

Befitting

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Kapitel 7:

Loki had always particularly enjoyed the calm of the gardens a little farther from the residence. As child, he had been forbidden to go there, let alone go there without the company of at least Thor and his friends. Well, nobody believed a man walking a sorcerer's path to be capable of fending for himself, at least in Asgard. Not only was magic itself perceived as the weaker choice for those too powerless to use their own strength, a man choosing to become a sorcerer was considered effete. Even though the queen had been more compromising than most, she still seemed to have the same thoughts as she was the one sending Thor along with him whenever he wanted to take a simple walk outside. He crossed the invisible boundaries that separated the interior part of the residence. It tingled inside his very bones when he touched and ultimately passed the floating energy – it was weak enough to not hurt but he knew that should the need arise, this feeble energy could be turned into a deadly weapon of defense. Obviously he wasn't banned from leaving the residence as nothing happened.

Outside the warmth of Asgard's residence the true climate of this realm showed. It was not nearly as cold as Joutunheim but it was far from the mild, ever-lasting springtime that ensured the Aesir's comfort and gave them limitless harvests at any time. He suspected this kind of magic to be the king's doing yet nobody ever said anything about it. Maybe because it would be shameful to admit to their king being a sorcerer as well or maybe because they never thought about it, simply accepting this convenience. Loki relished to feel this change, the chill that suddenly caressed his bare skin. He did not dare to look down, fearing his magic might be too weak to stop his body from visibly adjusting once more. How he loathed this constant fear, ever since he had discovered his shameful descend. It had taken but one touch of one of those monstrosities to shatter the seal Odin had given him. One simple touch had bared the dark secret that had been hidden right underneath his skin, hidden even from himself. If only they had never gone to Joutunheim that dreadful day. If only the cold breeze stopped to whisper into his heart, not with the kindness it had always done when he had been a child but with the fierce loathing he suspected to be a reflection of what he was trying to keep inside.

Following the narrow path that had been treaded into the ground, he reached a small and meager forest. He could not recall having ever gone further than that. His companions, well, Thor's companions had never allowed it, claiming it to be too boring to even bother their feet walking there. Truth be told, he never had any intention to

do so, either. The accounts he had read had been rather clear: Outside of Asgard's interior parts, this realm had not much to offer. Enough wild game for the huntings to entertain the bored warriors between wars and to sustain their beloved feasts where there were barrels of wine and mead and enough food for anyone to overeat. Loki smirked. Seeing it like that Asgard sometimes was a place fit for the dull and simple ones. He sighed and sat down to rest on a tree stump. It would be so easy to leave this all behind if only he would be able to get these thoughts from his mind into his heart. A movement not too far from him caught his attention: A stag was racing by and by the sounds that followed it Loki could only guess what it was running from. Wolves, a whole pack. He stifled himself and used whatever magic he could grasp in order to remain unseen. They were no actual threat as they already had chosen their kill. It was still wiser to not make them change their mind, both his diminished magic and the small dagger he carried being unlikely to help him defending himself from a whole pack of wolves. And then they flew by, six magnificent white wolves led by an old grey one. Within seconds they reached their prey, digging their teeth deep into its side and biting through its throat. The fight was short and Loki caught himself watching it with tension as the stag's cries became quieter until they died away. And the hunters did not wait for the stag to perish, they began ripping out its flesh right away, turning it into a quivering bloody mess. Their furs were no longer white and it would probably take some time before they were again. *That's how it goes, little stag.*

In the meantime Thor was still trying to figure out the whereabouts of his brother, having searched all the places he could have thought of already and in vain. There were only few possibilities left and he chose the most obvious one.

"Be greeted, good Heimdall." The man did not turn around.

"I have waited for you, Thor Odinson. You are looking for the lost one." It was a simple statement, not a question.

"I'm looking for my brother. He is nowhere to be found."

"You are looking in the wrong places, future king of Asgard. The one you seek has chosen to transgress."

"He did what?"

"You will find him outside. Not far from the boundaries around us is a small forest. I think you know the one." Thor thought for a moment before he understood.

"Thank you, gatekeeper." He turned to leave but Heimdall's voice stopped him.

"He is veiled from your eyes, though. The king's gift might be of aid."

"I see. Thank you again."

Thor did know the wood, how could he forget it? It had been there they had started their adventures when they were barely old enough to leave without escort. His first sparring with Sif had been there, she almost defeated him and thus gained his approval as a warrior maiden. Just a little further was the glade where Loki had tried to teach him a little magic. He had laughed, a warrior needed no sorcery, even though he did admit the fire Loki made was agreeable and helped a lot to roast the hare they had hunted down. When they had been older and more versed in the art of fighting or, in Loki's case, the art of defending himself, they had used this area for training either fighting each other or looking for animals fit to be decent adversaries. How could he not have thought of this place? Well... once they had focused more and more on the fighting and got used even more to the warrior's path, they had ceased to take Loki along since Loki had chosen to increase his sorcery instead of trying to at least

become a half-decent warrior, too. But when they asked him, he rarely declined, saying he preferred being out there anyway.

It took Thor some time to get to said forest and when he arrived the first thing he saw were the wolves with their bloodstained coats, still engaged in dismembering the already torn body of their prey. He automatically clasped Mjollnir's handle, ready to strike if necessary.

"You should rather stay where you are, Son of Odin." Loki slowly rose from his seat and withdrew the magic veil he had used to hide himself.

"Brother, I've been looking for you. You were nowhere to be found so..."

"You went to Heimdall and asked him to spy on me." With small, gracious steps Loki walked towards Thor, avoiding any sudden movement.

"The gatekeeper surely is a convenient... man." Loki looked back over his shoulder and found that the wolves did not care for either of them.

"Loki..."

"I'm here, Thor. So what is it you thought important enough to waste your time looking for me?"

"This bitterness does not suit you well, brother."

"I though I had made it clear already? I'm not what we thought I was, am I?"

"Can you not even find your peace for the last day you will spend here at least? ...just forget it, Loki." Thor did not want to hear any more of Loki's childish spite.

"Mother sent me to give you something from her." He held out the amulet Frigga had given him. Loki eyed it before he accepted it.

"Such a powerful amulet the queen is willing to give to a mere prisoner?" His fingers tightened around it.

"She will probably never get it back."

"Loki, you will return. You will come back here." Loki shook his head.

"You've always been an imbecile."

"You will come back to our mother...."

"YOUR mother."

"...to Odin, our father...."

"YOUR father."

"And to me, your brother, as prince of Asgard once more."

"You are not my brother. Can you not let this go, Thor? I've had enough with it – Why do you insist on forcing your delusions on me? You know what? I'm so glad I will finally be able to leave here without any reason to ever come back. I will never have to see you or your lying kin again and I am so grateful for this. I probably should have done what I did earlier to spare me some aeons of wasted time here in this hypocritical pretense of an existence." He glared at Thor, his teeth clenched, trembling. But Thor said nothing, Loki's sudden wrath had caught him off guard. He did nothing to stop him from leaving and only when Loki had left the range of his vision he himself moved again to return to the residence. His father's gift felt heavier than before and he could hear clearly the wolves devouring what little was left of the stag.