

Befitting

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Kapitel 2:

They were children – how many thousands of years ago was it? Both he and Thor were outside in the fields surrounding Asgard. It was summer, a warm but gentle summer. They had snuck out even though their father had forbidden them to leave the palace. It had been Thor's idea to get some distraction from the ever so same days they spend inside the walls. Sure, Loki hadn't disagreed, given he himself was a rather curious boy and he seldom disagreed with his older brother. Back then he had adored him, the one who was the perfect picture of what he was not. Even as children it was obvious that Thor was a born warrior whilst Loki remained seemingly fragile, no matter how hard he tried to become like his older brother.

"Hey, Loki, come over here!" Without even looking back, Thor had begun to climb one of the high trees standing at the edge of the field. It didn't take him but few moments to reach the top. Loki tried to be as fast, but it took him longer to get himself next to his brother, who was laughing at his somewhat clumsy moves.

"You know, little brother – sometimes I wonder how you turned out so weak." It wasn't even meant in a harmful way, but Loki hated it when Thor belittled him.

"I will grow strong when time comes, Thor." His eyes met his brother's. "I will prove to you I'm just as much of a warrior. Just... not yet. That's what mum always says and mum is right."

As if he wanted to apologize, Thor reached for Loki's shoulder and gave it a pat.

"I know. After all you are MY little brother."

The pride in Thor's voice caused Loki to smile. Yes, he was Thor's brother so it was only a matter of time.

He had grown older, but not stronger. By incident he had figured out that magic suited him more. He didn't like the idea, a man using magic was scorned, even though Loki didn't understand why. Wasn't his father, the almighty Odin one of the greatest sorcerers and the greatest warrior at the same time? It seemed unfair, but obviously he had inherited only the magic of his father, not his strength.

But Loki wouldn't have been Loki, had he not been able to adept quickly. In the end – wasn't magic the gift that was useful even outside of battle? And a great help to play tricks on those around him. At first his magic had been rather weak. He remembered clearly the first time he noticed it – he had held a glass with water, when suddenly ice crystals started to grow inside and outside of it. And since Loki had always like cold drinks the better, he had kept training this power, to be able to invoke ice even without water. He succeeded.

The next magic he discovered himself capable of was producing doubles of himself, which

came in handy quite often, both for sneaking out and to cause mischief. And he caused mischief a lot.

But surely his most impressive power was his shapeshifting. It took him some time to master this art, but he did it.

All this time he could hear the whispers behind his back on what a disgrace he would be for the house of Odin. A feeble sorcerer in a family of warriors, a prince not fit to defend his realm. The same time everyone praised his brother for his strength, his willpower and his ruthlessness when it came to dealing with enemies.

Loki seldom joined his brother on the battlefield and seldom was he asked to.

Again, thousands of years earlier, he was a child again. Loki couldn't sleep, nightmares of a realm made of ice haunted him. There were monsters living there, they called him, told him to come back. Their voices were deep and hoarse, coming from the deepest depths. They were hiding inside the ice, most of the time he only saw shadows.

These dreams came back so often, but Loki did not dare to tell his father or his mother. He once tried, but they only had shrugged it off, told him his dreams were just childish nightmares. And he felt judged by their looks. He couldn't tell them. And his brother would only laugh.

Something inside him pushed him to leave the security of his bed in order to go to another place where he could find peace. Taking his blanket and a cushion with him, he sneaked off to one of the towers, which was unused. Only he and his brother would come there. Nobody else, no-one in Asgard and surely no nightmare. He climbed the stairs, but then he slowed down: There was the light of a candle. He tiptoed closer and saw a familiar figure with blonde hair.

"Thor, you are here...?"

"I should ask you the same thing, Loki."

Loki sat down next to his brother.

"I... I couldn't sleep, that's all."

His brother nodded and laid his hand onto Loki's without saying a word for several moments.

"Were you having a nightmare?"

"...yes."

Loki felt ashamed to admit this to his older brother, but Thor's hand on his soothed him, allowing him to tell Thor what bothered him.

"It's the same one, all the time. All this ice and those monsters -"

"Don't worry, brother. I'm here, I will protect you from every monster, from anything that wants to harm you."

"...really?"

"Really. And now sleep."

With this Thor pulled his little brother closer, so he could sleep in his arms. That night, the nightmare did not return.

Somewhen in the future. His punishment. It was Thor who had been chosen to execute it. No mercy, not even the tiniest bit of regret tainted his gaze.

"Loki Laufeysson – hereby I shall put you to the punishment for your wrongdoings. First I revoke any ties that bound us, you are neither my brother, nor son of my father nor son of my mother. You are a stranger in the house of Odin and even more, a traitor. The first strike of Mjollnir is aimed at the traitor."

The moment Mjollnir broke his leg seemed to never end, even though at first there was

no pain, only the terrible sound of ripping flesh and breaking bones. He screamed, didn't he? Loki wasn't sure and once the pain kicked in all his thoughts were gone.

"You are guilty. Guilty of having put Asgard in grave danger. You broke the treaty we had with Joutunheim and brought us to the edge of war. The second strike is aimed at the treaty-breaker."

This time Mjollnir destroyed his other leg and caused another flood of pain. And seeing Thor's indifference made it hurt even worse.

"You are guilty. Guilty of feigning your own death and of lying. The third strike is aimed at the liar."

His left arm felt as if Mjollnir had ripped it apart completely. His vision blurred, but he heard Thor's voice even clearer.

"You are guilty. Guilty of trying to take what wasn't yours, guilty of causing massive destruction and many deaths in Midgard. The fourth strike is aimed at the one who doesn't know his place."

Loki tried to prepare for the next strike. For a moment he only saw black when his other arm was crashed. How he longed for a blackout, anything to end this pain. With unchanged voice Thor continued.

"You are guilty. Guilty of being a monster, unworthy to exist. You caused us much trouble, but now your time has come. Prepare yourself, Loki Laufeysson, to meet your end."

He felt every inch the hammer worked into his chest, how his ribs bended until they broke, how one of them pierced his heart.... everything. The world stopped existing – or was it him?

Frigga's voice. "Thor, take care of your brother."