

Metal and Magic

Chapter 5

Harry smiled at the pretty girl giving him a look as he sat alone outside a cafe, sipping a cup of tea and reading the morning paper. She smiled back before carrying on down the sidewalk. He quickly found himself enjoying Los Angeles. The weather was nice, and plenty of hot women were always walking around. He couldn't ask for much more. His phone rang, and he pulled it from his pocket and answered it.

"Hello?"

"So, have you spent all my money yet?" Tony's voice made him roll his eyes.

"No, but not for the lack of trying," he joked back. In reality, he hadn't spent much of the five million. He bought a whole new wardrobe of expensive luxury clothes and a new phone, but that was about it.

"You need to get on the ball. If it were me, I'd have blown through most of it by now," Tony joked back.

"That's because you're a degenerate with no self-control," Harry answered back and sipped his tea.

"We all have character flaws," Tony retorted. "Anyway ... I got what you asked for. Meet me at my house tonight. Any time after eight is fine."

"Already?" Harry asked. He had just given Tony his made-up information the previous day. "You do quick work," he complimented him.

"What can I say? I'm good," Tony smugly stated.

"That remains to be seen," Harry answered dryly. "The stuff probably looks like the cheap fakes they sell in Chinatown. He had asked some punk teens who tried and failed to buy beer from a store about their fake IDs, and they informed him about a shop in Chinatown. He visited the shop out of curiosity. The products were worse than he imagined.

"Oh, ye of little faith," Tony tutted. "Just come by tonight and prepare to have your socks knocked off."

"Yeah, yeah ... I'll be there. Later," Harry said and hung up. With nowhere to go and nothing to do, Harry ordered another cup of tea and finished reading his paper.

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It was just after eight-thirty in the evening when Harry rang the doorbell. Pepper Potts opened the door with a sweet smile.

"Hey, Pepper. Is Tony in?" Harry asked, returning her smile.

"Yes, he is. He told me to bring you down to him when you arrive," she said, standing aside so he could enter.

"I haven't seen him on the news in the last couple of days. I take it he's been staying out of trouble?" Harry asked as she led him to the lower level.

"As much as I could hope for," she easily answered. "You know ... You really shouldn't encourage him with your perverse party-boy lifestyle. He gets in enough trouble on his own."

"P-Party-boy?" Harry sputtered amusedly, chuckling. "That night was all Tony's fault," he explained, passing the blame. She looked at him.

"Uh-huh," she said skeptically. "Those two women were actual whores! They were bragging about how they were going to spend all the money you gave them."

"How much money did I actually give them?" Harry wondered. "I noticed my pockets were a bit light."

"I don't know, but they were throwing around names like Louis Vuitton and Christian Louboutin."

"That much, huh?" Harry said, scratching his head. "Tony must be a really bad influence on me. Maybe you should sit down with him and have a heart-to-heart about corrupting innocent young men with his wicked ways," Harry said, taking the time to check out Pepper's ass. The woman was thin and didn't have many curves, but she did have a tight little ass.

Pepper snorted in amusement. "By the way, the owner of that sleazy strip club called here asking for you. He said something about Two-For-One Tuesday ... Two lapdances for the price of one. He said he would reserve your usual table," she looked back at him and saw that he was checking out her ass. He then looked up and smiled.

"Pepper, you're breaking my heart. You know very well I wouldn't be caught dead in such a seedy joint ... no matter how good the chicken wings are," he added. His mouth was watering just thinking about the tangy sauce and ...

She cleared her throat. "Be that as it may, please try to keep your perversions to a minimum. Tony has an image he needs to maintain, and he already does enough to ruin it without outside help," she told him with a soft smile.

"I'll try my best," he relented. "You know ... that light dusting of freckles on your nose and cheeks is really cute," he teased as they walked up to a glass door. She looked at him and blushed slightly. She pressed some buttons on a high-tech number pad, and the door opened with a beep.

"Just ... Get inside!" she said, jabbing her finger toward the open door. She was clearly embarrassed by the sudden compliment. Harry laughed lightly and entered.

"Tony! Where the hell are you?" he called out.

"Over here!" Tony called back, hidden behind some machinery. Harry followed his voice and found him working on some mechanical boot. A robotic arm suddenly moved and spot-welded a piece that Tony was holding into place. Harry looked away, blocking his eyes.

"Are you trying to blind me?" Harry complained, blinking the spots from his eyes.

"Sorry about that," Tony responded, not sounding very sorry.

"What is this place anyway?" Harry asked, looking around. There were all kinds of high-tech equipment scattered about, but there were also expensive cars parked along the wall.

"One of my workshops," he said, messing with the boot.

"And the cars?"

"It's also a garage," he simply said.

"Good to know. I saw your press conference. Quitting the weapons game is a bold strategy," Harry said.

"Everyone thinks I'm nuts. What about you?" Tony asked, looking up from his work. Harry shrugged.

"It's your company. Do whatever you feel is right. Though, I don't blame you after what we saw in Afghanistan. It's probably a smart idea to stop ... at least until you find the mole."

"I'm glad someone agrees with me," Tony stated.

"Here's a piece of advice," Harry said. "Whoever raises the biggest fuss about your decision, I'd look at them first because they have the most to lose. Those terrorists won't be happy with them."

"I hadn't thought of that, but it makes sense," Tony nodded. "Aren't you going to ask me what I'm making?" he asked, tapping the metal boot. Harry shook his head.

“Good ...” Tony replied. “Because it’s top secret. There’s your stuff right there,” he said, pointing to a manilla envelope. Harry picked it up from the table and opened it up. He pulled out the documents and studied them.

“These actually look legit,” Harry said, impressed. Tony smirked.

“I told you I do good work. You got any plans for tonight?”

“Pepper said I should visit the strip club because it’s Two-For-One Tuesday. She said I could get two lapdances for the price of one,” Harry told him, trying hard not to smile. Tony looked confused.

“How does she know that?” he asked.

“I dunno,” Harry shrugged. “Maybe she secretly owns a whole chain of them. Think about it. She knows all the depraved places you go and how much you spend. If it were me, I’d buy ‘em all up and let the cash roll in,” Harry explained.

“That club WAS very quick to give us VIP access,” he said, rubbing his chin. “And Pepper is very smart when it comes to finances.”

“See? She’s a pervert for profit. Anyway, thanks for this,” Harry said, waving the folder.

“Hold on!” he suddenly interrupted. “You’ve got your phone on you?” he asked. Harry nodded and pulled it from his pocket. “Let me see,” he said, holding out his hand. Harry handed it to him, and Tony placed it on the surface of his workbench and clobbered it with a hammer.

“Hey!” Harry cried out as pieces of the smashed phone hit him in the chest and face. “I just bought that,” he complained, brushing the remnants of his phone from his shirt.

“Since discovering there’s a rat in my company, I’ve been a bit paranoid. I scanned all my lines and found that someone had tapped my phones. I’ve started using one of these,” he said, holding up a phone that looked pricey. “It’s a Stark Industries high-security phone. The military brass all use them. It’s heavily encrypted and connects to my company’s satellite system instead of traditional cell towers. Whoever tapped my phone won’t be tapping this one,” he bragged. He then pulled out a second identical phone and slid it to him.

“Consider it a gift. There’s a sticker with the number on the back,” he explained. Harry snatched it from the workbench and checked it out.

“Nice,” Harry nodded happily. “I hope this one doesn’t end up in the toilet tonight,” he said, stuffing it into his pocket.

"You're going to the strip club tonight?" Tony perked up.

"Pepper personally invited me. It would be rude not to show up," Harry explained. Tony nodded, completely understanding his point of view.

"I better come along to keep an eye on you. Besides, they bestowed upon me the greatest honor a strip club can offer ... VIP access. It would be insulting to deny them my patronage," Tony factually stated, getting up from his workbench and looking down at his clothes. "I better change first," he said, wiping at the grease stain on his five-hundred-dollar shirt.

"Do you think we should invite Pepper?" Harry asked as they left the workshop.

"Do you think she would agree to join us?" Tony asked in response.

"Probably not," Harry said.

"There's your answer," Tony chuckled, clapping him on the shoulder.

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Natasha was very annoyed with her target, which amused Clint to no end. Clint always got a kick out of it when things didn't go as planned for her. He got the easy task ... watching over Tony Stark. It did ease her annoyance when Clint was chewed out by Fury after Stark discovered that his phone lines had been monitored. Clint had a very sour look on his face when Stark switched to secured lines. Her job was to track down and follow this new mystery man who seemed to have suddenly gotten into Tony Stark's good graces. She thought it would be an easy assignment. They always were. However, she couldn't have been more wrong.

This guy didn't have a permanent residence, appeared and disappeared at will, and seemed to have switched phones. She had gotten his original number after analyzing Stark's call logs, both his personal and the ones from his company. Sadly, no sooner than she had, she discovered he was no longer using that phone. She tracked him back to the phone's last known location ... the Red Velvet Gentlemen's Club. It took a little poking and prodding, but she found out from the owner that he had been there and that his name was Harry. At least, that was the name he was going by that night. She also found out he had met up with Tony Stark that night. This, of course, made Fury blow a fuse. He didn't like the idea of some unknown entity having the ear of a man like Stark. Natasha could certainly understand why.

Natasha was left with no choice but to be a bit sneaky. While at the club, she saw an advertisement for Two-For-One Tuesday, which made her snort in amusement. As funny as she found it, it did give her an idea. She had Clint call Stark's assistant, Pepper Potts, pretending to be the owner of the club. He invited Harry and Tony back to the club for the Tuesday event and asked if she had Harry's new number. She said she didn't, sounding somewhat irritated that a supposed seedy club owner was calling her for such a thing. When she asked how he got her

personal number, Clint pretended that the call was breaking up and quickly disconnected the line. It was a long shot, but Natasha hoped this would bring Harry back out into the open so she could re-establish her surveillance. Clint's voice suddenly crackled through her earpiece.

"You're not going to believe it, but your loony plan seems to have worked," Clint said.

"What's going on over there?" she asked eagerly. Clint was stationed outside Stark's massive oceanside mansion, monitoring who came and went.

"Your boy is here. I don't know how he got here, though ... I don't see a car, and he wasn't dropped off by a taxi. He just showed up. The outer gate just opened, and he's walking in," Clint kept a running commentary. "I'm going to move so I can get a better view of the front door," he informed her.

Natasha waited with bated breath. She was camped out in an unassuming, unmarked car across the street from the strip club in case he decided to show up. His showing up at Stark's house was a good sign. "I've got eyes on the door," Clint said. "Pepper Potts answered the door ... She's let him in."

She sighed. They wouldn't know what was going on inside the house. Getting in there to bug the place without being detected was nearly impossible. The only thing they could do was wait.

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Harry was a little more reserved with his drinking this time around. Instead of drinking beer, liquor, and champagne, he simply stuck with beer. Tony seemed more than willing to drink his problems away. Harry didn't blame him. If he had been a prisoner in an Afghanistan cave for months, he would be trying to make up for lost time. Harry, however, wasn't letting his guard down. He had a feeling that he was being watched. Sensing such a thing was a skill he had developed over years of fighting the Death Eaters. He would casually glance around, pretending he was checking out all the hot women walking about. Unfortunately, the club was dark, and he couldn't spot anything out of the ordinary. He kept his composure and pretended everything was normal. When Tony was busy taking advantage of the club's promotion, Harry went outside for a breath of fresh air. In reality, he wanted to see if anyone would follow him.

He walked into the alley between the club and the building next door. Finding a nice, shadowy spot, he pulled out his wand and tapped himself on the head. The familiar sensation of an egg being cracked over his head let him know he had performed the Disillusionment Charm correctly. Harry pressed himself against the wall and watched the alley's entrance for a few minutes. He was about to go back inside when a man appeared at the mouth of the alley. It was too dark to make out who he was, but Harry was sure it wasn't Tony. This guy was taller and a bit broader in the shoulders. The guy loitered around the end of the alley for a minute or so before reaching into his pocket. A second later, a beam of light was dragged back and forth along the length of the alley. The man was searching for him with a small flashlight. Harry stood

perfectly still and remained calm. He knew he wouldn't be spotted unless he panicked and made a mistake. "Shit!" the man cursed and walked away from the club. Harry placed Cushioning Charms on the bottoms of his shoes and quickly followed him.

"Widow, he's not in the alley," the man said. Harry was confused. The man wasn't holding a phone or walkie-talkie. When he walked under a street lamp, Harry got a good look at him. He looked like he was nearing middle age and had short, brown hair. He had on black jeans, a white t-shirt, and a black leather jacket. Harry also noticed an earpiece lodged into his right ear. "Well, he's not in there now!" he quietly hissed. "Alright," he said before crossing the street.

He walked back in the direction of the club and waited. A moment later, a young, pretty redhead joined him. Harry stayed a short distance away from them and listened.

"You haven't found him yet?" she asked the older man. Her voice was a little smoky, which he found sexy. The man shook his head.

"The boss will have our asses if we lose him again," he said. "Are you sure he went into the alley?"

"Yes, I'm sure," she replied, sounding annoyed. "And I didn't see him leave. I scouted this whole area. There's a large fence at the back of the alley. Do you think he could have hopped it?" she asked.

"If he did, he's a hell of an athlete," the man told her. "That fence is fifteen feet tall."

"Alright. Go back inside, and I'll take the car around the block to see if I can spot him. Let me know if you find him," she said. The man nodded his head. As they turned their backs on each other, Harry quickly hit them both with Tracking Charms. He wanted to know who they were and why they were following him. As the man crossed the street, heading for the club, Harry followed the woman.

She jogged to a nearby parking lot with Harry hot on her heels. She slowed down when she saw two men using a slim jim on a black sedan. Harry guessed that it was her car. They didn't seem to notice her. She pointed the key remote at the car, causing it to chirp and the lights to flash. The two men were suddenly startled and stood up straight, leaving the slim jim against the window. "I'm not in the mood, gentlemen ... so get lost," she bluntly told them. They looked at each other and chuckled.

"And what if we don't want to get lost, huh?" one of them asked mockingly. "Me and my friend need a ride, sweetheart. Don't we?" he asked his friend. Harry had his wand in hand and was ready to act if things got out of control.

"Yeah," his friend greasily said. "She's a hot piece of ass, isn't she?" he mocked. "How's about it, honey? Will you give us a ride?" he asked, menacingly stepping toward the red-haired woman. The woman smiled cutely.

"Why don't you just take my car? Here. Here's the key," she said, tossing the key to the nearest thug.

The woman acted quicker than a flash. As soon as the man caught the key against his chest, she lunged forward and kicked him straight in the knee. Harry winced as his knee bent in the opposite direction with a disgusting pop. He screamed out in agony, dropping to one knee, and his friend was momentarily paralyzed with confusion. The woman rolled over his back, dropping the heel of her shoe right on the other man's temple as he rushed up to help. He stumbled back and fell on his ass. As soon as her feet hit the ground, her knee connected with the hunched-over man's face with a sickening crunch. He dropped face-first into the pavement and didn't move again. About that time, the other one was scrambling to his feet. The woman didn't even look bothered. She simply strolled up to him and roundhouse kicked him in the face. The thug spun through the air, hit the ground, and his body rolled a few feet before it stopped. He let out a pathetic moan of pain but didn't try to get up. She went up to her car and yanked the slim jim from the window, tossing it across the parking lot. She got in her car and started the engine. As she backed out of her parking spot, she accidentally ran over the dazed man's hand.

"EEEYAAAAAH!" he screamed, holding his hand to his chest, which Harry found hilarious. She drove away, not caring one bit about the two injured idiots she left behind. Harry stood there and watched as her tail lights disappeared around the corner.

'Who were these people?' Harry asked himself. These obviously weren't your average people. The woman wasn't very big, but she kicked their asses like it was nothing. These people were highly trained, which made Harry think that they were either with the government or the military. Neither was good news for him. The only good news in all of this was that they didn't seem to want to harm him ... at least for now. He needed to make finding out exactly who they were a top priority. In the meantime, he would pretend like nothing had happened. He went back into the alley and made himself visible. He returned to the club and found Tony sitting with three strippers.

"There you are! Where have you been?" Tony asked as two of the girls hung all over him. Harry sat down at the table.

"Just chatting with one of the girls," Harry lied as the other stripper scooted her chair closer to him.

"You're buying the next round!" Tony called out over the thumping music. "What do you think girls?" Tony asked. "Shots or champagne?"

“Champagne!” all three cheered loudly and bounced around. Harry’s eyes immediately went to their big, bouncing breasts. He suddenly didn’t have the heart to stick with beer and deny them their true desire. He sighed and pulled out a fat wad of cash, which made the girl scoot so close to him that their bodies were touching. He ordered the most expensive bottle of champagne, and suddenly, more girls joined the table, forcing him to buy a second.

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“HHUUUUUUUUHHH ... pfft,” Harry spat into the toilet the following morning. His forehead was sweaty, and his head was pounding. His stomach jumped again, and he hugged the toilet bowl. “HHUUUUUUUUHHH!” he heaved his stomach contents into the toilet. After five minutes of this, his stomach was mercifully empty. “Fucking Tony,” he cursed the man’s name. He only hoped the git was suffering as much as he was.

He shakily pushed himself to his feet and rinsed his mouth at the sink. He splashed some cold water on his face and dabbed it dry with a towel. He stumbled out of the bathroom and looked around for his trousers. He found it buried underneath two dresses and two pairs of panties. He looked at the bed and saw the two sleeping women spooning. ‘Okay ... Maybe last night wasn’t all that bad,’ he told himself as a smile appeared on his face. He went into his pocket and pulled out a trusty hangover cure. He drank it down and waited for it to work. After a minute or so, the headache dulled into a slight throb. His sour stomach mostly cleared up, and he quickly dressed and left the room after checking his pockets to ensure everything was still there. The only thing he found missing was the thousands of dollars he had the previous night. That wasn’t surprising in the least.

Stumbling into the hallway, Harry looked around and didn’t find Tony vomiting into a houseplant this time. Harry made his way to the kitchen and drank all of Tony’s orange juice. He tossed the empty carton into the trash and went into the living room. He looked around and didn’t see anyone. Knowing Tony was probably still asleep, he called for the only other person he knew. “Pepper?” he called out in a tired, raspy voice.

“Miss Potts is currently in her office at Stark Industries. Mr. Stark is asleep in his room. Is there anything I can do for you, sir?” a proper British voice suddenly filled the room. Harry spun around but didn’t see anyone.

“Who is that?” Harry asked, confused.

“Forgive me, sir. I am Jarvis, a natural-language user interface computer system.”

“You’re a computer?” Harry asked, even more confused than before.

“Yes, sir. I monitor and control Mr. Starks various computer systems at his behest. If you are ready to leave, I can have a car sent for you,” the computer said.

"Huh?" Harry said, scratching his head. "I suppose that's not the strangest thing I've come across," was all he could say. "As for the car, it's not needed. If it wouldn't be too much trouble, can you tell Tony I had to leave and take care of some business? And would you remind him of the female company I left in the room? They'll need a ride," he told the computer.

"Of course, sir. I'll lock up once you leave," Jarvis said. Harry nodded.

"Thank you. Oh! And would you tell Tony I left this for him? It's for the hangover I'm sure he's going to have," Harry chuckled and pulled another hangover cure from his small bag. He set it down on the coffee table.

"I will, sir," Jarvis pleasantly stated.

"Thank you, Jarvis," Harry responded, feeling weird about being so polite to a computer system.

"You're welcome, sir. I've unlocked the front door and the front gate."

Harry nodded and went for the door. "See you later, Jarvis!" Harry called out as he left the house. He heard him respond with, "See you later, sir!" Harry chuckled and walked the long distance to the front gate. As he neared it, it automatically swung open for him. When he exited, it closed and locked. Harry shook his head. This world really was strange.

He found a secluded spot and apparated back to his room. Harry immediately pulled out the map he had bought to learn the streets of LA. Harry pulled out his wand and did a bit of magic to it. Harry then conjured a knife and made a small slit in his palm. He let several drops of blood fall onto the map. The drops of blood converged, then split into two equal dots. These were the two operatives he had placed Tracking Charms on. They were close together, indicating that they were in the same place.

"Now, let's see who you guys really are," Harry said, staring at the dots on the map.