’s hold. “But enough of it, shall we go to the lab?”

Anthony did not respond immediately, so Loki began walking to the elevator. It did not take long until Anthony was at his side.

“You know I’m not fully buying that, right?” Anthony remarked. “I know you develop guilt issues as big as mine. I know you’re just appeasing me with that.”

“Am I?” Loki asked, feigning disinterest.

“Yup,” he popped the ‘p’. “But, that’s okay. Apparently, I’ve got a long time to convince a stubborn reindeer that I’m right.”

He said the words as a joke, and it both comforted Loki and made him grimace—because, yes, Anthony had time, and when he truly realised the extent of it, Loki did not think the man would be laughing over it, but mourning.

---

The truth was... it became normal.

While Loki had always spent time with Anthony—a common sight to see them in the mortal’s laboratory or the communal living space; discussing magic, Loki’s travels in the

Nine Realms and the man's experiments—but, after the bonding, Anthony sought him more.

Almost every morning, where once Loki would spend the time alone with a cup of tea, it now included Anthony.

Sometimes he would appear with coffee and tablet, other times without, but he would always join Loki on the couch and, within minutes, the man would be sprawled against him as if he was the mortal's personal pillow. It was *wonderful*.

But Loki knew it was also wrong. It was not *his* to share these mornings and he tried to insist as much.

*"Should you not be with Miss Potts?"* he'd asked, a few days into their bonding.

Anthony's head had been on his chest, but most of his attention was on his tablet.

*"Pep?"* he'd questioned. *"Why? She's at SI."*

*"Before she leaves then. Should you not be in your penthouse with her?"*

*"Nah. She usually beats me awake, and if she doesn't, she's getting ready to go. Last thing she wants is me distracting her."*

Loki had not been able to fathom the statement.

While he understood duties that could not be ignored or avoided, Loki could not imagine *disliking* Anthony distracting him. Rather, had he still been a prince upon Asgard, he would merely have made sure there was more time allotted for them so he could still be with his lover, but not enrage Odin.

That she was, in fact, the leader of the company and without another to chastise her only further confounded him.

*But she always has him,* a traitorous thought had whispered. *She knows she can come back to him, that he is hers. She need not crave his companionship as desperately as you do.*

The truth had hurt and so, he had fallen silent. He also had not protested again.

But it was not just the mornings that had changed.

After they left his rooms, they would continue with their usual activities, but where in the past Anthony would call his name (or some varying nickname) to get his attention, now, Anthony grabbed his arm and pulled him along. Sometimes, he threw his legs over Loki's on the communal couch.

The Avenger's eyebrows had all risen, but they'd paid little attention after Anthony's initial; *"Spell stuff. Lokes and I got a case of the touchy-feely."*

Miss Potts had been remarkably unbothered, even chuckling upon entering the penthouse to find them watching a movie and Anthony sprawled across his more upright form. She'd

taken a seat beside them on many occasions, sharing the popcorn, teasing Anthony and sometimes turning to him, asking what he thought of the latest piece of Midgardian culture.

Anthony would always smile at her, lean into her touch, press a kiss to her cheek or lips—Loki would make sure to look away, to pretend to be focused upon the movie or a magic text. His only comfort would be Anthony still against him, still *returning* to his side—even if, in the end, he knew he would always lose to the mortal woman.

Sometimes, when Anthony left to the bathroom or to get more food or drink, she would engage him in conversation. Loki had always done his best to be polite and personable, to not feel *guilt* as if he was doing things that he should not—but, it was difficult.

And sometimes, Loki felt as if Miss Potts knew—or at least, suspected. Her gaze would rest on him, thoughtful and curious and he would do his best to divert her, to leave and give the lovers their time alone.

Loki knew that the tentative balance he had struck between keeping Anthony close and remaining undetected could not last forever—but it still took over a week before Thor finally decided to badger him into a fresh discussion.

The man had been eyeing him all day, watching him and Anthony anytime they entered a communal space. In the end, Loki had caught his brother's gaze after the evening meal and the Thunderer had stood and followed him to the elevator.

He had taken them to the roof and they now stood atop the mortal's tower, overlooking the city's evening skyline. Thor, ever impatient, had not waited even a minute before beginning, "This is unwise, brother."

Loki kept his gaze on the lights and buildings below.

"Oh?" he replied. "Of which part do you refer?"

"If I am to ask after you, it is always said that you are with Stark. It matters not what time of day or night; you are always at his side."

"I am not with him now."

He could feel his adopted brother's glare, and rather than prolong the inevitable, he sighed and finally looked at the man.

"He is often with Banner, and he goes to his company meetings. Also, you will find, if his woman is in the tower, he is with her. That only differs if he is in the lab."

"And when he is there, he is with *you*, brother."

Growing annoyed, Loki countered, "We work together there, and we did so long before the spell."

"But—"

“Do not mistake the time we spend together as a new development,” he growled. “It has been occurring for many months before this.”

“But the bond-”

“Only exists because of what we had built *before* I enacted it,” he snapped, unable to curb his growing anger. “Are you so utterly foolish as to imagine I did not always spend as much time with him as was possible? Do you truly believe I merely watched on from afar? Just because *you* never noticed it, doesn’t mean it did not occur.”

Thor glared back, hardly browbeaten by his frustration.

“I know of your mornings, Loki,” Thor said, and Loki tensed. “I know that Stark is unaware of exactly why he wishes to be so close to you.” Thor placed a heavy hand on his shoulder, his gaze turning sympathetic. “I know you are honourable, Loki. You will not interfere with his love for the Lady Pepper.” Loki cringed at hearing that word; *love*. He was unable to help it. “But I fear keeping the truth from him will cause you difficulties.”

“I have it under control,” Loki gritted out.

“Aye, Loki, but for how long?” He squeezed his shoulder again. “I do not know as much of these bonds as you, but I have been told there is a means of sharing thoughts; a bonding of the mind *and* body.”

“That has to be fostered, Thor,” he muttered. “I have no plans on increasing it beyond its current limitations.”

“You know that Stark will seek to learn more of it. He has already tried to speak with me about it.”

“Thor-”

The Thunderer held up his hand.

“I have told him nothing, Loki. He merely insists that he agreed to all it entails, that you are not at fault. But Loki, you know as well as I that the mages of Asgard will not accept that.”

“And what would you have me do?” Loki demanded, not even wanting to *think* of what Asgard would do once they discovered his actions. “Tell him? Make him understand exactly what I did and *how* I could do it? Do you truly believe that would do anything but damage our companionship?”

“I believe you should be honest,” Thor answered. “Stark would wish to know, and he will not like it being kept from him.”

Loki looked away, knowing the truth of it, but not wanting to admit it.

“Sometimes the best thing to be done for someone is to keep them unaware,” he muttered.

“You of all people, Loki,” Thor said quietly, “know how dangerous a secret can be.”

Loki cringed. He didn't think Thor had ever landed a more powerful blow. His gaze flicked unerringly to his arm; the spot that had unravelled the lie that had been kept from him all his life.

"There is a difference, Thor," he whispered hoarsely.

"How so, Loki?"

Loki smiled bitterly. "The only person being harmed by this one, is myself."

He pulled from the Thunderer's touch and turned to leave the roof. He was not stopped, but Thor did call after him, "If not now, Loki, you will need to speak with Stark. He cannot remain unaware forever, his own curiosity will force the issue, if you do not."

Loki did not answer. He left the roof and upon entering the elevator, requested his quarters. He had intended to see Anthony again before retiring, but now he knew it would be impossible.

Thor's words weighed heavy and insidious on his mind.

He knew he had not been manipulating the bond to spend more time with Anthony. He had not sought him out any more than usual. *Anthony* was the one being unknowingly influenced and yes, perhaps he was at fault for allowing and encouraging those interactions.

They had touched one another more, shared a personal space only common for lovers.

Loki sighed, closing his eyes and resting his head against the wall. He had taken advantage, been the trickster Anthony had accused him of being; exploiting a loophole for his own personal gain, uncaring of the consequences.

And there *would* be consequences, there always were when he was involved.

Just because Asgard did not yet know of their bond, it didn't mean that they wouldn't. His next step upon the Golden Realm would signal it to any mage in the area, including his adopted parents. The realm would not simply remain silent on the subject, and Anthony would learn the truth quicker than Volstagg could consume lunch.

While his sentence would keep him on Midgard for at least another decade, it was still far too short a time. How would he tell the mortal? Or could he fashion some lie or spell to keep Anthony from uncovering it?

*An act he would despise you for.*

Loki sighed again, a hand running through his hair as the doors opened onto his floor.

"Mr Liesmith," JARVIS said, but Loki waved a dismissive hand.

"I have no wish for conversation, JARVIS. I wish to spend the evening alone—"

Loki stilled as he opened the door to his living quarters. Sitting on his couch with a tray containing a pot of tea and two cups was Miss Potts. Her hair was still tied up from a day at Stark Industries, but her clothing was the casual kind showcasing her plans to relax for an evening in the penthouse.

“I understand you have a quiet evening planned,” she said, “but I hope you can spare a few minutes of your time for me, Loki.”

She gestured at the tea and Loki felt a sense of foreboding. In his two years at the tower Miss Potts had never once requested a private discussion with him.

It made the subject obvious, for what else could the woman want to speak with him about if not the situation he shared with the man they both loved?

## Chapter End Notes

*Whatever* could Pepper have to say? 🤔

Only the next chapter will tell!

Thanks for reading 😊

# Chapter 4

## Chapter Notes

I have edited this chapter too many times to count. I give up, have it as is 😊

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Loki was not prepared—and yet, as much as he was not ready and had never wanted this conversation, he had still been anticipating it.

Miss Potts was hardly a fool and, had he been in her position, he would have wished to know *everything* the bond entailed. He would not have been accepting of a single conversation. He also would not have sat as silently as she had for the past week—watching as her lover sat closer and acted more affectionately with another.

No, he would have confronted the interloper much earlier.

But, if she *had* discovered the truth of the bond, would she be sitting so calmly? No. Surely not. She must simply have fresh questions.

Perhaps she wished to ask him things she did not want Anthony to overhear? Such as a request to aid her in the monitoring of Anthony's health both during his role of Iron Man and outside of it? Or maybe she had more pointed questions, such as what they did of a morning when she was not present?

But regardless of her exact motives and what it would mean for him, his answer to her enquiry was unavoidable.

“Of course,” he agreed.

He shut the door and when she started pouring them tea, he claimed a seat in the armchair that was both close enough to take the offered beverage, but as far as possible from her without being noticeably rude.

When she passed him the cup, he resisted the urge to check it over for poisons. He doubted she had anything that could kill him, and even if she did, she would not want to harm her lover indirectly.

“How may I assist you, Miss Potts?” he questioned.

She had a sip of her tea, only to give her attention to the detailed ceramic. It was not a set found in his rooms, and he wondered if any of the others had seen her carry the entire thing to his floor.



“As a prince, you’re good at navigating all kinds of conversations,” she said.

“Yes,” he answered warily.

She smiled faintly, her manicured nails tapping her cup. “It’s something Tony has a skill with too.”

“I believe you are also proficient,” Loki remarked. “Anthony would not leave his company in the hands of someone who was not equally as deft a wordsmith.”

“Thank you but some would disagree with that.” He raised an eyebrow and she added, “No matter how successful I am, some people will always prefer Tony over me.” She rolled her eyes. “Or any man, for that matter.”

“A preference I am certain they have learned to regret. Only the foolish underestimate someone because she is a woman.”

Miss Potts’ smile grew. “There are a lot of foolish people around.”

“A fact I am well aware of,” Loki replied.

He also finally had his own sip of well-brewed green tea. The impeccability of the blend only made him despise her a little bit more.

“I hope you don’t mistake me for a fool, Loki.”

Loki’s gaze had drifted but it immediately snapped back to the woman opposite him. She met him unflinchingly.

“I have never considered you that,” Loki said, choosing his words carefully. “And Anthony would hardly select a dim-witted partner.”

“Then would you mind if I spoke candidly?”

Loki’s earlier foreboding tripled in size. He lowered the teacup to his thigh, already knowing he wouldn’t be drinking any more of it.

“What would you wish to say?”

“That I don’t believe this bond was illegal.” She kept her gaze on him, pinning him in place. “But I do believe it’s a lot more important than you’re making it out to be.”

Loki didn’t flinch or hesitate, keeping his tone even and limbs relaxed. “There are definite advantages I haven’t outlined yet. As I advised, it will be best when my seidr is-”

“I trust you, Loki.” It brought him up short. Miss Potts smiled again, seeming to notice his surprise. “I didn’t expect to,” she continued. “Tony and I argued about you when he first agreed to let you stay here. I didn’t want you here and didn’t think it would be safe. Tony disagreed.”

“You had a reasonable concern,” he murmured. “I was your enemy.”

“No, you weren’t. I’ve learned that. We all have. I’ve also learned to trust you.” Her gaze softened. “Especially with Tony.”

Finally, he couldn’t hold her gaze.

“Yes, well,” he said. “Friends have always been difficult to come by, I am protective of those whom I do gain.”

“I thought we were going to be candid, Loki?” she questioned. There was a gentleness in her tone that he doubted he deserved. So, he said nothing. She sighed and he heard her put down her cup. “Okay,” she started anew. “I’ll be blunt. How many mages do this as some kind of wedding bond?”

Loki’s head jerked up and a denial immediately fell from his lips. “I assure you that they do not.”

“Because it’s so dangerous?”

“It is not *dangerous*.”

“Encompassing, then,” she allowed. “You tethered your lives together, Loki. That sounds an awful lot like a marriage.”

“There are many bonds shared between warriors,” Loki forced out. “Blood brothers are common, and there are even those shared by mages to bolster their power. There are rituals to create things not unlike what Midgardians call ‘covens’.”

“But this one has you both wanting to be physically closer to each other.”

“A side effect that will be concluded by the end of the month.”

“Your magic emanates from Tony-”

“Another side effect.”

“Any time I enter a room you look guilty.”

He stiffened and his voice chilled, “I am impressed you can read my expressions so clearly as it is a feat not even those who have known me for centuries have mastered.”

Miss Potts sat back, her lips pressing together and her expression changing from its more open state to something pensive.

“I was Tony’s assistant for years before we got together,” she eventually remarked. “I watched him drink himself into a stupor and be unable to help. I watched him leave with dozens of women only to escort them out of his home in the morning. I know what it’s like to watch him from afar. To be afraid for him, to want the best for him, and to do whatever I can to tug him back down to Earth.”

“A lovely story,” Loki intoned, doing his best not to spit the words. “But one you did not need to share. I am well aware of the origins of your courtship.”

Miss Potts heaved a frustrated sigh. “This is not going how I’d planned.”

“Oh?” Loki asked, finally giving in and crossing his arms. He also returned his unfinished tea to the table with a flick of *seidr*. “Just how did you intend this going?”

“Better than this,” she said wryly. She placed her hands on her knees. “I didn’t come here to accuse you of something, Loki.”

“No?” he demanded, anger entering his voice, but mixing in with his bitterness and guilt. “Then what did you come to do? Demand a confession from me? Extract an apology? You said you would be *candid*. So, what exactly do you want, Virginia Potts?”

“I want the best for Tony.”

“Wonderful, we share a common goal.”

“We share a common *affection*,” she countered and he tensed anew. Miss Potts watched him, not as one would an insect, but something far calmer and softer. “I can’t begin to understand the complexities of the spell you cast. I also doubt you’d ever tell me. But I’m not an idiot, Loki. I’ve spent years watching people look at Tony with awe, attraction and infatuation. Most of them have no idea what Tony is like, you do.” She carefully linked her fingers. “None of them would make the sacrifice you did and expect nothing in return.”

“I sacrificed nothing.”

“No?”

“No.”

*Or rather, nothing I wouldn’t give a thousand times for him.*

But the answer would only confirm what she was alleging, something that he could not bring himself to state. Thor knew, JARVIS had deduced it and now Miss Potts was uncovering the ever-present adoration that belonged to her lover.

“I suppose you didn’t,” she murmured. “After all, you made him live as long as you.” Loki clenched his jaw. “You made him outlive me.” Loki met her shrewd gaze. “Should I assume you did all of that deliberately to better your own position or-”

“Do *not* take me for a being so callous as to enjoy the consequences he is now going to suffer,” Loki snapped.

“Then don’t take *me* for an idiot,” she rebutted.

“Then what should I do?” Loki seethed. “Drop to my knees and plead for your lenience? Swear to find a way to defy the Norns and extend your own life to match his? Promise that he is and always will be yours, when such a thing is already obvious to all who know him?”

Miss Potts exhaled loudly and with clear frustration.

“I’m not asking you for anything, Loki.”

“Oh, clearly you are asking for *something*,” Loki hissed. “Perhaps you want a binding of your own? Something to assure you of my intentions so you need never fear it when you are not within this tower?”

“I said that I trust you, Loki.”

Loki laughed darkly. “That is an unwise choice on your part.”

“Not when it comes to Tony,” she said boldly. “I think the one thing I can trust above anything else is your love for him.”

Loki was on his feet in an instant. He glared at her, but she did not cower or act the slightest bit intimidated. She rose as well, her movements calmer and her gaze, not angry or fearful, but *gentle*. She looked at him as if he were someone in need of *compassion*.

“Do not look at me thusly,” he bit out.

“How am I looking at you?”

“As if I need your pity.”

“It’s not pity I’m feeling, Loki.”

“What a surprise,” he said darkly. “The honourable Miss Potts does not even feel compassion for her enemy.”

“You’re not my enemy, Loki.” She reached out as if to touch him but he jerked away. Her hand fell and her gaze turned sad. “And I said I didn’t come here to accuse you of anything.”

“Only that I am in love with your partner,” he acknowledged bitterly.

“Only to tell you that I *trust* you.”

Loki frowned, the repeat of the phrase making him reconsider exactly what she was implying—he looked at her again, analysing her features and manner. She didn’t look like a jealous or angry spouse. There was pity, yes, no matter how she denied it, but there was genuine *conviction*; she meant what she was saying.

“You trust me,” he repeated.

“Yes.”

“With your lover?”

“With the person we both care about.”

He observed her for a long time, the minutes stretching but her confidence unwavering. She truly believed it, and perhaps that should have given him some comfort, and in a way it did. He would not be forced from Tony's side, nor have his secret blared to all and sundry—but it ached in a different way. She had that luxury because his own wishes would never be fulfilled.

Tony would never want him, not while he had Miss Potts, and his own feelings for the man meant he would never approach while his mortal loved another. Yes, Virginia Potts *could* trust him, if only because any attempt for more would only damage himself.

In the end, he scoffed and looked away from her. It meant he was unprepared for her touch. He whirled around, grasping her wrist and yanking it away from his arm. She winced and he quickly released his hold.

“I didn't—”

“I shouldn't have,” she quickly interrupted. “I just wanted to...” she sighed. “I'm just sorry.”

“Why in the Norns are you apologising?” he asked, baffled.

“You saved Tony's life, and you put yourself in this position because of it.” She rubbed her wrist, but it seemed more absent than any attempt to incite his guilt. “I've worked it out. Others might as well. You did that because you wouldn't let Tony die. You sacrificed more than just your seidr for him, and I want to try and make that easier for you.”

“You should not make it *easy* for me,” Loki said hoarsely, feeling a truly spiteful hatred for the woman. The person he envied above all others and who had the *nerve* to be so kind to him.

“Why not?” she demanded, that same conviction and *compassion* blazing through her features. “I can't imagine how hard this is for you.” She grimaced. “Or how little you must like me.” He didn't deny it and her expression turned sad. “I just wanted you to know that I'm not going to yell or scream at you. Is it ideal? No. But, I know there is no way you would harm Tony by interfering in my relationship with him.”

“Wonderful,” he muttered. “A touching display of laudable kindness. I'm sure you will sleep all the better knowing you've so thoroughly claimed your moral high ground.”

“Would you rather me as an enemy, Loki?” she questioned. “Glaring at you from the sidelines, dragging Tony away, accusing you in front of everyone and making Tony realise exactly why you sacrificed all that you did?”

Loki whipped his head to her. “Anthony—”

“Doesn't know,” she said. “I won't tell him, and if he does work it out, it'll take him a while. He's not good at that kind of thing.”

Loki slumped, feeling the first hint of relief since this entire conversation had started.

“I’m not expecting you to start confiding in me or treating me with anything more than politeness,” she continued. “But as long as I’m dating Tony, we’re going to be in this situation. I don’t see you as an enemy and I hope that one day, you won’t see me as one either.”

Loki didn’t reply, he couldn’t, and she seemed to understand as much.

“I’ll make sure no one else tries to bother you,” she said. “I’m sorry if I made your evening worse, but I wanted you to know that if you need it, I’ll do everything I can to make this easier for you.”

She then offered him another sad smile before walking around him and leaving. She didn’t say another word and Loki only felt relief when the door shut.

Sinking down into the nearby armchair, Loki’s gaze flicked over the tea set. With a gesture he sent the ceramic flying to slam against the wall, sending shards and tea in numerous directions.

Loki half expected JARVIS to comment on it, but the A.I. was silent. It left Loki to sink further into the cushion, close his eyes and wish not for the first time that Virginia Potts was not so thoroughly *good*—maybe then, he could hate her the way he wished to, rather than feel a grudging respect and gratitude for the kindness she had shown him, and the protection she had offered his heart.

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He didn’t leave his rooms for the rest of the night.

When both Thor and Anthony tried to contact him, he had JARVIS decline them. They didn’t try a second time, leaving him the entire night and well into the early morning to turn over Miss Potts’ conversation and the multitude of ways he detested her.

Oh, he was *grateful* she was a compassionate and caring woman who would keep his secret—but he loathed it just as equally. He knew that he would never be so considerate to any being whom had tried to bond with his lover.

Yes, grudging respect for them saving Anthony’s life would have made him tolerate them, but little more than that.

He was far more possessive and spiteful than the *noble* Miss Potts.

And in the end, the very notion of being in the same place as her—when she was floors away with the one he *loved*—had him doing what he had not done since saving Anthony’s life; he left the tower.

He did not go far, merely teleporting to another building in the city. It wasn’t quite as tall as Avengers Tower, but he could see the ‘A’ in the distance. He could *feel* the strain on their newly formed and still unsatisfied bond.

He took the pain of it gladly; a burn in his chest that gave him something different to focus on.

Loki sat atop the building and watched the sun rising, listening as the Midgardian city awoke and began their day of drudgery and meaninglessness.

*A sea of mortals, and only one of them whom I care for so greatly that I would give my very life protecting this undeveloped world.*

Loki supposed it was almost fitting that as the first rays crept across the building, it was the very mortal on his thoughts who appeared in the distance, heading straight for him. Loki didn't move, he kept his feet hanging over the side and his gaze on a spot in the sky.

The Iron Man suit came to a stop just behind him, the metal of the boots loud as they landed. He heard the faceplate lift before, "Any reason you've picked this building to sit on, Lokes? Because, gotta say, my tower is *way* more impressive than this."

Loki's lips twitched, but didn't quite form a smile.

"A mere change of scenery. All walls can grow a bit dull, given time."

He heard the rest of the suit unlatch before he felt the warmth of Anthony behind him and a hand on his shoulder.

"So, your magic's a bit better then?" Loki hummed a non-committal sound. "Or was Thor pissing you off so much you had to ditch?"

For a fleeting moment, Loki imagined telling Anthony the truth: *no, it was merely your woman.*

But Loki would not open that door, rather, he would barricade it closed for as long as he was capable.

"Yes," he said, keeping the exact question he was answering unspecified.

Anthony undoubtedly noticed, but he didn't comment on it. Instead, he shifted a minute distance closer, Loki's back ending up flush with the mortal's leg, his head resting near Anthony's stomach.

"Well, I hope you don't mind me crashing this rooftop party."

Loki finally smiled. "You are always welcome, Anthony."

"Cool. Maybe, after we can get a coffee. There's this new café and I'm pretty sure even you'll like something on the menu. They have hot chocolate and these muffins that actually get the berry ratio right."

Loki's grin widened as he listened, letting the sound of Anthony's voice wash over him like a wave. He closed his eyes and tried to remind himself that this was more than enough; that if

he could only survive these years on Midgard then things between them could remain this way for eternity.

But Loki knew in his heart that he would not be so lucky.

There were three who had already worked out his secret, and how could he expect that a man as intelligence and perceptive as Anthony would not one day discover it too?

## Chapter End Notes

Pepper might have surprised a few people here, but I always wanted her to just... *understand*. She knows how easy it can be to love Tony, and she also knows exactly how much Loki gave up to do it and how little he's asking. She is very perceptive and she feels for Loki here. That's what I wanted her to be, not an ally as such but a neutral party who still appreciates what Loki did to save Tony's life. ~~Too bad Loki only hates her more for it 😏~~

Thanks for reading!



# Chapter 5

## Chapter Notes

As always, intended to post this earlier, didn't get the chance. Busy, busy, busy.

But I hope you like this one! Thanks for reading 😊❤️

They went to the café, as Anthony requested, the man continuing to ramble all he knew about the new business, making Loki smile. They did find themselves photographed by three separate fans while there (Loki still found it mystifying that a good portion of the populace actually liked him) before purchasing a bag laden with baked goods along with a coffee for Anthony and an iced tea for himself.

Returning to the tower was done via car, Anthony having sent the suit ahead of them. Loki had been enjoying the morning, letting Anthony's chatter wash over him, but he tensed the closer they came to the building. Anthony's hand soon found his wrist, squeezing gently.

"What do you say we head straight to the lab?" Anthony suggested. "You and me and some quality time warding my armour."

"I will not keep you from your own activities."

"You act like I don't *love* working on things with you."

Loki adored hearing such a phrase, and yet, it was diluted by the ever-approaching tower and the woman whom he'd conversed with only last night.

"It is still early," he murmured. "You could see Miss Potts first. I am sure she would enjoy one of the muffins you procured."

"Uh, you're the one I spent like twenty minutes arguing with over the best kinds."

"Even so," he said, keeping his gaze out the window. "I am sure she would like one."

"Not when she's allergic to strawberries."

"They do not all have them."

"Okay, what is with the Pepper fixation? Do you just want to be alone?" Anthony removed his hand and it finally made Loki look at him. Anthony was frowning, confusion mixing with a vaguely *hurt* expression. "You trying to tell me to leave? Because, you can just say that outright, Loki."

“No,” Loki hurried to say. His hand rising, wanting to touch but hesitating in mid-air before dropping back to his leg. “No. I would happily spend the morning in your laboratory, Anthony. I merely do not want to,” he winced, “*coerce* you into further time with me.”

Anthony’s hurt vanished, but his puzzlement grew. “*Coerce?* Lokes. Not sure how to tell you this, but no one forces me to spend time with you.”

“Perhaps not,” he admitted. “But I warned you that the spell seeks to have us remain close. It is what drew you to me this morning, had you fly your suit from the tower rather than simply monitor my whereabouts or remain unaware of my disappearance until you went searching.”

“Okay, so I woke up to a little bit of heartburn, big deal.”

Loki clenched his jaw. *Heart burn*, after all, was unerringly accurate. The heart, the mind, the *body* all ached to return to the one they were bound to; a mild enough affliction for Anthony as *he* had been the one to part them, but something that would increase over time if left separated.

And, he supposed, that was something he had been avoiding for too long; the truth. Not, perhaps, the truth of his feelings, but the consequences of their binding and exactly what else it could entail if they fostered it.

“I think it would be best if you saw Miss Potts,” Loki murmured.

“Lokes-”

“And afterwards,” he continued, “you will come and see me so that I can explain everything else I have neglected to tell you about our bond.”

Anthony was far too astute to miss the seriousness of his tone, but rather than do as he’d intended, Anthony’s hand came around his wrist again. Loki jerked his attention from the buildings outside to look at the man beside him.

“Pepper doesn’t need me,” Anthony said firmly, “but I think right now you do.”

“Anthony-”

“You’ve got a lot on your mind, Lokes. I don’t think it’s just Thor. I think something has got you freaking out-”

“I am not *freaking out*’.”

“Okay, over-stressing and guilt spiralling. Better?” Loki’s lips thinned and he glared at the mortal. Anthony just offered a gentle smile. “So, how about you start talking about what’s in that head of yours and I’ll convince you not to worry about it.”

“I have my doubts you will manage that,” he muttered.

“Only way to know is to try.”

Anthony shifted closer, not stopping until they were pressed together from shoulder to ankle. His hand remained warm and comforting around Loki's wrist.

And it *ached*, because for how many centuries had he longed for a companion to take his side, to listen to his woes, to be *his* confidant and *his* partner? It had been a childish wish, then an adult yearning and now, it was all of those things and more.

For, with but a small change, their hands could be linked, his *lover* could be offering to ease the burden of his frustrations as they returned home. Anguish that would not even be *present* were he and Anthony committed partners enjoying a magical binding that would be the envy of many.

Instead, it was his friend, whom thought he was irritated by Thor, or worried as to the consequences of their bond—and he was both, he was *more* than that and also so very *tired*. It was not just the sleepless night; it was the way he was subtly fighting all that the bond wanted them to be—it was hiding all that he felt from the man next to him.

Closing his eyes, Loki tilted his head back against the seat. He rarely let another see him when he felt so raw or vulnerable, but this was *Anthony*.

“Lokes?” he asked gently.

“Are you aware of any behaviour changes you have experienced?”

“Huh? Like what?”

“Preferring to write your calculations instead of using your technology? A craving for tea, perhaps? Maybe an urge to wear green over your favoured red?”

“Okay, that's a little creepy that you pinpointed two things I've *definitely* thought about over the last few days.”

Loki smiled faintly. “I have been trying to minimise that, but I am not surprised some of it has leaked through.”

“What do you mean?”

“An ability one can foster with this bond is that of telepathy.”

“Telepathy,” Anthony echoed.

“Mm. It is not reading thoughts in a traditional sense, although, I have heard that is possible with practice and compatibility to converse mentally, but I have my doubts we would be capable as you are not a seidr user.”

“Right,” Anthony said slowly, shock clear in his tone.

“It all comes down to the link between us,” Loki continued, opening his eyes but staring at the roof of the car. “We are intrinsically tied together. I mentioned this was not invasive and I will do all I can to keep it thus. Your lack of seidr aids me, but my magic complicates things.”

“Okay, less beating around the bush and more explaining what *exactly* this means,” Anthony said, his tone the same firm, focused one used in SHIELD briefings.

“When I concentrate on the link, I can sense your rough location and emotional state,” Loki explained. “I have not done this since the initial forging of the bond. I felt... unsettled being far from you and needed to remind myself of your health.”

“Why can’t I do that?” Anthony asked. “Because I don’t have magic?”

“Partially,” he answered. “Mostly, I have not shown you the means of doing so. If you entered a meditative state, you would manage to locate it. For me, it comes more easily as it was my seidr that forged the bond.

“And if we did that, we’d, what? Be able to improve the way we locate and sense each other?”

“Yes,” he agreed. “And it would, in theory, help you filter out the influences I am unconsciously offering you.”

“Tea and green things.”

“Yes.”

“But I’m not influencing you?”

“At this point you are not exerting a strong enough mental force to do so.”

“Uh huh,” he mumbled. “So, wait. Shit. Is this the not-quite-illegal part of it? *This* is why you’ve been freaking out, because it’s, what, an invasion of privacy and could be used against me?”

Unbidden, Loki’s gaze flicked to Anthony. His features were concerned, yes, but not disgusted or angry, he looked the way he often did when something that had been eluding him had fallen into place.

*I hope that is all he works out about it, and me.*

“You do maintain free will,” Loki explained. “I could no more influence you to kill an innocent person than I could make you shave your facial hair. The difference is that, where before you would always select coffee, one morning you might find yourself unable to resist a cup of tea.”

Anthony nodded slowly, a thoughtful furrow to his brow.

“So, it’s more like someone you know rubbing off on you? They like a certain food, or music or something, and you subconsciously start to grow to like it too.”

“In a manner of speaking,” Loki agreed, “but it is more... enveloping with the bond. Subconscious, even. You may one day wake up and find you have already brewed the tea

before even realising you craved it. Or you may pick up a dagger and spin it around your fingers, not having ever practiced the motion before.”

“Right,” he said, his tone hard to read. “But, it’s all innocuous shit? Random crap that doesn’t mean anything in the long run?”

Loki hesitated, it wasn’t that Anthony was *wrong*, but to hear him accept the mental link so absently was... disarming. In the end, he was forced to say as much.

“I did not expect you to take it so well.”

“I mean, if you had of told me you had an all-access pass to my thoughts and I didn’t have any chance of knowing yours, yeah, I’d be uncomfortable and angry you didn’t tell me. I wouldn’t *blame* you, because I did sign the dotted line without asking for details.” Anthony smiled and squeezed his wrist. “But right now, it seems like an acceptable price to pay.” His grin spread wider. “Especially when you’ll teach me the meditation techniques that get you drinking coffee and craving motor oil on your hands.”

Loki huffed. “The goal would be for *neither* of us to be influencing the other. To have enough mental control to block such urges from even getting through.”

“Like what’s happening with you?”

“Somewhat,” Loki allowed. “As I said, you are unable to project strongly enough to affect me. Additionally, this is heightened as an initial side-effect of the bond. Everything is more acute.”

“And you didn’t tell me about it because...?”

Loki hesitated, the truth was, he *should* have warned Anthony more than he had, but apart from the parchment in his room—the very note that even now rested within his favourite jacket—he had not seen any other indications it was affecting Anthony. The mortal had also made no comment on it.

“I suppose I had thought it was not influencing you unduly,” he admitted. “I was reminded of it because of the pain of our departure from each other.”

“Yeah,” Anthony murmured. He touched his chest, rubbing gently with his fingers. “So that burning sensation really was because you were too far away?”

“Yes. How else did you know exactly where to find me?”

Anthony opened his mouth as if to answer only to pause and frown. “Shit. You’re right. I didn’t even ask JARVIS, I just... I *knew* where you were.”

“The pain of our parting will weaken given time,” Loki said, the words feeling like a lie even as he spoke them.

Because the *physical* pain would cease, that was true, but the emotional kind? Well, for him, it would be ongoing.

“As I said initially,” he continued, keeping his tone even, “a month will be the time to review the bond. By then, we should have no need to touch or stay within a close radius to one another.”

“Shit.” Anthony ran a hand through his hair. “I wasn’t really thinking about it, but this is going to be a problem in battle, isn’t it?”

“Unlikely,” Loki replied, “it was not so much the physical act of removal, but my rather... swift and *specific* departure.”

He could feel Anthony’s gaze on the side of his face.

“You’re saying it noticed you leaving for no good reason and decided to complain about it?”

Loki grimaced at the depiction, but... “In essence, yes.”

“Okay,” Anthony said, clearly thinking it over. “But, this bond is still going to be a bit of a short-term issue, isn’t it? Are you going to have to come with me to Stark Industries meetings?” He snickered. “Actually, that would be funny. Or maybe it will be an excuse to not go to any for a month. Scratch the initial concern, it’s sounding like it’s going to be a great thing.”

Loki shot the man a wry look, but Anthony continued to grin. He continued, even *now* to act as if the bond wasn’t anything to be concerned or angry over. He still acted as if it was interesting, or even *fun*. They were bound together for life and Anthony still saw nothing but *positives* to the situation.

“You remain an eternal puzzle, Anthony Stark,” Loki murmured, knowing the words were far too fond but unable to curb them.

Anthony just laughed. He also nudged him gently. “Good thing you’ve got a long time to get around to solving me, huh?”

He was saved from a response by their arrival at Avengers Tower. They entered the garage and Anthony took the moment to check his phone for any messages, but Loki kept his gaze on his mortal.

*Somehow, Anthony, I do not think even an eternity would be enough time. Rather, I think I could spend the next few centuries doing nothing else and find myself well satisfied.*

And, despite his earlier worries, with Anthony still so accepting of their bond, Loki had to wonder if perhaps in the decades to come, when Midgard was but a memory... maybe Anthony *would* wish to explore the extent of the bond with him?

His gaze flicked to the hand that even now still remained encircling his wrist. Perhaps, if he was truly lucky, Anthony might even be willing, one day, for... more?

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Anthony did not return to Miss Potts as Loki had suggested earlier, nor did he seek out any other companions in the tower. Instead, he kept his hold on Loki’s wrist and dragged him into

the laboratory.

It was both similar to how it had been in the last week, and yet, a little... easier. Loki found the tension that had rested on his shoulders was easier to soothe. While Anthony did not know the extent of his feelings and how intimate these bonds usually were, he knew about the mental link, the ability to foster a deeper connection, and he was not shying from it, in fact, he was doing the opposite.

“No,” Loki insisted.

“Why not?” Anthony demanded. “You said meditation will help me and keep me from drinking green tea.”

“You could do with drinking more tea,” Loki muttered. Anthony just rolled his eyes. “But yes, it will, and we will begin it next month.”

“It’s always *next month* with you. Why not now? Won’t tackling it straight away be better for us both?”

“No.”

“You just don’t want me influencing you into coffee.”

Loki sighed and not for the first time. “Yes, Anthony, I am going to keep you from using a meditative state to aid you in our bond, solely to avoid drinking your horrifically bitter morning brew.”

“Well, when you put it like *that* it sounds like you probably have a good reason.”

“What a novel idea,” he drawled. “My decision not to encourage unstable seidr is *reasonable*.”

“You keep saying unstable, but nothing about your magic is in flux.”

He grabbed one of his monitoring screens and flicked the projection across the lab. Loki grasped it and skimmed the readings. It did, in fact, show his seidr as being below average in quantity, *still* on Anthony but overall, at peace.

Which, considering their close proximity and that they were *alone* was doing wonders for him. The only thing that would improve it would be Anthony against him—or him against the mortal. Truthfully, what he wanted was to wrap an arm around him and simply rest his weight against the man as he worked.

But he made sure to keep himself seated nearby but not quite in touching distance.

“That is because it’s being sated by our current interactions.”

“So, what you’re saying is I need to slap some wires and electrodes on you and have you walk around the tower and New York as I monitor from the lab?”

Loki sent the man a flat look, not amused by his teasing comment.

“Try it, Anthony, and you will regret it.”

“Uh, uh, uh. Can’t threaten me anymore, can you? It’d be like defenestrating yourself.”

Loki rolled his eyes, but although a rebuttal was on the tip of his tongue, he paused at the abrupt change to Anthony’s features. His humour had shifted to an almost brooding frown. Loki straightened in his chair.

“Anthony?”

“Huh. Sorry.” Anthony shook his head, but the expression didn’t fully clear. “What were we talking about? Your magic, right?”

“No,” Loki interjected, pushing from his seat. “What is it? What has unsettled you?”

“What? Me? Nah.” He waved his hand dismissively and looked at one of his work screens. “Now, I’m sure I’ve got some wires we can get you wearing outside the lab and-”

“Anthony,” he said firmly, reaching out and gently grasping the man’s upper arm. Anthony stilled. “What bothers you?”

“Seriously, it’s nothing, Lokes. So, how about-”

“Do you truly believe such a dismissal will work on me? I am *known* for my lies.”

Anthony exhaled harshly. “Look, you’ve got a lot going on right now and the last thing you need is me being all…” he waved his hand vaguely, “about something stupid.”

Loki’s heart sunk like a stone.

“Anthony, please do not tell me that you have been shielding your discomfort from me, especially not if it pertains to the bond.”

“It’s not *discomfort*.”

“But it is something?”

He winced. “Not… not really? Just sometimes it hits me what it means, you know? About our lives being tied together.”

“Your inability to be injured?” Loki asked, recalling the comment about defenestration.

“More that I’ve kind of created a giant fucking weak spot for you.” He ran a hand through his hair. “And that it means I’m around for a… a lot longer than I know how to deal with.”

Loki felt the guilt like a physical weight, as if Mjölfnir was strapped to his back, pulling him to the ground.

“Anthony,” he whispered, feeling choked, “I cannot… I am *sorry*-”



“No. Fuck. This is exactly what I *didn't* want. You didn't do this to mess with me. I'm not... I still don't blame you, okay? I hate that I'm now a vulnerability for you and I'm... I'm *dealing* with what it means for my life to be longer.” He chuckled faintly. “Actually, Rogers has been really good on that front.”

“You have been speaking to the captain?” He asked, surprised.

“Yeah. Pulled him aside, let him know the health update and had a long chat. A couple of them actually. Also been talking to Rhodey. No one, and I do mean *no one* blames you for the call you made. Sometimes it just hits me and I have to roll with it.” He offered a tight smile. “It's a lot to wrap my head around, but I'm a realist and a futurist.” His smile became a little more genuine. “There will always be a part of me that's ecstatic that the future's opened up for me in ways I couldn't have imagined even a month ago. So don't think I'm hating this, I'm not. I'm just... aware of it sometimes.”

Loki knew, all too keenly, exactly what Anthony was referencing. It had plagued him with every battle they'd fought, every tease Barton had made about Anthony's '*grey hairs*'.

Mortality.

The very essence that had them burn so brightly—also had them disappear too quickly. Something that Anthony now had to grapple with in more far-reaching terms. As, apart from him, Thor and perhaps the captain, Anthony would long outlive the many heroes and friends surrounding him.

He would also outlive his woman.

“I am still sorry,” Loki murmured.

Anthony shrugged. “You said consequences. I made my choice, Lokes.” He lifted his head and met Loki's gaze. “And I mean it when I say, ninety percent of the time, I'm happy and excited about it.”

“But there is a ten percent,” he acknowledged quietly.

“And that's when I talk to Rogers or Rhodey.”

“You can talk to me,” Loki was quick to offer. “Do not believe you cannot.”

“I know I can.” Anthony clasped his arm and squeezed. “But, I'm not going to make you beat yourself up any harder. I have other friends who are happy to listen and help.”

A part of Loki wanted to protest, to *demand* to hear every discomfort and regret Anthony was feeling; to accept each word as the penalty he was due for forging the bond. The rest knew that Anthony would not wish to harm him that way, that it would hurt *Anthony* to do it. The man needed to be able to speak his mind and heart; unfettered and unafraid of the other person's reaction.

But oh, it *hurt* to know the man felt that way.

While it was obvious that Anthony was being genuine and did not blame him, it brought Loki little comfort. Their bond, the tethering that should symbolise nothing but happiness between two lovers... it was the opposite in more ways than simply the change to their relationship. It brought with it detriments that Anthony was still struggling to overcome.

“I am sorry,” Loki said again.

“I told you I don’t-”

“Blame me, yes, but I can still apologise for what it entails.”

Anthony sighed heavily; he also shook his head. Then, to Loki’s surprise, the mortal didn’t try and argue with him or pull away, instead, he stepped *into* his space. He wrapped his arms around Loki’s waist, making him stiffen. Anthony just rested his head against Loki’s chest, far too close to his rapidly racing heart.

“I don’t think it’s necessary,” Anthony murmured, “but for what it’s worth, I *do* forgive you for everything; not telling me, freaking out about it, the pain of separation, extending my life. *All* of it.”

Loki clenched his jaw rather than let anything escape him, be they words or any other expression of the emotion clogging his throat. Instead, he hesitantly brought his arms around Anthony. The mortal sighed gently and relaxed against him; Loki only tugged him closer. He also dared to let his chin rest atop the other man’s chin.

Closing his eyes, Loki let the warmth from his mortal and the satisfied bond flood his body. It was almost enough to make him forget that for all that he embraced his Anthony, it was only ever as his friend.

# Chapter 6

## Chapter Notes

This chapter is only a short one, I'm afraid. I also meant to post it earlier but, alas, as always, time runs away from me 😊  
I hope you enjoy it!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

After their discussions in the car and lab, Anthony became even more demonstrative. Whenever they were in a room together, Anthony made certain to touch him at least once and to always remain near enough to reach out for him.

Loki knew he shouldn't enjoy it as much as he did, and he certainly felt uncomfortable any time Miss Potts happened to be nearby—to the point that he started to avoid the upper floors of the tower, especially during days and times where she would be present.

At first, Loki had imagined that Anthony didn't notice or that, if he did, he was merely keeping quiet about his evasion, but as another two weeks passed and the mortal *finally* convinced him to begin the process on teaching him meditative techniques (apparently, accidentally making a tea and drinking it three times was his limit) it became obvious that Anthony was merely distracted.

It was their third attempt and they were sitting in a cleared section of Loki's floor. He'd placed them on a soft rug, giving Anthony a point to tether his normally ceaseless hands. The first time, Anthony had interrupted him constantly with questions, making the process take many more hours than should be necessary (not that Loki had been complaining). The second, he had been far more focused, even managing to drift surprisingly deeply for a novice.

Today, his knees were jerking up and down, occasionally knocking Loki's as he tried and failed to centre his mind. His eyes were squeezed shut, but more from frustration than concentration.

“Something is on your mind,” Loki remarked.

“I thought that was the point of this, to *get* things on my mind.”

“The opposite,” Loki drawled. “And I meant you seem to be preoccupied with something else. What troubles you?”

Anthony immediately tensed, looking cagey. “Nothing.”

“Anthony.”

The mortal peeked open one eye, Loki watched him sharply. Anthony finally sighed. He opened both eyes and slumped with one elbow on his thigh and his chin on his hand.

“It’s not about this.”

“That is still a worrying start.”

Anthony rolled his eyes and almost smiled. “Really, it’s not. It’s... an ongoing issue.”

Loki’s brows furrowed. “Is it something in your laboratory?”

“That would be easier if it was,” he muttered, only to sigh. “Do you remember the day you saved me? How you, uh,” he grimaced deeply, “walked in on a bit of an argument?”

*Ah.*

Loki did his best not to wince along with Anthony. It was certainly not a discussion he *wanted* to have with Anthony, but he had promised he would listen to any problems or woes he was having, that included his romance with Miss Potts.

“Yes, I recall.”

“Right, well.” Anthony rubbed the back of his neck with his free hand. “I kind of thought that once the dust settled, she’d be relieved, you know? I mean, I’m not going to be taken out by one punch anymore. But it turns out, she’s still not happy about me flying out there as Iron Man. Says I need to think about more than just myself. I have to think about her and, well, *you.*”

Loki swallowed hard at that, knowing that even *now* she was thinking about him—his connection to the bond, yes, but he was certain his feelings were also being considered, and by the Norns, but he hated how unfailingly *kind* she was.

“And I told her,” Anthony continued, “I said I wasn’t going to do anything stupid that would get us both hurt or worse, but then she told me that I could *try* all I wanted, but if someone else was in danger, I would be the first one in the middle. And I just...” He let out a frustrated breath. “I can’t get her to understand. It’s not just the *world* that needs Iron Man, it’s...”

*You*, Loki thought but didn’t say, because it had long been clear that flying his armour, being in the midst of battle, it appealed to Anthony in a way that non-warriors could never understand. And yes, while Anthony was hardly the kind spurred on by blood-lust like Thor, he wanted to be efficient, to test out his technology and showcase his prowess and the sharpness of his mind.

It was the same as how Loki would not seek a fight but he would always feel a certain pleasure at testing a new spell, of defeating his enemies soundly and proving *he* was superior. Anthony, of course, was also prompted by the desire to protect the innocent but... Iron Man was a *part* of Anthony. Loki doubted the man could ever willingly hang up his suit and repulsors.

But, to side with Anthony on this... it would not help him with his woman. It would also make Anthony defend her if he came across to harshly and try to justify both her point of view and his own.

And so, Loki was left with the one recourse he did not want, but was the *honourable* thing to do.

“It is only because she loves you a great deal that she is so worried about you,” Loki said quietly. “She does not wish to stop you from being who you are, but she does not want to see you hurt. I imagine if she were performing such a role as say, Iron Woman, you would feel equally concerned.”

Anthony’s mouth twisted.

“Yeah, I *know* she cares. And I know I’m a hypocrite if I say I wouldn’t be the same, but.” He groaned and dropped himself backwards, laying on the ground and kicking out his legs until one heel hit Loki’s knee. “I just feel like we’re constantly arguing lately.” He quickly lifted a hand as if to forestall Loki. “And not about the bond, not even *because* of the bond.” He rubbed a hand over his face. “We were doing it before then too. I actually thought my being more durable might *help* the arguments.”

*So did I*, Loki silently admitted.

“I suppose it has merely thrown her concern into sharper light,” he theorised. “Now you are *not* vulnerable, but her worry has not faded.”

“It’s almost like it’s gotten worse,” he muttered.

Loki’s breath caught and he stiffened as a different thought came to mind. But... no, surely he had made himself clear to Miss Potts? He had no plans to try and divide them or make an overture on Anthony. She had nothing to fear, especially as he knew Anthony would never be the kind to accept—his eyes did not wander and his heart did not sway once given to another. He was loyal to a fault.

But then... he had been taking up more of Anthony’s time recently. Perhaps, even if she did not admit it aloud, she felt excluded from her lover’s time and life?

Loki’s gaze ran over Anthony; lying so at ease upon the Vanaheim rug he had selected specifically for the mortal’s comfort. Anthony’s bare foot brushing up against the leather of his pants. The two of them together under the safety of his wards; his seidr humming at the proximity and safety of his bonded.

Loki did not want him to leave—but he wanted the man frustrated and miserable even less.

“You should go to her,” Loki murmured.

“Huh? Pep? She’s at SI.”

“Regardless, you should visit her, or arrange an outing for the two of you for when she finishes. The point is that you should spend time with her, preferably outside this tower.”

Anthony sat up with a frown. “But won’t the bond-”

“Not if you remain reasonably close and if you leave in increments. It was my teleport and abrupt departure that caused us difficulty before. It has also been longer for my seidr to settle. You should be fine.”

Despite his assurances, Anthony still looked hesitant.

“I don’t have a good track record with surprises,” Anthony murmured.

“Your approach could use work,” Loki agreed. “I hardly enjoy when you ambush me unexpectedly, but the act itself is always of interest. I’m sure with some warning from JARVIS she will be more receptive.”

“And when it *doesn’t* work, I’m blaming you,” Anthony remarked, but he still pushed from his position on the floor.

He crouched (a position that, Loki knew, would have been difficult for the mortal before the bond). He flashed a more genuine smile.

“Thanks for the advice, Lokes. And the willingness to cut our meditation short.”

“You’ll find *you* are the one you insisted on the lessons in the first place.”

“Yeah, yeah, you love being a prickly asshole of a teacher.”

“I am being *far* more patient than you deserve.”

Anthony laughed. He also finally pushed into a standing position. Loki stayed seated and looked up at him, resisting the urge to reach for the man and have him stay with him—a place where Anthony was welcomed and *adored*, where every aspect of his heroics and surprises were enjoyed.

But it was not his place, and so, he merely bid the man well, offered to have another meditation session tomorrow, and watched as Anthony left to create a suitably romantic dinner with his woman.

With his evening plans so thoroughly destroyed, it was no surprise that JARVIS questioned, “Shall I ask Mr Odinson to dine with you, Mr Liesmith?”

“No,” Loki answered, not inclined to see the Thunderer’s pitying gaze.

“Very well. Shall I send a meal to your rooms?”

“Not yet, JARVIS,” he answered, letting his fingers skim over the rug. “I’m afraid I do not have much of an appetite.”

There was a long beat of silence before, JARVIS said, his tone almost... gentle.

“Sir is not lying, Mr Liesmith. There has been no noticeable increase in his and Miss Potts disagreements since the forming of your bond.”

Loki smiled wryly. “Somehow, that does not mollify me. He is unhappy and I am certain that, although not specific enough to pinpoint, I am at least partially to blame for the current arguments.”

“I do not believe Miss Potts *or* Mr Stark are unhappy with your decision.”

Despite the statement seeming finished, there was another noticeably hesitation and Loki glanced at the ceiling curiously, “You wish to add something else, JARVIS?”

“Merely that Miss Potts and Mr Stark have always disagreed with many of Sir’s decisions and ways of conducting himself. One does not need another involved to cause such arguments.” There was another pause, before, “I have noticed that, despite these conflicts, Mr Stark has been in greater spirits since your bond, especially when in your presence, Mr Liesmith.”

Happiness burst through him, but it was almost instantly followed by a sharp spike of bitterness and even a tendril of *wariness*. Because JARVIS was perceptive in many ways, but he was also biased in others. The A.I. would choose a course of action solely based off the benefit it would give his master, and without care of any others involved. Anthony had instilled protocols that he would not choose Anthony's life over those of innocents... but Loki had seen the A.I. bend those orders when necessary.

If JARVIS had started to believe that he benefited Anthony Stark, it could prove difficult for him. It felt *nice*, of course, but Loki had long learned to distrust and avoid things that were far too good to be accepted or indulged in.

“Your observations are... pleasant,” he allowed, “but altogether irrelevant. Anthony and Miss Potts will, as you say, continue as they always have, more than likely even better once they have adapted to the new bond. My own influence over Anthony should merely add to that... happiness.”

There was another delay in a response before, “Of course, Mr Liesmith.”

Loki tried not to acknowledge the clear doubt in the A.I.’s tone, because the last thing he needed was anything even *resembling* hope about himself and Anthony. Because even if something was to happen to the man and his woman, even if JARVIS thought he would be *good* for him, it did not mean anything when Anthony himself had made no comment or gave no indication he desired it.

Loki could have the support of everyone in the tower, he could have Anthony single and *desiring* a partnership—but it meant nothing if the mortal he wanted saw him as nothing but a companion or a friend.

---

Loki’s suggestion did not go as well as he’d anticipated.

Oh, the dinner seemed to be received positively by Miss Potts, but it did not change the turbulence within their relationship. In fact, as the days passed, Anthony became more short-tempered and distracted. He was often absent from the lab, and their mornings together became less frequent.

Loki tried not to let his regret or sadness show, merely finding the man as he had in the past by visiting the lab or the communal areas. He also had to watch their distance return to what it had been before the bond. Back then, Anthony had rarely entered into his space, not unless it was to slap his shoulder or his back, sometimes if there was little space on the couch, they might have ended up pressed together, but as a general rule they were never close.

Anthony, for his part, didn't seem to notice the new change as his own attention was focused inward.

Loki thought of asking, of trying to assist the man, but every time he found the words drying up. Twice, he had stood in the lab, watching the man tinker with his projects but make little headway. He'd stayed there, observing Anthony and devising a dozen leading statements, pointed questions and even things he could say to try and aid in healing the wound forming between the two lovers.

But what was there to say? Surely, *he* of all people had interfered enough?

So, he'd stayed quiet. He'd waited, he'd watched, and less than two weeks later—just over a month since saving Anthony's life and forging their bond—Loki was sitting in his room in the late evening, reading a book by lamplight when his door was opened without the courtesy of a knock.

He lifted his head, already knowing who it was by the hum of his wards; but the bright and energetic face of the mortal was not what he saw. Instead, Anthony looked tired and drawn with red-rimmed eyes and messy hair.

“Anthony?” he asked, concerned. He put down the book, not even bothering to mark his place. “What has happened?”

“Turns out, I can't do any-fucking-thing right,” he said, only to laugh harshly. “At least, not good enough to make anyone stick around. God.” He pressed his hands to his face. “And you're kind of fucked, right? Didn't read the fine print either and now you can't even *get away*.”

“Anthony,” Loki said, standing. “What are you talking of? I assure you there was no ‘*fine print*’ when I created our bond. I have no wish to-”

“Not *yet*, but Christ, you're going to work it aren't you? Because, it's not like I can even... I can keep...”

He stopped talking, his jaw clenched as he swallowed roughly. Slowly, Loki approached and when he was close enough, he placed a gentle hand on the man's arm.

“Anthony, please, tell me what is wrong.”



“Pepper,” he said, a wealth of pain in his voice. “We’re done.”

Loki had always tried never to think of Anthony and his woman ending their relationship; he never wanted to betray his friend by even contemplating it, especially not for his own benefit.

But *had* he thought of it, he might have expected relief intermixed within his concern for Anthony.

But what he felt in that moment was nothing but pain; an aching grief for the man in front of him.

He closed the remaining space and, although not something he usually did, he gently pulled the mortal into his arms. Anthony immediately clutched the back of his shirt, his face pressing against this chest.

“I am so sorry, Anthony,” he whispered.

“God,” Anthony choked out. “Not your fault I’m an absolute fuck up. Can’t do anything right. Can’t fucking... fucking *be* enough.”

*You are more than enough*, he wanted to swear.

*She is a fool to give you up*, he wished to insist.

*If it were but me, I would never let you go*, he yearned to confess.

But none of those phrases passed his lips, instead he said, “I know you are many things Anthony, but I am certain all you have ever done is love Miss Potts, and she has always known that.” He stroked the man’s back. “Whatever might have been said, I know she would have never called you any of the things you are calling yourself.”

“She didn’t need to *say* them,” Anthony said, his voice raw. “They were *there*. *Fuck*.”

Loki wanted to contradict him, to insist it wasn’t the case, but the harshness of Anthony’s voice kept him quiet. Instead, he stroked the man’s back and when he began to tremble, he gently rocked them, cradling the mortal and wishing he could wipe his pain away the way he could with a wound.

But this was not a simple or easy remedy, this would take time; and even if Anthony did not understand it himself, the bond would help him. Their tether would give him something to find safety, comfort and contentment from—and Loki would offer all of it willingly, for as long as it was needed.

Because he was realistic; whatever Anthony had said and implied, he could not assume that they truly had ended their relationship. Many broke apart and returned given time, and perhaps he was entirely biased, but Loki could not imagine Miss Potts being foolish enough to give Anthony Stark up indefinitely.

Loki knew, once he was recovered from the initial pain, Anthony would seek her out. He would try and win her, offer her everything under the sun if it would only give him another

chance. And when faced with the naked love and promises from Anthony Stark, what person, mortal or demi-god would deny him?

## Chapter End Notes

Some of you might be surprised by this "break up" but don't forget, Loki is an unreliable narrator when it comes to Pepper and Tony. I've also never painted their relationship here as overt or without problems. There's probably been quite a few straws waiting to fall and break the camel's back, it just happened to occur while Loki & Tony were bonded. ~~As if someone wanted it there for plot purposes~~ 😏

As for what happens next... only time and the remaining chapters will tell.

Thanks for reading!

# Chapter 7

## Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Anthony stayed the night.

He never asked to do it, but Loki didn't even think to deny him.

Rather, he sat beside the man, watching pensively as he consumed a worrying amount of liquor. He listened to him recount the break up and the numerous arguments preceding it, but every depiction left Loki vaguely uncomfortable, because the core of their disagreements seemed to be a fundamental opposition to each other's state of being.

It was subtle, but it was *there*. They complemented each other, they functioned *well* together, but at a distance—the way friends or even relatives might. But as lovers? There was too much friction. It was as distinct but unassuming as incorrect spell ingredients—and, left too long to simmer, it had burst out, taking their relationship with it.

Because, the more he observed, the more he was forced to do more than turn his head and ignore any signs of discontent as his own wishful thinking. Instead, he had to realise the *truth*. And so, when the mortal finally passed out on the couch from drink, Loki placed a blanket over him and a pillow beneath his head.

Stepping away from the man, he went to his bedroom and called softly, “JARVIS?”

“Yes, Mr Liesmith?” JARVIS answered, his voice noticeably lowered.

“Were you privy to the many conversations Anthony mentioned between himself and Miss Potts?”

“Yes, Mr Liesmith.”

“And were his depictions accurate?”

“I do believe that Mr Stark was being unfair to himself and all that he has done to attempt to maintain his relationship with Miss Potts.”

Something that Loki had already privately believed was the case.

“And aside from his own perceived failures and guilt?”

“His depictions as to the faults in their relationship and the detailing of each argument was correct, Mr Liesmith.”

Loki nodded thoughtfully. “Then if that is the case... I believe I am right in the assumption that this relationship would be difficult and perhaps, unwise to repair?”

“I would agree, Mr Liesmith. As too would Colonel Rhodes.”

*That* surprised Loki.

“Anthony’s closest friend does not approve of the relationship?”

“He has always wanted Mr Stark happy, but he has had misgivings from the beginning. He has not done more than express mild concerns, but he will not be surprised by this severance.”

It was another unexpected piece of information.

“Anthony has not informed him?”

“No, Mr Liesmith. You are the first person he has confided the situation to.”

“Oh,” Loki murmured.

His heart tugged in his chest and he stepped into the doorway, needing to see the man. Anthony was on his side, his back to Loki. He was sleeping calmly, not the fitful rest one might expect—but under his wards and tethered by the bond; his seidr would do everything it could to sooth his restless mind.

And, driven by an unstoppable urge, Loki reclosed the distance. He perched on the arm of the couch and hesitantly extended his hand. He gently placed it on the man’s head. Anthony made a small noise and leant more into his touch.

He used the contact to administer a small spell to cure the man of any ills from his alcohol consumption, but even with it concluded, he did not pull his hand away. He lightly carded his fingers through the man’s hair. He smiled sadly at the mortal.

“Tell me, JARVIS,” Loki said quietly. “When shall Colonel Rhodes come to the tower to aid in Anthony’s recovery?”

“It shall depend on when Mr Stark tells him, and when he can leave his base without consequence.”

When Anthony let out a small contented sigh at a more extensive caress from his fingers, his smile became a little more genuine.

“I shall do all I can to assist him in the meantime,” Loki murmured. “Does Miss Potts intend to leave the tower?”

“Yes, Mr Liesmith. She has already departed for a hotel. I believe she plans to stay in a vacant Stark Industries apartment. Did you wish to contact-”

“No,” Loki interjected firmly. “But I would like to be appraised if she intends to see Anthony so I may prepare for...”

He trailed off, but his gaze flicked pointedly to the empty bottles of liquor.

“Of course, Mr Liesmith.”

Loki let the quiet descend around them, his gaze returning back to the slumbering mortal—*his mortal.*

*I will help you recover from this, Anthony, he vowed. I will make you realise you are not to blame, that she is not the end of love or romance in your life. You will have many centuries to find a partner anew.*

He hesitated with his fingers at the edge of Anthony’s hair, almost touching the man’s temple.

*And if I am so lucky that you might pick me... I promise my bonded, you would make me the happiest being alive, and I would do everything in my power to do the same to you.*

---

Loki had known from the start that the path to recovery for Anthony would not be fast or without its hurdles.

And, he had been right.

Anthony drank... a lot. He didn’t always do it in Loki’s rooms, but it seemed to be his preference, that or his laboratory. But, in Loki’s rooms, he felt safe—something he confessed drunkenly, leaning his head against Loki’s thigh. The place felt comforting to him and eased some of his hurt.

The Avengers were, of course, sympathetic and Banner in particular offered to be a friendly ear. Colonel Rhodes also showed up within the week, pulling Anthony into a hug and spending two full days with him.

Loki had felt a twinge of jealousy but had refused to let it take root, especially when the Colonel sought him out to personally thank him for saving Anthony’s life and for being such a friend and support to him.

The Colonel had also been quick to draw him and Banner into a united front to aid Anthony by the third day of his visit. He wanted Anthony eating, sleeping, and not inhaling his bar. An objective he and Banner could both get behind.

But, even with the three of them all working in tangent, Anthony was depressed, snappish, belligerent and outright rude. At one point, Loki had been so irritated with him, he’d turned every bottle of alcohol the man touched into green tea.

It had provoked Anthony’s anger and even a thrown bottle of what had once been whiskey, but after he had left for his rooms in a teleport, Anthony had come and found him an hour later, apologetic and remorseful. Because Anthony was not sleeping, unable to rest in the bed which he’d shared with his lover. His only *true* sleep came after crashing in an alcoholic stupor on Loki’s couch—or passing out over his workbench in the lab.

But the latter was hardly conducive to rest, and the former, while aided by seidr, was not a remedy for everything.

It was why Loki had ended up guiding the weary mortal into his rooms and directing him to his bed. Anthony had tried to protest, but Loki had been insistent. The thrill of the mortal in his bed had almost been non-existent, his attention too caught on the bags under Anthony's eyes and the stubble on his jaw from not bothering to shave.

It was *JARVIS* who had traitorously suggested they share a bed, that their *closeness* and *bond* might help Anthony sleep better *and* would minimise Anthony's guilt for 'disrupting Loki's sleep'. Loki had glared harshly at the nearest camera, but JARVIS knew his creator well, and was able to convince the man—to the point that Anthony became insistent until Loki had been forced to concede.

He had ended up in bed with Anthony, *sharing* the space and waking in the morning to find the man curled around him as if he was some Midgardian plush bear. And it *ached*—because he wanted this so desperately, he had for *months*. It meant their situation brought with it a guilty pleasure, and a sharp spike of unattainable longing.

Because, Anthony was still heartbroken. Anthony did not even *look* at him as a prospective partner, no matter the nudging JARVIS was clearly making in that direction. The man came to him for comfort, for *safety*; all bi-products of the bond. Which was what found the man seeking his touch in unconscious rest—or perhaps, he merely sought the missing form of his woman.

And yet, despite both not being what he wanted, Loki could not deny his enjoyment of them.

Sighing gently, Loki looked down at the man, smiling at his relaxed features and the soft snores he released. Loki could truly stay in these moments for eternity; he and Anthony, curled together. It was far better than the alternative; waking the man and dragging him back to the unpleasantness of reality. *He* didn't want to return to reality; where Anthony's gaze was sad and the man's decision to share his bed was born neither from lust nor romance.

But, as was inevitable, not all good things could last.

It took only a few minutes for the mortal to begin stirring. Loki's arm was still gently tucked around the mortal's waist, but he unwound it before the man was conscious enough to notice. Anthony stretched and briefly squeezed him, wiggling closer before he tensed and lifted his head. A momentary confusion was replaced with recognition and then the dull sadness that Loki hated seeing.

"Lokes," he mumbled, "hey."

"Hello, Anthony," he said, keeping his voice just as soft.

Anthony glanced down and winced. He unwound his arms and Loki had to resist trying to pull him back.

"Sorry."

"It is no bother," Loki replied. "It was not uncomfortable. Remember, we have fallen asleep upon the couch in a similar position."

Anthony half-smiled. He also shifted further down the bed. He didn't climb out of it, but he laid on his side, his gaze on the green bedding but his mind seemingly far away.

“You know, it actually used to annoy Pepper.”

Loki frowned. “Your desire to seek warmth in the night?”

Anthony smiled, but it was without humour. “The opposite.”

“I do not follow?”

“I *didn't* do it. I slept on the edge of the bed. Or woke us both with nightmares.”

Loki blinked, his only show of surprise, it also infused him with a fresh warmth, a feeling he wanted to hold close and consider *all his own*—but, he had long been putting aside his own desires for the betterment of the man beside him.

It was why he offered, “You are already used to seeking me through the bond. It would only follow that, while under my wards and with me so close, it influenced you in an action you would not normally instigate.”

Anthony frowned, clearly thinking it over. Loki had to stifle the words that were yearning to escape: *or perhaps it is just me, just us? Perhaps you feel more comfortable with me than you ever did with her? You know I can survive anything you might do or say while tormented in the night. I have demons that rival, even dwarf yours. It's why we match so well, Anthony. It's why I could be your partner in far more than battle or your laboratory.*

“Maybe,” Anthony finally said, only to sigh. He turned over on his back, looking up at the roof. “Fuck. It's too bad I didn't have a bond with her. It might have solved some of our problems.”

Loki felt the words like a physical blow. He could not fully suppress the flinch that followed. His bonded wanted another, sought *their* bond with *someone else*. It was illogical, completely unfounded, but he *hurt*. His very *seidr* felt like knives beneath his skin. He'd always known Anthony would never have willingly chosen this bond, never have made it had another option been possible; had he known what it *meant*.

Suddenly, hands were on him and a moment later, Anthony was flush against him; their bodies pressed together beneath the covers.

“Loki,” Anthony said. “Loki. Shit. I didn't mean to—God, shit. Offend? Upset? *Fuck.*”

Loki wrenched himself from the pain—the one in his heart and the one inspired by the bond. Anthony's face was pinched, clearly in a similar hurt.

Unable to help it, Loki cupped the man's waist, tugging until Anthony was on top of him, he then curled his arms around the mortal.

“*Anthony.*”

“I didn’t, it—I mean,” Anthony was tripping over his words but he finally got out, “I didn’t mean it, shit. It wouldn’t have helped, wouldn’t have fixed anything. We’d have still broken up and been a mess and I’m not... I don’t regret it. Don’t want it with someone else. Promise. I *promise*.”

Loki shuddered, his hold on Anthony tightening. He even pressed his face into the man’s hair, not really thinking the gesture through, all he knew was he needed to be closer, to have Anthony in his arms voluntarily—*happily*.

And it was as he was pressed there, he felt it—*Anthony*. His mind and essence, worried and afraid, wanting to *fix*, wanting him to *know*. He gasped and his eyes snapped open. He jerked back and looked Anthony in the eye—there was no glow of seidr, he did not have the ability but Loki could still feel it, feel *him*.

But as strong as it was for those few seconds, it disappeared as Anthony blinked, looking disoriented. He pressed a palm to his head.

“Fuck. Jesus. That was... that felt like an out of body experience.”

“You projected your thoughts to me,” Loki murmured. “You... you forced it through sheer will. Anthony, that is beyond impressive.” He swallowed hard. “And it is... kind. *Thank you*.”

Because Anthony’s brute force had transferred a rather unrefined amount of emotion, but it had travelled through the bond, soothing the frayed edges long before a rough estimation of Anthony’s emotions had reached his mind.

And what *had* come through had been genuine; he did not regret the bond, he *did not* want it with Miss Potts, not truly. He wanted it with Loki; to him, there was no other person to consider. What was done was done and Anthony had committed to it as strongly and loyally as he had to his woman.

“I didn’t know how badly the bond would hate that,” Anthony said. “I just... I had to fix it, because it’s not true. I know it wouldn’t have helped.” Anthony shut his eyes. “I *know*, even though I haven’t wanted to say it, but, fuck. Pep and me, we were never going to work, were we?”

Loki hesitated, not wanting to lie, but also wary of offering the truth, yet when Anthony met his gaze, looking worn but clearly waiting on his answer, Loki decided to be honest.

“I cannot say, Anthony, but after all you have said... what JARVIS and Colonel Rhodes have relayed... I would be inclined to say you were not the most well-suited match.” He slid his hand to Anthony’s back, stroking in a way he hoped was soothing. “But that is not a fault of your doing, or even of hers. Some are not meant to be, it is merely the way that it is.”

Anthony’s eyes shut, he also slumped forward, startling Loki as he came to rest entirely on him; just as they had woken up. Anthony hugged him tightly and buried his face in Loki’s shirt. He didn’t cry, as Loki had half-expected, but he whispered, “I really wanted to be good enough for her.”



“It is not a case of being *good enough*,” Loki insisted sharply. “It is a case of being an *imprecise fit*.” His hand rose instinctively, touching the man’s hair and gently caressing. “I would have you think of it as incorrect tools in your laboratory.”

Anthony scoffed. “A screwdriver instead of a wrench?”

Loki tsked. “I am not talking about the tool, Anthony, but the parts which make up the whole. Tell me, could you refashion a gauntlet to work in place of a boot on your suit?”

“Why the hell would I do that?”

“You required flight and had only one stabiliser.”

“That would be an absolutely shit design and I’d be-”

“Having difficulty, *yes*. It would be an *imprecise fit*, but it would work, because it had *aspects* of compatibility, but at its core, it worked better in a complimentary but *different* fashion.”

There was a pause before, “Did you just use my suit to make a ‘*you’re better off as friends*’ speech?”

“Perhaps,” Loki muttered.

He was rewarded by Anthony giving a snort of amusement, he also shifted his head and Loki glanced down. He swallowed at their proximity and the way Anthony looked; amused and so *close* to his old self.

“I’m not sure if that’s impressive or insane, Loki.”

“I care not if it is both, so long as it proves my point,” Loki countered.

Some of the humour fled Anthony’s expression, exchanged for something more pensive as his gaze shifted, staring unseeingly at Loki’s chest.

“I don’t know how much I believe it,” Anthony murmured. “Everyone keeps fucking saying it wasn’t my fault, but it just feels like it was, that if I had of done *something* better, we’d still be together.”

“I cannot say that isn’t true,” Loki allowed. “But, Anthony, just because you might have still been *together*, it doesn’t mean that either of you would have been happy, or that you wouldn’t have fallen apart at another point, and possibly with greater casualties.” He hesitated to say it, but in the end, decided to remark, “And I think you believe at least that much.”

It took a long time, so much that Loki half-expected the man to say nothing, but eventually he whispered, “Yeah, I guess I do.”

It was a small concession, very little in the grand scheme of things, but it relaxed something deep in Loki, because if Anthony was acknowledging their faults, their inevitable ending... it meant he was healing.

It would still take time to return the man to what he had been, but it was a start.

## Chapter End Notes

I hope you liked this chapter! 😊💜

# Chapter 8

## Chapter Notes

Leeeets do a time skiip aaaaaain. ~~I couldn't resist.~~ But yes, I'm afraid, a timeskip is needed to speed things along. I hope you'll enjoy!

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

It took another two months for things to return to as they had once been—only perhaps, even *better*.

There had still been ups and downs to get them there, of course.

The first conversation between Anthony and Miss Potts since their separation had been difficult for all involved—ending with two broken bottles, Anthony drunk in his penthouse and Loki joining the man, sitting on his floor as Anthony's head rested in his lap and Mozart played through the penthouse speakers.

There had also been arguments. JARVIS and Tony were at odds over the continued liquor he was consuming, something Loki also disliked. He had made his own attempts to dissuade Anthony, only to be blatantly ignored or to gain bitter words spat at him which *hurt*. When the latter had happened, it had found Loki leaving the man's floor in a swirl of magic. Anthony had found him later once he'd sobered. He'd apologised, *hugged* him and promised that he didn't blame him or the bond, that he was just angry and hurt. He was *sorry*. Loki had forgiven him—as he did any other time Anthony lashed out—because he knew that the man was genuine in his regret and did not truly mean any of the things he said. What was more, Loki loved him and he did not want to be the cause of any more pain or guilt.

But it was a slow progression back to the man he had been; the one who laughed, invented and showed up with creative energy at his floor. The man who flew his suit with enjoyment into both battle and to simply travel to a new destination. But, over time, it returned. Anthony also, to Loki's pleasant surprise, still dropped down on his bed at night, making his heart race at the proximity as he listened to the man's lengthy rambles before he fell asleep. They would then wake entangled, sometimes talking, sometimes not, but always sharing a beverage in the morning before Anthony left for his floor to shower and start his day.

Loki learned to cherish the mornings; his heart aching with the near-perfection of it. The near-perfection of *all* of it, especially in the last few days.

It had been eight weeks since Anthony's heartbreak and the man spent most of his days at Loki's side—encouraged by Rhodes and Banner to be there. Not even Thor derided them their time together when it clearly helped Anthony. It had begun to feel, for the first time, as if their bond was a *help* not a *hindrance*.

Of course, it did not feel as such when the mortal abruptly threw open his door one afternoon, bypassing his many wards and making Loki cringe as he quickly recalled his magic and halted the flow of the spell he'd been practicing.

“Anthony-”

“Oh, don't even yell at me, I could tell for the last hour that you weren't making any headway with it.”

Loki pressed his lips together, unable to deny the surge of pleasure at knowing Anthony sensed that about him now. Ever since the morning where Anthony had forced their bond to accept his emotions, he'd had a much easier time of reading him whenever he used seidr.

It had meant he'd needed to be careful about displaying the more *romantic* and *loving* emotions he felt, but luckily, they rarely came to the forefront of his mind when he channelled seidr.

“Did you interrupt me for a reason, Anthony?”

“Yup,” Anthony said, coming further inside and dropping down onto the Vanaheim rug, his fingers immediately curling into the material. “Trip to Malibu in two days.”

“Oh,” Loki murmured, a twinge of disappointment forming. “I thank you for the warning. The bond should not cause issue over the distance but-”

“Uh, not planning on finding out either way.” Loki frowned and tilted his head in puzzlement. Anthony just grinned. “What?” he asked. “Did you expect me to go without dragging you along? Think again, Reindeer Games.”

“Oh,” Loki repeated, a much sweeter pleasure and happiness flooding his chest. “Well, I suppose I can spend a few days-”

“A few weeks,” Anthony corrected, lightly rocking where he sat. “I'm sick of the tower. Want a change of scenery. I don't think you've ever gone to a beach; I'm changing that.”

“The other realms have beaches,” Loki answered, still mystified by the concept of leaving for *weeks* with Anthony.

“Well, not an *Earth* beach then, and, it's about time you met the 'bots. Can't believe I've never brought you there before. So, you, me and my place in Malibu. Sound good?”

“Yes,” he agreed, finally smiling, “it does.”

“Great!” Anthony leapt back to his feet. “Time to pack then, Lokes. If we get done early, maybe we'll leave sooner. J, let everyone important know; Loki and I are soon to be out of contact unless the world is ending.”

“Yes, Sir.”

“And get the jet ready, Lokes has already agreed and we need—”

Anthony continued to talk to his A.I. as he left the room, leaving Loki smiling after the man with bemusement. Slowly, he stood and made his way to his bed chamber. Truthfully, there was little he needed to pack as most of his belongings he could call with seidr, but he conjured the rucksack usually used for tedious quests with Thor throughout the realms. It would carry clothing and a few books; more than ample when he was only exchanging one Midgardian abode for another.

He opened his closet and selected a few items, but his hand did linger on his favourite jacket. He slipped his fingers into the pocket, pulling out the well-read piece of paper that Anthony had thrown at him those many weeks ago.

It was as he traced his name that JARVIS questioned, “Mr Liesmith?”

“Yes, JARVIS?” Loki asked, re-folding and placing the paper back in his jacket and then the clothing into his bag.

“Mr Stark is very pleased you have agreed to his request.”

Loki chuckled. “Well, it is hardly a hardship on my part.”

“Even so, he does not often have someone so willing to do as he does and without warning.”

“Well, I am hardly beholden to a career as the Colonel is.”

“Or Miss Potts,” JARVIS agreed.

Loki shot the nearest camera a suspicious glance. “She is very dedicated to her position running Anthony’s company. Something I am sure he appreciates it.”

“Of course, Mr Liesmith,” JARVIS answered, “But Sir does not often invite others to visit his Malibu residence. He uses it to distance himself from others.”

“And yet, Miss Potts has been there and, I’m sure, many a woman before her. The Colonel as well. I am hardly *irregular*, JARVIS.”

“That may be, Mr Liesmith, but not in recent years. And you are the one he has spent the most time with since the end of his relationship with Miss Potts. You have, in fact, been instrumental to his current happiness.”

“I think you are trying to put ideas in my head,” Loki said lowly and with warning. “I do not appreciate it.”

“My apologies, Mr Liesmith,” JARVIS demurred. “I had merely wished to encourage you in your pursuit of Sir.”

Loki tensed immediately. “I am *not* pursuing him.”

“Of course, Mr Liesmith,” JARVIS answered, a healthy amount of disbelief in his tone.

“I am *not*,” he growled. “I have been his friend. I have been helping him recover from his relationship with Miss Potts.”

“A recovery that has concluded.”

“You overestimate your master.”

“I do not overestimate his fondness for *you*, Mr Liesmith. Nor does anyone else in this tower or outside it. Miss Potts has even-”

“I do not care to hear what *she* has to say,” Loki snapped.

“Even if it was to express her support of your bond being expressed in a deeper manner?”

That drew Loki up short. “I beg your pardon?”

“Miss Potts remains convinced your bond is romantic in nature-”

“I informed her it was *not*,” Loki said hotly.

“Be that as it may, she has expressed interest in your well-being during this period. She has asked if you and Mr Stark have considered developing your relationship further. She-”

Loki clenched his fists, seidr crackling from them.

“If she for even a *moment* believes I have influenced Anthony or aided in the severing of their relationship. If she thinks to *blame* me for exacerbating an already faulty courtship-”

“Miss Potts has said nothing of the sort,” JARVIS interjected, the words a firm rebuke. “She was upset about the ending of her partnership with Sir, but she wants him happy above all else. *Shemerely* believes that you and Sir have a greater chance of achieving it than she and Sir ever did. Something I also believe, Mr Liesmith.”

Loki gritted his teeth. “I do *not* appreciate this.”

“Mr Liesmith-”

“No,” he snapped, “I will say this once and I expect you to listen and *adhere* to it. Just because you, and the blasted and honourable *Virginia Potts* might think Anthony and I would be well suited, it does not mean such a situation will ever come to pass. I am Anthony’s *friend*. I will not strive for more with him when I have already done more than enough damage to his life through the forging of this bond.”

“You did not-”

“By the Norns,” he snarled. “*Mute*.”

The second the command left his lips there was glorious silence. Loki closed his eyes and pinched his nose. He took in slow, deep, measured breaths and tried to calm his spiking

heartbeat and the turbulent, angry state of his seidr. He did *not* need Anthony noticing that and seeking him out due to concern.

But, for all he tried to calm down, he still fumed over the A.I.'s implications and encouragements. He had been trying *hard* since Anthony's break up with Miss Potts to never once think of the man as *available*. To do so would be a further betrayal of the man's trust. His heartbreak was not an *opportunity* and he resented the idea that JARVIS was trying to foster it.

Yes, the A.I. wanted his master happy, but did JARVIS really believe that having him manipulate the situation would breed anything but distaste and resentment?

No. If he was to one day ever manage a relationship with Anthony, he would do it slowly and at a time when the man was not vulnerable and recovering. He had an eternity, and he would not run the risk of ruining the friendship they shared due to impatience.

Forcing himself to continue packing, Loki shoved his chosen tomes into the rucksack angrily. He had almost finished when a knock came upon his door. He shot the roof a suspicious look, but left his bedroom to enter the living space. He sent out his seidr to check only to curse internally.

Stalking forward, Loki yanked the door open and growled, "*What?*"

Thor startled.

"Ah," he said. "Your mood is indeed foul." Loki's brow furrowed and Thor elaborated, "I was informed through Stark's servant that I was to stop angering you. I had come to seek an answer as to which actions had displeased you."

Loki stepped away with a disgusted noise.

"Really, JARVIS?" He snapped. "You introduce another to this conversation?" The silence lingered so he grunted, "Unmute."

"Mr Stark enquired as to the angered surge of your seidr," JARVIS answered promptly. "I did not believe you wished him to know the true reason."

"How underhanded of you," he gritted out. "Lying to your master."

"I merely implied that Mr Odinson would be displeased at your decision to leave the tower for numerous weeks with Sir."

Loki did not get a chance to reply before Thor demanded, "What is this? You and Stark are leaving?"

*Wonderful*, Loki thought darkly.

"Yes, Thor," he replied. "We are."

"Where do you go?"

“Another of his residences.”

“*Alone?*”

“I do not see how this is *any* of your business.”

Thor glared. “Loki! You cannot leave with Stark when you have not told him the extent of the bond.”

“Oh, for Norns sake,” Loki hissed. “We are going as *friends*. He has asked me along as a *companion*.”

“This matters not,” Thor insisted, stepping forward to close the space between them. “It has gone on long enough, Loki. Stark is no longer with another.” He slapped his fist into his open palm. “You must do the honourable thing and tell him the extent of what this binding means.”

“I will do nothing of the sort,” Loki snapped.

“Loki!” Thor near shouted, the anger and authority reminding Loki too much of Odin for comfort. “I have let this be these past weeks to give Stark time and comfort to heal, but you are doing Stark and yourself no favours by hiding this.”

“No *favours?*” Loki demanded. “You think telling him *now* would be anything other than a fresh burden? A new emotional barrage he must navigate? He has hardly healed and you expect me to thrust my affection upon him?”

“I expect you to give Stark the truth, Loki. Does the man not deserve that?”

Loki cringed and turned away, putting his back to the Thunderer. He started walking to his rooms, but Thor followed on his tail. Loki threw out his hand, using seidr to slam the door and bar the man from entrance. His brother still tried the handle before slamming his fist against it.

“Loki!” He growled. “Do not think this door will silence me!”

Loki clenched his fists. He wanted desperately to be far away from this tower. In his youth when bothered by Thor, he would go to secluded groves or the highest points in the palace; locations that he forever changed but would take Thor numerous hours to trace, if he even found him at all.

But he had long learned that no time would truly deter the man; his stubbornness was infamous and if he believed he was doing the right thing, the *noble* thing, then nothing would keep him from his goals.

It was why, as much as Loki wanted to scream and send the man far away, he lowered the ward and flung the door open. Thor almost toppled inward but righted himself and let go of the handle.

“Loki-”



“You are not a mage,” he began, “you have no *idea* of the delicate nature of this bond. You do not understand that a *single* rejection from Anthony and I will be in agony.”

Thor’s eyes widened. Loki stalked forward and fisted a hand in the man’s shirt only to use it to shove him backward. Thor stumbled but remained standing.

“Loki-”

“He is owed the truth; I am not a fool nor callous enough to leave him so entirely in the dark.” He shoved the man again, Thor faltered but moved backward. He then continued to walk as Loki stalked toward him. “I *will* advise him of what this is and what we share, but I will do it when I, and this *bond* is ready.” Another shove. “I will *not* be forced into it by an angry display of temper by a non-practitioner.” They reached the door to his rooms and both stopped. “Do you understand me?”

Thor’s brow furrowed and his gaze was turbulent, but eventually he gave a small nod.

“Aye, Loki.”

“*Good.*”

Loki followed it by grabbing the door and slamming it in the man’s face. He then sealed it with seidr through pure annoyance and spite. When he was through, he turned and looked up at the nearest camera.

“And *you*,” he snarled. “I would think before trying to *scheme* me into doing something. I have been around far longer than you, and I will counter any further attempts in ways you will *not* enjoy.”

“Mr Odinson approached you with no input from me, Mr Liesmith,” JARVIS replied calmly.

Loki laughed darkly. “Oh, do not believe I have missed your manipulations, JARVIS. I have noted each of them and while I would never harm a creation so beloved by Anthony, I *will* find a way to make your circuitry emit unpleasant things.”

“You have no need to threaten me, Mr Liesmith. I have no intention of harming your relationship with Sir.”

Loki laughed again, but it was a little deranged even to his own ears. He buried his fingers in his hair and forced his body not to shake—but for all he tried to regain control, he felt like it was slipping through his fingers.

Because, he had been holding himself, holding this *bond* so tightly to his chest since the moment he had performed it. He had tried to keep the worst from Anthony but it was escaping with every passing second—with every encouragement from JARVIS and chastisement from Thor. And how much longer would it be before he could do nothing to hold back the tidal wave of thoughts and feelings that encapsulated his love and desires for Anthony Stark?

---

It took Loki a good hour to get his emotions back under control and during that time, JARVIS didn't speak to him. Anthony, however, did. Loki was not willing to allow verbal communication, instead, he texted the man on the phone he had long been given but rarely used. He insisted, three times, that he was fine and did not need company.

Eventually, Anthony had taken to spamming him with unrelated communications and cat pictures.

When he finally felt ready to face the world, and specifically the mortal he cared for, he sent out his seidr to find the man. Anthony was in his penthouse and rather than wait for the elevator, he teleported to join him. He found Anthony looking out one of his windows with a coffee mug in hand.

He turned and immediately flashed a smile.

“Lokes!”

The mortal crossed the room and without hesitation, wrapped an arm around him in a hug. Loki sucked in a small, surprised breath but quickly embraced the man.

“Feeling better?”

“Yes.”

“Thor being an ass again?”

Loki shot the ceiling a small glare. “In part.”

“Yeah, J said you were having a disagreement. I wasn't happy about it, but J said that I should leave you alone. What I *really* wanted was to go down there and shout at Thor with you, but JARVIS wouldn't start the elevator. I think you're his favourite.”

Loki scoffed. “I think he knows which boundaries even *he* should not push.”

*Not* that he forgave the A.I. or felt anything more than a grudging gratitude for at least keeping Anthony out of their argument. After all, JARVIS wanted a *positive* solution, not one that would cause his creator any emotional harm.

“Well, if you're sick and tired of having him so close by, I can fix that.” Anthony shifted position. He still kept one arm around Loki's waist, but the other uncurled so he could rest partially on Loki but hold out the hand with his coffee mug. “You and me, Lokes. How about we ditch New York right here, right now? I've got a jet on the tarmac just waiting for my signal.”

Loki blinked. “Truly?”

“Yup. Had them on standby since I heard you and Thor were fighting. So, sunshine, alcohol and no one else but us. Sound like a good plan?”

Loki felt the remaining tension in his shoulders easing at the mere idea.

“Yes,” he admitted quietly, “it does.”

“Then grab your bag and get us to the airport, Lokes. We’ll leave in a swirl of magic and no one will know we’re gone until they go looking.”

He smiled up at Loki as he said it, his head practically pillowed on Loki’s shoulder. Looking down at the mortal, Loki’s heart ached in an almost sweet way; because the man he loved was taking him away. It was not romantic in nature, but for a moment, Loki could almost believe it was possible.

In fact, with Anthony Stark in his arms and weeks alone stretching out before them, Loki could almost forget the gnawing sense of guilt in the back of his mind. The reminder that, for all that the moment felt near-perfect, there was still far too much in the shadows lurking. Because as much as he hated to admit it, Thor was right. Anthony *did* need to know the truth; he *did* need to understand all that he felt and wanted from their bond—but how could he bring himself to tell him? How could he possibly imagine that it would end in a way that would be happily or positive?

## Chapter End Notes

We're getting closer to the crunch point! I hope you've enjoyed this chapter as they skate closer to Tony ~discovering more about Loki's feelings to create the bond. Final chapter should be up in a few days!

Thanks for reading!

# Chapter 9

## Chapter Notes

This chapter is going up quicker than the others as (if you haven't seen my note on my recently posted fic) I am posting my final FrostIron story on the 30th and will be endeavouring to reply to all your lovely comments by the 31st (so I'll need a few days to do it!) which is when I'll be retiring my FI hat. I won't be deleting my account or my works, so don't worry about that. It's just time for me to step back 😊

But, I'll talk more about everything on my final fic! For now, thank you so much for reading this story! I hope you've enjoyed it ~~despite the fic going quite different to how I planned it~~ 😊. ❤️

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Loki liked Malibu.

A surprise, considering he had never been fond of warm climates, but Anthony's home was temperature controlled, his laboratory had the most charming robotic creatures whom Loki instantly adored, and of course, it had Anthony.

JARVIS, thankfully, had also made no further comments on his and Anthony's relationship or their bond. It allowed Loki to merely... enjoy himself.

Because Anthony was unfettered in a way that Loki had not realised could be different while not in his tower. But it seemed that while the Avengers weren't always in the room, their presence clearly influenced Anthony in ways that Loki had not known, not having experienced the difference.

In his Malibu home, he left bits of electronics on any available surface. Once, Loki had come into the kitchen only to find the man barefoot and sitting atop the kitchen counter taking apart the toaster. Loki had merely barked a laugh, asked what he was doing and listened while making a fresh cup of tea.

It was so entirely, *wonderfully* domestic. Loki could have experienced it forever—he *wanted* to experience it forever, not just on Midgard but the other realms, in the decades and centuries to come. And even if it was only this, if there was no further intimacy, no romance, simply *them* he knew he could be content.

But pleasant things, as he should have known, never did last long for him.

They had only been in Malibu for six days and while Anthony had shown him the beach, it was the pool that Loki preferred. He was floating in a ludicrous green sea monster Anthony

had purchased, sipping from a fruit cocktail Anthony had created while a magically conjured umbrella hovered overhead, shading him.

He had already been subjected to numerous photographs as Anthony cackled, but Loki was now peacefully drifting. Anthony was up to his waist, but leaning against the side, a tablet in hand as he made notes on a new idea he had devised while swimming. His own drink was to the side and had been untouched for the last ten minutes.

Loki was considering conjuring a second umbrella to protect the mortal from the sun's rays, but for now he let the man be. In fact, he made sure to keep his floating device turned to allow him to admire Anthony from under his green-framed sunglasses.

The mortal was shirtless and only wearing red swim trunks. Loki had done his best not to admire the man any time he had worn them, but while Anthony was distracted and with the tinted glass to cover his gaze, Loki let himself smile and look.

It wasn't just the man's handsome form that held him captivated; it was Anthony in his preferred element. He was focused on his inventions, his genius intellect hard at work. He was... perfect, and it was no wonder he had fallen so easily in love.

Having another sip of his drink, Loki closed his eyes and gently searched out the bond; not enough to be noticeable, but enough to feel it there; tethered and content between them. They were here, *alone* and had spent most of every day together, only parting to sleep (truly, the only downside about not being in the tower, it meant Anthony had no need to avoid his own bed.)

As much as further intimacy would be preferred, in every other way the bond was satisfied.

In fact, Loki was so relaxed, so *happy* that he didn't expect the disruption—but then, he did not think he would *ever* anticipate the magic and power of the bifrost slamming into the ground outside Anthony's abode.

Loki leapt up with such force that his drink spilled in the pool and he almost upended into the water. It was only the swift action of his seidr that had him teleporting outside of it. Anthony startled and looked at him.

“What's-”

“Sir,” JARVIS announced from the speakers of the tablet, “the bifrost has activated outside the mansion gates.”

“The *fuck?*” Anthony declared. He shoved up and out of the pool, uncaring of his tablet and whatever designs he had been working on. “Why the hell are they here? *Who* is here?”

“I am uncertain,” JARVIS answered. “It is a woman I do not recognise.”

But Loki did, he did not have to do more than extend his seidr to recognise Frigga.

“Stay here, Anthony,” he ordered.

“Wait you can’t-”

But Loki did not let Anthony finish. He pulled on an illusion of his armour to hide his casual appearance before teleporting to the edge of the bifrost site.

Frigga was waiting patiently, her hands clasped loosely as she stood in the centre of the scorched earth.

“Loki,” she greeted. “Have you been well?”

Loki ignored the question, instead he felt his panic meld with bitter fury.

“Why do you come here? Did *Thor* go seeking you to mention my absence from his sight?”

“Your brother did not speak to me at all,” Frigga replied. “I search for you every few months to see as to your health and happiness. Imagine my surprise at the change since my last observation.”

Loki’s heart sunk.

“Frigga-”

“Are congratulations not in order?” She asked, her gaze shrewd. “You have crafted a bond that many mages would envy. Where is your chosen mortal? I would greet him and bless your union.”

Loki glared. “Cease this polite drivel, you are not a fool and understand this bond better than most.”

“I also understand *you* no matter how much you would deny it.”

“Oh, I know you understand me *well*, it is why you know exactly how inclined I am to seek your comfort and counsel.”

Her calm exterior faltered into a pained grimace.

“Loki,” she whispered. “Please, don’t turn me away. Thor must have supported you in this, why else would he have kept the bond a secret from Asgard? But there is so much unsettled in the tether why-”

The sound of approaching footsteps cut off her words. Loki looked over his shoulder to find Anthony walking down the path from his house. He had added nothing to his appearance but shoes and a repulsor. His gaze was narrowed and his features dark.

“Hey Lokes,” he said when he was close enough. “Who’s the surprise guest?”

Loki did not immediately answer, he looked at his mortal and felt a familiar sense of impending doom. During the revelation of his heritage, everything had been slipping from his grasp like water. He had felt lost with no solid ground beneath him. Here, now, Anthony *was*

his solid ground. He felt as if one touch from his bonded would keep him from slipping away—but the very thing he needed also felt like the one thing he could not have.

“I am Frigga,” his adopted mother said, answering when Loki could not bring himself to speak.

Anthony’s eyes widened and some of the hostility dropped from his stance.

“Frigga? As in the mum?” He glanced between Loki and her before quickly closing the last of the distance. He gripped Loki’s arm. “Hey, I don’t know what got you so freaked you had to drop down here to check in, but I’m just putting it out there; one hundred percent on board with our bond. No second guessing or coercion happened.”

Loki shut his eyes, barely repressing a wince; it was possibly the *worst* thing Anthony could have said, because, had it been an incontestable and *mutual* bond no one would ever doubt his commitment. Insisting his agreement would only make mages search *deeper*.

“I see,” Frigga murmured. “I am surprised that it was not announced then.”

“Yeah, my fault on that,” Anthony immediately answered. “Almost died then had a break up, Loki was looking out for me.”

*Stop talking*, Loki mentally hissed. He knew they were not at a point of sharing actually thoughts but he genuinely hoped that some of his wishes would transfer down the bond.

“You were courting another?” Frigga asked, not able to hide all her surprise.

Loki very much wanted to find another void to hurl himself into.

“Yeah,” Anthony answered, a hint of suspicion colouring his voice.

Loki knew that the longer they spoke, the quicker he would pick up the nuances that had, so far, passed him by.

“Anthony,” he said, gritting his teeth but opening his eyes and turning to the mortal. “If you wouldn’t mind giving Frigga and myself some privacy.”

Anthony met his gaze shrewdly; eyeing him in a very weighted manner.

“Uh huh,” Anthony finally said. He turned to Frigga and gave his polite, public smile. “I’ll leave you with Loki.” He stepped closer, leaning near Loki’s ear to mutter, “If you want her to stay, she’s welcome, if you want her gone, then the inn is full for the night.” He squeezed his arm again. “Shout if you need me, I’ll be here with repulsors firing.”

Loki’s chest warmed even as part of him wanted to grimace. He settled for nodding rather than answering. Anthony waited a few more seconds before turning on his heel and walking back into the house. Loki’s gaze shifted to Frigga whose expression had turned more pensive by the minute.

When he was out of earshot, Frigga began, “Loki, did you-”

“He was dying,” he gritted out. “I asked his consent and he gave it. I would never have coerced the bond. He and his woman’s separation had nothing to do with my bonding to him.”

Frigga’s expression was far from pleased.

“Do you believe such words would sway a council of mages, Loki? *I* may know you and accept your words as truth, but they will not.”

“Let them examine us then,” Loki spat. “They will see I am being truthful and that *he* is speaking with honesty.”

“But is he truly?” Frigga countered. “Does he know the extent of *how* you are able to share this with him?”

Loki turned away, crossing his arms and looking at the man’s home. “I was hardly going to confess such a thing while he courted his woman.”

“By his own admission he is no longer with another.”

Loki shot her a glance. “That is immaterial.”

“It is not, Loki,” she insisted softly. “I can understand your hesitance while he courted another as you did not wish to unjustly strain their union.” She stepped forward but he stiffened and so she stilled. “But now you have no such excuse. He needs to know. Your bond will never settle until you do.”

“It is fine as it is.”

“No, Loki, it is not. I can sense your guilt inside it.”

Loki tensed further. “You lie.”

“I do not, and what is more, I believe that despite him being a non-practitioner, he will notice it soon enough.” She sighed softly. “And even if he doesn’t, some mage *will*, and they will not be as kind as your brother or I. They will tell him, and then you must contend with his reaction to the secrecy.”

Loki glared at the ground. He wanted to snap and snarl at her, to insist she was wrong and that he could continue as he had been—but to what purpose? Anthony had witnessed part of their conversation, seen Frigga’s expressions. He would know something was wrong and he would be thinking over all that had happened; all his carefully worded replies and side-steps. And if he *asked* JARVIS the A.I. might not outright admit the truth, but neither would he lie.

“Loki-”

“Yes, fine,” he snapped. “You have made your point.”

And with the confirmation of what he needed to do, Loki both felt his tension ease and the churning in his stomach increase. He had carried this for months, and as much as he did not



know how the man would take his confession... Anthony had handled everything well so far. He had *accepted* the bond in every other capacity; surely learning the means could be just as easily handled?

“If you wish it,” Frigga said quietly, “I can wait and speak with him. Thor does not understand this spell, but I can be an impartial guide should he have questions with answers you do not wish to explain.

Loki wanted to deny her, but he also knew it would be... beneficial. If Anthony wanted time to understand what he had to say, or wanted an independent voice that did not love him, well, Frigga was the only mage in the Realms that Loki would want doing it.

It was why, he gave a small nod of consent. He then turned and started the walk to the man’s front door. Frigga followed at a quiet pace, nothing but their footfalls to break the quiet until —“He must be a fine man, this mortal.”

“He is,” Loki bit out.

“And he seems to care for you.”

“You would be wise to cease this line of conversation,” Loki warned.

“I merely wished to say that for all your guilt and pain entangles the bond, so too does his fondness for you. He might not know all you have done, but what he *does* know, he truly does enjoy.”

“Is that meant to bring me comfort?” Loki demanded.

“Merely the honesty of my perspective,” Frigga answered. “I know that you will only expect the worse, Loki. But opening your heart does not guarantee all will be lost.”

Loki scoffed, hardly feeling optimistic about the thing he had been avoiding since the beginning. While it was marginally more preferable to tell Anthony while he was not courting Miss Potts, Loki still doubted that they would return to the easy companionship they had been enjoying by the pool.

When they stepped into the mansion, it was to find Anthony pacing inside the hallway. He turned and opened his mouth as if planning to talk, but shut it upon seeing Frigga. Loki merely directed her to a room where she could sit and wait. Loki then returned to Anthony and placed a hand on his shoulder, leading him deeper into the house.

“Why did you invite her in?” Anthony asked. “I mean, I said you could, and you can, but I really expected you to tell her to fuck off and then coming in here and fume for a while about it.”

“No,” Loki said quietly, “I’m afraid I cannot do that just yet.”

Anthony instantly noticed the seriousness of the situation.

“Right. Shit. What did she say? This is that not-quite-illegal part, isn’t it?”

“... Yes.”

Anthony let out a heavy exhale, the sound pushing through his clenched teeth.

“Okay. Right. Lay it on me, then. What’s the big issue you’ve been avoiding?” And then, because Anthony was indeed *perceptive*. “Is it to do with the fact I was dating Pepper?”

Accepting his fate, Loki stopped them and took a step away from the man. Anthony frowned, but Loki was quick to avert his gaze.

“Yes, it was in part because of your relationship with Miss Potts.”

“Okay. Is it because she didn’t technically agree? Like a sort of unspoken ‘*need the partner’s approval*’ clause?”

Drawing his hands behind his back, Loki linked his fingers, using the opportunity to clench them.

“I am afraid, the act of having another partner *at all* would be seen as a problem.” He paused. “Well, yes, unless there was approval from all parties beforehand.”

“Okay, kind of lost me, Lokes.”

Loki breathed out slowly before deciding, once and for all, to stop deflecting and hiding from the truth.

“Miss Potts once accused me of performing a spell that was designed for weddings. She was wrong only in that this is *far* more important to a mage than a wedding.” He swallowed. “It is why the only people who can perform this bond are those who are deeply and unequivocally in love.”

The silence was deafening and Loki felt the ache like a physical weight holding him down.

“I am sorry,” he said quietly. “I should have told you from the start, but why make your relationship with your woman even more complicated? Why burden you with affections you have never wanted? I do not regret saving your life, Anthony, I would never *ever* regret that. There was no other choice I would have made.” He still could not bring himself to look at Anthony, too afraid to see his face as he laid his heart bare, “But you see why Thor, why *Asgard* will have their concerns? You did not know how I bound to you, *why* I could bind to you.” He breathed in shakily. “I do promise it is not invasive. You will not be required to share my feelings, or to spend your lifetime with me. But it is the nature of the spell and all mages who see us will know it.” He shut his eyes. “I knew I needed to tell you, that I have needed to do it for some time, that you would not want to find out from another—but I have not wanted to.” He clenched his fingers tighter. “I have not wanted your reaction, but you do deserve the truth, Anthony... and now you have it.”

Anthony was still quiet and Loki could not open his eyes, nor could he wait for his bonded's response.

“Frigga will answer any questions you have,” he murmured. “And if you seek me, I will be in the room you gave me. If you wish me gone, then I will do that too, but do know Anthony, the only thing I have ever wanted for you is your happiness.”

Loki gave the man a few seconds, but when nothing came, he let his seidr take him from the hallway and deposit him in the room he’d been given in the mansion.

The moment he was safely inside, he opened his eyes and let his illusion drop. He looked down at his bare feet and the way water from the pool dripped upon the floor—at least, that was what he chose to believe was the cause for the droplets, for his stinging eyes, he was sure, was merely a coincidence.

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Loki was in his room for an hour, he counted every minute of the clock as he sat upon the edge of his bed, ignoring JARVIS and straining for the feel of the bifrost reactivating—but nothing came. Frigga was still present, but if Anthony was talking to her, it was a mystery he did not wish to uncover.

Instead, he stared at the floor between his feet; wondering when he would next speak to Anthony, what the mortal would *say*. Loki had already accepted the fracturing of their friendly companionship and casual, platonic touches—it would be understandable, especially with Anthony now knowing what he felt.

He just hoped that, given time, the man might be able to accept him back by his side. They had a long eternity together, after all, and Anthony, kind-hearted as he was, would not be the kind to hold a grudge forever, especially when all Loki had ever done was love him.

Even so, when the knock finally came at his door, Loki sat bolt upright, but, he did not get long to react before it was opening. Loki stayed where he was, not moving from his bedroom. It took a few moments, but eventually Anthony stepped into the doorway.

“Hey, Loki.”

“Anthony.”

The mortal leant against the frame. “So, uh, Frigga gave me a bit of a rundown on the spell, what it entails, what it means that you could perform it at all.”

Loki had to look away. While Anthony didn’t look angry or disgusted, he looked... thoughtful, confused as well and while neither emotion was necessarily *bad*, they still weighed heavy on his heart.

“In hindsight, I’m surprised I never worked it out. JARVIS said he already did *and* that he’s been pushing you to make a move.”

“An interference I have not appreciated,” Loki grumbled.

Anthony didn’t reply immediately, instead, he stepped further into the room, making Loki tense. Anthony just kept moving until he could drop down beside him. Loki sucked in a

breath when Anthony allowed them to rest close; their entire bodies flush. Loki jerked his head to the side, but Anthony was staring at his hands.

“So, uh, got to admit, wasn’t expecting that revelation. I know our friendship has kind of been on steroids since the bond; touching more, sharing a bed, always being close. I was just rolling with that because it felt natural and comfortable. I didn’t really think anything more about it. I was with Pep and you were just Lokes.”

“I understand,” Loki murmured, still pained to hear it. “Our relationship is platonic.”

“Ehhh.”

The sound, while undefined made Loki’s breath catch because, that sound from Anthony meant *indecision*, it meant he was *thinking*. Loki’s heart pounded in his chest, his seidr twisting beneath his skin as he tried to keep it and his emotions locked down.

“It is not platonic?” he whispered.

Anthony flicked his gaze over to him and offered a faint smile.

“It’s pretty shit timing. I’m not... completely over Pep. Not ready to really jump into a new relationship but, yeah, there’s something here. I’m way behind you, but,” he smiled, “we’ve got the time for me to catch up, right?”

“Yes,” Loki hurriedly agreed. “As long as you need.”

Anthony’s smile widened. “Good. Because, I hear you’re stuck with me. *You* signed up without reading the fine print; Anthony Stark, certified mad inventor, and emotional mess. Oh, with a side of heroics and bad ideas.”

Loki laughed, the sound feeling ripped out of him; full of incredulity and *relief*.

“Anthony, you speak as though I do not *know* this about you; that I have not encouraged it and found every bit of it charming.”

Anthony’s expression softened, and Loki saw something he had never dared to notice before; something gentle and fond and entirely his—not Miss Potts’ not some other mortal’s; *his*.

“Well,” he said, “just for that, I think I need to give you something.”

“You need not give me anything.”

"Oh, but I want to."

Anthony shifted closer and Loki’s breath stuttered. He stared at the mortal, watching his every move as Anthony brought their faces to rest inches apart. Loki licked his lips and dared to ask, "And what would it be?"

“The promise that I’ve made my choice, back in that battle, and right here.”

And with a tiny movement, Anthony closed the last of the distance. He pressed their lips together in a chaste kiss; the likes of which could be found in the earliest days of courtship. But oh, it was a *fitting* kiss. Considering all that had happened between them, all that he had kept from the man and all that Anthony did not yet feel—yes, it was fitting.

And yet, for all that it was small, with Anthony's mouth against his own and the promise of what the future might hold, Loki felt something he hadn't even realised was tight release from around his chest.

As it did, Loki felt the hum of his seidr and saw a green glow from behind his eyelids; he didn't even have to look to know it was surrounding them, broadcasting a life bond that was firmly in place with no doubts or guilt to cripple it.

Finally, after months of churning uncertainty and pain beneath the surface, he had Anthony Stark *truly* choosing him and their bond. Finally, this mortal—*his* mortal—truly and unequivocally had accepted him and the depth of his heart. It meant that the kind of bond he had only ever dreamed of could finally be shared between them, all it would take was something they both had in abundance: *time*.

## Chapter End Notes

Annnnd that's the fluffy end of this fic! I know it only had one kiss and a hopeful ending, but I'm sure that Tony doesn't take too long to fall in love with Loki. And once that happens, no one will ever question the bond, it will be thoroughly and truly *mutual* and everyone will be very, very happy (especially our boys).

And, I think I was going to have more notes but I'm super tired and have edited this too many times, and can't think of anything, so I'm off. But feel free to ask questions in the comments and I'll endeavour to answer with any headcanons I have.

Thanks so much for reading!!  

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!