

Thousandfurs

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Thousandfurs

by [Dubstep_Wombat](#)

Summary

Once upon a time, a monster meets a monster in the woods. One of these monsters is also a prince, and he is well within his rights to kill the other. Despite that, the second monster emphatically does not beg for mercy. Instead, she comments on the state of his clothes.

The prince thinks the monster is a bit uppity and could definitely use a bath but grants her work in the palace anyway. He doesn't quite know why.

The monster thinks that agreeing to work for the prince is probably the stupidest thing she could do but agrees anyway. She doesn't quite know why, either.

Of course, she's not really a monster. But maybe he isn't really a monster either.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Prologue: Once Upon a Time There Was a Prince

When the younger prince Loki discovered his true identity as a Jotun, he seemed to go mad, and with his mind the Nine Realms also fell into chaos. Through the efforts of his brother, Thor, his father, his mother, and, eventually, his own, the Nine Realms slowly righted themselves. It cost the royal family much along the way. The queen died. The elder prince abandoned his position to live on Midgard for a time, and the king fell into the restorative sleep called Odinsleep.

And so, Asgard was left with only the mad, monster prince to defend it. He donned the guise of his father and took up control of the realm. And he surpassed all expectations by ruling well. It wasn't even until Odin woke from his sleep, a decade later, that anyone learned what truly happened.

But the prince was not pardoned. What he had done, for the betterment of the Nine Realms or not, was treason and so must be punished. Loki, who once had the knowledge to travel all through the Nine Realms whenever he wanted, was confined to live only on Odin's holdings. This limited him to the Citadel itself and a very few other places. And his magic too, was constrained. Bands were placed on his wrists that prevented him from disguising his appearance as he had done for the past decade. Having lived his whole life keeping his Jotun form hidden beneath his magic, he now had to face Asgard wearing the blue skin and red eyes of a monster.

Where once he had been king, Loki rarely left his rooms, not welcoming the frightened and repulsed stares of the Asgardian court. His belongings suffered, as all but a very few servants refused to tend him. His only visitor was his brother, now returned to court with his newly immortal, Midgardian wife in tow. Such visits usually ended in shouting, if not outright blows. The few times he left were to go hunting in the forests owned by the royal family, taking only his hound, Fenrir, which was far too little protection. Thor often worried his brother was daring some boar, bear, or bilgesnipe to end his life.

But if Loki was looking for his end out in the forest, he found something else entirely.

A Mantle Made of All Kinds of Fur

Chapter Summary

In which the story begins

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The morning dew condensed on her mantle, filling Sigyn's nose with the loathsome smell of wet fur. But, even though the spring morning was fairly warm, she could hardly take the thing off. Made from thousands of pieces of fur stolen from many different pelts over the course of her mother's long illness, it was her protection. Sigyn's magical abilities, meager as they were, manifested best through threadcraft and clothing, and she'd used all of her skills to make this. When she wore it around her shoulders, she looked like a girl wearing a very ugly cloak. But when she put the hood up, she transformed into a hideous creature, like a girl-bear but with fur of every different color.

The trickiest part, spell-wise, was getting it so the mantle would be over her clothes when the hood was down, and under them when it was up. But she'd managed it, thank God, because it would have been awkward to try and put on her shirt or trousers over her mantle.

The only pieces of her she couldn't cover with fur were her face, her hands and feet. Designing some kind of mask or gloves for the cloak had proven too difficult for her paltry spellcraft and having the fur on her feet made wearing boots uncomfortable. But hands and feet weren't really the problem. She doubted anyone would recognize her by her hand. Her face though? Sigyn tried to use a scarf to obscure her features, but it turned out that mud worked best.

She'd been living on her own in the woods for three weeks, and so far her disguise had fooled everyone. She was beginning to relax, which is why she allowed herself a few more moments of rest before she got up. Living in the wild had been a lot harder than she expected it to be.

It's better than the alternative, she thought to herself, shuddering. She pulled her cloak closer around herself, checking to make sure the hood was still up, before curling up tighter and dozing off.

She didn't know how long she'd been sleeping when something cold pushed into her face and woke her with a start. Sigyn sat up with a gasp, heart pounding, only to be faced with a large hound, sniffing curiously at her.

She laughed, collapsing against the tree. "Hello there," she said, reaching up to scratch behind the dog's ears. With her other hand, she reached into her pack and grabbed a strip of

dried beef. “Would you like a treat?” she asked. He gobbled it eagerly. “Of course you would,” she murmured, continuing to pet him as he licked every last scrap of salted beef off her hand. She laughed as he pushed his nose at her face again, licking her forehead.

“Fenrir!” someone barked a sharp rebuke, and the dog ran away from her to the side of a tall... *blue* man. She glanced away, hiding her face from him, her heart pounding in her chest. A Jotun? In Asgard? Sigyn knew of only one person the hound’s owner could possibly be: the younger prince.

Intellectually, she understood that Prince Loki was unlikely to have even heard of her, much less recognize her face, especially covered in mud and fur. But rationality would not stop her heart from being terrified he would see through it all. And then the prince of the realm would bring the law down on her head. It was his duty as a royal.

“What kind of creature are you?” he asked her.

She didn’t answer. She didn’t even move. *Please just leave me alone*, she thought.

He didn’t. “I know you can speak,” he said. “I heard you speak to Fenrir just now. What are you?” She still did not answer. He sighed angrily. “I’m not going to hurt you.” He sounded so frustrated, and Sigyn found she understood exactly. Everyone who saw her in this disguise thought she meant harm, even though she’d never done anything remotely threatening. Though it was strange to her, to think she should have anything in common with a prince, it was this empathy that gave her back her voice.

Though she didn’t know how to answer his question. “Some,” she began, hesitatingly, “have called me Thousandfurs or Straggletag, but most are far less... specific in their terminology, and far less polite.”

“And what do you call yourself?” the prince asked.

“Me,” Sigyn said with some confusion. Confusion that was feigned. “What other word would I need?”

She heard the frustrated sigh again, though she knew it’s cause was different this time.

“You’re not answering my question.”

“I don’t think your question has an answer, Your Highness,” she said. “Feel free to make something up. Everyone else does.”

“You know who I am, then.”

She frowned, forgetting herself, and looked up at him, meeting blood red eyes. “Does that surprise you? You’re a prince of the realm. Everyone knows who you are.”

His eyes darkened at that, and, while Sigyn understood the appeal of anonymity, really she did, she felt the comforts of living in a palace with your every whim catered to triumphed it. By a lot, actually. Although... her eyes traveled over his clothes. They were worn, torn, tarnished... hardly rags but not the quality of dress Sigyn expected from a prince.

“If you know who I am,” Prince Loki eventually said, “then surely you know these woods are owned by the All-Father. It’s illegal for anyone to hunt here without his express permission. It’s called poaching.”

She scowled at him. “I’m not a poacher. I was just sleeping. Or is it illegal to do *that* in the king’s woods, too?” After realizing what she’d said, she looked back down, chastising herself. Arguing with a prince? This was not going to end well.

“Then how do you plan to feed yourself?” he asked.

She reached into her pack and pulled out the first piece of fabric she found in there. “I have things to sell in Gladsheim,” she said, showing him the cloth. It was one of the many handkerchiefs she’d embroidered by her mother’s sickbed. This one had pansies on it. The prince leaned down and pulled it from her fingers, examining the stitches. “And I didn’t steal them, either.”

“I didn’t say you did,” he said, running his fingers over the stitches.

“Well, you had just accused me of poaching, despite my obviously having no weapons,” she said. “But I’m sorry I made the assumption.” Her voice was only a *little* accusatory.

He heard her tone anyway and looked up from the handkerchief with a very odd expression on his face. Sigyn couldn’t decipher it. Some mixture of annoyance and... amusement, perhaps? Not chagrin, she noted. “Since you so obviously didn’t steal it,” he said, and she bit her lip to keep from smiling, “Where did you get this?”

“I made it,” she said, only a little annoyed.

“You?” he asked.

She scowled at him again. “Is that so hard to believe? After all, my clothes are in a lot better shape than yours,” she said, before biting her lip and looking down again. *Why do I keep letting my tongue loose?* she thought, desperately. “Apart from the mud, I mean,” she muttered.

She stared at the ground, twisting her fingers together while she waited for Loki to speak. When he did, it was not what she expected. “Would you like to fix that? I’ll pay you, of course.”

She looked up. “What?”

“I would hire you, Thousandfurs,” the prince said.

“Uh...” Well. This was... unexpected. And she wasn’t sure it was altogether good, either. “Why?”

“Most of the palace staff refuses to work for me,” he said. His voice was neutral, but she could feel the bitterness he was hiding. And the sorrow beneath that. “But I suppose you wouldn’t object to working for a monster.”

Being one yourself. He didn't say it, but the words still echoed in her ears. They made her angry.

She stood up and dusted herself off as best she could. "Actually, I do. Are you a monster?"

He scowled. "Are you mocking me?" he snarled.

"Do you really believe you can tell if a person's a monster just by looking at them?" she asked. She watched him absorb the words, but she could not tell what he made of them. "I'll work for you," she said. "If you do turn out to be monstrous, I'll leave. May I have the handkerchief back?"

He looked down at the cloth in his hand like he'd forgotten it. He probably had. He tossed it to her dismissively. "Come," he said, walking away, Fenrir followed him.

Is he talking to me or his dog? Sigyn thought with a grimace. Probably both. Again, her anger sparked. But she knew how to choose her battles... sometimes... and followed the prince meekly back to the castle.

She noticed that his path through the city, through the castle grounds, then through the Citadel itself was carefully chosen to run into as few people as possible. It was impossible to see no one. They were stared at by a smattering of guards and servants, but Sigyn found it was easy to see the difference between the stares meant for her and those meant for Loki. People stared at Loki with a mixture of disgust, suspicion, and fear. They stared at her with all those plus a healthy dose of shock, which passed quickly into more suspicion. Their thoughts could be easily read on their faces. Of course the monster prince would bring another monster into their midst.

The prince glided through it all as if they were too far beneath him to notice, but if he truly didn't care, why lead them along this serpentine path through only the most isolated halls of the palace?

Finally, they reached a set of doors that the prince opened and walked through like he owned. Sigyn remained outside. Despite her being a grotesque monster at the moment, and despite being hired as the prince's servant, and despite, well, everything that had happened recently, she was still a Jarl's daughter. She was not going to enter the prince's *bedchambers*.

From her position in the doorway, Loki's bedroom looked a bit like a library with a bed in it. But, unlike any library Sigyn had ever seen, the curtains were kept tightly drawn. All the light in the room was provided by lamps, and since they were currently turned off, it gave the whole thing a dark, brooding look.

Dark and brooding matched the prince well, Sigyn thought.

"Brynjolf," the prince called. A manservant appeared, seemingly out of nowhere. "This is Thousandfurs, who will repair my clothes. She needs a workroom and a place to sleep." Sigyn started at the pronoun. If he had chosen to call her 'it,' either from ignorance or indifference, he wouldn't have been the first. But he hadn't.

The prince turned to look at her. “And a bath.”

“Yes, Your Highness,” Brynjolf said, bowing. He looked her over, and, to her surprise, he didn’t sniff or sneer or any of the other expressions of disdain she was expecting. He nodded to her. “This way.”

Hesitantly, she crossed the threshold into the prince’s room and followed Brynjolf into a corridor, the entrance of which was disguised so you could only see it if you knew it was there. Off that corridor were several doors. “This is where the prince’s staff would normally stay, but it’s just me ‘an Tjorvi, so most of ‘em are empty.” She stared at the man, startled by his drawl. City. Lowborn. He caught her staring and smiled. “Used t’ be a city rat. A thief. The prince caught me pokin’ ‘round the castle, but decided I’d be more use to ‘im if I had both hands.” He didn’t elaborate on what he meant by “use,” but, by the man’s wicked grin, Sigyn suspected he was more than just Loki’s manservant. “You can bed down in ‘ere,” Brynjolf said, opening a door. “What kind of space d’ya need for a workroom?”

The room was small and windowless, with a cot in the corner, a desk against the wall, and a small cabinet for her things. “Actually, if you get me a table and more light,” Sigyn said, “This room would be fine.”

“If you say so, lass,” Brynjolf said. “But we ain’t exactly strapped for space. You can have whatever you want.”

“More light and a table,” Sigyn said. “Though, if the table had measuring units carved on at least one of the edges, that’d be helpful.”

Brynjolf nodded. Then he pointed into the room. “See that door?” he asked. “That’s ‘t the bathroom. D’ya need help running a bath?”

Sigyn blushed beneath her fur. “No, thank you, I can manage perfectly well on my own.”

“I’ll go see ‘t the table and the light,” he said, before turning away. But he stopped and smiled at her. “Welcome t’ Prince Loki’s service, Thousandfurs. Here’s hopin’ you’ve a thick skin and a crooked eye, else you won’t last long.”

She stared at him. Was that a threat? He looked so jovial that she couldn’t help but think not. But if it wasn’t a threat, what was it?

Brynjolf had walked away before she thought to ask, so Sigyn entered her room, closed the door, and dropped her pack on the bed and undressed. But she didn’t take the hood off her mantle until she was safely inside the bathroom, with two closed doors between her and the rest of the world.

Taking off the cloak felt wonderful. She allowed herself a moment simply to breathe, free of it’s too close warmth, the smell, and sometimes the itching. Then she ran the bath. She didn’t dare fill it more than a hand’s length deep, and just warm enough not to be uncomfortable. Then she washed off what she could; she’d caked on the mud really well. She had to refill the tub twice more before she felt really clean.

Sigyn stalled before putting her mantle back on. It didn't take much to clean her clothes. She'd made them herself, from spinning the thread to weaving the cloth to sewing the pieces together. They obeyed her, only picking up dirt when she wanted them too. Simply shaking them out was enough for all but her underthings, which she washed and hung from a rafter in the bathroom. The mantle, too, obeyed her. A simple shake and it was good as new.

But she still didn't want to put it on.

Which was why, when someone knocked on her door, though she was dressed, sitting on her bed and carefully putting her things away, her mantle was still hanging in the bathroom.

Shit, she thought as she called, "One moment!" running to the bathroom and hurriedly clasping it around her shoulders.

She flipped the hood up and went to the door. Opening it revealed Brynjolf and another man holding up a table. "Well lass," Brynjolf said. "You look a sight better."

"Thank you," Sigyn said, looking at the ground.

"This is the new girl?" the other man asked. He was much older than Brynjolf or Loki. His hair and beard were white.

"Tjorvi, meet Thousandfurs. Thousandfurs, Tjorvi," Brynjolf said. "Tjorvi's been lookin' after the prince since he was just a little kid."

"Kid?" Sigyn asked, frowning. What did baby goats have to do with Loki?

"Street slang," Brynjolf explained. "For child."

"I'll never understand why you insist on talking like a hooligan," Tjorvi said, "when you've been in service here longer than you were on the street."

"You can take a kid out o' the street, but you can't take the street out o' the kid," Brynjolf said. Both men spoke with the air of having had this conversation many times before.

Tjorvi sighed. "Young lady," he said. "Despite what this ruffian may tell you, working in a prince's service is a very important position. If you cannot treat it with it's due respect and consequence-"

"That table looks heavy," Sigyn interrupted, stepping back to allow them into the room. "Why don't you come in and put it down before giving me lectures on my behavior." But she couldn't be truly angry with the old servant. She was positive that Tjorvi gave everyone the speech she'd just interrupted, and anyone who decided to call the she-bear monstrosity she was a "young lady," deserved the benefit of the doubt.

The two men hauled the table into her room and put it down where she directed them. Then she saw Brynjolf bring in several more lamps. "Is this enough?" he asked.

"Yes," Sigyn said, deciding that if it wasn't she would get more herself.

“Now,” Tjorvi said after they had settled the room, “as I was saying. If you cannot treat your new position with it’s due respect and consequence, you will quickly find yourself out of a job. That said, if you behave yourself as a palace servant should and do your work with diligence, I think you will find life here to be very fulfilling indeed. At least until you find yourself a nice husband and settle down.” Sigyn choked, but Tjorvi ignored it. “Now, I take my leave of you. If you have need of anything, please do not hesitate to ask.” Then he walked out the door.

Sigyn was still staring at the “husband” comment. Brynjolf laughed when the door was shut. “Aw, lass you should see yer face! I take it you didn’t notice old Tjorvi’s blind as a bat.”

She blinked. That explained a lot. “But he didn’t act as if he were blind.”

“He knows the whole palace better ‘n the back o’ his hand,” Brynjolf said. “Been serving here since he was a kid himself.”

“And the two of you are the only ones who serve Prince Loki?” Sigyn asked.

Brynjolf shrugged. “Now you. Welcome t’ our little club, lass.” He turned to go.

“Wait,” Sigyn called, and Brynjolf turned back to her. “Earlier, you said I had to have a thick skin and a... crooked eye to be in Prince Loki’s service. What’s a crooked eye?”

Brynjolf grinned. “Don’t you know the stories?” he asked. “Loki the Liar, the trickster. They call him ‘God o’ Mischief’ on Midgard, did you know? He’s crooked as they come,” he said. “And all o’ us what call him “master” are too. Gotta be, just t’ keep up.”

“Even Tjorvi?” she asked, frowning.

The thief-turned-manservant’s grin grew wicked. “Especially Tjorvi,” he said, before turning away.

“Um,” she said, and Brynjolf poked his head back in. “Could you fetch me those of the prince’s clothes in need of the most urgent care?” she asked. “Those that he won’t be needing?”

Brynjolf shook his head, wicked grin still on his face. “‘Fraid I’ve got other things need doin.’ Yer the seamstress; that’s for you t’ do.”

She glared at him, but he only laughed. She could hear him whistling a tune as he walked down the hall.

Chapter End Notes

In keeping with Marvel traditions, I'm Americanizing a lot of Icelandic and Norse names for things. Sorry. Or you're welcome. Depending on your thoughts.

Yes, Brynjolf is based off the character of the same name from Skyrim. I love Skyrim, and I love that guy, and there will probably be more than one similarity to that video game before we're done here. (It helps that many things in Skyrim come from the Vikings. Like the title of Jarl, which I am also using.) I apologize if Brynjolf's accent isn't always consistent. I'm trying, but sometimes I forget. Writing in accents is hard.

Mistress of Wardrobe

Chapter Summary

Sigyn finds that Loki's servants are the exception, not the rule.

Sigyn stood nervously in her room for a few seconds, twisting her fingers together, before steeling herself and following Brynjolf out. The corridor had two ways into it, one she'd already taken through the prince's rooms. She assumed the other one was so the servants could come and go without disturbing him. She followed it to find she was right. It emptied into a discrete alcove in the golden hall outside Loki's chambers.

Sigyn turned and walked back down the hall to the prince's room and announced her presence with a knock on the door frame.

Prince Loki was bent over a book at his desk, Fenrir asleep at his feet. He looked up at her knock. "Brynjolf got you settled in, I see," he said, turning back to his book.

"Yes, Your Highness," she said, looking down to obscure her face, now that the mud was gone. "I've come to collect the damaged clothes?"

He gestured in the direction of a door. She swiftly opened it. It was a wardrobe, the largest she'd ever seen, and it was *full* of clothes. All were in need of attention, though mostly through neglect. Only a very few were damaged through wear. Sigyn frowned at what she saw. Evidence of a man who had once been fastidious about his appearance but no longer cared. She chewed her lower lip. That could mean many things, not all of them bad. In any case, it was not her place to worry over it.

She ignored the feeling, and grabbed the clothes that he obviously wore often, filling her arms with what she could carry before turning around.

She nearly dropped everything. The prince had come to stand behind her, but he moved so silently she hadn't noticed. "Excuse me," she said to the bundle of clothes in her arms, trying to calm down.

Cool fingers gripped her chin and forced her head up. Brown eyes met red ones, and Sigyn's breath stopped in her lungs. *Please don't recognize me*, she thought. *Please don't-*

"You could be almost pretty," he said. "If not for the fur."

She glared at him to hide the flood of relief inside her, pulling her chin from his grasp, and turned back to close the closet door with her foot. "Great. I'll get right on that," she said sarcastically, escaping detection making her bold.

He snorted. "I think you should decide whether you're going to be timid or fierce."

"I think I don't need to pick one or the other just so you can fit me into a neat box," she retorted, stepping past him.

The ensuing silence lasted only three steps before the prince spoke again. "You know, you look a bit Vanir, with all the mud gone," he said, choosing to ignore her comment.

Sigyn's gut twisted. Her grandmother had been from Vanaheim. "I wouldn't say so around any Vanir," she said to distract him. "Wouldn't want them to take offense." With that, she stepped back into the servant's corridor and walked back to her room.

She worked through most of the morning, using the supplies she'd brought with her to repair Loki's clothes. She used her magic to make the colors match. Starting with the most worn and working her way back, she fixed torn hems and ripped seams. She had to sacrifice a few of her handkerchiefs to reinforce the areas that were simply worn thin. She chose to magically weave the new cloth into the existing fabric rather than the much simpler, traditional patch. Princes shouldn't wear patched clothes.

She frowned at the shirt in her lap. Why would he hire her to repair his clothes instead of simply throwing them out and having new ones made? Sentiment, perhaps? But Loki didn't strike her as the sentimental type.

Perhaps he just didn't like being wasteful, Sigyn thought, finishing off the hem of the shirt.

Still... she put the shirt was working on down and grabbed the first few things she had fixed, using the ruler on the table and some paper she'd found in the drawer to mark down measurements. Then, using more paper, she sketched a few designs. Mad, Jotun prince or not, there was no reason he couldn't wear fine clothes. She could design ones that complimented his Jotun form, while still being Asgardian in design. She already had several ideas.

It would be presumptuous of her, but, why not? If he didn't like them, he could just ignore them the way he ignored the rest of his clothes.

Sigyn looked around her sparse room and chewed her lower lip. If she was really going to sew Prince Loki a whole new wardrobe, she would need more material. Using magic to unravel handkerchiefs wouldn't be sufficient for that.

She poked her head out of her room and found Tjvori in the servant's hall. "Tjvori?" she asked tentatively, and he turned to her. Now that she was looking, she could see the way his eyes did not quite focus. "Where might I get supplies? For the sewing?"

He thought for a moment. "Come along, my dear," he said. "I'll show you." He started walking, and Sigyn followed a few steps behind. "Though I would have thought you'd have started your duties before now," he said. The quiet rebuke made her scowl.

"I have," she said. "I've been using my own supplies thus far, but I haven't quite the right thread needed for the next shirt." A lie. She wasn't sure why she felt the need to lie to Tjvori, but she remembered what Brynjolf said about his being especially crooked.

“Ah,” the old servant said. “Well, feel free to replenish your personal supplies in the loom rooms. You’re here for your skills; not your tools, my dear. You needn’t use your own things.”

“Thank you,” she said, as he took her down several levels into a hall that was not gilt in gold. Instead, everything was plain grey stone. The hall was not as illuminated as the ones above, and it took a moment for her eyes to adjust. Even so, she knew they were very close. Sigyn could hear the sound of weaving shuttles and spinning wheels before Tjvori showed her the unassuming door.

“Ask for Gunnharda,” he said. “She is the Mistress of Wardrobe for the entire palace. She will make sure you have all you need.”

He turned to leave, and Sigyn twisted her hands, debating asking him to stay and introduce her. At least that way, she would have credibility. But she bit her lower lip and kept silent, watching him walk away. Tjvori did not know she was anything but a normal girl. It was an illusion she would like to keep, at least for a few more hours. She waited until she could no longer see the old man before she yanked open the door.

The room was filled with looms, dress mannequins, spinning wheels, sewing machines, and tables for cutting. It was also filled with seamstresses and tailors. Not all of them looked up at her, but the few that did stopped to stare, and their neighbors noticed and looked up too. It spread through the room like ripples through water or perhaps like plague through a village. Soon, everyone was staring at her.

One woman gave a little shriek and fainted.

Sigyn looked at the floor, wishing she could throw back the hood and just be normal. But she couldn’t. She could never be normal again if she wanted to live. “I was told to ask for Gunnharda,” she said, wrapping her furry arms around her waist.

“And what business do you have with her, monster?” asked a sharp-faced woman, her hands at her hips and her mouth in a deep scowl.

“Prince Loki hired me as his tailor, and I need supplies to complete my work,” she said.

She expected the disbelief as the woman’s eyes grew wide, but it didn’t come in the form Sigyn anticipated. “That’s why he brought you here?” the woman asked. “To make clothes?”

One woman giggled, but a glare from Sigyn silenced her. All the blood drained from the woman’s face.

Sigyn should have expected the few servants that saw her enter would not keep their mouths shut, but she was still surprised. She vaguely wondered how the rumors explained her arrival, before firmly deciding she didn’t want to know. “I have considerable skill with threadcraft,” she said, holding out her arms. “I made my clothes. I spun the thread and wove the cloth and sewed it all together myself. He was in need of a seamstress. I was in need of an employer.”

The woman came forward and reached out to grab the sleeve of Sigyn's shirt, despite several whimpers and a hushed warning from a blond man on his knees, hemming a gown.

The woman looked into Sigyn's eyes. "This is indeed fine work," she said.

Sigyn bowed very slightly. "Thank you, Gunnharda." It was a gamble, that was for sure, but this woman was the only one in the room who acted with any kind of authority.

The Mistress of Wardrobe's eyes widened as those around them that heard gasped. "How did you know?" Gunnharda asked.

"I'm hairy," Sigyn said. "Not stupid."

Gunnharda looked her up and down with stern eyes before asking. "And what are you called?"

"Thousandfurs," Sigyn responded. If that was what the prince decided to call her, the rest of them could use it too.

"Come with me, Thousandfurs," Gunnharda said, turning.

The man who warned against coming too close stood. "Don't trust it!" He didn't even try to keep his voice down, and Sigyn fought back the wince at being called an 'it' once again.

"Back to work," Gunnharda told him. "That gown won't hem itself." He sat with a thud but glared after them. Gunnharda turned to the rest of the room. "All of you!" The room suddenly burst into a flurry of activity, none of them daring to look up from their work while Gunnharda and Sigyn walked through the room.

"Sorry about Brimir," she said. "He's a little overprotective of his mother." For a moment, she sounded a little fond. Then they reached a door set into the back wall of the room. "We store all supplies in here. Mark what you take on the ledger to the right of the door." She peered at Sigyn. "You can write, can't you?"

"Yes," Sigyn said, somewhat sternly.

"Good," Gunnharda said. "If we don't have what you need, just tell me and, if I think it's reasonable, I'll find it for you. This door is locked from dusk 'til dawn, so don't come around at night."

With that, she opened the door, but she didn't let Sigyn through quite yet. "Thousandfurs," she said. "If you have indeed made those clothes, then you have great talent as a seamstress. However, have no delusions. You're still a monster. I may respect your work, but I want you down here as little as possible, understand?"

Sigyn glared at the ground. "I understand," she said quietly. Getting angry would not solve this issue.

"Good. Go," Gunnharda said. "Get your things."

Sigyn hurried into the closet and gasped.

It was not a closet. It was almost paradise. Full of everything she could ever want for any cloth project she could possibly conceive. Now, she thought, If I could just have a library right next door, I'd have my own personal Valhalla.

But she wasn't here to gawk. There were baskets near the door. She grabbed one and got to work, pulling out bolts of cloth and cutting what she needed, mostly in black or green, though she did grab some cloth of particular texture whose colors she planned to change magically later.

She worked quickly under Gunnharda's uncomfortable stare, noting down everything she took in the ledger by the door, and exiting with her basket full. The stares followed her until she was out of the Mistress of Wardrobe's domain altogether. She resisted the urge to run back to Loki's chambers, instead taking a leaf from the prince's book and walking like none of it affected her.

It did though. It did a lot, and her stomach was in knots by the time she slid back into the corridor for Loki's staff. Here, safe from prying eyes, she did break into a run, hurrying back to her room and slamming the door shut before flinging her mantle off and throwing it in a corner.

She stood there for several moments before taking a deep breath and getting back to work.

She was just finishing with the last of the prince's existing clothes when there was a knock on her door.

Sigyn had not yet retrieved her mantle from where she had thrown it, but the room was too small for putting it on to be much of a delay. She took a deep breath before flipping the hood up, waiting an extra moment to be sure the charm was settled properly. She suspected it was either Brynjolf or Tjvori coming to ask her about something. Though she wasn't sure whether they'd ask about her progress or whether she'd yet taken the nooning, she did not think it would be urgent.

She opened the door and found she was utterly, entirely wrong. It was neither servant, but two of the Einherjar, the elite guard. She stared up at them with fear, and they looked down at her with disgust.

Her heart nearly beat itself out of her chest, it pounded so hard. "Come with us," one of them commanded.

Unable to speak, she merely nodded, and followed along meekly as they led her through the palace.

End Notes

Exposition exposition exposition. I'm sorry it's so clunky, but trying to slip all this information in the story was... also clunky.

For more explanatory purposes, Asgard is the whole planet, the Sky Citadel is the palace itself, and Gladsheim is the name of the city surrounding the Citadel. Okay?

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