

Metal and Magic

Chapter 11

“Uhhbluhh,” Harry muttered in his slumber. Something was jerking his body while his mind desperately wanted many more hours of sleep. Whatever it was didn’t stop. It shook him again, and finally, when he could no longer take the intrusion on his rest, Harry opened his eyes. It was a mistake.

His head began pounding, and his stomach twisted. “Ohhh,” Harry groaned as he rubbed his forehead.

“I know how you feel,” Harry heard Tony’s tired, gruff voice. His blurry vision cleared, and he saw a very disheveled Tony Stark staring down at him. “Hangover drink ... Please,” he practically begged. Harry was sure Tony looked worse than he did.

The two blondes they had taken out the previous night had no qualms about having the funnest time possible. The drinks flowed like water, and it wasn’t long before they became very handsy. As one could imagine, it led them back to Tony’s Malibu mansion, where the fun went into overdrive. Harry knew he would likely suffer in the morning for his night’s poor choices, but he was prepared. Harry blindly pointed at the nightstand beside his bed. Sitting on top were several bottles of his latest batch. What better way to test his work than to try it out for themselves? “Hand me one,” Harry pleaded.

Tony quickly grabbed two and handed one to Harry. Both popped the tops and drank it down at record pace. Harry closed his eyes and waited. After a few seconds, his headache cleared up, and his stomach stopped feeling so sour. When Tony’s face suddenly became much more relaxed, Harry guessed that it had worked for him, too. Tony breathed a sigh of relief. “That’s the good stuff.”

“I’m glad to see my new cauldron worked,” Harry replied, his voice sounding scratchy and rough. The busty blonde asleep on his chest woke up with a pitiful groan. Apparently, her hangover was just as bad as theirs. Tony smiled down at her when she locked eyes with him.

“Good morning, Veronica,” he said, his eyes following the curve of her nude back.

“Her name is Katherine, idiot,” Harry replied while his hand rested on her wide hip.

“Actually, it’s Danielle,” she corrected them while closing her eyes and wincing.

“Oh,” Harry and Tony said at the same time.

“Hand me another,” Harry told Tony, holding out his hand. Harry then removed the top and hovered it in front of her face. Her nose wrinkled from the smell. “Drink it,” Harry told her. “It’ll help with your hangover.”

Danielle pushed herself into a sitting position with great effort. Apparently, she didn’t care that her bare breasts were on full display. She put the small bottle to her lips and drank while Harry and Tony ogled her wonderful assets. She pulled a face at the taste, but a few seconds later, she seemed much happier and livelier. “Whatever that stuff is, it’s fucking awesome!” she declared. “Where did you get it?”

“Actually, it’s a new product that my partner and I are about to put on the market,” Tony proudly stated and clapped Harry on the shoulder.

“Cool beans!” she said with much enthusiasm. “Do you mind if I freshen up?” she asked Harry.

“Go ahead,” Harry said, pointing at the bathroom door. “It’s over there.”

“Thanks!” she chirped and hopped out of bed. She scampered to the bathroom with her bare ass bouncing from side to side. Harry and Tony only looked at each other once she disappeared behind the door.

“Cool beans?” Harry asked in confusion. Tony just guffawed amusedly. He then grabbed another bottle.

“I’m going to take this to the other one,” he told him. “Do you remember what her name is?”

“Your guess is as good as mine, mate,” Harry replied and waited for his turn in the bathroom.

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“Adios! Don’t be a stranger!” Tony called out and waved as the two women were being taken home in a cab. They waved back as the car drove off.

“Man, that miracle tonic you whipped up works wonders,” Tony happily stated as they went back into the house. “I feel rejuvenated.”

“It’s got everything a growing boy needs,” Harry said. “We still have to come up with a good name for it.”

“I’m sure you’ll come up with something,” Tony said as he went straight for the refrigerator.

It wasn’t long after that Pepper made an appearance. She walked into the house and found Tony and Harry lounging on the couch. She wrinkled her nose and waved her hand in front of her face. “You two smell terrible!” she exclaimed. “Did you fall asleep in a dumpster again?”

"That's the smell of success, baby. Get used to it," Tony said as he drank his coffee while watching the recording of the morning news. Harry sniffed himself.

"We do smell pretty ripe," he concurred. "I'm going to take a shower."

Fifteen minutes later, Harry went back into the living room, and Tony was nowhere to be seen. "Where's Tony?" Harry asked Pepper as he walked into the kitchen. She was reading the paper and drinking a glass of orange juice.

"I browbeat him into taking a shower. His stink was starting to turn my stomach," she said, putting her glass down on the marble counter. Harry chuckled in response.

"Yeah. He was smelling pretty foul," Harry agreed.

"He wasn't the only one," Pepper smirked and looked him up and down. "Do you think I don't know what you two hooligans got up to last night? Carousing with those streetwalkers... It's embarrassing. Tony has a reputation to maintain," she complained, but there wasn't any venom in her voice. Harry was confused.

"How did you know what we were doing last night?" Harry wondered. Pepper gave him a look and held the newspaper out for him to see. Plastered across the front page was a picture of Tony and Harry in the posh restaurant Le Cirque. Their heads were thrown back, mid-laugh, and the table was covered with empty champagne bottles. On each of their laps were the two blondes. Their extremely short dresses were riding high up their thighs, and their boobs were practically spilling out of the top. "Can you get me a copy of that?" Harry asked. He was hoping to pin it to his wall. Pepper huffed, folded the paper, and tossed it onto the counter.

"What am I going to do with you?" she rhetorically asked.

"Looking as good as you do, you can do whatever you want with me," Harry teased with a boyish smile. He looked her up and down. She wore a tight black dress that accentuated her soft curves. He checked out her long, smooth legs and then moved back up. The top of her dress only showed off a classy amount of cleavage, but it was enough to keep him interested. Her cheeks immediately blushed pink. She grabbed the paper and whomped him on the shoulder.

"Enough of that, you scoundrel," she said, blushing with embarrassment. Harry chuckled and spent a bit of time chatting with Pepper about this and that.

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Tony provided Harry with a brand new, state-of-the-art laptop for all his research needs. At the moment, he was researching realtors in the LA area who dealt with commercial property. Harry

needed a factory of sufficient size to meet the demand that Tony repeatedly said would definitely come. Harry wasn't so sure, but he trusted Tony's judgement on this more than his own. After all, Tony had run a successful business for years, and Harry had not. When he heard rumbling down below, Harry closed the laptop and headed down into the garage. Upon entering, he found Tony hovering above the ground with a pair of Iron Man boots on. The thrusters were roaring loudly, and Harry had to cover his ears and squint his eyes. After another ten seconds of slowly maneuvering across the garage, Tony slowly lowered to the ground and turned off the thrusters. "So, what do you think?" he asked, smiling proudly.

"Pretty cool, I guess," Harry answered. Tony snorted.

"Pretty cool he says." Tony shook his head in disbelief. "I'll have you know that these newly designed boots are two point three percent more efficient than the last pair, and they have better handling," he boasted as two machine arms sprayed his boots with argon gas.

"Well, whoopto freakin' doo!" Harry exclaimed with fake enthusiasm.

"Everyone's a critic," Tony huffed and went back to work.

A few hours later, Harry found himself sitting in a realtor's office as she showed him pictures on her computer. Harry had already listened to her talk about three other factories that were for sale, but they didn't meet his needs. Two of them were abandoned and would need over a year's worth of work just to get them in working order. The third was too far away.

"This one is sixty-five thousand square feet," she read from her notes. "It was previously a manufacturing plant for Salty Sea Foods Inc., but they moved to a larger factory up north. The electrical and gas lines are all good. You can see the inspection report right here," she said, pointing to her monitor.

"Various machinery and tools are included in the price, including ten forklifts of varying sizes," she told him.

All of that sounded good. Tony had told him not to get one under fifty thousand square feet. There needed to be plenty of room to expand. The pictures looked good as well. The facade wasn't broken down and rusty like the others. The inside looked to be in good shape, and based on the fact that it used to produce food products, Harry guessed that it was relatively clean as well.

"Where is it located?" Harry asked her.

"Oxnard, which is good because you'll have access to Port Hueneme, and since you reside in Malibu, it's just a short drive up the Pacific Coast Highway. The views along the road are stunning, and it's the perfect way to start your day. You can completely avoid that lousy LA traffic!" she happily chirped. The woman was trying hard to get her commission.

“All of that sounds good, but I’m going to need to see it first,” Harry told her. She nodded, already knowing he would. They made arrangements to meet there first thing in the morning.

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Nick Fury looked at the morning’s issue of The LA Times for what must have been the twentieth time that day. Tony Stark and Harry Potter’s picture would have made him laugh if he had any kind of sense of humor.

They had pulled most of their surveillance team back from the Malibu mansion, but they continued to keep a few of the younger agents in the area. It was a good bit of real-world training for them. Of course, Barton was still the team leader and was in charge of filling him in on the details.

Having to send Romanoff away was a big blow to his fact-finding mission. She had done an excellent job of infiltrating Potter’s defenses and getting him to share some information. With her gone, that pipeline had practically run dry. The worst part was that she might have to be gone longer than expected. This wasn’t good news for Fury. In fact, none of this was good news for him. He didn’t like the idea of Stark and Potter getting so close. Stark had already invited Potter to live in his house, and only God knew what was going on in there. He checked the paper again and snorted.

“I know one thing that’s going on in there,” he said, training his one good eye on the two blondes sitting on their laps. He already ordered an agent to find out the identities of these two blondes in the hope that they would discover something new. He didn’t normally judge a book by its cover, but he would bet anything that these two bimbos were the type to gossip. You would be amazed at what you could hear over a phone tap.

Fury put the paper down on his desk and lifted a folder. Emblazoned across the front in big, bold letters were the words, TOP SECRET. He opened the folder and looked at the cover page. Avengers Initiative, it read. He then set it down on top of the newspaper and rubbed his chin in thought. Stark was a prime candidate for a new group he was planning, but there were obvious red flags. For one, Stark didn’t seem to play well with others, if his files were to be believed. Fury moved the folder to the side and looked down at the newspaper again.

‘He seems to be playing well with this Potter fellow,’ he thought. There was also the excessive drinking and partying, but that in and of itself wasn’t a major problem. Those who worked hard tended to play hard as well. It could be overlooked if he was able to get the job done to Fury’s satisfaction. Hell, quite a few of his agents tended to party a bit too hard when not on duty, but Fury ignored it as long as they didn’t do anything stupid. There was also the fact that Stark was a blatant womanizer. The newspaper picture only proved that.

There were a lot of red flags against Stark, but that didn't necessarily disqualify him from being a candidate. That he was running around with Potter was, in fact, the biggest red flag, and that was only because Fury knew next to nothing about the man. He needed to know more, and Stark was very tight-lipped about him. Of course, there were other ways to find out. If only Widow were still here. Unfortunately, she might not be back for several months. Fury looked at the picture again. From the reports, Potter was considered just as much a womanizer as Stark. 'Two peas in a pod,' Fury snorted. 'It's no wonder they get along so well.'

Fortunately for Fury, he knew there was more than one way to skin a cat. He pulled out his phone and hit the speed dial. The phone rang twice before his underling picked up. "Agent Hill, report to my office at once."

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"Well ... What do you think?" the realtor nervously asked, hoping to make a boatload of money today. Harry rubbed his chin while tapping his foot on the ground. There weren't many factories for sale around this area, and this was certainly the best one.

"I'll take it!" Harry finally exclaimed after stating that she would be able to get the price lowered by ten percent if he paid in full today. Apparently, the fish factory people were eager to get rid of it. The realtor breathed a sigh of relief, and a huge smile crossed her somewhat pretty face.

"Excellent, Mr. Potter!" she happily stated. "You won't be disappointed. If you follow me back to my office, we can get the paperwork sorted."

A few hours later, Harry left her office nine point three million dollars poorer. It made him feel much better knowing it was Tony's money he was spending. Of course, Tony had already given his blessing on purchasing the property, and stated that the asking price was reasonable for what they would be getting. After the agreement was made and the payment was issued, Tony's lawyers would take it from there. She said it would take a month or two for everything to go through, which would give the lawyers enough time to get all the necessary permits to begin work. Until then, Harry would have his hands full coming up with a streamlined process for making the magical hangover cure. Harry didn't mind at all, though. He was glad he had something to do. Life would get boring if he sat at home all day.

The drive home was fun. Harry had had a great time testing the limits of one of Tony's beloved Audi R8s. Just as he pulled up to the house, Tony walked out of the front door in his full Iron Man armor. "What's going on?" Harry asked, jumping over the door without opening it.

"The children's hospital in Pasadena is on fire," he stated with his robotic, suit-amplified voice. "It's burning up, and I'm going in," he said with confidence. Without hesitation, Harry's wand appeared in his hand, and after a few waves, he was back in his black, hooded robe with his face obscured by shadows. Tony shook his head.

"We've really got to get you a new outfit. We can't have Iron Man's sidekick looking like a complete dufus," he amusedly said.

"Harry Potter is no one's sidekick," Harry snorted. "Now let's go."

"How are you getting there?" Tony asked. Harry hadn't thought about that. He then shrugged.

"I'll hitch a ride with you."

"I don't think you'll be able to hold on. I'll be flying too fast," Tony warned.

"Just trust me," Harry said, and Tony shrugged. Harry walked up behind him and waved the Elder Wand. He placed a force field around himself that would protect him from the cold, wind, and any small objects that might accidentally hit him. He then used Sticking Charms on his hands and placed them on Tony's shoulders. "Hit it!" Harry called out, and Tony's thrusters immediately burst to life.

The takeoff was relatively slow due to Tony not wanting to kill him with the sudden acceleration, but once they got into the air, they were flying faster than the speed of sound. Harry was very relieved to discover that his magical protection worked, and his hair wasn't even fluttering. It only took a few minutes to reach their destination.

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Hey, Bill ... Look at that," a chopper news reporter flying around on a helicopter told his colleague as they circled the flaming building. Bill followed the direction of his finger and squinted. It was a spec in the sky, rapidly growing larger. When he finally got a good look, his eyes widened excitedly.

"It's Iron Man!" he practically shouted. He moved the camera from the burning hospital and aimed it straight at the flying suit of armor. He zoomed in to capture it in greater detail.

"What's that on his back?" Eddie asked as he looked through the monitor at the camera feed.

"It looks like another man," Bill answered in confusion. Suddenly, the dark cloaked figure stood up on Iron Man's back and rode him like a surfer catching the most epic wave of his life. "WOAH!" Bill excitedly exclaimed. His hands were shaking as he trained the camera on the insane sight. This was pure gold, and it might just earn him a raise. Best of all, it was live on TV. Beside him, Eddie was running an excited commentary of the unfolding events to the news station as Iron Man and his unknown passenger neared the burning hospital from high above. Then, the passenger did something utterly insane. He jumped off Iron Man's back and dove straight toward the ground. With pinpoint accuracy, Bill followed the man's descent.

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"I can see the hospital," Tony's voice called out over the loud wind. It wasn't hard to see. All he had to do was follow the pillar of black smoke towering into the sky.

"Fly right over it," Harry called back and did something crazy. He removed the Sticking Charms from his hands and pressed his feet against Tony's back. He then stood, slightly crouched, with his arms stretched out to keep his balance. When they were almost over the hospital, Harry called out to him. "I'll see you on the ground!" he shouted with a huge, excited smile and jumped.

The ground stretched out around him for hundreds of miles, and like when he was in his bird form, he felt free. Harry stretched out his arms and legs to help slow his descent and moved his limbs to maneuver through the air. Below him, he saw Tony soaring downward toward the burning building. His wand appeared in his hand, and after a quick wave, a bubble of fresh air encased his head just before he disappeared into the tower of smoke. Once inside, Harry twirled the wand over his head, around and around, building up his magic. Harry then flipped himself until he was facing the sky. He jabbed his wand and let his magic free. A massive ball of water appeared above, undulating and rolling as it fell along with him. Knowing that if a ball of water that size hit the roof of the building, it would destroy a huge chunk of it, Harry jabbed his wand again and broke the ball into millions of marble-sized drops. He then flipped back onto his belly and transformed into a raven. Harry pulled out of his dive and broke through the pillar of choking, black smoke just a hundred feet above the scorched roof of the hospital.

Down below, the firefighters, police, and onlookers were met with a sudden waterfall of rain. It was like God had split open the heavens and took a piss directly on their heads. It was a level of water beyond anything they had ever witnessed.

Harry circled away from the falling water and watched as the burning building hissed angrily and spat steam into the air. When the roof was finally absent of flames, Harry dove down through a hole in the roof and transformed back into a human. The second he did, he slapped Bubblehead and Flame Freezing Charms on himself. He quickly used Homenum Revelio and looked around. Thankfully, most of the hospital seemed to have been evacuated. There was only a small group of people one floor below him. He could see their ghostly outlines in the distance, so he ran over to them as fast as possible. When he was near them, Harry waved his wand and blew a hole through the floor. He dropped down and found flames in the hallway behind him. There was no way anyone would be leaving through there. The hallway was so thick with smoke that he could barely see a few feet in front of him. He ran ahead, through a broken-down door, and turned the corner. There, he found Tony with several children and nurses around him. Everyone except Tony was coughing loudly. The room was full of smoke, which was pouring out of several smashed windows. Without thinking, Harry swished his wand and slapped Bubblehead Charms on each of them. They wouldn't suffocate, but they were still coughing loudly and raggedly. They had likely breathed in a lot of smoke, which wasn't good.

Tony looked over at him and said, "I can't carry them! The shell of my suit is red hot from the fire!" he explained. It seemed that Tony had walked through the flames, looking for survivors who needed to be rescued. The skin of his suit was slightly discolored and covered in soot.

"Blow a hole in the wall! I'll lower them down!" Harry called back. Tony immediately raised his hand and fired off a repulsor blast. The wall blew outward, filling the dark room with light. Thick clouds of smoke poured through the hole while Harry waved his wand at them. They gasped through their coughing fits as their bodies were levitated from the floor. Harry gently guided them through the open hole and down to safety. As soon as they were safely on the ground, Harry released his magic, and they were swarmed by EMTs. Harry stepped back away from the hole and turned to Tony.

"There's no one else in the building. At least no one living," he somberly stated. Harry didn't know if anyone had died before they arrived. He certainly hoped not.

"You sure?" Tony asked as a chunk of plaster dropped down from the collapsing ceiling and hit him in the shoulder.

"I checked with my magic. This group was the only one," Harry assured him.

"Alright," Tony nodded. "Let's see if we can put out the rest of this fire. From what I can tell, it started on this floor and made its way up. The floor below us is relatively undamaged."

"I already handled the roof and the floor above. There's still fire back down the hall," Harry told him. They followed the smoke, snuffing out the flames as they went. Once they were satisfied with their work, Harry apparated back to Malibu while Tony flew out of the hospital and waved to the crowd while soaking up the glory.

Later that night ...

"Who is this cloaked hero, and how did he become so powerful?" the hot news woman said as it showed a sky-eye view of Harry surfing on Tony's back and jumping off. The camera followed him down until he disappeared into the smoke. A few seconds later, a massive ball of water appeared out of thin air and fell like rain onto the hospital, which almost instantly extinguished the flames.

"The rescued survivors claim this same cloaked superhero appeared before them and saved them from certain death. This unbelievable footage was captured ..."

It then cut to them floating from the hole in the wall and slowly being lowered to the ground. It then cut back to the hot news woman.

“The identity of this hero is unknown, but if he’s listening ... I’d love to have some one-on-one time with you,” she seductively stated while staring into the camera with a sexy look on her gorgeous face.

“For an interview,” her smirking male co-host added for her.

“Yeah, sure,” she absent-mindedly said while still staring sultrily into the camera. The TV then suddenly cut off, and Tony tossed the remote onto the coffee table. He turned and looked at Harry with a sour expression on his face.

“You son of a bitch,” he grumbled. “You just had to hog all the glory, didn’t you?”

Harry had the biggest shit-eating grin on his face. He smirked at Tony and huffed on his fingernails. He then buffed them against his shirt and examined them.

“What can I say ... Courage and heroism come naturally to me.”

Tony grumbled again and stood up. “I’m going to the strip club where I’ll be properly appreciated. You coming?” he asked. Harry chuckled and followed him. Heroes deserved their rewards after all.