

(Every character depicted in the story below is a consenting legal adult over the age of 18)

A/N: Lady Loki has had it rough~

-x-X-x-

How long had it been since she'd been sealed away? That was the real question. But of course, she couldn't exactly ask the Midgardian for a number. He wasn't likely to have any concept of Asgard or Odin's machinations, even if it did sound like her male self and her brother had been meddling in Midgardian affairs recently.

Still, the last things she remembered of Midgard put its indigenous population firmly in the bronze age. Just looking at the Midgardian in front of her now made it obvious they'd advanced quite a lot from there. Which meant it had been at least centuries since Odin had 'dealt with her'... possibly longer.

The Midgardian fidgets in front of her, seeming unsure of what to say or do next. His wariness is as annoying as it is amusing, especially now that she knows it's likely because of her male self rather than anything she did. Tch, once upon a time Loki had just been Loki... one mind, but constantly changing, as was their nature.

Unfortunately, Odin hadn't appreciated that. In spite of the benefits he'd gleaned from it, such as his beloved horse, her son, he'd decided she was too unruly to be allowed to continue. At this point, she wasn't even sure she could rejoin her male half.

Odin had started by severing her from the greater whole and while she might not know exactly how long had passed, she could feel that it was long enough for her to have become her own distinct self. Not to mention, from the sound of things, she and her male self had diverged quite a bit in the centuries they'd probably been apart.

That didn't mean she was just going to sit here and take it though. With a huff, Loki focuses back on the nervous Midgardian in front of her.

"What is your name, Midgardian?"

He hesitates for a moment, a telltale sign that he's considering whether to lie or not. Finally, he speaks.

"I am called Crow, milady."

A moniker, of course. Loki holds back the urge to scoff derisively. Did he think she would be able to use his name to hurt him if he was too free with the information? Well, she *could*... but she wasn't going to. She needed him, not that he needed to know that.

Instead, she focuses on the figurine in his hands. Not the cat statuette, she doesn't care about that... no, she focuses on *her* figurine. Her failsafe, something she'd never thought she would have to use until Odin forced her hand.

"I wonder, how did you get your hands on my figurine, exactly? How did you get here?"

Again, the Midgardian hesitates, glancing down at the exquisitely carved eight-legged horse he's holding.

"... Where even is here, Lady Loki? How did this figurine bring me here?"

Classic deflection, but Loki is amused enough to humor him for the moment. Or perhaps she just needs someone else to know after all this time. Did Thor know? Why were her male self and her brother outright warring over Midgard? What had happened between them while she'd been imprisoned?

No matter...

“This is my domain, a hidden demesne that I prepared quite a long time ago just in case. When Odin sought to destroy me, specifically the me that was Loki’s female aspect, this was where I retreated to. However, I could not simply make it such a place that he could follow easily. Given his power, I needed to properly conceal myself, to make it seem like he had succeeded. And so my escape and refuge became my prison.”

It was truly her only option at the time. Odin was one of the most powerful beings in all of Yggdrasil’s branches. Even fleeing outside of the World Tree’s reach might not have protected her. When Odin cut her out, her only choice was to let him ‘destroy’ her fully... and in doing so hide what remained of herself here, in this place.

“The only way to enter or exit this place is via the figurine in your hand. Without it, I am trapped... but also without it, nobody can find me here. And thanks to the spells I cast on it, no one with ill intentions towards me can use it either.”

Crow looks down at the figurine for a long moment, his brow furrowed when he finally gazes back to her.

“... Why would Odin try to destroy you though?”

Loki smirks at that.

“My father did not approve of most of my choices. He especially did not approve of the choices I tended to make when I was a woman. I believe near the end he claimed there was some sort of prophecy foretelling the destruction of Asgard brought about by one of my not-yet-born children. So he sought to curtail such prophecy by doing away with me entirely.”

The Midgardian scowls at that.

“That... that’s not right. He was punishing you for what *might* happen?! You hadn’t done anything wrong!”

Oh. How cute. Loki is surprised and taken aback... especially by how warm the mortal's words leave her. She wasn't expecting him to take her side so easily... most people never did. What did it say that a mortal Midgardian was willing to stand up to the great Odin's decisions when no one on Asgard would even dare?

Of course, it wasn't like said Midgardian was face to face with the All-Father here and now. He might be singing an entirely different tune then. But she could feel that his reaction in this moment was genuine all the same... and given how often she'd employed her Silvertongue to lying to Odin, she would be a hypocrite if she blamed the mortal for doing the same in some hypothetical scenario.

Regardless, Loki just shrugs, smiling now.

"Either way, I know not how long it has been or what the state of things outside of this place are."

The Midgardian blinks at that before slowly shaking his head.

"Uh... I don't know either, milady. I mean, I think Norse Mythology is something like a thousand years old at this point but..."

Norse. That was what those Midgardians who she and her brother had interacted with had called themselves. To be fair, that had been some time before Odin decided to do away with her... but not too long. Meaning she'd been trapped here closer to a thousand years than not. Somewhere around eight or nine centuries, perhaps?

Loki's smile drops as she ponders that, causing the mortal to go still in response to her changing mood. Finally, she fixes her emerald gaze on him.

"We will return to our previous topic of conversation. The one you somewhat unskillfully diverted us from originally. How did you get your hands on my figurine? How did you find yourself here?"

Squirming, Crow grimaces... but clearly understands that even a goddess' patience has limits. Furthermore, she appreciates that he realizes he cannot lie to her, because she can taste the truth on his tongue as his shoulders slump and he finally explains himself.

"Right, so... I'm a thief. I was robbing a museum with that friend I mentioned earlier when we were caught in the process. I ran and hid... and while I was being searched for, your figurine was on a shelf and began to glow. I grabbed it to keep it from alerting my hunters to my hiding place... and it brought me here."

Interesting. Very interesting. She hadn't fully told the truth earlier when she mentioned that the figurine wouldn't let anyone with ill intentions use it. Rather, the spells on the figurine were designed to seek out a very specific sort of person, someone who could be useful to her.

Suffice to say, given it had taken centuries for such a person to stumble across the figurine, Loki was reconsidering ever using such... vague magic ever again. Still, the point remained... this man in front of her, this 'Crow' was exactly who she'd been waiting for. Even if he didn't look like much, he was what she needed, as strange as that might feel.

"Lady Loki... if you don't mind me asking, how does one leave this place?"

Loki arches a brow at that question, perhaps the most audacious thing he's asked yet. And he knows it too, given how he's fighting hard not to squirm in front of her. Heh, this little mortal continues to be quite cute. She can't help but play with him just a little bit.

"Leave? Why would you want to leave? Is my company not satisfactory, mortal?"

Crow winces at that, quickly shaking his head.

"It's not that, milady! I just... I still need food and water. And I mean... don't you want to leave too? We could both depart now that I'm here?"

He sounds hopeful... but Loki also senses a hint of deceit in his voice. He's holding something back from her. Narrowing her eyes, she moves from her throne faster than the mortal can track, appearing directly in front of him. He tries to step back, but she grabs him by the front of his garments and yanks him in close.

"You're hiding something from me, mortal. What is it? What do you not want me to know?"

She has no magic that will force him to tell her the truth. Nothing that will persuade him to be honest with her. In the end, she has to act a little brutish, relying on intimidation where usually she would prefer guile and subtlety. Of course, she's a goddess and he's a mortal, so intimidation works just fine.

"... My brother! I have to get back to my brother!"

His jaw is clenched, the vein in his neck bulging as he grits his teeth. In that moment, his fear seems to vanish and he looks much like a cornered rat that might try to bite. Family... Loki would be lying if she said she fully understood considering what her father did to her and what he'd said of her brother in the modern day. But at the same time, she thinks of her mother, of Freya... and lets out a sigh.

Releasing him, she nods.

"Thank you for your honesty."

He looks shocked by her words... as well he should. It is not every mortal that Loki would deign herself to thank. At the same time though, she considers their surroundings, this dark empty cave that she has survived in for centuries.

... He's right, she does want to leave with him here and now. She wants to throw caution to the wind, rush out of this place, and see how the universe has changed in her absence. She wants to experience new things, she wants to meet new people... and play new games, concocting new schemes.

However...

“Does Odin still live, mortal? Do you know that much at least?”

“I, uh... I think so? I’ve heard him mentioned once or twice. He doesn’t really come to Earth at all though. Or rather, Midgard. Not like Thor. Thor is an actual Avenger.”

‘Avenger’. Loki files that away, even as she ponders the greater issue at hand. With Odin still alive and on the throne of Asgard, leaving this place behind held the potential of alerting him to her survival. And she didn’t doubt that he would immediately move to destroy her if he sensed her presence within the Nine Realms once more.

Which meant... she couldn’t leave. She couldn’t go anywhere. Not yet, anyways. Loki sighs at that, shaking her head. It was just too dangerous to stick so much as a toe out into the open. But that didn’t mean she was entirely out of options...

“You, mortal. You will serve.”

The self-named Crow straightens up at that, his eyes narrowing as Loki looks at him with a wicked smile.

“... What exactly does that entail, milady?”

He hasn’t messed up once in addressing her properly since this conversation began. Self-serving or no, it’s a good sign. Smirking, Loki gestures broadly.

“I cannot leave this place yet. Not if Odin remains vigilant. I need someone to check for me, to find out the state of the All-Father and report back to me. That someone... will be you.”

She expects him to refuse her, at least initially. She expects him to deny it, to say he’s not right for the job. In the end, it turns out she underestimates him...

because rather than any of that, the Midgardian narrows his eyes and stands up all the straighter.

“And what’s in it for me?”

That sealed it for her. She didn’t just need this mortal... she *liked* him. Chuckling at his brazenness, Loki flicks a hand through the air, her magic swirling to life in verdant green. Crow’s eyes widen, but he can’t move in time to avoid her if he wanted to, even as the magic hits both him and the figurine in his hand, swirling around them.

“I’ll tell you what’s in it for you, mortal. Power. You will gain untold power from helping me. I require your assistance, so it wouldn’t do for you to be arrested or killed before you can help me. As such, I name thee my Champion... a Champion of Loki.”

A Champion of Lady Loki technically, but even having been severed from her other self, she still can’t quite think of herself as anything but Loki. That might be a problem, eventually. If she does get out of this place eventually, then she’ll have to decide what to do with her male self. Kill him? Help him?

Well... it’s not relevant for now. For now, her magic finishes connecting to the Midgardian in front of her. To be fair, it’s not as though he’s unwilling... she can feel that the resistance is meager at best. He doesn’t fight very hard once she explains what she’s going to do. Instead, he stands there and stares at himself as his all black attire morphs into the green and gold of one of her Champions.

Meanwhile, the horse figurine transforms as well, until all that remains of Sleipnir is the horse’s head. The rest of the body becomes a cane, within which sits a hidden blade. A fine instrument by which her new Champion can enact his will upon the world.

“Through this, we are now connected. You will be my eyes and ears in your world, and I will be able to communicate with you from within my demesne.”

Looking down at his new attire and the sword cane in his grasp, Crow adopts a crooked smile as he turns his gaze towards her.

“I suppose I don’t have much of a choice in the matter, do I?”

Loki just smirks.

“No. Good luck.”

He probably has other questions, but funnily enough her first interaction with another intelligent being in centuries has been surprisingly draining. So before he can say anything else, Loki snaps her fingers... and sends him back from whence he came.

-x-X-x-

A/N: Remember to Vote, leave a Like, and let me know what you think!