

Befitting

Von Juju-Chan

Kapitel 14:

The person facing him was about Loki's height and wrapped in ragged cloth. Given the deep voice, Loki strongly suspected it to be male but then again it was hard to figure such things out in a world that kept on defying every bit of knowledge Loki had. He opened his mouth to answer the question, but the words wouldn't come out the way he wanted to. Maybe it was because of the other's sudden appearance. Or it was the mere fact Loki knew this kind of aura too well. He had dwelled in it for quite some time, it felt ages ago.

The ones who had picked him up when he fell through nothingness were simple wanderers in the eternal vastness that was the cosmos. Or so he had thought when they collected him, a broken, bruised and bitter nothingness himself, so far gone he no longer resembled the second princeling of Asgard. His fall had drained him, the nagging on his heart had ceased to hurt more than with a dull throbbing. But the beast had found its way into his very mind. The beast that went by so many names... loneliness, hurt, disgust, worthlessness, despair, just to name a few. There had been an instant he had felt regret for letting go. There had been one person who hadn't given up on him... his brother, Thor. And there was this one truth Loki had spoken that was by far greater than all of his lies. No, he had felt a stab of regret when he witnessed Thor crying out for him. But given enough time he figured out this memory was but a wish he had. Thor had not cried for him, he had cried for his brother. Not for Loki.

Step by step Loki had drawn nearer and nearer to so many truths. Most of them concerned himself, some of them concerned those he had thought of as his friends and family. And there was this one truth that was the most painful to bear for it was an absolute.

He refused to remember it.

Once they stopped his fall he was all theirs, his mind too far gone to care about them. What were the reality and the physical world compared to the things he had seen, had felt had been? But they nursed him back so he awoke once more. A shaking pile of nothingness and insecurity. But the fire deep inside had never vanished and they had fed the spark that was alive inside all this time. Because they knew him, knew who he was from the very beginning. He remembered their calls, how they called out his name long before they met. It had been destiny. And destiny had never been too kind to him.

"Are you alright, my son?" The man asked and brought Loki back to the here and now.

How could it be this man was so similar to them?

"I... thank you." That was all Loki managed to stammer. The man seemed to be no threat, he had saved him even, but still Loki felt the urge to run away. This aura was too similar to the ones of his previous saviors. The man turned and he caught a glimpse on this face so unlike the fair ones of Asgard... old. He looked older than the allfather himself.

"There is no need to be afraid anymore, lost one from far away." The man twisted his mouth in something that distantly reminded Loki of a smile. "Yes, I do know you. The cocoons have whispered your name but the ground spoke of your pain." Loki stepped back. Whatever this person said, it made no sense at all.

"What do you want from me?" He readied himself, yet once again. Would he ever be at peace here? But when he slowly brought his hand closer to his dagger, the other one raised his arm.

"There is no need to fight me as I have no intention of fighting you. I wanted to know how this disturbances came into this world and then I found you." He lifted the cloth that had been wrapped around his head and had veiled him from Loki. And now Loki could see him. He looked even older now, old and weak and so far from being threatening that it almost made Loki reach for his dagger again. But he saw wisdom as well and a knowledge he himself had not yet been able to grasp, even though he had been an apt pupil to every master he had had. The man's face was scarred beyond recognition and it seemed not to matter to him at all. He was bald and his dark skin seemed crackled like the ground after months of a draught. There was no trace of ears but a prominent nose, broad and short but still crooked. A very small cut in his face appeared to be his mouth and his eyes were sunken and dull, of a color like milk with a faint hint of a reddish glare underneath.

"What are you talking about, old man?" Loki wished for answers even though he had not been ready to find the questions he wanted to be answered. There were too many anyway. "Why do you talk as if you knew me when we have never met before?" Of course he knew this was no hinderance for some beings. Beings he had been associated with not too long ago for example. "How..." The other one interrupted him.

"I fear this is not the place to talk. The ground may be stunned but it will not remain so forever."

"The.. ground?"

"The one that followed you." So the beast he had fought with... had been the ground? Either that or this old man was slightly insane. Neither possibility was calming Loki. "I will bring you out of its reach. Once we are save we may continue and you may ask me whatever you want. But for now me should hurry." The man did not wait for Loki to say anything else but started walking ahead and after a second of considering the possibility of simply leaving Loki followed him. In the end the man had saved him so he probably did not wish for him to get killed right away.

It took them some time until they reached the end of the woods and entered a plain, grassless and without any green. But in the distance Loki could spot something like a small house. Or rather a round hill with small openings for windows and as a door.

"Is this your home?" He wondered and the other one took several steps before he answered.

"This is where we are save. The area of the cocoons is a dangerous one for those who do not belong." Loki decided to accept this answer for the time being even though it made him wonder. More than he already did anyway. But that had to wait until they were inside this house.

The insides were just as plain and simple as the outside had suggested. There was a bench carved from stone and a table. Most things seemed to be made from stone, but, well, whatever suited them, he guessed. There were so many other things bothering him right now and the material of the interior was not part of these things.

"You promised me answers, old man. I suppose we are save here, are we not?" Without waiting to be asked, he sat down onto the bench. It was far from being comfortable, too hard for comfort, but it served its purpose well enough. "Tell me... who are you? And how did you know I was here?"

"My name is as unimportant as yours, but since you insist.. you may call me Thenaree. I found you because they whispered your name after the first crash." He wanted to continue, but Loki raised his hand to stop him.

"Wait... the first crash? So there was another...?" There was something like hope in his voice. He remembered the noise clearly, he had heard it soon after he had started to roam the forest. The old man smiled, this crooked smile that sent shivers down Loki's spine because it was obvious this mouth had not been made to smile. He took his time to answer.

"No, only this one. You arrived here and this crash was all... and its after-effect, of course. But there was only you..." There was something like empathy in his face but Loki wasn't too sure about that. In the end it was hard to read a face that was almost lacking. He wondered how much this man did know about the circumstances of his arrival. And how he knew this.

"I see. But why did you come to ... collect me? And how were you able to slay this beast?" This had been bugging him since he had witnessed this old and seemingly weak man finish the creature he could not slay with just one blow.

"The ground? You cannot slay them. The only way is to... well, shatter them and stun them for a while." He went silent.

"The reason, old man, I need it." Loki insisted and he did not care about him sounding rude and somehow demanding. Right now this was the thing he needed to know most: Why.

"I know these areas. They are dangerous but they called me to save the lost one. Because you don't belong there." Loki pondered about the things this Thenaree had told him. The answers were far from being satisfying but he could not tell whether it was because he wished for more or because his host hid something from him. But he obviously did not intend to give him more information about this point or maybe there actually were no more informations for him to give.

"You talked about cocoons earlier. What cocoons?"

"The cocoons are what this area is made of. These things, you saw them. The dark ones, the tall dark ones." It took Loki some thoughts to figure out what he meant. He clenched his fists as he remembered leaning against one of them. The warm pulse they had. It had felt like a heartbeat. It had disgusted him back then and it disgusted him even more now.

"You don't mean the.. trees? This forest... this damned forest is made of .. cocoons?!"

"Trees? Forest? Well... the cocoons are harmless, they really are. Never move as if they are stuck to one point and I suppose they are. Unlike the living ones they can't move around. But you seem tired, young one." Without having realized it, Loki had brought one hand onto his temples, rubbing them to stop this throbbing he felt. He needed some time to process these informations and to bring them together to form a whole.

"You might be right. Allow me to rest a while before we continue this." His host nodded.

"There is some space left in the next room." With this he gestured to a small doorway, barely big enough to pass through. But Loki did not care. He needed rest. And maybe this time his magic would return to him faster for now he did not have to uphold a barrier.