

Befitting

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Kapitel 13:

It was coming at him. Fast. Inexorable. There would not be enough time for Loki to take hold of his blaze once more. And he highly doubted his small daggers to be able to penetrate the skin of this thing that ran through the trees of stone as if they were mere illusion. It would only be a matter of moments until it reached him for now he could even see its cover. It was not fur and neither was it covered with bristles. It looked like a piece of earth had come alive and taken the form of what rudimentary reminded him of a boar. Simply less an animal and more of... well, whatever else it was. At least its approaching had made clear Loki did not face another shadow but a solid creature of some kind. He dashed forward, towards his attacker. It was a matter of timing – one second Loki was in front of it, a mere instant from being crushed, the next he had swung himself onto its back, trying to sink his dagger into the creature's body. It almost worked, he could feel the cover weaken but before he could make use of this weakness, he had to jump off again to prevent himself from being shook off without a chance to control his fall. And he had no desire to land under the claws that had only the aim to tread him down. The dagger fell to the ground, Loki had taken just one second too long to retract it. Immediately he grabbed his second dagger, memorizing where the other one had landed, so he could get it back once the opportunity would arise.

Magic. He needed it. Not his flame, though, this spell was powerful but too slow – and it drained him too much. Something lighter, a magic that came at a lower price. Within an instant he felt the blood in his veins turn cold and his heart slowed down... as did everything around him. The creature's every move he saw, decelerated so much he wondered why it had seemed to be so fast when it first approached him. A grin appeared on his face. He knew he would win because there was no way a dull creature like that would end him. It was coming back to him. Good. He clenched his fist and with a small movement straightened his arm once more. It would be his blade for now. Some more steps. He put his hand forth and frost mist was surging from the tips of his fingers, clouding his enemy, slowing him down even more. It was easier this time, his blade of ice cutting through his enemy as if there was no resistance whatsoever. A piece of the beast's front burst off, the frozen mass unable to bend enough the say together when he forced his blade into it again and again as if he was in rage. Truth was: He was calm. So calm he almost felt beside himself.

When he was done with the slaughtering, he examined the leftovers. Unlike the trees, this creature had nothing like blood inside. Neither blood, nor veins, nor entrails or bones. It was formed from a dark mass that felt like clay but firmer and dry. Loki dropped the piece he had picked up to look at it and cleaned his hand on the side of

his cloak where it left a dark stain. He snorted discontentedly but the cleanness of his coat surely was the last thing he would worry about now. A small gesture made his double disappear.

There was something else he did worry about. He sensed how his magic had weakened even more from this fight and now he couldn't even use his prey for anything. He leaned against one of the untouched trees and remained there, even though the pulse disgusted him. It was calming and gave him the warmth he needed to bring the warmth back into his body. There was no need for him to look at himself to know he had slipped into his monster form. And there was no mistaking the icy flow inside of him. He had not felt it that strong when he was fighting but now he was calming down it was so brutally clear, this feeling as if he had been tossed into a frozen stream somewhere in the nothingness. At least the cold of the night had vanished, it wasn't warm but it also wasn't so freezing cold anymore. Slowly his heart came back to its usual pace and with it he felt the change it brought upon his whole being. Back to normal.

He did not move for some time. He rested against the tree, whose pulse dictated his own one. Something was missing and he knew it was the feeling of his magic returning to him, however slowly it would do so. But there was nothing. The fight was over but his magic refused to return to him – could it be this world was so different from the realm he had existed in that his whole existence was shaken to the degree of refusing to provide him with his power? He would have to get behind this pretty soon because for the time being he did not dare to drain the power he clearly felt surrounding him, not as long as he was unable to determine whether it would nourish or rather destroy him further. A rustling noise, not far from him. Once more... he opened his eyes a bit, not too sure about what he had heard. Again, this time louder, coming from the side to his right. That was where he had left his dagger. Where he had – he opened his eyes wide in shock. That couldn't be... but when he looked at the remains of his enemy he figured his presentiment had been correct. The pieces were gathering together, what he had ripped apart grew back to become one once more.

"That's not true. What is this sorcery?!" He whispered to himself. Except it was not sorcery for he would have sensed this earlier. It made him wonder even more what absurd realm this was. He hurried to pick up his second dagger, maybe he could bring enough distance between himself and this creature to escape another senseless fight. Well, at least he now knew better than to underestimate the hostile beings that roamed this world. After one last glance at the thing he grabbed his bag and hurried off, listening to be warned should the thing follow him. And he almost had been sure he had outdistanced the creature when he heard the quiet noise of breaking stone far behind him but drawing closer and closer. Loki started running again, even though he knew he did not have the speed nor the stamina to outrun it. But he could at least win precious moments in order to form a plan.

The problem was: What was there he could do to destroy this thing for good? Ripping it apart obviously hadn't worked too well and his daggers were too weak to cause any harm, especially not of the kind that prevented this thing from growing back together. The variety of spells he had mastered seemed reduced to nothing for none appeared fit to have the effect he needed. Shrouding himself would not work either, he guessed, for the thing had no eyes and still 'saw' him. It could not be manipulated the way he would manipulate other beings. It needed to be crushed to dust and even further so it would not come back again. But he wasn't one given to this kind of destruction – that had always been his broth-... Thor's part. Where Loki was content

once his foe was defeated for good, Thor would bring Mjollnir down again and again until there was nothing left of what had once been his enemy. But he could not rely on anybody but himself now for he was alone and nobody would come to his rescue. Not that he needed to be rescued, of course, but a little help with this thing would have been appreciated anyway.

The thing had almost reached him when Loki stopped dead and turned to face it one more time. Since he couldn't destroy it, he would at least keep it from following him around. He concentrated his cold in his hands as to hurl it at his enemy. One more second... something broke with a drawn-out noise and then his enemy no longer faced him. Instead someone was standing in front of him. At least he hoped it was someone and not one of those shadows or creatures or whatever this accursed world housed.

"I think you could use some help, could you not?" Loki wanted to deny it but he found himself unable to make use of this silvertongue of his to form another lie. Or truth. Anything...