

World's Dictator

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World's Dictator

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Summary

Tony Stark was a hero at heart, but after being betrayed countless times by people he trusted, he had enough. He's sick and tired of being treated like a villain for trying to protect people in his own way and blamed for everything that went wrong. The Ultron debacle. The Sokovia incident. The Sokovia Accords.

The fight in Siberia against Steve Rogers was the last straw. If he was already a villain in his team's eyes, then he'll make it a reality. He'll become a villain everyone would fear and run away from. He'll be their worst nightmare.

Tony gained enough influence to control every aspect of the people's lives and ruled the world as a dictator. He suppressed rebellions using violence and forced other superheroes to fight for him. No one would dare fight against him. Until he discovered the existence of the sorcerers and met their leader, Stephen Strange.

Slow updates

Notes

This is a concept I wanted to write for so long after being inspired reading many stories about evil Tony Stark and the dynamics between him and our hero, Stephen Strange. Unfortunately, I'm not that experienced in writing long stories yet and sadly unable to explore more of their interactions in detail. So, this would be a short one-shot instead. Regardless of how short it might be, I hope you still enjoy reading another self-indulgent story of mine~

Betrayal

Everyone knew of Tony Stark's multiple personas. A genius. A billionaire. A playboy. A philanthropist. He utilized these masks to hide his true self. A weak and broken man seeking approval and praise from anyone. From a random person on the street. From a loved one. Anyone at all.

His personal goal drove him to be one of the superheroes everyone admired and looked up to. Iron Man. A hero capable of rescuing people in distress and protecting the world from alien invaders. His new identity brought him a team he could trust and confide in. A family he could call his own. Until everything changed one fateful day and his entire world turned upside down.

"Did you know?"

"I didn't know it was him."

"Don't bullshit me, Rogers! Did you know?"

"Yes."

Betrayal. A concept Tony was very familiar with. Betrayed once again by people close to him. Obadiah Stane. His father figure who sold him out to terrorists. Rhodney. His best friend whose loyalties lie with the government and had let him down when he needed someone on his side during his arguments with Cap.

Now, Steve Rogers and his team. His team built upon lies and deceit. Steve Rogers, the righteous leader, who never took him seriously and used his money to search for his best friend, Bucky Barnes. Natasha Romanoff, the traitorous spy, who hid the truth behind the deaths of his parents and double-crossed him to join with Rogers. Bruce Banner, his science partner, who ran away and left him behind to deal with the aftermath of Sokovia. Thor, the selfish God, who left for Asgard without a word, uncaring about the problems of the mortal world.

As he lay on the Siberian snow with a damaged suit and broken reactor waiting for rescue, he realized that the only one he could trust was himself. If no one took responsibility for harming the people they were supposed to be protecting, then he would. He would hold his old team accountable for their actions. He would punish those who break the law without mercy. He would discard his weak personality and become someone powerful enough to control everyone under his rule. No one would dare disobey him or get in his way.

"All the work I have done for the Avengers and this is how they repay me? Fine. I'll show them what happens to people who piss me off." Tony laughed with a deranged look in his eyes.

"Breaking news! Tony Stark announced the disbandment of the Avengers team in a recent press conference. He admitted the team members were unable to fulfill their promise in

fighting for the people and primarily acted for themselves. He planned to finalize the Sokovia accords and form a new superhero team that would strictly follow the laws and the government orders."

Tony's influence grew as weeks passed. His personal connections as the owner of Stark Industries allowed him to curry favor with major leaders in the political and business worlds. He then ran for office as a politician and won by a landslide. Everyone loved and supported him. They trusted he would make decisions on their behalf and improve their daily lives. Tony soon became the de facto leader of the entire world.

Domination

Chapter Notes

Heya. It sure has been a while and I sincerely apologize for the late update. I have been busy with work and didn't have time to write recently. Don't worry though! I'll continue working on finishing this story during my free time. I also found a great beta reader and they have been such a great help in revising my story. Thanks so much, [Turtle!](#) You're the best! Here's the next chapter and hopefully I won't take as long to post chapter 3. ^^

After successfully accomplishing phase one of his plan, Tony's next order of business was amassing an army. Loyal soldiers who would follow his every order and dispose of rebels and traitors alike. He rebuilt his Iron Legion and programmed countless robots under his command in secret.

Tony performed his duties as a benevolent ruler to avoid suspicion, hiding his true intentions behind a plastered smile and charismatic nature. He made false promises to the general public about providing them with economic security and fighting for equality. At the same time, Tony appeased the corrupt government officials with bribes and convinced them to vote for laws favorable to him.

His plans went unnoticed by everyone except for two people, Pepper and Rhodey. "Tony! What are you doing spending millions of money on factories manufacturing arc reactors and mechanical parts around the world? You promised me you won't build an army of Iron Man suits anymore." Pepper shouted while barging into his lab with Rhodey trailing behind her.

Tony looked up from his blueprints for his suit's new design incorporating nanotechnology and turned his attention toward his friends.

"Plans change, Pepper. With the Avengers team disbanded, the next alien invasion would easily tear through Earth's feeble defenses. We require another form of protection and I could provide that with my robotic army. I'm making my ambition to create an iron suit of armor around the world a reality." With a twist of his hand, a hologram of Earth shielded by Stark technology displayed itself on the screen.

The two of them looked at him in disapproval, strongly against his plans. "Have you not learned your lesson from the Ultron incident, Tones? Your good intentions in protecting the world became a catastrophe instead. Innocent lives were lost that day." Rhodey argued, reminding him of his failure.

"Rhodey is right. If your plan fails again, it will be worse than last time. There's no guarantee your plan would work." Pepper sided with Rhodey, pleading with Tony to reconsider and give up on his plan.

It was too soon to reveal his scheme to possible traitors like them. It's better to agree with them for now instead of arguing. "You're right, Pepper. I admit it was an impulsive decision to build an army of robots without discussing it with you first. I don't want us to be caught unaware by an enemy attack when our defenses are down." He sighed and swiped the hologram away.

Pepper smiled in relief, glad that Tony listened to reason. "I understand that you're worried. But, the New Avengers would be formed and ready to face those future threats when they happen."

"You're the voice of reason as always, Pep. Thanks."

"What about me? You ask me for help when Pepper is unavailable. Where is my word of 'Thanks'?" Rhodey complained in a teasing voice.

Tony rolled his eyes in response. "Thank you too, Rhodey. I would be hopeless without you two to keep me in check." *Too restricting if you ask him and that would be problematic for his plans in the future.*

"You heard what Pep said, Friday. Shut down factory production immediately." Tony ordered his A.I.

"All factories successfully shut down, Boss."

"Good work, Fri." Tony looked at his two friends and asked, "Was there anything else you needed?"

"No. That was all. However, since we're already here, you'll be coming with us for lunch, Tony." Pepper said, glaring at Tony and daring him to argue with her. "We know you haven't eaten yet and it's time for you to take a break."

Tony groaned but didn't complain. He reluctantly followed the two out of his lab for lunch. Rhodey laughed when he saw Tony's pouting face and Tony punched him on the shoulder in rebuttal. Pepper shook her head in amusement, watching the two boys fool around and bicker like children.

Unbeknownst to the two, Tony continued to build his army in factories hidden underground. He merely stopped production for factories that Pepper knew of. They were too naive to think he would stop his plans because of their pointless words.

A year passed and Tony gained more influence in the government. A majority of the Congress and Senate politicians became his supporters and it was an easy task to make the new Sokovia Accords into law. The very few people who opposed it had a surprise visit from his Iron Legion and were silently assassinated.

Rumors spread about the possibility of foul play and suspected Tony to be the culprit. After all, what were the chances of Tony's enemies being eliminated one by one in succession? However, there was no proof to support their accusations and most of the deaths were

classified as suicides or accidents. No evidence of a murder. Tony made sure of that by bribing or threatening the police investigators to hide evidence of his crimes.

Once the Sokovia Accords were ratified, anyone with superpowers was required to sign it and join the New Avengers, a team under government control fighting for the protection of the ordinary people and their world. They would abide by the laws and be held accountable for their actions. Some superheroes and vigilantes refused to give up their autonomy and disregarded the new law, not knowing of the consequences.

Tony expected many superheroes to refuse to sign the Accords like the Rouge Avengers. However, this time would be different. He would force them to sign it whether they want to or not. He would show everyone what happened to people who break the laws by making an example of Daredevil.

Daredevil, or Matt Murdock, a lawyer and vigilante hero who was a thorn in his side. Murdock strongly opposed the ratification of the Accords from the very start and secretly gathered evidence to pin the politicians' murders on him. He was too troublesome to leave alive. A public execution would be the perfect way to dispose of him and serve as a warning to others.

"Tony Stark became the leader of the New Avengers and announced a new law. Any superhero who did not sign the Sokovia accords is considered a criminal and be captured on sight. Their punishment for not following this law includes jail time and the death penalty."

The general public thought the death penalty was a joke after hearing the announcement. It was the 21st century and they live in a democratic country. People have the freedom to choose which laws to obey and it was a ridiculous idea to execute someone for their disobedience. They quickly changed their minds after one dreadful day. The day when everyone's lives changed forever. Daredevil's execution day.

It was a sunny Monday morning and many people started their day commuting to school or work after the weekend. They walked to their respective destinations in a daze until they saw the eye-catching red color of the Iron Man armor heading toward them. Tony landed in the middle of Times Square with a loud crash, suddenly disrupting the city's quiet atmosphere. With a single command to Friday, Tony hacked the electronic sign boards to simultaneously display himself on the screen.

"Good morning, citizens of New York! I have exciting news to share with you all. As many of you know, I have been hard at work making your lives better. I sacrificed blood and tears to keep both you, your loved ones, and the world safe. But, I noticed some of you were ungrateful and didn't appreciate my efforts."

Tony activated his Iron Legion and a massive army of drones gathered around him. One such drone held a familiar figure in its grasp. Someone wearing a dark red suit that people recognized as Daredevil. It carelessly dropped the captured vigilante to the ground and Matt coughed out blood from harshly landing on his injured chest.

"This is Daredevil. Someone who opposed the Sokovia Accords and continued his vigilante activities outside of government jurisdiction."

Tony grabbed Daredevil's throat and lifted him off the ground. "You might consider him as a hero, but he is nothing more than a criminal. He broke the laws I established and didn't listen to my warnings." He tightened his grip and watched his captive slowly suffocate before abruptly letting go. *Suffocation was too lenient of a punishment for someone like him. No. He had something much worse in store.*

"Today I'll show everyone what happens to criminals. To people who disobey my orders and don't listen." Tony fired a small bomb toward Matt without warning while the other party was desperately gasping for air. It successfully reached its target and within a few seconds, Daredevil's body burst into flames from the explosion. His screams of pain resounded throughout the surroundings before his voice died out in a whimper.

"Dying a slow and painful death with millions of people watching." Tony finished his speech with a sadistic smile on his face.

The people were horrified and shocked after witnessing Daredevil's brutal death. They didn't expect Tony to do something so inhumane as burning someone to death. One of the worst deaths a person could ever experience.

"This won't be the last public execution you will witness during my reign as your leader. There are other people in mind who are my next targets and deserve to be punished." Those were Tony's last foreboding words before flying away back to his Tower as suddenly as he arrived.

Protests and riots arose after that day. They spoke against his cruel punishments and called him a dictator. Tony's answer in response to the escalating rebellions was to discuss the aftermath of Sokovia in a press conference.

"Recall what happened when enhanced individuals like the Avengers fought their battles without government regulation. It resulted in 177 civilian deaths and \$474 billion in damages. A woman personally blamed me for her son's death during the Battle of Sokovia. I can't afford to have another innocent person die because of me. Never again." Tony's voice shook with emotion as he remembered the incident. With a few tears escaping from his eyes and composure broken, he ran toward the exit with reporters shouting more questions behind him. A smirk briefly appeared on his face as he left the room, Tony internally laughing from how easily fooled the people were by his acting.

Tony's press conference divided the world into two as he planned. One side supported him and was sympathetic to his cause. They justified his actions despite the atrocities he committed, proclaiming that everything he did was for them.

The other side continued to oppose him and his tyrannical rule. They lost trust in him as their leader and planned to overthrow him. Unfortunately for them, Tony's Iron Legion patrolled the streets in the shadows, acting as sentries to keep peace and order in the world. These robots quelled possible rebellions and murdered his enemies. Fewer people rebelled against him when multiple bodies were found dead in their homes with no explanation. The remaining opposers feared for their lives and willingly submitted themselves to his rule.

No one could stop Tony from ruling the world with an iron fist, not even his closest friends.

“Tony. We need to talk.” Pepper said as she entered the lab without warning with Rhodey beside her.

“What is it, Pep?” Tony asked her, acting clueless about what his friends wanted from him.

“Drop the innocent act, Tony. We know what you did behind our backs.”

Tony frowned hearing Rhodey’s harsh words and his face displayed his confusion. “What do you mean by that?”

Pepper slammed the documents she brought with her on his desk in answer. “These documents contain information about your bank transaction history. The amount of money you sent, received, and the name of the person or company sending or receiving the money. As the CEO of your company, I kept track of your finances and noticed suspicious activity from your account in recent months.”

“And what did you find out?”

She crossed her arms and glared at him. “Most, if not all, information was classified. I dug deeper and with the help of Matt Murdock, I uncovered the truth. You’re a criminal, Tony!”

“Bribing politicians. Amassing an army without government permission. Threatening law officers. Holding public executions without conducting a proper trial in court.” Rhodey listed the criminal acts Tony committed one by one, his voice filled with anger.

Tony slowly and dramatically clapped for his friends. “A round of applause to you two. You managed to figure out my plans despite the security measures I used to hide my tracks. I’m impressed.”

They looked at him in disbelief. “You’re admitting to it? You actually committed those crimes?” Pepper asked, surprised Tony easily confessed the truth.

Tony smirked at her, not showing an ounce of guilt for what he did. He seemed to be proud of it instead. “Why should I bother lying if you already have the evidence to prove I am guilty? I have nothing else to hide.”

“You changed, Tony. And not in a good way. That newfound power as the leader had corrupted you. You’re not the same friend I knew and loved in the past.” Pepper shook her head with a look of sadness in her eyes.

“You’re gravely mistaken if you thought that being a leader corrupted me, Pepper. It was something else entirely.” Tony retorted, ignoring Pepper’s heartfelt confession.

The two looked at each other confused, clueless about what Tony meant. They failed to realize that being taken advantage of and betrayed by the ones closest to him smashed his kind and caring heart to smithereens. The remaining pieces froze over the day he was left behind in the Siberian snow by his team.

“But it’s not important. Since you already know I broke the law, what are you going to do about it?”

“As a military officer, I’m forced to arrest you as a criminal. I don’t want to do it, but you left us with no other choice, Tones. You would be sentenced to life in prison for what you did.”

“You should have listened to our warnings, but it’s too late for regrets. I would be providing you with a lawyer for your court trial, but that’s the only thing we can do for you. You’re on your own afterward.”

Tony uproariously laughed at the regretful expressions Pepper and Rhodey had on their faces. “You can try arresting me, but I’m afraid you have no power to do that. Can’t you understand that I’m above the law itself?”

“What do you mean by that, Tony? I’m a colonel. I have the right to enforce the law on an ordinary citizen like you.”

“That was true in the past. Now, the military lost all its power and authority after I disbanded it. With the power and influence I have in the government, I convinced the politicians to appoint me as the head of national security and disbanded the military.”

“That’s impossible! Why would they appoint someone like you? Someone with no experience in law enforcement and mostly cared about himself.”

“I’m hurt, dear Platypus. I thought you liked my personality. Was that not the reason you became my longtime friend?” Tony placed his hand over his arc reactor, pretending that his feelings were hurt by Rhodey’s harsh words.

Pepper and Rhodey ignored the other man’s dramatic actions and dreadfully awaited Tony’s next words. “To answer your simple question, I bribed or threatened them to do so. The Senate and Congress would do anything I asked and they agreed with me about the military being unnecessary. After all, why would the people need them if they have me and my Iron Legion?”

Rhodey clenched his fists in frustration, wanting to argue with him, but was unable to refute his statement.

“We might not be able to arrest you, but we can release the documents to the public. We can convince more people to overthrow you after learning about your evil plans. As the CEO of the board of Stark Industries, I have the influence to persuade your supporters to oppose you instead. There’s nothing you can do against a crowd of angry people.” Pepper argued.

“Don’t be too excited bragging about the influence you have as the CEO, Pepper. Or, more accurately HAD. You’re fired!”

“You can’t fire me. A board meeting is required for everyone to vote on it. The majority vote decides if I’m fired or not.”

“It’s hilarious to see you fight back despite knowing you can’t win in the first place. The entire board had already been replaced with my supporters. No one would side with you, Pep. I’ll be taking back my company without your permission.”

Tony gleefully watched the hope disappear behind his ex-friends’ eyes as they admitted defeat. “It was a fun chat, but now you have to die. I can’t afford to have traitors living in the society I created.” *I had hoped they would support me but should have known better than to believe in delusions such as friendships. The only one you can trust is yourself.*

Before Pepper and Rhodey could make a move, Tony formed his gauntlets and shot them down where they stood without hesitation. Their eyes looked at him in betrayal before their lifeless bodies fell to the ground. He watched their blood slowly spill on his floor and ruthlessly squashed his feelings of guilt.

He ordered one of his many robots to dispose of their bodies before leaving his lab. He wiped every memory of Pepper and Rhodey from his brain and continued with his plans of world domination.

One year later...

Tony smiled when he finally received the news of the rogue Avengers' capture. He wanted to execute his former teammates, but he knew the government leaders would disagree with him. They were still deluded by Captain America's righteousness and his past achievements to the country as a hero despite the evidence presented to them of him being a criminal.

"I'll be their personal grim reaper and kill them myself in the future. I'll let them rot in the Raft for now." Tony promised himself.

As the entire world changed under Tony’s dictatorship, the sorcerers of Kamar-Taj minded their own business. They had no reason to involve themselves with the physical world’s problems when they were always busy fighting off interdimensional enemies and mystical threats. The sorcerers avoided Tony’s radar for many months until one of their own was discovered by one of Tony’s robotic soldiers. The secret society would be forced out of hiding and Stephen Strange, the newly appointed Sorcerer Supreme, would fight against Tony Stark to protect his own people.

Disappearance

Chapter Notes

Hi~ I sincerely apologize for the short chapter this time. There's less exposition here compared to the last one, but I hope you enjoy reading it regardless.

As usual, I want to thank [Turtle](#) for beta reading this chapter. Thanks so much! I also want to thank you supportive readers for the kudos and comments you gave this story. I really appreciate it. 🎵💚

In the New York Sanctum, Stephen Strange held a small teacup with his trembling and scarred hands. He sipped on the chamomile tea as his eyes focused on the book levitating in front of him. Multiple books he already finished reading stacked themselves on a small table. His ever-loyal companion, the Cloak of Levitation, browsed the many shelves behind him and chose random books for him to read. A familiar shout interrupted the peaceful and quiet atmosphere of the library.

“Strange! Where are you? There is an emergency at Kamar-Taj.” Wong, one of Stephen’s trusted friends and strict librarian, burst through the library doors. Stephen’s relaxed demeanor switched to alert and battle-ready mode after hearing the urgency in Wong’s voice. The Cloak of Levitation attached itself to his shoulders and his casual clothes changed to blue robes.

“What happened, Wong? Did Sharma-Gora return? I need more time to do more research.”

“No. Not yet. It’s about a different issue. One of our apprentices disappeared during his lunch break. His last known location was a nearby deli buying himself and me a sandwich for lunch. Lunchtime already passed and I couldn’t get my Tuna Melt.” Wong muttered under his breath, more concerned about missing his lunch than their apprentice.

Stephen rolled his eyes hearing Wong complaining about not getting his favorite sandwich. He knew the librarian was taking the situation seriously, but sometimes Wong considered food a top priority. “Focus, Wong. Did you use the tracking spell on the kid?”

“No. I don’t have anything that belongs to him. I thought you would have an idea where to find one of his possessions.”

Stephen answered his question by conjuring a piece of the boy’s hair and presenting it to him. “Before you ask, I have everyone’s hair on hand in case they go missing and I can easily locate them.”

Wong looked at him like he was a crazy pervert.

“Don’t look at me like that. Levi was the one who collected their hair lying around in the bedrooms and training rooms.”

Levi smacked Stephen’s cheek in rebuttal to his comment. It was only following his orders and he’s blaming it for being a creep.

“Don’t tell me you also have my hair too?” Wong reluctantly asked.

“Don’t ask questions you don’t want the answer to. It’s better to be prepared for anything.” Stephen said, shrugging his shoulders.

Wong’s face briefly displayed disgust and disbelief before returning to his stoic expression. He returned his focus to the tracking spell, choosing to ignore what Stephen said for his own sanity.

Golden sparks formed between Wong’s hands and a mirror showing the kid’s last known location appeared in front of them. With slight modifications to the original spell, the mirror reenacted the scene that happened at the specified locations.

A teenage boy wearing red robes walked towards an alleyway with takeout bags from the local deli. He formed a small portal before being captured with electric nets. A shadow of Iron Man’s armor appeared before the image dispersed in a burst of light.

A sense of dread emanated from the two sorcerers. The sorcerer society hid its existence from the rest of the world and it remained a secret for millennia. Until now. The infamous dictator discovered the existence of magic and captured their apprentice.

“Prepare for the worst, Wong. Tony Stark is a formidable enemy and shouldn’t be underestimated. I’ll personally meet with Stark first and negotiate the release of the boy. I’ll leave the Eye of Agamotto and Time Stone under your care in case I don’t return.”

Wong received the precious relic from his friend without argument. He knew Stephen’s silent request in stepping up as the Sorcerer Supreme if he became unable to fulfill his duties as their leader. He accepted the responsibility with a heavy heart.

“Be careful, Strange. You’re venturing into unknown territory.” Wong cautioned his friend.

“I know. Regardless of what happens to me, don’t try to rescue me. I’ll figure out a way to escape by myself.” Wong nodded his head in acknowledgment. Stephen waved farewell to the librarian as he opened a portal to Stark tower.


Apprentice

Chapter Notes

Hello~ It's been awhile hasn't it? I'm so sorry for my impromptu hiatus. As some of you may have guessed, life happened. With my declining physical and mental health at the end of last year, holiday season madness, and stressful work deadlines, I didn't have the time nor energy to continue my hobbies like writing my stories and painting. I'm doing better nowadays, but I won't lie and say that I'm back with my updates. It's been a couple months since I wrote anything and it'll take some time for me to remember what I planned to do with my incomplete stories, especially this one. I apologize for the wait in advance and thank you for understanding.

As for my future plans for this story, it'll be a short one like I planned when I first started. There would be 9 chapters in total and I already wrote chapters 4 and 5 around October/November. I just didn't have the time to edit them and post them until now. I also started writing chapter 6 and with the outline and notes I have, I'm halfway done. I'll hopefully finish it sooner or later in the future and think about posting my other unfinished stories afterwards (the story based on Greek mythology comes to mind).

Unfortunately, I lost contact with my beta reader, Turtle, during my hiatus and don't want to bother them in beta reading the rest of the chapters for me. They might be busy and it'll take some time for me to write the rest of the drafts. So from chapter 6 and onwards, it might not be beta read by anyone and I can't guarantee their quality. I'll still do my utmost best writing the last chapters without a beta reader and I sincerely hope you readers would enjoy reading them too.

Without further ado, here's chapter 4 where we meet that mysterious apprentice who was captured in the last chapter. As usual, I want to thank Turtle for beta reading this chapter~ 

Below the depths of Stark Tower, Tony entered his secret laboratory. Blueprints of failed experiments lay scattered on top of tables. Various versions of his Iron Man armors stood guard alongside the monotone white walls. Some of his older models remained unfinished and broken parts that needed to be repaired lay forgotten on the floor. Multiple screens displayed themselves in front of him as Friday greeted him.

Tony avoided the cleaning bots haphazardly sweeping the room and bumping into the tables and chairs when he walked into the room. He deeply sighed and mentally facepalmed at the sight.

"Friday. Remind me to take a look at the lab's cleaning bots' programming. Instead of doing their assigned jobs, they are making a bigger mess."

“Adding another task to your never-ending to-do list, Boss.” Friday sarcastically remarked, knowing full well Tony would forget to do it.

Tony disregarded Friday’s comment and directed his attention to the middle of the room where his newest test subject was confined. The teenage boy banged his fists on the containment chamber, shouting profanities at his captor and demanding his release.

Stark smirked in amusement at the small animal’s pitiful struggles. It’s been so long since he had someone defy him like that. The people learned to stop fighting against him after multiple public executions and dead bodies left behind by his army. They were necessary sacrifices to pave the way for world domination.

Compliance and obedience were the new ways to survive in his new world. People cower in his presence as they pass him in the streets and no one dared to speak up during his board meetings and press conferences.

He would enjoy extinguishing the fighting spirit in the boy’s eyes once he’s done with him.

“You’re a brave kiddo, aren’t you? Brave, but foolish.” The boy refused to answer and glowered at him instead.

“It’s surprising that you’re not afraid of me. Do you even know who I am?”

“I don’t care who you are! Let me go before my Master discovers I’m missing. I’m more afraid of him than I am of you!”

With his interest piqued by the boy’s comment, Tony decided to learn more about his captive. “Friday, search for all possible information about this kid.” He ordered his A.I. disregarding the concept of breaching one’s privacy.

Friday displayed the relevant background information she found on the screen. “Ruben Bressan. 15 years old. An only child and both parents died in a car accident when he was 10 years old. Lived in an orphanage for four years without anyone adopting him. Ran away last year and disappeared somewhere in Nepal.”

Ruben’s face paled at the mention of his deceased parents and his time at the orphanage. His old feelings of abandonment resurfaced as Stark recited his life history. Tears of sadness streamed from his eyes before he wiped them off with a determined expression. He wasn’t the weak and pathetic child from before. He grew stronger with the help of Master Strange and Master Wong and found his place in Kamar-Taj.

Tony laughed at the boy’s sudden change of emotions. “You’re the same as the rest of them. An unwanted child who ran away from the orphanage. Let me guess...” He placed his finger on his chin, pretending to think of his next words. “You wanted to end your life afterward, right? But you were discovered by someone who gave you a purpose in life.”

Ruben remained silent, but looking closely at his face, the boy’s mouth slightly twitched in anger. A subtle change in facial expression that Tony noticed.

“Seems like I’m correct in my guess. Now, you must have learned how to form a portal out of thin air when you were in Nepal. Tell me how you did it.” Tony demanded as he replayed a camera feed showing Ruben creating a portal in the alleyway on the screen.

The boy briefly looked at the screen before returning his focus back to Tony. He ignored the question and continued to yell for him to let him go.

Tony’s head began to hurt from dealing with the stubborn kid. It would be so much easier if he could kill the kid already. However, he still needed answers. “How about we make a deal? If you answer my questions, then I’ll release you without harming a single hair on your head.”

“No. I refuse to tell you anything.”

Tony was about to order Friday to teach the kid a lesson, but stopped himself. It’s better to persuade Ruben and make him more cooperative by relating to him and his situation.

“I understand you’re trying to protect the people who took you in by keeping your powers a secret. It might also be them who taught you how to form a portal. But how are you so sure that they are not using you for their own goals?”

“What do you mean? They’re not the type of people who would do something like that!” Ruben yelled out, offended by Tony’s words.

“Trust me, kiddo. You don’t know your benefactors’ plans for you until it’s too late. They show their true colors and stab you in the back like the traitors they really are.” Tony’s voice rose in anger as he recalled his own experiences with Stane and the Rogue Avengers.

“I don’t believe you. My Masters have always been truthful to me and answered any questions I have for them. Why should I trust someone I just met instead of them?”

“Don’t forget that lies of omission are still considered lies. They could have hidden important information from you without you knowing. After all, no one is kind enough to take care of an orphan like you without an ulterior motive.”

“You’re lying.” Ruben weakly protested. He subconsciously knew that Tony was right. He wasn’t anyone special. He was an ordinary kid Master Strange found on the streets and rescued from a gang of robbers. He only followed him to show his gratitude and was trained in the Mystic Arts after learning about his savior’s status as Sorcerer Supreme. Why would someone important as Master Strange take him in as an apprentice?

Tony triumphantly grinned, seeing Ruben shaken by his words. *Perfect. The kid is starting to doubt himself and his trust in his benefactors. I’m so close to convincing him to tell me the information I need.*

Before Tony could continue his conversation with Ruben, an alarm blared throughout the Tower.

“Intruder alert! Intruder alert!”

“Friday, what’s going on?”

“Boss, unknown energy signatures coming from the entrance of the Tower.” Friday announced.

“Are they the same energy signatures detected from the kid’s portal?”

“Affirmative.”

“Show me the camera feed.”

Tony watched a portal form in front of his tower and a tall man with blue robes and a red cape walked through. The man looked directly at the camera, knowing he was being watched. “Tony Stark. I’m here to negotiate the release of my apprentice.” He shouted in a calm and authoritative voice.

“Master Strange! He came to rescue me?” Ruben exclaimed.

“So is this the person who saved you?” Tony turned to face Ruben with a contemplative look on his face. “In order to prove I wasn’t lying to you earlier, I’ll ask your so-called benefactor’s true intentions for you.”

“Wait. Don’t!” Ruben tried to stop Tony from troubling his Master, but Tony ignored him.

“I’m doing you a favor, kiddo. Think about what I said while I deal with our uninvited visitor.” Tony called out over his shoulder as he left to greet his newest guest.

Negotiation

Chapter Notes

The long awaited chapter where our two protagonists finally meet is here. Yay! Isn't that so exciting? I wonder what would happen? Would sparks fly? If you guessed a fight, then you would be correct! As a disclaimer, fight scenes aren't my forte (neither is smut, but I won't be touching that with a ten foot pole...maybe... 🤔), but I at least tried? 😊

Anyways, this chapter is beta read by none other than Turtle. Thanks so much for all your help and I deeply appreciate the work you have done for me thus far. From now on, the rest of the chapters would be both written and edited by yours truly, me! 😊

See you supportive readers soon in the next chapter!~ 🎵💚

Stephen knew Tony Stark was a dangerous individual based on what he heard from the news and civilians. A diabolical man with no heart and soul, willing to sacrifice innocents for his goals. He murdered his enemies without a second thought and had no mercy toward people who opposed him. Even his friends weren't spared from his wrath once he suspected they were traitors. Stark made that painfully clear by announcing their deaths in a press conference.

His mouth twisted in a grimace, recalling another incident that showed Stark's true colors as a dictator. The brutal execution of Daredevil shown on live television. The vigilante didn't deserve a death like that. No one did.

Stephen had mixed feelings about Stark's actions. He was appalled by the multiple lives lost under Stark's rule since it went against the Hippocratic Oath he followed as a former doctor and as a sorcerer. Stark didn't give anyone a chance to prove their innocence and punished them as he pleased. One small mistake in his presence would cost them their lives.

On the other hand, he knew that ruling with an iron fist was an easy way to control the public. Stark's executions struck fear into the hearts of the people and coerced them to submit to him. Is this his twisted way of protecting the people from danger by making himself the common enemy?

The reasons Stark became a dictator remained unbeknownst to him. What was the reason for his drastic change in personality? Perhaps something that involved his team and the so-called 'Civil War'? Betrayal?

Regardless of the answers, the sorcerer noticed the signs of a man losing control of his life from Stark. Stephen could deny it all he wanted, but he could see the similarities between them.

So similar to his life as a neurosurgeon after his failure to save his sister, Donna. He turned away patients he knew had no chance in surviving the operation or were too late to save from their illness. All for the sake in preserving his perfect record of having little to no patient casualties. No chances of failure.

Fate then gave him another bitter pill to swallow. His car accident. No matter how hard he tries, he cannot control everything in his life.

He raised his trembling hands and looked at them with a melancholic smile on his face. His scarred hands were proof of that.

What did they do?!

11 stainless steel pins in the bones. Multiple torn ligaments. Severe nerve damage in both hands. You were on the table for 11 hours.

Look at these fixators.

No one could have done better.

I could have done better.

No. No.

Stephen did everything he could to save his mangled hands and he lost everything in his act of desperation. His beloved watch collection. His luxurious apartment. His expensive piano. His closest friend, Christine Palmer.

Everything led to his path as the Master of the Mystic Arts and his acceptance in relinquishing control to what life holds for him.

His somber thoughts were interrupted when he felt a threatening presence nearby. Even with his battle-honed instincts, he barely avoided the repulsor aimed at his head. Despite preparing himself for the encounter, the sorcerer was caught off guard by how suddenly the other man appeared behind him.

“Good reflexes,” Stark commented with a smug smirk on his face before putting his repulsors away. Stephen turned to face him and pretended to look unfazed by the surprise attack.

“Is that how you greet your visitors, Stark?”

“I rarely have guests, Strange. If I did, then they didn’t survive long enough to meet me. Be grateful that I graced you with my presence instead of my soldiers.” Stark deactivated his nanotechnology suit and the nanities seamlessly returned to a visible contraption in the middle of his chest, revealing a business suit underneath. “What’s the reason for your visit?”

“Don’t play dumb. You kidnapped my apprentice and I’m here to get him back.”

“Apprentice? I don’t remember seeing an apprentice?” He asked while tilting his head in confusion.

Stephen rolled his eyes. “I don’t have time to play pointless games with you. I know one of your soldiers captured him while he was returning home from a deli.”

“If you’re talking about my newest test subject, then no way. I won’t release him. I still have some questions for him to answer.”

“He isn’t a lab rat you experiment with, Stark. At least have the decency to treat him like the human being he is.”

“Why do you sound angry, Strange? Are you annoyed that I stole your loyal pet?” The other man teased with a playful glint in his eyes.

“He isn’t a pet either! What’s wrong with you?” Stephen glared at him with Levi threateningly blowing behind him.

Stark didn’t say anything and only gave him a mischievous smile in response. Stephen silently took deep breaths to calm himself down after noticing Stark having fun at his expense. “That isn’t important. I’m here to bargain for my apprentice’s release. I’m willing to exchange places with Ruben.”

“What made you think I’ll accept your offer? Your apprentice is enough for my experiments. I don’t need you.”

“I don’t think you understand how powerful I am. I’m the leader of the sorcerers and am capable of doing whatever you want of me.” Stephen’s eyes met the other’s eyes and taunted him.

“Interesting. That makes it a more tempting offer. But what’s the reason you are so insistent on getting him back? A leader doesn’t give himself up so easily to an enemy for a kid like him. Unless...you have something else in store for little Ruben?”

Stephen shook his head. “No. I didn’t want him to be involved with the organization in the first place. However, he was persistent in learning sorcery from me and I taught it to him for his protection. As his mentor, it’s my job to rescue him from any trouble he found himself in. Even saving him from a dictator like you.”

“That is a touching story. It brings a nonexistent tear to my eye.” Stark pretended to cry before manically laughing. “I’m not that foolish to believe a sob story like that.”

“Believe whatever you want since I don’t care what you think. Just release him!”

“Oh no, Strange. I won’t make it that easy for you. Try to get him back through force!” Stark released his electric nets without warning and caught Stephen unaware.

Contrary to his enemy's expectations, Stephen easily freed himself from the net's confines, barely flinching from the electrical shocks. "Was that all?" He asked unimpressed and his eyebrow raised in challenge. He lightly knocked his fists together and summoned the Tao Mandalas. His negotiation plan failed and now it was time for battle.

Stark lunged at him, kicking the shields away and punching Stephen in the stomach. The dictator smirked thinking he was victorious, but Levi dragged the sorcerer away from the next attack just in time.

"Impressive. You managed to avoid that." Tony remarked after seeing Stephen unharmed. "I guess it's time for me to get serious." He shot multiple missiles as a distraction and began storing energy for his repulsor cannons.

Stephen multiplied himself with the Images of Ikonn, each copy holding a golden Eldritch whip. They used the whips to destroy the missiles while the real Stephen flew toward Stark. Before he could stop him, Stark launched the powered-up cannons obliterating everything in its path. With only a second to spare, he formed the Shield of the Seraphim.

The two men were the only ones left standing in the aftermath of the explosion. They faced each other once again, neither side giving up. Stephen summoned the Sacred Sword of Vishanti and Tony formed a long nanite blade. As their swords were about to clash, a robotic voice coming from Stark's watch interrupted them.

"Boss, the boy is getting restless and is trying to escape. He seemed to be worried about his Master and wanted to help."

Stephen watched his enemy retract his blade and backed away. He continued to hold his sword, not willing to let his guard down.

Stark closely looked at him and seemed to be deep in thought before shrugging his shoulders. "Alright. I accept your deal. You are easier to deal with than your stubborn apprentice. You also proved your point of being more powerful than him by being able to fight against me without breaking a sweat."

"Where's the boy, Stark?"

"Don't be so impatient. He'll be here in a minute using those fancy portals once Friday releases him." Stephen saw Stark press a button on his watch and he braced himself for another battle. Instead of an attack like he expected, small bots emerged from the Tower and started cleaning up the rubble and repairing the damage to their surroundings.

Stephen raised an eyebrow in question and before Stark could answer, a portal appeared behind him with Ruben rushing through.

"Master Strange! Are you okay?"

Stephen put his sword away and focused his attention on his apprentice. "I'm fine. Instead of worrying about me, you should worry more about yourself." He commented with a frown.

Ruben looked fine at first glance, but he didn't know what Stark did to him during his absence. "Did Stark hurt you, Ruben? Be honest with me and don't lie."

"No. He didn't, Master Strange. He only talked to me and tried to convince me to answer his questions. He also made me doubt your and Master Wong's intentions for me."

"Ruben..."

"It's fine though! I finally realize that you guys are only looking out for me after watching your battle. I won't believe his words next time!"

"There's no next time, young man. Return to Nepal at once and find Wong. He'll be the one to punish you for your disappearing act."

"But.."

Stephen didn't bother to hear Ruben's objections and formed a portal to Kamar-Taj underneath the boy. Ruben's screams of 'It's not my fault' and 'Master Strange being unfair' were cut short as the portal closed.

The sorcerer noticed Stark quietly watching the spectacle on the sidelines and walked away to spare himself from the embarrassment. "What are you waiting for, Stark? I can't enter your Tower by myself."

"I'm surprised you didn't escape with the boy," Stark said while he ran to catch up with him.

"I don't break my promises. You fulfilled your end of the bargain. It's my turn to fulfill mine." Stephen replied. "Now, where do you want me?" He asked, following Stark and entering the Tower's mechanical walls without hesitation.

"You sure don't waste time. I have a feeling we'll get along quite well, Strange." Stark's sinister chuckle echoed throughout the hallways as Stephen was led further into the depths of enemy territory.

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