

# 5 Times Loki Meddled in Darcy and Steve's Relationship & One Time

**By: StarTrekFanWriter**

AU: During the events of the Avengers, Darcy and Steve (but mostly Darcy) hit Loki over the head (repeatedly) and release him from Thanos' control. Loki is eternally grateful. For Loki, gratitude means meddling. Darcy x Steve. Darcy!Loki!BFFs. CRACK

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# 5 Times Loki Meddled in Darcy and Steve's Relationship & One Time

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# Meeting

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## Meeting

It's all Loki's fault that Darcy and Steve meet in the first place. If Loki hadn't let frost giants in Asgard's backdoor, prompting Thor to cause an intergalactic war, causing Thor's daddy to give Thor a galactically proportioned timeout on Earth, Darcy would have gotten her 6 credits blissfully unaware of hot aliens or *literally* hot alien robots that shot fire from their eye visors. She would have graduated, been unable to find a job in her field, and blissfully unaware of the true horrors loose in the universe, would probably have taken a job waitressing while she earned enough money to go back to get her law degree, or masters in art history, or something.

But she does know about alien menaces, and is therefore a security risk. That's why on graduation she was whisked off to New York for a job that sounded glamorous on paper but is really all for show, and keeping her quiet. She has a sort of executive assistant job, minus the executive, or even really the assistant part since everything that comes her boss Phil Coulson's way is classified beyond her pay grade. In short she has nothing to do, and her job is boring, with a capital B for Bullshit.

So, it is all Loki's fault when she is standing in the bathroom at SHIELD H.Q. drying her hands taking an extra *long* time. She is afraid as soon she gets back to her desk drool will dribble from her mouth, and she'll pass out from sheer lack of mental activity - she can't even surf - they track what's on your computer! She'll wake up with her face planted in a puddle of said drool. And. Well. Far better for everyone if she just takes an extra piece of paper from the dispenser, checks her glasses for smudges one last time, and busies herself with picking all the lint off her super thick gray acrylic sweater piece by piece. (SHIELD headquarters are really cold, except for her

boss' Phil's office; he keeps his office extra warm, but he never sweats. Darcy suspects he's actually a snake).

It's all Loki's fault that she's dropping lint into the trash can, watching it fall like gray snowflakes when Steve Rogers, a.k.a., Captain America, bursts into the bathroom. Darcy knows who he is, because her boss, said Agent Phil Coulson, is kind of in-love with the man. Seriously, Phil's got some Captain America collectors cards encased in glass on his desk. Darcy's also not particularly surprised to see Captain Steve Rogers up and alive - she may have snuck a peek into some of that super classified material that went past her desk. But only because she was bored. She is a little surprised to see him in her bathroom though. She pushes her glasses up her nose and glances to make sure there aren't any urinals in the stalls and that she hasn't wandered into the men's bathroom by mistake. It's been known to happen.

"Ah..." says Steve. His chest is heaving and Darcy's brain springs into gear - finally - really it's been a long time since it's been put to good use.

"Hi," says Darcy. Okay, maybe it doesn't spring into the *right* gear.

Steve takes a deep breath, "I'm so sorry, M'am, but they're following me."

All sorts of interesting, exciting possibilities fill Darcy's brain. "Doombots? Aliens? Evil mutants intent on ruling the world?" With a grin she reaches for the taser in her super big sweater pockets - she's not supposed to have it, but she took it apart and snuck it into HQ piece by piece past security over the three months she's been working here.

Steve blinks. And then he whispers. "I wish. They're SHIELD agents...my um...bodyguards." His mouth twists into a sad sort of smirk. "Well...more like my babysitters. But I don't think they'll look for me in here."

From the hallway Darcy hears loud footsteps. And then her brain really springs into gear. Grabbing Steve's arm she whispers, "Better safe than sorry, Captain Rogers." Pushing him into a stall she whispers, "Quick! Stand on the toilet!" He follows orders remarkably well, and doesn't look *too* shocked when she follows him into the small space and closes and locks the door behind her. "Um, what are you-"

Putting her hands to her lips for silence, Darcy turns and faces forward. Her toes are facing the right direction a moment later when she hears the bathroom door swing open, followed by the pound of very masculine footsteps.

"Oh. My. Gawd!" Darcy shrieks, letting her voice soar an octave higher than normal. "Oh. My. Gawd. There are men in the bathroom!"

A bland voice says, "We'll just be a moment ma'am. We need to check the stalls -"

Keeping the same falsetto, Darcy shouts, "So help me, I've got a pen in my hand and if you check my stall I will jab it in the eye!"

"Um, ma'am, there's no reason to be concerned," says the bland voice.

Darcy ducks her head down underneath the divider and sees an agent with short dark hair, head near the ground, peeking into the stall next to hers. Pointing an accusatory finger at him she shouts, "Perv! Just wait until my boss Phil Coulson finds out about this!"

The face on the peeking head has the decency to blush before it disappears and another voice says, "I swear I saw him come in here..."

"Get out! Get out! I'm calling Phil," screeches Darcy. Pulling her phone out of the other gigantic pocket of her sweater she hits speaker so the agents can all hear when she starts to dial an imaginary number.

"We're leaving!" someone says. "We're sorry ma'am."

"You better be!" says Darcy, even as she hears the last of the footsteps retreat and the door shut.

Taking a breath, she turns around. Steve Rogers, a.k.a., Captain America, blonde, blue eyed, muscular symbol of all that is good, strong and true, is squatting on the toilet seat, hand over his mouth, face completely red. Darcy grins at him. He lifts an eyebrow towards the door. Holding up a finger, Darcy turns and checks outside the stall. Smiling at him proudly, she whispers, "They're gone."

Steve's eyes crinkle up, and he starts laughing so hard, he nearly falls off the toilet. Darcy starts laughing too. And then she and Steve both seem to suddenly realize how close they are to each other, and how small and the space is, because they both stop laughing at once, and Steve is suddenly staring at her.

Straightening, Darcy says, "I'll um...just step out."

"Um, yeah, right," says Steve, as Darcy turns and slips out the door.

As he steps out of the stall behind her, Darcy's eyes meet his in the mirror. He blushes, and they both start giggling again. Running a hand through his hair, Steve says, "Thank you, I am really grateful for that."

Shrugging, Darcy says, "It was no problem. It was actually the most fun I've had since I came here."

Steve looks down, and says, "Yeah, me too." He's smiling but he looks a little sad.

Darcy purses her lips. "Those guys follow you everywhere?"

Still not lifting his head, Steve nods. "Yeah. I don't really know what they're afraid of..."

"Well, they probably figure you're not in Kansas anymore and want to help," says Darcy, weakly. But really, she can see where having men in black suits trailing everywhere could feel a little confining. Heck, having men in black suits insist you work for them feels confining - and she at least gets nights and weekends off.

Steve looks up at her and his mouth forms this funny little 'o' of awe. "You've seen the Wizard of Oz?"

"Uh, yeah," says Darcy. "Everyone has seen it."

Steve huffs, and grins. "See, things aren't so different from Kansas!"

Darcy smiles. "Yeah." She taps her chin, and searches her pop-culture brain. "I also am familiar with The Hobbit, Lord of the Rings, Dick Tracy, The Phantom...and Superman."

Steve tilts his head at her and looks to the door. Darcy can't help but notice how freakin' All American he looks. Not the kind of guy she usually goes for, or who would ever go for her.

"You know, I owe you for this. Maybe I can take you out for lunch or something?" says Steve.

For a moment, Darcy just stares at him, the words not processing. But then she realizes that he's looking at her like he's kind of hurt. "Now?" squeaks Darcy.

"Um...yeah..." says Steve. "I mean, unless you think you'd get in trouble?"

She probably will, but what are they going to do, fire her? "I won't get in trouble," says Darcy, quietly wondering if this is a date.

Looking relieved, Steve says, "Good because I have no idea where I'm going."

Oh, right. Not a date, he's asking her because he's woken up in Oz. But Darcy is game anyway - she's been overlooked by hot aliens for

Jane, and overlooked by hot assassins for other hot assassins, overlooked by hot billionaires for perky CEO types, and well, she's not in the league that dates hot aliens, hot assassins, hot billionaires, or hot superheros, but that doesn't mean she can't have fun. "Never fear, I will be your guide to the 21st century!" Darcy says gamely.

"Great!" says Steve.

As they walk to the door she winks at him and says, "I'll keep the robot police away from 'ya, and teach 'ya how to ride the hover cars."

He snorts. "I know you're making that up."

She shrugs.

"And quite frankly, I'm disappointed," Steve says shaking his head. "Not what I expected from the comics I read as a kid at all."

"You like comics?" says Darcy, perking up.

"You bet!" says Steve.

In her brain Darcy starts calculating the best way to get to the comic book store from headquarters. Yep. There's no reason she can't have fun.

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A few hours later, Steve's standing in front of her, a foot high stack of comic books in his hands, topped off with a box set of the full works of Tolkein - turns out *Lord of the Rings* came after the war. Darcy's got her own comics. They're standing in the entrance lobby of SHEILD HQ.

"I can't thank you enough for this, Darcy," Steve says. He's grinning ear to ear. "This has been the best day since..." he looks away.

Darcy looks down to keep from looking at his profile. She's been reminding herself all day that as fun as it is, it's just fun and friendly,

not a date or anything, and she shouldn't get her hopes up, but it is kind of hard. (Damn you Disney!) He is really good looking, and kind of funny, and not as stuffy as she imagined him to be. Maybe...

She looks up and Steve's face has gone a little harder, he's standing straighter and looking over Darcy's shoulder. Hearing footsteps behind her, Darcy turns to see Agent Maria Hill approaching. Maria's wearing the de rigeur SHIELD black catsuit, and walking and looking like a runway model. Darcy suddenly feels short and plump in her sweater.

Steve tips his head, at Agent Hill. "Agent," he says. Darcy swears that his voice has dropped a little.

Agent Hill's eyes narrow at Steve. "The Director wishes to speak to you," she says.

"I'll be there in a few minutes," says Steve. His jaw is tense.

Pursing her lips, Agent Hill nods. "He'll be expecting you," she says. Turning, she walks away. Steve's eyes narrow and briefly flick over her body. Is there heat in that gaze? Darcy's sure there is. Not that she can blame him. If she went that way, she'd go for Maria too.

Steve turns back to Darcy. When his eyes meet hers they have none of that heat. Just resignation. "Thanks for the reprieve, Darcy," he says. "I had fun."

Darcy shrugs. Ah, yes, she's loads of fun. And safe. And safely in the friend zone. It's not just a place for nice guys. "Me too," she shrugs again.

Steve smiles. "You sure are easy to talk to, anyone ever tell you that?"

Darcy sighs, but she smiles. "All the time."

Steve smiles back, shifts the books a little awkwardly in his hands, and then says, "Well, see ya!"

"Yep, see ya!" says Darcy as cheerfully as she can manage.

Nodding a little awkwardly, Steve sets off in the direction Agent Hill came from. Darcy watches him go. She expects she'll see him, but only see him, no more than that.

And she's right. For the next few weeks, she sees Steve in passing. He always smiles at her - but she thinks it looks a little forced. She wants to tell him he doesn't have to worry, he won't lead her on, she knows where she stands - firmly in the friendzone. Or, well, really the acquaintance zone now since they don't really talk...but she never gets a chance to have that conversation, because Loki strikes again.

**A/N:**

For personal reasons I won't go into here, I really needed to write some crack. So voila! I hope it was funny.

Reviews == Love

## First Date (or Getting To It)

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**Unbeta'd. Beware.**

**Thanks for all the reviews last chapter! I'm sorry I couldn't respond, it's been a busy week!**

### First Date (or Getting There at Least)

It's also, definitely Loki's fault that Steve and Darcy go out on a real date. Although, at the time, a date with Steve is the last thing Darcy's thinking about - she's long since given up on that; and besides, she's got more important things to do.

Running through the lobby of Stark Tower, clasping a thick folder under one arm, Darcy almost misses the elevator. It dings and is almost completely closed, but she thrusts in a toe. The door slams on her foot, but then slides open and she doesn't so much as walk as fall in, panting slightly, and a little bit sweaty from her sprint from SHIELD headquarters.

It's just her luck that she isn't alone.

Steve is standing there, hands on the elevator buttons. He's holding his shield and wearing his red white and blue getup, minus only the silly ski mask. The all American look of the outfit is a bit tarnished; the suit is stained with dirt, grease, and other things she thinks she'd rather not think about. Has he been wearing it since that video in Germany was taken? The video where Steve faced off against Loki, the megalomaniac intent on ruling the world? The megalomaniac who killed her boss, Phil Coulson? The Best Boss Ever Coulson, who hadn't even gotten mad at her when she'd taken the afternoon off with Steve. *Au contraire*, the man had taken her out for sushi—and could he ever put down raw fish! He'd plied Darcy with tender

uncooked morsels of oceanic origin until she'd told him every detail of her not-date with Steve.

Darcy's jaw hardens. Coulson is—was- awesome, even if he might be—might have been—a snake. Besides his quirk for warm offices and inability to sweat, Darcy couldn't help but notice he nearly swallowed his sushi and sashimi whole. She glances down at the folder in her hand, and the neat little Post-it note stuck to it, the words "For Tony Stark" written in Phil's near perfect hand.

"Darcy," Steve says. When she looks up at Steve he's scowling at her.

Squaring her shoulders, she says, "I need to see Tony Stark."

Steve's brow furrows. "Are you authorized to see him?"

Darcy sniffs, and tries to look imperious. "No." She actually got in the building by saying she was going to see a tech geek girl she knows who works in the marketing department.

Steve stares at her. Tightening her jaw, Darcy holds up the folder. "But I have to see him. My boss Phil Coulson left this on his desk and it has Tony's name on it." She bites the inside of her cheek. She will not cry.

Steve's eyes soften. "You knew Coulson?"

Darcy doesn't answer. But she doesn't need to. Bowing his head, Steve says, "JARVIS, take Miss Lewis and me to the penthouse."

"Yes, Captain Rogers," says an ethereal voice and for a moment Darcy thinks of Mr. Rogers from PBS, and for some reason that really almost makes her cry—oh, for safe mornings in the Neighborhood of Make Believe and..and...sweaters! And slippers! She doesn't cry. But only just.

The elevator starts to ascend. Darcy looks sideways at Steve. "Thank you," she says, but he is just looking up at the lights flashing above the elevator door. With one arm he's gripping his shield, his free hand is clenching and unclenching at his side. Her eyes fall to his butt. And whoa. She immediately looks up at the lights above the door too.

The elevator doors slide open, and Darcy and Steve step into what is one seriously awesome, luxurious room with a swank bar that looks like it was designed to double as a chic nightclub come sunset.

Steve gives her a tight lipped smile and starts to pace away from her, free hand still clenching and unclenching. Asking him how he is, or if he's finished all the Usagi Yojimbo comics they got together seems shallow, so Darcy doesn't say anything.

From the ether comes the voice that must be JARVIS. "Mr. Stark is approaching in his Ironman suit and will be here in approximately 3 minutes."

It suddenly occurs to Darcy that she's not just going to meet Tony Stark—again, though she doubts he remembers the first time, he kept calling her Marcy—she's also going to meet Ironman. Also...seriously the bar is really cool. Walking over to it, she slouches on a sleek chrome bar stool that probably costs more than two months rent. Looking at the bottles against the wall, she wonders if she makes Tony a drink if it would be okay to make herself one.

And then JARVIS voice announces, "Unknown energy source detected in the penthouse."

Before that can even process there is a sound like static that makes Darcy turn. A shimmer of light in the middle of the room catches her eye. There is a slight pop. And then, suddenly, a guy with long black hair, eerily bright light electric-blue eyes, and armor of black leather accented with gold and green is standing between Darcy and Steve in the middle of the room.

"Loki," says Steve lowly.

"Captain Rogers," purrs Loki, turning to Steve.

"You killed Phil!" shouts Darcy, dropping the folder to the floor and reaching into the pocket of her sweater—the sweater she's not wearing because she just sprinted over on a hot summer day from SHEILD's New York HQ.

Loki and Steve both turn to stare at her, their expressions of disbelief oddly mirroring one another.

"Darcy get down!" says Steve.

"Leave this to the big boys," says Loki. He looks down his nose at Darcy with a sneer and then turns his back to her.

"What do you want, Loki?" says Steve, raising his shield. Or maybe he says that. Darcy can't really hear him. All Darcy can hear is her own blood pounding in her ears, and all she can think about is that Loki turned his back on her. *Loki turned his back on her*—because she is not worth a second look by super hot aliens, super hot assassins, super hot billionaires, super hot super heroes and *apparently* not supervillains!

Darcy is suddenly very hot, her mouth tastes funnily like metal. Bending down wordlessly as Steve and Loki debate the merits of benevolent dictatorship—as if! Don't they realize the trouble with succession that madness brings? Darcy picks up a barstool by the legs. It feels oddly heavy and light at the same time, which makes no sense at all. Turning back to *The Boys*, Darcy walks forward, lifts the barstool above her head and brings the shiny chrome seat down on Loki's head.

There is a loud clang. Nothing happens immediately. But then Loki, slowly turns his head to look at her. His lip curls up in a snarl. "You'll pay for that mortal!"

Darcy's eyes widen. It suddenly occurs to her, in her anger she may have made a rather hasty error in judgement. She swallows.

There is a blur of red blue and chrome and another loud clang on Loki's skull. Darcy blinks to see Steve with his shield raised above his head. Growling, Loki turns to Steve, but Loki's wobbling a little.

Oh, fuck she's dead anyway. Grunting, Darcy swings the barstool up and hits Loki again. It bounces on his head, and then hits a second time—though with less force, so it's sort of a hit and a half.

"Stop!" Shrieks Loki.

Darcy takes a gulp of air and then Steve's shield is whipping through the air and falling on top of Loki's head, again, again, and again.

Loki staggers to his knees.

Pausing his onslaught, Steve says, "Had enough?"

Heaving the barstool above her head, Darcy cracks it down on Loki's skull. Twice. Just for good measure.

"I think -" says Steve.

"That's for Phil!" shouts Darcy, lifting the barstool up in the air.

"Um, Darcy. That -"

She brings the barstool down again. "And that is for Stuttgart." Loki falls backwards on the ground.

Another man's voice nearby says, "Is that Loki? Is he turning blue?"

Darcy kicks Loki in the head, and then raises the barstool again. "For everyone in Stuttgart!" she shouts striking the stool against Loki's skull.

"Easy She-ra," comes that other voice, and frankly, it's a *leeettle* condescending.

"Arrrrggggghhhhh!" Screams Darcy swinging the barstool at Loki again. It hits his head with a satisfying twang.

Someone grabs her from behind. "Let me go! Let me go!" Darcy shouts still flailing the barstool in Loki's direction. The metal beneath her fingers goes suddenly icy cold and Darcy flings it away, the torque twisting her out of her captor's grasp. She lunges onto her knees towards Loki, grabbing fistfulls of his hair. So help her, she'll rip that greasy, metal-head long hair right out of his scalp.

"Darcy!" shouts Steve, moving forward in a blur. "Let go -"

"No!" The word comes from Loki.

Before Darcy knows what has happened, two viselike hands have wrapped around her wrists. Her eyes widen. The hands are completely blue, with intricate lines upon their backs. Darcy tries to pull free, but then she hears the words. "You've freed me."

The tone is so...awestruck, Darcy just...stops. Her eyes move up to Loki's face. He is staring at her, the top of his head is just a few inches from her knees. His eyes are red and *glowing*, his face is completely blue. Darcy's hands unclasp from Loki's black tresses, and she *stares* in pure wonder.

She hears Steve say, "Wow," his voice hushed and awed. And Darcy feels what he means. Blue Loki looks—well, nearly godlike.

"I'm free," Loki says again, his red eyes searching hers. "You don't know what you've done." His grip on her hands tightens. "I am sorry for the death of your master, Son of Coul, but you must believe me, when I say I was only the unwitting weapon."

"Ummm...so Reindeer Games, should I be calling you Grumpy Smurf?" says the strange voice.

The red eyes snap from her, to a point over her shoulder. "This is no time for your gibberish, Stark. Thanos will know I'm free. He'll control the others directly, they'll open the portal, the Chitauri will invade."

"Thanos...as in the Greek, for death?" says Stark.

"Yes," Loki snaps.

"Chitauri?" says Steve.

"His strike force. They scour the realms and leave behind them only destruction," says Loki.

"Oh," says Darcy.

"We are all in grave danger," says Lok, his voice trembling, his eyes coming back to Darcy's. Squeezing her hands he says, "But never fear. Where there is freedom there is mischief, and where there are those, there is hope." He pulls her hand down to his lips and kisses her knuckles.

"Did I miss something? Are you on our side now, Blue Guy?" says Stark.

"Blue?" says Loki, eyes widening. He drops Darcy's hands and stares at his own.

"No..." Loki murmurs. "No...this is...ahh...an illusion." His body shimmers, and then he's pale again, his eyes back to being an eerily bright pale blue, and a sneer suddenly upon his face. Sitting up quickly he spits at Steve, and says, "You dare look down at me mortal! I will crush you like the ant you are and leave your world in ruins!"

"Whoa!" says Stark.

"Huh?" says Steve.

"Hit him over the head!" shrieks Darcy.

Steve slams his shield over top Loki's head. Loki wavers and shimmers blue for a moment. "Again!" shouts Darcy. Steve does as he's told, and then Loki's full on blue. "Stop!" he cries, putting a blue hand to his head and wincing. Steve pulls back.

Loki says softly, "So I'm cursed to be a blue monster..." He swallows, "But at least I'm free..."

"You don't look like a monster," says Darcy in a hushed voice, staring at his sky blue skin.

"No," says Steve.

"You look magical," Darcy say.

"Yeah," says Steve.

"Well..." says Stark. "I dunno. You are still freakishly tall."

Loki's glowing red eyes narrow and flick to Darcy, and then to Steve. And then they widen, as though he doesn't quite believe what he is seeing.

Swallowing again, he says, "We must move quickly if we are to save our skins."

Steve jumps forward, holding out a hand for both Darcy and Loki, giving Darcy a sort of weird angry glare, as he does. Darcy glares right back at him. She doesn't care if he is the tall, good looking, icon of Americana, if he's going to be a weirdo, so will she.

Loki and Stark both clear their throats. Darcy half turns to them, and both of their eyes snap to her chest. Darcy looks down to see that the top three buttons of her blouse are now open, and her bra is showing. Thankfully, not a ratty one, a pretty pink one with a flower pattern that gives her great lift. Steve's gaze goes to Loki and Stark, then follows their eyes back to Darcy—or her boobs actually. His eyes lift to her face and he looks so angry—like she meant for her

buttons to pop, and she is some hoochi mamma or something, and really what is wrong with him? Stupid, prude, 1930s throwback.

Dropping Darcy's hand, Steve turns, and steps in front of Darcy towards Stark and Loki—steps in front of her! Bastard. Like she's not there.

"How do we find out where this portal will open? Can we use any of the instruments on the Hellacarrier?" he says, sounding quite Captain-America-y.

"Hell, we can use the instruments two floors down," says Stark. On cue, the elevator dings, and opens, and the three men walk towards it.

"Wait!" says Darcy. "I have to get my folder!"

"Meet us downstairs," says Tony. "JARVIS will give you directions."

"Okay," says Darcy weakly, towards the guys in the elevator. Tony waggles his eyebrows and gives her a wink. Steve just looks pissed. Loki is raising an eyebrow in Steve's direction.

The doors close. Darcy's alone, suddenly feeling oddly cold. And she's shaking. She walks over to the bar and looks down at her overturned barstool-bludgeoning-tool-thing. Bending over, she she tries half-heartedly to pick it up, but suddenly feels too tired, or it feels too heavy. How did she ever lift that thing? Must have been an adrenaline rush, like that mom had, the one who lifted the car off her son.

Kneeling down, Darcy reaches out to grab her folder. She feels something in her spine pop, a sudden pain that makes gasp and put her hands behind her back, and then she promptly loses balance, falls forward and hits her head on the flagstone floor. Just before the world goes black she remembers what happened to the mom who lifted the car off her son. She threw out her back.

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Darcy wakes up to moans, screams and sobs. She opens her eyes to a high school gym that has been converted into a makeshift trauma center.

It's the day after the Chitauri came through a portal opened by Eric Selvig and the Avengers, aided by Loki, fought them off.

Turning her head to the side, she sees Katie, one of the nurses, remove a bedpan from underneath the bed next to her. The guy there has his face wrapped up in bandages. He nods minutely as Katie goes about her business.

"I wish I could help," Darcy says to Katie. And she means it. Even if it meant just emptying bedpans for the nurses. In the past day she's watched them coming and going, never stopping. And she's laying here useless with a pulled back and a concussion. She's cleared to leave now, she just needs bed rest. But there's no one in the city to come get her.

Katie smiles at Darcy, and opens her mouth to speak. And then a smooth, vaguely British, man's voice interrupts. "But you already did help."

Katie turns. Darcy lifts her head with a whimper. A hush falls around the little part of the gym they're in. Loki's standing there, dressed in a SHIELD uniform, one that looks a lot like the one Clint wears—but with sleeves. His blue skin seems to glow, and his orange eyes definitely do. Around Darcy come whispers. "The mutant who fought with the Avengers!"

Loki smiles. "Miss Lewis, armed only with a barstool, took on an alien and won. That's how she injured her back."

Darcy blinks at him.

The guy with his face wrapped in bandages rolls his head in Darcy's direction and utters the first words Darcy's heard him speak. "You took on an alien and won?" He laughs. "Awesome."

"Wow," says Katie with a grin. "You're a hero."

"Yeah," says the man next to Darcy.

Nodding, Katie, turns and walks away, bedpan in hand. Darcy's brow furrows as she watches Katie walk through the lines of beds of the wounded. Darcy doesn't feel like her heroics were all that greater than Katie's normal, everyday, job.

"Feeling better?" says Loki.

Darcy's eyes snap back to him. "Uh, yeah."

Loki smiles. "I'm here to collect you, Miss Lewis. Your apartment is still intact, and the doctors say you're well enough to be transferred back home—but apparently you have no family in the area."

Darcy blinks. Figures her apartment would be in a part of town the Chitauri wouldn't bother to destroy. "Ummm..."

Tilting his head, Loki says, "And I couldn't let my savior go back to an empty house."

Walking over he picks up the pain pills that are set on a little roly tray beside Darcy's bed with one hand, and takes one of Darcy's hands with the other. "Shall we go?" he says, lifting an eyebrow.

"Ummm..." says Darcy, but there's a swirl of green, and a crackle of electricity, before she can really form a coherent thought. Her stomach sinks, her ears pop, and all she can see is gray. Suddenly, she finds herself lying on her own bed—or mattress rather—on the floor of her tiny studio apartment.

Loki's still sitting next to her—but wait, whoa! Darcy rubs her eyes and does a double check of Loki's silhouette. Mammary glands—yep. Narrow feminine waist—definitely. Daintier feminine facial features, slightly fuller lips... Yes, Loki is definitely now a she. An impossibly, unfairly beautiful she. Her skin is still blue, but the scars

on her face seem a little less pronounced. Her red eyes glow just as intensely though. She's still in the SHIELD uniform, but it's more Widowy than Clinty, and Darcy's pretty sure the belt buckle with the wolf on it isn't regulation—and neither are the dangly snake earrings, or the pendant around her neck that looks like half the face of a little girl with a single red ruby as an eye.

Darcy's jaw drops as Loki (Lady Loki?) tilts her elegant head, looks around the room, and sniffs a little in distaste.

And. Well. Darcy's brow furrows in irritation. Her little studio doesn't have much furniture besides the mattress, a wooden crate turned on its side with her laptop on it, and a pillow beside the crate as a chair, but she's pretty proud of how clean she keeps it—the comic books by her bed are stacked neatly, and the books along the wall aren't even dusty. And it's *hers* .

Oblivious to Darcy's ire, Lady Loki turns to her and says in new feminine tones, "I thought teleportation would be more comfortable than a cab ride."

"Yeah..." says Darcy. "Thanks...umm...why?" She gestures vaguely with her hand in Loki's direction.

Swallowing, Loki looks down at her hands. "Well, I still can't turn back to...ahhh...myself...without my brain reverting to as it was under Thanos' control."

Darcy blinks. Even she's gathered that blue is probably Loki's natural form, what is with the self loathing, lying, weirdness? She decides not to focus on that, instead she says, "I meant, why are you a woman?" She holds up her hands, and only winces slightly with pain. "Not that I'm judging."

Lady Loki smiles. "Well, since I was escorting you home I thought that it would be better for me to be female, so your lover does not think that there is anything untoward between us."

Darcy's mouth does a sort of fish gulping air move. Finding her voice, she says, "My lover?"

Loki blinks at her. "Steve Rogers! My second favorite human. He's working with Fury right now, trying to get me amnesty."

"Steve Rogers is not my lover!" Darcy snaps.

Tilting her head, Loki smirks. "Well, if he isn't, he soon will be!"

"Hell, no!" says Darcy. "Did you see him glaring at me after I..." Darcy stops, suddenly a little uncomfortable with saying, 'After I repeatedly beat you over the head.'

"After you rescued me," Loki supplies helpfully.

"Ummm...yeah," says Darcy. "It's not like all of us have super suits that stay together during that sort of thing. I still don't really understand it—was he mad because my buttons broke? Because I stole his thunder? Because I didn't listen to him? Because I gave him orders? The way he stood in front of me like I wasn't even there—"

"Ah, you are a virgin," Loki says.

"What?" says Darcy, thrown by the non-sequitur.

Sitting back, Loki taps her chin with a long elegant finger. "Yes, that must be it, someone without experience with men might think—"

"I have experience with men!" Darcy says, sitting up and instantly regretting it as a wave of pain sweeps over her back. Flopping down onto the mattress, Darcy whines.

"Obviously, not a lot," says Lady Loki. "Steve was not mad at you."

Darcy raises an angry eyebrow at her.

Laying back on the mattress beside Darcy, Lady Loki threads her long elegant fingers on her stomach and sighs. "What you were

witnessing was Steve's internal battle between his simultaneous desires to protect you and Earth from alien invaders and Stark's lascivious gaze, and his desire to ravage you—or fall down on his knees and worship you." Lady Loki smiles happily.

"Uh, no," says Darcy.

Lady Loki blinks. "Oh, yes." She looks away. "It was the same look was on my face when my so-called-brother-Baldur tried to feel up Sigyn at a reception. Sigyn turned around, spilled wine down the front of his trousers, and then excused profusely as though it had been an accident!" Chuckling, Lady Loki's voice cracks a little. "Of course, I can see through lies..." Her voice bobbles down an octave and she seems to shimmer. "I knew then I had to have her."

Lady Loki shakes herself, and then laughs in high feminine notes. "When Steve does fall down on his knees to worship you hopefully it will be with his tongue!"

"What?" says Darcy.

"Oh, that's right," Loki says rolling onto her stomach. "You're still a virgin."

"I'm not -"

Putting a finger to Darcy's lips, Loki says, " *Virginal* ." Lady Loki smiles. "I'm referring to cunnilinguis that's when—"

"I know what that is!" says Darcy. "And I highly doubt Steve would be into that!"

"Really?" says Loki, her brows furrowing. "You know that for sure?"

"Well—"

Shaking her head, Loki says, "Because if he isn't throw him back in the pond. He's not worth keeping. You need a man that gets into it."

She licks her lips, and Darcy draws back in the covers. She stares at Loki for a second.

And then clearing her throat, Darcy says, "Guys get into that?"

Lady Loki's eyebrows lift.

"Not that it matters," Darcy says. "He's not going to ask me out. Not when he sees you." The words tumble out before she can stop them.

Blinking, Loki sits up and draws back.

"You're beautiful," Darcy mumbles. And Darcy's flat on her back, and not getting up to grab a hairbrush anytime soon.

"But I'm blue!" says Loki. "I look like a...a...a...frost giant!"

Darcy stares at her uncomprehendingly. "So?"

Lady Loki stares back at her, and then looks away. "You mortals have become unaccountably strange in the last few hundred years."

Her form shimmers, and when it stops the SHIELD outfit is gone, Loki is wearing a pretty green dress that's a little more billowy, and her hair is gray. She turns around and there are delicate crows feet around her eyes, and laugh lines around her mouth. Darcy notices the belt buckle, pendant and dangly snake earrings are still there. Lady Loki's still beautiful, but she now looks like she's in her late 60's or early 70's.

"You didn't have to do that!" says Darcy.

Lady Loki leans forward and kisses Darcy's forehead. "But I did. For my favorite human." She winks. "Just don't ask me to cry for anyone."

Darcy stares at her and Lady Loki (Grandma Loki?) says, "Not a big follower of your mythology are you?"

Darcy just blinks. She suddenly feels tired. And even though she'd splurged when she bought this mattress, her back really *hurts* .

Grandma Loki looks up in the air. "Steve is coming down your block now."

Not bothering to ask how she knows that, Darcy says, "I think I need more pain medication."

"I'll get you a glass of water," says Lady Loki. One materializes in her hand instantly.

Wincing, Darcy takes it from her, her hand shaking a little at the strain. Grandma Loki raises a concerned eyebrow, and Darcy says, "It will take about a week for my back to get better." She shrugs and then grimaces.

Grandma Loki hands her a pill, and takes the glass after Darcy finishes. "Now I'll brush your hair," she says.

"Mmmmm...thanks," says Darcy, wondering if the pain meds are already taking effect. "You know though, Steve isn't really going to ask me out, right?"

"Want to make a wager on that?" says Grandma Loki, a brush materializing in her hand.

"And who says I'd say yes, anyway?" says Darcy, a sudden strange dread filling the pit of her stomach. Steve is just so...out of her league...and they're practically from different cultures, and he probably won't be keen on the fact that Darcy isn't a virgin—no matter what Loki's thoughts on the matter Darcy isn't a virgin or even virginal, and really, the whole idea is just too daunting and—

"If he asks and you say yes I will buy you some new furniture," says Grandma Loki, smoothing Darcy's hair with a brush.

Darcy thinks she'd say no to that sort of generosity, even if she knew it wasn't going to happen. But she is in pain, her brain is a bit fuzzy, and all she can think of is all the splinters she's gotten from her crate desk. "Done," she says.

Grandma Loki hums happily. Just then, there is a knock at Darcy's door. "I'll get it!" Grandma Loki calls, whisking the brush away to...well...somewhere...and running to the door.

It suddenly occurs to Darcy that Steve might not be keen on genderswitching aliens. He's from the 1930s! She almost calls out to Loki, but it's too late. The door opens. Steve blinks in surprise for a moment at the blue woman with gray hair in front of him. And then his eyes widen. "Oh, hey, Loki! You do this in the myths too." He smiles. "Neat!"

Loki smiles right back. "You know, I just remember somewhere I have to be..." There is a shimmer and a pop, and then she's gone.

Steve looks at Darcy, his usual earnest, vaguely perfect frat boy, Ralph Lauren poster child, self. Pointing at the place where Loki was, he says, "It's sure is something when he—" His brow furrows and he looks up as though deep in contemplation. " *She* , does that."

It's so not what Darcy expects.

A few minutes later, sitting down on the floor by Darcy's mattress, Steve asks Darcy out on their first date—after politely inquiring about her present health and asking if there is anything he can get her, of course. Darcy's blames her answer on the painkillers making her feel like the whole thing's a goofy hallucination...and maybe on the promise of free furniture.

She says yes.

**A/N:**

Why yes, I chose to write awkward, immature Darcy. And it will only get better! Or something. I think I will show the first date as flashbacks, that way I can skip around a bit.

Lots more crack in My Stories. Check out "5 People Who Thought Loki was Gay", "I'm Dying Here", "The Snow Wife", and "What Happens in Alfheim".

If you're still enjoying this, Review. Or show your love by checking out my original stories on Amazon (links in my profile!)

## **Brand New**

**Disclaimer: I don't own. I don't profit.**

Unbeta'd. Read at your own risk.

Special author's note. So this was going to be a "5 Times" story, but I see Loki messing with Steve and Darcy's relationship more like 7 times...so...you get an extra chapter or two. I'd change the title to "Loki Meddles..." but, meh.

In other news, just finished off the rough draft of Chaos, the third installment in my "I Bring the Fire" series. I'm taking a break now, so I should have more time for fanfiction. (Go ahead and check out the first two installments of Fire and Murphy's Star - sales of my original stories keep my husband from nagging me about writing fanfiction. Links are in my profile).

Thanks everyone who reviewed last chapter. Reviews really help fanfiction authors keep going.

## **Brand New**

Darcy sits in her (brand new!) Aeron chair in front of her (brand new!) desk in her apartment. Scrolling through Tumblr, she's trying not to be nervous. She looks at the clock. 20 more minutes until Steve arrives. Is supposed to arrive. Maybe he was called off to answer a world threatening emergency. Maybe Tony tried out some new Iron Man suit weaponry on him and it blew him through a window and he fell 50 stories and broken all of his super soldier bones. Maybe Natasha winked at him.

She shakes her head.

Guys like Steve don't date Darcy. He's not even a geek, or even geek chic, which is about the upper echelons of Darcy's dating pool.

Okay, well, actually he is a geek, but he doesn't look like one, and that is what matters and-

Green smoke?

A familiar voice snaps behind her. "What in Norns name — ?"

Darcy's jaw clenches but she does not jump.

Turning around, she meets the red eyes of Lady Loki.

"What?" says Darcy.

But Lady Loki's eyes are on Darcy's computer. The markings in her storm cloud blue skin seem to have contorted into a dark vee.

Uh-oh.

Voice a deadly whisper, Lady Loki says, "Is that cartoon supposed to be depicting me and Stark -"

Darcy's eyes widen as she looks at the fanart of Loki in his male Asgardian form with Tony Stark *in flagrante delicto* on the top of Stark tower. In the picture Loki is in his full Asgardian armor, with the exception of one very strategic piece.

"You guys are kind of a thing on Tumblr," Darcy says, her face so hot she feels like she's suffering from a third degree burn. "It's harmless."

Loki turns to stare at her, nostrils flaring.

"And I didn't mean to look at it, I was just scrolling." Darcy adds. Which is true. Not that she *minded* seeing it.

Loki's eyes narrow.

"At least Tony is the one on his knees?" Darcy suggests, weakly.

Closing her eyes and taking a deep breath, Lady Loki waves a hand in Darcy's direction. "What is the meaning of this?"

"There's no meaning. Lots of people just think you're a cute couple." She shrugs. "I dunno, I kinda do too, I mean — "

Eyes snapping open Lady Loki says, "I don't mean your porn, woman! I mean your clothes! What are you thinking?"

Darcy looks down at her jeans and sweater. "Ummm...what?"

With an exasperated sigh, Lady Loki wraps a well manicured hand around Darcy's upper arm, heaves Darcy out of her chair with surprising force, and pushes her in the direction of the closet. "I happen to know Mr. Rogers went to considerable effort to dress to impress you, and you will return the favor!"

"It's just dinner!" says Darcy.

Releasing Darcy and opening her closet, Loki begins furiously rifling through her clothing. "Not at a hot dog stand you Philistine!"

"Steve likes hot dog stands, we stopped at one when we — "

Throwing up her hands, Lady Loki exclaims, "This is a date! And you have nothing! Nothing!"

And then she disappears.

"Oh," says Darcy, turning around. She looks down at her sweater. It's her nicest one, roomie, and soft and —

Poof.

Darcy lifts her eyes. Lady Loki is standing in front of her with a deep maroon dress on one arm.

Tilting her head, Darcy says, "Why do you care so much anyways?"

Loki sighs. "Because my debt to you can never be repaid." She scowls at Darcy's clothing. "Partially because an eternity of torture, pain and servitude cannot be weighed against anything you a mere mortal can possibly experience...partially because you and Steve need so much help."

"Hey!" says Darcy putting her hands on her hips.

"Put this on!" Lady Loki snaps, thrusting the dress into Darcy's hand.

"Uh — " Darcy says.

"Well, go on!" Lady Loki says. "It's just us girls here." She smiles, but it looks a little too much like a leer.

Narrowing her eyes, Darcy backs into the closet and shuts the door. As she pulls her sweater over her head she hears Lady Loki grumble. "Damn it."

"Are there tags in this dress?" Darcy says, slipping it down her back.

She is met with silence.

"Did you at least pay for it?" Darcy asks.

"Of course I did!" Lady Loki snaps.

"If you didn't — "

The door flies open, and Lady Loki drags Darcy out by the belt. "We haven't got time for this; you're going to die!"

"I am?" squeaks Darcy.

Buckling the belt one notch tighter and spinning Darcy so she is facing the mirror on the back of the closet door, Lady Loki snaps. "You are mortal aren't you? Now, stop asking questions — your life is too short."

Darcy does stop asking questions. Mostly because she's lost the ability to speak. With  $\frac{3}{4}$  sleeves, a high, square neckline, and a hem that reaches a few inches below her knees the dress isn't revealing in the strictest sense of the word, but it fits Darcy like a glove. The fabric isn't flimsy, yet it has stretch. Darts in the waist and hips give it a tailored look, the belt is the same color as the dress. She doesn't think she's ever owned anything so nice. She looks like a new person.

Darcy breathes out a sigh. "I look..."

"Like you're not wearing heels!" Lady Loki shouts, bending down and staring at Darcy's feet.

"My back just got better!" Darcy cries. "I can't throw it out again."

With a huff, Lady Loki stands up. Rolling her eyes, she sighs. "Very well. That would ruin the evening, I suppose." She looks down at the black ballet flats Darcy is wearing. "Those will have to do."

Lady Loki runs her fingers through Darcy's hair, and drapes it over Darcy's right shoulder. "You do look..." Her red eyes meet Darcy's in the mirror. "Beautiful all the same." There's something sad in her eyes. The ruby eye in the necklace she always wears of half a girl's face glints in the light. Dropping her gaze, Loki picks at the sleeve of Darcy's dress.

"Darcy," she says.

"Yes?"

"In every relationship there can only be one prima donna," says Lady Loki.

"Ummm?" says Darcy.

Eyes flashing, Lady Loki meets Darcy's gaze again in the mirror. "Stark and I will never be a couple, in male or any other form. Filter.

Your. Tags."

Darcy's eyes widen. Then she smirks. "I think you doth protest too much."

Loki blinks at her in the mirror. "No, I really meant that. He's not my type; even when I'm a woman." Her voice turns wistful. "Now Sigyn and I — "

"Uh-huh," says Darcy, gracing Loki with a leer of her own.

Narrowing her eyes, Lady Loki says, "Thinking that he is distorts your understanding of a healthy relationship."

Darcy winks at Loki in the mirror, just to be obnoxious, really. She sometimes wonders if she would be so daring around Loki in his hot male form, but he—she's—not in his male form. So.

"Fine, ignore my words of wisdom." Rolling her eyes, Lady Loki disappears.

Darcy turns around, just as there is a knock at her door.

Taking a deep breath, and smoothing her dress, she checks the peep hole. There is Steve, looking very nervous. He's and holding a bouquet of deep blue irises that completely obscures what he's wearing.

When she opens the door she is immediately grateful to Loki for the dress. Steve is wearing a charcoal gray suit and a blue striped dress shirt beneath - no tie, which really works for her. The shirt is open slightly and she can see the hollow of his throat. He looks gorgeous. Completely and utterly out of her league. She swallows and tries not to tremble.

"You look great!" says Steve. He hands her the flowers.

"Ummm...not roses," he says putting his hands in his pockets, and

blushing. "I dunno, I thought for you...something less traditional would be better."

Flowers in her arms, Darcy beams. "They're perfect. Much better than roses." And she means it. They're lovely, and fresh, and he actually thought about the choice.

Steve kind of smiles, and bows his head. Feeling incredibly awkward, Darcy says, "I'll just put them in water."

As she steps to the kitchenette Steve says, "So, I hear you like sushi, so I made reservations at Masa's."

Darcy's eyes widen at mention of the premier sushi restaurant in New York City. She has to thank Loki for the dress.

And then she blinks. Putting the irises in a pitcher she says, "Do you like sushi, Steve?"

He blushes. "No idea, but Tony says it's the best place, and I've got several decades of active duty pay for my time on ice, and if you want to try raw fish, going for the best seems like a good idea...and ummm...I hear sushi's popular nowadays and I want to be a circle."

Darcy stares at him.

Steve draws a little circle in the air with his finger.

Darcy stares a little more, her mind drawing a blank.

"Not a square?" says Steve, one eyebrow hitching up, and his nose kind of crinkling.

Darcy giggles, all her nervousness suddenly gone. "Yeah, you can just say, 'not a square'."

Steve winces, "But I kinda am one, aren't I?"

Shrugging, Darcy holds out her arm, and winks at him. "What? You were making a joke."

Steve coughs, and then grins. "Yeah...a joke...right..." He says, taking her arm. And whoa, it's one thing to look at Steve, but it's another thing to feel him. The feeling of muscle, and warmth beneath his jacket is so exquisite Darcy actually shivers.

As they walk down the hallway, Darcy says, "Who told you I like sushi?"

"Natasha," says Steve.

Darcy's brow furrows. She's never told Natasha she likes sushi. "Makes sense...she probably knows what type of underwear I wear too."

Beside her Steve coughs.

Darcy looks up at him. He's grins, the sweetest, most impish look on his face. "To be fair," he says. "I know what your underwear looks like too."

Darcy's eyes widen.

He swallows. "Some of it?" He scratches his head. "Did I take that too far! I didn't mean..."

Remembering the day her blouse snapped open Darcy bites her lip. "No, you're doing fine. I'm just surprised at how circle-like you are."

As they step into the elevator, Steve grins, Darcy grins right back, and everything is fine.

The elevator dings at the first floor. As they get out, Steve says, "And Clint says that you're looking into nursing programs?"

"Yeah," says Darcy. "Ever since..." she shrugs. "The invasion, I've been thinking about going back to school. I don't really want to be a

doctor, too much time behind books...but a nurse-I could be helpful, soon, or soonish, and since SHIELD will pay for it..."

"You'd be great at it-doctor or nurse. Especially emergency medicine. You sure keep your head in a crisis." Steve's brow crinkles, and darkens. "I always wanted to go to college-had the grades for it, but not the time...or the money."

Head bobbing, Darcy says, "I can get you the right paperwork!"

Eyes widening, Steve says, "That would be really swell. Thanks Darcy." He gives her a sly look, and then grinning, he starts whistling a tune from *The Wizard of Oz* .

Laughing, Darcy sings along. "If I only had a brain!"

And for a little while, everything is divine.

**A/N:**

Reviews == love!

## Understanding

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IF YOU THINK STEVE IS A VIRGIN AND SHOULD ALWAYS BE VIRGINAL STOP HERE

## Understanding

When Darcy enters the diner, Loki is already seated in at a booth in the corner. He's holding an open New York Times in front of his face and she almost doesn't see him. Only a slight shimmer in the air in front of his pale hands gives him away. To anyone else it would look like steam rising from his coffee cup. But Darcy knows what to look for. Squinting her eyes she lowers her glasses and sees what she *expects* to see—cobalt blue fingers. She blinks and they're pale again.

Striding over, Darcy plunks her purse down and then falls into the seat across from him with a sad huff.

Loki just continues to read the paper. Darcy blinks at the headline, "Government Denies Loch Ness Sightings in North Atlantic". Beneath the headline there is a blurry picture of a creature that looks more snakey than Nessie. It's the sort of headline and photo that in Darcy's youth would be confined to supermarket scandal rags, but in a world where mutants, so-called "demi-gods" and alien invasions are common knowledge-well, that stuff makes the serious newspapers now.

Darcy sighs.

From behind the newspaper comes a grumpy, "Well, spit it out. What's bothering you now?"

Darcy sighs again. "I think Steve is gay."

Loki half closes the newspaper and stares at her wide eyed above the fold. He looks Asgardian, but it's not his true Asgardian form, just a glamour. Darcy blinks her eyes, and sees what she expects...Blue skin and red eyes. She blinks again and he looks like the deathly pale, vaguely vampiric version of himself.

Loki continues to stare at her.

Darcy swallows.

A smile crosses his lips, and then he snorts. Folding up the paper, he lays it down beside him and smirks. "Here I am worrying about creating a working Bifrost for Earth despite my so-called father's numerous attempts at sabotage and trying to create a better early warning system to detect future alien invasions-all the while dealing with the furious, stark raving, rabid creature that is Director Fury on a daily basis-"

"He's not that bad," says Darcy. His bark is worse than his bite. She's come to respect him since she was transferred to his office. He's cunning, and ruthless to his enemies, but he's also very loyal. She likes him alright, odd taste in red meat aside. Seriously, she used to suspect Coulson was a snake, but the number of times Fury has sent her out to fetch him steak tartare for lunch...She looks to the side...what does that make him? A lion? A bear? Maybe a -

"He is that bad!" Loki snaps. Looking away he taps a finger on the table. "He's always talking about how untrustworthy I am, how fickle, how prejudiced..."

"You did kill his best friend," says Darcy. Coulson and Fury had been very close...so close and intimate sometimes Darcy suspected there was more to it than simply friendship.

Loki glares at her.

"Even if it was under mind control..." Darcy finishes weakly.

Loki shakes his head. "The more I gain the trust of his people the worse his paranoia becomes. It's as though he holds something personal against me..."

Darcy decides not to bring up Coulson again.

Shaking himself again, Loki says, "But here I am with my legitimate problems, and you come and tell me your problems that are completely imaginary."

"It's not!" says Darcy.

"It is," says Loki picking up his coffee cup and giving her an indulgent smile. "But don't worry, I enjoy it. It helps me take my mind off my own troubles."

Darcy fixes him with a death glare.

Rolling his eyes, Loki says, "Steve is not gay, Darcy. Seriously, as much as my female form enjoys your slash obsession on a pornographic level, I think your slash goggles are distorting your understanding of real men gay, straight and in between and how they deal with real relationships."

Darcy crosses her arms over her chest.

Sighing Loki says, "Well go on, tell me what after nearly 5 months of dating, leads you to believe that Steve is *gay* ." He says the last word with air quotes.

Darcy huffs, and then immediately feels like crying. "There were so many signs," she says, "But I've been so happy I've ignored them." They've have been happy, almost inseparable, even going back to school together.

Loki opens his eyes wide in pantomime of happy attentiveness.

Darcy sniffs. "He always brings me the most lovely flowers-always something different, I think I've only gotten roses once..."

"He's an artist. He has a good sense of color," Loki says waving a hand.

Darcy sniffs. "And then he dresses so well-"

"He asked Tony Stark's personal shopper to help him design a modern wardrobe-so he wouldn't *embarrass* you."

"He loves Judy Garland!" Darcy says, her voice hitching with despair.

At that Loki actually blinks. "He has an interest in a short, desperately cute brunette who veers towards curvy and scrumptious as opposed to the bone thin that is generally considered beautiful these days...Considering your physical attributes-this bothers you why?"

"She's a thing with gay men on Earth!" Darcy says.

Loki shrugs, "In your time, maybe. Did you know last time I was here, fathers wanted their boys to grow up to be Liberace?"

"Who's he?" Darcy says.

Loki fingers drum the table by his cup. "He was very flamboyant piano player famous for candelabras and gaudy jewelry."

"Never heard of him," says Darcy.

Loki sighs. "The point is, none of your evidence stacks up against the *fact*. "

Darcy feels a little bit of hope unfurling in her stomach. "What *fact* ?"

Resting his elbows on the table, he leans across and whispers. "Last time we were drunk you waxed very poetic about his joy in giving you oral pleasure."

Darcy looks down, feeling her face heat. She doesn't remember that conversation, but she can see how she might have wanted to share.

Steve is really, really, really good at *that* . It had been a revelation that guys from his day would even know about *that* , and be so skilled at it (turns out, being on the road with show girls can give a guy a lot of practice). And Steve, crawling up over her body after she's climaxed and blissed out, with a big smile on his wet face and a raging hard-on...seriously, one of the most beautiful things in the world.

Darcy sighs, and almost cries. "But that's just it. He's into *that* , but whenever we move onto the main course..." She closes her eyes...she'd really hoped the Judy Garland thing would have been enough evidence for Loki. She opens her eyes, Loki's face has actually become strangely sympathetic. Darcy leans closer so she won't be heard. "The flag goes to half mast before..." She closes her eyes. "Before he's finished."

Loki leans on his hands. "Darcy, that doesn't mean Steve is gay."

The look she gives must be sufficiently dubious because he says, "There may be a very small subset of gay men who enjoy oral sex with women out of some bizarre sense of masochism, but the numbers of those men are so small..."

"There are only two Norse Gods on this planet and I know both of them!" Darcy says.

Loki gives her a tired look. "You know Darcy, men are supposed to be virile and to want sex all the time, but just like women our desires can be dimmed by experiences and events."

Dropping his head, he stares empty eyed at the blurry picture of the Atlantic Lochness on the front of the Times. "After Angrboda and our children died I..."

The only woman Loki's ever talked about is Sigyn. The myths talk about his wife Angrboda, killed by Odin. She was mother of three of Loki's children, all of them banished from Asgard for being 'monsters'. His silence had made Darcy think those stories were just

myths. He's never spoken of Angrboda. And although he's spoken of Odin's many slights, he's never mentioned her murder or his childrens' banishment. Perhaps those parts weremythology?

What is she doing thinking about this right now? Feeling like an ass, she pushes her curiosity to the side and puts her hand on his. "I'm sorry," she says.

He doesn't look up.

"I know I can't..." She knows she can't relate. She takes a deep breath. In the psychology class she took for nursing school she learned that the loss of a child is the most difficult loss to take-and after that is death of a life partner. Three children and a wife...

"I'm sorry," she says again.

Loki's gaze turns to their hands. Giving her hand a squeeze he pulls away. Lifting his head he says, "Have you and Steve talked about it?"

Darcy doesn't blink at the change of subject, instead she just nods. "I've asked him what's wrong and he says he doesn't trust the pill-I'm on it," she adds hastily. Looking away, she says, "And he always says condoms break...and..." she shrugs helplessly.

Loki purses his lips and looks down at the table. "You know condoms do break."

Darcy can't help it, her eyebrows shoot up.

"...and to a man like Steve," Loki says. "Oral contraceptives might seem a bit like..." He pauses. "The hocus pocus your Earth magicians call magic."

"So you think he's telling the truth?" says Darcy, pulling back.

Loki nods. "I do."

Darcy looks at her plate. "Well then, what do I *do* ?"

Picking up his cup, Loki levels her with a steady gaze. "Don't make it an issue. It will happen."

Darcy stares at him as he takes a sip of coffee, a sinking feeling in his stomach. First, that advice is very vague, second, she may have already botched it.

Looking towards the window, Loki says, "If you've been asking him what's wrong, you might switch to asking *what happened* . A factual question is easier than an emotional question when the connections between your cerebral hemispheres is tenuous."

"What?" says Darcy.

"Men," says Loki. "We're wired differently."

"Oh," says, Darcy. The sinking feeling in her stomach, a deep well of despair now.

Loki's eyes meet hers. An eyebrow rises, his lips pull into a smirk. "What's wrong, Darcy?" he says, an evil glint in his eyes.

"Nothing," she says too quickly.

Loki's eyes narrow. Loki lips his lips in a way that tells Darcy he's just about to say something diabolical. "You didn't let Steve in on this little suspicion of yours, did you?" He takes a sip of his coffee and peers at her over the edge of the cup.

"What?" says Darcy, her voice a trifle high.

Loki puts his hand to his nose, and begins to cough so hard he nearly bangs his head on the table. "You did, you did! You asked him if he was gay!" He sputters, cackling in earnest now.

"I let him know it was okay if he was!" says Darcy says. "He comes from a time when that sort of thing wasn't accepted and I wanted him

to know-"

Banging his hand on the table, Loki screws his eyes shut, as he doubles over with laughter. His Asgardian visage is now beet red.

"Stop laughing!" says Darcy. "It isn't funny!" Steve had actually gotten kind of mad at her...not when she first asked, but when she didn't really believe him and kinda insisted that it was okay to tell her.

Wiping a tear from his eyes, Loki giggles, "Oh, this is as rich as your first date when you told him you weren't a virgin during the third course!" He cackles maniacally.

"I wanted to to make sure it wasn't an issue!" Darcy cries, her face going warm at the memory. And Steve took the virgin conversation, really well. Well kind of well. He turned as red as Loki is now, but managed to keep a straight face when he'd replied that neither was he.

Loki doubles over with laughter so hard he breaks a plate with his forehead.

"I hate you," Darcy says, as a waitress walks by and gives them a funny look.

Loki just continues to laugh.

---

About a week after the conversation in the diner, Darcy stands at in front of the campus bookstore, brow wrinkled in concern. She's supposed to meet Steve, but he isn't here. Steve's technically not late, but he's not early—which means late in Steve time.

In her pocket her phone starts to buzz. She knows it's Steve, even before she looks at the caller ID. Feeling the slight dizziness of anxiety, she puts the phone to her ear. "Where are they sending you now?" she says, trying to sound casual and not worried. This is what

he does. She accepts it. But it still...yeah...she doesn't get mad for missed dates, but worry...that she can't control.

"You know I can't tell you, Honey," Steve says, his voice tight. In her mind's eye she can see his lips press together and his jaw tighten. "And I was so looking forward to going out for borscht after getting our new books."

Darcy swallows. Food is their secret code. He's most likely off to Russia. There's a pause on the phone, a roar of an engine in the background. She knows he doesn't have much time.

"We're good, aren't we Darcy?" Steve says, his voice just a touch plaintive.

Darcy sucks in a breath. "We're better than ever," Darcy says. Even if they're not having sex yet...or not exactly.

"I love you," Steve says.

"I love you too," she says, and she means it.

"I have to go, I'm sorry," Steve says, his voice rushed.

And then Darcy's just listening to the dial tone.

She turns to enter the bookstore and her nose nearly runs into a generous bosom. Darcy's eyes go up. Lady Loki is standing there. She's wearing civilian clothes, her Asgardian glamour, and a scowl. "I offered my services for the trip your lover and my so-called brother are about to depart on but Fury, in front of everyone, said I was not to be trusted!"

Darcy blinks up at her. Lady Loki is right, Fury does have something against her, and errr...him, when she's inhabiting that skin, but Darcy doesn't feel like indulging a rant.

"So you and me, girls night after book buying?" she says instead.

Loki sighs. "I suppose."

"Great," says Darcy stepping around her. "You can carry Steve's books for me." She might as well get them while she's here.

Lady Loki sighs again, but follows her into the bookstore.

As Darcy grabs a basket, Lady Loki says, "So you and the good Captain are in good standing?"

"Yes," says Darcy, suddenly on edge.

"Did you find out what the source of his little hang-up was?" Lady Loki says, and Darcy can hear the evil grin in her voice.

Freezing in place, Darcy says, "Maybe you should turn to your male form. He's not as interested in gossip."

"I can't get drunk with you in my male form. That would be completely inappropriate," says Lady Loki. And then, completely inappropriately, she says, "So what was the source of his little problem?"

Darcy turns to her. "Steve and I are great."

Lady Loki raises two perfectly shaped eyebrows expectantly.

"But I can't talk about the source of his..." Darcy huffs in frustration. "It's really personal." She shouldn't have brought up the problem with Loki to begin with. Or maybe she should have, because her-his-advice really did help.

Lady Loki looks hurt, but to Darcy's surprise, doesn't dig anymore.

Deflating a bit, Darcy starts up the Art History aisle. Picking up a book for Steve, she turns and sees Lady Loki has a large textbook, *Mythology in Art*, open in her hands. She is staring down at a page, an unreadable expression on her face.

Darcy is immediately overwhelmed by a feeling of *uh-oh* . Walking over, Darcy leans over her shoulder-well, her arm. Darcy is short, and Lady Loki is nearly as tall as Loki-Loki. What she sees makes her heart break a little. It's a picture of Angrboda, and her and Loki's three children: Jörmungandr their snake son, Fenrir their wolf son, and Hel, their half-dead daughter.

Darcy puts her hand on Lady Loki's arm and looks up to see tears standing in Lady Loki's eyes.

It makes her think of Steve and their conversation earlier this week. "You know," she'd said on her apartment floor, over coffee and eggs, the morning after an almost having sex session. "You can tell me what happened."

Standing up fast, Steve had stomped off to the kitchenette and dumped his plate in the sink with a clang.

"Or you don't have to-" Darcy said quickly. "It's alright, I-"

"I got a girl pregnant," Steve said.

Darcy's jaw dropped.

"Condom broke," said Steve. "One of the chorus girls."

"Oh," said Darcy.

"Bet your agent Coulson didn't know that about me," Steve said, turning his head to look at Darcy, his expression furious. But she knew it was himself he was furious at.

Darcy gasped. "Something happened to them."

Steve's expression softened, and then his forehead knotted in worry lines. "How..." He tilted his head, and his jaw got tight, like he was trying not to cry. "How did you know?"

Standing, up, Darcy walked towards him slowly, like she was approaching a frightened animal. "Because you wouldn't abandon them," she said. Steve was actually pro-choice-that had been a surprise, but apparently he'd seen the results of botched abortions in his time with the show girls. Pro-choice though he might be, Darcy knew he would prefer a child be kept if at all possible.

Steve looked down. "I didn't, I dunno, maybe I did..." He wiped his face. "She found out when we were in Europe. We didn't love each other, but we were going to get married and make the best of it. She went to London, to get a dress on leave. I didn't go with her. There was an air raid. She-they-died."

Darcy's shoulders fell. Steve's wasn't much older than her. Not really. But he came from a time when life was so much more serious. When choices had so much starker consequences. Padding softly forward, she put her arms around him. "It wasn't your fault, Steve."

"I wasn't there when they needed me..." Steve said. "I failed."

Pressing her forehead to his chest, Darcy said, "No, you didn't. No one can ever always be there." She sighed. "Oh, Baby, how long have you been keeping this inside?"

Steve's arms had wrapped around her. "Since it happened," he said, voice cracking slightly. "Right before I saw Peggy again."

Darcy knew about Peggy. She wasn't threatened by Steve's past love; Peggy was an abstraction, a long-ago. "Is this why you never pursued her?" Darcy asked, suddenly very sad for Steve and Peggy both.

"Maybe." Steve said dropping his chin to the top of Darcy's head. "I pretty much felt like a shit at the time."

The profanity and the bitterness in his voice made Darcy just that much sadder. "I'm sorry," Darcy said, and she meant it. Steve probably could have used some love about then.

The book snaps shut in front of Darcy's nose, and suddenly Darcy is hit with an epiphany. Looking up at Lady Loki she says, "You weren't there when it happened. You couldn't save them."

Lady Loki's eyes slide to Darcy's. For a moment she looks surprised, but then her expression goes so cold and hard Darcy looks away—almost walks away too; but a hand lands on hers and holds her back.

"We need to get very drunk tonight, Darcy," Lady Loki says.

Darcy isn't exactly sure that's what Lady Loki needs, in fact, she's pretty sure it very much *isn't* what Lady Loki needs, but she smiles, and says, "Sure," anyways.

Darcy blames the booze on what she says later that evening. They're in a bar, at the bar, and it's loud, and crowded, and she's pressed really tightly at Lady Loki's side. "I'm sorry," she says out of the blue after a long argument about the virtues of Captain Sisko, versus Picard, versus Janeway, versus Kirk.

"For thinking Janeway is too patrician sounding?" says Lady Loki. "You should be sorry!"

Darcy snorts. "Sisko rocked, get over it! No...no...I'm sorry about your kids and...and...and...Aggieboda..."

Loki's body stiffens next to her.

Darcy should stop there, but she is drunk and the words have already left the station in her brain and are coming out her mouth. "In our myths they just say Odin killed Aggie...but...that your kids were only banished...but you say they're all dead...I'm soooo...sorry. That's terrible."

She shakes her head.

"Odin did not kill Angrboda," Lady Loki says. "They were killed by frost giants in a raid on Alfheim...they were visiting kin." Her voice grows dark. "And you wonder about my self-loathing."

Darcy hiccups. "Well...that's just what our myths say." She nudges Lady Loki with a shoulder. "Did you know our myths also say you're a frost giant?"

A man leans over Darcy's other side, and says, "Hey, there...can I get you two ladies anything?" And then he gasps, loud enough to be heard above the din in the bar, and is gone. It takes Darcy a moment to realize that Lady Loki has dropped her Asgardian glamour, she's full on blue with glowing red eyes and she's staring at Darcy.

The temperature in the bar seems to drop; and then suddenly Darcy's stomach is falling, the barstool beneath her is gone, and she's suspended in midair above her bed. An instant later she lands with an undignified plop. Lady Loki is standing above her, red eyes blazing more than usual.

"I do know about that myth, Darcy," Lady Loki says. "Odin used to tell me it was all nonsense..." She lifts her head and starts playing with the necklace with the little girl with the one ruby eye.

"Oh," says Darcy. She snorts. "And they called you the God of Lies."

That is supposed to cheer Lady Loki up, instead her lip curls in a look of pure unadulterated fury. "I must go now," Lady Loki says. And poof. She's gone.

Darcy stares at the nothingness for a moment, but then her phone starts buzzing. Considering it's 2 AM she knows it can only be one person. Fumbling it out of her purse, she smiles. "Hi Steve. You home?" Her voice is slightly slurred, because she's drunk, but also because she's so happy to hear from him she's almost purring.

"Not home, just on the Hellacarier. But on my way." He pauses. She can hear the hum of engines on the other line. "Were you out

drinking with Lady Loki again?"

"Yeah, but she teleported me home and then disappeared...I'm just about to slip out of my clothes and into my jammies," she says lazily.

"You're slipping out of your clothes? Errr...should I call you back...I mean..."

And suddenly Darcy has a great idea. Something safe. Without any pressure. "No, Babe, I think you should stay on the line...especially if you're alone. Maybe if you're not you could go somewhere you are alone?" she says as meaningfully as she can with her head as foggy as it is.

"Oh..." says Steve. And then louder, with more understanding.  
"Ohhhhh..."

"Oh.. .yeah ," says Darcy.

Later, a very groggy, very relaxed sounding Steve says, "I love you, Darcy. I'm so glad...I'm so glad we're still okay."

"Mmmmm..." says Darcy, very relaxed and groggy herself. "Baby, we're not just okay, we're bulletproof."

Because really, if sudden calls to save the world, and decades of cultural misunderstandings can't get between them, what can?

**A/N:**

Little bit of angst with crack, is good, yes? And yes, what indeed can come between Darcy and Steve? (No, this will not turn out to be Loki/Darcy, sorry).

If you read and enjoyed, please review!

# To Hel and Back Part I

Disclaimer: I don't own. I don't profit.

Warnings: Unbeta'd. Read at your own risk. Also, I think we wander a bit into the crack zone here!

## To Hel and Back Part I

Loki stands just 2 feet in front of Darcy, so close she can smell his sweat and hear the shallow sound of his breathing. Still, the mist of Nifheim, so-called "World of the Dead" is so thick his figure has a hazy dream like quality. Behind them she hears a giant hiss, a howl, and Steve's frantic, "Fury, down!"

And then there are the skittering noises of thousands of Chitauri feet. How and why the Chitauri are here is anyone's guess. But it is kind of why the Nifheim experience is more nightmare than dream. That and the chill. And the portucalis in front of Loki. Made of long spikes of metal, skulls - human and other - are threaded along the spikes like so many beads. Garish, but a fitting entrance to a giant pyramid made of bones the length of school busses.

Loki looks up, black hair and blue skin glistening in the damp. Water droplets cling to the black leather of his overcoat. "Hel's magic protects this place, but I don't know how to break the spell." Hel is the daughter Loki thought dead for centuries. It's been five months since Darcy has seen Loki, and finding his little girl was *one* of the personal matters that kept him away.

Behind her, Darcy hears the clang of Steve's shield. She clutches her first-aid gear tighter to her. Something in the mist makes a loud gurgling noise. Crouching closer to Loki she says, "You were on good terms with her when she disappeared-"

"Of course, she is my little girl!" Loki says, voice stricken.

"Maybe you don't have to *break* the spell," Darcy whispers. "Maybe you just have to ask her to let you in?"

Loki's head spins round. His red eyes bore into Darcy's. "That is a ridiculous idea," he snaps. A howl rises in the air behind them. All the hair on Darcy's back stands on end.

Some of the air goes out of his chest. "But I have none better." Turning back to a skull three times too large to be human, protruding from the gateway like a maniacal grinning doorknob, Loki says, "Hel, it's your father. Please let me in."

The doorknob skull's jaw opens and shuts wildly, as though clacking with laughter. Darcy and Loki both pull back, and then, with a creak and a groan the door swings inward.

Loki turns to Darcy, his mouth open in wonder. "How -"

"Lord of the Rings," she says. Giving him a push, she adds, "Hurry, the boys can't hold off the hordes forever."

Nodding, Loki hurries inward, Darcy on his heels. As they move forward the door closes behind them with a bang. Darcy, gasps, and then sighs with relief as green light rises in front of her. She blinks as her eyes adjust. Loki is holding a ball of glowing green in one hand. They are in a single large unfurnished room. In the center is what looks like a dias made of ash. On the ash dias lies a statue of a woman, carved to look like she is sleeping on her back, hands crossed over her stomach.

"Hel..." Loki says, his voice cracking. He walks forward, and Darcy follows. The ground beneath them becomes soft and treacherous. Up close, the statue appears covered by dust.

"Oh, Hel," Loki murmurs. "I failed you." His fist clench at his side.

Darcy stares at the statue. The sculptor obviously loved his subject; Hel looks beautiful - rendered her as though she is sleeping, the

statue has fine cheekbones, a delicate nose and brows, lips like a bow, and a likeness to Loki that is unmistakable. What's more, the detail of the statue is so great Darcy swears she can see eyelashes, and every strand of hair where it flows off the dais towards the floor in a long river.

Gently, reverently, she wipes the dust away from a cheek - and instead of the cool hardness she expects she feels softness beneath the grime.

"He turned her to stone," Loki says, his voice wavering.

"This is not stone," Darcy says.

"What?" says Loki.

"It's her!" Darcy says, frantic fingers sweeping away the dust. Beneath her hands she sees blue cerulean skin on one side of Hel's face, alabaster skin on the other.

"She's still dead," says Loki. "It is not in my power to bring her back."

"No," says Darcy, "No we did not come all this way for her to be dead!" And Hel's skin, though cool to the touch, is not shrunken or dry as though she is embalmed.

She hears Loki swallow.

Lifting her head, Darcy says, "Loki! Wake her up! I don't have time for you to get over your guilt and fear; I'm mortal remember?"

Loki is looking down at his daughter; but at Darcy's words he looks up briefly. An expression that is unidentifiable flickers across his face. His eyes are sparkling - it takes a moment for Darcy to realize they're wet with tears. Falling to one knee, Loki takes one of Hel's hands, and drops his lips to her brow.

"Hel," he whispers. "I'm here, Father is here, and so are your brothers and...and...friends. Please, wake up."

For a moment nothing happens. Loki crumbles, falling down on both his knees.

And then two lights begin to glow behind Hel's eyelids-the light on the blue side red, the light on the alabaster side blue.

"Loki..." Darcy murmurs. "Look..."

Hel's eyelids flutter open, just as Loki lifts his head.

"Father?" she says.

Loki gasps, and scrambles up, dropping his forehead to hers.

"Father, you came!" says Hel, her voice choked by sobs.

Loki doesn't respond, but Darcy can hear him gasp for breath, and knows he's crying.

This is not where Darcy thought she'd be twenty four hours ago. Darcy's vision goes blurry...not because of any evil magic or a blow to the head...just because she starts crying too. What a horrible, terrible, wonderful day.

---

24 hours before Darcy wound up with Loki and the literal Hel, she was in a very figurative Hell. She was at a bar with her new work buddies, some of the nurses from Stark Memorial Children's Hospital-Tony had helped her escape SHIELD's employment custody. Shawna, Dave and Bridget were just out to have a good time; and by the sound of their laughter they were doing a good job of it.

Darcy though, Darcy was on a mission. She tipped the Long Island ice tea back and drained the glass.

"Hey," said Bridget, nudging her with an elbow, "You think maybe you should, you know, slow it down there, Darcy?"

"No," said Darcy.

"Yes," said a cool, crisp vaguely British voice behind her. Darcy glowered at her glass, empty of everything but ice, and an orange cocktail umbrella.

Grabbing the tiny umbrella, Darcy spun around, and poked a glamour wearing, male Loki in the chest. "I don't need another man trying to tell me what to do!" She said. Or stammered.

Loki scowled at her. "Where is Steven?"

"Steven?" said Bridget.

"Is that your mystery ex?" said Shawna.

"Ex?" said Loki.

"We broke up five months ago," Darcy said. Or rather, Steve dumped Darcy. Just after she'd last seen Loki - the day after she got her nursing certification. *To* night would have been Steve and Darcy's three year anniversary.

Loki and one of his doubles stared at her.

Darcy blinked. "Hey are you using magic right now? 'Cause they're two of you." She maybe hiccuped also.

Loki's brow constricted. "Well, this is inconvenient."

"Um, Darcy," said Dave. "There is only one of him...I think you need to go a little easy on the ice tea."

"Hell no!" said Darcy.

"I don't have time for this!" Loki declared. His eyebrows rose, and his face took on a sudden look of earnestness. "Darcy I need your help. It's urgent."

Darcy wobbled on her stool. "Well, why didn't you say so?" Standing, up, she tried to take a step towards him-and almost fell over.

"Whoa, they really have to even out this floor," she said.

"Oh, Norns sake!" said Loki. Leaning over, he heaved her over his shoulder like a sack of potatoes.

Someone screamed.

"Don't worry I know him!" said Darcy to no one in particular. "And I'm going to throw up on his butt."

A cloud of green rose up around them.

Before Darcy could shout, "It's alright, it's just teleportation," the screams and flashing lights of the bar were gone; replacing them were the soft sound of waves and velvety darkness broken only by moonlight streaming through four circular windows.

"Where are we?" said Darcy.

"Somewhere you can sleep off your current state of inebriation," said Loki.

She blinked. Oh. There was a bed.

He bent down roughly, as though he was going to throw her off. Darcy felt her stomach heave. "No sudden movements or I'll puke!"

Loki sighed. More gently, he sat down on the bed. Darcy felt her feet and then her knees connect with the mattress.

"Laying you down, now," said Loki.

"Holding my puke now," said Darcy.

With another sigh, Loki eased her off his shoulder, put his hand behind her head, and lowered her gently onto what felt like the most

comfy mattress in the world. When she was settled among soft pillows, Loki said, "Now rest."

Besides the moonlight, the only light came from his now red eyes. It had been so long since she'd seen him, and now he was just dumping her in some dark, unfamiliar place? Darcy reached out a hand to his. "Stay with me."

Loki stiffened beneath her fingers, but didn't leave.

"Where have you been?" Darcy said.

"Attending to some personal matters," said Loki tersely.

Sliding her hand up from his palm to his wrist, Darcy said, "I missed you. You are my best-friend girl-friend, my best guy-friend and I broke up with Steve and you were gone and I had no one to talk to because I left SHIELD, and it was for the best, but you were gone!"

Somehow between the first word and the last, Darcy started to sob.

Loki sighed. Cool fingers brushed a tear from her face. With more coordination than Darcy thought she had, she sat up and wrapped her arms around him, burying her face in his chest. He was wearing a shirt that felt like linen. Beneath her cheek she could feel muscle and sinew less bulky than she was used to, but still wonderfully masculine.

After a moment she felt Loki's hands on her back. "Do you want to tell me what happened?" he whispered, his voice sounding slightly strained.

And oh, those hands were firm and comforting and more. Darcy began to talk, rubbing her cheek against his chest as she did, her hands on his back sliding down to his waist...because she was tired...but more too. She hadn't been held like this in over 5 months, and between the closeness and the alcohol she felt good, too good.

And she thought of Steve, and didn't want to, so she squeezed Loki tighter.

"Was I an idiot?" she said at last, after she'd told Loki everything.

Loki took a deep breath. "No, actually, Darcy, you were in the right, this time."

Hearing him say that was a relief-and yet Darcy broke down again anyway. Tears ran in streams down her cheeks. In her darkest hours, she sometimes thought she should go back to Steve, apologize, make her life the way Steve wanted it to be. But if Loki said she was in the right, there really was no hope.

"Shush," Loki said, trying to lay her back down. "Shush...Darcy, I need you to be well rested."

"Stay with me," she said, pulling him down with her. For a moment, he resisted, and then with a barely audible sigh he lay down on his back beside her.

Darcy moved her head to the crook of his shoulder, and snuggled against him. They'd just sleep, that was all, no matter how warm her body felt despite his cool skin. To her surprise, Loki wrapped an arm around her. The force of the embrace rolled Darcy onto her side. On instinct, she put a leg over his hip and a hand on his chest. Suddenly every nerve in Darcy's body was buzzing, beyond her own arousal she felt, heard, and saw almost nothing; she barely registered Loki's body stiffening. She hadn't felt so turned on, since, since...well Steve. For a few minutes she lay in stillness as ominous as the windless moments before a storm. Was it just her who suddenly felt like gravity had increased a notch?

Seemingly on its own volition, her hand began to trace a loose light pattern along the flat planes of his chest.

Two red lights slid towards her in the dark. She hadn't realized Loki had closed his eyes, until he stared at her, pupils blown out and

wide, face inches from her own.

Darcy dragged her leg down his hip, and let out a murmur at what she felt beneath his trousers.

It wasn't just her.

She let her hand leave his chest and drift downward. Loki caught it before it reached her intended destination.

"No, Darcy."

Craning her lips to his cheek, she placed a light kiss on the side of his mouth.

"You're drunk." Loki said, taking a sharp intake of air as she dragged her knee over him again.

"Haven't you ever thought about it...about you and me?" Darcy said. She had. Not seriously. Loki was in a perpetual state of in love with his ex-wife, Sigyn. It was kind of annoying and a turn off. But now he was here and she was single and why not? Maybe this was what they both needed.

Abruptly throwing her leg off of him, Loki sat up. "Have I ever thought about fucking you? Yes. But it would never be more than just a fuck."

Darcy had never heard Loki be so crude, or even angry with her. Cold dread coiled in her stomach. "What -" Her hand reached to his shoulder in shock, a plea for him not to leave.

"You can never really give me what I need Darcy-not for the long term." He brushed her hand away with such a look of disdain Darcy felt her fear turn to rage.

"And Sigyn can?"

Swinging his legs over the side of the bed, Loki turned to her. "Yes," he said.

"Then why did you divorce her?" Darcy taunted.

"I've explained this to you," snapped Loki. "So she wouldn't be held accountable when I disrupted Thor's coronation and was accused of treason!"

"That was years ago!" Darcy shot back. "Have you even tried to contact her since then? No!"

"I am wanted. For treason." Loki hissed. "Everytime I visit Asgard I wind up with a Destroyer on my heels. I would never put her or our children in danger!"

Darcy huffed.

Elbows on his knees, Loki dropped his head into his hands, and let out a breath. "And I'm a monster. Our boys are just babies..."

Darcy's brow wrinkled. "Didn't you tell me they were close to sixty years old or something?"

Loki waves a hand. "Exactly! Ones so young...they aren't ready for the truth."

Darcy shook her head. "If Sigyn thinks you're a monster because you're blue, she doesn't deserve you." She put her hand on his forearm.

Lifting his head, Loki stared at her hand for a moment. Picking it up, he entwined their fingers. His breath was cool on her skin. Turning his red eyes to hers, he raised one eyebrow and gave her a sad smirk. "Darcy," he said softly. "Last time we got physical you wound up throwing out your back." He licked his lips nervously, and closed his eyes. "I have needs you simply cannot fulfill."

Darcy's slightly sobering brain chugged down that information. Suddenly in the gray matter and Long Island Iced-tea soup, she remembered the news feed from Germany, where he'd commanded

a whole crowd of people to get down on their knees. And she'd heard rumors of the threats he gave to Natasha on the Hellacarier. And what had Thor said about Sigyn? "All of Asgard thinks her submissive and weak, for what she has endured with Loki."

She swallowed, suddenly thinking she understands him. "You're a sadist or something aren't you?" It was the alcohol talking, and she instantly regretted it...it was a crazy idea. She put her hand to her mouth and was about to apologize when she caught Loki's expression.

Lifting his brow, his jaw dropped a fraction, as though he was surprised. She heard his breath hitch. Closing his eyes, he looked away. "Yes," he said, his voice a whisper; his head dipped. He looked ashamed.

"Oh." Darcy stared at him, eyes wide, shocked at being right with such a wild stab in the dark, and shocked that he was admitting it. It all made so much sense all of a sudden. Loki was a sadist; Thanos just took his natural urges and turned them against the human race.

Loki was right. Darcy couldn't meet his needs. And probably no human could, even if they had serious masochistic tendencies. Loki was stronger than Steve-not to mention that Loki was magical. Darcy had seen Loki accidentally set things on fire from time to time. In the heat of passion if that happened...

"I'm sorry," she whispered. For her come-on, for making him uncomfortable, for how lonely he seemed to be. Whatever his inclinations, since the Chitauri invasion, he'd kept himself in check, and he was her friend.

Shaking a little, she pulled her hand away. Loki watched it go, something like sorrow flickering in his red eyes. For a few long moments, neither said anything, and then he stood. "I can't risk the family I've made when I'm starting to put my other family back together," he whispered cryptically. He turned to her. "We can forget this ever happened?"

Darcy nodded.

"And you won't..." His voice drifted off.

"I will never speak of it," Darcy said. "Even though I don't think less of you for it," she added hastily.

Loki smiled. Just a little bit. "I knew you wouldn't judge. If they knew on Asgard-" He shook his head. And then he said, "Rest now, Darcy. I have need of you in the morning."

Darcy fell back into the pillows. It was a long while until she fell asleep. When she woke, dawn peeking through what she realized were portholes, she felt off. It wasn't a hangover, which miraculously she didn't have. It was memories of the night before.

Darcy wasn't as naive as she once was. She read *Savage Love!* She knew being a sadist or a masochist wasn't something you asked for, it got programmed into your brain-or maybe you were born with the inclination-no one really knew. Anyway, Loki couldn't help it, that was the main thing.

Sitting up in bed, Darcy blinked her eyes. Being a sexual sadist didn't make you a bad person, as long as everything was consensual and between two willing adults. She winced, visions from a website she accidentally blundered upon coming into her mind: ropes, whips, purple bruises, red skin, blood, and ugh...not her thing.

She looked around her room. It was luxuriously opulent, like something out of *Metropolitan Home*, but on a boat. From beyond her door she heard what sounded like pots clanging and smelled coffee, eggs, and bacon. It sent a pang through her. Steve always used to make bacon, eggs, and coffee in the morning when they had a sleepover.

Shaking away that memory, she remembered Loki's earnestness the night before when he told her he needed her help. Of course she'd help him. Loki was, whatever else, one of her best friends.

She opened the door to her cabin and walked down a hallway panelled in dark wood. Gold fixtures were set into the walls. The boat she was on was seriously luxurious, if kind of dark. She swallowed as she drew closer to the sounds of frying and clanking plates. Time to face the music. Seriously, she probably knew more about Loki than she ever really wanted to know, and she felt kind of like an ass, and he probably felt like an ass. She didn't think things could get any more awkward.

There was a swinging door to her right up ahead. Hearing the chink of silverware she surmised it was the galley. Taking a deep breath, she stepped through the doors, girding herself for her first after-almost-sex-chat with Loki. But Loki wasn't in the kitchen. At the stove, frying pan in hand, apron on his front, was Steve.

Not looking in her direction, he said, "Just thought I'd make some breakfast, before our epic quest. Hope you don't mind, Loki." He turned around frying pan in hand...and promptly dropped it, spilling eggs all over the floor.

Darcy blinked at him, wondering if maybe this was sort of a weird dream. He was wearing a tight white t-shirt under the apron, jeans and no socks or shoes. He looked just as perfect and wonderful as he always did.

His brow furrowed. "Darcy what are you doing here?"

Behind her came the slight squeak of the swinging door and Loki's sleepy voice. "Well, this is awkward."

**A/N:**

**So lots of exciting news. The rough draft of my original fiction, "I Bring the Fire Part III: Chaos" is pretty much ready to be zipped up and sent to the Grammar Nazi.**

**Other exciting news...you can download the first part of "I Bring the Fire" FREE at Amazon U.S. or Smashwords (links are in my**

**profile). Taking a peek at my original fiction is a great way to show your support for my fanfiction. ;-) Especially if you're too shy to review this story.**

**Reviews are love, and seriously, the only reason to write fanfiction. Even a word from you makes this more worthwhile.**

## To Hel and Back Part II

Disclaimer: I don't own. I don't profit.

Special thanks to my beta NotesfromtheClassroom. Check out her latest, Deeper Into Darkness for Star Trek Reboot adventures.

### To Hel and Back Part II

Darcy turned to see Loki in the galley's door. His red eyes were slightly hooded and not so glowy. Steve's eyes flicked quickly between Darcy and Loki, and then his face melted into a look that oozed...Darcy blinked...jealousy.

And okay, she could see where being in Loki's kitchen could look like a "morning after breakfast", but it wasn't, and even if it *almost* was, it was none of Steve's business. Darcy screwed up her face, felt her nostrils flare, and wanted to shout something, but instead she just stamped her foot.

"Darcy, what are you doing here?" Steve said, his voice too even.

A noise came out of her mouth that sounded surprisingly like a growl. It was too early in the morning for this. Taking a deep breath, she managed to spit out, "I have no idea, actually."

Eyes widening, Steve's gaze moved to Loki. "Loki-"

"I brought her here shortly before I brought you," said Loki.

Steve's eyes narrowed. "Why?"

"Ah, well," said Loki, running a hand through ruffled hair and blinking bleary eyed at Steve. "After I shrink Jory down to a more reasonable size, teleport him out of the water, and you untangle me from his coil -"

"Jory?" said Darcy.

Loki's eyes flicked to Darcy, "Yes, my son, Jormandr, the giant snake. After Steve rips me from his suffocating grip, I will need your help with the defibrillator, Darcy."

"What?" Darcy and Steve said in unison.

"To restart my heart," said Loki.

Raising a finger, Darcy said, "I know what a defibrillator is for. But why will your heart be stopped in the first place?"

Not meeting her eyes, Loki tapped his chin. "His venom is extremely poisonous."

"Umm..." said Steve. "You didn't tell me that."

Waving absentmindedly in Steve's direction, Loki said, "Oh, he won't bite *you*. He's always been very even tempered. He's just extremely mad at me." He sighed. "A few months ago when I tried to have a chat with him he almost killed me."

"Did you have to bring *Darcy*?" said Steve.

Before Darcy could respond to the tone of...something...in his voice, beneath her the boat groaned. She heard something metallic clanging in the distance. "Guys, is it my imagination, or are we sinking?"

"We're sinking," said Loki.

"You could have brought Bruce!" said Steve.

"Isn't anyone concerned that we're sinking?" said Darcy.

"It's a submarine," said Loki, giving her a little smile that seemed to say, *You-are-an-idiot-but-I-still-like-you*. Swivelling his head, he narrowed his eyes at Steve. "Bring the green rage monster onto a

submarine where I'll be bringing my long-lost little boy? Are you out of your mind?"

"It's too dangerous for Darcy," said Steve.

Throwing her arms in the air, Darcy shouted. "Arrrggghhh! Must you be such a condescending..." She looked around for something to hurl in Steve's direction. Everything looked bolted down. Steve gave her a look like a hurt puppy and held up his hands.

Stamping her foot, again, she balled her fists at her sides. "Do gooder," she shouted. Grabbing Loki's arm, she spun him towards the door to the galley. "Show me to that defibrillator."

---

Clutching the defibrillator, Darcy leaned against a cold metal wall by Loki's chosen teleportation target—an unadorned utility room in the bowels of the sub. The nearby lights were rugged and recessed; there were dark shadows on the edges of the room, and the slow steady thrum of the engine sounded nearby. Leaning against the opposite wall, Steve wasn't meeting her gaze.

Loki was outside in the water somewhere, looking for Jory, and Darcy was trying to pretend Steve wasn't here. Loki was trying to reunite with his long lost "little-boy", and she was going to help him. She was going to be professional. She wasn't going to pick a fight. She wasn't going to break down and say something like-

"I've missed you."

Darcy blinked. It took a moment for her to realize the words came from Steve's mouth and she hadn't just thought aloud.

She looked up at him and glared.

He was studying his shoes and didn't notice her evil eye. Throat bobbing as he swallowed, he said, "I keep wondering if we could...maybe...you know..."

Darcy's breath left her lungs too quickly. For a moment she felt hope. Keeping her voice even, she said, "Has anything changed?"

Steve's jaw got hard. "No. But if you worked for SHIELD..."

The brief flicker of hoped died and was replaced by fury. "I don't want to work for SHIELD, Steve! I'd rather risk my life everyday, and spend the majority of my days doing work I love, with patients who adore me, making a difference, than handing out band aids at SHIELD HQ!" With a huff of air Darcy turned her head away.

"There's always the HellacARRIER..."

Darcy snapped. "And I'm not going to work on the Death Star!"

Wince audible in his voice, Steve said, "Don't call it that-"

Shivering, Darcy said, "That's what it is!" The thought of the gray steel corridors and unsmiling agents made her body tense up. Working there would be like...like working in this damn submarine her entire life. She looked around at the windowless walls and deep shadows and longed for Stark's Children's hospital and the bright rooms lit with floor to ceiling windows. "I'm not working there." Besides, you practically had to be a Navy Seal or Marine just to be on the medical staff. A little known fact of Marine Corp training...almost 1/3 of the women were honorably discharged due to medical injuries. No. Thank. You.

She could see Steve's tongue going over his teeth, the way it did when he was angry.

Voice hard, he said, "As long as you date me, you're a target for my enemies. I can't protect you from my enemies when I'm on mission- and if you don't work for SHIELD they can't protect you either!" Bowing his head he added, "I'm sorry."

A long exasperated sigh was on it's way from Darcy's lungs to her lips, but it morphed into a gasp of surprise when the shadows to her

right began to coalesce. A semi-transparent Loki in a wetsuit appeared to hover in the air next to her. He had on an Asgardian glamour-because that was 'how Jory remembered him.' At the moment, his nose was curled in a funny way, like he'd just smelled something unpleasant. Glaring at Steve, Loki's apparition said, "I can't believe it, Steven! You're serious!"

Raising his head, Steve blinked at Loki's amorphous form. "Wha-?"

Lifting his arms, Loki said, "There I was thinking you were just afraid of commitment and looking for a way out that didn't make you look like a pound of dirty bilgesnipe scales!"

"I'm not afraid of commitment," Steve said, his voice rising. "I even bought Darcy a ring."

Darcy blinked. "You did?"

Steve met her eyes, and blushed. "Yeah, I was going to propose when-"

Interrupting him, Loki shouted, "You really believe I would let your enemies pose a threat to Darcy?"

"Uh..." said Steve.

"I have business relationships with nearly all of them," said Loki. "Why, this submarine belongs to Victor VonDoom!"

"What?" said Darcy and Steve in unison.

Amorphous Loki lifted his head as though gazing through the ceiling. "I find the decor a bit garish, but it does dive remarkably deep."

Tilting her head in a way that probably made her look like a confused Scooby Doo, Darcy said, "Ummm...you have business deals with Doom and yet...you get upset when SHIELD doesn't trust you?"

Steve coughed.

Loki looked at Darcy with wide eyes. "I have NDAs with all my clients."

"Errr...NDAs?" said Steve.

"Non-Disclosure Agreements," said Loki curtly. "I take them very seriously."

Darcy and Steve both stared at him, slack jawed.

Rolling his eyes, Loki said, "Oh, don't look so shocked. A man has to stay busy. I also have NDAs with Disney and the country of New Zealand, among other entities."

"What sort of business do you have with..." Darcy blinked. "Any of them?"

Loki stared at her a moment, as though she was a slow child. "Now if I told you that, I would be violating my Non-Disclosure Agreements, wouldn't I?"

"Umm..." said Steve.

"Ahhhh..." said Darcy.

Leaning close to Darcy, semi-transparent Loki winked. "But take it from me, the new Disney Land ride opening up next week is not to be missed."

"Errr..." said Darcy and Steve as one.

Waving his hands, Loki said, "But the important thing to know is that among all of Steve's enemies, past, present, and likely-future, it is widely known that to kidnap, maim, or murder you, Darcy, would result in said perpetrator and all his or her minions being flayed alive and pinned like bugs with railway ties to the sidewalk in front of SHIELD's headquarters. Also, that all my business dealings with them would be forfeit."

Darcy's mouth fell. Steve gasped.

Bringing a hand to his chin, Loki blinked. "Or do you think that's not enough?"

"Ummm..." said Darcy.

"Ahhh..." said Steve.

Loki's eyes got wide and he stared at a point beyond Steve's shoulder. "Jory! Father is coming!" And then he winked out of existence. Or semi-existence. Or whatever unsubstantial doubles winked out of.

Darcy's eyes met Steve's. He looked as shocked as she felt. He opened his mouth, and she steeled herself for a lecture on how Loki's methods were very, very, very wrong. He licked his lips. She closed her eyes.

"So," said Steve. "I've always wanted to go to Disney Land." Darcy's eyes snapped open. Steve bit his lip. "Want to make a long weekend of it? I mean, when you can get off work."

Darcy grinned. Before she could respond, a dark, wet, thrashing shadow filled the room and began to take on real form. Gray scales materialized before her eyes, and the thrashing body sprayed her with water as the sub shook and metal clanged. Huddling over the defibrillator, she took a deep breath and inhaled a smell halfway between Reptile House at the zoo and fish market.

Loki's voice rose up from...somewhere. "I've almost shrunk him down to size!"

Blinking, Darcy watched as the scales condensed rapidly. And there, suddenly, at the corner of the room, was Loki trapped in the coils of a dark-blue-gray snake-like creature. Its body was still as thick as Steve's waist, and it was at least 30 feet long. It had gilly looking fin things where ears would be, and a long snout with whiskers. The

snout was affixed to Loki's shoulder and blood was spilling over Loki's wet suit and running in dark rivulets to the floor. "Steve..." slurred Loki. "Now..."

Steve darted towards the creature. Before he reached it the snake-dragon released Loki from its jaws and lifted its head.

"Ssssstteeeeeveeeee?" it hissed, long black tongue darting out between wicked looking fangs.

Steve stopped in his tracks.

The creature's coils rapidly untangled, leaving Loki to fall in an ungraceful heap on the floor. Darcy rushed towards Loki with a defibrillator. His eyes were closed, his body limp.

"Errr...hi umm...you must be, Jormungandr. That's Darcy...please don't hurt her," said Steve as Darcy took out a utility knife and sliced the wetsuit away from Loki's chest. She eyed the dark wounds on Loki's shoulder with trepidation. They looked deep, but not overly large. Reaching for his pulse point and feeling no beat beneath her fingers, she focused on restarting his heart. Vaguely she noted his Asgardian glamour was still holding.

"Darcyyyyyyy?" hissed Jormungandr. In the periphery of her vision she saw the serpent's head turning towards her as she affixed the defibrillator pads to Loki's cool skin. Focused on her task, she activated the defibrillator, and her body jerked as the charge coursed through the wires and Loki's body jolted, his eyes fluttering open.

"Sssssteeeeeveee...Darcyyyy. How can yooouuuu hellpppp my fatherrrr...?" Hissed Jormungandr. Hissing in what sounded like impatience, the serpent creature shook himself, and the whole sub shook again with him. The coils near Darcy began to retreat. She didn't even bother to look up, she was busy reaching for a first aid kit to patch up the puncture wounds in Loki's shoulder. She was dimly aware of Steve gasping.

Loki shook his head, and put a hand over the puncture wounds. "I got those. Is Jory here?"

"You don't deserve to call me that," said an oh-too-calm, very familiar voice.

Darcy's eyes widened.

"Phil?" said Steve.

Darcy looked up, her eye widened even more and her jaw nearly hit the floor. There was her former boss, hands on his hips, completely naked.

"Phil?" Darcy, stammered. "Is that really you?"

Lifting his head, and turning his eyes to Phil, Loki gasped. "It's him, I recognize him... *now* ..." His eyes fluttered. "Jory-Phil-I don't blame you for being angry...when I tried to kill you...I was..." Loki's head fell to the deck with a clang. "...You're a shapeshifter, too. I couldn't be more proud of you..."

Darcy felt for his pulse. "Crap, he's dead again!" she said reaching for the defibrillator controls.

---

Loki was still alive, still Asgardian looking, but unconscious. They'd moved to the sub's living room, partly to put Loki in a bed to make him more comfortable-partly to get Phil into a bathrobe, to make Darcy comfortable.

Or more comfortable. Phil wasn't happy to see Loki, and that was very uncomfortable. Steve and Darcy had explained the whole Chitauri-mind-control situation when Loki had invaded Earth and "killed" Phil in the process.

Phil wasn't buying it. Not that he said so, but he was pacing. Phil did not pace. Phil was calm, cool and collected-Darcy supposed it went

with being cold blooded. But at the moment he was wearing a trail in Loki's carpet, or rather, Doom's carpet. It was the equivalent of another man waving his hands and shouting at the top of his lungs.

"You don't understand," Phil said to Steve and Darcy. "It wasn't just the Chitauri invasion. He sold our sister Hel to a Titan."

Darcy and Steve met each other's eyes.

Tilting his head, Steve said. "I don't think that Loki could have done that..."

Phil turned his head sharply in Steve's direction, quick as, well, a serpent.

Eyes still closed, Loki's voice cracked. "What?"

"Don't claim ignorance," Phil said. One corner of his mouth curled up in disgust. It was more emotion than Darcy had ever seen from him. "Uncle Baldur told us all about it."

Flicking his gaze between Steve and Darcy, Phil said, "When the Titans came for us while we visited kin in Alfheim, mother, Hel, my brother and I did our best to fend them off; but they were too strong. We fled from realm to realm. When we arrived on Earth, mother died. Nicholas and I tried to hold them off as Hel escaped..." Pausing his pacing, he wiped his face with his hands. "I still don't know if she made it..."

On the bed, Loki lifted his head. "Would never...sell your sister...to anyone. Baldur told me you were killed by frost giants. Mourned you...so long..."

"It's true," said Steve. "He has been in mourning...ever since we've known him."

Phil raised an eyebrow, and began pacing again.

Sitting beside Loki, Darcy straightened. "Wait, a second. Nicholas?"

Stopping his pacing, Phil turned sharply to Loki again. "You sold Hel because mother's Jotun side showed in Hel's blue skin. You were ashamed of her! Ashamed of all of us!"

"No...No...No...Is that how you remember it?" Loki said, shakily pulling himself to a sitting position.

Phil looked down at the ground. And then looked away.

"Jormungandr," Loki said. "I loved you all-before you could shapeshift, when you were just a little serpent slithering into the world, and Fenris was but a cub! I was never ashamed. Don't you remember?"

Phil turned back to Loki. "...I..." He shut his eyes. "I remember mother dying in my arms! I remember facing dozens of Titans with Nicholas beside me...I..." He put his face in his hands. "It seemed like you cared, even after mother's jotunn blood was discovered...but..."

Blinking, Loki looked down at his pale hands. "Ahh..." His Asgardian glamour fell, and he sat on the couch in all his blue skinned glowing red-eyed glory. "It was never your mother who was the jotunn."

Phil's eyes went wide. "But grandfather said..."

Loki sighed. "Grandfather lied...about many things." Dropping his head, his lips flattened. "When I was king of Asgard I tried to destroy Jotunheim-to prove I was worthy...and to destroy that part of me that I thought destroyed my wife and my own children."

Clearing his throat, Steve said, "Ummm...tried to destroy Jotunheim...?" Darcy saw Steve trying to meet her eyes. But the gears in her brain were frozen on one other pertinent piece of information. "Nicholas?" she said again.

Phil's face went slack. Loki's eyes went wide. "Nicholas! Nicholas Fury is Fenris!"

"Uhhh..." said Phil.

Steve cocked his head. "Really? You don't look at all alike..."

"He's a shapeshifter too, of course!" Loki said. "When did you start being able to transform?" he said to Phil.

Looking at the carpet, Phil said. "Since about the time of the U.S. Civil War, and only one form for each of us."

"Still quite impressive," Loki said. "Thor only has one shape-and you're still young."

Darcy's brow furrowed. "But Phil and Fury look older than you..." she said, before she realized it might be rude.

"Because they aren't eating the apples of Idunn," said Loki.

In his more normal, collected tones, Phil said, "Nicholas and I age more slowly than humans, but we are aging."

"For now," said Loki cryptically. And then, he beckoned Darcy over. "Darcy," Loki said. "Give me your arm. I am going to call Fenris right away!"

As soon as he was on his feet, Loki took a step towards Phil and lifted his arms as though he might embrace his son. Phil took a step back, hands forming fists at his side.

Loki froze in place. Arms falling to his side, he looked away. "Of course...I...hope..." He shook his head. "I think I know where your sister is."

Phil's hands unclasped and his eyes widened. "You do?"

Loki nodded, eyes on Phil. "With your and Fenris' help we may be able to rescue her."

Phil's gaze went slightly unfocused. "Yes...for Hel...anything."

Loki gave him a tight smile. "Good. I will be right back."

He exited the room, wobbling only slightly, waving Darcy away when she tried to follow him.

Looking to Darcy and Steve, Phil said, "You trust him? Really?"

Darcy nodded. "Yes." She did. NDAs and all.

She looked a little worriedly at Steve. "Yes," said Steve. "With my life." His eyebrows rose. "With Darcy's life."

Phil let out a long breath.

At that moment, Loki wobbled back into the room. Smiling, he said, "I told Fury I am holding you all hostage and he is the only one I will negotiate with. He'll be here as quickly as he can."

"Errr..." said Steve, eyes going to Darcy's.

"Ah..." said Darcy.

Tilting his head, Phil tapped his chin and gave a shrug. "Actually, that's not a bad plan."

---

On Nilfheim, in the darkened hall that is Hel's tomb, Darcy says, "Loki, Hel, we have to go."

Loki gives a quick nod. Hel's eyes meet his. Lifting her head a few inches from the dais, Hel says, "I'm stuck..."

Darcy's eyes go to the dusty shape she'd thought was carefully sculpted hair. Her eyes follow the shape as it falls to the floor, and snakes around the dais. It suddenly occurs to her why the floor feels soft. Being a nurse teaches you not to be squeamish though. Reaching into her first aid kit she pulls out a pair of scissors. "Your hair, it's too heavy," Darcy says bending to cut the long dusty locks.

"Can you stand?" says Loki, helping Hel sit up as Darcy snips away.

"I...No..." said Hel.

Darcy looks worriedly to the woman. Her frame is terribly gaunt, the bones of her spine visible through the thin shift she is wearing. Swinging off his coat, Loki wraps it around his daughter and pulls her into his arms just as Darcy snips the last of the long tresses.

At that moment, the floor below them shudders.

Loki gestures with his head for Darcy to go, and Darcy obligingly bolts for the door. As they step out into Nilheim's misty air, Steve emerges from the mist. He's not dressed in his Captain America uniform, he's actually wearing something Darcy dug out of a storage locker on the sub. It looks suspiciously like a Hydra outfit.

Behind him, a wolf, as tall as Steve emerges from the mist. Its eyes glow red and it gives a quick bark. Steve looks at it and nods. "Ma'am," he says to Hel, as he simultaneously, touches Darcy's hand. "We can't hold the Chituari back much longer."

Gasping, Hel says, "He's still sending those dreadful things? He thinks that's love?"

"He?" says Loki.

Hel shivers. "Thanos!"

Fenris-Fury, gives a low growl. Loki wavers on his feet. "You know I didn't..."

Hel looks up at Loki. "I know...Jory and Fenris believed Baldur, but mother and I always knew."

Darcy puts her hand on one of Loki's shoulders. Steve puts his hand on the other. As one they say, "We have to go!"

Just before they start to run to the small bluff Loki calls a world gate, Darcy catches Steve giving her a small smile.

---

Later, Loki's children talk late into the night on the deck of Doom's sub. Fenris-Fury eating steak, Jory-Phil eating sashimi, and Hel drinking chicken broth with a little rice. Darcy doesn't think eating solids so soon after a long period of starvation will kill Hel like it would a human, but she's pretty sure it would hurt.

Fury, not bothering to wear an eyepatch to hide his one red glowing eye, talks about how he washed up on the shore of North Carolina and was taken in as an injured wolf by a freed slave.

It was that man's form that he wore as a human. Apparently, he'd never gotten the one eye quite right.

Phil tells of learning to take the form of a fisherman he met off the coast of New England.

And Hel quietly tells the story of feigning her own death to escape the amorous intentions of Thanos. Thanos had built her tomb, intending to burn it to ashes, but she'd magically sealed it from within as soon as he'd tried to set it alight. Thanos had been sending Chitauri to guard her and win her love ever since.

Loki sits to the side, closest to Hel. Fury and Phil's eyes don't meet his often. Still, except when talk turns to Thanos, there is a faint smile on his face. At one point Fury asks Steve to take pictures of the three of them with his camera phone.

A little while later, Steve and Darcy are in the galley, as the siblings continue to talk above. Darcy's sitting on a counter, and Steve is standing between her knees, one hand up her shirt, when Loki walks in.

Smirking, Loki says, "I hope I'm not interrupting anything," in a way that says he knows he has and is glad of it.

Darcy blushes a little, thinking about her ill-fated, ill-conceived, almost-something with him a few hours ago. Steve just snorts. "Did you want something?" Steve says.

Shrugging, Loki says, "Just to see the pictures of my children on your phone."

Pulling away, Steve takes his phone out of his pocket and hands it to Loki. Loki scrolls through the pictures. His smile drops a little. "I will print these out and give these to Thor to pass along." His jaw twitches. "Sigyn will want to see them." Not looking at Steve or Darcy he says, "She was their mother's best friend when they were girls..." With that he hands the phone back to Steve and walks out of the room.

Knowing the frisky times are over, Darcy slides off the counter. Steve wraps his arm around her, but stares at the galley door, still swinging in Loki's wake.

"He's so lonely," Steve says.

"Yeah," says Darcy, her heart hurting for her friend. She looks up at Steve. Their friend.

Steve looks down at her. "I'm glad I don't have to be anymore."

Darcy pats his chest, and smiles. "Me too."

**A/N:**

I am so sorry for the long break between updates! I just finished the third installment of my series, "I Bring the Fire". It stars myth!Loki, and the first installment is free. Links are in my profile-Go Get It!

# **The 5th Time Loki Meddled And**

**Disclaimer: I don't own or profit.**

Special thanks to Beta Notesfromaclassroom. She just recently finished off a terrific Star Trek 2009 team fic called "Deeper into Darkness". She's in my favorite authors tab-check her out-all her fics are excellent.

## **The Fifth Time Loki Meddled in Steve and Darcy's Relationship**

Darcy is sitting on her couch. Steve's sitting next to her, one of his hands in hers. Bruce is leaning against a wall, eyes blinking rapidly behind his glasses. Thor is standing, one hand on a hip. Jane is standing next to him, biting her lip. All eyes are on the coffee table in front of Darcy. On it are two beautiful apples, their red skins flecked with gold. They're filling the room with the fragrant smell of apple pie. Next to them is a piece of paper, a handwritten note in slightly shimmering green ink.

Bruce sighs. "Well, I won't tell Fury."

"Nor I," says Thor.

Steve squeezes her hand and exhales loudly beside her. "Just go ahead and eat them, Darcy."

"What does the note say, Darcy?" Jane whispers.

Darcy reaches towards the paper. The sun streaming through the curtains briefly puts her hand in a harsh spotlight and Darcy restrains a gasp. Her hand does not look really old...just twenty or thirty years older than the twenty odd years it actually is. The veins are more prominent; there are fine lines around her knuckles that weren't there two months ago. She flexes her fingers. Seeing her face in the mirror is worse. The sudden onset of crows feet and laugh lines still takes her by surprise. And when she looks closer she can see the way the

skin on her cheeks is beginning to cave inward, as though her face is made of tiny dried out riverbeds.

Steve, bless him, says he can't see any of it. But neither of them can ignore the signs of menopause and her drop in energy. Darcy and Steve had wanted children eventually...but although adoption is still an option, Darcy's not sure she'll have the stamina to raise a child, especially since Steve is gone so often. It makes her heart ache, and sometimes the sight of children makes her feel like she might burst into tears.

It's all a result of an experiment to try and replicate Steve's superserum that went terribly wrong. Darcy wasn't even supposed to be at SHIELD that day. She'd been meeting Steve for dinner when there was some sort of equipment malfunction and -

"The note," says Jane.

Darcy blinks. It's not like she needs explanation of what the apples are. They are Loki's latest business venture, and they have the power to bestow eternal youth.

Picking up the paper she reads anyway:

*Dear Darcy,*

*These apples will only erase a few years at a time, and eating more than two a year is unwise. I will continue to provide them to you at harvest time until such time you wish me to stop.*

*I am aware that many of your people-Steve, Fenrir, Jory, Bruce, most of your televangelists, the head of your senate (though between you and me, he is a customer) and too many more to count-find the product of my New Zealand orchards morally dubious.*

*I cannot be with you as you decide whether or not to eat these or hand them over to my well meaning, yet horribly misguided, sons. I fear you will decide not to eat them.*

## *Loki*

Steve lets out a sigh. He isn't crazy about Loki's venture. Loki sells his apples to the highest bidder-sometimes the bids are money, sometimes they are favors. If Loki wanted to rule the world now, he probably could, if not overtly, through his customers.

Beside her Steve says, "Just eat them, Darcy." He squeezes her hand. "Better you than half a dozen senators or congressmen I can think of."

Darcy meets his eyes and he looks down at her hand. She knows that's not the real reason he wants her to eat them. They'd always known that the superserum might extend Steve's life and slow the physical manifestations of aging. They hadn't realized Darcy would age so quickly.

Steve hasn't taken it well. It's not the aging itself-he really doesn't seem to see-which is odd and weird, strange and unexpected. They've made love, and if anything it's more intense. Every time it's like he's trying to hold onto her. He's terrified of losing her. He's even thrown around the idea of giving up his work as Captain America to 'be with her as much as possible'. Darcy had nixed that idea. He needs work, something to focus on besides her, more than ever with the prospect of her leaving sooner.

Now as he sits beside her, blonde head bowed. It makes her stomach twist in knots to look at him. He loves her so much. She's afraid to die and leave him alone.

"Eat them," says Bruce.

Thor looks vaguely perplexed. "They are delicious, as good if not better than Idunn's! I highly recommend them."

Everyone turns to look at him sharply.

Beside her, Steve kisses the shell of her ear. Darcy turns to look at him. "Eat them for me," he whispers.

Darcy picks up an apple. After only a moment's hesitation, she takes a bite.

Lying on the floor of Avengers' mansion, Darcy stares at the photo on Steve's phone. She still looks like the "older woman" in the photo, but it's not so bad as it was a few months ago. She's sitting across Steve's lap in the photo as he sits upon a throne. More precisely, the throne of Alfheim. They just got back a few hours ago. Or maybe a day ago. Darcy's head is still a little foggy.

In the photo, behind Steve and Darcy are Jory - in Coulson form - Fenrir, in wolf form - standing on two legs with his tongue hanging out and looking goofy, Thor with Jane on his shoulders making 'V' victory signs with her fingers, Hel with an arm draped over Natasha who has an arm draped over Clint who has an arm draped over Pepper. Slightly to the side is Loki. Everyone but Loki looks slightly drunk-even Steve, Natasha, and Thor get hammered on Alfheim mead. Everyone but Loki is smiling wildly. Even Tony was smiling at the time-but he was holding the camera and not in the picture.

Beside her, on the floor, Steve looks at the screen and laughs. "Look at me! I got to sit on the throne with a cougar on my lap!"

Darcy elbows him and he giggles in a way that is distinctly unmanly.

Somewhere, Fury groans and Coulson hisses. Darcy's not sure if they really don't know about the apples, which SHIELD is officially opposed to, or if they're just turning a blind eye for Steve.

On the couch, draped over Thor, Jane hiccups. Natasha says something in Russian and Hel says something back. Clint sighs. A long snaky tail whips briefly over Darcy's head and then settles across her tummy. Darcy gives the tail a pat and hears Coulson, in his Jory form, give a happy hiss. The only member of the birthday not present is Loki. As soon as they arrived back on Earth he

teleported off to New Zealand-something about apple worms becoming immortal and being worse than a Bilgesnipe larvae infestation.

From the couch, Thor laughs. "A trip to Alfheim. Did I not tell you, Steve, that Loki gives the best gifts?"

Steve smiles. The trip had been for his birthday.

From a chair, Tony crosses his arms over his chest and grumbles. "Just trying to show up my birthday gift."

Darcy thinks that might be the case. Tony had loudly declared in front of Loki that no one gave better gifts than he did.

Staring at the picture, Darcy follows the direction of Loki's gaze. He's looking at her and Steve, his face a little sad.

Beside her Steve's brow furrows. "It was great-but I don't know what to get Loki for his birthday." His eyes slide to Darcy. "I owe him so much."

She squeezes his hand. "We do."

They both look at the screen. Darcy's memories of the last day, week-or whatever-are a bit blurry, but she remembers Loki saying, "Sigyn and I came here together..."

"Sigyn," whispers Darcy. "He's still madly in love with her." She sighs, thinking of a painting she's seen of Sigyn, cowering with a bowl in her hand, catching snake venom before it fell onto Loki's head. "Sweet, loyal, submissive Sigyn." She shakes her head. But who is she to judge.

"Who is submissive?" says Thor.

From somewhere near her on the floor, Natasha says, "It's true. He is in love with her."

Darcy sits up. Natasha is leaning against one of Jory's coils, her eyes half lidded, an arm around Hel's shoulders. Hel's head is pillowed on her breast. Shaking her head, Natasha says something in Russian, and then in English says, "Poor man, he has needs even I, with all my training, would be unable to fulfill."

Darcy blinks.

So does Natasha. "I think I am still drunk," she says.

Hel sits up. "I don't think I want to know how you know my father's needs."

Tilting her head, Natasha says, "I am trained to assess such things and sometimes he's spoken of Sigyn." Wobbling slightly, Natasha smiles at Hel. "You meet all my needs."

And then they kiss. Every man in the room, except Jory-Coulson and Fenrir-Fury, sits up and stare. Actually, Darcy and Jane sit up a little, too. Natasha and Hel are both so beautiful, if she did go that way...

Beside her, Steve clears his throat and looks pointedly away, catching Darcy's eye and flushing a little as he does. "Thor, do you know if Sigyn harbors any feelings for Loki?"

"Mother's best friend?" says Hel, drawing away from Natasha. "I always wanted to meet her."

Thor grunts. "I don't know. Sigyn isn't particularly welcome in court." Scratching his beard, he says, "She would never be allowed to visit Loki on Earth even if she does-and every time Loki ventures to Asgard the Destroyer sets upon him."

Thor scowls. "And if father knew of Loki's continued affections..." he shakes his head. "It could be bad for her."

Steve sits up straighter, and in his biggest Captain America-y voice he says, "Don't tell me there's no hope."

Thor blinks. "I did not say that. If the lady still harbors affections for Loki there is hope. The trouble is that unless we distract Heimdall's eyes..."

Thor's eyes widen. And then he smiles. "But yes, I think we could do that! We'd need Jane's skills to deliver us to Asgard, Hel's magic, all our skills as warriors to create a spectacle, and Lady Pepper would have to see to smoothing over the diplomatic crisis that would result, but..."

Grinning, he declares, "This, my friends, could be a prank worthy of Loki himself!"

From the doorway to the kitchen, Pepper enters the living room, a cup of tea in her hand. "Why do I get the feeling you're planning on storming Asgard?"

Punching a fist in the air, Thor says, "Because that is exactly what I intend to do."

"For father, anything!" declares Hel.

"For you, anything," says Natasha, eyes on Hel.

As everyone else voices their assent, Steve smiles happily. Darcy feels kind of proud of him. He did start this. "Way to go, Captain," she says, elbowing him a bit in the ribs. Steve beams all the brighter at her praise.

And then Thor's eyes fall on Darcy. "Of course, someone will have to confront the lady herself to determine if she still holds Loki in her heart."

The room is silent, and all eyes turn to her.

"Me?" squeaks Darcy.

Beside her, Steve shrugs. "Can't be as dangerous as Nilfheim."

Eyes still on her, Thor just beams.

**A/N:**

Yep, next chapter Darcy meets Sigyn, in Asgard. And Nari and Valli too!

Sorry for the long absence. Promoting Chaos, fixing minor bugs, and getting it onto all the various sites took up a lot of my time. Also, I've begun working on a novella for I Bring the Fire and Part IV too.

If you read Chaos (or Monsters or Wolves)-PLEASE review them on the site you downloaded them from.

If you haven't read any of my original stories, give them a try. I Bring the Fire stars myth!Loki and the first part is FREE. Links to download are in my profile!