The End

“Avengers! Assemble,” Cap announces and the fighting begins.

There’s madness and chaos every way you look. A stream of lightning pulled from the sky illuminates the person you’ve longed to find in a blaze of glory.

“Hello, brother.”

“Loki? But how? Thanos killed you, I was there,” Thor replies while cutting the head off an enemy creature.

“Didn’t I say the sun would shine on us again,” I counter while stabbing a different evil being.

“Yes, but seriously how? He snapped your neck. This makes no sense.” Another bolt of lightning strikes down several advancing monsters and gives the brothers a moment to exchange words before the next round gets to them.

“It’s a very long story, but sacrifices were made and I intend to avenge them. That is what we’re doing here, is it not? Can I borrow that axe in a moment? There’s someone whose body needs to be relieved of its head.”

“If you can get there, it’s all yours, but you owe me an explanation. Is this about…,” Thor begins.

“Yes. Now I must go while there’s still the element of surprise.”

You winds your way around the battlefield in a flurry of motion, constantly changing appearance to hide from all parties. At last you reach Thanos who is currently fighting Stark for the gauntlet and you let the disguises all fall away.

“Loki, have you come to bargain?” Thanos asks.

“We’re a little busy at the moment,” Starks comments at the same time.

“You took everything from me,” I say.

“She must have actually loved you, which is surprising after everything you put her through.”

“What *I* put her through?”

“Uh guys, can this wait?”

“I’m sure it was a fair exchange as all things should be.”

“Well, you’re right, fair is fair..” I trail off as I call for Thor’s axe as I begin to swing and Thanos’s head falls to the ground. I pick up the gauntlet before Tony can process what just happened. The power of the stones is overwhelming as I place it on my hand and I can hear Thor yelling for me to stop, but there is no going back. “For Sigyn,” I say as I snap my fingers and it all goes black.

Almost the Beginning

Chapter One

If I can just master this one transition and surprise Thor, I know I can be a worthy opponent in battle. I slither through the garden up to an unsuspecting boy just trying to get the lighting to jump between his fingers when he turns around and sees me.

“Oh a snake, I love snakes!” he exclaims and proceeds to pick me up when I transform back into myself. For effect I produce a dagger to touch his tunic with to finish the game when I notice movement out the corner of my eye. Distracted, I actually stab Thor instead of lightly tapping him. I scan the balcony that I thought I saw someone in to see a flash of hair and silently curse to myself that we were spotted. Quickly, I help drag Thor inside before whoever it was can reach that part of the garden.

“Loki, what happened?” I hear Mother ask as we enter her chambers.

“Thor’s been stabbed,” I reply simply. She shakes her head in disappointment at me and helps me lay him down so she can attend to him. I watch as she uses a healing stone and whispers some sort of healing spell over him. Then she turns back to me.

“You should go get ready for the celebration this evening. Thor will be fine by then, don’t worry,” she tells me as if I was actually worried I’d killed him.

“I don’t want to go to yet another dumb party. It’s all that goes on around here; party after party after party,” I groan in annoyance.

“We’re welcoming back an Asgardian who has been recently re-orphaned because her adoptive parents don’t want her anymore. Surely you can muster a smidge of compassion to be polite for five minutes,” she beseeches and I roll my eyes.

“Fine, but five minutes is all I’m willing to stand up there for and then I’m out.”

“Thank you, Loki. That’s all I’m asking of you. Now go on and wash up and change into something not covered in your brother’s blood,” she adds that last part as her face changes into a scowl as if she’s not sure she wants to let it go yet. I leave quickly before she changes her mind.

I change into something that is benefitting of the occasion without being too restricting. It’s hard to move in some of these stiff formal clothes. There’s no reason I cannot attempt to make a good first impression on someone whom I haven’t had the pleasure of pulling a prank on yet. When I reach the hall, I find that Thor has indeed made a full recovery and it annoys me that that doesn’t seem to be any lingering effects.

I walk over to join him to wait to be introduced. We don’t have to wait long before she arrives and is presented before Odin. She wears only a simple dress, but likely her best. As she curtsies, her hair falls forward and my mind flashes back to earlier in the garden. I frown for just a moment and then I feel Thor shove me a little. He’s clearly over excited about someone new. Then I hear Father present us to her.

“I must present my sons, Thor and Loki,” he says and gestures to each of us as he says our names. There’s a momentary look of surprise before it disappears and she lowers her gaze and mumbles a shy, “Nice to meet you.” Then my oaf of a brother breaks his silence.

“Hi! It’s good to meet you, Sigyn. Fresh faces are a rarity around here.” She lifts her head back up to look him and I instantly feel her warm to his charm and then her gaze shifts to me and I narrow my eyes at her to say that I’m onto her and give her a short “hello.” She curtsies again and then makes a quick departure.

I look to Mother and she nods to me that I can go. Relieved I back away from Thor before he can make any further comment and plan my strategy. Why didn’t she say anything about Thor and his ‘injury?’ What is she up to? I decide the best way to gauge her is to not be me and I cannot simply be a snake again. That would be obvious. I find a secluded area and decide to try out being a cat for a change. I do my best not to be spotted by anyone else I quietly sneak up on her.

“Oh, hello. I didn’t know there were cats on Asgard. May I pet you?” she asks uncertainly. I was hoping she wouldn’t know about the lack of cats detail, but no matter. She holds out her hand waiting for me to make the first move. I hesitate and then move closer to allow my head to brush her hand. She starts to scratch my ears, which feels nicer than it should when I notice Thor making his way over with his posse of friends. I cannot let them see me so I run off before they spot me and I quickly find a spot to hide to at least listen in.

“Sigyn, these are some of my friends. May I present Sif, Hogun, Fandral, and Volstagg. We’ve all been training together, when we’re not training with proper teachers that is. We were wondering if you’d like to join us on occasion,” Thor asks.

“Well, that is generous of you, but I’m probably so far behind. I’d just be in the way, wouldn’t I,” she counters.

“Nonsense, why Sif here could bring up to snuff in no time I’m sure and you might feel more comfortable working with her at first anyway, right Sif?” he asks and looks at her. I watch as Sif looks her over and then she shrugs her shoulders noncommittally.

“Well, somehow I doubt I could learn that fast,” she argues.

“Is that a challenge,” Sif interjects, “you don’t think I could teach you well?”

“That isn’t what I meant at all,” she says on the defensive.

“Tomorrow at noon, be in the training room. We’ll see what you’ve got,” Sif announces and she walks off and the boys follow sharing confused and slightly worried glances. I cannot transform without being spotted so I try out one of the new things Mother’s been teaching me. I project my regular likeness behind her. It’s a little shaky, but hopefully she won’t notice.

“Now you’ve gone and done it,” I say. I see her clutch a hand to her chest as she turns towards my image.

“Loki, you scared me.”

“You should probably get used to that,” I reply simply. I realize she won’t stand a chance against Sif with whatever clothes she’s brought with her from Midgard so I add, “and you’re probably going to need something easier to move in than anything you’ve brought with you from Midgard. I’ll be by in the morning.” Then I let the image fade before she can say anything more than “wait.”

Tired of the party I wander out to the garden still in cat form. It’s easier to see in the dark this way anyway. I’m not out there long when I notice Sigyn leaving the party early as well. I hop up onto the garden wall so she’ll have a better chance of seeing me. When I know she’s seen me, I hop down and start to make my way into the maze. After a moment I realize she hasn’t followed and I walk back towards her and stare at her. Once she decides to follow I weave us through the maze as far away from the party as possible to a dark part of the garden and then I stop. I hear her ask “Now what?”

I look at her and then hop up onto the wall. I pause for one brief moment and then jump off to the other side leaving her stranded in the dark. I hear her mutter to herself, “Oh you have got to be kidding me. I should have known better. Now what do I do?” I look around and seeing no one, I transform back into myself. It’s not as easy as the snake, but I can certainly get around faster. I head to the library for a little magic study before the night is over.

Chapter Two

A couple of hours later, Mother finds me asleep in the library and wakes me up.

“Loki, you need to go get Sigyn out of that maze,” she tells me.

“Why me” I ask trying to pretend I don’t know how she got lost in there.

“Loki, you and I both know you led her back there. Heaven knows why, but it’s cold tonight and she’s not even bothering to try to make it out. She’s just waiting until morning.” I scramble up off the floor.

“I didn’t know she’d stay there,” I mumble as I make my way down to the garden. I shift back into a cat to make it easier to see one way at least and then change back after I find her sleeping on the ground shivering.

“Sigyn,” I whisper trying not to scare her as she wakes up.

“Loki? Wait, where am I?” she asks as she sits up. She glances around and then adds, “Oh right, never mind. How did you know where I was?” Pausing for only a moment because I cannot tell her it was me who left her out here I reply with, “Mother sensed you back here and sent me to find you. She knows I know this garden better than nearly anyone else. You’re freezing, come on let’s get you to your room.”

I help her up and take her hand and I start to lead her back through the maze. I only hope I do actually remember the way. After a few minutes I cannot help myself and have to ask, “What were you doing here in the dark anyway?” She doesn’t answer right away. I start to worry that she’s figured it out already. Finally she answers the question.

“The party was a bit overwhelming and went for a walk. Clearly I wasn’t paying attention to where I was going and got lost. I’ll try to remember to take a light with me next time,” she assures me.

Her answer feels like a lie, which I know it is, but I can’t just accuse her of that without giving myself away so I decide to play with a little different fire, “well, you should be careful. There are snakes hiding out here.”

She stops walking and takes her hand back and starts rubbing her cold arms and then she asks, “You mean you?” I turn to look at her.

“You did see that, didn’t you? I thought I’d seen you run from your balcony after, but you didn’t tell anyone?” I ask curiously.

“I wasn’t even sure who it was until Odin presented you to me. There was no one there when I reached that spot in the garden, just a puddle of drying blood. If it hadn’t been for that, I would have thought I’d made the whole thing up.”

“Ah, I see” I say irritated.

“What does that mean?” she asks, clearly annoyed.

“If you’d have known who we were you would have run off and told someone, right?”

“Thor could have died. If I’d have known who you were I would have known who to tell to get him help. Should I not care if someone lives or dies?” she asks quietly.

“Aren’t you going to ask?”

“Ask what?”

“You know what,” I mutter and when she doesn’t say anything, “if I was trying to kill him or not, obviously,” I add bitterly.

“Did you mean..” she starts to say, but I cut her off.

“No, I was practicing my transition from another form back to myself and I misjudged my stab a little. It wasn’t supposed to be as deep as it was.”

“Oh so he knew that was you?”

“Well, no. It couldn’t be a successful surprise attack if he knew it was me,” I add feeling a little guilty when she puts it that way, but I can’t help but smile a little at Thor’s shocked face in my memory. Then she surprises me with little burst of laughter as she quickly covers her mouth to hide it.

“Perhaps you should use fewer sharper objects when you’re supposedly practicing,” she suggests and then she shivers and I realize how cold she is even though I’m not sure it’s truly cold enough that she should be shivering this much.

“Right, well let’s get you back and warm before my mother accuses me of stabbing you as well. Shall we,” I suggest as I hold out my arm for her to take. She hesitates at first, but then she takes it and I lead her back out.

I drop her off at her room, bow, and then leave her in peace while a million little thoughts run through mine on the way back to my own room where I find Mother waiting for me.

“She’s safe back in her room,” I report.

“Good, now Loki I need you to listen to me. I need you to look out for her, not keep baiting her into traps. She’s not going to find it easy to transition here and her training will not be as productive as everyone else’s,” she tells me and I look at her in confusion. She continues, “I know it’s hard at 9 to be good, but can you at least try a little?”

I’m not sure exactly what she means, but I nod in any case. No need to disappoint her now.

“Oh and one more thing, I’ll be taking care of her clothing situation and not you Loki. I’m sure you mean well, but seeing as how you’re a boy and she’s a girl, I think it best if I take it from here for now, yes?” she asks.

“You’re right Mother. I hadn’t thought if that,” I tell her in return. It was true though. I didn’t actually know what an 8 year old girl would need to wear. She kisses my forehead goodnight and I lay in bed trying to figure out why she wants me to look out for Sigyn. Surely Thor would be better suited. In fact he’d be thrilled with such an honor to prove himself worthy. I’m just going to muck it up.

Eventually I drift off wondering how the training with Sif will go.

Chapter Three

Eight Years Later

Thor and I are sparring with each other when we hear Sif getting fed up with Sigyn. We try to ignore it at first as this happens nearly every session.

“No, you have to place this foot here and this foot here,” Sif says angrily as she adjusts her footing.

“Sif, maybe we should just call it a day,” she pleads.

“One more time,” is all Sif says in return says as she places their arms into position and then they step off and then she flips Sigyn onto her back, again. I cringe when I hear her land. “Ugh why aren’t you listening to me?” Sif barks in frustration, “are you sure you’re even Asgardian?” That gets our attention and we can’t ignore them any longer. I see Sigyn shrink into herself a bit. “What?” Sif practically yells at her audience, “you’re all thinking it. Someone had to say it. We’ve been at this for over 8 years and she still cannot even grasp the basics. Anyone else can after a year. She’s impossible to train,” she sputters and walks out of the training area.

Thor wanders over to Sigyn before I gather the courage to go over myself. I hear him tell her, “Don’t let it get to you. She’s just always been a natural fighter. You’re clearly not and she doesn’t know how to work with that. Why don’t you take a break and just watch for a while,” he suggests and then returns to where I’m still standing. I watch her walk to the edge of the training area and sit on a bench to observe. She notices me watching and she shakes her head at me and I frown at her then turn back to Thor.

Thor and I resume our practice when all of a sudden I hear her voice in my head asking herself if there’s something wrong with her and questioning if she is Asgardian after all. It catches me off-guard and Thor hits my arm harder than I was prepared for so I stop and complain about needing to ease up, that it’s only practice. We argue back and forth and when I glance back to check on Sigyn I see that she’s disappeared. We continue for another hour or so before calling it a day and I go off in search of Sigyn.

I find her alone in the library. When I decide she hasn’t seen me, I shift into cat form and silently walk over, getting her attention by rubbing up against her arm.

“Are you here to lead me into some other trap today?” she asks defensively. I meow at her back offended. “Well the record shows that so far it could go either way with you, you know,” she responds. Well I don’t have to take this. After all I was trying to be nice, so I lift my head up and strut off around the corner. I hear her call after me, “Wait, I’m sorry,” but I don’t go back. Instead I shift back into myself and wait until she moves from her reading spot to return the books she was reading. I creep up behind and wait for her to turn around. I am not disappointed when she does. “Good grief, stop doing that.”

“I did say you should get used to it,” I laugh in response.

“You’ve been sneaking up me ever since I got here 8 years ago. Aren’t you bored yet?”

“Not when it gets you every time,” I reply with a smirk on my face. She predictably rolls her eyes at me. Then I frown and get serious. I ask her, “You know not to listen to Sif, right?” She laughs quietly, hesitantly before answering.

“You mean about my apparent lack of skills? I got over that ages ago.”

“You know that’s not what I’m asking about,” I say softly and her face drops in sorrow. I hate when she has that look.

“Oh, that. I don’t think your father would let me be here if I wasn’t, at least in part, right? He’s not much for outsiders. Does everyone really doubt I’m Asgardian?” She asks in return, deflecting what she thinks a smidge.

“I don’t doubt it,” he tell her firmly.

“Thanks, Loki,” and she rewards me with a smile, “I know I can always count on you.” That wasn’t exactly the response I was expecting, but knowing her maybe I should have. It puts me on the defensive when she’s nice to me.

“You probably shouldn’t do that. I’m only trouble, don’t you know,” I say bitterly and the frown returns to her face.

“Loki, you’re not a bad person, okay” she say to me and then she touches my cheek and I can’t bear to look at her, “They just don’t always understand that you’re not trying to hurt them; that you’re just having a bit of fun. It’s not always the best way to get their attention, but I know that you don’t always know how to show you care and…” I cut her off before she can finish.

“Stop,” I angrily say as I grab her wrist and pull he hand away from my face. I grip it tightly as I tell her, “you think I care about them? I don’t. You’ve got it all wrong. I don’t care about any of them.”

I let go of her wrist and turn away from her. I walk away from her before I do something ridiculous like go back and apologize. I didn’t mean to get angry at her. After rounding the corner I transform back into a cat and wait outside the doors. Hopefully she won’t be angry to see me in that form because she doesn’t know it’s me. I shouldn’t have hurt her like that and if the only way I can comfort her is in this form I’ll do it. I don’t have to wait long before she exits the library and see me.

“I am deeply sorry if I have offended you. I seem to only be good at shoving my foot in my mouth when I speak,” she apologizes and I can only meow in return. Then we both hear footsteps heading this way and I recognize the sound of my Mother walking the hallway this way. I scurry off before Mother catches me and thinks I’m up to no good again.

I slink around the dark shadows around the garden to avoid being seen by anyone and find a safe path to wait on Sigyn’s balcony. Several minutes pass before I hear her enter her room. I silently walk closer to her room, but pause as I see her sit in front of her dressing mirror staring at her reflection. Then she suddenly gets up and goes to her bed. I shrink back to avoid being seen. She grabs her pillow and lets out a sorrowful, angry scream. Then I hear her quiet sobs and I decide maybe I should go for now. I return to the dining hall, as my normal self, to find Mother. She’s talking with one of her ladies when she spots me and waves me over.

“I’m worried about Sigyn, Loki,” she tells me plainly. “Something happened today, didn’t it?” I only nod in affirmation and she nods in return. “There’s something I need to do in the morning, would be willing to give her the magic lesson tomorrow?”

“Of course, Mother,” I reply and leave the hall to return to Sigyn.

I return to my cat form and paw at the door after another hour or so have passed and I’ve formulated my plan.

She opens the door and glances around, but forgets to look down so I wind myself between her legs to get her attention. She gently picks me up and then closes the door behind her.

“I’m not sure you should be in here, but I don’t know if anyone else even knows you exist so there’s probably no harm,” she tells me and sits back down on the bed places me down next to her. Well that won’t do and I crawl into her lap. “Oh, are you no longer mad at me? At least that’s one fewer to worry about I guess, for now. I’m afraid I’ve quite made a mess of things.” She pauses before rambling on, “I never meant to hurt him, you know? And now she wants me to call her mother? And now I’m venting to a cat. I think I’ve officially gone crazy. What do you think?”

“Meow,” I respond with sympathy.

“Yes, you are quite right, I’ve lost it. Perhaps things will be better tomorrow. Oh, I don’t have anywhere for you to sleep,” she says only to frown as she notices me curling up on the pillow. “Hm, well just tonight,” she says through a yawn, “but that’s it.”

I wait until I know she’s for sure asleep and then I change back to myself and I pull a small pair of scissors from my pocket. I gently separate a small section of hair on the underside of her head and cut it about shoulder length and mouth an apology as I hide the scissors and the lock of hair. Just as I’m about to change back into cat form, she opens her eyes. She blinks a couple times and must have seen my shadow, because she quietly asks out, “Loki?” I finish shifting and sit on the railing trying to pretend I’ve been there awhile. Instead of getting up, she mercifully falls back asleep.

I make my way down, turn back to myself, and head to my room. Once I reach my room, I carefully take the lock of hair and tie it with a green ribbon. Then I safely store in a nearby drawer. Then I fall into a restless sleep.

In the morning I hurry to beat Sigyn to the lesson and sit myself in the middle of the room. I’m only waiting for a few minutes before she enters the room. I notice that she didn’t attempt to braid her hair this morning so that at least means she noticed, but does she know it was me?

“Good morning, Loki. I’m sorry about sticking my nose into things yesterday. I hope we can try to just forget about it?” She says when she reaches me. She’s kept her face from showing any emotion. Why isn’t she calling me out? She must certainly know it was me.

“If that’s what you wish,” I finally respond after giving her another moment to break down and accuse me of cutting her hair. Then I calmly inform her of the day’s lesson and Mother’s cancellation. “Mother asked if I would take her place today. She had some other things to attend to. Do you mind?”

“Might as well. I’ve got nothing better to do,” is all she says.

We spend most of the morning trying to perform any sort of magic, but as I expected nothing comes of the lesson. I’m not sure why she’s unable to do magic. I remember Mother’s warning years ago about how she wouldn’t be as proficient quite as quickly as the rest of us, but she didn’t mention she wouldn’t be able to perform any magic. I get frustrated that I’m unable to help her and let her have the afternoon off with a note that perhaps some unwatched practice will be more productive. She looks at me doubtfully and wary for some reason. Then she leaves.

After I know she’s back in her room, I spend the next hour sneaking around cutting some hair from a few of my Mother’s ladies and Sif of course. I wouldn’t want Sigyn to feel like I’ve singled her out, plus now she’ll have someone else to confide in about her cut hair. Perhaps they can bond over it. I’ve just made it back to my room when I hear the thunderstorm starting up. I internally groan. Of course Sif would go to Thor. I didn’t even cut that much, just enough to notice. Then I hear the lightning strike followed by Thor shouting my name. Well there’s no point putting it off. I head off towards the garden.

I confront him and notice the storm surrounding us and yet we two are dry. He has that much control already? I dare a glance up to Sigyn’s balcony where she’s watching, but she goes back inside once Thor cuts into me complaining about Sif’s hair. I feel a little deflated. And then the All Father’s scepter clangs and I internally cringe. The storm breaks immediately and the two of us head to the hall. Both Odin and Frigga are waiting for us, but Father is the one to speak.

“What is the meaning of all this noise, Thor?”

“Sif and several of Mother’s ladies have reported an unusual hair chunk of hair missing from their heads. Who else would’ve done such a thing?”

“It his accusation correct, Loki,” he asks me in turn. I look to Mother before answering and she looks so tired so I decide not to beat around the bush.

“I was just having a bit of fun, Father,” I tell him. There’s a brief moment where the surprise hits his face, but then he quickly schools it away to give his verdict.

“You will apologize to each lady and offer your assistance for one favor whatever their choosing as repayment for your behavior. Is that understood?”

“Yes, Father,” I agree. It’s a light sentence, easy enough to carry out except for Sigyn. Did she report the incident after all? Odin dismisses us and I decide to start with Mother’s ladies first and I apologize to each and offer my assistance as required by the All Father. Thankfully, they each had no need of me at the moment so I left them to go find Sigyn. I find that the closer I get to her room, the more nervous I am. I bail at the last moment, changing back into cat form and hopping up onto her balcony rail, where I pace pondering what to say when she notices me there.

“Are you coming in or shall I leave you in peace to wander back and forth?” she asks. I stop pacing, hop down, and slowly make my way over. I pause momentarily before climbing into her lap waiting for forgiveness. She sighs and then starts to carefully pet my head and I’m so relieved I start purring. I didn’t even know I could purr. Then she starts to speak.

“Well, I might as confess to someone. I’m worried kitty. I feel like Loki’s acting out and I fear it might be my fault.” I meow in protest. “I pushed too far too fast. And then this morning’s lesson went horribly. I’m just letting everyone down. He was so frustrated with me today. He must have taken it out on Thor instead. I wish he’d have just yelled at me, you know? I should probably go apologize to Thor for that. Then, I should confront Loki. I had hoped he’d been satisfied after,” she pauses mid-sentence to look in the mirror and then shakes her head, “no, what’s done is done. I had it coming anyway, right?”

I let out a quieter meow feeling guilty and then I realize it’s getting late so I climb out of her lap and stretch. She looks outside to see it’s grown darker and clearly realizes that we’re late for dinner. She brushes out her hair and leaves it totally loose and then we head down. I turn when we the garden and let her go in first so that I have a chance to shift back safely somewhere in the garden.

It takes an extra moment as there are a couple people wandering today and I lose precious time waiting for them to walk by. Then as I’m rounding the corner to head into the hall Sigyn is nearly running from the hall and looking down so she doesn’t see me before she runs into me.

“What’s the rush? Fire in the dining hall I hope?” I ask light-heartedly so as not to one hundred percent give myself away.

“Ones I’ve started I guess,” she replies as she finally looks up at me. She’s very clearly trying not to cry. I don’t know what to say to keep her from crying, again.

“Sigyn, what’s wrong, tell me,” I asks softly.

“No, Loki, not this time. I have to go,” she answers quickly as she pushes me aside and runs back to her room. I glace around and not anyone, shift again and run after her. When I reach her room she’s scrambling around shoving things in a bag. I sit there in a frozen panic unsure of what to do when after a moment she picks something up and stands in front of the mirror. A moment too late, I realize she’s holding scissors and cutting the rest of her hair to match the section I cut. Then she turns, grabs her bag, and heads to the door where I’m sitting utterly petrified.

“I have to go kitty, I’m sorry. I’m sorry I can’t take you with me, but I have to go,” she says to me. All I can think to do is try to grab at her skirt to get her to stay, but she instead she says, “no, stop that. I’m going.” So I stop and run for the dining hall, for Mother. I change as I’m entering the room.

“Mother,” I say breathless, “it’s Sigyn. She’s heading for the bifrost.”

She nods and quickly heads to the bifrost and I head back to Sigyn’s room to wait for her return. Mother will speak reason into her. I’m carefully cleaning up the masses of hair when Mother finds me there, without Sigyn.

“Where is she?” I ask, panicking.

“She left, Loki,” she says and then continues before I can ask what happened in the dining hall, “she confronted Thor apologizing for setting you off not knowing you’d made a mess of cutting hair off several other heads. And Sif made an extra point about you not cutting some of Sigyn’s hair, but you did, didn’t you?” I can only nod in shame and then she goes on, “and instead of claiming that you did in fact cut some of her hair, she apologized again and ran off. Do I even want to know why you’ve done what you’ve done? Nevermind don’t answer that.”

“Is she safe? Will she be back?” I ask not knowing if I want the answer to the second question. She takes a moment before responding.

“Yes, she’s safe. I made sure Heimdall left her somewhere safe. And I am sure she’ll return soon. I think you’ve underestimated how much she cares about you, Loki.” She touches my cheek and then leaves me alone in Sigyn’s empty room.

“I know,” I mumble as soon I know she’s out of hearing range.\*

Chapter Four

For the first couple days after Sigyn left, I mope around in my rooms, but that leaves me with pent up energy so what else to do but plan some scheme to get back at Thor for being a complete boor. I go to the library for a book when I cross paths with Mother.

“It’s nice to see you finally out and about. Hopefully you’re not about to do anything you might regret,” she says as if somehow she can read my mind. Although I suppose it wouldn’t truly surprise me that she can. Perhaps she’d be willing to teach me so maybe I’ll be slightly truthful in my response.

“You must know me well, Mother. Don’t worry it’s nothing too terrible, just a bit of fun really,” I say while smiling innocently at her.

“Fine, so long as it does not involve trying to murder someone.”

“Mother, that was a complete accident. It’s too soon before I could try that one again anyway. He’d see me a mile away.”

She shakes her head and continues on her way. I locate the book on transforming that I’m looking for and go back to my room to read. After an hour I get bored and I place the book down on a table.

I open the drawer with the lock of Sigyn’s hair in it and hold in my hand. I’d only wanted to use it to cast a spell to try to make her happier. She always seemed sad. I’d only cut others’ hair as a cover-up to my plans. I didn’t know it’d drive her to leave.

I certainly never expected she’d not tell anyone what I’d done. She didn’t even confront me about it. She’d thought she’d deserved it. I wish she’d come back home so I could at least explain. Enough of that, I put her hair back and pick the book back up. I have a prank to pull at dinner.

I take my midday meal in my room so that I can practice and when I feel satisfied with the results I head to the training to field to see if there’s anyone left training. If I can pretend like all is well it’ll produce better effects later. Everyone is still there when I arrive so I make way over to Thor.

“Brother, it’s good to see you. Have you come to join us for a round of sparring.”

“I have although I wasn’t sure if you’d be just about done.”

“Well we were, but I’m willing to go a short round with you brother, if you’re willing?” he offers and I nod. It’s almost too perfect. The others however take their leave to prepare for dinner.

“It’s good of you to spare some time for me, brother.”

“I always have time for you,” he says defensively.

“That might have been true once. Anyway, shall we?”

We match blow for blow for a few minutes before he interrupts the flow by talking.

“I was surprised about Sigyn being sent on a goodwill mission to Midgard. Shouldn’t it have been us? I’m not sure she’s had enough diplomacy training to be sent.” So that’s the story. I did wonder. I counter attack after Thor attempts to throw me off balance.

“I’m sure she’ll do fine. I doubt she’s trying to undermine your ascension to the throne or mine.”

“You should have seen her face though after I brushed her hair back behind her ear that night at dinner. She looked so pale that I nearly kissed her to put some color in her cheeks, but then Sif…” he says, but I cut him off with a punch to the face. “Ow, what was that for?”

“Sorry, my hand slipped,” I reply and he raises an eyebrow.

“Anyway, I do have to ask why didn’t you cut hers or had you just not gotten to her before I called you out on it?”

“Oh no, I cut it. She just didn’t rat me out or make a scene because she’s not like the rest of us barbarians.”

“There is something definitely off about her, that’s true,” he responds and it takes every effort not to murder him, but I promised Mother I wouldn’t. Instead I leave and I hear him call out after me, “you owe me a rematch! Loki! Loki!”

Back in my room I pace about angrily until it’s time for dinner. I do my best to clear my face as if nothing is bothering me and walk into the hall. Everyone else is already there. I debate whether this silly trick is worth it, but it’s better than nothing.

I wait until Thor has a mouthful of food before I strike. I cast my magic across the room at him and his friends and turn the food in their mouths into a bunch of spiders. Their shrieks of disgust and horror delight me until I sense Father’s gaze upon me. He doesn’t say anything and I feel like some sense of justice has been served. I smile proudly to myself the moment I leave the room.

The next half year or so passes uneventfully as I simply return to training both in combat and with magic lessons with Mother. I anxiously wait for Sigyn to return. As her 17th birthday approaches I ask Mother if she thinks she’ll be back, but she tells me that Sigyn hasn’t made any move towards returning. I wander down to Himinbjorg to see Heimdall.

“Do you think I might visit her?” I ask knowing it’s likely pointless, but just in case I add, “It is almost her birthday. I thought perhaps,” but he interrupts me.

“I’m afraid that won’t be possible. The Queen has forbidden me from letting you go. She’s doing fine though she does occasionally call for you, but I don’t think she even realizes she’s doing it.”

“Thanks,” is all I say as I leave to return to the city feeling slightly disappointed and slightly puzzled.

Reaching the comfort of my room, I walk to the balcony overlooking the city. In the distance, I see a small cottage. I’d forgotten it was even out there. Thor and I had found it when we about 7 and would hide from Father and Sif. I glace to where I have Sigyn’s lock of hair and wonder. The next day I ask Mother about it.

“That has been abandoned ever since,” and she trails off before continuing, “Why, what are thinking?”

“You mean you don’t already know?” I ask sarcastically.

“I try not to always be in your head. It’s a mess in there.”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about. It’s perfectly organized. And anyway, I want to fix it up for Sigyn, for when she eventually comes home, because she will, right?”

“She will, but I’m not sure about the cottage. It’s not in very good shape.”

“Is that the only reason you’re unsure?” I ask sensing there’s more she’s not saying and it takes a while before she responds.

“No, but that’ll be a conversation for a different day. If you want to fix it up, you may, but don’t be disappointed if she doesn’t want to stay there.”

I thank her and then run off to the cottage. When I arrive, I can definitely see what she meant about it being run down. Perhaps I should have looked at it before asking. Then I decide to get to work. I consult some people in the city who are better dealing with architecture and such and basically let other people do the work.

I do my best to limit the number of people who know what I’m up to. I go in disguise myself as Mother so that no one actually even knows that it’s me. As the final touch of the furnishing and decorating, I add a small porcelain snake to the top of the mantle. It’s one from my personal collection. That way there’s no hiding I had my hand in this is some regard.

Before I know it, nearly another year has passed when Mother informs me that Sigyn has told Heimdall that she’s hoping to return the day before her birthday. I start trying to figure out what to say to her, when Mother interrupts my thoughts.

“She doesn’t want to see anyone right away, just so you know.”

“Well, how do we get her to the cottage then?” I ask and she just looks at me like the answer is obvious.

“Does she know you’re the cat?”

“You know about that?” I ask feely slightly guiltily.

“You think I cannot see through your magic? I’d know you anywhere Loki.”

“Are you going to tell her?”

“No, you should do that before she figures it out and feels betrayed. In the meantime, you might as well use that to deliver a message when she arrives.”

“That should work. Heimdall isn’t going to say anything, is he?”

“I’ll let him know not to say anything. Now what should I get her for her birthday. Any ideas?” she asks as if again, she cannot already read my mind.

“I might have a couple ideas,” I tell her.

We spend the next couple days gathering some things and then I take some of them to the cottage and a couple I keep back for more personal delivery after she arrives.

And then I wait.

Chapter Five

As early as I dare the day before her birthday, I write a quick note to tell her to follow the cat and then I transform into said cat. I pick up the note in my mouth and rush to Himinbjorg to await her arrival. Hopefully I haven’t missed her. I reach the end of the bifrost bridge just as Heimdall is opening it to bring Sigyn back and then she steps through, slightly unsteadily.

They exchange a brief greeting and then Heimdall gestures to me. I see a look of dread in her eyes that changes to relief when she sees it’s only me as the cat. Clearly she hasn’t quite figured it out, which is fine honestly. I learn more this way.

She slowly makes her way over to take the note. She raises an eyebrow in some question after she reads it. I stand and then lead her through several winding back alleys and roads to keep her from meeting unsuspecting Asgardians.

Eventually we make it to the cottage where there’s another note from Mother waiting for her. I wait until she’s read the note and heads in before I wander away to quickly retrieve two more of the presents we have for her, one from Mother and one from me. She’s already finished making herself breakfast by the time I’ve returned. I place the items down near her feet and then hop on the table to spy on what she’s made.

“That is not for you,” she scolds me. I leap back off the table and meow loudly at her in complaint. Then she picks up the two items I brought. She asks, “More presents?” I nod. “Well, I’ll save them for tomorrow. I’ll add them to the box I had noticed in the bedroom.

She gets up to do that and I follow her. Mother specifically said she needed to open the one from her now so I bring it back to her.

“Am I to open this one now then?” she questions and I can only meow and nod at her. I don’t know what she got her so I watch as she dumps the contents out. It’s some weird ring thing and another note to which she lets out a groan of annoyance.

She reads the note and looks the ring over, but then returns both to the bag. Then she turns back to her food of which she only takes a few small bites of before placing down by me. It’s clearly gone cold, but I nibble some just to be polite.

After that, she starts unpacking and I follow her around at she acquaints herself with the cottage. Then she takes a break to read and I curl up in her lap and read along. We read until she determines it’s time to make dinner. She graciously makes up two plates, but then puts the second on the floor and I meow at her offended that she put it on the floor again.

“Well I’m not letting you eat sitting up on the table. I have to set some sort of boundaries with you,” she says as she shoves a fork full of food in her mouth. I meows crossly, but then I give in and nibble small bites. Even though I’m annoyed, I’m hungry.

Once we've finished eating and she cleans up the dishes from the day, she has clearly decided it's time for bed. She wanders into the bedroom and I follow her to the door. She carefully moves the box and the extra package to a nearby table. Then she closes the door in my face.

"I'll be back in a moment okay, although feel free to get comfortable on the couch or something," she tells me. I just sit in wait, confused. Then she opens the door and notice she changed. Ah. I move past her and jump onto the bed. I then proceed to curl up on her pillow and am glad I made sure she got nice, soft ones. It doesn’t take long to fall asleep after a long day of nothing.

I wake to the smell of food being made and I realize she was up long before me. I wasn’t even sure I could hold this form this long. I get down and make my way to her little kitchen. I’m glad Mother told me she’d been learning to cook so that I made sure I didn’t just rip the whole kitchen out when redoing the cottage.

"Finally decide to get up?" she says when I enter the kitchen and she places an extra plate on the ground and I immediately dig in feeling starved. She half complains, “So nice of you to wait for me,” as I do so, oops. When I’ve finished eating, I glance out the kitchen window and see how late it’s gotten already. I quickly scurry for the door and scratch at it until she lets me out. Then I bolt to the palace to start prepping for tonight.

Thankfully I don’t have to help much with the logistics of setting up the actual party, but I do manage to help carry a few things. Soon enough it’s time to bathe and dress. I want to attempt to match what’s she’s wearing, elegance wise. Mother picked out her colors and fabric without me, so I’m not sure how well we’ll match, if at all. I can always change the color later with magic if need be. I wear my usual green and black, with a few gold accents here and there. Thor’s been experimenting more with his lightning so I grease my hair slightly to avoid static frizz.

Once I’ve finished dressing, I head to the hall for dinner. I’m not sure she’ll show for that, but as a prince of Asgard I have to be present for such occasions. It’s quite annoying most times. I sit at the table and push around my food waiting impatiently. Where is she?

We’re all starting to head to the ballroom to start the rest of the festivities, which feels odd without the guest of honor, when I sense something. I glimpse at Mother whose now wearing a worried look. Her head turns my way that now reads that I need to go with some urgency.

I set my pace as fast as I dare without drawing attention and switch to cat form the moment I can to run for the cottage. As I approach the door, I notice the sudden destruction to several flower bushes around the structure. I begin scratching and meowing at the door. When she doesn’t answer right away, I start panicking. I nearly shift back so that I can let myself in, but the door finally opens.

She looks the most miserable I have seen her to date. I knew I should have actually cast that spell. Her eyes are hollow and red; her cheeks are colorless with clear traces of fresh tears. She picks me up and then carries me towards where her mirror is while saying, “I’m fine kitty, I’m fine,” but I meow knowing it’s a lie.

There’s a letter laying open on the floor. I don’t have much time to read all of it before she picks it back up. All I pick up is something about Father forbidding something, something about Jötunheim and her parents, and something about titles. She’s a goddess? I watch as she throws it on the fire. There was something important in there if she’s burning it. Oh I wish I’d had more time to read.

She goes back to face the mirror and says, “This will never do now,” and it’s the first chance I get to look over the outfit Mother finished putting together for her. The majority color is a deep emerald which miraculously matches the necklace I bought for her. Mother must have known. She’s also wearing some ratty white bracelet that doesn’t match and yet it suits her.

She runs her hands over her outfit and shakes out her skirt, but nothing changes. She touches her face and then the necklace. She looks back to me and asks, “That’s better, isn’t it, kitty?” I give her a quiet meow worried. Nothing changed, but clearly she thinks something has. I’m afraid perhaps whatever sadness was in that letter is making her delusional.

She moves to head to the door as she says, “I suppose I ought to get going before they send an army to fetch me.” After a brief moment of hesitation wondering if perhaps now’s the time to come clean about being the cat, I decide just to follow her out. Once we reach the outskirts of the ballroom I reluctantly leave her so that I can change back without notice.

By the time I’ve returned properly she’s walking away from Mother and Father and towards Thor who is walking towards her. I try to get as close as I can without being seen to hear the conversation.

“Sigyn, you’re back. We’ve missed you. Life has been dull without our entertaining combat training lessons. And what’s this, you’re in all black. Tis more appropriate for mourning and not a birthday party surely, isn’t it?” Thor asks and I feel confused, black? She’s clearly wearing green.

“It’s warmer,” she replies sounding slightly irked.

“But it’s not even cold, though now that I think about it, you have always been sensitive to the cold I guess,” he responds and that is true. It’s why I wanted her to have long sleeves.\*

“Yes, now if you’ll excuse me, I need to go find a drink,” she says clearly starting to get angry. I didn’t even know she drank. Perhaps she picked that up on Midgard. As she walks away, I can hear people start to whisper about the conversation and the question about her outfit of choice, which apparently people are seeing as all black.

She makes her way to the balcony just past the edge of the ballroom after grabbing a drink on the way by. I follow staying hidden in the shadows watching to see what she might do next. She appears to be leaning over the edge so I decide then to announce my presence to her.

“Careful you don’t fall over the edge,” I call out to her in both as a light hearted joke and with a smidge of concern.

“How do you know I’m not just planning to jump?” she asks in return and turns towards me. It’s honestly hard to tell if she’s joking or not and then she continues, “I’m not sure I can promise not to push you over though.” That puts a small smile on my face. Sometimes I think we have more in common than I thought.

“You’d never. At least not on purpose, now I on the other hand...” I say, but leave the sentence hanging for interpretation. I move close to where she’s standing and ask her, “Are you having a good birthday, Sigyn?”

“Oh of course, Loki. It’s been the best birthday, I’ve had in years,” she replies bitterly, but then in a more serious tone, “Thank you for the gifts, Loki. They were unnecessary though.”

“It was my pleasure. Is there anything else I can do for you?”

“No, you’ve done more than enough.”

“Can I ask you a question?” I ask and she nods a go ahead.

“I’m confused. I overheard Thor saying that your dress is black, but it’s not. I would maybe think he’s just colorblind, but I did hear some other whispers wondering about it being black,” and I pause.

“That’s not a question,” she informs me.

“Why can I see the green?” I finally ask continuing my thought and she doesn’t answer right away.

“It didn’t seem fair that you should be denied seeing your own gift in its true form. The Queen Mother can also see it as it truly is,” she eventually says.

“You can do magic now?” I ask confused. Is that what I felt earlier?

“That’s two questions, but since I’m feeling generous today I’ll answer. I can do some, yes. I don’t know the extent of it. I learned some things while on Midgard. I’m attempting to not make it public knowledge yet so I trust you’ll keep my secret?” I nod feeling slightly honored to know her secret and so she adds, “Thank you.”

And then I do something crazy.

“Can I have this dance?” I ask and hold out my hand to her. She glances around for potential witnesses so I say, “No one can see us here.” She rolls her eyes and takes my hand. I lead her though the steps of some dance that’s flowing in my veins with happiness. I am careful to never have us leave the shadows so that this is just between us. At the end of the dance, I bow to her and leave her to her thoughts so that I can process my own.

Elated after the dance, I decide to leave the party before someone can ruin my mood. I return to my room and head to the balcony to look over the city in the starlight. Soon I notice movement at the Bifrost Bridge. Even from here I can easily tell it is Sigyn.

I watch a little worried she might be running away again. There doesn’t seem to be anything happening so perhaps she just didn’t want to leave Heimdall out of all the fun. Soon enough I see her making her way back and release a breath I didn’t know I was holding.

I make the choice to transform again. By the time I’ve reached the cottage she’s already made it in and has closed the door behind. I hop onto a window ledge to peek in and see she’s already gotten into bed. I get back down and I change a paw back to hand and an arm and open the door. I peak inside and then let myself in and quietly shut the door so she doesn’t see me.

She flips over as I make my way to her room so then I leap onto the bed and curl up in my spot on the pillow. She doesn’t say anything. She just closes her eyes and falls asleep.

I don’t stay the whole night. This might be the one night Thor notices I’ve gone missing so I only stay a few hours though I don’t really want to leave her when I know she’s feeling this terribly depressed about whatever was in that letter. I check the fireplace before I leave in case anything didn’t burn, but there’s nothing. I leave disappointed not to know more.

I return to the palace as the party is ending. I try to blend in attempting to make it seem like I was here the whole time. I wish Mother good night and head back to my rooms, again.

Chapter Six

The next morning, I’m making my way down to eat when I come across Sigyn walking down the hall clearly on some mission.

“Good morning, Loki. I don’t suppose you happen to know where your mother is, do you?” she asks.

“I have not seen her yet this morning, so I’m sure she’s still in her rooms. Would you like me to walk with you?” I offer and she nods. We walk in silence for a moment before she breaks it with another question.

“Where did you go after our dance last night? Did I step on your toes without realizing?”

“You just looked like you’d rather be alone. You looked positively heartbroken actually. Would you like to talk about it?” I ask in return, because it’s the truth, she looked pretty miserable.

“And here I thought I’d hidden it pretty well.”

“You forgot that you didn’t use your magic to hide your true face from me. Plus there’s also the fact you asked me if I wasn’t sure you weren’t planning to jump from the balcony,” I remind her gently.

“Oh, right that. I suppose it’s a bit of a long story. Can we talk later? The cottage, dinner?” Is that a date?

“Anything you wish. And here we’ve arrived just in time; Mother,” I say trying to keep my cool who’s exiting her chambers as we approach.

“Loki. Good morning my dear. What can I do for you?” she asks Sigyn curiously while dismissing me. I bow and leave them and I return to my initial plan and head down for breakfast.

Mother comes into the hall only moments after me. That was an unusually short conversation, so I decide to investigate. After she’s had a chance to sit, I make my way to where she is at the head of the room at the main royal table.

“Good morning, Mother. I didn’t get much of a chance to greet you this morning,” I casually say to her and she rolls her eyes just slightly.

“She was hoping I had time to talk with her. We did not get much of a chance to talk privately last night.”

“Mother, you wound me. I didn’t come over solely to see what she wanted.”

“Oh?” she asks feigning surprise, “what else did you supposedly want?”

“I, uh,” I search my brain for something and come up with, “I was hoping you could show me again how to do the trick with the fireworks. I’m afraid I still can’t quite get that one.” That should do. It is something I haven’t quite been able to get to work properly.

“Perhaps tomorrow? I’m not sure how long this meeting will go with Sigyn.”

“That would be splendid. Thank you, Mother.” I take my leave for now and eat while I wait for her to be finished. When she has, I follow at a distance and as we get closer to the library I shift to cat form. Mother leaves the library door open as I assume she’s realized I’ve followed.

“Where would you like to begin?” Mother asks as she enters the library to join Sigyn who is sitting on a nearby sofa.

“I do seem to have many questions, but I don’t know how overly bombarded you’d like to be. Perhaps you’d rather stick to magic lessons.” She seems to be offering an out which piques my curiosity.

“If there’s anything I am unable to tell you, I’ll let you know after you ask. I should warn you though, it appears we have an audience so you may wish to consider what you ask,” Mother suggests and then looks back over her shoulder behind her. They both look at me as I wait in the doorway waiting for Sigyn’s permission to be there.

“You might as well join us you ridiculous, sneaky thing,” Sigyn tells me and then back to the Queen Mother, “I’m glad I’m not the only one who can see him. For a while I had perhaps I’d made him up in my head.”

“I am quite certain he’s real. He’s,” she pauses for a moment, “partially mine. I have a feeling he’s become partially yours.” Sigyn looks at her in surprise.

“Oh dear, I am sorry. I didn’t mean to lay any claim to him. He just has this way of showing up. I never have the heart to turn him out. He sort of just grows on you.”

“Yes, although he sometimes has a way of being ill-behaved,” Mother adds.

“Downright mischievous even, just like,” and Sigyn stops for a moment, some thought just occurring to her. Oh dear, has she figured it out?

“It is true though. They are nearly one and the same. It’s why I wouldn’t dare give him up,” Mother finishes and then gives Sigyn a look, waiting to see what see says. Why don’t you just blow my cover, Mother? You’ve practically told her anyhow now. I wait for Sigyn to answer.

“No, we shouldn’t do that,” she says after thinking for a minute with a confused look on her face.

“Well now, what else can I help you with?” Mother asks her. She shakes the confusion from her face and continues.

“Right, well first things first, did he live?” she asks and Mother smiles like she’s proud. Did who live?

“He did,” is all Mother says in response though, hm.

“I’m glad for that.”

“You might regret saying that later,” I hear Mother mumble to herself. Sigyn apparently chooses to ignore her comment, because she moves on to her next question.

“Was there no way to unfreeze them? Shouldn’t they have been able to withstand the cold for longer?” Who was frozen? Her parents maybe? I don’t have time to think much about it before Mother answers.

“Unfortunately, we couldn’t. It was their sacrifice that allowed you to survive for as long as you did,” she tells me and then pauses before adding, “Odin went to Jötunheim to get you first. By the time he made it back to Midgard it was too late. I’m sorry we couldn’t do more.”

Does this have to do with the war with the Frost Giants? Go figure, Father is keeping secrets by not telling the whole truth.

“Thank you. I figured you couldn’t, but I had to ask,” she accepts and then continues, “I might have made a small mess yesterday when I read about my parents. Mostly I’m worried about the flowers, is there a way to restore them, aside from time healing them that is.”

“There might be, but everyone’s magic is different. It allows us to do different things. It’s possible you might be able to, but it might be awhile before you have enough true control to make it work. It’ll take practice and it’ll mostly be up to you to figure it out. I’m afraid I don’t know that much about your particular set of powers. I’ll see if I can find any resources for you.”

“Thank you, again. And lastly, about this ring thing you gave me. What is this for exactly?”

“That, yes, well I have a feeling you are not quite ready for that yet. We’ll return to it at another time. Let’s work on making sure you don’t accidently kill any more flowers, shall we?” Mother suggests and glances at me. Something she doesn’t want me to know about, curious. Sigyn takes the bait instead of pushing, unfortunately.

“You’re probably right. I like to get ahead of myself sometimes. What should I practice?”

“I did hear you pulled off a splendid deflection spell at your party, perhaps we’ll work with that. You must have a fair amount of control over it already, but let’s try and master it, shall we?”

Sigyn nods in agreement and they spend another couple hours working on not only deflection, but some minor transformations, adding embellishments, changing hair color, et cetera… They stop when it is time for the midday meal. I’m about to change back when I hear Thor call Signy over so I change into a guard. They’re usually pretty invisible. I see her search around looking for something or someone, but then decides to sit with Thor after all, though she doesn’t sit directly next to them. Is she saving a seat? I move closer to where they are without being obvious that I’m spying. She moves her food around and pretends to listen to their conversation, but clearly her mind is elsewhere. She was asking Mother some serious questions. Then I hear Thor ask her a direct question.

“Will you be joining us for a rousing training session tomorrow, Sigyn?” Thor asks and she slowly turns to look at him. I can see her blinking trying to determine what he asked since she wasn’t paying attention. Eventually she figures it out and replies.

“Is that wise? I’m horribly out of practice and besides you know I was never very good to begin with.”

“That is true,” Sif comments and Thor gives her a look. I have to agree with Thor with the look. I mean, how rude.

“Which is why you should join us, we’ll start back over from the basics,” Thor suggests. I groan internally.

“I’ll give it some thought. Perhaps I should get a smidge of exercise in this afternoon to warm up. If you’ll excuse me, I realized I forgot something.”

Thor nods and she stands up and picks up her plate, then pauses. Then she puts it back down and leaves the hall. I casually find my way out of the hall to follow her. She does appear to be heading down to the training field. I quickly find a place to change back to myself. I go back into the dining hall to grab a quick bite and then make my way to the training field to see if I can offer some assistance. When I arrive she’s vigorously pummeling a punching dummy. I watch for moment before saying something.

“Anyone in particular you’re trying to murder,” I ask slightly amused at her apparent anger and she stops mid-punch.

“Not yet. Perhaps you’d like to volunteer,” she asks in return and I oblige by stepping in front of her and catch her fist mid-punch.

“You’ll have to try much harder than that,” I challenge. She tries to divert my attention by bringing up her other fist, but I easily catch her fist at it comes at my face. “Are you even trying?” I ask her. She glares at me.

“If you’re here just to make fun of me, you can go.” she says angrily.

“It is in fact not why I’m here. Mother sent me to make sure you weren’t hurting yourself and I’m afraid that if I don’t give you a lesson I’ll have bad things to report and I don’t think either of wants that, do we?” I say even though Mother had absolutely nothing to do with my being here. She looks at me suspiciously. It’s a fair look; I wouldn’t trust me either in all honesty.

“Are you sure that’s a good idea? There’s a higher chance I’ll hurt you being this terrible.” She is joking, right? I’m not sue she could ever actually hurt anyone.

“Not to worry. I’m pretty agile. I’m sure I’ll be able to dodge just about everything you’ll attempt to throw at me today,” I say instead and I laugh quietly at the cat reference.

“Oh, you think you’re so clever,” she says as she spins out of my grasp to try to elbow me in the chest, but I quickly catch her elbow before it can reach me and then I slide my hand down to her wrist and pin it against her back.

“That wasn’t all bad. I wasn’t sure you had it in you,” I say slightly impressed which clearly annoys her for some reason and then she stomps on my foot and I let her go. “Now that wasn’t nice and not at all a proper maneuver,” is all I can think to say through my shock.

“It got me out, didn’t it?” she retorts and then she bats her eyelashes at me. What the hell is that?

Before I let myself think, I grab one of her arms and go to grab the other when she remembers some part of her training and kicks my leg out from under me I fall onto my back, but I hold my grip on her tightly and pull her with me. She didn’t see it coming so I take advantage to flip us so that she’s now under me. We’re both breathing heavily and I look at her and she looks at me.

What is happening to me? After what probably felt like an eternity for her, I stand up quickly. I hold out my hand to help her up. After she’s up I stalk off. After I know she cannot see me anymore I pause to catch my thoughts. Then I hear her punching away again, much more forcefully this time. I go back to my room to pace.

A few hours later I find that somehow I’ve managed to fall asleep without realizing and now I see that it’s getting late. At first I don’t think much about it and then I remember I was supposed to go to Sigyn’s for dinner. She’s going to kill me.

When I finally make it the cottage it’s completely dark out except for a bit of pale moonlight shining off the flowers near the house. Wait, the flowers, I thought she’d accidently killed them. How has she managed to figure out how to fix them already?

Shaking my head I move to the next task of facing her. I go to knock on the door only to find it still open. I peek inside and I can see that she’s already gone to bed. Instead of waking her, I shift forms and find my place on the pillow. I can see that she apparently dressed up and everything.

I don’t stay the whole night. I find that I cannot sleep peacefully knowing I let her down so I leave before she even knows I was there. She deserves so much more.

Chapter Seven

I spend the next couple weeks avoiding her. I quickly figure out her routine, one day combat training and the next sessions with Mother. She makes it incredibly easy to not run into her. It’s frustratingly easy. I even start to wonder if she’s happier without me. I still feel guilt over missing her dinner. Perhaps I should at least check in on her or let the cat check at least.

I head down to the cottage one day after I know she’s finished a lesson with Mother. She’s more likely to be receptive to a visit after seeing her. Then I reach the entrance I could swear I hear humming. I sneak in and sit in the kitchen doorway. She is indeed humming and making something or other. She seems quite happy. Perhaps I should not have come. She turns and sees me before I can sneak back out.

“Oh, have you decided to join me this evening? It’s been a while. I thought perhaps you’d chosen to go back to Mother. Not that I could blame you. I’m afraid I haven’t been the best of company lately,” she tells me and she gets another plate and places it down for me.

I nibble at the food, but I don’t have much of an appetite. I start to pace instead not sure what to do.

“Sometimes, I wish you could just tell me what’s going on in that feline mind of yours,” she says and I stop to look at her. Eventually she continues, “I feel like I do all the talking sometimes or perhaps mostly complaining.

It’s only that I don’t have many friends here, at least not ones I can truly talk to. Loki was probably the only one who cared about what I had to say, other than Mother of course, but he’s either avoiding me or mad at me or maybe he’s simply up to planning some outrageous scheme to get himself in trouble.

If he were here, I’d have a chance to explain about my parents, at least in part and why I’ve been a bit extra off the rails lately. Perhaps I would tell him about my progress with my magic and we could…” she stops talking, as if she let out some secret she didn’t know she had.

While she talked I came to the decision that maybe I can hint her into realizing it is me, so I head to the mantle where the snake ornament is. I start patting it once she sees where I am, but she doesn’t seem to be getting it. I get a little too aggressive and accidently knock it off the mantle. She shouts “no” and runs to try to catch it, but it falls and shatters on the floor.

“Why would you do that?” she asks helplessly as she kneels to the ground to try to pick up all the pieces, but of course I cannot answer her. I jump back down and run back out of the cottage trying to not to think about the guilt building up more than there already was.

The next day I’m walking through the gardens near the training fields to watch Sigyn training when I realize she’s not down there. I come around a corner and there she is walking, likely back to the cottage. For a moment I almost decide to turn and run, but instead I decide to stay out. It’s time to face her.

I wait for her to reach me. When she does, she slaps my face, not very hard, but effectively. I earned it, but I didn’t think she had it in her. For some reason it makes me a little proud.

“I’m sorry, I don’t know why I did that” she apologizes quickly and then she’s angry and asks, “Where have you been?” And then she turns sad, “You never showed for dinner that night and you’ve been avoiding me ever since. Why? What did I do?”

“You didn’t do anything,” I say quietly and then after a brief hesitation, I hold her face and kiss her. I have no idea why I’ve done this. She makes a small “oh” sound as I break the kiss and pull away. I let a soft laugh and leave her standing there. Great, another thing I’m going to have to find a way to cover up.

When I reach the palace, I nearly run into Father. I bow and greet him, “Father, how are the realms this fine day?”

“You’d do better to not involve yourself with her. No good can come from it,” he informs me.

“It was just a bit of fun Father. I’m not sure I could ever be serious about anyone,” I say, but I’m starting to wonder how true it is.

“Well, you’ve been warned,” he replies and then continues going wherever he was going. I watch him as he goes. It almost sounds like a challenge. How far would I have to go before he’d step in? I wonder.

As I think I find myself in the library. Mother is there searching for some book or other. She turns my direction when I enter.

“Loki, you look like you’re scheming. Hopefully you aren’t planning anything too ridiculous.”

“What do you think of Sigyn, Mother?”

“I’m not sure I know what you mean. I like her very much. I tend to think of her as one of my own. Why?”

“Nothing, I,” I pause thinking about what I want to say, “I’m not sure Father likes her.”

“I see. You would like his approval though?” she asks curiously.

“I just don’t see why he’d give me a warning.”

“Probably because he’s afraid it would be like taking a torch to a powder magazine.”

“I don’t understand.”

“He just doesn’t want anyone getting hurt. There’s a high chance either of you will hurt the other I’m afraid. Be careful, Loki, if you pursue more than friendship. Although I wouldn’t mind officially welcoming her to the family,” she says and winks at me as she turns back to what she was doing.

I take that as my leave. I grab a random book on my way out back to my room. I’m not sure why though, because I have no intention of reading it. I spend the rest of the day trying to sort through my emotions and thoughts.

Chapter Eight

The next morning during breakfast, the All Father summons us to the throne room with the clang of Gungnir. Once we’ve all finally assembled, he tells us why he’s called us.

“Many of you know that Hogun went home recently for a family marriage; however what you might not have known is that he was also there on a mission. Heimdall had seen some unrest within the realms, but was unable to pinpoint where since nothing seemed like an immediate threat.

Hogun returned yesterday, wounded as he fought back against a group of rebels trying to overtake his people’s court. He has asked for our assistance in putting a stop to the coup.

I have called you here today to accept that request. I will assemble a task force for negotiations as well as a small legion of Einherjar warriors to assist should things go poorly with the negotiations.

Together we will restore peace to the realms.”

He dismisses the whole hall, but Thor and I stay behind to wait for further instruction from Father. I can see Sif, Fandral, and Volstagg hanging together off to one side and Sigyn lingering across the room from them. Father motions for the two of us to come closer.

“I need you both to go and naturally Sif, Fandral, and Volstagg as the main task force.”

“What about Sigyn?” I ask him.

“I’m not sure she’s prepared for this, Loki. She’d likely only be in the way at this point. It might be best to leave her.”

“Father, we’re going in for negotiations, certainly she cannot be in the way of something that doesn’t involve fighting,” I suggest.

“That is true, Father. It might be the best way for her to gain experience and if there’s fighting we can always send her back with a report or something if she’d be more comfortable with that,” Thor chimes in. Father mulls it over.

“Fine, but you both are responsible if something goes sideways,” he gives in.

“Thank you, Father,” I say and we both bow to him and take our leave. “Thanks for helping convince him of Sigyn,” I tell Thor as we walk towards Sif. I wave Sigyn over to join us.

“Of course, I really do think it’ll be a good way for her to test the waters of battle though. It should be an easy fight should it come to that.”

We gather our group and discuss the logistics of our plan. Everyone inputs their thoughts on the best way to proceed, except for Sigyn. She listens and observes, but doesn’t give any input. Thor thinks it is best that we leave first thing tomorrow. That gives us each time to gather a few things and put our minds to rest before engaging with the enemy. Plus he wants to give Hogun time to heal to potentially join us.

After Thor dismisses the group, we all go our separate ways. I notice Sigyn walking slower than she might normally so I decide to offer to walk her back to her cottage. She nods and we walk in silence for a few moments before she decides to say anything.

“Do you really think I should be going Loki? I wouldn’t want to put the mission in jeopardy.”

“I won’t lie to you; that is what Father thought, but both Thor and I think it’ll be a great opportunity for you. Would you rather not go?”

“No, I do want to go. I just don’t want to screw it up.”

“You won’t. We probably won’t even see a fight and even so you’ll be covered. We’ve got you or we can always send you back with a report to Odin,” I reassure her. We walk in silence again for a few minutes before she breaks the silence with a question.

“Loki, about what happened yesterday, why did you, you know...” she lets the sentence hang. I take a moment before answering.

“It was a poor excuse for an apology. It was completely inappropriate. I won’t do it again, I promise.” I tell her simply and then she takes a moment to think before she responds.

“So it didn’t mean anything? Just you being your usual overly flirtatious self,” she asks and I look at her offended.

“I do not going around kissing everyone,” I say defensively.

“That isn’t exactly what I said, but I suppose it’s good to know that I must have reached some important level to have earned that then.”

“Yes, well, like I said it won’t happen again.”

“Alright, Loki, you’ve made your point. I’m sorry I brought it up.” We’ve made it to the cottage at this point and then she adds, “Thanks for walking me back. I’ll see you in the morning,” and then she goes inside and closes the door in my face. I stare at the door a moment trying to process what just happened before turning back to the palace.

Am I a flirt? I hadn’t known that I was, but maybe? And Father doesn’t want us together for some reason so for now I’ll try to hold off until maybe I can win him over. I just kind of hope I didn’t ruin things completely.

Wait, what? Since when did I truly decide that I care? Darn that conversation with Mother.

Back in my chambers I pick that book up that I grabbed yesterday and head to the library to return it. I put it back where I found it and am about to leave when I spot a different book. It a book of records of past battles and wars we have participated in.

I skim through until I find the one I’m searching for, the war with Jötunheim and the Frost Giants. I scan the pages for some mention of a rescue, but there’s nothing. It only mentions the Jotuns going to Midgard to freeze the planet and Father going down to assist.

I close the book frustrated. Then I wonder how many of these Sigyn knows about. She might want to read some of it before tomorrow. I head back down to the cottage, but when I arrive I remember she’s upset with me, again.

I place the book down and shift back into the cat. Honestly this is getting to be a bit tedious. I scratch and meow at the door hoping she’ll hear me. It only takes a moment before she opens the door to let me in. She picks up the book and closes the door behind us.

“How’d you carry this down here?” she asks and then adds, “never mind, I don’t want to know.” I wonder if I should have put a note in it or something. She looks it over before saying, “I suppose this is from either Mother or Loki,” and then looks at me expectantly.

I take a moment trying to decide how I’m supposed to answer when I decide to meow twice and see if that works. Thankfully the message got through.

“I see, Loki then. As tempted as I am to reject this out of spite, it might actually be useful,” she pauses to think and then asks, “If I wrote a message could you take it to him for me?”

I meow and nod. I sit and wait while she writes out the message. She pats my head and then holds out the message for me to take. Then she opens the door to let me out and once I reach a quiet and empty section of the garden I shift so that I can read the message.

“Loki,

Thank you for the book. Perhaps there’ll be something useful to learn before tomorrow.

I’m sorry I keep pushing all the wrong buttons with you. I just cannot seem to help it.

Sigyn”

She knows I basically bait her into it every time right? She’s fun to play with. I fold up the note when I notice something else written on the back.

“When are you going to fess up?”

Oh no, has she figured me out? Or have I done something else we haven’t argued about already? I rack my brain trying to figure it out, but to no avail. It has to be about the cat thing. I’ll tell her after we take of this issue with Vanaheim.

I am walking through the dining hall because I’m feeling hungry and there’s always something here to eat when I find Thor sitting alone. He’s usually surrounded by the others so I take the opportunity to talk with him.

“Is everything alright, brother?” I ask.

“Oh, Loki, I didn’t see you there. Yes, yes everything’s fine. Hogun seems to be well on the mend. I’m sure he’ll join us tomorrow.”

“I hate to say it, but you look worried.”

“Well, yes, a little I suppose. This is our first solo mission without Father. As much as I’m sure Sigyn is worried, I am also. I don’t want to let Father down or any of you.”

“It’s going to go great, I hope.”

“Anyway, so you and Sigyn?” he asks curiously.

“What about us?”

“You look good together.”

“I think you’re reading too much into things. She’s just easy to talk to. She hasn’t been attached herself to you. That’s a win for me.”

“She’ll come around eventually.”

“You wish. Well, I have some things to do. I’ll see you in the morning.”

He’s insufferable. I try to have a single serious conversation and he always finds a way to ruin it. She wouldn’t abandon me to join his posse, would she? I sulk all the way back to my room.

Chapter Nine

In the morning we meet in the throne room. Apparently Father has something he wanted to contribute before we left, some token words of advice I’m sure. Once we’ve all gathered Father motions for Thor to come forward and kneels.

“Thor Odinson, prince of Asgard, it is my honor to present to you Mjølnir. Should you be worthy of it, it is now yours to wield.”

“Thank you Father, I shall try to be worthy and bring glory and peace throughout all of Asgard and the nine realms,” is his response.

Thor stands and approaches Father to take the hammer. After a moment’s hesitation he takes it and a surge of power rolls through the hammer into Thor binding them together. I look on with distaste and with a slight pang of jealousy.

He turns back to face us and then lifts the hammer in victory. Well, now I’m just annoyed. I sneak peeks at the reactions of the others. Sif and the Warriors Three look pleased and ready for battle. On the other hand, Sigyn is looking at me, a question in her eyes. I look away.

Thor then leads the way out of the room towards the dining hall to grab a small bite before embarking on our true journey. The five of them gather together laughing and trying to lift the hammer and congratulating Thor on his achievement. I’m standing off to the side watching when Sigyn comes up to me.

“It’s seems like it’s a big deal,” she says quietly. I turn towards her.

“It is indeed. Mjølnir has been wielded by Father in many a battle. It’s an honor to have been chosen,” I say attempting to keep my emotions in check.

“I see. It must be difficult for you to see him with it then, yes?”

“Nah, it’d be too hard to hide. Knives and daggers are much easier,” I say deflecting my true thoughts. For demonstration though I conjure a dagger into my hand and say, “See? You had no idea, did you?”

“No, I suppose I did not know, but you do seem to hide everything. Sometimes I’m not sure I know you at all,” is all that she says before going over to offer her congratulations to Thor.

I give her a moment to say what she needs and when they start looking too chummy, I walk over.

“Don’t you suppose we ought to be going pretty soon, brother?” I remind him.

“Right, yes, petty skirmishes wait for no one, not even me. Let’s get to Himinbjorg and then to Vanaheim to dismiss these rebels once and for all!” Thor announces and then purposefully walks out. We all just sort of stare after him. I roll my eyes and then we all follow him out.

The legion of Einherjar are already there and waiting for us when we arrive at Himinbjorg. As we join them, Thor stands up next to Heimdall to give a going into battle speech. I internally cringe waiting for whatever ridiculous he can muster.

“Asgard, today we head to Vanaheim to restore peace by appeasing to the rebels who have staged a coup against their government. We go in peace, but should a battle inevitable we will be ready for it. For Asgard!”

“For Asgard,” they chant in return.

“For Vanaheim,” Thor shouts.

“For Vanaheim,” they echo; I just sort of mumble along, so embarrassing.

Heimdall then opens the Bifrost and Thor leads us, the task team, through first and the Einherjar follow. When we reach Vanaheim, all seems quiet. Thor and Hogun take the lead as we cross the terrain towards the main village. Sif, Fandral, and Volstagg run the second line while Sigyn and I run the line behind the legion to watch for anything behind us.

The smell of burning bodies becomes more intense the closer we get to the encampment. Perhaps we should have come yesterday. As we approach what looks to be the edge of the battlefield Sigyn doubles over. Thinking it might be the smell I rush over to console her, but as I get nearer I can tell it is pain. I quickly scan for an injury but see none.

“What’s wrong, are you okay? Did you step on something?” I ask trying to figure out where her sudden pain could have come from.

“I’ll explain later, I’m okay. Help me up?” is all she manages to say. I see Sif coming back so I take Sigyn’s arm and help her stand to face her.

“What happened?” she asks.

“I tripped over something. I don’t think is any sort of trap though. I just wasn’t watching my feet well enough. I’m sorry,” she tells her and I frown knowing it is a lie, but I say nothing.

“Well let’s keep going. We’ve nearly reached the location of the rebel camp. Watch the ground as much as the tree line, okay,” she tells her and then we both nod at her.

She returns to her own line and we follow as fast as Sigyn is able. She seems to be concentrated on the pain so I walk closer to her to watch for both of us while she figures out whatever it is.

By the time we’ve reached the outskirts of the camp, she looks like she’s mostly recovered from her pain, which is good because I have a feeling I’m going to have to leave her. Thor motions to us to join him so he can go over his plan.

“Loki and Hogun will come with me to talk with the leader or leaders of this outfit. It looks larger than I was hoping, so this may still end in a fight despite our diplomatic efforts. The rest of you will wait here until we either return or are able to give you a signal,” he says and lifts the hammer a little to know that it’s the signal. Everyone nods in agreement and then the rest of the group retreats to some place with cover.

We casually walk to the edge of the camp when Thor raises his hands in a motion of peace so Hogun and I do the same. After the guards converse for a moment, they lead us towards the main tent. We’re announced and then in we go. The apparent leader stands as we enter and Thor announces us.

“Hello. I am Thor Odinson, of Asgard. This is Loki Odinson, my brother, and this is Hogun of Vanaheim. We have come to discuss your surrender.” The leader laughs at us.

“So the mighty All Father has sent us children to deal with,” he says sarcastically and then adds, “now I really do hate killing children, but sometimes you have to do what you got to do.”

“Now it doesn’t have to come to blows, we can talk this out,” Thor says in return and I inch closer to him to guard his back while Hogun does the same on the other side.

“Doesn’t it always come to blows? Too long have we been ruled not only by weak rulers here but also by an overreaching ruler on Asgard.”

“Perhaps there is some arrangement we can come to?” I suggest and add, “Hogun can represent Vanaheim as we represent Asgard. Certainly there is some way to find a happy medium.”

“Loki, is it?” the leader asks and I nod. “Well Loki, kingdoms are won by blood and fire, not by talking,” and then he unsheathes a hidden knife and aims for Thor.

I shove Thor out of the way and the knife slices across my arm. As I register the shock, Thor picks up the hammer and swings at the leader who dodges as Thor is unused to the weapon.

“Thor, signal the legion,” Hogun shouts at him and Thor quickly summons a small bolt of lightning through the hammer and aims it at the leader knocking him down and I can only assume killing him, but we don’t have time to think about it. The surrounding guards come at us and the fray of battle begins.

I don’t have much time to register much around me as I match my opponent blow for blow. Out of the corner of my eye, I think I see Sigyn and I risk a glance and confirm that it is her, but it cost me. My opponent slices my leg and I start to go down still attempting to fight back, but I’m losing.

Then I see a hand grabbing his arm and then a burst of wind flows through the air and my opponent drops, dead. Sigyn is left standing there, some emotion I cannot make out across her face. Then she kneels over my leg and touches it gently. At first it stings at her touch, but then the pain recedes and the wound is healing quickly, faster than it should.

I look at her in wonder and curiosity. Then I see her fainting so I do my best to catch her fall. The tent collapses around us as she falls into my arms. I lay her next to me while I regain my strength. I can hear the faint sound of clinking swords, but it’s farther away than I would have thought. When I can, I work on trying to get us out from under the tent. Thankfully it’s a lightweight material and is easy enough to maneuver. I carry Sigyn to the edge of the battlefield. Thor finds a way to reach us as he sends his hammer to knock down enemies between us.

“What happened, Loki? Is she okay?” he asks

“I’m not sure, there was a blast of wind of some kind and then the tent fell on top of us knocking her out. I need to get her back,” I tell him.

“Go. Tell Father we have nearly beaten them back. Peace should be restored soon.” I nod and carry Sigyn a little further so Heimdall can call us back safely.

When we arrive there are more guards waiting there. Heimdall instructs two of them to help us. I hand Sigyn over to one of them, my strength waning and another guard helps me walk towards the healing rooms. As we’d left I saw Heimdall sending a few more through to help Thor and the others finish the job.

When we reach the doors of the palace, both Father and Mother come out to meet us. I give Father the message from Thor who nods and heads to Himinbjorg to await their victorious return. Mother follows us to the healing rooms.

“What happened, Loki?” she asks me. I wait until I can sit and speak to her privately.

“I’m not sure. She touched the guy I was fighting and there was some weird blast and he died. Then she healed the majority of my leg wound, which allowed me to get her here. She fainted shortly after healing me and then the tent collapsed. I don’t know if she was hurt from any of that or not. That’s all I know,” I say in a rush while I can remember.

“Alright, you stay here. I’ll go to her and see what I can do. I’ll be back as soon as I can with an update,” she tells me. I nod and then I lay back on the cot to rest while I wait.

After another hour or so I start to worry and am getting ready to go find Mother and Sigyn when I see Mother coming back. At the same time more of the battle-wounded are being brought in. I wonder if that means the battle is over. I don’t have to wait long to find out. Thor comes in as well.

“Well brother, have we won?” I ask him and Mother reaches us at the same time.

“Yes, the remaining rebels surrendered and peace has been restored to Vanaheim,” he tells me and then asks Mother before I can, “How’s Sigyn?” She glances at me before answering.

“She still hasn’t woken, but any injury she has must be internal. I’ve sent her to a guest room upstairs for now while the other wounded are being treated. I’m sure she’ll wake when her body says it’s time. Now I must help tend the others,” she finishes and then leaves us.

“I should go check on Sif and the others. Glad to see you’re well brother,” he says and then helps me stand.

“Hopefully they didn’t get hurt too seriously,” I say as he leaves and he laughs as if the thought that they’d be too hurt is ridiculous.

I walk slowly towards the wing of the palace where the guest rooms are. I ask a standing guard if he knows where they put Sigyn and he points me in the right direction. When I reach the room, I waver before entering, but then I push open the door.

The attendant exits the room as I make my way to the bed to give us some space. I drag a nearby chair closer to the bed and sit. I hesitate and then hold her hand. Her skin feels cold. I grab more blankets and cover her.

Against my better judgement, I risk shifting into cat form. It takes a little more effort after being wounded, but it could have been worse. She saved my life. I hop onto the bed as gently as I can and snuggle in next to her hoping the fur will help with keeping her warm. It’s not long before I fall asleep. It’s also not long before I hear someone talking quietly to me.

“If your Father finds out you’re here like that who knows what he’ll do,” I hear Mother say. I meow softly in response. She thinks for a moment before saying, “Fine, but just until morning or when she wakes. Come get me if that happens during the night. I’ll let the guards know not to let anyone else in.” Then she quietly leaves us there and I go back to sleep.

Chapter Ten

Sometime during the night, Sigyn finally wakes. Her movement wakes me up. I open my eyes and look at her while I finish waking up. Then she speaks.

“I know it’s you. You might as well transform back into yourself,” she tells me. I almost decide to get up, but this would be way more fun so instead I shift back while still laying down.

I cannot help myself, I smile at her because she clearly didn’t think about that before asking me to turn back. I can see a bit of color in her cheeks and I realize how pale she’s been and cold. There are so many things about her I just don’t know. We stare at each other for a moment and then I frown remembering I need to go get Mother.

“I should go get Mother. She told me to get her when you woke,” I say and then I make a quick retreat from the room. As I make my way to Mother’s room I stop in my tracks when I hear voices. I listen in case it’s something interesting.

“What went off in that tent? It took out so many of the enemy. It doesn’t make sense,” one person says.

“I know, it couldn’t have been them right? Certainly they wouldn’t have a weapon designed to take out themselves, right? It was how many, 5, maybe?” A second voice says.

“I’d heard it was at least 30,” the first person says.

“It wasn’t that big a blast, maybe 20, maybe,” yet another person adds in, “And whatever the case it certainly made the rest of the battle go by quicker. Most of them gave up after that.”

I ponder on that as I quietly make my way to Mother. When I reach her chambers an attendant is standing at the door. I ask her to get Mother, that it’s about Sigyn, and she goes in. It doesn’t take long before Mother joins me.

“Has she finally woken then, Loki?” she asks as we walk.

“Yes, though she looked tired still so hopefully she’ll still be when we get back.”

“Let’s walk a little faster than shall we,” she suggests.

When we reach her room she’s desperately trying and failing to sit up. Perhaps I loaded her with too many blankets.

“Loki, be a dear and help her, would you?” Mother tells him. I go over and help her arrange herself properly and then Mother sits down on the bed and I sit down in a nearby chair. She looks at me, then Sigyn, and then back to me and sighs, “We’ll just start with asking how you’re feeling? Any lingering effects, pain, headaches…”

“No, it is mostly just confusion. I’m not sure what happened. It all happened so quickly,” she answers and then asks, “Oh, did we succeed? Is everyone okay?”

“There were a few casualties among the Einherjar, but everyone else is fine, though I’m afraid they have questions for you about what happened,” Mother says.

“I told Thor it was some random blast of wind that collapsed the tent and that’s how you sustained your injuries so you might want to have a headache or something,” I tell her.

“I’m not sure if Sif will accept that, I think she might be onto you in some way, she said that you somehow knew that the three of them were in trouble before Thor signaled,” Mother questions.

“I,” she starts to say and then glances at me and I frown wondering what’s she’s thinking and then she finishes her thought, “don’t know. It was just something I felt that needed attention.” Mother looks her over and I simply feel confused.

“I didn’t know that part. When did Sif say this?” I asks Mother.

“We had a brief meeting after everyone was released properly from the healing rooms to discuss if any further action was needed,” she says.

“Why was I not included?” I inquire back.

“You were otherwise preoccupied and I didn’t think you’d really want to be disturbed,” she tells me while giving me a pointed look. Oh, right.

“This is all lovely, but we’re getting off track I feel, what happened? Do I need to come clean?” Sigyn interrupts.

“More details can be discussed later and for now let’s keep this between us and we’ll see what Odin wishes to do. For now you should get some rest,” Mother decides and then addresses me, “don’t linger too long, she does need to rest. I think she’s been through more than she knows at the moment.”

“Of course, Mother, goodnight,” I say as she’s leaving us alone again. And then I look at her and ask, “is there anything you want to tell me?”

“I don’t know; is there anything you want to tell me?” she asks back clearly exasperated. Darn, I was hoping we could just forget the cat thing.

“How long have you known?”

“Known what exactly?” She’s really going to drag this out.

“Do I really have to say it?” I ask and she nods. “Fine, how long have you known I was the cat?”

“I suppose I’d known for a while, but hadn’t wanted to admit it to myself. Honestly it was when you brought the book though. It was a bit unbelievable a cat could drag that thing down from the library and still be that intact.”

“Oh, right. I didn’t think about that. Are you mad at me?” I look at her sheepishly. I’m not really sure I want the answer.

“I suppose I ought to be. You were sleeping on my pillow, on my bed. I said things I shouldn’t have. Why did you do it?” she asks sadly.

“At first I wanted to see what would happen, when I you know, did my tricks and stuff, but you never told anyone, about any of them. It was easier to follow up as the cat, but then I realized you needed someone to talk to and I’d already established myself that way. It felt more like an invasion of privacy after a while and I didn’t know how to tell you without it seeming like a huge betrayal. I was…”and I cut off before finishing my thought; it’s so embarrassing.

“Afraid you’d lose me?” she suggests and I just hang my head in shame. Why does she know me so well? Then she continues, “Loki, I’m not going anywhere. I wish you had just told me. I needed an actual person to talk to more than anything. I was starting to feel ridiculous thinking the cat was the only friend I had. I was lonely.”

We both sit in silence for a few minutes trying to figure out where to go from there. I don’t know how to make it up to her. She’s the first to speak.

“Loki?” she says breaking the silence and I look at her. “I suppose there are some secrets I need to share with you and since we’re confessing now is as good a time as any.”

“Are you sure? Yours I have a feeling are a bit more personal.”

“It’s time I think, but you have to promise to keep it to yourself.”

“You can trust me,” I tell her, but after the whole cat thing I’m not sure she should.

“Why do I feel like I’m going to regret this then?” She says and then pauses for a moment before starting in, “I didn’t just learn magic while on Migard. I mean I did learn a few things, but I still couldn’t actually do magic.”

“So why can you now,” I interrupt and she glares at me and I apologize, “sorry.”

“The All Father had my power and titles bound until I turned 18. I inherited my parents’ titles of fidelity and nurturing because of their sacrifice to try to save me from the Frost Giants of Jötunheim. I was also granted my birthright title of grieving.” That’s a lot of titles and of course Father would bind her powers. He’s threatened by anyone who could challenge him with that many titles.

“That’s what happened when we were on Vanaheim?” is what I ask instead.

“Yes, I hadn’t been anywhere near that much grief before, it was overwhelming and I must have been absorbing it and it came out later when I touched that man. I didn’t mean to kill him. I just wanted to distract him.” I say as I feel tears coming to my eyes.

“Sigyn, it’s okay. I know you didn’t mean it, but I don’t know how to tell you this, but that’s what happens in battles and wars.” I tell her as gently as I can, but then I fall silent because I know it wasn’t just that one man.

“What is it?”

“He wasn’t the only one your power killed apparently,” I tell her reluctantly.

“What?” I say shocked.

“As I was walking to get Mother I heard someone say something about the blast clearing a fairly wide radius of rebels around the tent.”

“How many, Loki?” Why do I have to be the one? I should’ve kept my mouth shut.

“They weren’t sure, someone said it was only a handful and someone said it was closer to 30.”

“That’s a really large range.”

“Well, I think they were more confused about it only being the enemy that was affected than being worried about how many it actually was.”

She sits there in shock. I watch her as she lifts her hands up and stares at them in horror. I don’t say anything, because honestly I don’t know what to say to make this easier for her. Then she looks at me.

“Loki, I have to go back,” she tells me. My eyes widen at the suggestion and I shake my head no at her.

“No, no, no. I really don’t think that’s a good idea. You do not want to do that to yourself.”

“I won’t be able to stop thinking about it if I don’t face it, please Loki?” she pleads and I stare at her, thinking. I hate it when she uses that voice. Maybe I can talk sense into her later, for now I’ll stall.

“I’ll talk to Mother and see what she thinks, but for now you do need to try to sleep. I’ll see you in the morning,” I say and start to stand up when she stops me.

“Loki, wait,” she says and I look at her, waiting, then she asks, “Stay?” Why would she ask that, certainly she doesn’t mean? No, of course not, that’s ridiculous. So I nod my consent and lean back in the chair to get somewhat comfortable. She laughs softly and says, “That is not what I meant.” She pats the bed and my eyes widen again. She did mean that.

Slightly reluctantly, I join her. Then we both lay there on our backs not touching or saying anything. After a short while, her eyes close and she turns towards me and places a hand on the pillow between us. It’s not long before I decide to give in and turn towards her, adding my hand on top of hers.

I wake up shortly before Sigyn by the sound of a soft knock at the door. I move as quickly as I can without disturbing her and head for the door. When I open it, there’s no one there, just a note and a box. The note’s likely for Sigyn, but it doesn’t specify so I read it.

“Sigyn is to report to the throne room as soon as she’s able. The All Father has made some decision. There’s a dress for her to wear. It’ll just be Odin and I in attendance.

Mother”

I bring the box inside and pocket the note. I grab book to read while I wait for her to wake. I haven’t gotten much more than a page read before she interrupts me.

“Anything good in there?” she asks and I close the book. I’m glad I wasn’t that involved yet.

“Sigyn, you’re up. How are you feeling this morning?” I ask her in return.

“I’m fine. Am I allowed out of bed yet?”

“Oh, yes, right. A message was delivered a little bit ago. Apparently my Father wants to see you,” I inform her and then I get serious, “I have to tell you I haven’t had a chance to ask Mother yet about going back. I’m still not sold on the idea anyway.”

“The All Father wants to see me? Is that good or bad? It seems like it might be bad,” she says with a tinge of worry in her voice.

“I cannot say I’m fond of his little talks, but that’s just him with me. I’m sure you’ll be fine.”

“You won’t be there?”

“No, it’ll be just you, him, and probably Mother.” As if I didn’t already know.

“I see, but oh, I don’t have anything clean to wear here. I don’t know that I should attempt magic at the moment either, Loki?” she asks me looking for some suggestion. Thank goodness I have an answer for that one, though I suppose I could have run to the cottage while she bathed to get her something to wear.

“Mother has you covered. She sent a simple dress with the message for you to wear. I’ll leave you to bathe and dress. You’re to join them in the throne room when you’re ready.”

“Thank you, Loki.”

I bow quite dramatically and then I leave her to get ready. I watch as an attendant enters as I go. Were they there the whole time and didn’t see them? I shrug and head to my room to clean up as well. No reason to be a complete slob.

I head to breakfast after cleaning up. It appears to be a quiet morning which seems odd following a victorious battle. Perhaps they’re all sleeping in. I’m sure there was a party last night that we missed. I’m sure we won’t be able to miss another night without being noticeable absences.

As I’m eating an Einherjar royal guard member announces that my presence has been summoned by my Father. I groan and abandon my food. As approach the throne room, Sigyn is leaving. That’s highly suspicious.

“Loki, where are you off to?” she asks though she looks like she feels guilty about something

“I have been summoned. I don’t suppose you know why?” I jokingly ask back.

“I’m afraid I might have gotten you roped into something you’re not going to want to do. I’ll be in the cottage if you need to find me later.”

I shake my head knowing that I knew it couldn’t be good. I approach the throne where my Father sits and see my Mother standing near him looking concerned. I wait for Father to decree whatever it is I must do.

“Sigyn is to be trained. Her powers are young yet and need to be molded and learned to be controlled. Between the three of us, I’m sure she’ll learn quickly how to wield them.” I stare at him not sure if I’ve heard correctly.

“You’re going to train her, as well as Mother and I?”

“Yes. I feel that given proper training, she will be a great asset on the battlefield.”

“I see. Is that what she wants?” I ask and add, “Or did you even give her a choice?”

“She appears to know her place better than some do. You will do as I tell you or I can make things very difficult for you,” he threatens and I nod reluctantly. Satisfied he continues, “You are to escort Sigyn back to Vanaheim this afternoon with as little notice as possible. She says she thinks she can learn something from seeing her destruction. Make sure that she does.”

“As you wish, my King,” I say and am about to leave when he adds one more thing.

“Before you go, you might also tell her that she’ll be moving into the palace upon your return. It’ll be easier to train her among us that way. Frigga will assign her a room and get it ready for your return.”

All I do is bow and leave. I return to my chambers in a fit of rage. I pace about wondering why it is he feels the need to control everyone all the time, aside from being the King. He wants to train her, which means he wants to manipulate her into nothing more than a puppet. Well two can play that game.

Just after the midday meal, I head down to Sigyn’s cottage and I feel a bit sad as I approach it. She’s not going to like having to move into the palace, but at least we’ll be closer together.

I knock gently on the door when I arrive, but there’s no answer. I start to panic thinking maybe she’s left again so I open the door. I’m relieved to see her sitting in front of the fireplace.

“Sigyn?” I ask, but she doesn’t respond. I go over and touch her shoulder and try again, “Sigyn? Are you okay?” She blinks a few times breaking whatever daze she’s in.

“Ok, Loki, I didn’t hear you come in. How did your meeting with the All Father and Mother go?”

“About as well as yours I think. Apparently you talked Father into allowing you to go back to Vanaheim?”

“He wants to train me as a weapon; the least he can do is let me see what kind of damage I’ll be having to cause.”

“He did mention wanting to up your training, but I didn’t know he meant in that way, but perhaps I should have,” I lie and then I pause before adding, “he also wanted me to talk to you about moving into the palace. He said it would be easier to rotate among us as far as training is concerned.” She scoffs.

“He wants to lock me in a golden cage,” she spits out and then asks me, “What do you think?”

“We’d be locked up together at least,” I reply quietly, “You can always come back out here if you need a break.”

“I suppose I don’t have much choice. How soon?”

“They’re prepping a room now. We can grab some of your things from here when we return from Vanaheim.”

She nods admitting defeat and then I help her stand and we head to Himinbjorg. When we arrive, Heimdall is ready to send us through. He doesn’t say anything to us as he opens the Bifrost and we step through to Vanaheim. When we arrive I take her hand and she raises an eyebrow at me.

We walk carefully towards where the battle was. There appear to be a few others wandering the area as well so we each mask our appearance with more traditional Vanaheim clothing that we’ve seen. I try to gauge her thoughts as we move further in the battlefield area, but she’s so hard to read sometimes.

I don’t let go of her hand even though her grip increases the further we go, the closer we get to where her part took place. Her walking becomes more and more unsteady as we go. I don’t know if it is everyone else’s grief or her own mixed with guilt. Once we hit the center of the ring, I know now it’s both.

She falls to her knees when we reach the center, letting go of my hand. She stares blankly around her. I stand there unsure what to do to help. Then I decide to come down to her level to try to reach inside her past the emotions overwhelming her.

“Sigyn?” I ask gently, but it’s clear she doesn’t register it, so I do the next crazy thing and move to hold her face in my hands. Her eyes widen in fear before I can touch a single finger to her skin.

“No, stop. Don’t touch me,” she says in a panic, “I don’t want to hurt you.”

I stop momentarily before saying, “You won’t,” because I know she won’t and then I gingerly hold for head and look into her eyes so that she sees only me and not the battlefield around her. I tell her softly, “Let it go.”

“How?” she asks as tears start to fall. I think for a moment trying to come up with an actual way to do it that won’t destroy her when a thought occurs to me. I look at her with hope.

“What about your other title, nurturing? Is that how you restored your flowers outside the cottage?” I ask her.

“Oh, I’d never considered that,” she says quietly and then I see her ponder for a minute and then she nods. I release her to do whatever it is she needs to do. She doesn’t need me for this part.

She closes her eyes to think through what she wants to accomplish and then she tentatively places her hands to the ground. At first nothing happens and then slowly it grows.

The dried blood vanishes from the ground and the bodies, seeping into the ground, then tiny wildflowers blooming everywhere. No, not everywhere, specifically around each of the bodies. The biggest rings around closest to her and thinning out as the bodies stretch into the distance, but no one is left out, on either side.

I look at her in wonder and with pride. She’s so much better than all of them, than me. She deserves more to her life than to be trapped within Odin’s army as nothing more than a lackey to do his bidding. I will find a way to set her free.

“That was the most amazing thing I have ever seen,” I tell her excitedly.

“It certainly felt more rewarding than actually killing them,” I say and then he frowns. Yes, that’s what I had thought as I looked at the beauty she created.

“We probably shouldn’t tell anyone though,” I warn her.

“Why not?”

“My Father will only use it to his advantage. Send you into battle to kill everyone and then use you to clean it up as some twisted peace offering.”

“He wouldn’t, would he?”

“You know he would.”

“But Heimdall has probably already seen…” she starts to say but I interrupt.

“Hopefully the invisibility spell I’ve been working on cloaked most of it from his view.” I may have forgotten to tell her about it before.

“Your what now?”

“It’s a spell that hides one from his vision so that he cannot see or hear us. I’ve been working on it for a while now. I could teach you if you want,” I offer not sure it’s something she’ll even remotely consider.

“Yes,” she says after a moment and I look at her taken aback. “What, thought I’d say no,” she teases and I can’t help but laugh.

“Of course I’d thought you’d say no.” I stand up and offer my hand. She takes it and I pull her up from her kneeling position. She wobbles a little but tries to hide it. She was kneeling for quite a bit of time.

We look around before heading back to where Heimdall dropped us off. The landscape looks vastly different now. I’m not sure that I could hide all of that, but I think he’s more interested in keeping an eye on people anyway so we should be fine. A few people look our direction as we go. I can only hope they don’t think about us too much.

Once we reach the drop point, I release the invisibility spell and call for Heimdall to bring us back. Upon our return Heimdall gives us a weird look, but says nothing. I feel a small sense of relief, but part of me wonders if it’ll go in a report to Father. I’ll worry about that later.

We make a quick trip back to the cottage to pack a few things. She doesn’t bring as much as I would have thought and I’m confused about the last thing she grabs. It’s a bowl that she had sitting on a table next to her bed. I’m not sure what could be so important about that, but I shrug my shoulders and forget about it. Then we journey to the palace.

Mother is waiting for us when we reach the main entrance.

“Glad to see you’ve both made it back in one piece,” she says almost as a question.

“Yes, I think we’ve both learned a bit from the trip. I am thankful for the chance to return,” Sigyn replies.

“I see Loki did break the news about moving into the palace,” she says as she gestures to the items we’re carrying.

“He did, though I would have been fine getting up earlier or staying late to learn instead of barging in on your space,” she suggests in one last ditch effort to remain in the cottage I assume.

“I’m afraid Odin won’t be swayed, my dear. I’m sure you’ll eventually get used to the palace, besides I was at least able to have my way with room location. Shall we…”

As Mother leads us up several I start getting nervous, but I do my best to hide it, but I’m not sure I’m doing well because Sigyn keeps glancing at me. We eventually stop in front of an open doorway and she motions for us to enter. I stand frozen in the doorway when Sigyn turns back after she’s made it about halfway into the outer receiving room.

“Are you coming in, Loki?” I ask him. I shake my mind loose.

“Just waiting for an invitation, it’s not proper to enter a lady’s room without an invitation,” I say trying to sound casual.

“Quite right, my son, such a gentleman, though more so these days than I knew,” Mother says thoughtfully. I narrow my eyes only for a moment at her while Sigyn isn’t looking.

I place the things I was carrying gently on a settee for her since I don’t know where she wants them. Mother and I make ourselves comfortable while Sigyn starts arranging her belongings.

“Seriously Mother, this room?” I ask her in a heated whisper.

“Oh please, you know it would have happened eventually. This way she won’t have to move again later,” she whispers calmly in return.

“Father could not have approved and what will Thor say or anyone for that matter?”

“He did not and I thought you didn’t care what others thought?”

“Not me, Sigyn.”

There’s a small coughing noise behind us and I realize Sigyn has snuck up on us. Did she hear us? We turn our heads to look at her looking probably rather suspicious.

“Am I interrupting anything important? I can go back into the bedroom if you’d rather,” she suggests. We look back at each other, each of us trying to signal some thought to the other, but failing so we look back at Sigyn and she sighs, “oh nevermind,” letting us off the hook. She sits down in a seat across from us, waiting for us to say anything so I start with another lie.

“We were trying to figure out the best training regimen given that there are three of us to work with…”

“Yes, but then I told him that Odin wouldn’t be training you for a little while yet until after you’ve gotten a little more control practice in so that brings us back down to two…” Mother adds though I can tell she hates the direction I went.

“But there is also combat training to consider in there somewhere, but I’m not sure who’s best to train you there…” I add in.

“Yes given that no one else knows about your titles yet so your Asgardian prowess is more prominent so I’m thinking…” Mother adds on, but it is Sigyn’s turn to interject.

“Do I get any say in this?” she asks and we both look a little guilt ridden. She continues, “I would say given that I do have three titles, couldn’t they learn about one, perhaps the fidelity one? It would still lend cause to being more *Asgardian* without necessarily jeopardizing the entire operation.”

“That’s not bad. What do you think Mother?” I approve, slightly annoyed I didn’t even think of that.

“I suppose it might be enough to work. We’ll have to run it by Odin of course, but I’m sure he’d love to still have Thor and Sif training you. You were already progressing well with them.”

“Great, it’s a plan then. Perhaps we should get ready for dinner?” she proposes clearly trying to get rid of us.

“Quite right, yes I’ll go run this by Odin and see you downstairs shortly,” Mother agrees.

“I am feeling hungry. Hopefully Volstagg won’t eat everything before we get there,” I say mockingly and I hold out my arm out for Mother, which she takes. Sigyn walks us to the door and closes it quickly behind us. Mother drops my arm and heads to find Father.

I take only a few steps down the hall to the right. I pause at the first door I come to, open it, and then step into my own chambers. I close my door and again wonder what Mother could have possibly been thinking putting her right next to me.

I change quickly, not paying much attention to what I wear as most of my wardrobe is all more or less the same. I pace about for a moment or two to work off whatever it is that’s bothering me and then I head to the door to head to dinner.

As I’m exiting my rooms I look to the left only to see that I’ve been caught as Sigyn is leaving at the same time. She’s wearing a lovely shade of blue, but for some reason I find it disappointing. It’s only as she starts talking that I realize neither of has moved and I feel a bit foolish. I quietly close the door behind me as she speaks.

“Would you walk me to dinner? I must admit I’m feeling a bit nervous in case Mother is able to convince the All Father of our plan. I don’t know that he’d delay too much in announcing me,” she rambles.

“Of course,” I reply, because it is an excellent idea. I walk over to her and put my arm out for her to take, which she does. Then I continue trying to clear my name, “I had no part in this room arrangement if it makes any difference.”

“It was certainly unexpected. Is there anyone else nearby I should worry about?”

“Only Thor is also in this particular wing of the floor. He’s across the hall and a couple more doors down. We’ll pass it on the way as we walk down to dinner. Hopefully he’s already there.”

She nods in agreement as we start our journey back down the stairs towards the dining hall. I point out the door to Thor’s chambers as we pass and I’m glad he does not emerge as we go by. Once we reach the entrance to the dining hall Sigyn releases my arm and I feel instantly lonely.

We both notice Thor already in attendance along with the others gathered on one side of the room. The All Father and Mother are in their places at the head of the room. The All Father stands as we fully enter the hall. He’s clearly already agreed to our plan. I didn’t think he’d act that quickly. I figured he’d want to throw another party in celebration.

“Asgard,” his voice thunders across the hall and all heads turn towards him and the room falls silent. Once he has everyone’s undivided attention he continues, “It is my great pleasure to present to you Lady Sigyn, Goddess of Fidelity and future princess of Asgard.”

What is Father talking about, future princess, but how? What manipulation game is he playing now? I look to Mother to see if she had some say in it, but she only looks confused, as does Thor. I glance towards Sigyn who appears to be trying to figure it out also. Then finally she responds to Father’s announcement.

“It is an honor, my King. I shall try to be worthy of such an honor as my natural loyalty is to Asgard and its interests.”

It’s a carefully worded response. I’m impressed she was able to come up with something so rapidly and to say it with such calm considering she looks a bit shaken. For a moment nothing else happens, but then The All Father speaks again raising a glass in toast and others follow suit.

“To Lady Sigyn, for Asgard,” and then the hall echoes his toast. Then he sits and the hall bursts into furious whispers around us. I only catch bits and pieces, but it seems to mostly be in the realm of confusion. Sigyn starts to head towards the front of the room and I see why, Mother appears to be gesturing to us to come. We slowly make our way there. Conversations die as we walk by and then start up again once we pass.

I sit in my seat next to Mother and Sigyn sits to my left. The seat to Father’s right is empty as Thor generally sits with his friends as opposed to his proper placement. It still irks me to look at it sometimes. Wine and food is served to us and we eat in silence none of us knowing what to say after that. Eventually Mother breaks the silence.

“I have no idea what he’s talking about. That was not any part of our discussion. I’ll speak with him again after dinner,” she whispers in our direction. Sigyn and I only nod unsure of how to respond to that.

As the dinner itself comes to a close, everyone starts to mingle more about with others they weren’t sitting with. A few even come over to congratulate Sigyn on her new status. She’s trying to be as I try to be as polite as she can, but I can see it starting to weigh on her. After a while Thor and his posse finally find their way over to offer their congratulations.

“Welcome to the upper ranks of the Asgardian circle, Lady Sigyn,” Thor teases.

“It was a surprise given your lack of strength on the field, but given your title of fidelity, perhaps that shouldn’t be so surprising after all,” Sif adds rather spitefully.

“She has gotten better Sif,” Fandral says in her defense and the others nod and murmur their agreement. I’ll grant them a few points in their favor for that. Sif just sniffs in defiance and distaste.

“Does this mean you no longer want to help with my training, Sif?” Sigyn asks her.

“Oh no, I’ll help, if it means I get to best you over and over and over again.”

“You best everyone Sif. I can’t be that much of a feather in your cap.”

“Oh, you’re not, but it’ll give me immense satisfaction to take you down every time,” she says with a dangerous gleam in her eye. Then she leans in closer to whisper in her ear, so quietly that I cannot even make it out.

Sigyn’s eyes widen at whatever it is Sif has said. Sif laughs as she walks away. The rest of the group all glance at each other not sure what just happened and then they all trail after her except for Thor. I can fear the anger rising in me, but I try to remain calm on the outside.

“She’ll come around, don’t worry,” Thor assures Sigyn and then adds, “plus I’ll still help with your training. Eventually you’ll be able to best me on occasion.” He smiles, pats her arm, and then rejoins his group.

“What did she say to you,” I ask her gently and she turns toward me. She puts on a fake smile before answering.

“Nothing important, don’t worry,” she replies simply, but I know it’s not true. Whatever it was got to her.

“She’s just jealous of you so don’t let her get to you, okay?” I say in an attempt to comfort her.

“Jealous, of me?” she asks with confusion on her face. She can’t tell?

“The future princess part of the announcement… She’s wasting her time waiting around for Thor to see her, if you know what I mean.”

Before she can reply we both notice the All Father and Mother leaving together and I motion with my head to Sigyn to follow them. She hesitates, but then she nod and we try to sneakily follow them. I place my invisibility spell over us for extra protection.

They finally pick a room to go into far enough away from the dining hall that they won’t easily be overheard. Luckily there’s no door to close either so we can wait just outside the room and hear them without looking too suspicious. It’s not long before we hear Mother start in.

“Would you care to explain yourself, dear?”

“Explain what precisely?”

“You know very well what. We never discussed anything about her being a future princess. What exactly did you mean by that?”

He doesn’t reply right away. Sigyn and I look at each other, wondering for a moment if they know we’re here, but then he finally answers her.

“Despite your obvious efforts, you know I will never approve such a match. I will however consider her as a match for Thor or we can go the long way route of officially adopting her into the family.”

“That is the most ridiculous thing I have ever heard. Loki and Sigyn are clearly a match. She and Thor would never work.”

“I don’t care about matches. I need to do what is best for Asgard and you know why I cannot and will not allow it. I will not mix mischief and grief together.”

“You are being foolish.”

“You are my wife and I am your king and you will let this go.”

We hear Mother sniff and start walking closer so we make a quick getaway to a room nearby. We hear her walk further down the hall but we stay put until the All Father makes his way back to the dining hall to finish mingling and probably drink.

After I peek around the corner to see if the coast is clear we meander back to our rooms. Neither of us says anything the whole way back. It’s not until we’re almost to Sigyn’s door that I break the silence.

“Do you want to talk in my rooms?” I ask and she blinks at me so then I offer, “or in yours if you’d feel more comfortable.” She looks around for witnesses I presume before answering.

“I wouldn’t mind seeing your rooms, if you don’t mind my being in there.”

So we walk a few extra steps and then I open the door and gesture for her to enter. Tentatively, she crosses the threshold and into my receiving room. She sits down in an armchair and looks around.

I sit across from her and let her observe the room before trying to initiate conversation. There’s no way she won’t notice how similar the rooms are to hers, as far as layout that is. Eventually she does ask a question, but it’s not what I’m expecting.

“Why did you break that snake ornament that was in my cottage? It looks like it was one from your own collection.” she asks me.

“It was an accident to be honest. I was a smidge frustrated that you weren’t getting the message that I was the cat and I just hit it too hard.”

“But you just ran off. Why didn’t you stay?” she asks, a note of sadness in her voice.

“I figured you’d be mad at me or at the cat. I didn’t want to face you being mad at me in two different forms.”

“I’m sorry. I’m afraid my emotions tend to get the best of me. Your Father might be right.” She’s not serious, right?

“Now I’m worried. I don’t agree with his methods or Mother’s clear hand in trying to match us, but would it truly never work?” I ask her softly.

“I don’t know about never, but Loki we’re young yet. There are so many others you could make a better match with. I barely have control over myself. I’m a ticking time bomb,” she says and then pauses for a moment before she continues, “I’m not even sure I should stay here after all. Maybe I should go back to the cottage.”

Suddenly she stands up and heads for the door. Where is she going? I rush to stand in front of me.

“Sigyn wait, stay, please.”

She gazes at me for a moment and then she pushes past me and out the door. I freeze unsure of what to do or what I could say to convince here to stay aside from the obvious that Father just won’t like it or probably allow it. Maybe I could offer to talk to Mother about at least getting her a different room in the palace.

I head to the door to hear Sigyn saying something about not knowing what she wants. Maybe Mother has come to tell us what’s happening so I step out into the hall only to see that it’s Thor. I stop mid-step wondering what else I’ve missed.

“Brother,” I say.

“Brother,” he echoes.

No one says anything for a couple minutes, all of us standing there awkwardly not sure where the conversation should go. It’s Thor that eventually makes the first move by walking towards us.

“Sigyn, can I offer to walk you back to your room?”

“There’s no need, Thor, it’s right there,” she says point-blank and points to the next door down. Another look of confusion crosses his face.

“But you said,” but a thought occurs to him and he decides to skip the rest of that sentence and instead says, “Well this should be fun.”

I glare at him knowing know that they’ve at least discussed the situation more than I’d like so I do the next logical thing; I conjure a dagger and aim for Thor. Thor easily counter-attacks and we go back and forth until the lights start flickering down low.

Caught in confusion we both stop and look around, landing our gaze on Sigyn who looks likes lost in some trance again. Why does this keep happening? I go over and take a hold of her arms and search her eyes for some recognition, but it’s like she doesn’t see us.

“Sigyn, stop, snap out of it. I’m sorry,” I say softly, trying not to frighten her as I try to bring her back to reality. Finally she’s released from the trance and the lights return to normal. I look at her worried. She gazes at me and then turns her head towards Thor. Then she turns back towards me.

“Oh god, I’m sorry, I…” she starts and then I see some thought crossing her mind and then she says with a note of horror, “Sif was right. I am a monster.” That’s what she said? I’m going to kill her for that.

Sigyn fights my hold and eventually wrestles free. She runs to her room before I can grab her again and closes the door in my face. I shout her name and try to open the door, but she’s managed to push something in front of it. Thor comes over and calls out for her as well. I bang on the door over and over trying to get her to open the door. Failing at that I turn back to Thor.

“You better warn Sif that she called the wrong person a monster,” I spit at him and go back to my own room slamming the door behind me. I pace about wondering what to do when I remember something.

I go into the bedroom and to the wall that separates our two rooms. I step in front of the door that connects the rooms. I stand there trying to decide whether to knock or just try opening the door. I wonder if she’s even discovered her side of the door yet.

Eventually I try to turn the knob figuring she won’t answer to my knocking, but it’s locked. So either she has found it or Mother made sure it was locked knowing my sneaky habits. I sigh resigned and knock softly on the door. I don’t want to scare her too badly.

She doesn’t answer straight away and I don’t hear movement so maybe she didn’t even hear it so I knock again, slightly louder this time. Now I hear her moving on the other side so I knock one more time in case she needs help finding the door. I hear a noise on the door, but I don’t hear her unlocking it so I decide to say something.

“Sigyn, please let me in.” She doesn’t respond and I wonder if she’s moved back away from the door so I try again, “Sigyn please, I just want to know you’re okay. Can you at least tell me that?”

“What do you think, Loki?” she says bitterly. “How would you feel?”

“Why do you think I’m asking? Do you want me to go get Mother?” I offer.

“No, don’t do that. I don’t want to make a bigger mess of things,” she says and pauses before asking, “What do you think Thor’s going to do?”

“I don’t know. If he’s smart he’ll keep it to himself, but I suppose there’s a chance he’ll go to Father,” I admit. I hadn’t even thought to think about that. Father is so temperamental right now, he might be bound to do anything.

“I’m sorry, Loki. You truly do deserve more,” she says so quietly that I almost don’t hear her.

Then I hear her move away from the door. I know there’s no point trying to say anything else. She won’t listen. I sit down with my back against the door to listen to her movements. I figure as long as can hear her she’s still there and she hasn’t run away again. Unfortunately, her movements are soothing and it’s not long before I fall asleep.\*

Chapter Eleven

I wake to the sound of distant voices. I get up and look outside and see that it’s already morning. I curse to myself for falling asleep and get ready to head to breakfast. I wash my face and thro o some clean clothes and head out. As I pass Sigyn’s room I can hear her talking to someone, but I cannot tell who.

I don’t have time to think about it, I just head down. I come across Thor already on the stairs down. My first thought is to ignore him, but I need to find out if he said anything to anyone.

“Ah brother, just the person I wanted to see this morning,” I say trying to keep the mood light. He stops on the steps and looks at me suspiciously.

“You’re never this nice in the morning. What do you want?” he asks getting straight to the point.

“I’m not sure ‘never’ is correct, but no matter. I suppose I was wondering if, well,” I start not sure how to phrase this without setting off alarms.

“If I told anyone about happened with Sigyn in the hallway last night, is that you’re trying to ask?” he finishes for me.

“Yes, actually that is what I’m attempting to ask.”

“Not yet, but I would like some straight answers. This concerns me too I have a feeling.” I hate that he’s right.

“Unfortunately I think you’re right, which I hate admitting. If I promise to fill you in a little more later, can you keep it to yourself for now, please, for Sigyn?” He ponders it over before nodding.

“You owe me something, soon.”

“Thank you, Thor. Shall we go before we’re missed?”

We enter the hall together which earns us a few looks, but when Thor takes his seat next to Father’s, more heads turn our direction out of curiosity. It takes me by surprise as well, but if he’s looking for answers it is probably the best option he has right now.

We aren’t there long before Mother and Father join us, which leaves us waiting for Sigyn. However Father doesn’t wait to begin the feast without her. Shortly after we’ve started eating, Sigyn joins us as well as another girl who leaves her to stand along the wall. She must be a lady in waiting. They’re that serious about this then?

I leave her to settle in when I see her wave her lady in waiting over. It’s easy to overhear their conversation.

“Yes, my lady?” the lady in waiting asks her sounding slightly wary.

“Do you have any friends eating somewhere in here this morning?” Sigyn asks in return.

“I do.”

“Wouldn’t you prefer to go eat and sit with them?”

“That’s not proper protocol, my lady,” she says with more apprehension in her voice now. That’s an understatement.

“Ah, well both the All Father and Mother are here nearby so they can keep an eye on me themselves if that’s really what’s bothering you,” Sigyn suggests. That’s interesting. Are they spying on Sigyn? Who am I kidding of course they are. The lady in waiting hesitates for a moment glancing in the direction of the All Father and Mother and I see Mother nod in agreement. She bobs a quick curtsy and then joins her friends. Mother turns her attention to Sigyn.

“That was generous of you, my dear. I hope you slept well,” she says casually.

“So was she your idea or our very generous King’s?” Sigyn asks her and Mother blinks at her in clear denial, but Sigyn narrows her eyes at her in accusation. This is riveting stuff. I can see nearby people trying to hear what’s being said.

“Odin did wish to assign someone to you and I chose her. I know she’s dependable and eager to please. I wouldn’t be surprised though if he had a word or two with her himself though,” Mother admits in defeat.

“I have a feeling there’s a conversation we need to have somewhere in the near future, don’t you suppose?” Sigyn asks in turn.

“Yes, I think we need to clear the air, but now is not the time,” she says and so I decide to jump on that and see if I can start something to start getting real answers.

“Why not now, after all does it not concern the future of Asgard?” I propose. Then I look at Sigyn and without thinking say, “It’s good to see you’re looking well this morning.”

“Why would she not be well?” the All Father asks, barging his way into the discussion as well. Oh, oops.

“Well, that was quite the announcement last night. I’m afraid it took me more by surprise than I thought. After so many offers of congratulations I developed a rather large headache is all,” she offers as explanation.

“You should probably work on some breathing exercises as I’m afraid your duties within the kingdom will often bring on such headaches. You best get used to them,” Father suggests and then turns back to whomever it was he was already talking to. Mother is looking at Sigyn more suspiciously.

I mouth a sorry at her because I don’t want to cause her anymore distress and go back to eating. I hear Sigyn next to me stab at her plate rather aggressively. Why can’t I do things right by her?\*